

AUTHORITY TO RELEASE INFORMATION

To Whom It May Concern:

I hereby authorize Grant/ Luna/ Hidalgo CASA Program to conduct an investigation on my background in conjunction with the program guidelines.

I further authorize any New Mexico law-enforcement agency to conduct a criminal-records check and to release the results of said criminal-records check to CASA Program of Deming, New Mexico.

This release is executed by me with the full knowledge and understanding that the information to be obtained about me is for official use of Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Deming, New Mexico.

I have read the above waiver and release statement and fully understand what rights I am waiving by signing this document.

SIGNATURE

DATE

FULL NAME

PREVIOUS NAME (maiden, etc.)

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

DATE OF BIRTH

CURRENT ADDRESS:

PREVIOUS ADDRESS(ES) FOR THE
PAST **SEVEN** YEARS:

AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION

I, _____
NAME (MUST BE **PRINTED-LEGIBLY**) (SOC) (DOB)

PURSUANT TO NMSA 1978, SECTION **29-10-6(A)** (Repl. Pamph. 1990), OF THE NEW MEXICO ARREST RECORD INFORMATION ACT, HEREBY APPOINT:

NAME (MUST BE **PRINTED**) (IF NO AGENT, **PRINT "SELF"**)

AS AN AUTHORIZED AGENT FOR ME FOR THE PURPOSE OF INSPECTING (AND /OR OBTAINING COPIES) ANY NEW MEXICO ARREST FINGERPRINT CARD SUPPORTED RECORD INFORMATION MAINTAINED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, INCLUDING INFORMATION CONCERNING FELONY OR MISDEMEANOR ARRESTS.

TO THE CUSTODIAN OF THE RECORDS IN QUESTION, I HEREBY DIRECT YOU TO RELEASE SUCH INFORMATION TO THE AUTHORIZED AGENT AS DESCRIBED ABOVE.

I HEREBY RELEASE THE CUSTODIAN OR CUSTODIANS OF SUCH RECORDS AND THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, INCLUDING ANY OF THEIR AGENTS, EMPLOYEES, OR REPRESENTATIVES IN ANY CAPACITY, FROM ANY AND ALL CLAIMS OF LIABILITY OR DAMAGE OF WHATEVER KIND OR NATURE, WHICH AT ANY TIME COULD RESULT TO ME, MY HEIRS, ASSIGNS, ASSOCIATES, PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OR REPRESENTATIVES OF ANY NATURE BECAUSE OF COMPLIANCE BY SAID CUSTODIAN OR CUSTODIANS WITH THIS "AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION" AND MY REQUEST CONTAINED HEREIN FOR THIS RELEASE OR BECAUSE OF ANY USE OF THESE RECORDS. THIS RELEASE IS BINDING, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE, ON MY HEIRS, ASSIGNS, ASSOCIATES, PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OR REPRESENTATIVES OF ANY NATURE.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

(*ATTN: NOTARY-ENSURE DOCUMENT IS SIGNED IN YOUR PRESENCE AND NAME,DOB,SOC INFO IS VERIFIED WITH A VALID ID)

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME THIS DAY OF , 20 .

(SEAL) _____
(NOTARY PUBLIC)

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES:

CASA of Luna/Grant/Hidalgo Counties is kindly requesting this check.



Luna County CASA
210 # A Poplar
Deming, NM 88030
575-567-1186

CASA JOB DESCRIPTION

A CASA is a volunteer appointed by the Sixth Judicial District Court to ensure that the needs of a child who may have been neglected or abused are met. In order to do this the CASA must **investigate** the facts of the case, **recommend** a course of action to the court, **facilitate** the resolution of the presenting problem, and **monitor** progress toward established goals.

I. Qualifications of a CASA

1. Must be at 21 years old and has an interest in children, their rights, and special needs.
2. Must have time to devote to training sessions, investigation and follow-up of a case assigned (usually a two-year commitment averaging one to three hours per week).
3. Must have the ability to work with a child, family members, and professionals using tact, and basic human relations skills.
4. Must have the ability to gather and accurately record factual information and maintain objectivity.
5. Must not have any current involvement with juvenile or dependency court.
6. Must respect and be able to relate to people with different values and from various backgrounds (economic, educational, cultural) in a variety of settings.

II. Requirements

1. Successfully complete the application process including reference checks, background investigations and personal interview.
2. Attend 30 hours of pre-service training and 12 hours annually of in-service training.
3. Serve at least one child until a permanent plan has been implemented (often a period of one

year or more).

4. Maintain an up to date and complete file on each case assigned.
5. Be aware of deadlines and timetables involving an assigned case, and turn in all reports on time.
6. Complete evaluations, time studies, etc. which may be requested in order to monitor the entire CASA project. Attend CASA group meetings to share ideas and concerns.

III. Specific Duties of a CASA

1. Upon assignment to a case, review the case records received from the courts and CYFD. Interview the child, family members, foster family, teachers, social worker, and other interested parties to determine the facts. (Many interviews are by phone, by necessity, some must be in person. In addition, any home suggested as a permanent or temporary placement for the child should be visited).
2. Determine if a permanent plan has been created for the child. Determine whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts, are being provided to the child and family.
3. Prepare a written report stating findings and a recommendation for a permanent disposition of the case, and submit the report no less than four days prior to the court hearing.
4. Appear in court as needed for review hearings, continue follow-up contacts, and submit supplementary reports and make new recommendations as needed, until a final disposition is made.
5. Bring any significant changes in the family situation to the attention of the court.

Luna County CASA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate against anyone otherwise qualified because of race, age, religion, color, national origin, ancestry and sex, mental or physical disability.



Luna County CASA Program CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

I shall hold in confidence all pertinent information. I will not violate the confidential relationship between the CASA Program, its volunteers, the Children Youth & Family Department, the courts, related agencies, and all parties involved. I will not remove any written records from the Program office without express permission.

