



# Tutor Volunteer Handbook Advocates for Children - CASA

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# Purpose of this Tutor Volunteer Handbook

## Concrete Objective:

To provide Tutor Volunteers with clear guidelines, expectations and program practices to support their service to children who are being tutored at Advocates for Children CASA.

Tutor Volunteers are to abide by policies and procedures set forth by Advocates for Children-CASA. This policy and procedure handbook has been developed in alignment with the guiding principles of the Advocates for Children-CASA program which follows the National CASA Standards for Local CASA Programs (2013 Edition).

## About Educational Advocacy

### Overarching Objective: (Standard 7.A)

To provide a Tutor Volunteer to children who have a D&N case, a Truancy case or are in the Legacy Project within the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. Tutor Volunteers will provide tutoring support, resources and general assistance with educational needs.

### Objective Statement

“Our objective is to inspire confidence, motivation and self-reliance through the caring, supportive network of CASA Volunteers.”

### Program Structure:

- Children will get tutored by a volunteer once a week for at least one hour
- The Tutor will commit to a full year
- The Tutor will report the time and activity after all sessions into Optima
- The Tutor will work closely with the CASA, Case Coordinator and placement provider to make sure schedules are clear and tutoring sessions take place.

## Job Description (Standard 7B)

### Tutor Volunteer

**Reports to:** Educational Advocacy Liaison

**Purpose:** The Tutor Volunteer works closely with an assigned child to address his/her specific educational needs, tutoring support, assist with assigned homework, resources to benefit the child.

### Qualifications:

- Maturity, stability, confidence, common sense
- Good Communication skills
- Knowledge of subjects being tutored
- Must be at least 18 years of age or have a guardian who will sign a waiver
- Ability to pass background checks (if 18 or older)

### General Duties:

- Meet with child in the community at least once a week for tutoring
- Assist with educational gaps, reading and homework help
- Commitment of serving as a tutor for one year
- Maintain complete and accurate records of time and activities in the program's web based data tracking system, Optima
- Maintain strict confidentiality
- Maintain good communication with child, placement provider and CASA staff

### Benefits:

- Guidance and support from the staff of Advocates for Children-CASA
- Opportunity to develop own skills and abilities
- Satisfaction from contributing to community services on behalf of at-risk children

## Code of Ethics

This Code of Ethics provides National CASA Association members with guidelines for professional behavior and ethical conduct. The Association may not, however, be held liable for the actions of its members. (Section 2.C)

### Conduct (Section 2.C)

1. Members of the National CASA Association will abide by the NCASAA Code of Ethics and all laws and regulations governing their activities.
2. Members of the National CASA Association will uphold the credibility and dignity of the CASA concept by conducting all business in an honest, fair, professional, and humane manner.
3. Employees of CASA programs and its Volunteers will not use their authority inappropriately, nor condone any illegal act or unethical practices related to their program or community.
4. CASA programs and individuals who are members of the National CASA Association may not use CASA for personal gain.
5. Members of the National CASA Association will avoid any action which could adversely affect the confidence of the public in the integrity of the Association.
6. National CASA and its member programs will serve and respond to requests without bias because of

race, religion, sex, age, national origin or handicap.

### Confidentiality (Section 10.D)

7. CASA programs and their Volunteers will respect the right to privacy of all individuals, and will keep all information about their work confidential.
8. Persons affiliated with CASA will not use confidential information obtained through their work with CASA for personal benefit.

### Knowledge and Understanding (Standard 7.C.5)

9. Individuals working in CASA programs as staff and/or volunteers must be trained in the operations of the court and child welfare systems, and in the nature of child abuse and neglect.
10. CASA programs and volunteers must respect a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets the child's best interests.

### National Affiliation (Standard 4.A.4)

11. A CASA program which is a member of the National CASA Association must operate in accordance with the NCASAA Code of Ethics, goals and purposes.
12. Official CASA designations may be used only for purposes in accordance with the goals and purposes of the National CASA Association.

