
CASA of Iowa Policy Manual for Advocates and Coaches



CASA of Iowa is a program of the Iowa Child Advocacy Board (ICAB)
and a member of the National CASA/GAL Association

<https://childadvocacy.iowa.gov>

Updated and adopted by the Iowa Child Advocacy Board on March 12, 2021

The purpose of these policies and procedures is to provide overall guidance and direction to individuals serving as advocates and coaches for CASA of Iowa. They do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. CASA of Iowa reserves the right to change any of these policies and procedures at any time and expect adherence to the changed policy. Areas specifically not addressed by these policies and procedures shall be determined by the local program coordinator in consultation with the Administrator and/or Deputy Administrator. All advocates and coaches will be required to sign an acknowledgement indicating that they have received, read, understand and will comply with all the policies and procedures. Advocates will be notified, in writing, of any changes made to this manual.

Under particular circumstances, certain exceptions may be made to the policies and procedures of this program. Such exceptions will be made at the discretion of the local program coordinator in consultation with the Administrator and/or Deputy Administrator.

Updated information and policies for the year are noted in **RED** text.

Prior versions of the Local CASA Program Policy manual were reviewed and adopted by the Child Advocacy Board on 06/21/2019, 06/22/2018, 06/16/2017, 06/24/2016, 11/15/2014.

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Section 1: Program Overview

This section provides an overview of CASA of Iowa as it relates to the mission, purpose, governance, and affiliations.

A. Mission, Purpose, and Core Values

1. CASA of Iowa commissions trained and qualified community advocates to serve as an effective voice in court for abused and neglected children, strengthening efforts to ensure that each child is living in a safe, permanent and nurturing home.
2. CASA of Iowa recognizes the importance of advocating for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the court system. The goal of CASA of Iowa is continued development and expansion of an active CASA program (advocates recruited, screened, trained, and assigned to cases, with supervision and program assistance available) in all of Iowa. CASA of Iowa has been granted the legal authority to operate in all of Iowa's 99 counties.
3. The child population served by CASA of Iowa is clearly defined as children from birth to 18 years of age who have been adjudicated a child in need of assistance (CINA).
 - a. CASA of Iowa accepts court-referred cases that meet the definition of child in need of assistance (CINA), per Iowa Code Section 232.2.
 - b. CASA of Iowa serves any child for whom the court appoints a CASA.
 - c. The court may appoint an advocate to represent the interests of a child in any judicial proceeding to which the child is a party or is called as a witness or relating to any dispositional order involving the child resulting from the proceeding.
 - d. The court may appoint an advocate in a delinquency, child in need of assistance or family in need of assistance proceeding.
 - e. If the plan for the child's transition from foster care to adulthood identifies services or other support needed to assist the child when the child becomes an adult and the court deems it beneficial to the child, the court may authorize the CASA to continue a relationship with and provide advice to the child for a period of time beyond the child's eighteen birthday.
4. CASA of Iowa solely provides trained and qualified community individuals to advocate for the best interests of children who come before the court as a direct result of abuse or neglect as defined by the state child welfare laws. All Iowa CASA advocates must:
 - a. submit an application,
 - b. provide three personal references, unrelated to the applicant,
 - c. complete a personal interview with CASA staff,
 - d. pass background checks,
 - e. complete thirty (30) hours of pre-service training and
 - f. take an Oath of Confidentiality with a judge before being appointed to a case.
5. CASA of Iowa staff and volunteers emulate these core values which have been adopted by the Iowa Child Advocacy Board and are displayed in staff communications, meeting agendas, performance evaluations and job descriptions:
 - a. Advocacy

- b. Collaboration
- c. Quality
- d. Integrity
- e. Respect
- f. Equity

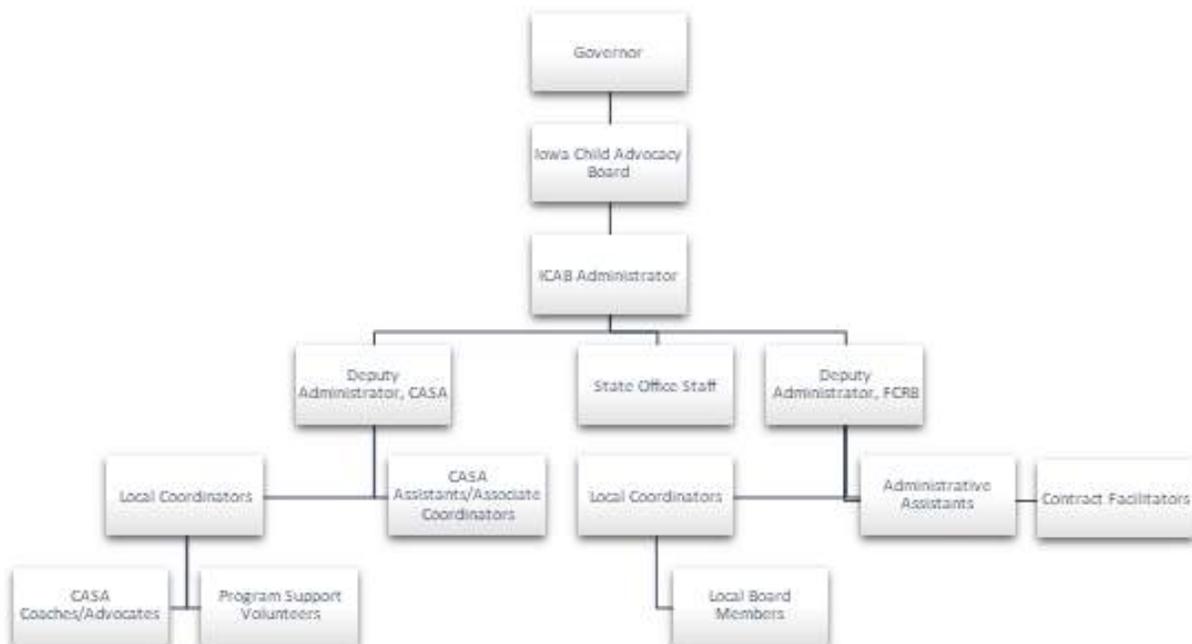
Resource: [Core Values of ICAB](#)

CASA of Iowa acknowledges that the National CASA/GAL Association's core values are: adaptability, collaboration, integrity, quality, respect, service and stewardship

B. Program Governance

1. Iowa Child Advocacy Board

- a. The board is a nine member advocate board appointed by the Governor. The board provides oversight to both CASA of Iowa and the Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) program. The Iowa Child Advocacy Board administrator is hired by the state board and reports directly to the board regarding agency decisions and governance. The board works to ensure that Iowa's abused and neglected children and all foster children are well cared for and that the system designed to meet their needs is doing so in the most effective manner possible. One method of tracking data for the children served by the CASA program is the Iowa Child Advocacy Board's web-based data system, Child Advocacy Match System (CAMS).
- b. The board is responsible for making recommendations to the Governor, Legislature, Supreme Court, Chief Judge of each judicial district, Department of Human Services (DHS), and child-placing agencies on ways to improve the delivery of foster care services. Members also submit recommendations on how to remove barriers that prevent the delivery of top-quality foster care, as well as services to abused and neglected children.



2. Program administrator's responsibilities, operating out of the state office, include the following for the CASA program:
 - a. Regularly collect, organize and report budgetary, programmatic and systemic information and recommendations to the state board to assist it to carry out its statutory duties, which include the establishment and administration for CASA of Iowa and the delivery of reports and recommendations to the Governor, General Assembly, court and others. Assist the board as directed in all matters related to its meetings, deliberations and decisions.
 - b. In consultation with ICAB staff, stakeholders and organizations involved in the child welfare system, develop operational plans to implement the strategies established by the board.
 - c. Review or modify changes in operations, staffing assignments, information management system functions, CASA program policies and related matters as needed or as requested or proposed by local program staff, state office management team or CASA program's steering committee; establish and monitor functional work activities and organizational relationships to meet statutory and program funding requirements and achieve ICAB goals and objectives.
 - d. Provide direct supervision to CASA staff in coordination with the deputy administrators. In cooperation with the Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA), approve and assure appropriate personnel actions for all ICAB staff related to selection, performance, leaves of absence, grievances, work schedules and assignments and disciplinary procedures; and, administer personnel and related policies and procedures.
 - e. Provide policies, direction and consultation to local program coordinators to assure their appropriate recruitment, screening, training, supervision and support of all ICAB program advocates. Accept or reject requests for policy exceptions to advocate eligibility conditions based on background check findings. Exercise authority to intervene and resolve ICAB staff disputes, disciplinary actions or other concerns with advocates as needed to assure staff and advocate compliance with ICAB program policies.
 - f. Develop and maintain effective working relationships and carry out planning and advocacy activities with a broad spectrum of key officials and organizations to generate executive, legislative and related support for budget requests and management decisions on ICAB priorities/goals. Represent ICAB on statutory committees and other national, state, local child welfare initiatives and partnerships. Identify and carry out initiatives that promote ICAB programs and their advocate opportunities to targeted audiences and the general public.
 - g. Prepare, or approve, and provide required reports and responses to requests for information from the Governor's Office, General Assembly, court, funding sources, ICAB program interested parties and others.
 - h. Seeks grants as deemed necessary and appropriate to assist in growth and programming of CASA in the state of Iowa.

3. Deputy Administrator for the CASA program's responsibilities include:
 - a. Provide direct supervision to CASA staff in coordination with the administrator. Assure appropriate personnel actions for CASA staff related to performance, leaves of absence, grievances, work schedules and assignments and disciplinary procedures; and, administer personnel and related policies and procedures. For new hires, arrange for initial training

and mentoring, and create performance plans. Initiate and complete timely performance evaluations for designated staff.

- b. In consultation with the administrator and ICAB staff, direct and oversee the development of specific plans to carry out program operations.
- c. Recommend and assist the implementation of approved changes in operations, staffing assignments, information management system functions, and other CASA program policies and related matters as needed or as requested or proposed by field staff, state office management team or steering committee.
- d. Regularly collect, organize and report statistical information for the CASA program. Analyze information and seek to maximize the effectiveness of the programs for both individual staff contributors and the agency as a whole. Provide consultation and support for field staff in the execution of their assigned duties.
- e. Provide policies, direction and consultation to local program coordinators to assure their appropriate recruitment, screening, training, supervision and support of all ICAB program advocates. Exercise management authority to intervene and resolve ICAB staff disputes, disciplinary actions or other concerns with advocates as needed to assure staff and advocate compliance with ICAB program policies.
- f. Develop and maintain effective working relationships and carry out planning and advocacy activities with a broad spectrum of key officials to support management decisions on ICAB priorities/goals.
- g. Organize and submit the National CASA/GAL Association six-month and annual report for CASA of Iowa by coordinating the data collection of the local programs and providing state-level data within established time frames.

