

# OH MY, A CASA IS ASSIGNED TO MY CASE!

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How do I work effectively with the CASA?

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## How did CASAs become involved in the juvenile courts?

- CASAs have served in juvenile courts for more than four decades.
- Today, there are 44 CASA programs in California serving 51 counties and nearly 1,000 programs nationwide



## What is a local CASA program?

- Counties that have CASAs in their courts have a nonprofit organization that is their designated local CASA program.
- The designated CASA program is authorized by the Superior Court in that county and must operate their program within the parameters established by the Cal. Welfare and Institutions Code, Cal. Rules of Court, National CASA Standards, and local MOU or operating agreement.



## What is a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)?

- A CASA is a volunteer.
- A CASA has been recruited, screened, selected, and trained by the local CASA program.
- A CASA is supervised by the local CASA program.
- A CASA is appointed by a juvenile court judge as a sworn officer of the court to help define the best interest of a child in dependency proceedings.



## What is the CASA's role?



- Provide independent and factual information to the court.
- Represent the best interests of the child and consider the best interests of the family.

*Cal. Welfare and Institutions Code § 102(c)(1)(2)*



## What is the CASA's role?



- Make reports to the court.
- Access and review sensitive and confidential records; court documents, social worker files, mental health documents, school information, and medical and dental records.

*Cal. Welfare and Institutions Code §§104-107; see also your local program's Order of Appointment*



## CASAs are prohibited from the following:

- Bringing a child home.
- Giving legal advice or therapy.
- Giving expensive gifts.
- Having a conflict of interest.
- Introducing child to their own family or friends.

*Cal. Rules of Court 5.566(i)*



## CASAs Can Advocate for Any Dependent



- Ages birth to 21.
- Any stage in an open dependency case, including family reunification, family maintenance, post-permanency, and extended foster care.
- In-home or any kind of placement.



## CASAs Can Advocate for Any Dependent



- Dual-Status youth.
- Medically fragile.
- Some CASA programs have piloted programs for youth involved only in the juvenile justice system.



## CASAs Partner with Professionals

- CASAs can be essential partners in the court process, the specially trained volunteer advocate generally has more time to spend with the child than the child welfare professional or child's counsel, and therefore can provide additional information so that the court can make the most well-informed decision for that child.
- CASAs are not a substitute or a replacement for children's attorneys or child welfare professionals.



## CASAs Partner with Professionals

- Referrals accepted by anyone who knows the child.
- CASAs see child regularly, gathers details about the child's needs that assist professionals.
- CASAs will attend team meetings: CFTs, IEPs, and Court.
- CASAs build relationships with parents, resource parents, and relatives as well as the child.



## Scenario 1

Marco is eleven. His parents' reunification services were terminated two years ago, and they do not visit consistently. Marco is in APPLA. Marco has been matched with CASA Edward for nearly a year. Marco and Edward see each other every other week. Marco's favorite way to spend their time together is to play soccer at the park and then go for an ice cream. Marco loves to convince Edward to mix flavors that seem like they don't belong together. The outings give Edward the opportunity to gain insight into Marco's needs and make observations about his well-being.

Marco recently moved to a new placement where he is the only child and the caregiver is very experienced. The caregiver tells the social worker that "Edward seems like a nice guy" but that "Marco won't need him, now that he is in a good foster home." She suggests that "maybe some other child would enjoy having Edward take him to get ice cream."



## Scenario 1



- What might the social worker say to the caregiver to help her understand the CASA's role?
- On these facts, what might Edward be able to do to complement the roles of counsel and the social worker?



## Scenario 2

Sara is a new parents' attorney. She represents a father whose two girls, ages nine and three, have recently returned home with family maintenance services. The girls have been matched with CASA Monica who was appointed to their case shortly after the dispositional hearing. The father has met Monica a couple of times when she observed visits. The father found Monica to be cordial, and his girls have both said that they enjoy spending time with her. The father appreciates that Monica speaks Spanish, because that is his preferred language.

Sara has never had a family maintenance case with a CASA involved. She wants to learn more about what the CASA's understanding of her role is at this phase of the case.



## Scenario 2



- Who might Sara contact for more information about the role of a CASA? What questions can you anticipate she will have?
- On these facts, what might Monica be able to do to complement the roles of counsel and the social worker?





## For more information



Please take a moment to review the handouts for this conference this is additional information regarding resources and starting conversations with your local program.

- [CaliforniaCASA.org](http://CaliforniaCASA.org)
- [SpeakUpNow.org](http://SpeakUpNow.org) (Voices for Children)
- [CASAofSantaCruz.org](http://CASAofSantaCruz.org)
- [CASAforChildren.org](http://CASAforChildren.org) (National CASA)