## Roles & Responsibilities of Tutor Volunteers (Standard 7E)

One expectation of Educational Advocacy through tutoring is to promote strong teamwork between Tutor Volunteers, Children, Advocates for Children CASA staff, placement providers and caregivers.

Tutor Volunteers shall not provide direct service delivery to any parties that could (but not limited to):

- a. Lead to a conflict of interest or liability problems
- b. Cause a child or a family to become dependent on the Tutor Volunteer

Examples of inappropriate Tutor practices include (but not limited to):

- a. Taking children to the Tutor Volunteer's home
- b. Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling
- c. Giving money or expensive gifts to the child, child's family or caregiver. This does not include small gifts, birthday acknowledgment, holiday recognition, or taking them out to eat
- d. Accepting money or gifts from the child, child's family or caregiver

### Conflict of Interest:

A Tutor Volunteer should not be related or have a relationship to any parties to the case, or be employed in a position or with an agency that may result in a conflict of interest. (Standard 7.E.7.f)

## Confidentiality:

### Tutor Volunteers must adhere to the confidentiality policy. (Standard 7.E.7.b)

Violation of this policy will be grounds for termination as a Tutor Volunteer.

- A. The Tutor Volunteer shall maintain strict confidentiality as to the child's situation in which the Tutor is involved. The Tutor Volunteer shall request only that information which the Tutor is authorized to receive.
- B. The Tutor Volunteer will take appropriate measures to ensure that confidential records may not be observed by casual observers.
- C. The Tutor Volunteer should not promise a child that statements will be kept secret or confidential. The Tutor Volunteer should proceed on the assumption that all statements made or relied on should be shared judiciously.
- D. The Tutor Volunteer may discuss a child in general terms for purposes of illustration and examples at seminars or meetings designed to provide education on at-risk children. The Tutor Volunteer must not mention names of individuals involved with the child or provide facts which would identify the child.

### Media Contact:

Tutor Volunteer should not make any comments, to the media, about the child. Any general comments about the Advocates for Children CASA should be discussed with program staff prior to talking with the media. All comments or questions should be directed to the Executive Director or Board President.

### Social Media:

Social media tools, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support and a sense of community for those engaged in tutoring at-risk children. A thoughtful approach to online conversation and interaction among people online (on blogs, social networking, link-sharing, etc.) can enhance the reputation of *Advocates for Children-CASAs'* movement and help recruit needed supporters, mentors and volunteers.

While *Advocates for Children-CASA* encourages staff, board members, mentors and volunteers to join the global online conversation, we also believe it is important that those who choose to do so understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss program-related topics; whether at work or on their own time. Our ability to serve children as a cause depends on the trust and support of the public, and it is critical that we tell our story well—and handle the confidential information entrusted to us responsibly.

The following guidelines will help you engage in online conversations about your involvement with *Advocates for Children-CASA's* cause in a way that is appropriate, yet still interesting.

## Online Communication and Social Media Guidelines

- 1. Be transparent.** Identify yourself and your role at Advocates for Children (staff/volunteer/mentor/board member) when you discuss program-related matters. Write in the first person. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. Be clear that you are speaking for yourself, that the opinions expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of *Advocates for Children-CASA* (unless, of course, you are posting as part of your employment responsibilities for the program—as a communications or online outreach manager, for example).
- 2. Always comply with the law regarding copyright/plagiarism.** Never post someone else’s work without his or her express permission (other than short quotes that comply with the “fair use” exceptions).
- 3. Be aware of laws related to libel and defamation of character.** Defamation of character can lead to lawsuits against the author of the statement and will reflect negatively on the program's cause. In choosing your words or content, imagine your supervisor and your family reading everything you post.
- 4. Be respectful.** Don’t pick fights. Be the first to admit and correct your own mistakes. You should show proper consideration for other’s privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory, such as politics and religion.
- 5. Be considerate.** Remember that anyone, including fellow volunteers and staff, may be actively reading what you publish online. Refrain from any communication intended to bash, discredit or embarrass the program, families, board members, donors or your colleagues. If you have suggestions for improvements, please state them constructively or, better yet, go through the proper channels to air your concerns and share your suggestions.
- 6. Be accurate.** Even though your posts may be primarily made up of personal opinion, do your research well and check that your facts are accurate. Make sure you have permission to post any copyrighted or confidential information (e.g., images, statistics), and be careful about posting or linking to items that may contain viruses.
- 7. Be committed.** If you decide to jump into online communication, do so with a commitment to post regularly and well. Link to others and show your unique contributions. Make it interesting and have fun!
- 8. Try to add value.** Does your posting provide worthwhile information and perspective? Does it help you, your coworkers, volunteers, fellow volunteers and supporters better understand and feel more connected to our cause? Does it build a positive sense of community?
- 9. Respect work commitments.** Please remember that blogging and other social networking activities—unless specifically assigned as part of your employment—are personal and should be done on your own time. The obvious exception is if you have specifically been assigned to perform an online activity related to your responsibilities as a program employee or Tutor Volunteer.
- 10. Don’t reveal confidential information.** Sharing stories that illustrate the value of Educational Advocacy is often the most powerful way to engage the public in our cause and promote empathy for the children we serve.