4. Local program coordinator's responsibilities, operating out of a specific cluster of counties, are as follows:

- a. Meet with judges, DHS, county attorneys, attorneys and service providers to educate them about the CASA program. Maintain ongoing contact with these professionals to enhance your working relationship and problem solve with those individuals and agencies as needed. Seek and receive their feedback regarding program functionality and their recommendations to further enhance CASA.
- b. Increase public awareness of the CASA program through public speaking to community groups and organizations.
- c. Conduct activities to recruit new CASA advocates, including the development of a recruitment plan to meet the needs of the assigned area.
- d. Track and project advocate needs based on youth in care, vacancies and program expansion needs.
- e. Ensure recruits reflect diversity of the community/locale.
- f. Handle local media responsibilities as needed for recruitment and/or public awareness about the program.
- g. CASA advocate and coach management as outlined this manual, including all training-related activities.
- h. Provide or coordinate support for CASA advocates from case assignment to case closure.
- i. Provide or coordinate support for the program, support advocates who are assisting in non-advocacy support roles with the CASA program.

- j. Record keeping as outlined in the Local Program Staff Policy Manual.
- k. Oversee case and advocate data management in CAMS.
- l. Perform other responsibilities to include: maintain contact with administrator and deputy administrator for program updates; attend program staff meetings as scheduled; other duties as determined by the administrator to be in the best interest of the local program.

5. [Role of a CASA coach](#)

6. [Role of the CASA advocate](#)

C. Guiding Principles

CASA of Iowa provides best interest advocacy for children as reflected in these guiding principles which recognize the importance of family preservation and reunification, equity, diversity, inclusion and collaboration.

1. Instill best interest advocacy

CASA of Iowa integrates these principles into program policies, practices and procedures, most notably through pre-service training and continuous education:

- a. Children experience trauma when separated from their family of origin. Therefore, the following are important to family preservation and/or reunification:
 - i. It is in a child's best interest to remain with their family of origin when safely possible; all staff and advocates must respect a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets the child's best interest, first and foremost with a biological parent if the parent is able to provide a minimum sufficient level of care to the child.
 - ii. If a child is removed from their family of origin, it is in the child's best interest to be reunified with their family of origin as soon as safely possible.
 - iii. If a child is removed from their family of origin, it is in the child's best interest to be placed with a relative as the next best option whenever safely possible.
 - iv. CASA of Iowa programming strengthens families, through recommendations for services, supports, visitation and communications because it is in the child's best interest to achieve stability and/or reunification.
 - v. CASA of Iowa requires and demonstrates respect for the parents and all parties associated with the case.
 - vi. The local program ensures that information regarding the family's strengths is incorporated into reports to the court.
 - vii. The local program ensures that information regarding the child's wishes is incorporated into reports to the court.
 - viii. Another permanent placement is in a child's best interest only when a court determines the child cannot be safely reunified with their family of origin in a reasonable timeframe or within legal mandates.

- b. CASA of Iowa recognizes the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion:
 - i. All children regardless of age, race, ethnicity, national origin (ancestry), color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or physical challenge should be safe, have a permanent home and an opportunity to thrive.
 - ii. CASA of Iowa acknowledges the existence of implicit bias and takes steps to minimize and/or eliminate implicit bias by ensuring all advocates and staff are trained in the area of bias and inclusion.
 - iii. CASA of Iowa demonstrates understanding of disproportionality impacting the children we serve by advocating for culturally competent services, placement and standards of minimum sufficient level of care.

- c. CASA of Iowa recognizes the importance of collaboration:
 - i. The Child Advocacy Board, administrator, state and local program staff, along with CASA advocates and coaches, cooperate, collaborate and coordinate with other advocate and public service agencies, the courts, community groups, families and individuals to:
 - 1. Improve services for individual children and their families.
 - 2. Advocate for needed change in the conditions which adversely affect the children served.
 - a. State program staff participate in state-level child welfare, human service committees and councils, to promote betterment of Iowa's children.
 - b. Local program staff participate in local area committees and human service councils to learn about community programming and affect change for local children and families.
 - c. Advocates and coaches partner with families, individuals, public service agencies and the courts through their advocacy work.

- 2. CASA advocates are tasked with providing best-interest advocacy for the children to whom they are assigned. Best-interest advocacy activities include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Gathering information.
 - b. *Meeting in-person with the child once every 30 days at a minimum.*
 - *Visits take place to ensure in-depth knowledge of the child's life for informed recommendations to the court.'*
 - *To allow for an exception, the advocate will note this on the monthly update for local program coordinator's review/approval. Exceptions to permit less frequent in-person contact, or alternatives for in-person contact, shall be documented and retained in the CAMS case record as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception.*
 - c. Collaborating and coordinating with legal, child welfare and other partners to assure service provision that is in the child's best interests.
 - d. Reporting to the court with recommendations regarding the child's placement and needed services; *attending court hearings to provide best-interest advocacy.*
 - e. Monitoring the case until released by the court.

D. State Affiliation

1. The CASA of Iowa local programs comply with all state laws, regulations and administrative and court rules.
2. The CASA of Iowa programs take advantage of services available from the state office which may include:
 - a. Technical assistance
 - b. Marketing materials
 - c. All-staff meetings
 - d. Training and professional development opportunities
 - e. Grant assistance
 - f. Web resources

E. National Affiliation

1. CASA of Iowa utilizes the services available from the National CASA/GAL Association which include:
 - a. Technical assistance
 - b. Resource materials
 - c. National conference
 - d. Training opportunities
2. When using National CASA/GAL Association trademarks including taglines, slogans, and logos, the CASA program adheres to National CASA graphic standards.
3. CASA of Iowa uses the name CASA, GAL or identifies itself as a member of the National CASA/GAL Association on all promotional, public relations and recruitment materials.
4. CASA of Iowa's local programs are members of the National CASA/GAL Association, and as such, are bound by the *National CASA/GAL Association's Standards for Local CASA/GAL Publicly Administered programs*. **Iowa statute takes precedence over National CASA/GAL standards.**

Section 2: Ethical Conduct

This Code of Ethics provides advocates and the staff of the CASA of Iowa program with guidelines for professional behavior and ethical conduct. Advocates and staff will abide by this Code of Ethics and all laws and regulations governing their activities.

A. Conduct:

1. Staff, CASA coaches and advocates will uphold the credibility and dignity of the CASA concept by conducting all business in an honest, fair, professional and humane manner.
2. Staff, CASA coaches and advocates will refrain from the use of alcohol or substances while conducting CASA-related work.
3. Staff, CASA coaches and advocates will use their authority appropriately. Staff, CASA coaches and advocates will not condone any illegal action or unethical practice related to the program or community or participate in harassing behavior towards children, their families or other case parties. staff, advocates and governing body members must immediately notify the CASA of Iowa program **if the individual becomes a subject of a criminal or child abuse related matter.**
4. Staff, CASA coaches and advocates will uphold the CASA of Iowa program through their actions. Those involved with CASA will appropriately use good/materials and will make every effort to secure confidential information they obtain through their position with CASA.
5. Staff, CASA coaches and advocates shall not engage in any activity that might create a conflict of interest for CASA or for themselves individually.
 - a. If a possible conflict of interest arises at the management level, the administrator shall report to the state board in writing that the conflict of interest was disclosed and that the interested party was not present and did not participate in discussion, deliberation or decision on the matter.
 - b. If any party does not disclose a potential conflict of interest prior to becoming involved in a transaction or decision affected by the conflict, appropriate discipline or dismissal will be implemented. **Resource:** [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)
6. CASA of Iowa will serve and respond to requests without bias because of race, religion, sex, gender, national origin or handicap.

B. Confidentiality Policy

Confidentiality of records and information (verbal and written) is paramount for the families served by the ICAB and the local CASA program. The [Confidentiality Policy](#) outlines the policies described below and is required to be signed annually by all advocates, coaches and non-advocate program advocates.

1. Case file information
 - a. Staff, CASA coaches and advocates will respect the right to privacy of all individuals and will keep information about CASA cases confidential. Staff and advocates shall adhere to the confidentiality of records provisions pursuant to Iowa Code §217.30. Violation of this section

shall constitute a serious misdemeanor.

- b. Pursuant to Iowa Code §235A.15 and §235A.17, staff, coaches and advocates shall maintain all information received from the child abuse registry or assessment report as confidential and shall not disseminate such information except when the re-dissemination is in connection with official duties, and the person receiving the information would have independent access to the same information under §235A.15.
 - i. To obtain a copy of the Child Protective Services Assessment Summary, complete the DHS request form. The form can be obtained at: [Request for Child and Dependent Adult Abuse Information](#)
 - ii. Fax the form to the Child Abuse Registry.

2. Gathering case information

- a. Unless otherwise enlarged or circumscribed by a court or juvenile court having jurisdiction over the child or by operation of law, the duties of a guardian ad litem, and thereby court appointed special advocate, with respect to a child pursuant to Iowa Code section 232.2(22) "b" shall include the following:
 - i. Conducting in-person interviews with the child, if the child's age is appropriate for the interview, and interviewing each parent, guardian, or other person having custody of the child, if authorized by counsel.
 - ii. Conducting interviews with the child, if the child's age is appropriate for the interview, prior to any court-ordered hearing.
 - iii. Visiting the home, residence, or both home and residence of the child and any prospective home or residence of the child, including each time placement is changed.
 - iv. Interviewing any person providing medical, mental health, social, educational, or other services to the child, before any hearing referred to in subparagraph (2).
 - v. Obtaining firsthand knowledge, if possible, of the facts, circumstances, and parties involved in the matter in which the person is appointed guardian ad litem.
 - vi. Attending any hearings in the matter in which the person is appointed as the guardian ad litem.
 - vii. If the child is required to have a transition plan developed in accordance with the child's case permanency plan and subject to review and approval of a transition committee under section 235.7, assisting the transition committee in development of the transition plan.
- b. Upon presentation of this order to any agency, hospital, organization, school, person or office, including the clerk of court, DHS, JCS and/or agencies providing services to families and children, public and private health care facilities, medical and mental health professionals including doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, counselors and staff and law enforcement agencies, the CASA advocate and program staff are hereby authorized to interview any relevant person and inspect and copy any records relevant to the proceedings, including protected health information, if not prohibited by federal law. The CASA advocate and program staff may interview, and are hereby authorized to receive verbal and written disclosure from any person providing medical, mental health, social, educational, or other services to the child(ren), relating to the above named child(ren) without consent of the child(ren) or parents of the child(ren) pursuant to Iowa Code Sections 232.147(3), 237.21 and 235A.15(2)(d). The CASA and program staff may attend any departmental staff meeting, case conference, or meeting with medical or

mental health providers, service providers, organizations, or educational institutions regarding the child(ren), if deemed necessary by the CASA or program staff; and pursuant to 237.21(2)(a), a Court Appointed Special Advocate may attend family team decision-making meetings or youth transition decision-making meetings upon request by the family or child and disclose case-related observations and recommendations relating to a child or a child's family while attending the meetings;

