
CASA of Iowa Policy Manual

Local Program Staff



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

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Agency Structure

Terms used in this manual as they pertain to the structure of the agency:

- Iowa Child Advocacy Board (ICAB) - administrative authority
- State Organization - administrative authority
- CASA of Iowa - state and local programming
- Local Programs - CASA programs throughout the state

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Resources

Child Advocacy Board Staff can access the resources referenced in this manual by clicking the hyperlinks contained within or by accessing them from one of these shared folders:

[CASA P&P Resources \(Alphabetical\)](#)

[CASA P&P Resources \(Categorized\)](#)

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.

Standard 1: Core Model and Mission

Standard 1 Statement: CASA of Iowa operates in alignment with the mission of the National CASA/GAL Association for Children and adheres to the *Core Model* of providing screened, trained, and qualified community court appointed advocates to advocate for the best interests of children and youth who are before the court as a result of abuse or neglect as defined by Iowa child welfare laws, living at home or in out-of-home care.

Policy 1.1: Operate under the Core Model

1. CASA of Iowa operates under the National CASA/GAL Association's Core Model by utilizing screened, trained and qualified community advocates who are appointed by the court to provide best interest advocacy for children and youth, who are:
 - a. between the ages of 0 up to age 18 (or 21 if special circumstances exist, see [Policy 1.5.3](#)),
 - b. living in the biological home or in out of home care,
 - c. before the court as a result of abuse and neglect as defined by Iowa's child welfare laws.

2. All qualified community advocates are:
 - a. Screened per National CASA/GAL Association Standards
 - b. Trained according to National CASA/GAL Training and Facilitation Standards
 - c. Supported by staff or coach (peer equivalent) in accordance with National CASA/GAL Standards



Source: National CASA/GAL Association for Children

Policy 1.2: Work to fulfill the mission statements

1. CASA of Iowa's mission statement, adopted by the Iowa Child Advocacy Board, is as follows:
 - a. The Iowa Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program 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. The Mission Statement of the Iowa Child Advocacy Board: *Advocating for the protection of Iowa's children and improvement of the child welfare system.*

Policy 1.3: Emulate core values

1. 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](#)

2. CASA of Iowa acknowledges that the National CASA/GAL Association's core values are: adaptability, collaboration, integrity, quality, respect, service and stewardship.
3. CASA of Iowa values the acts of service, transparency, inclusion, trust and continuous learning and improvement in all programmatic decisions.

Policy 1.4: Work in accordance with the agency vision

1. CASA of Iowa and Iowa Child Advocacy Board Vision Statement is as follows *Safety, permanency, and well-being of every child in Iowa.*

Policy 1.5: Serve children and youth

1. The primary child population served by CASA of Iowa is clearly defined as children from birth to 18 years of age who have been adjudicated Child In Need of Assistance (CINA) per [Iowa Code Section 232.2, subsection 5](#).
2. Per [Iowa Code 232.2, subsection 9](#), CASA of Iowa will serve any child for whom the court appoints a Court Appointed Special Advocate. 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.

Best Practice:

Local program staff are encouraged to follow the National CASA/GAL Association's Core Model and accept cases before the court due to abuse and neglect.

3. 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 court appointed special advocate to continue a relationship with the child beyond the child's eighteenth birthday.
4. All CASA of Iowa advocates must submit an application, provide three personal references, complete a personal interview with Iowa CASA staff, pass background checks, complete thirty (30) hours of pre-service training and take an Oath of Confidentiality with a judge before being appointed to a case to serve children and youth.

Policy 1.6: Fulfill the Role of a Local Program

1. CASA of Iowa local programs provide best-interest advocacy for children in the program area. The role of the local program includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Support for advocates to advocate for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse and neglect.
 - b. Raise awareness of the needs of children in the community, along with awareness of the program's mission and role.
 - c. Interact efficiently within the judicial system, stakeholders and community at large.
 - d. Recruit, screen, train, support and retain advocate advocates and coaches.
 - e. Ensure a program with a strong foundation through compliance with CASA of Iowa's policies, National CASA/GAL Association standards and alignment with core values.