I accept full responsibility for maintaining the confidential and private nature of all records and information. I understand that I am personally responsible and liable for violation of this statement.

Signature

Date

Address

Phone

CASA Program Coordinator

Date



New Mexico Children Youth & Families Department
Protective Services Division/Placement, Prevention & Adoption Resource Bureau/Criminal
Records Check Unit



Children Youth & Families Department

New Mexico Child Abuse & Neglect Check

**** Form shall be typed. Form will be rejected if information is missing. ****

I hereby authorize the NM Children Youth & Families Department (CYFD) to check for allegations of child abuse and neglect made against my name(s) and to check records for prior applications to become a Resource Parent. I understand that the check will be used in consideration of my suitability to be a Resource Parent. I release the NM CYFD from liability and otherwise hold CYFD harmless. The Department has my permission to provide the results to:

***Agency Name** ***Contact Name** ***Phone #**

***Agency Type:** **Docket #** **Court Name**

***Mailing Address:** ***City** ***State** ***Zip**

E-mail:

APPLICANT INFORMATION

List your birth / legal name and every married name(s), hyphenated name(s), nick name(s), or variation of a name you have ever used.

****Form will be rejected if fields are left blank.****

***First Name** ***Middle Name** *If none then NMN.* ***Last Name**

***Aliases, AKA's, Madien Name, Nickname, Sr. Jr., etc.** *If none then N/A. Do not leave blank*

***Social Security Number** *9 digits* ***Date of Birth** *mm/dd/yyyy*

***Physical Address** ***City** ***State** ***Zip Code**

***Place of Birth** *City, State* ***Phone #**

***Current Spouse / Significant Other:** List the full name, DOB and SSN. *If none, please indicate N/A in the name field.*

Full Name ***DOB** *mm/dd/yyyy* ***SSN**

Previous Spouse / Significant Other: List the full name, DOB (if known) and SSN (if known). *If none please indicate N/A in the name field.*

Full Name **DOB** *mm/dd/yyyy* **SSN**

Full Name **DOB** *mm/dd/yyyy* **SSN**

Please list the full name(s) of any birth, adoptive, foster, step or other children who have lived in your home. **Should you need additional space please add a separate piece of paper with the requested information below. Please have applicant sign and date additional page(s).** If none please indicate N/A in the first name field only.

Full Name **DOB** *mm/dd/yyyy*

Full Name **DOB** *mm/dd/yyyy*

Full Name **DOB** *mm/dd/yyyy*

Full Name **DOB** *mm/dd/yyyy*

Full Name **DOB** *mm/dd/yyyy*

Please list all previous street addresses where you have lived at any time during the past 5 yrs. **Please include New Mexico address(es). Should you need additional space please add a separate piece of paper with the requested information below. Please have applicant sign and date additional page(s).**

***Street Address** ***City, State** ***Yr(s) resided**

Street Address **City, State** **Yr(s) resided**

FOR NM CYFD/PS USE ONLY

Our office has completed a child abuse and neglect check via our Family Automated Client Tracking System (FACTS). Our records show the following for _____

The following **Substantiation(s)** were found:

Date(s) Investigation Opened	Date(s) Investigation Closed	Physical Abuse	Physical Neglect	Sexual Abuse

The following **Unsubstantiation(s)** were found:

Date(s) Investigation Opened	Date(s) Investigation Closed	Physical Abuse	Physical Neglect	Sexual Abuse

Should you need additional information about the information recorded above please have your **applicant** contact CYFD's Records Custodian Kathleen Hardy (505)476-0471 or via email at Kathleen.hardy@state.nm.us.

A search of the CYFD/PS Foster Care and Adoptions Criminal Records Check (CRC) database Indicates that this applicant previously had a Background Check conducted on and by the following agencies:

Agency Name(s)	Date Background Check Conducted

If you have any questions please contact the CYFD PS CRC Unit at (505)827-8400 or e-mail CYFD.PSCriminalReco@state.nm.us.

Search processed by: _____ Date: _____

Print name of person who completed search: _____

REFERENCES

Please list three personal references that are not related to you. If you are employed, one reference must be a co-worker or supervisor. We will verify references. Thank you!

Name _____

Address (mailing) _____

Phone _____

Relationship to you _____

Name _____

Address (mailing) _____

Phone _____

Relationship to you _____

Name _____

Address (mailing) _____

Phone _____

Relationship to you _____

Your signature: _____

Please attach any additional information you want to submit with your application, and return to:



CASA of Luna/Hidalgo Counties
210 #A Poplar
Deming, NM 88030



Luna County CASA Program
210 # A Poplar
Deming, NM 88030
Phone (575) 567-1186

CASA of Luna and Hidalgo Counties STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

**As a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), I am willing to make a
commitment to:**

1. Attend basic training sessions.
2. Attend in-service education and on-going training as scheduled.
3. Serve at least 18 months and/or the duration of a case or cases you will represent as a volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).
4. To act in a professional manner as an officer of the court in accordance with CASA volunteer policies and procedures, court policies and relevant laws.
5. To maintain objectivity and advocate for the child's best interest.
6. To keep all matters confidential.
7. To treat all persons with respect, fairness and courtesy regardless of race, religion, affectional (sexual) preference or economic status.
8. To complete all necessary court reports and monthly reports (timesheets) in a timely manner.
9. To attend all hearings regarding the child and to monitor court orders in a timely manner.
10. To maintain an active commitment to the child until the case has been dismissed or other disposition has been made by the Court.
11. To seek and accept support and supervision from program staff.
12. To maintain commitment to the mission statement and goal of the program.