3. Disclosing Information

- a. A CASA advocate or coach may disclose or release information with the following individuals: *Iowa Code §237.21 (2)(b)*. A CASA may disclose case-related observations and recommendations to the agency assigned by the court to supervise the case, to the county attorney, or to the child's legal representative or guardian ad litem. CASA advocates and coaches are not authorized to disclose or release information to any other party (such as foster parents, non-custodial parents, parent's attorney or service providers. Per Iowa Code § 235A.15, 235A.17, 600.16 and 600.16A, CASA advocates are not authorized to release any information at any time regarding Child Protection Assessment reports or adoption records.
- b. Iowa Code §237.21 (2)(a). A CASA advocate may attend family team decision-making meetings or youth transition decision-making meetings upon request by the family or child and disclose case-related observations and recommendations relating to a child or a child's family while attending the meetings.
- c. Similarly, a CASA advocate may provide testimony at FCRB reviews that pertain to their assigned child. Testimony may include case-related observations and recommendations to the local FCRB. Agency in "a." refers to the DHS or JCS.
- d. When CASA staff, advocates and/or coaches are included in group emails with case specific information, subsection (2)(b) prohibits the staff, advocate or coach from replying to all recipients in the group email. Disclosing case-related observations and recommendations can only be made to DHS/JCS, the county attorney or to the child's legal representative or guardian ad litem.

4. CASA report dissemination

- a. Reports prepared by advocates for submission will be disseminated by the local CASA program office to the court and to each of the parties to the proceedings (Iowa Code 232.89) prior to each scheduled court hearing. Advocates and coaches do not submit information to the court on their own. Nor do advocates or coaches provide documents to other parties to be submitted to the court.
 - i. Only to anyone who is required to receive notice and be present at a hearing (DHS, juvenile court officer, county attorney, child's parent, child's guardian, child's legal custodian, child's attorney or guardian ad litem, intervener, parent's attorney, intervener's attorney, local FCRB), according to local protocol or as court ordered
 - ii. If the permanency goal is adoption, then in accordance with Iowa Code §232.88, reasonable notice for any hearing shall be provided to the agency, facility, institution, or person, including a foster parent, relative, or other individual providing pre-adoptive care, with whom a child has been placed. In these cases, CASA reports are disseminated to the foster parent, relative or individual with whom the child is placed for pre-adoptive care.

- iii. CASA reports are provided to the local FCRB in accordance with Iowa Code §237.20 1a(1).
- iv. No other dissemination of information by the advocate or CASA program is permitted.
- b. If a party is represented by counsel, providing the CASA report to that party's attorney is the same as providing it to the party. An attorney for a parent or other intervener is responsible to share the report with their client.
- c. Intervener as referenced in "a.i." is any agency, facility, institution, or person including a foster parent or individual providing pre-adoptive care, who petitions the court and is made a party to the proceeding. (Iowa Code §232.91)

5. Subpoenas

A subpoena is a writ, generally issued by a court, to compel testimony or evidence. The case records and information made available to CASA advocates, coaches, and staff is privileged and confidential per Iowa code. In the event that a subpoena is issued with regard to the CASA program:

- a. Immediately bring the subpoena to the attention of the ICAB administrator or deputy administrator, and provide a copy.
- b. Do not respond to, contact or discuss the matter with the issuing/serving party without further guidance.
- c. The ICAB program has legal counsel available to provide guidance to advocates, coaches, local & lead coordinators and administration throughout the subpoena process. A motion to quash (make null and void) the subpoena will likely be filed on behalf of CASA. Should other steps be required, specific guidance will be provided.

6. Media and legislative contact

- a. Staff and advocates of the CASA program are **strictly prohibited** from commenting on any case to the media or legislators.
- b. Advocates cannot discuss information about their cases with the media or make arrangements for interviews of children or parents, regardless of their consent. The CASA program does not exploit children and families to receive media attention.
- c. If contacted by the media or a legislator regarding a case or CASA program, advocates shall contact program staff to determine the plan for responding. Advocates may participate in providing in the response if deemed appropriate by the coordinator. If the advocate is interviewed by the media or a legislator, the coordinator shall be present.

7. Use of technology

- a. Reasonable precautions must be taken to guard confidential issues in regard to the use of technology such as email, electronic and social media sites, computers, and cell phones. Electronic files and devices must be password protected.

Quick Reference Charts

Code Sections Applicable to Confidentiality within the CASA Program

237.21	The information and records of or provided to a local board, state board, or CASA regarding a child receiving foster care and the child's family when relating to the foster care placement are not public records pursuant to chapter 22.
237.21(3)	A CASA may attend family team decision-making meetings or youth transition decision-making meetings upon request by the family or child and disclose case-related observations and recommendations relating to a child or a child's family while attending the meetings.
237.21(4)	A CASA may disclose case-related observations and recommendations to the agency assigned by the court to supervise the case, to the county attorney, or to the child's legal representative or guardian ad litem.
237.21(5)	Members of the state board and local boards, CASAs, and the staff of the department and the department of inspections and appeals are subject to standards of confidentiality pursuant to sections 217.30, 228.6, subsection 1, sections 235A.15, 600.16, and 600.16A. Members of the state and local boards, CASAs, and staff of the department and the department of inspections and appeals who disclose information or records of the board or department, other than as provided in subsection 2, are guilty of a simple misdemeanor.
217.30	Lists the types of information considered confidential: Names, addresses, social or economic conditions, evaluations, medical or psychiatric data,
232.147	Juvenile court records are considered confidential. Court records may be released to CASA under this section.
235A.15 and 17	Addresses the dissemination and distribution of Child Protective Assessment information. As a reminder, CASA advocates should not disclose any Child Protective Assessment information to other parties or in CASA Reports
600.16 and 16(A)	Addresses the dissemination and distribution of adoption records. As a reminder, CASA advocates should not disclose any information gained from adoption proceedings to other parties or in CASA Reports. TPR and Adoption records are sealed after expiration of the appeal timeframes.
232.89(5)	Requires CASA advocate to submit a written report to the court and to each of the parties to the proceedings containing results of the advocate's investigation of the child's case, including but not limited to recommendations regarding placement of the child and other recommendations based on the best interest of the child. The advocate shall submit subsequent reports to the court and parties, as needed, detailing the continuing situation of the child's case as long as the child remains under the jurisdiction of the court. In addition, the advocate shall file other reports to the court as required by the court.

Case Party Privilege of Information

Case party	Advocate can collect information from this party	Advocate can release information to this party
DHS	Yes	Yes
JCO	Yes	Yes
County Attorney	Yes	Yes
Guardian Ad Litem	Yes	Yes
Parents Attorney	Yes	Only in a Report to Court, at a FTM, YTDM or during FCRB testimony
Pre-Adoptive placement after permanency goal changed to adoption	Yes	Only in a Report to Court, at a FTM, YTDM or during FCRB testimony
Intervener	Yes	Only in a Report to Court, at a FTM, YTDM or during FCRB testimony
Foster Parent	Yes	No - only if party is present during FTM, YTDM or FCRB
Relative Caregiver	Yes	No - only if party is present during FTM, YTDM or FCRB
Provider	Yes	No - only if party is present during FTM, YTDM or FCRB
Therapist/Doctor	Yes	No - only if party is present during FTM, YTDM or FCRB
Teacher/Child care provider	Yes	No - only if party is present during FTM, YTDM or FCRB

C. Knowledge and Understanding

1. Individuals working in the CASA program as staff or advocates must be trained in the operations of the court, child welfare systems, and in the dynamics of child abuse and neglect.

2. The CASA program, its staff and advocates must respect a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets the child's best interest, first and foremost with a biological parent if the parent is able to provide a minimum sufficient level of care to the child.

Section 3: Professional Conduct

Ultimate responsibility for all CASA cases rests with the coordinator. However, each CASA advocate or coach also represents the CASA program, and what an advocate or coach says and does in the courtroom and in the community reflects on the program.

A. Gift Giving

1. Advocates and coaches cannot directly give money, gifts, clothes or other items to a CASA child, the child's family or caregiver.

B. Providing Direct Service

1. If needs of the child or family are not being met, recommend direct services to address the needs. Advocates and coaches are restricted from providing direct services such as, but not limited to:
 - a. intervening in domestic disputes,
 - b. giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling,
 - c. making placement arrangements for the child,
 - d. offering to provide funds for necessities,
 - e. taking children or family members to the advocate's home, and
 - f. taking children to any location that is not pre-approved by the child's legal guardian, custodian and the local program coordinator.
2. The Iowa CASA program does not encourage transportation by CASA advocates. Review the [Transportation Policy](#). Any advocate who accepts the liability and responsibility for transporting children and/or members of the child's family must adhere to all aspects of the transportation policy.
 - Consent to motor vehicle check annually,
 - Provide a copy of a valid driver's license annually to the local office,
 - Provide proof of insurance annually to the local office, and
 - Obtain a transportation consent form for each case where transportation is provided by the advocate.
3. Advocates and coaches shall not provide direct service delivery to any party involved in the case as it could:
 - a. Lead to conflict of interest or liability problems;
 - b. Cause the child or family to become dependent on the CASA advocate rather than working with community agencies and organizations.

C. Public Speaking/Media

1. Staff and advocates of the CASA program are strictly prohibited from commenting on any case to the media or legislators.
2. Advocates cannot discuss information about their cases with the media or make arrangements for interviews of children or parents, regardless of their consent. The CASA program does not exploit

children and families to receive media attention.

3. If contacted by the media or a legislator regarding a case or CASA program, advocates shall contact program staff to determine the plan for responding. Advocates may participate in providing in the response if deemed appropriate by the coordinator. If the advocate is interviewed by the media or a legislator, the coordinator shall be present.

D. Use of Social Media

1. Advocates must comply with the [Social Media Policy](#) and provide acknowledgement of understanding as requested by CASA of Iowa.