However, National CASA Quality Assurance standards and the policy of *Advocates for Children-CASA* require:

- Respect for the child’s and family’s’ rights to privacy regarding personal information
- Adherence to the confidentiality restrictions imposed by law and program policies and procedures

**It is unacceptable to discuss online any identifiable details of children or post pictures that include children served by Advocates for Children.**

It is acceptable to discuss general details and to use non-identifying pseudonyms so long as the information provided does not contain information recognizable to the family or others associated with the family or case. For example, use general terms such as “child” instead of “14-year-old girl.” You should be careful to protect the dignity of families, children and social agencies, even if they are not named.

Tutor Volunteers and staff should not link to personal pages (or become online “friends”) of families or children they may encounter in their capacity with Advocates for Children-CASA. This includes email addresses, instant messenger names, blogs, photo sharing sites and social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.

**11. When in doubt, do not post.** Staff and Tutor Volunteer are responsible for their words and actions, wherever they are. Exercise sound judgment and common sense, and if there is any doubt, DO NOT POST IT. In circumstances where you are uncertain please contact your Coordinator, the Program Director or the Executive Director for guidance.

**12. Know that the internet is permanent.** Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if you “remove/delete” it later or attempt to make it anonymous. If your complete thought, along with its context, cannot be squeezed into a character-restricted space (such as Twitter), provide a link to an online space where the message can be expressed completely and accurately.

**13. Be mindful that what you post can be a reflection on CASA and can influence the perception and reputation of the program.** Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures.

## Tutor Volunteer Roles & Work Flow

**Assignment:** (Standard 5.A.1)

Once a Tutor Volunteer accepts assignment to a child, a Coordinator will assist with completing internal program paperwork and file it into Optima. Tutor Volunteers will have access to all paperwork and a password protected profile in Optima.

**Meetings:** (Standard 7.E.5)

The Tutor Volunteer will meet with the child shortly after being assigned. The Educational Advocacy staff will be available for guidance, coaching and assistance to the Tutor Volunteer. The Coordinator will help coordinate the initial orientation with the Tutor, guardian and the child. During this first meeting, the Tutor Volunteer will facilitate the “Child Information Form” and the “Student/Guardian/Tutor Agreement”.

## Telephone Numbers:

A Tutor Volunteer should carefully consider the implications of giving their work and home telephone numbers to children or family members. The decision to give out these numbers is up to the Tutor Volunteer. Cell phones are the preferred method of communication.