As a volunteer I understand that I am part of the staff of the CASA Programs and, therefore, I can be requested to resign from the position. Causes for dismissal from the volunteer staff include:

1. Failure to complete 100% of the initial training.
2. Failure to accept an assignment over a six (6) month period of time.
3. Failure to attend two (2) consecutive on-going training sessions without reasonable cause.
4. Taking action that endangers the child(ren) or is outside the role of powers of the CASA program, without program approval.
5. Demonstrating inability to effectively carry out CASA duties.
6. Falsifying volunteer application of misrepresenting facts during the screening process.
7. Failure to see the child(ren) involved in the CASA volunteer's assigned case for a period of three months.*
8. When it is apparent that participation is a detriment to the program philosophy or policy. Examples:
 - A. Unwillingness to consult with and reach agreement with staff about assignments.
 - B. Unwillingness to follow directions regarding procedures and policy.
 - C. Failure to make reports to the court in a timely manner.
 - D. Breach of confidentiality.
 - E. Engaging in ex-parte communication with the judge.

Signature of CASA volunteer

Date

Signature of CASA Program Coordinator

Date



**COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES
SIXTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT – LUNA/HIDALGO/GRANT COUNTIES
NEW MEXICO**

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

This volunteer application form is to serve the same purpose as that of an employment application. The CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) Program reserves the right to make any reference checks or inquiries deemed appropriate and necessary on the suitability of any new volunteer (just as reference checks are made on new employees).

We trust that you will understand this is in the spirit intended. Any checks or inquiries will be kept in strict confidence.

Please be aware that our standards for volunteers are high and not all people who apply will necessarily be accepted.

Working with abused and neglected children as a CASA volunteer is extremely rewarding. We are looking forward to talking to you about becoming part of our dedicated corps of volunteers.

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

TODAY'S DATE: _____

NAME: _____
 Last First Middle

HAVE YOU BEEN KNOWN BY ANY OTHER NAMES? _____
IF SO, WHAT NAMES? _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____ **SOCIAL SECURITY #:** _____ **ETHNICITY** _____

HOME ADDRESS (mailing): _____ **HOME ADDRESS (physical):** _____

HOME PHONE: _____ **BUSINESS PHONE:** _____

May we contact you at work? _____**E-MAIL ADDRESS:** _____**EDUCATION COMPLETED:** _____**CURRENT EMPLOYMENT:**

Job title	Employer	Dates
		<i>Full or Part time? (Circle one)</i>

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY FOR THE LAST 5 YEARS:

Job title	Employer	Dates
Job title	Employer	Dates
Job title	Employer	Dates
Job title	Employer	Dates
Job title	Employer	Dates

*Use back of page if more space needed***BUSINESS ADDRESS:** _____**MARITAL STATUS** _____**SPOUSE/PARTNER'S NAME:** _____**DO YOU HAVE A CAR AVAILABLE TO YOU?** _____**INSURER NAME:** _____**DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER:** _____**STATE:** _____ **EXPIRATION DATE:** _____

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONVICTED OF A CRIME OTHER THAN A TRAFFIC VIOLATION? ____ YES
____ NO. IF YES, WHAT CHARGE? _____ All volunteers will be required to sign an authorization for release of information maintained by the NM State Police, FBI, CYFD or other agencies. This will require you to be fingerprinted. Acceptance into the CASA program is contingent on clearance.

IF YES, WHAT CHARGE? _____**DATE CONVICTED:** _____ **WHERE?** _____**IF YES, PLEASE EXPLAIN, IN DETAIL** _____

PLEASE LIST CURRENT AND PREVIOUS VOLUNTEER WORK:

PLEASE LIST ANY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES YOU'VE HAD WITH CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT:

WHAT LANGUAGES DO YOU SPEAK? _____

WHY ARE YOU VOLUNTEERING FOR THIS PROGRAM? _____

HOW WERE YOU MADE AWARE OF THIS PROGRAM? _____

PLEASE LIST YOUR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH CHILDREN _____

ARE YOU WILLING TO COMPLETE AT LEAST 30 HOURS OF TRAINING?

_____ **YES** _____ **NO** _____ **UNDECIDED**

ARE YOU WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN ONGOING TRAINING AND COURT APPEARANCES?

DO YOU HAVE ANY PERSONAL/EMPLOYMENT CONSTRAINTS THAT MAY RESTRICT YOUR TIME?

IF YES, PLEASE EXPLAIN: _____

ARE YOU WILLING TO COMMIT TO AT LEAST ONE YEAR OF SERVICE TO THIS PROGRAM?

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY, WHO CAN WE NOTIFY? _____
PHONE: _____

County of Luna CASA Program is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate against anyone otherwise qualified because of race, age, religion, color, national origin, ancestry and sex, mental or physical disability.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE REFERENCES PAGE. AT LEAST 2 OF THE REFERENCES MUST BE FROM PERSONS UNRELATED TO THE APPLICANT. RETURN TO:

**CASA of Luna/Hidalgo Counties
Attn: Joanna Vasquez
210 E. Poplar, Suite A
Deming, NM 88030
(575) 567-1186**

As a volunteer I understand that I represent this CASA Program in both the child welfare system and in the community, and as a representative, I can be requested to resign from this volunteer position. Causes for dismissal can include, but are not limited to:

- 1. Failure to complete 100% of the initial training.**
 - 2. Failure to accept an assignment over a six (6) month period of time.**
 - 3. Failure to attend two (2) consecutive on-going training sessions without reasonable cause.**
 - 4. Taking action that endangers the child(ren) or is outside the role of powers of the CASA program approval.**
 - 5. Demonstrating inability to effectively carry out CASA duties.**
 - 6. Falsifying volunteer application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process.**
 - 7. Failure to see the child(ren) involved in the CASA volunteer's assigned case for a period of three months.**
 - 8. When it is apparent that participation is a detriment to the program philosophy or policy.**
- Examples:**
- A. Unwillingness to consult with and reach agreement with staff about assignments.**
 - B. Unwillingness to follow directions regarding procedures and policy.**
 - C. Failure to make reports to the court in a timely manner.**
 - D. Breach of confidentiality.**
 - E. Engaging in ex-parte communication with the judge.**

I understand that this CASA program rejects any applicant found to have been convicted of, or having charges pending for, a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse or neglect, or related acts that would pose risks to children or the CASA program's credibility.