Resource and Link

[Role of Local Programs](#)

Policy 1.7: Respect and support roles of the State Organization and National CASA

1. Local programs will be knowledgeable of and support the roles of the State Organization and National CASA.

Resources and Links

[Role of the State Organization](#)

[Role of National CASA](#)

Standard 2: Guiding Principles

Standard 2 Statement: 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.

Policy 2.1: Instill best interest advocacy

1. 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.
 - i. Visits take place to ensure in-depth knowledge of the child's life for informed recommendations to the court.
 - ii. 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.

Policy 2.2: Train program staff and advocates on the guiding principles

- 1. CASA of Iowa provides orientation, training, and continuing education for staff, advocates and members of the administrative authority working with the program about the guiding principles.
- 2. CASA of Iowa is committed to using the guiding principles to direct advocacy practice.

Standard 3: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Standard 3 Statement: CASA of Iowa is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion and demonstrates these qualities in its own operations, management and quality advocacy for children.

Policy 3.1: Reflect the populations served

Diversity, equity and inclusion are highlighted, celebrated and advocated for in the program's work related to operations, management and quality advocacy. **CASA of Iowa staff and advocates shall provide written acknowledgment indicating agreement and understanding of the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action, Anti-Discrimination, and Anti-Harassment policies.**

1. CASA of Iowa works to diversify its staff and advocates to reflect the population of children served.
 - a. Local programs engage in collaborative efforts with the State Organization to foster diversity, equity and inclusion. **Each local program is required to have a written plan and action steps to diversify the program's advocate base to reflect the population of children served. The plan shall:**
 - i. **Include specific, measurable goals to meet the strategies at the state level in addition to any needs identified at the local level**
 - ii. **Be reviewed annually as part of the program evaluation process.**
 - iii. **Be updated at least every three years.**

Resource: [Recruitment Plan \(CASA Template\)](#)

- b. All statewide program staff and advocates must participate in approved education and training related to diversity, equity and inclusion annually.
 - i. Documentation of staff diversity training will be managed by the State Organization.
 - ii. Documentation of advocate diversity training will be managed by the local program office staff.
2. The local program engages individuals who can:
 - a. Help the program identify and understand the needs of the children served.
 - b. Identify the actions the program can take to address these needs in governance, recruitment, training, supervision, retention, evaluation and advocacy.
 - c. Identification of these individuals, along with results from collaboration will be documented in the local program diversity, equity and inclusion plan.

Policy 3.2: Promote equity and inclusion in all areas of programming

1. CASA of Iowa promotes equity and inclusion through its management, operations, recruitment, continuing education, retention and advocacy policies and practices. The elements of equity and inclusion shall be integrated throughout all facets of CASA of Iowa programming.
2. All staff and advocate recruitment materials, continuing education and retention documents will include diverse populations and messaging.

Policy 3.3: Commit to understanding disproportionality and disparate outcomes

1. CASA of Iowa is committed to understanding disproportionality and disparate outcomes and how this affects the communities where programming operates, along with individual children and their advocacy needs.
2. As part of the diversity, equity and inclusion plan, all local programs will:
 - a. Annually collect and review data for the program coverage which may include: race, socioeconomic, gender, sexual orientation, and disability data for all children in the counties served.
 - b. Collaborate with child welfare providers and court representatives to identify and understand their community's issues of disproportionality and disparate outcomes.
 - c. Work in partnership with child welfare providers and court representatives to address issues of disproportionality and disparate outcomes.
 - d. The Locally Agreed-Upon Procedures documented with each DHS office will include recognition of and potential efforts to address and reduce disproportionality in areas where the CASA of Iowa program is serving children. **Resource:** [Locally Agreed-Upon Procedures](#)
3. Local CASA programs will participate in activities to increase the awareness and understanding of advocates and staff regarding issues of disproportionality and disparate outcomes within its local child welfare and court systems.
 - a. Efforts shall be documented annually in the state's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan.

Policy 3.4: Promote a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace

CASA of Iowa promotes a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace.

1. CASA of Iowa is inclusive and actively recruits qualified staff reflective of the children served. The recruitment and selection practices are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
2. CASA of Iowa makes reasonable efforts to ensure the workplace is free of barriers for staff, advocates and others.
3. CASA of Iowa complies with the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. Human resources practices are administered to all persons without discrimination based upon age, race, ethnicity, national origin (ancestry), color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or physical challenge.
4. CASA of Iowa publicizes the State of Iowa's equal opportunity policy in their staff recruitment materials.