E. Involvement with Legal/Welfare Systems

1. CASA advocates must immediately notify the program if the advocate is charged with or convicted of a criminal offense, or becomes involved in any other court proceeding which might cause a conflict of interest or adversely affect the advocate's ability to effectively advocate for a child.
2. CASA advocates must notify the program if they become involved in a case with allegations of child abuse or neglect.

F. Conflict of Interest

1. A CASA advocate's effectiveness and standing in court depend on maintaining professional relationships with children and families. Review the entirety of the [Conflict of Interest Policy](#).
2. An advocate does not engage in activities which could jeopardize the safety of the child, the integrity of the program, the objectivity of the advocate, or activities which are likely to result in a conflict of interest or expose the program or the advocate to criminal or civil liability.
3. An advocate cannot be related to any parties involved in the case or be employed in a position that might result in a conflict of interest.
4. An advocate will not become personally involved with the child(ren) and family. This includes not developing intimate, social or other non-professional relationships with any person connected to the case.
5. If a conflict of interest is identified after case assignment (e.g. other parties become involved in the case that the advocate may have a conflict of interest with, employment situations of parties or advocate change that result in a conflict, the advocate no longer maintains objectivity), the coordinator will submit a request to the court asking for the CASA advocate to be released.
6. If a CASA advocate also serves on a FCRB that reviews the advocate's case, the advocate be recused from the board reviews and participate in the review process as an interested party.

G. Communication with Parties

1. CASA advocates are prohibited from giving counseling, legal advice, misrepresenting the role or position of an Advocate.
2. CASA advocates are prohibited from engaging in any ex parte conversation with a judge.

H. Confidentiality

Refer to the [Confidentiality Policy](#) for complete policy guidelines.

I. Duty to Disclose

1. A CASA advocate has a duty to immediately disclose any instances where the advocate suspects:
 - a. Child abuse and/or neglect
 - b. Reasonable belief the child is in imminent danger.
 - c. Someone involved in the case is at imminent risk of self-harm.
2. Disclosure of child abuse and/or neglect is made by contacting the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-362-2178.
3. Disclosure of concerns regarding imminent danger for the child or self-harming behavior is made to the Department of Human Services case manager and CASA coordinator.

J. State Liability – [Iowa Code 232.13](#)

1. For purposes of [chapter 669](#), the following persons shall be considered state staff:
 - a. A child given a work assignment of value to the state or the public or a community work assignment under this chapter.
 - b. A CASA and the members of the child advocacy board created in section 237.16 or a local citizen FCRB created in accordance with section 237.19.
2. The state of Iowa is exclusively liable for and shall pay any compensation becoming due a person under section 85.59.

Section 4: CASA Case Assignment

A. CASA Advocate Roles and Responsibilities

1. The roles and responsibilities of the advocate are clearly communicated through written policies, job descriptions and training, and are reinforced through the supervisory process.
2. Advocate roles and responsibilities include the following:
 - a. Acknowledge receipt of and adhere to the program policies
 - i. Adhere to all policies as outlined in this manual to remain in good standing with the local CASA program.
 - ii. Sign and date an Acknowledgement of CASA Program Policies form within 15 days of receiving a manual (during pre-service or as revised by the program) as requested by the state and/or local CASA program.
 - b. Accept case assignments
 - i. An advocate will not be assigned to more than two cases at a time. An exception may be granted at the discretion of the program staff; however, the decision to permit a higher caseload shall be documented as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception which may include an assessment of the advocate's prior performance, flexibility and time to devote to more than two (2) cases at a time.
 1. Under the exception, a CASA will not be assigned to more than five cases. An exception to more than two case assignments will be generated when CASA staff enters a case and assigns it to an advocate with more than two active cases.
 2. The exception is created in CAMS by the local coordinator and approved by the supervisor from the administrative exception dashboard.
 - ii. *A Notice of Acceptance/Confidentiality Agreement will be signed by the advocate for each case assignment. A copy of the agreement will be uploaded to the child record in CAMS.*
 - iii. Consult with the coach (or local coordinator if no coach is assigned) regarding the case to develop an investigative plan for the case which identifies goals, objectives and action steps for the advocate.
 - c. Provide best interest advocacy that aligns with the National CASA/GAL Association's Core Model.

Core Model

CASA/GAL Best-Interest Advocacy



- i. Learn
 1. At a minimum, the advocate shall meet in-person with the child(ren) once every 30 days.
 - a. Visits take place to ensure in-depth knowledge of the child's life for informed recommendations to the court.
 - b. An exception may be granted at the discretion of the program staff; however, the decision to permit a less frequent in-person contact shall be documented as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception.
 - c. The advocate will indicate on their monthly update in CAMS that they did not see the child face to face for the month.
 2. Identify each child's needs and advocate for the best interest to assure that the child(ren)'s needs are met.
 3. Complete the five (six if the child is age 14 or above) Child Assessments in CAMS for each child on the case.
 - a. First set of assessments will be completed within the first 60 days of assignment to help identify areas the advocate may need to learn about the child, the child's family and life circumstances.
 - b. Subsequent assessments to be completed a minimum of every six months thereafter, ideally to align within 30 days of a due date of the report to the court to assess strengths and/or concerns.

Resource: [CASA Advocate Quick Guide to CAMS: Child Assessment](#)

4. Obtain and maintain first-hand understanding of the needs and situation of the child(ren) by conducting an ongoing review of all relevant documents and records and interviewing the child(ren), parents, DHS case manager, service providers, teachers and other pertinent persons to determine the facts and circumstances of the child's situation. As needed, advocates will request parental consent to release and obtain information from therapists, counselors or medical providers.

Resources: [Health Related Consent Form](#) and [Non-Health-Related Consent Form](#)

- a. All case notes will be entered in the CAMS and will include date, interested parties involved, mode of visits, length of time spent on the activity, mileage incurred for the activity.
 - b. Each case note should be linked to the appropriate child(ren) for each activity.
5. Advocate for the child's best interests in the community by interfacing with mental health, educational and other relevant systems, subject to confidentiality limitations.

ii. Engage

1. Engage the child during visits.
2. When one to one situations with the assigned child occur, reasonable and sensible precautions are taken by the advocate. An advocate will make every attempt to ensure the safety and security of the child during one to one situations.
 - a. These situations have the potential to make a child more vulnerable to harm by those who seek to exploit their position of trust.
 - b. Adults working in one to one situations with a child may be more vulnerable to unjust or unfounded allegations made against them.
 - c. When scheduling a visit with a child, the advocate will talk to the caregiver beforehand, assessing the need to have someone else present or close by during the visit.
 - d. Advocates will avoid meeting with a child in remote, secluded areas.
 - e. Advocates will report any situation to the local coordinator where a child becomes distressed or angry during a visit between the advocate and child.
 - f. Advocates will carefully consider the needs and circumstances of the child when having a one to one visit.

iii. Recommend

1. Speak up for the child's best interests in court; appearing in person in court to advocate on behalf of the child is part of the National CASA/GAL core model and a local CASA program expectation.
2. Make recommendations for the child's placement and needed services for the child and family.

3. Monitor the child's situation until the case is dismissed by the court.

iv. Collaborate

1. Information gathered by CASA advocates can be pivotal for children's success during their court involvement. It is important for advocates to regularly share information they receive with the DHS, County Attorney (or Assistant) and Child's Attorney/Guardian Ad Litem to establish a pattern of effective, timely advocacy for children served. Information gained during regular case work should not be saved and only reported in the advocate's report to the court. Failing to report important information as it is gained to DHS, County Attorney or the Child's Attorney/GAL is not in the child's best interest.
2. Best practice demonstrates that advocates should share information regularly with those case parties whom they are allowed an unlimited exchange of information. The preferred method of communication is telephone, including leaving a voicemail, but advocates can create a password protected Word Document and send the update over email. The password to the protected document will be sent in a separate email. Once a password is established for a party, the password should be the same for each contact.
3. The chart on the following page includes the types of information that should be shared with each party. Keep in mind information about the family or the child that is considered emergent or impacts child safety should be shared with DHS, County Attorney and Child's Attorney/GAL immediately and should not be held for an update.

Party	Information to include in communication with the party	Frequency
DHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Change in household members ● Change in parent circumstances (housing, transportation, job, substance use etc) ● Tracking of compliance with case plan or court order ● Identified needed services for child or parent ● Notable successes for child, family or caregiver ● Concerns with service or service provider ● Concerns with family members ● Concerns with case situation ● Concerns with placement ● Concerns with school ● Other noteworthy information ascertained during the month 	Monthly
GAL &/or Attorney for child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tracking of compliance with case plan or court order ● Identified needed services for child or parent ● Concerns with services not being provided ● Concerns related to reasonable efforts 	As needed
County Attorney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tracking of compliance with case plan or court order ● Identified needed services for child or parent ● Concerns with services not being provided ● Concerns related to reasonable efforts 	As needed

4. A CASA may attend family team decision-making meetings or youth transition decision-making meetings upon request by the family or child and disclose case-related observations and recommendations relating to a child or a child's family while attending the meetings.
5. Determine if a permanency plan has been established for the child(ren) and make recommendations concerning permanency.
6. Facilitate cooperative solutions among parties when necessary.
7. Monitor implementation of service plans and court orders assuring that court-ordered services are implemented in a timely manner and whether review hearings should be scheduled with the court.

v. Report

1. Provide a written report for every hearing where permitted which includes observations and specific recommendations for the child, and when appropriate, the child's family. **The report includes information and recommendations about the child's needs and best interests.** Court reports are developed and edited in CAMS. **Resource:** [CASA Advocate Quick Guide to CAMS: Court Reports](#)

2. Appear at all hearings to advocate for the child's best interest and provide testimony when necessary. When the advocate is not able to attend a hearing, the advocate will provide the earliest possible notice to the coach to arrange for coverage at the hearing.
 - a. Advocate will provide a written statement that includes observations since the report was submitted to the parties for the coach or local program coordinator to present at the hearing.
 - b. Advocate will provide a telephone number that (s)he can be reached at during the time of the hearing.
 - c. If absence is known in advance of submitting the report, a statement will be included in the CASA report to court in regard to the absence.
3. Significant case developments must be reported to the local program coordinator for consideration of submitting an interim report between hearings.
 - a. If the advocate has been assigned to the case less than six weeks, the local program coordinator will talk with the advocate and coach to determine if the advocate has enough information to submit a relevant report to the court. Discretion shall be left to the local coordinator.
4. An advocate shall only include a photograph of the child in a report to court **if requested or required by the court** or written permission has been granted by the child's parent or legal guardian. Use [Photo Release Form](#) a copy shall be kept in the child's case file.
 - a. When a photograph is taken of the child, the photograph must be uploaded to CAMS by the advocate. The image must not be sent via email.
 - b. The image will be promptly deleted from the advocate's device after uploading.
 - c. If the advocate uses a cloud sharing service, the advocate must ensure that the photo is deleted from the cloud as well.
 - d. **Advocates are prohibited from using the photographs for social media, marketing or personal use.**

d. Maintain case notes and records

- i. Create an account with the Iowa Court's Electronic Document Management System (EDMS). EDMS notifications will serve as the official notice from the court whenever a change is made in the court's file.
 1. If an advocate chooses not to use EDMS to receive documents and notifications, the local coordinator and advocate will work together to develop the best method for sharing this information.
- ii. Learn to use CAMS for case management to maintain complete data about the case, including appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances. **Documenting notes in CAMS, at least monthly, is a critical**

component of preserving the advocate's work and having the information available for the monthly update to keep the coordinator/coach informed of case progress, as well as for preparing the court reports. **Resource:** [CASA Advocate Quick Guide to CAMS: Case Note dashboard](#)

- iii. Complete a [Monthly Advocate Update](#) in CAMS to record case contacts, brief case updates, hours and miles contributed for all case activities for the month and in-service training hours completed. Submit the Monthly Advocate Update in CAMS to the coordinator by deadlines as identified by local office protocol.