Signature of CASA Volunteer

Date

Signature of CASA Program Coordinator

Date



CASA OF LUNA, GRANT & HIDALGO COUNTIES Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Roles and Responsibilities of a CASA Volunteer

What is a CASA volunteer?

A CASA volunteer is a trained volunteer child advocate sworn in by the President Judge to represent the best interest of children who are abused and neglected and are active cases in the Juvenile Court System. The CASA volunteer investigates the child's circumstances, provides fact-based information and makes recommendations to the court while becoming a source of support for the child.

The CASA program is independent, but works closely with the court, social workers, therapists, attorneys, care providers and other professionals involved in a child's case. CASA volunteers work under the direct supervision of the CASA Program Coordinator to further the child's welfare and to expedite the case through the system.

The CASA volunteer's ultimate goal is to move the child out of temporary placement, usually in the foster care system, into a safe and permanent home. This could mean return to the parent's care, adoption, the appointment of a legal guardian, or some other permanent living arrangement that satisfies the court and fulfills the child's needs.

I. A CASA Volunteer shall:

1. Report any incident of child abuse or neglect to the CASA Supervisor, Social Services Hot Line and any other appropriate parties to the proceedings. New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (1-800-797-3260) or to 911 if it is an emergency.

2. Maintain complete written records about the case, including appointments, interviews, observations and other pertinent information gathered.
3. Determine if a permanency plan has been created for the child, and whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts are being provided to the child and family.
4. Discuss all recommendations with program supervisor before submitting them to court. CASA supervisory staff may not alter a volunteer's report without agreement from the volunteer.
5. Ensure that the child's best interest are being represented in all facets of the case by attending court hearings, attending foster care reviews and school staffing, writing timely court reports and advocating verbally to parties involved.
6. Monitor the case by visiting the child as often as necessary and contacting involved parties to observe whether the child's essential needs are being met and whether the Court's orders are being followed.
7. Participate and/or recognize the need for planning meetings or calling hearings involving the child in order to move positively toward a permanency plan for the child.
8. Remain actively involved in the case until formally discharged by the Court and/or the CASA Program.
9. Provide monthly time sheet of case activities to the Program.

II. A CASA volunteer shall not:

1. Provide direct service delivery to any parties that could lead to a conflict of interest or liability problems or
2. Cause a child or a family to become dependent on the CASA Volunteer for services that should be provided by other agencies.
3. Be alone with a child, left to be sole person responsible for the child's care during a visit or provide child care. Be related to any parties involved in the case or be employed in a position which might result in a conflict of interest. Give children or family members their personal home or work numbers unless expressly given specific permission by the CASA Supervisor.

III. Examples of inappropriate volunteer practices are:

1. Sheltering a child in the home
2. Giving legal or therapeutic advice
3. Making placement arrangements for the child
4. Giving money or expensive gifts to the child or family
5. Excessive or inappropriate contact with the child

IV. Transporting

1. As a general rule a CASA Volunteer may not transport CASA children. It is our philosophy that transporting can put both the volunteer and the child at risk. Furthermore, transporting can easily lead to the enabling of respondents and social workers. Under rare and extra-ordinary circumstances a CASA Volunteer may transport a CASA child if given express permission by their CASA Coordinator. A copy of the volunteer's driver's license, motor vehicle record and proof of insurance must be in the volunteer file. Transporting a child without permission may result in the termination of the volunteer.
 - i. Volunteers must carry state minimum insurance.
 - ii. Volunteers must obtain permission of the child's legal guardian or custodial agency before transporting a child.
 - iii. Volunteers must be knowledgeable of the potential personal risk of liability before transporting a child.
 - iv. Volunteers must choose to accept the responsibility before transporting a child.

V. Duties of a CASA Volunteer

1. Conduct an independent investigation.
 - i. Review all relevant documents, including those of CYFD, law enforcement, court, medical and school.
 - ii. Conduct direct interviews with the child, parents, social workers, relatives, school personnel and others who have knowledge of the facts in the situation.
 - iii. Maintain complete written records about the case, including a log of appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child, records reviewed, and time spent on the case.
 - iv. Report any incidents of child abuse or neglect to the CASA-PC and/or appropriate authorities immediately.
 - v. Determine if a permanency plan has been created for the child, and whether "reasonable efforts" were made to provide services to the child and family. Is this plan appropriate and in the best interest of the child?
2. Determine the best interest of the child.
 - i. Utilize as many factors as possible in making this determination, including:
 1. Current age and sense of time
 2. Level of maturity
 3. Culture and ethnicity
 4. Degree of attachment to family members, including siblings
 5. What situation would best provide continuity, consistency and a sense of belonging and identity

3. Monitor the case by visiting the child as often as necessary to observe whether the child's essential needs are being met, and whether the court order is being carried out by the natural parents as well as involved agencies.
4. Participate in any planning or treatment team meetings involving the child in order to keep informed of the child's permanent plan. Seek cooperative solutions, if possible. Monitor the development and/or revisions of a case plan, ensuring inclusion of specific tasks with target dates for completion. Review the service plan with workers and ask questions to ensure all the child's needs are being met by the plan and may suggest additional services.
5. Advocate for the child.
 - i. Assure the child's best interests are being represented at every stage of the disposition of the case.
 - ii. Attend all court hearings.
 - iii. Make a written recommendation to the court on what decision is best for the child.
 - iv. Urge the court, through written reports, to enter specific and clear orders for evaluation, assessment, services and treatment for the child and the child's family.
 - v. Point out concerns about the case to the court.
 - vi. Help the child understand the court process.
6. Remain actively involved in the case until formally discharged by the court. Once a case terminates and/or a CASA volunteer is no longer assigned to it, all notes and other associated paperwork must be returned to the CASA office.
7. Abide by all laws and regulations governing activities; conduct all business in an honest, fair, professional and humane manner; use authority appropriately; and do not use CASA to promote a personal agenda or for personal gain.
8. Respect the right to privacy by keeping information that would identify parties involved in CASA cases confidential.
9. Disqualify self from involvement in a case if you are related to any parties in the case, if your employment might result in a conflict of interest; or if for any other reason circumstances arise or you know parties well enough that it becomes impossible for you to remain impartial and/or unbiased.
10. Failure to perform the above described duties or infractions of the prescribed ethical standards would be reason to consider dismissal of the volunteer from the CASA Program. Administrative policy is to aid and facilitate the work of the volunteer, to openly discuss any problems and concerns with the volunteer; but, at all times, to establish and maintain the integrity and credibility of the CASA Program.