Standard 4: Ethical Conduct

Standard 4 Statement: CASA of Iowa upholds the credibility, integrity, dignity and reliability of CASA advocacy by conducting all interactions in an honest, fair, respectful and compassionate manner. These policies help to avoid conflicts of interest and preserve confidentiality for children and families.

Policy 4.1: Conduct work ethically and minimize risk for conflict of interest

1. CASA of Iowa requires all CASA-related tasks and conduct to be completed ethically. The State Organization determines policies related to ethical conduct. The local program follows the administrative authority's policies that govern ethical conduct of its staff, paid consultants and advocates.
2. CASA of Iowa's [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) is required to be signed by all staff, advocates, coaches and non-advocate advocates at hire or case assignment and when updated policy manuals are released, at least every three years.
 - a. Advocate and coach policy acknowledgments are stored in the CAMS volunteer record.
 - b. Staff acknowledgements are stored in the employee record with the State Organization.
3. Violation of Conflict of Interest Policy:
 - a. Violations of Conflict of Interest policy will be reviewed by the state's appointing authority. Appropriate discipline, up to and including dismissal from the CASA program will be implemented.

Procedure:

If an advocate is found to have violated CASA of Iowa policies related to a conflict of interest, 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. [CAMS Staff User Guide: End Case Assignment for Volunteer](#)
 - d. If another advocate is not available, close out the case and exit the advocate per CAMS user guide instructions. [CAMS Staff User Guide: Closing a Case in CAMS](#)
4. The local program's staff and advocates must immediately notify the State Organization **if/when they are involved in any investigation for abuse/neglect or criminal misconduct, or if/when criminal charges are filed against them.**
 5. Local programs shall promptly refer to National CASA/GAL 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. The State Organization shall promptly notify the National CASA/GAL Association of the incident.

6. If active advocates are employed by or affiliated with the administrative authority, the State Organization follows state processes and procedures for handling potential conflicts of interest in relation to human resources and other issues with potential for a conflict of interest.

Policy 4.2: Maintain confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality is of paramount importance in CASA-related work to demonstrate respect for the child and family's right to privacy.

1. The local program follows written policies and procedures regarding access to, use of, and release of information about the children it serves to ensure that the confidentiality of children and their families is maintained at all times.
2. CASA of Iowa staff, coaches and advocates will uphold the integrity of CASA of Iowa through their actions. Those involved with the program will appropriately use goods/materials and will make every effort to secure confidential information they obtain through their position with CASA of Iowa.
3. The [Confidentiality Policy](#) is required to be signed by all staff, advocates, coaches and non-advocate advocates at hire or case assignment and when updated policy manuals are released, at least every three years.
 - a. Advocate and coach policy acknowledgments are stored in the CAMS volunteer record.
 - b. Staff acknowledgements are stored in the employee record with the State Organization.
4. All records of staff, advocates and program donors shall be considered confidential and are not subject to release under Iowa Code, chapter 22, examination of public records.
 - a. If requested, advocates have access to their own advocate record, with the exception of personal reference checks.
5. Any pertinent child or advocate program data must be de-identified prior to release and if possible, reported in aggregate to prevent individual identification.
6. 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.

Procedure:

- a. To obtain a copy of the Child Protective Services Assessment Summary, complete Authorization for Release of Child and Dependent Adult Abuse Information [form](#), sections 1 and 3.
- b. Send the form to the Child Abuse Registry to obtain child protective assessment information.