- e. Participate in continuing education
 - i. Acquire 12 hours of continuing education each calendar year to enhance knowledge and skills of best interest advocacy, **to include a topic related to diversity, equity and inclusion and the annually required security awareness training.**
 - ii. If assigned to a youth age 14 or older, participate in Fostering Futures Training within the first six months of case assignment to learn more about the advocacy efforts needed when working with older youth.
 - iii. **See [Continuing Education](#) for more information.**

- f. Develop and maintain a positive working relationship with coordinator and/or coach
 - i. Maintain at least once a month contact with the coach (where applicable) or local coordinator for case conferences to review progress on the case.
 - ii. Discuss all recommendations concerning the case with the local program coordinator prior to submitting recommendations to the court.
 - iii. The local program coordinator does not alter the advocate's reports or recommendations without the knowledge and documented agreement of the advocate.
 - iv. Report to the local program coordinator immediately any concerns of an advocate's personal safety and await instruction on how to proceed. If the advocate has a coach, a contact will be made to the coach as a courtesy.
 - v. In situations where the advocate requests mileage reimbursement for case-related activities, the request and circumstances must be taken to the ICAB administrator for consultation and consideration for approval.
 - 1. Any reimbursement (including gas cards) given to advocates/coaches for travel expenses cannot exceed \$0.14/mile.
 - 2. If an advocate receives reimbursement for mileage, then the miles cannot be submitted each month as donated mileage.

- g. Performance / Continued Service
 - i. Participate in advocate progress reviews six months after initial case assignment, annually thereafter and in the interim if requested by the local program coordinator or coach.
 - ii. **Consent to background check screening a minimum of every four (4) years.**

- h. Follow case closure procedures
 - i. Case closure ends the advocate's and coach's assignment to serve on behalf of the

child. An advocate is allowed to continue a relationship with the child or family if the child (or guardian for a child under age 18) desires continued contact.

1. The advocate must make known that they are no longer serving in an official role under the auspices of the CASA program.
 2. The advocate will incur all liability for activity related to continued relationships with children and families after official case closure.
- ii. Return case file and any documentation to the program staff within two weeks of case closure and properly destroy any electronic records advocate has stored.
 - iii. Complete a feedback survey upon each case closure. Staff will send an online survey link to the advocate to complete.

B. CASA Coach Role and Responsibilities

1. When a CASA coach has been assigned to oversee an advocate, the coach provides coaching and support to the advocate to ensure that each child involved receives sound advocacy and early permanency planning.
2. The responsibilities of the CASA coach include:
 - a. Acknowledge receipt of and adhere to the program policies
 - i. Adhere to all policies as outlined in this manual to remain in good standing with the local CASA program.
 - ii. Sign and date an Acknowledgement of CASA Program Policies form within 15 days of receiving a manual (during pre-service or as revised by the program) as requested by the state and/or local CASA program.
 - b. Support and coach up to ten advocates in their work with children.
 - i. Together with the local coordinator, assign advocates to cases.
 - ii. Receive initial discovery documents from EDMS and review them with advocates, making note of important documents and assisting the advocate in the development of an action plan for each case assignment.
 - iii. Obtain case updates and address any issues, maintain monthly contact with advocates who have cases; remind advocates to enter their case notes, training hours and other data into CAMS and to timely submit court reports in CAMS. Review *Monthly Advocate Update* submitted by assigned advocate in CAMS.
 - iv. Track court hearings and confirm advocates' attendance.
 1. Be available to fill in at court hearings and case-related meetings on an advocate's behalf, and document actions taken to share with the advocate. When the advocate is not able to attend a hearing, the advocate will provide the earliest possible notice to the coach to arrange for coverage at the hearing.
 - i. Advocate will provide a written statement that includes observations since the report was submitted to the parties for the coach to present at the hearing.
 - ii. Advocate will provide a telephone number that (s)he can be reached at during the time of the hearing.
 - iii. If absence is known in advance of submitting the report, a statement will

- be included in the CASA report to court in regard to the absence.
2. If unavailable to fill in for an advocate at a court hearing, schedule coverage by contacting the local coordinator, who can provide assistance.
- v. Assist in the case progress review process of assigned advocates six months after the initial case assignment and annually thereafter.
 1. The advocate progress review is conducted in CAMS. The coach completes the review first, it then moves on to the advocate for comment.
 2. After advocate approval, the coordinator adds information and the final product is provided to the advocate in CAMS.
 - vi. When an advocate is no longer available to continue on an existing case, a coach may fulfill the CASA duties in the interim if his/her schedule permits the additional duties. The coach will consult with the local coordinator to determine case coverage until a different advocate is available to accept the case.
- c. Data and case record management.
- i. Create an account with the Iowa Court's Electronic Document Management System (EDMS). EDMS notifications will serve as the official notice from the court whenever a change is made in the court's file.
 1. If a coach chooses not to use the EDMS system to receive documents and notifications, the local coordinator and advocate will work together to develop the best method for sharing this information.
 - ii. Learn to use CAMS for case record management.
 - iii. Report monthly advocate contribution of hours and miles in CAMS by entering administrative notes.
 - iv. Maintain log of current cases and enter administrative notes regarding contacts with advocates.
 - v. On a daily basis, check email for updates and give timely approval to pending monthly updates, court reports and other data in CAMS.
 - vi. Review and edit court reports in CAMS.
- d. Communicate with the local program coordinator.
- i. Report to the local coordinator a minimum of once a month to discuss advocate progress, cases and other issues that have arisen.
 - ii. Notify the local coordinator of critical events in a case.
 - iii. Consult with the local coordinator regarding any advocate performance concerns. Provide notice to the local coordinator when an advocate is not doing their assigned case work and the coach has attempted to re-engage the advocate. coaches should not automatically assume case work if an advocate is unable or unwilling to fulfill their duties. A coach needs to notify the local coordinator who will reassign the case or seek to have the CASA program removed from the case.
- e. Continuing Education
- i. Complete 12 hours of continuing education per year **to include a topic related to diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as the annual security awareness training.**

ii. See [Continuing Education](#) for more information.

f. Performance / Continued Service

- i. Maintain familiarity with CASA policies and procedures and sign acknowledgement of policies as requested by CASA staff.
- ii. Participate in a progress review six (6) months after becoming a coach and annually thereafter and in the interim if requested by the local program coordinator.
- iii. **Consent to background check screening a minimum of every four (4) years.**

C. Specific CASA Program Policies

CASA advocate and coaches will adhere to all policies and procedures as set forth in this manual; in particular the following policies are of utmost importance to the CASA of Iowa program:

1. [Anti-Discrimination / Anti-Harrassment Policy](#)
2. [Confidentiality Policy](#)
3. [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)
4. [Social Media Policy](#)
5. [Transportation Policy](#)
6. Weapons Policy

Regardless of whether an advocate possesses a non-professional concealed weapon permit, those advocating for the CASA program may not possess a weapon at any time while conducting any work within the scope of CASA duties.

- a. This includes possession of firearms, electroshock weapons, knives, explosives and any chemical whose purpose is to cause harm to another person.
- b. Weapons may not be brought onto any property owned or leased by the ICAB or brought to any property where an ICAB-sponsored event or training is taking place.
- c. advocates may not possess weapons on their person while conducting CASA work and may not possess a weapon in their personal vehicle if the vehicle is being used to transport any child, family member or any other case-related party to the case.
- d. Violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Advocates with a Peace Officer or Professional Weapons Permit (i.e. law enforcement officials or members of the military) are encouraged to conduct CASA-related business off work time. It is the preference of the CASA program that peace officers or those with a professional concealed weapons permit do not carry any weapons when visiting children or families due to possible trauma or reaction.

D. Case Record Management

1. The CASA program uses the Child Advocacy Match System (CAMS) for case management. Advocates agree to use their CAMS account for case management.
2. Advocates are encouraged to use the EDMS system for their case documents in place of maintaining a paper copy or storing electronic documents on their personal devices.
3. If an advocate requests a paper copy of the file, copy the case file information and prepare a working file for the advocate. Give the file to the CASA advocate at the time of assignment. Any subsequent case file information received during the life of the case will be shared with the advocate for a comprehensive record of the case.
4. It is critical for advocates and coaches to realize that the materials contained in these case records are confidential and they must take precautions to safeguard their working records when they are in their possession. Violation of maintaining the confidentiality of records constitutes a serious misdemeanor.
 - a. All electronic copies must be stored in a password protected folder.
 - b. Paper copies must be kept in a secured location.
5. Upon case closure, the advocate must delete all electronic documents and return the complete case record to the office within two weeks if s(he) has printed case documents. The CASA case record is shredded upon receipt by the program staff.
6. If the CASA case is closed before the court closes the record, CASA staff will notify the clerk of court to have the advocate and coach removed from the parties of record in the EDMS system.