VI. Qualifications of a CASA volunteer:

1. Must be 21 years of age.

2. Must successfully pass screening requirements which include a written application, criminal record and Child Abuse Registry checks, Social Security Number verification, personal interview, and three personal references. When a prospective volunteer has lived in another county and that jurisdiction is not covered by the national criminal background check utilized, requiring the program to secure county and state criminal record checks and child abuse registry or child protective services check in any county and state in which the person has resided for the previous seven (7) years. Re-screening for existing volunteers should be repeated every 7 years to include criminal record and Child Abuse Registry checks.
3. Must successfully complete initial training provided by the CASA Program, which will include 25 hours of material review/in person training and 5 hours of court room observations. Any sessions missed must be made up by the applicant before being appointed to a case.
4. Must be able to make an eighteen month minimum commitment to a case (in addition to initial training time), entailing 2-3 hours per week on the average.
5. Must be accepted as a volunteer by the CASA Program Coordinator and sworn in by the President Judge.
6. Must participate in ongoing training, a minimum of 12 hours annually.
7. Must accept supervision and seek feedback from the Program Coordinator on a regular basis.
8. Must be able to keep information confidential and to work within established program guidelines.

VII. Volunteer Recruitment

1. Volunteer recruitment will be an on going function of the organization coordinated by the Volunteer Coordinator or designee. The volunteer recruitment effort will be the responsibility of every member of the organization and can be accomplished in any community setting.
2. It is the responsibility of the Volunteer Coordinator or designee to recruit volunteers and to coordinate and assist the efforts of other organizational members to recruit other volunteers.
3. Recruitment can be accomplished at community gatherings, local colleges, presentations to local community and church groups, through local media (print and radio), through word of mouth from other volunteers and by many other sources.
4. Formal presentations should include information about volunteering for CASA, general information about the organization and its mission and funding sources.

VIII. Volunteer Screening

1. All volunteers will be screened for acceptance and assignment to the CASA program through an application and initial interview process prior to commencement of basic training. The application and interview will be

in-depth and designed to determine if the prospective volunteer will be appropriate for CASA work. The screening interview will be conducted face to face and not over the phone.

2. The volunteer will fill out a complete application form and submit names for three (3) references. There will also be a criminal record and background check that will consist of a NCIC and DHS Child Abuse Registry checks. The proper information and proper permission must be obtained for the check to be done.
3. The Volunteer Coordinator or designee will be responsible for conducting the screening interview. The screening interview will be designed to gather the following information about the prospective volunteer:
 - i. The purpose for volunteering: What does the person hope to gain from working for CASA?
 - ii. Will they attend all training, staff meetings and other in service sessions as they are scheduled to the best of their ability?
 - iii. What beliefs, ideas, or theories do they have about why child abuse/neglect occurs?
 - iv. Have they had previous contact with the child welfare system or juvenile court?
 - v. Do they have current contact with children?
 - vi. How do they feel about corporal punishment? How do they discipline their children?
 - vii. How were they disciplined as children?
 - viii. What do they wish they had received from their parents that they did not get?
 - ix. What do they feel constitutes child abuse? How would they define child abuse?
 - x. What do they do to deal with stress in their lives?
 - xi. Would they be willing to go into someone's home to interview them or assess the home environment?
 - xii. What skills, strengths, and/or personal characteristics do they possess that would make them as an effective CASA volunteer?
 - xiii. How much time can they give to being a CASA volunteer? Other responsibilities?
 - xiv. Do they have any questions about CASA?
 - xv. Is it possible they would enjoy a volunteer experience in an area where they would have more direct contact with a child?
 - xvi. Can they commit to one year or more of continuous service?
 - xvii. How does the person react to the presentation of controversial topics such as AIDS, abortion, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, etc.?
 - xviii. Are there any conflicts of interest with the volunteer service?
 - xix. How does the rest of the family feel about the volunteer service?

IX. Equal Opportunity Clause

1. As stated in the By-Laws of CASA: The Corporation shall not restrict its services, employment, membership of the Board of Directors, and all other public involvement by the Corporation because of race, creed, color, nationality, sexual orientation, marital status, disability or sex.

X. Non-Discrimination Statement

1. CASA provides equal opportunities to all volunteers, without regard to sex, race, color, religious belief, national origin, age or disability, except where the disability is such that the volunteer cannot perform the duties and responsibilities required of him/her.

XI. Probation Period

1. All volunteers, once trained and sworn in, will be subject to a probationary period of six months after receiving their first case. At the end of six months, a review of their case work and in-service training will take place based on the Volunteer Policies and Standards, the Volunteer Agreement and the Code of Ethics. The review will be conducted by the Volunteer Coordinator or by the Director.

XII. Confidentiality: Your Responsibility as a CASA volunteer

1. Volunteers must respect children's and families' rights to privacy in regard to personal information.
 - i. Disclosure or verification of case information shall not be made to anyone who does not have a professional reason for receiving such information.
 - ii. No information shall be released to anyone not authorized to receive it, without the express written and dated consent of the party.
 - iii. Confidential information shall only be shared with professional staff at CASA, CYFD, the Guardian ad Litem (GAL), and the court.
 - iv. Case records and notes shall be secured and kept private and inaccessible to public view.
 - v. Discussions of case-related material are not to be held in hallways, elevators, or other public places.
2. It is the CASA volunteer's job to transmit the information it collects to the court. It is important to let all parties to a case know this at the beginning of a case.
3. No one outside of CASA personnel may have access to a CASA case record without a court order. Copies of the CASA Report to Court are provided prior to a court review or hearing to the CYFD caseworker, the child's GAL, and to parents or their attorneys.