7. CASA Report to the Court Dissemination – Confidentiality of Records
 - 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.
 - b. Reports shall only be disseminated to those who are authorized to receive judicial notice and be present at a hearing. These parties include: DHS, juvenile court officer, county attorney, child's parent and parent attorney, child's guardian and attorney if one is appointed, child's legal custodian and attorney if one is appointed, child's attorney and/or guardian ad litem, intervener and intervener's attorney if one is appointed), according to local protocol or as court ordered.
 - i. Code generally does not authorize CASA report dissemination to foster parents, relative caregivers or suitable other caregivers, unless documented as the child's legal custodian.
 1. Exception: If the permanency goal has been changed to adoption, Iowa Code §232.88 allows 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.
 - ii. If a party is represented by legal 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. CASA reports are provided to the local Foster Care Review Board in accordance with Iowa Code §237.20 1a(1).
 - d. Intervener as referenced above 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).
8. Disclosing Information – Confidentiality of Records and information
 - a. A CASA Advocate or Coach may disclose or release information with the following individuals: *Iowa Code §237.21 (2)(b). A Court Appointed Special Advocate 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.*
 - b. 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, teachers or service providers).
 - c. 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.
 - d. Advocates shall refer to the [Case Party Privilege of Information](#) reference guide when determining which parties they only collect information from versus the parties they can share information with.

9. Violations of confidentiality policy.
 - a. A violation of a child or family's confidentiality will be taken seriously. Regardless whether the violation was made intentionally or unintentionally; with or without malice, the CASA Organization has a duty to immediately remove the advocate from the case and dismiss them from the CASA Program. In addition, when a violation occurs, the advocate has committed a simple misdemeanor and may be subject to the simple misdemeanor charge by their county officials or litigation by the offended party as the violator was not acting within the scope of Iowa CASA advocate protection provided under Code §232.13 State Liability and Chapter 669, Iowa Tort Claims Act.

Procedure:

If an advocate is found to have violated CASA of Iowa policies related to confidentiality, they must be removed from their case and exited from the local program.

- a. Talk with the advocate about the violation. Inform the advocate the program must release them from their advocacy duties.
 - b. 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.
 - c. File a proposed [Order to Release CASA Advocate](#) -OR- [Order to Release CASA Advocate and CASA Program](#), with the court.
 - d. Reassign case if another advocate is available. [CAMS Staff User Guide: End Case Assignment for Volunteer](#)
 - e. If another advocate is not available, close out the case and exit the advocate per CAMS user guide instructions. [CAMS Staff User Guide: Closing a Case in CAMS](#)
10. CASA applicants and observers of CASA-related work and hearings are not authorized to receive confidential information unless they have signed a Confidentiality Agreement.

Procedure:

If an applicant or other observer wishes to observe CASA-related work, they must sign a [Confidentiality Agreement CASA Observer or Non-Advocate Volunteer](#).

11. Use of Technology: 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 protection.
12. CASA of Iowa staff, advocates and coaches are **strictly prohibited** from commenting on any case to the media or legislators. Review the [confidentiality policy](#) for more information.

Policy 4.3: Non-Juvenile court subpoena of records or testimony

1. Per confidentiality policy, CASA of Iowa is not authorized to approve or allow its advocates to provide documents, information or testimony in a non-juvenile court proceeding. To protect confidentiality and ensure CASA of Iowa remains in compliance with Iowa Code, these policies and procedures must be followed when a CASA advocate learns they may be subpoenaed in a non-juvenile matter.

Procedure:

- a. [Volunteer Guidelines for Handling Subpoenas](#): If an advocate is approached in-person or via telephone/email about potentially testifying or providing documentation in a non-juvenile court matter, advise the attorney or other party that CASA advocates are only authorized to testify in juvenile court proceedings.
 - i. The advocate shall direct the attorney or other party to the local program coordinator.
 - ii. The advocate shall immediately inform the local program coordinator that they have been asked about providing testimony in a non-juvenile court matter and they have directed the attorney to the Coordinator.
 - b. [Coordinator Guidelines for Testimony Requests](#): If the attorney reaches out to the local program coordinator, the coordinator will speak with the attorney to gather information and tell the attorney that CASA advocates can only accept service on a subpoena if the service is adequate and personal.
 - i. Personal Service is served in person and includes required payment of witness fees and mileage to/from the courthouse where the proceeding is taking place.
 - ii. Adequate service means the subpoena has been served with ample notice (around 2 weeks).
 - c. [Coordinator Guidelines for Handling Subpoenas](#): If the attorney persists and issues the subpoena with personal and adequate service, CASA of Iowa, along with legal counsel for the Department of Inspections and Appeals will determine how to proceed.
 - i. If the date or time of the advocate's expected attendance at court is in conflict with their schedule, please let the program Coordinator know. Our offices can work to quash the subpoena based on the advocate's lack of availability.
 - ii. If an advocate receives a subpoena in person or via email/phone/fax that does not meet the personal and adequate standards for service, the advocate will send the subpoena to the local program coordinator. DIA Legal Counsel and the Attorney General's office will be involved to determine the next course of action.
2. If it is determined that the advocate's testimony (or providing needed documentation) is needed and appropriate for the criminal/civil matter, the advocate will be asked to attend the court hearing as subpoenaed. **Resource:** [Notice of Position for Testimony](#)
- a. When taking the witness stand, be sworn in.
 - b. Before answering any questions under oath, the advocate will read the highlighted section of text provided by the local program coordinator which references Iowa code sections related to confidentiality of information retained by the CASA Program.
Resources: [Testimony involving child abuse](#) and [Testimony not involving child abuse](#)
 - c. After reading the statement, the presiding Judge will either order the advocate to provide testimony or dismiss the advocate from the stand. If ordered by the presiding judge to continue with testimony, the advocate will continue answering questions as requested.
 - i. If the information released during testimony involves child abuse information, the advocate will follow the guidelines provided in [CASA Testimony in Criminal/Civil Case Involving Child Abuse](#).

Standard 5: Governance and Administration

Standard 5 Statement: CASA of Iowa oversees and ensures compliance with applicable laws, regulations, fiduciary obligations, written agreements, standards and financial sustainability of the program. Local programs have the legal authority to operate through [Iowa Code 237.18, subsection 7](#).

Policy 5.1: State Organization oversight and responsibilities

1. The State Organization ensures local program compliance with state and local statutes, court rules, ordinances, executive orders and appropriate regulations.
2. The State Organization provides local programs with access to legal counsel and/or relevant legal expertise, via the Department of Inspections and Appeals, to clarify the meaning of laws and regulations governing its program operations and to provide legal counsel as needed to assist in performing the duties assigned to the advocates by the courts.
3. The State Organization provides local programs with operational goals and objectives in the written form of the individual performance plan for local program coordinators. The goals and objectives are reviewed and evaluated annually.
4. Local programs are responsible for compliance with all policies required by the National CASA/GAL Association and the State Organization.
5. The State Organization reviews all required policies at least every three (3) years to assess the need for updates. All updated policy manuals contain the date of each review and revision and are approved by CASA of Iowa's administrative authority.
6. **CASA of Iowa adheres to the state's [whistleblower policy](#).**
7. The State Organization secures sufficient resources, and manages resources prudently in order to support the provision of services for the local programs.
8. The State Organization establishes the local programs' written budget annually to guide the management of resources for the local programs.
9. As employees of the State of Iowa, CASA of Iowa staff have applicable liability protections.
10. The State Organization hires the local program coordinator (equivalent of a program director) for the local program and is responsible for succession planning for the coordinator position.
 - a. The State Organization will assign an interim local program coordinator(s) to maintain program oversight,
 - b. The State Organization is responsible for conducting a search utilizing the State of Iowa's hiring process.
 - c. The State Organization is responsible for communicating program staff changes to National CASA/GAL, staff, stakeholders, and program advocates.
11. The State Organization evaluates the performance of the local program coordinator in writing at least annually utilizing the Individual Performance Plan document provided for state employees which includes written goals, action steps, performance criteria and a timetable.

- a. The local program coordinator participates in the annual performance evaluation process.
 - b. The local program coordinator is given the opportunity to review the evaluation document and include employee comments before the evaluation document is signed and submitted to Human Resources for the employee's record.
12. The State Organization utilizes a CASA Policy and Procedures Committee, composed of local program coordinators from across the state, to address program policy or operations. The deputy administrator for the State Organization serves as the committee chair and maintains documentation of meetings, topics and relevant attendance information.

Policy 5.2: Screening of Staff and Advocates

CASA of Iowa ensures and monitors screening of all staff and advocates.