## Transportation of Child or Family Members: (Standard 7.E.8)

Transportation by the Tutor Volunteer can be approved if the following are in place:

- A. Advocates for Children CASA must have a current copy of the volunteer's driver's license and auto insurance. Volunteers who do not have a current and valid driver's license on file, or do not have proof of adequate, current and valid auto insurance will not be allowed to transport children.
- B. Tutor Volunteer should have adequate auto insurance coverage in compliance with Colorado state law
- C. Tutor Volunteer must accept responsibility for transporting the youth and sign a **Transportation Waiver** before transportation may take place. This waiver can be signed in person, scanned and emailed or faxed. The original will be placed in the office case file and uploaded to Optima.
- D. The Tutor Volunteer must document each time they transport a child via Optima contact logs. This documentation will include: date, time of transportation, total time spent transporting the youth, location and purpose of visit.
- E. The Tutor Volunteer will abide by all federal, state and local transportation and safety laws.

## Reporting: (Standard 11)

### Contact Notes

Each Tutor Volunteer keeps a log in Optima, the program's web based online data tracking system, which notes all contacts (in-person contacts, telephone, e-mail, or written) with all individuals who are significant to the child, including attempts to reach parties which were unsuccessful. This log will include the time spent, the type of contact (phone, personal, etc.), miles/expenses, and date of the contact. These notes should be objective.

### Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect: (Standard 7.E.7.a)

- A. The Tutor Volunteer should immediately report any suspected child abuse or neglect which is observed or discovered while tutoring children. A report should be made by calling the child abuse and neglect hotline at **1-844-CO-4kids**. It is important to note that identifying child information is acceptable to share with the hotline when reporting suspected child abuse or neglect (ie. Name, Location).
- B. The Tutor Volunteer should report to the Educational Advocacy Coordinator as soon as possible after making the report. A full written report should be submitted within 24 hours.
- C. The Tutor Volunteer does **not** investigate the possible abuse. The social services department will determine the need for and whether to complete an investigation.

## Cooperation in Criminal Investigation of Alleged Child Abuse

If any officer, director, employee or volunteer of the organization should be asked to produce information or documents, or discuss the facts of any alleged child abuse with any investigator or counsel of record for the office of the prosecuting attorney or the defense attorney:

- No documents (written reports of the incident) shall be produced without having been properly subpoenaed. Cooperation to facilitate the service of subpoenas should be extended as professional courtesy.
- In the event any investigator or attorney of record wishes to conduct a personal interview, the person requested to appear may appear with legal counsel at such interview.
- If a telephone interview is given, care should be taken to assure the identity of the contact person. It is suggested that the staff or Tutor Volunteer call the office through the main switchboard and be transferred to the person requesting the interview.
- It will not be necessary to be subpoenaed to this personal interview, although every effort should be taken to coordinate the time and date of the interview with the legal counsel.
- Before granting an interview, the Tutor Volunteer and staff should review what may be discussed in the interview.

## Advocacy & Mentorship:

### Facilitation: (Standard 7.E.5.c)

The Tutor Volunteer may be in a position where it is appropriate to facilitate communication between individuals. This is not the primary role of the Tutor and should be discussed with your Coordinator/Educational Liaison. Tutors are expected to communicate with appropriate individuals regarding issues and progress. Failure to communicate can result in a strain in relationships that can be stressful for all involved.

### Assignment to a Child: (Standard 7.E)

- A. The Coordinator will aim to match the child to the Tutor Volunteer based on best fit. The Coordinator will contact the Tutor Volunteer and brief him/her on the child. Tutor Volunteers have the option to accept or not accept the tutoring assignment.
- B. Tutor Volunteers may work with more than one child simultaneously, if desired.

### Supervision and Support: (Standard 7.D)

- A. Tutor Volunteers are encouraged to contact program staff at any time when questions arise about their work. In addition, Tutor Volunteers and their CASA or Coordinator will communicate on a regular basis via email or telephone regarding the child, including information such as:
  - Issues or gaps
  - Progress