4. Any confidential materials received from another individual or agency may not be disclosed to anyone outside CASA's professional staff, except by court order or written consent of the party involved.
5. Duty to Disclose - CASA volunteers have a duty to immediately disclose information to their supervisor in the following situations:
 - i. If child abuse or neglect is suspected
 - ii. If you learn someone may harm himself or others

XIII. Completion of Training

1. The Volunteer must successfully complete 30 hours of CASA core training, sign the Volunteer Agreement form, confidentiality oath, and be sworn in as an official of the court. Completion of 12 additional hours of in-service are required annually.
2. Training
 - i. All CASA volunteers will be provided with a training manual that includes copies of pertinent federal, state, and local laws. It will also include policies and procedures that relate to the program.
 - ii. CASA will provide training to any interested agency or persons that require knowledge of CASA and how to work with CASA effectively. CASA will conduct a minimum of 2 basic training courses per year.
 - iii. Basic core training will consist of at least 30 hours of training. These sessions need to be scheduled at the convenience of the volunteers. Documentation for attendance at training sessions will be provided for on sign-in sheets made available at each session. These sign-in sheets and copies of certificates will be maintained in a training file by the Volunteer Coordinator or Director.

XIV. Steps for Preparation of Volunteer Training

1. Advertise for volunteers and upcoming basic training course.
2. Schedule dates, times, and place where training is to be held.
3. Contact area professionals to secure commitment for each training component.
4. Screen and interview prospective volunteers.
5. Conduct pre-service training which includes addressing the following topics:
 - i. Roles and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer
 - ii. Juvenile court process
 - iii. Dynamics of human behavior associated with child abuse and neglect
 - iv. Dynamics of families
 - v. Relevant state and federal laws including the Adoption and Safe Families Act, (ASFA) the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, (CAPTA) the Indian Child Welfare Act, (ICWA) and the Multi Ethnic Placement Act, (MEPA)
 - vi. Confidentiality and record keeping practices

- vii. Child development
 - viii. Child abuse and neglect
 - ix. Permanency planning and resources
 - x. Community agencies and resources
 - xi. Communication and information gathering
 - xii. Advocacy
 - xiii. Cultural awareness
 - xiv. Poverty
 - xv. Special needs of the children served: differences in cultural and socio-economic norms, values, and heritage
 - xvi. Identification of personal and institutional bias or discrimination as it relates to the children and families being served.
6. Allow an opportunity for each volunteer to visit the court while it is in session to observe proceedings.
 7. No person will be allowed to work or volunteer in any capacity that has not completed basic training. All volunteers will be sworn in by the presiding judge. After completion of basic training and completion of all required forms, assignments will be made.
 8. Persons who have missed singular training sessions may make up those sessions at the next regularly scheduled training or in individual sessions at the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator or designee. Contact the Volunteer Coordinator or designee in order to schedule make-up sessions.

XV. Assignments

1. The CASA Director or Volunteer Coordinator will assign a CASA volunteer to a case upon the request of the court. A volunteer may be assigned to two (2) cases (no more than 6 children in either the first case or both combined) if the Director and Volunteer Coordinator feel the volunteer can handle the additional caseload, and the volunteer is closely monitored.
2. After the judge notifies the CASA Director of a new assignment, both the Director and the Volunteer Coordinator review all volunteer files to determine which volunteers are free and best suited for the new assignment. Once a choice is made, the Volunteer Coordinator contacts the volunteer to outline the basic details of the case. The volunteer has 24 hours to consider whether or not to accept assignment to the case. If the volunteer accepts assignment, then the Judge is notified and he issues a CASA Advocate in the name of the assigned volunteer. If the volunteer declines the assignment, another volunteer is chosen from the list.

XVI. CASA Guidelines for Contact with Children

1. Visits and/or contact with children should occur at minimum 3 times per month while assigned to a case. This is to be done whenever you are assigned to a case. It does not change based on placement. Visit children

when they are in Shelter Care, Foster Care or living with relatives or parents regardless of the age of the child.

2. Don't take children home with you. NEVER have a child with you overnight.
3. Ask if the children have questions and answer the questions honestly with facts.
 - i. Do not probe or introduce the specifics of abuse. Be especially careful when discussing issues in sexual abuse and other potential criminal cases.
 - ii. Explain your role as a CASA volunteer in words children can understand. Communicate in a manner appropriate for their age and developmental level.
 - iii. Explain to children why they were removed from their home and keep them informed about case events.
 - iv. Explain confidentiality. Tell children that you may be asked to tell what they tell you. If they are adolescents, tell them exactly what information you will share.
4. Visit the child prior to any hearing that the child will be attending. Explain what is expected to occur and explore the child's current reactions and feelings regarding the upcoming hearing.
5. Reflect children's feelings without evaluating them and let them know it is okay to have unpleasant or negative feelings.
6. Respect children's attachments to their parents. Remain neutral and non-judgmental about their parents. Do not express your opinion of the parents even if asked.
7. Treat children with respect. Don't talk down to them or criticize them.
8. Don't make promises you can't keep. Keep the promises you make.
9. Tell children that what happened is not their fault. With older children who have been in therapeutic treatment and/or state care, confirm the need to accept past problems and assume responsibility for their future.
10. Prior to confirming with children what you will advocate for, confer with the treatment team (therapist, house parents, shelter or foster parents, social workers, case managers) regarding concerns children express to you and other case matters.
11. Know that your case will have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Plan on being in the child's life for only a limited time.