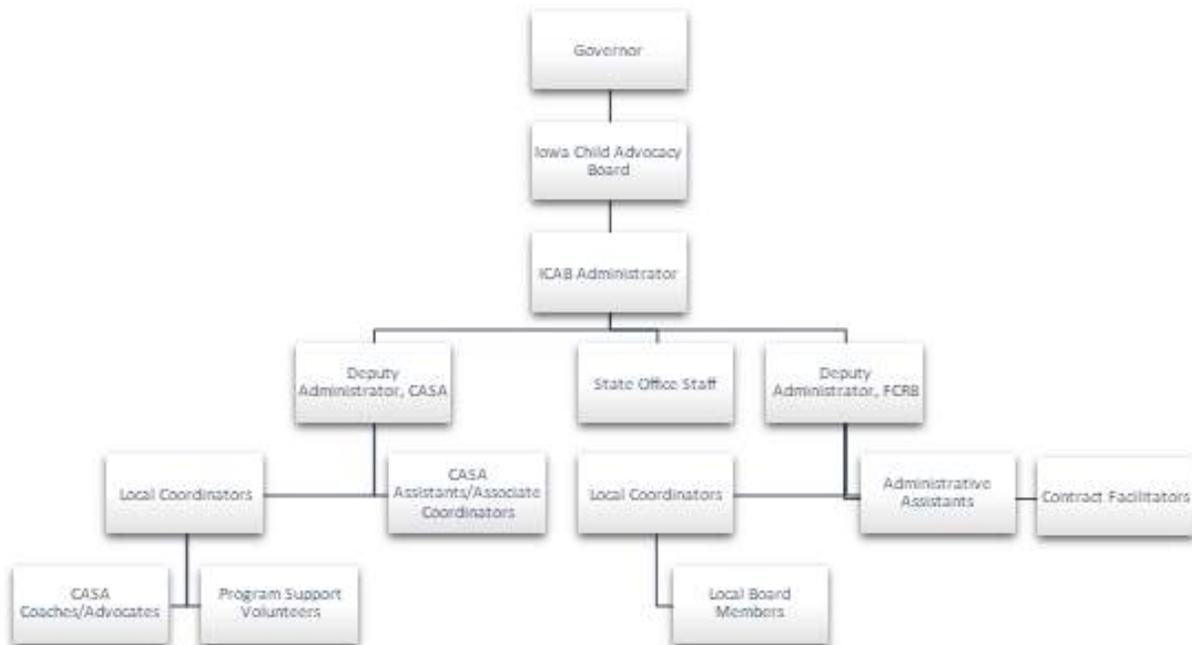
1. Obtains a completed written application from each prospective staff person and advocate containing information about educational background, training, employment history and experience working with children.
2. Obtains the names of three (3) or more references that are unrelated to the applicant.
3. Conducts a personal interview in-person with each prospective staff person and advocate.
4. Background check process and screening includes, (also referenced in [Standard 8.2](#)):
 - a. Obtains written authorization and information for the program and other appropriate agencies to secure and secures a background check on each prospective staff person and advocate initially and at least every four (4) years to include:
 - i. Criminal records from the court jurisdiction in which the applicant currently resides and works.
 - ii. State criminal records.
 - iii. FBI or another national criminal database.
 - iv. National sex offender registry.
 - v. Child abuse registry or child protective services check where permissible by law.
 - vi. Social security number check or the equivalent that allows for additional names, aliases and/or addresses to be obtained for the individual for further checks.
 - b. CASA of Iowa secures county and state criminal record checks for any county or state not covered by a national criminal background check in which the prospective staff person or advocate has resided for the previous seven (7) years.
 - c. CASA of Iowa secures a child abuse registry or child protective services check, unless prohibited by law, for any state in which the prospective staff person or advocate has resided for the previous seven (7) years.
 - d. CASA of Iowa declines any prospective staff person or advocate who refuses or fails to sign a release of information form or submit the required information necessary for any of the checks required by National CASA/GAL Association Standards for Local Programs.
 - e. CASA of Iowa declines or dismisses any prospective or current staff person or advocate applicant found to have been convicted of, or having charges pending for a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse or neglect or related acts that would pose risks to children or the program's credibility. An applicant with a documented criminal

domestic abuse, child physical abuse offense or sexual abuse documented on the abuse registry will not be approved.