- Attendance
  - Discuss strategies for best tutoring the child
- B. The CASA or Coordinator and the Tutor Volunteer will discuss the child, the monthly data requirement, areas of achievement, general education and areas in which additional support is needed. The Tutor Volunteer will have an opportunity to request an internal meeting at any time to problem-solve ideas and solutions related to their child.
- C. Advocates for Children-CASA values its volunteers and has ongoing programs to recognize the efforts, dedication and hard work of our volunteers. Activities include, but are not limited to: (Standard 7.D.5)
- Notes of appreciation and support
  - Recognition of other community involvement
  - Numerous professional development & training opportunities
  - Acknowledgement of birthdays and other significant life events
  - Planned networking opportunities with other volunteers and staff
- D. A Tutor Volunteer shall be considered active if s/he is involved with at least one child, meets with them once a week, helps them with school work, tutors on concepts they require and completes all requirements in Optima. If the Tutor Volunteer is unable to do any of the above, the volunteer will be inactivated and removed from mailing and emailing lists. If a Tutor Volunteer decides to become active again by participating in the above activities, s/he must contact the Educational Liaison and a decision about how to proceed will be made at that time. If there are special circumstances involved in a Tutor Volunteer's inability to participate, the ability to remain active is at the discretion of the Program Director or the Executive Director.

**Resignation:** (Standard 7.F.1)

The Tutor Volunteer should remain actively involved with the child until formally discharged by Advocates for Children. The Tutor Volunteer should consider the child assignment a serious personal commitment. The Tutor Volunteer should provide a two-week adequate written notice if it becomes necessary to leave the program.

**Mileage:** (Standard 11.B.12)

Mileage documentation (based on data in Optima) will be available to Tutor Volunteers at the end of the calendar year for tax purposes (see a tax consultant for more information on volunteer mileage deduction). The Tutor Volunteer must enter their mileage into Optima to receive an annual statement.

**Equal Opportunity Clause:** (Standard 7.A.3d)

Advocates for Children-CASA shall not restrict its services or volunteer opportunities on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation or gender.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:** (Standard 7.A.2)

Advocates for Children-CASA does not discriminate in the solicitation of business, employment, or volunteers on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, gender, gender variance, gender identity, age, marital status, sexual orientation, military status or physical or mental handicap, provided that an individual or company is qualified and meets the requirements established by the agency.

### Tutor Volunteer Records: (Standard 7.B.4)

Advocates for Children-CASA will maintain a written/electronic record for each Tutor Volunteer that contains, at minimum:

- Application
- Emergency & identifying contact information
- Job description
- Reference documentation
- Documentation of record checks
- Training records
- Performance evaluations and any other applicable documentation related to performance
- Documentation of Tutor Volunteer status

Tutor Volunteers may coordinate a time with the Advocates for Children-CASA staff to review their personal file in the office. The Tutor Volunteer may submit additions and corrections to their record. The file may not be removed from the office and will be maintained at Advocates for Children per the program's record retention policy. These records will be retained while the Tutor Volunteer is active and for 10 years after a Tutor Volunteer becomes inactive.

### Access to Legal Advice: (Section 2.C.4)

Advocates for Children-CASA will provide Tutor Volunteer access to legal advice and representation, as needed.

### Background Check Policy: (Section 7.B.4.c)

As part of the Tutor Volunteer screening process, all Advocates for Children-CASA and volunteers will participate fully in various background checks. The required background checks that will be conducted on every Tutor Volunteer to include: CBI (Colorado Bureau of Investigation), a Social Security Search, a 50 state Sexual Abuse Registry search, Arapahoe & Douglas County Police Department check, and Colorado TRAILS. If a Tutor Volunteer applicant has lived in the state of Colorado for less than five (7) years, then similar out of state background checks will also be conducted. Tutor Volunteer applicants will be required to provide a deposit for their initial background checks. There are scholarship opportunities if payment for background checks is a financial hardship. Advocates for Children will conduct random background checks on annual basis on all Tutor Volunteers, at no further cost to the volunteer. Tutor Volunteers must immediately notify the program of any criminal or civil charges filed against them.

## Corrective Action (Section 7.F)

Corrective action may be taken if the Tutor Volunteer's work is unsatisfactory. Corrective action is within the discretion of the Educational Advocacy Liaison, Executive Director and Program Director and may include any of the following actions as deemed appropriate:

- Additional supervision
- Temporary leave of absence
- Retraining
- Reassignment
- Referral to another volunteer position

- Separation from the program

### Criteria for Dismissal from a Child or Termination

A Tutor Volunteer may be discharged from a child assignment by the request of the Educational Advocacy Coordinator and Program Director of Advocates for Children-CASA.