XVII. CASA Guidelines for Contact with Parents and Family Members

1. Explain your role as a Court Appointed Special Advocate in words parents and relatives can understand. Do your best to develop good working relationships with both parents and relatives.
2. Focus on obtaining information. Find the strengths of the parents and family members. Find the needs of the family. Strive to be non-judgmental.

3. Tell the parents and relatives that you have been appointed by the court. Explain confidentiality; you will gather information about the case, then report facts and make recommendations to the court.
4. Listen with respect.
5. Respond to questions. When you do not know an answer, say you do not. If the question is about their legal action, encourage them to contact their attorney. If the question is about services, encourage them to proactively contact their social worker. Confer with the program supervisor to assist you if you are uncertain about the answer to a question.
6. Let the parents and family members know you are aware of the stress caused by court intervention.
7. Avoid asking leading questions and making emotional remarks.
8. Use reinforcement such as “I see” or a nod of your head to encourage responsiveness.
9. Begin with general, open-ended questions such as “Tell me about...” Use closed questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no” or a short answer when you need specific information or when you are not receiving responses to more general questions.
10. Strive to understand your attitudes and behaviors, then try to understand the attitudes and behaviors of the parents, family members and foster parents.
11. Be clear about what is to occur next. Consult your supervisor for help in planning your work as a CASA volunteer or assistance with any questions you may have.
12. After contact with parents or family members, carefully document the facts you obtained, and your observations, actions, questions and plans. Use objective statements that describe a specific fact or behavior. Do not make interpretations, diagnostic conclusions or judgments.
13. File your notes and any records you obtain in your file and in the office file.

XVIII. CASA Guidelines for Working with Social Services and other Collaborative Partners

1. When first contacting an agency, introduce yourself as the Court Appointed Special Advocate. If the person/agency is unfamiliar with the CASA program, explain the role of the CASA. If seeking information, provide a copy of the Order of Appointment.
2. Receive all records in person or have them sent to the CASA office. To access records on anyone other than the child, contact your supervisor about obtaining a court order or use the release of information form that could be provided by CYFD.
3. Document all contacts and conversations in your case notes by entering the date, type of contact, agency and individual names. Enter factorial highlights of conversations and observations.

4. Maintain confidentiality. With contacts other than social services, limit information provided to that necessary to state your request for information.
5. Consider the needs and schedule of the other party. Be brief. State the reason you are contacting them. Provide details only if necessary. Present most important information first.
6. Arrange visits in advance.
7. Watch for opportunities to express appreciation and praise and do so. Specify what was done or said, how it contributed, and why you appreciate it.
8. Practice good listening skills. Affirm that you have heard what was said. Summarize or paraphrase significant statements then ask if you understood correctly. If strong emotions are expressed, affirm your awareness of the feelings of the speaker. Confer with program staff if problem is unresolved. Avoid escalating conflicts.
9. Be certain information you share with and receive from service providers is known by the assigned case worker or supervisor. Provide any significant new information as soon as possible. Confer with team prior to court appearances.
10. Contact service provider(s) to find out about the availability of needed services. If referral seems appropriate, contact case worker and request that a referral be made.
11. Contact the assigned case worker and your supervisor when concerns exist about a child's placement.
12. When appropriate, confer regarding each contact's perception of case needs. Ask if there are specific ways you could help with case activities.
13. Remember that patience is a virtue and persistence—appropriately expressed—is also a virtue.
14. Report suspicion of abuse and neglect to the 24 hour Emergency Hotline in your area.

XIX. Case Assignment Flow

1. A request for a CASA assignment may come from any of the parties on a case. However, a judge or referee will determine which cases are referred to the CASA program.
 - i. the jurist will make the referral via the CASA Referral Form
 - ii. the court officer clerk will attach a copy of the petition and any other forms required to the referral
 - iii. the court officer clerk will place the referral in the CASA box located at the assignment desk
 - iv. the program director will notify CASA volunteers of open cases and meet with him/her individually to select the case
 - v. volunteers will generally choose each case they work on with the help of the director

- vi. volunteers always have the right to refuse a case suggested by the director
 - vii. the program director or designee will prepare the Order of Appointment and secure signature
2. Once the Order of Appointment is signed by a judge, a copy of the order will be sent to the parents, foster parents, social services, attorneys, etc.
 3. The CASA volunteer's first contact will be with the caseworker. If there is a contract agency assigned to the case, after the initial contact with social services, subsequent contacts, will be with the contract agency worker. Next:
 - i. CASA volunteer contacts child's attorney
 - ii. CASA volunteer contacts child's caretaker
 - iii. CASA volunteer meets caretaker and child
 4. The CASA volunteer will conduct a thorough assessment of the case. He or she will talk with the child and anyone else deemed appropriate to conduct a thorough assessment.
 5. Efforts will be made to share findings of the assessment with the caseworker prior to the written report.
 6. The written report and copies will be placed at the assignment desk five working days prior to the hearing. Copies will be available for caseworker, Assistant Attorney General, and the various attorneys.
 7. CASA volunteers will visit or contact the child(ren) weekly while assigned to a case.
 8. Correspondence with CASA volunteers can be made via the CASA office, unless otherwise prearranged by the CASA volunteer and other parties on the case.

XX. Volunteer Supervision

1. The CASA Director and Volunteer Coordinator will be responsible for direct supervision of volunteers. The volunteer to staff ratio called for in NCASAA standards is (1) staff person to every thirty (30) volunteers.

XXI. Evaluation/Review of Volunteer Records

1. Volunteer records will be reviewed every six (6) months and volunteers will be advised if they have met in-service training requirements. Volunteer meetings are scheduled monthly. Volunteers need to have 12 hours of in-service training per year which can be obtained through the volunteer monthly meetings or can be obtained by attending a program relevant training. Attendance at six (6) volunteer meetings is required in order for in-service requirements to be met each year.