- f. The local program coordinator can request consideration of hiring a prospective staff person or accepting an advocate by making a formal request for administrative review and determination. CASA of Iowa considers if an individual is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is unrelated to or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the program, the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony was committed, as well as other factors that may influence the decision, to accept the applicant as a staff person or advocate.
 - g. CASA of Iowa completes and documents all screening before the staff person or advocate is accepted by the program and written verification is maintained on file at the program office.
 - h. CASA of Iowa's advocate application provides written notification about all screening and background check requirements. Consent to conduct background checks is obtained at the interview.
5. CASA of Iowa repeats and documents these record checks for each active staff person and advocates at least every four (4) years.
 6. CASA of Iowa determines and monitors adherence to policies related to corrective action(s) for any current staff person or advocate who violates a program policy, court rule or law that poses a risk to a child or negatively impacts the program.

Policy 5.3: Program Administration Oversight

1. The State Organization ensures clear lines of accountability and authority exist at all levels of the program's organizational and management structures and are formalized in a chart of the organization for the program showing lines of accountability to which all program staff and advocates have received orientation.



2. The State Organization provides opportunities for interactions amongst advocates, staff and the state board to promote communication and collaboration.

Policy 5.4: Orientation for the Iowa Child Advocacy Board

1. The State Organization ensures new members of the Iowa Child Advocacy Board receive formal orientation to:
 - a. Applicable laws and regulations.
 - b. National CASA/GAL Association Core Model.
 - c. National CASA/GAL Association Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs.
 - d. Roles of national, state and local CASA/GAL programs.
 - e. Goals, objectives, structure and operations, including receiving key documents.

Policy 5.5: Training and Development Plan for Iowa Child Advocacy Board

1. CASA of Iowa provides periodic opportunities for ongoing training and development to improve the knowledge and skills of the State Board members who administer the local court appointed special advocate and foster care review board programs.

Standard 6: Management and Funding

Standard 6 Statement: CASA of Iowa demonstrates mission-oriented leadership in operations management and is a responsible steward of all resources in order to maximize advocacy for children who are eligible for and in need of a CASA/GAL advocate.

Policy 6.1: Program Leadership

1. The local program coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day management of the program.
2. The local program coordinator has the following qualifications:
 - a. Education and/or training in a related field.
 - b. Management skills and experience to effectively administer the program's human and financial resources as applicable to the program's structure within the public entity.
 - c. Ability to effectively coordinate services with the court and other community agencies.
3. The local program coordinator:
 - a. Plans and coordinates with the administrative authority on the development and periodic review of program policies for approval when serving on the CASA of Iowa's Program Policy committee.
 - b. Establishes a logic model that is approved by the administrative authority and evaluated annually.
 - c. Attends, or is represented by a designee, at all meetings that pertain to program management as required by the State Organization.
 - d. Participates in all-staff meetings and regional meetings hosted by the State Organization.
4. The State Organization oversees human resources management for local programs and ensures the local program's staff management is carried out in accord with written policy.

Policy 6.2: Management of Financial Resources

1. The State Organization follows a written plan for securing and maintaining financial resources for local programs adequate to accomplish its established goals and objectives.
 - a. The organization uses state, private and federal funding to promote the mission of the organization and utilizes resources in a manner that maximizes advocacy for children who are eligible for CASA advocacy.
 - b. Local programs may consult with the State Organization to identify funding opportunities, conduct grant reporting and fulfill grant activity requirements to further the mission.
 - c. As such, all employees are required to act as responsible stewards of this funding.
2. The State Organization seeks to conserve its financial resources by:
 - a. Following policies established by the Iowa Department of Administrative Services (DAS) regarding purchasing and inventory control.
 - b. Following policies established by DAS about competitive bidding, where applicable, in accordance with policy and law or regulation.

3. The State Organization, on behalf of the local programs, regularly analyzes:
 - a. Cost of operations.
 - b. Current and potential funding sources.
 - c. Allocation of funds.
 - d. Effectiveness in achieving budget objectives.
4. Local programs will adhere to the policies and procedures for [Friends of Iowa CASA and ICFCRB](#) accounts.
5. Local programs will adhere to the policies and procedures for [Special Revenue](#) accounts.