**All records kept by the Tutor Volunteer must be returned to the Advocates for Children CASA office when the volunteer assignment terminates.**

**Termination from Advocates for Children may occur at the staff's discretion, if:**

- If data is not entered into Optima on a monthly basis and is more than two (2) weeks late and the tardiness occurs more than three (3) times in a calendar year. Copies of contact logs may be requested at any time.
- Adequate and sufficient contacts are not being made.
- Complete and accurate records of time and activities are not documented.
- Close contact with the Advocates for Children-CASA Educational Advocacy staff is not maintained. A minimum of bi-monthly contact either by e-mail, voice mail or personal contact.
- Strict confidentiality is not maintained.
- Professional conduct within the parameters of the case is not maintained.
- Not following the Advocates for Children-CASA Conflict Resolution Procedure.

### Criteria for Dismissal from Tutoring

Involuntary termination of a Tutor Volunteer must be approved by the Executive Director, with the input of the program staff. In the absence of the Executive Director, the Program Director has the authority to terminate a Tutor Volunteer from service.

**The following include, but are not limited to, grounds for involuntary termination:**

- Misuse of Volunteer Status: Tutor Volunteers will not use their volunteer status to promote other causes or for personal gain, unless otherwise stipulated by the Board of Directors. They are to call the Advocates for Children office when in doubt.
- The Tutor Volunteer takes action without Program, which endangers the child or is outside the role of the Tutor Volunteer.
- The Tutor Volunteer violates program policy or law
- The Tutor Volunteer fails to demonstrate the ability to effectively carry out duties
- The Tutor Volunteer falsifies information on the volunteer application or misrepresents facts during the screening process.
- There are allegations of child abuse/neglect against the Tutor Volunteer.
- A conflict of interest arises which cannot be resolved.
- Tutor Volunteer uses drugs or alcohol
- Not maintaining close contact with the Advocates for Children-CASA staff. A minimum of bi-monthly contact either by e-mail, voice mail or personal contact.

### Conflict with Tutor Volunteer /Staff Resolution Procedure:

**Overall Goal is Communication:** Good communication is often the key to avoiding conflicts in any organization

or setting. It is hoped that disagreements can be resolved through communication among the parties. In the event assistance is needed to resolve any issues, the following procedure shall be followed:

**A. Meet with your Coordinator:**

- I. If a Tutor Volunteer disagrees with any action, including correction or separation taken by Advocates for Children-CASA, or any of its agents, he or she shall first meet with the with the Coordinator.

**B. Meet with Program Director**

- I. If the disagreement is not resolved to the satisfaction of the Tutor Volunteer, they may elevate his or her concern to the Program Director.

**C. Meet with the Executive Director**

- I. If the disagreement is still not resolved to the satisfaction of the Tutor Volunteer, they may elevate his or her concern to the Executive Director. If the issue is not resolved at this point, the Tutor Volunteer can contact the Board of Directors Chair.

# Tutor Volunteer

## Handbook Acknowledgement & Agreement

1. I have read this Tutor Volunteer Handbook in its entirety.
2. I agree to contact the CASA or Educational Advocacy Liaison if I have any questions, concerns or challenges.
3. I understand that Educational Advocacy is a sub-program of Advocates for Children-CASA and that I am representing the organization.
4. I commit to fulfilling my role as a Tutor Volunteer and serving the children for the duration of his/her involvement in the program.
5. I understand and agree to the roles and responsibilities as a Tutor Volunteer.
6. I understand and agree to the Transportation policy.
7. I understand and agree to the Confidentiality policy and procedure.
8. I am aware I need to comply with all the policies and procedures in this Handbook or it may result in a review of my ability to continue in my role as a Tutor Volunteer.

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Tutor Volunteer

Date

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Educational Advocacy Staff

Date

Please submit this signed form to the Educational Advocacy Staff.