Section 5: CASA Advocate and Coach Management

A. CASA advocate and coach records

1. The local program maintains a record of each CASA advocate and coach in CAMS that may be reviewed with the *exception of confidential reference documentation and record checks*.
2. The CAMS record contains, at minimum:
 - a. Application with emergency contact information and employment history
 - b. Confidential reference documentation.
 - c. Documentation of all records checks.
 - d. Training records.
 - e. **Developing Competencies for CASA Advocates (from pre-service training)**
 - f. Performance reviews and any other documentation related to performance.
 - g. Documentation of CASA status. This is maintained in Iowa's case management system.
 - h. Copy of the advocate's current driver's license and verification of automobile insurance, **annually**, if the advocate chooses to transport a CASA child.
 - i. Documentation of personal interview responses.
 - j. Copy of the Oath of Confidentiality.
 - k. Signed policy acknowledgement form
 - l. Exception to policy forms, if applicable (caseloads and/or in-person contact with child)
 - m. Resignation or dismissal documentation
 - n. Exit Survey

B. Pre-Service Training

1. Individuals must complete 30 hours of pre-service training prior to being sworn in as a CASA advocate.
2. In addition to 30 hours of pre-service training, advocates may be required to visit the court while in session to observe abuse/neglect proceedings before appearing in court for an assigned case.

C. Continuing Education

1. **Advocates will complete 12 hours of continuing education annually (pro-rated based on the advocate's date of swearing-in) consistent with National CASA/GAL guidelines and the program documents completion of this requirement for each advocate.**
 - a. Continuing education hours should be related to the work of best interest advocacy.
 - b. Continuing education can be completed through a variety of sources and delivery methods such as education events hosted by the local program or state organization, program approved externally provided opportunities (in person or online), National CASA/GAL webinars, program approved books and videos.
 - c. **To encourage diverse learning experiences, no more than a total of four (4) hours of**

continuing education should be completed by reading books/articles.

2. Advocates will participate in, at least annually, education and training approved and documented by the program related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

3. Types of Continuing Education

- a. CASA of Iowa defines five (5) different types of continuing education available to advocates and coaches
 - i. In-person, delivered by CASA staff (to include training received in a classroom setting **or through a virtual platform**, hosted by CASA staff).
 - ii. Independent study materials and modules that include specific application to the CASA role, approved and delivered to advocates and coaches by CASA Staff.
 - iii. Community-based training (such as local conferences or a college course) delivered by someone outside of the CASA staff with application to the CASA role.
 - iv. Self-found training (such as information obtained from articles, books, videos, etc.) with application to the CASA role.
 - v. **Informal continuing education provided by the CASA staff, either in-person, through virtual platform or via telephone about a topic applicable to the case assignment. No more than a total of three (3) hours of continuous education through informal conversations with the local program coordinator will be accepted per calendar year.**
- b. The information received from training that was procured outside of the CASA program must include at least one learning objective and an evaluative statement of what was learned and how it applies to the CASA role.
 - i. To receive credit for “outside” continuing education, advocates and coaches will complete the request in the training (self found) approval in CAMS. This request will be provided to your local program coordinator who will determine if the training is eligible to count towards the 12 hours of continuing education required annually.
- c. **Training Travel Time is defined as time spent traveling to and from a training location. In order to document this time in CAMS,**
 - i. **The advocate will enter a Case Note to document the time spent traveling and the total number of miles traveled. Time spent at the training is not included in the total hours as the training time is documented separately in CAMS.**
 - ii. **The coach will enter an Administrative Note to document the time spent traveling and the total number of miles traveled. Time spent at the training is not included in the total hours as the training time is documented separately in CAMS.**

Resource: [CASA Advocate Quick Guide to CAMS: Self-Found Training](#)

4. The State of Iowa requires all CASA staff, advocates and coaches to complete Security Awareness training annually which includes the topic of confidentiality.

D. Monthly Advocate Update

1. At the end of each month, advocates are required to complete the Monthly Advocate Update in CAMS and submit it to the local program coordinator, or the CASA coach where assigned, by deadlines as identified by local office protocols.
2. Advocates will enter hours and miles as they enter case activity in CAMS. Coaches will create an administrative note by using the advocate management button on their CAMS home page. Advocates and coaches are required to report their monthly CASA hours and miles for reporting purposes.

Resource: [CASA Advocate Quick Guide to CAMS: Monthly Advocate Update](#)

E. Case Progress Reviews

1. Coordinators and CASA coaches will maintain a personal, yet professional relationship with the advocates.
2. The progress of all advocates will be reviewed on a regular basis. An advocate will review case progress after s(he) has been assigned to the first case for six months and yearly thereafter.
 - a. If issues arise between the scheduled evaluations, an additional evaluation can be performed.
 - b. All completed reviews must be shared with the advocate.
 - c. A copy of each review must be kept in the CASA record.

Resource: [CASA Advocate Quick Guide to CAMS: Advocate Progress Evaluations](#)

F. Release of CASA appointment from a case

1. Closure of case: The entry of an order discharging a child from the jurisdiction of the court shall automatically serve to terminate the appointment of the CASA advocate.
2. Program request: The coordinator may request that the CASA appointment be dismissed.
3. Court termination: The court reserves the right to terminate the appointment of a CASA advocate.

G. Complaints and Grievances

1. If any concerns arise relating to the performance of the professionals involved in the case, such concerns shall be relayed to the coordinator if the respective parties cannot resolve the concerns.
2. General concerns about CASA policy or procedures must be directed in the following order: coordinator, deputy administrator or the administrator.
3. When the coordinator and the CASA advocate differ regarding recommendations made to the court; the advocate's recommendations will take precedence as long as they are consistent with juvenile code.

4. If an interested party has a grievance against an advocate, that individual can contact the coordinator regarding the concerns. If the coordinator is unable to resolve the concerns, the grievance will be referred to the state office for resolution.
5. If a conflict or grievance occurs between the coordinator and an advocate, the state office will be consulted for resolution.

H. Leave of Absence / Unassigned Advocates / Reactivation

1. A CASA advocate may take a leave of absence from active case assignments. An advocate with this status may advocate with the CASA program in other ways.
 - a. Advocates will remain on distribution lists and continue to receive program materials, updates, and training information.
 - b. On leave status can continue for up to 24 months.
 - c. On leave status exceeding 24 months, with no planned date for reactivation into the program, will result in the removal of the Advocate from the program roster.
 - d. **To be reactivated from on leave status,**
 - i. **An advocate who was on leave for more than one (1) year must complete refresher training on local court practices, program policies and procedures, investigation and report writing before being assigned to a case. All training will be documented in CAMS.**
 - ii. **Staff will end the leave on the advocate face sheet alert in CAMS to show availability of the advocate to accept a case assignment when training requirements have been met.**
2. **Unassigned approved advocates may remain unassigned for up to 6 months.**
 - a. **An approved advocate who is not able or willing to accept a case assignment after 6 months of inactivity, but wants to remain involved in the program, will be put on the appropriate leave status and follow guidelines provided in H.1.**

I. Corrective Action and Non-Voluntary Dismissal

1. If a violation of confidentiality has occurred, the coordinator will make arrangements for immediate dismissal of the advocate and/or coach.
2. The coordinator (in consultation with the administrator) may request the dismissal of an advocate from the CASA program. Appropriate grounds for dismissal of a CASA advocate include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a. The individual takes action without program or court approval that endangers the child or is outside the role or authority of the CASA program.
 - b. The individual violates a program policy, court rule or law.
 - c. The individual fails to complete **the required National CASA/GAL Association Pre-Service Training and 12 hours annually of continuous education.**
 - d. The individual demonstrates an inability to effectively carry out their duties, **which may include not following the local program coordinator's guidance.**
 - e. The individual engages in ex-parte communication with the court.
 - f. The individual falsifies his or her application or misrepresents facts during the screening

process.

- g. The individual has allegations of child abuse or neglect brought against them or criminal charges are filed against the advocate.
- h. The existence of confirmed or founded reports of child abuse/neglect against the individual.
- i. The individual fails to report suspected child abuse on an assigned case, of which the advocate is aware, and a subsequent Child Protection Services Assessment Summary (CPSAS) report substantiates the abuse.
- j. The individual fails to report a conflict of interest. [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)
- k. The individual experiences an irresolvable conflict of interest that occurs after case assignment.
- l. The individual refuses to submit to background checks every four (4) years, or does not satisfactorily pass background checks.

J. Resignation

1. When a CASA advocate desires to be relieved of the responsibilities of the program, the advocate must submit his or her resignation in writing to the local program coordinator.
2. The coordinator will submit a request to the court for the CASA advocate to be released from the case due to the advocate's resignation from the program.
3. The advocate must return all case-related documentation to the coordinator within two weeks of resigning from the program and destroy any electronic files.
4. The advocate must return the CASA identification badge upon leaving the CASA program.
5. The advocate must delete their EDMS account.
6. The advocate must complete an exit survey upon leaving the CASA program.

CASA of Iowa Anti-Discrimination / Anti-Harassment Policy

* For the purposes of these policies, all advocates are considered (unpaid) CASA staff.

CASA of Iowa is committed to developing and implementing a program of non-discrimination and affirmative action, a responsibility CASA of Iowa accepts willingly because it is the right and just thing to do. Because best-interest child welfare advocacy exposes Iowa citizens and vulnerable children to a multitude of ideas that strongly influence personal experiences and familial outcomes, it is an area of society where we demonstrate commitment to removing barriers. We insist on promoting the concept of inclusion, celebrating diversity and actively seeking participation of those from diverse populations.

The creation and facilitation of a non-discrimination, anti-harassment environment compliments the efforts to provide culturally competent child advocacy. The goal is to provide a non-discriminatory work environment for staff and advocates.

1. CASA of Iowa does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. Veteran. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies may be directed to the Iowa Child Advocacy Board, 321 E 14th St, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines IA 50319, Tel. 515-281-7621 or email: cab@dia.iowa.gov
2. No otherwise qualified person will be denied access to, or participation in any program, service or use of facilities on the basis of factors previously listed. Reasonable accommodation will be made to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in all CASA-related activities consistent with applicable federal and state laws.
3. Likewise, no advocate or staff member shall discriminate against any child, family member or interested party involved in a CASA case on the factors previously listed. If discrimination or harassment by staff or an advocate is reported, CASA of Iowa will conduct an investigation, which could lead to discipline or termination from the program or employment.

The State of Iowa is an Equal Opportunity Employer and states the following:

1. *"It is the policy of this state to provide equal opportunity in state employment to all persons. An individual shall not be denied equal access to state employment opportunities because of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or physical or mental disability. It also is the policy of this state to apply affirmative action measures to correct deficiencies in the state employment system where those remedies are appropriate. This policy shall be construed broadly to effectuate its purposes"* (Iowa Code Section 19B.2)"
2. When hiring or accepting advocates, CASA of Iowa screens and scores all applicants without identifying information in accordance with State of Iowa Equal Opportunity laws. The Iowa Department of Administrative Services requires public job postings for all permanent positions,

allowing all staff the opportunity for promotion. All applicants are scored based on experience in child welfare and experience and knowledge of the CASA program as an advocate or staff member.