XXII. Conflict Resolution

1. If a Volunteer disagrees with any action including correction or separation taken by CASA or any of its agents, he or she must first meet with the

Executive Director and attempt to resolve any disagreement. If the disagreement is not resolved to the satisfaction of the Volunteer, the Volunteer may file a written complaint with the Director of the Community Health and Well Being Department under Luna County. The Director of the Community Health and Well Being Department may uphold or reverse the decision of the Executive Director. No further appeal or review is allowed.

2. Conflict of Interest Policy

- i. This program shall not employ, enter into a contract with, nor accept as a volunteer any individual or entity who has a conflict with the best interest of a client. This program shall follow O.S. Title 10, Section 1109.c.1 which states:
- ii. "The guardian ad litem shall not be a district attorney, an employee of the office of the district attorney, an employee of the court, an employee of a juvenile bureau established pursuant to the provisions of Sections 1201 through 1210 of this title, or an employee of any public agency having duties or responsibilities towards the child."

XXIII. Dismissal and Corrective Action

1. Corrective action may be taken if the volunteer's work is unsatisfactory. Corrective action is within the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator or the Director and may include:
 - i. Additional supervision
 - ii. Reassignment
 - iii. Retraining
 - iv. Referral to another volunteer position
 - v. Separation from the Program
2. Separation from the Program may occur in the discretion of the Executive Director. Appropriate grounds for separation include:
 - i. The Volunteer being charged with a crime against a child or any gross neglect or misconduct
 - ii. Breach of confidentiality
 - iii. Ex-parte communication
 - iv. Falsifying the volunteer application
 - v. The Volunteer takes action without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the capacity or power of the CASA Program
 - vi. The Volunteer violates a Program policy, court order or law
 - vii. The Volunteer demonstrates inability to effectively carry out CASA volunteer duties
 - viii. The Volunteer fails to complete required ongoing training
 - ix. The Volunteer falsifies volunteer applications or misrepresents fact during the screening process

- x. The Volunteer becomes inappropriately or over involved with the child or family
- xi. The Volunteer fails to satisfactorily complete initial training
- xii. The Volunteer's references are not consistent with application or screening process
- xiii. Violation of the program's nondiscrimination and/or sexual harassment policy
- xiv. Soliciting or accepting gratuities
- xv. Neglect of duty or incompetence
- xvi. Failure to contact child on a monthly basis without a legitimate reason
- xvii. No contact with CASA staff for two months including no reports to the office, no replies to letter and/or returning phone calls from CASA staff
- xviii. When the child's best interests are not being served
- xix. Repeated failure to do Reports to the Court or monthly reports to office
- xx. Having a conflict of interest that cannot be resolved

XXIV. Dismissal from a Case

1. A volunteer may be dismissed from a case for the following reasons:
 - i. At the request of the volunteer
 - ii. At the request of the Juvenile Judge
 - iii. For failure to make court appearances
 - iv. For failure to provide court reports and/or turn them in on time
 - v. Insubordination or refusal to follow an order
 - vi. For failure to act in a professional manner as deemed by the Director
2. Should the actions of a volunteer result in either dismissal from the case or the CASA program, the volunteer has the same rights as an employee to grievance procedures.
3. At the time of a volunteer dismissal all files, notes, and any other materials associated with the CASA case will be returned to the CASA Director within five (5) working days of the dismissal.

XXV. Resignation

1. While CASA volunteer's make a commitment to continue with a case until it is terminated, there may be circumstances that require a CASA volunteer to resign.
2. Resignations must be made in writing so that the CASA office can notify all parties involved and assign another CASA volunteer if necessary
3. It is requested that volunteers provide advance notice if at all possible and state a reason for their departure
4. Return all case materials and notes

XXVI. General Policies

1. Ultimate responsibility for all CASA cases rests with the Program Director. As a volunteer, you represent CASA and your actions reflect on the organization. Always conduct yourself in a professional way that reflects favorably on CASA and comply with CASA policies and procedures.
2. **Open Door:** CASA has an “open door” policy. If you have any problems or questions regarding your case or concerning the policies outlined in this manual, you are encouraged to discuss them with the Program Director.
3. **Agency Letterhead:** Volunteers act as official representatives of CASA and may use CASA letterhead in normal advocacy situations. Use of letterhead is not permissible for personal correspondence relating to CASA (i.e. letters to the editor expressing personal opinions, etc.).
4. **Media Communication:** Volunteers are not permitted to make statements involving CASA to the communication media without the written consent of the Program Director. Any inquiries concerning CASA, its policies, practices or clients, should be referred to the Program Director. CASA volunteers may be asked by the Program Director to represent CASA at speaking engagements.
5. **Expense Reimbursement:** Volunteers must obtain prior approval from the Program Director in order to have expenses reimbursed. Reimbursement is generally not available, but may be considered in cases of hardship or unavoidably high case-necessitated outlay.
6. **Access to Volunteer Records:** Volunteer records are kept under lock and key with limited access. A volunteer may access their personal records under the supervision of their Coordinator or Director. A volunteer may not have access to privileged information in their files such as personal references. Corrections to the record may be inserted with the approval of the Volunteer Coordinator or Director. Dates and signatures approving the amendment will be kept in the record.
7. **Conference/Workshop Attendance:** Will be offered to Volunteers as opportunities arise and funding is available.
8. **Direct Service Provision:** CASA is not a “direct service” provider. CASA is a facilitator and may advocate for direct service providers to provide appropriate services to clients.
9. **Personal Involvement with Children and Families:** CASA volunteer’s effectiveness and standing in court depends on volunteers maintaining professional relationships with children and families. Volunteers are not permitted to become over involved with CASA children and families. Inappropriate personal involvement with a CASA client can be grounds for dismissal.

By signing below, I acknowledge I have received a copy of the Volunteer Policies and Procedures. After having read said policies and procedures I will address any questions that may arise about my duties and responsibilities with my Volunteer Coordinator or Program Director.

CASA Advocate

Date

Amendments to the CASA of Luna, Grant & Hidalgo Volunteer Policies and Procedures were approved by:

Chris Brice
County Manager

Date

Community Health & Well Being Director

Date