Anti-Harassment Policy

Every employee and volunteer of CASA of Iowa has the right to a workplace free from harassment. Harassment of anyone on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, physical or mental disability, or other personal characteristics is prohibited by law and by the policies of CASA of Iowa.

1. No employee will suffer retaliation for reporting alleged instances of harassment. staff and management must work together to prevent and stop harassing conduct in the workplace.
2. Harassment can include such behavior as slurs, demeaning jokes or comments, innuendoes, unwelcome compliments, cartoons, pictures, pranks, hazing, stereotypical comments, derogatory descriptions or other verbal or physical conduct. Such behavior is considered harassment when it has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance; or affects an individual's workplace opportunities.
3. Sexual harassment is a type of harassment that occurs when the verbal or physical conduct described above is sexual in nature or gender-based. Sexual harassment involves making unwelcome sexual advances, or requests for sexual favors or other conduct of a sexual nature, a condition of employment; or making submission to or rejection of such conduct the basis for employment decisions; or creating an intimidating, offensive, or hostile working environment by such conduct.
4. If an employee experiences or witnesses any incident of inappropriate or unprofessional behavior in the workplace he or she believes may violate this policy, the employee should immediately report the incident and, if circumstances permit, express his or her concerns directly to the offending person. However, if the employee is not comfortable with addressing concerns with the offending person, the employee may report the matter to his or her direct supervisor, the next higher supervisor, the employee's agency director or other designated agency personnel. Alternatively, any complaint, including those regarding senior agency officials and directors, may be submitted directly to the director of the Department of Administrative Services or the Governor's Office without reporting the matter internally to the employee's agency. Once the incident is reported, the situation will be investigated in accordance with Section V, and appropriate action will be taken. All executive branch staff are expected to cooperate with an investigation undertaken pursuant this policy.
5. Failure to cooperate with an investigation may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

CASA of Iowa Confidentiality Policy

Introduction

Preserving the privacy rights of citizens and maintaining the confidentiality of personal information is a major concern in many segments of society. Because of the sensitive nature of CASA work, these concerns are even more critical for CASA programs. A breach in confidentiality can cause irreparable harm to the child and family involved. It can poison working relationships between CASA and the professional community and cast doubt on the value of the program. In the worst cases, it could even result in litigation. In Iowa, violation of confidentiality policies constitutes a simple misdemeanor under Iowa Code § 237.21.

For these reasons, it is important that staff and advocates are clear about what is meant by confidentiality in this context. Something as simple as discussing a case in the hall, the elevator, or the bathroom, or leaving information on the coffee table at home can have unforeseen consequences.

Violation of confidentiality (intentional or unintentional) is cause for immediate dismissal from the CASA program. This action is appropriate and necessary given the potentially devastating consequences to individuals and to the program.

Policies and procedures

CASA staff, advocates and coaches shall adhere to the following guidelines with respect to maintaining confidentiality and respecting the privacy of others in all matters relating to an assigned case. The guidelines govern circumstances in which the CASA advocate or coach requests or receives information. However, these guidelines cannot cover every possible situation that may arise. Any questions and/or concerns regarding confidentiality or the application of this policy should be discussed with the CASA staff.

1. When sworn in, all advocacy advocates shall take an oath of confidentiality.
2. In requesting information in the course of an investigation, an advocate or coach may need to obtain information from doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, attorneys, clergy, teachers, or other professionals who have a protected relationship status with a party or the child. For the child, your Order Appointing CASA allows you access to these individuals and their records. The professional has no authority to provide any information to a CASA without the express permission of the client or court order.
3. Pursuant to Iowa Code §235A.15 and §235A.17, staff, coaches and advocates shall maintain all information received from the child abuse registry or assessment report as confidential and shall not disseminate such information except when the re-dissemination is in connection with official duties, and the person receiving the information would have independent access to the same information under §235A.15.
4. If it is necessary to obtain any privileged/confidential information about someone who is directly related to the case but is not the child(ren), the CASA advocate or coach must obtain from that

person a written release of information which allows the professional or agency to discuss the matter with CASA.

5. The CASA advocate must disclose confidential information learned during the course of their investigation in these circumstances:
 - a. When consulting with CASA staff members or CASA coaches who must be provided all significant case specifics known to the case,
 - b. When ordered by the judge in a hearing or trial; and
 - c. When the advocate has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect.
6. Outside of these circumstances, the disclosure of case information by a CASA advocate is authorized at the following times and to the persons outlined below:
 - a. A CASA advocate may release any relevant information in their report to the court.
 - b. Iowa Code §237.21 (2)(a). A CASA advocate may attend family team decision-making meetings or youth transition decision-making meetings upon request by the family or child and disclose case-related observations and recommendations relating to a child or a child's family while attending the meetings.
 - c. Iowa Code §237.21 (2)(b). A CASA advocate may disclose case-related observations and recommendations to the agency assigned by the court to supervise the case (DHS or JCS), to the county attorney, or to the child's legal representative or guardian ad litem.
 - d. Iowa Code §277.20 (b) and 277.2(4)(a). A CASA advocate may attend a local FCRB if invited and disclose case-related observations and recommendations relating to the child or a child's family. If a CASA advocate cannot attend the local FCRB review, the advocate shall submit written testimony or report for the Board by following the instructions indicated in the invitation letter.
 - e. When CASA staff, advocates and/or coaches are included in group emails with case specific information, subsection (2)(b) prohibits the staff, advocate or coach from replying to all recipients in the group email. Disclosing case-related observations and recommendations can only be made to DHS/JCS, the county attorney or to the child's legal representative or guardian ad litem.
7. When CASA staff, advocates and/or coaches are included in group emails with case specific information, §237.21 (2)(b) prohibits the staff, advocate or coach from replying to all recipients in the group email. Disclosing case-related observations and recommendations can only be made to DHS/JCS, the county attorney or to the child's legal representative or guardian ad litem.
8. The disclosure of information outside of these approved methods violates the confidentiality policy. Service Providers, foster parents, caregivers, teachers, day care providers and others involved in the child's life provide excellent information for CASA advocates. However, CASA advocates can only accept information from these individuals, but are not authorized to provide information to these persons as it is in violation of Iowa Code §237.21(2).

9. The CASA advocate or coach must never discuss an assigned case for purely conversational purposes, particularly in specific terms, with anyone. In addition, conversations with case parties or conversations with authorized individuals about the case shall be held in a confidential location; not in hallways, elevators or other public locations.
10. The CASA advocate should not promise a child or any party to the assigned case that their statements will be kept secret or confidential.
11. CASA of Iowa staff, advocates and coaches are **strictly prohibited** from commenting on any case to the media or legislators.
 - a. CASA of Iowa staff, advocates and coaches cannot discuss information about their cases with the media or make arrangements for interviews with children or parents, regardless of their consent. CASA of Iowa does not exploit children and families to receive media attention.
 - b. If contacted by the media or a legislator regarding a case or the CASA program, coaches and advocates shall contact program staff to determine a response plan. Advocates and coaches may participate in providing the response if deemed appropriate by the local program coordinator. If an advocate or coach is interviewed by the media or legislator, the local program coordinator must be present.
 - c. If staff know of an article appearing about the local program or CASA of Iowa, a copy of the article is shared with the administrator.

Safeguarding confidentiality of records

advocates who keep case files outside the CASA office (either in paper or electronic format) must take the steps to ensure that the files are maintained in such a way to prevent inadvertent disclosure to persons not having a reason to know.

- Advocates are encouraged to maintain their case in the CAMS data system and the court's file in the EDMS system.
- The advocate shall not use an email address that is accessible to others.
- Paper files should be stored in a location that is not easily accessible by others in the home. It is preferred that paper files be stored in a locked location.
- Records should be stored away once you've completed your work with the documents.
- Digital/electronic records must be password protected.
- Advocates must ensure that they have a private place for phone conversations about the CASA duties away from the CASA premises.

Violation of Confidentiality

A violation of a child or family's confidentiality must be taken seriously. Regardless whether the violation was made intentionally or unintentionally; with or without malice, the CASA program has a duty to immediately remove the advocate from the case and dismissed from the CASA program. In addition, when a violation occurs, the advocate has committed a simple misdemeanor and may be subject to litigation by the offended party.

CASA of Iowa Conflict of Interest Policy

CASA of Iowa's Conflict of Interest Policy is in accordance with the National CASA/GAL for Children's local and state program standards. Staff, paid consultants, CASA coaches and advocates will uphold the CASA program through their actions.

CASA of Iowa identifies and defines the following conduct as a conflict of interest or has the potential to exist and warrants disclosure:

1. Staff, paid consultants and CASA coaches and advocates are prohibited from having direct or indirect financial interest in the assets, leases, business transactions or professional services of the program.
2. Staff, paid consultants, CASA coaches and advocates will use their authority appropriately and will not condone any illegal action or unethical practice related to the program or community or participate in harassing behavior towards children, their families or other case parties.
3. Local program staff and/or assigned CASA advocates/coaches are prohibited from being related to any parties involved in the case or being employed in a position and/or affiliated with an agency that might result in a conflict of interest.
4. Staff, paid consultants, CASA coaches and advocates will avoid any action that could adversely affect the confidence of the public in the integrity of the program.
5. program staff, paid consultants, CASA coaches and advocates must immediately notify the CASA/GAL program of any criminal charges filed against them.
6. program staff, paid consultants, CASA coaches and advocates are not allowed to have ex parte communications with the court.
7. CASA coaches and advocates shall not be employed by the Department of Inspections and Appeals, the district court, the Department of Human Services or employed with an agency which contracts child welfare services for children with any of these entities.

In regard to ethical conduct and conflict of interest, program staff, paid consultants, CASA coaches and advocates:

1. Use their authority appropriately. Those affiliated with CASA of Iowa shall not condone any illegal or unethical practice related to the program, the community or participate in harassing behavior towards children, their families or other case parties.
2. Abstain from the use of alcohol or illegal substances while conducting CASA-related work.
3. Are required to make timely disclosure to the program of any conflict or potential for conflict of interest.

If a possible conflict of interest arises at the management level, the administrator shall report to the Iowa Child Advocacy Board in writing that the conflict of interest was disclosed and that the interested party was not present and did not participate in discussion, deliberation or decision on the matter.

Considerations for CASA Case Assignments:

1. In case related matters, staff, CASA coaches and advocates must notify all case parties of the potential conflict of interest.

2. An advocate does not engage in activities which could jeopardize the safety of the child, the integrity of the program, the objectivity of the advocate, or activities which are likely to result in a conflict of interest or expose the program or the advocate to criminal or civil liability.
3. An advocate cannot be related to any parties involved in the case or be employed in a position that might result in a conflict of interest.
4. An advocate will not become personally involved with the child(ren) and family. This includes not developing intimate, social, social media-related or other non professional relationships with any person connected to the case.

Recusal or release of the advocate due to conflict interest

1. If a conflict of interest is identified after case assignment (e.g. other parties become involved in the case that the advocate may have a conflict of interest with, employment situations of parties or an advocate change that result in a conflict, the advocate no longer maintains objectivity), the local program coordinator will notify the court and legal parties of the conflict. If any of the legal parties object to the advocate's continued work on the case and the judge requests that the advocate be removed, the local program coordinator will submit a request to the court asking for the advocate to be released.
2. If an advocate also serves on a FCRB that reviews the advocate's case, the individual will be recused from the board reviews and participate in the review process as an interested party to avoid a conflict of interest.

Violation of the Conflict of Interest Policy

1. If any party does not disclose a potential conflict of interest prior to becoming involved in a transaction or decision affected by the conflict, appropriate discipline or dismissal will be implemented as determined by the appointing authority.
2. If an advocate is found to have violated program policies related to a conflict of interest/ethical conduct, the local program coordinator will talk with the advocate about the violation and discuss possible discipline or dismissal.
 - a. If dismissing the advocate, in writing (letter or email), inform the advocate of the violation and their dismissal from the program. Upload copy of email or letter to CAMS advocate face sheet.
 - b. File a proposed Order to Release CASA advocate -OR- Order to Release CASA advocate and CASA program with the court.
 - c. Reassign case if another advocate is available. Follow instructions in CAMS user guide to close out the advocate.
 - d. If another advocate is not available, close out the case and exit the advocate per CAMS user guide instructions.

CASA of Iowa shall promptly refer to National CASA/GAL Association and the State Organization any credible evidence that a staff person, advocate, contractor, sub-grantee, subcontractor, or other person affiliated with the program has committed a criminal or civil violation of law pertinent to fraud, conflict of interest, bribery, gratuity, or similar misconduct involving program funds.

CASA of Iowa Social Media Policy

Electronic and social media, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support and sense of community for those of us engaged in advocacy for abused and neglected children. It is important that those who choose to engage in social media understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss CASA-related topics. Our ability to serve children depends entirely on the trust and support of our community, and it is critical that we handle the confidential information entrusted to us responsibly. *(This introduction is adapted from the National CASA/GAL Association.)*

When you engage in social media and online communication, you become a public figure. As a public figure that is associated with CASA, you have a responsibility to help protect this organization and our clients. The following expectations are intended to give you guidance in both promoting and protecting CASA, and to protect the children we serve.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of any electronic or social media site created/used by ICAB staff is to provide news, in-service training opportunities and other CASA program-related materials to CASA advocates serving in Iowa. It is also intended to provide program staff and advocates a site through which program-related current events and training topics can be discussed. It shall not be used as a site to post or exchange information about actual cases that could be used to identify a specific child or other specific parties in a case involving child abuse and neglect or any other information which program staff and advocates are required to keep confidential by law or policy.

Comments submitted to sites will be reviewed and, at the sole discretion of program staff, a representative sample may be posted on the site or comments may not be posted. In addition to the prohibited information enumerated above, the following forms of information shall not be posted:

1. Comments not topically related to the particular content being commented upon;
2. Profane language or content;
3. Use of harassing language or tone;
4. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
5. Obscene sexual content or links to obscene sexual content;
6. Solicitations of commerce;
7. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
8. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
9. Information or content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party; or,
10. Information that promotes or opposes any person campaigning for election to a political office.

User Expectations

1. CASA staff
 - a. Are permitted to develop and use social media tools as a recruitment and information tool as time allows. This is not a required part of job duties.
 - b. Post information about events such as swearing-in local advocates, interesting articles/videos inspirational quotes and other events at the local or state level.
 - c. Have advocates sign a statement prior to swearing in that gives permission to use their photo for online purposes.
 - d. Staff shall notify judges that photographs taken of them may be used in print or electronic media.

2. Advocates
 - a. Can use social media to promote the CASA program and talk in generalities about their advocate experiences. Advocates must follow the local, state and National CASA/GAL Association program policies on social media.
 - b. Cannot at any time disclose names, circumstances, events or pictures of anyone they are working with, including children, families, caregivers, foster parents, DHS Workers, providers, etc.
 - c. Are not allowed to friend or follow anyone who would fall under the confidentiality policy such as children, family, foster parents and caregivers.
 - d. Cannot use social media to express their opinions about the child welfare process, a ruling, an action taken by a professional or someone on their case.
 - e. Advocates must use discretion when viewing information from social media about individuals related to a CASA case that may impact decision-making. CASA advocates will consult with the local program coordinator regarding how best to handle the information.

Information Subject to Public Disclosure

The information submitted to this site is subject to the access and confidentiality provisions of Chapter 22 and any other applicable sections of the Code of Iowa. Any content posted may be subject to public disclosure including open records requests.

Authorized Users and Password Protections

Only program staff and sworn ICAB advocates will be approved to access sites. Persons with approved access shall not allow others to access the site using their login and password information. Passwords shall be different than other agency or program network passwords and be:

- a. At least eight characters,
- b. A mixture of numbers, upper and lower case letters,
- c. Include at least one special character, and
- d. Changed at least every sixty days.

In addition, ICAB staff and advocates will adhere to the [National CASA/GAL Association Social Media Policies and Best Practices for Network Staff and Volunteers](#).

CASA of Iowa Transportation Policy

CASA of Iowa does not encourage transportation by advocates.

Transportation by CASA advocates or coaches in personal vehicles of children or other persons during the course of performing their duties and responsibilities is not mandatory. Advocates can still perform their duties without transporting a child; however, in certain circumstances an advocate may choose to provide transportation for a CASA child(ren) or his/her family members if it is case-related. The need for transportation will be assessed by the advocate and local program coordinator when developing the advocate's initial action plan for the case.

If case circumstances warrant, transportation may be provided by an advocate when all of the following conditions have been met:

1. Is knowledgeable of the transportation policy, potential **personal** risk of liability and chooses to accept responsibility.
2. Has passed a motor vehicles division record check.
3. Provides annually to the program a copy of a valid **unexpired current** driver's license, a safe driving record and adequate personal automobile insurance.
4. Has insurance coverage that meets or exceeds the required state minimum.
5. Has a [Transportation Consent](#) on file for each case in which transportation will be provided that includes:
 - a. Written permission of the local program coordinator.
 - b. Written permission of the child(ren)'s legal custodian, legal guardian or custodial agency.
 - c. The transportation consent is uploaded and stored on the case facesheet in CAMS.

When transporting CASA child(ren), it is extremely important to consider their safety as well as the advocate's own safety. If a CASA advocate chooses to transport CASA child(ren) or their family members, the following guidelines shall be met:

1. Only CASA advocates with valid driver's licenses, auto insurance coverage of 20/40/15 and who have passed a motor vehicles check are allowed to transport child(ren) and/or their family members.
 - a. It is the responsibility of the advocate to annually provide copies of a valid driver's license and proof of auto insurance coverage to the program staff.
 - b. It is the responsibility of the advocate to notify program staff if their driver's license is revoked or suspended at any time; **and then provide a copy of the valid driver's license once it is reinstated.**
 - c. It is the responsibility of the advocate to notify program staff if their auto insurance coverage lapses at any time; **and then provide proof of auto insurance coverage once it is reinstated.**
2. CASA advocates must have a transportation consent on file for each case.

3. CASA advocates who have received three (3) or more traffic citations (moving or non-moving) in a year or who have been involved in three (3) or more vehicular accidents in the last twelve (12) months are prohibited from transporting CASA child(ren) or family members. It is the responsibility of the advocate to inform staff of any accident they are involved in immediately following the incident.
4. CASA advocates who have been drinking any alcoholic beverages, using illegal substances or taking any medication that may impair their ability to drive shall not transport any child(ren).
5. CASA advocates who have been convicted of DWI or DUI (Driving while intoxicated or Driving under the influence) within the last four (4) years shall not be permitted to transport a CASA child or family member. It is the responsibility of the CASA to inform staff of any DWI/DUI arrest that occurs after initial background checks.
6. CASA advocates transporting a CASA child(ren) shall abide by all traffic laws.
7. CASA advocates are responsible for the passengers in their vehicle. It is the CASA's responsibility to safely transport CASA child(ren). Advocates are required to comply with state laws regarding safety and seatbelt requirements.

If circumstances permit or the above guidelines are not followed, the local program coordinator has discretion to revoke the advocate's privilege to transport a child(ren) and/or their family members at any time.

Acknowledgement of CASA Program Policies

I have received a copy of and read the **CASA of Iowa Policy Manual**. I understand its contents and agree to follow the policies and procedures as set forth in it. As policies are updated, I understand changes will be provided to me in written form and I will provide written acknowledgement. Contact the local coordinator if you have any questions.

I further understand my responsibilities and failure to perform those duties may result in corrective action leading up to possible dismissal. Check or initial each policy noted that you have read and understand it.

Specific policies	
	Anti-Discrimination / Anti-Harassment Policy
	Confidentiality Policy
	Conflict of Interest Policy
	Social Media Policy
Transportation Policy (either decline or accept to transport)	
	I decline to transport CASA child(ren) and/or family members. I understand that if I choose to transport at a later date, I will sign a new acknowledgement form and comply with the expectations as set forth in the transportation policy.
	I accept responsibility and liability; and will comply with the expectations of the transportation policy when choosing to transport a child/ren and/or family members in my personal vehicle. I will consent to an annual motor vehicle check, provide annually a copy of a valid driver's license and proof of auto insurance that meets the state's minimum requirements.
	Further, I understand that the CASA coordinator has the discretion to revoke my privilege to transport a CASA child(ren) or family members at any time if the above guidelines are not met
Use of photographs (staff/advocate/coach/program volunteer). Check one:	
	The CASA program is allowed to post photographs of me online or submit to print media as they relate to the CASA program
	The CASA program is not allowed to post any photographs of me online or submit to print media at any time.

I have read, understand and will abide by the policies and procedures set forth by the CASA of Iowa program, enhancing the integrity of the program and credibility of my work on behalf of the program.

Signature

Print Name

Date