Policy 6.3: Reports and Accounts for Fiscal Records

1. CASA of Iowa collaborates with the Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) for prudent financial management.
2. Audits are conducted by the State Auditor's office.
3. CASA of Iowa provides a financial report to the Iowa Child Advocacy Board at least quarterly.
4. CASA of Iowa ensures that an annual report is developed which includes financial, statistical and service data summary information.
5. CASA of Iowa programs receiving grant funding through National CASA/GAL may be subject to additional financial oversight.

Policy 6.4: Accounting and Financial Reporting

1. CASA of Iowa follows operational policies and procedures set forth by the Department of Inspections and Appeals.
2. CASA of Iowa's account records are kept up to date and balanced on a monthly basis.

Policy 6.5: Resources to Sustain the Program

1. CASA of Iowa adheres to the administrative authority's policies and procedures regarding resource development. Under Iowa Code §237.18, subsection 8, the Iowa Child Advocacy Board and the administrator are expected to raise funds to supplement the appropriation from the state.
2. CASA of Iowa provides potential funders with an accurate description of the program, its purpose and services as well as the financial needs for which the solicitation is being made.

Policy 6.6: Workplace Management

1. The State Organization determines the office locations for local programs in Iowa.
2. All local program offices must have access to a location for meetings (e.g., interviews with applicants, networking and training events with staff, advocates, and coaches, etc.) that offers privacy to protect confidentiality.
3. Local programs maintain a work environment for its staff and volunteers that is conducive to effective performance.
4. Local programs' facilities comply with applicable health, fire safety and accessibility codes and regulations.
5. Local programs take reasonable measures to maintain its equipment and ensure it is used as intended in accordance with State of Iowa, DIA and DAS policies.

Policy 6.7: Monitor and Minimize Risk

1. The State Organization is responsible for monitoring and minimizing risks at the state and local levels.

Standard 7: Human Resources

Standard 7 Statement: CASA of Iowa follows written policies for recruiting, screening, training, supervising, evaluating and developing staff from diverse backgrounds in an equitable and inclusive environment that advances the CASA/GAL mission.

Policy 7.1: Human Resource Policies

1. CASA of Iowa has and adheres to written human resources policies and practices that specify the responsibilities of staff. Human resources policies and practices are equitable, clear and consistent. CASA of Iowa adheres to:
 - a. [Department of Inspections and Appeals Handbook](#)
 - b. [State of Iowa Employee Handbook](#)
2. Human Resources policies available to CASA of Iowa include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Human resources practices
 - b. Working conditions
 - c. Wage policies and benefits, as applicable
 - d. Insurance protection
 - e. Required and supplemental training, and development opportunities
 - f. Social media policy
 - g. Policy requiring all staff and contract workers to disclose any paid employment, contract work, advocate service, or membership on a board of directors that might present a conflict of interest
 - h. Whistleblower policy
 - i. Gifts and gratuities
3. As human resource policies are updated by the state and/or the Department of Inspections and Appeals, CASA of Iowa provides a copy to each staff member. The State Organization obtains, and keeps in the supervisory file, a signed acknowledgement that each staff member has read and understands the policies. Any changes to human resource policies are provided to staff in writing.
4. CASA of Iowa complies with applicable laws and regulations governing fair employment practices.
5. The State Organization follows DAS procedures for establishing positions which includes a review of the position description questionnaire (job description) to determine the appropriate job classification which includes salary and benefit information.
6. The State Organization follows DAS procedures regarding grievances by staff and acts on any complaints in accordance with DAS procedures.
 - a. The complainant is informed of the resolution of any complaint, subject to confidentiality limitations, and a copy of the notification is maintained with the State Organization.

Policy 7.2: Diverse Qualified Staff

1. CASA of Iowa has recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that the needs of the program are adequately met through an ongoing planning process, which details the type and number of staff positions required to accomplish its goals and objectives.
 - a. Each position with CASA of Iowa has a job description which includes relevant education and/or experience and competencies as required by the job classification.
2. The State Organization conducts an interview with all applicants considered for employment with the program.
3. The State Organization completes full screening of any applicant considered for employment prior to finalizing any offer of employment, consistent with [Policy 5.2](#).
4. The State Organization's interview process for all staff applicants includes discussion about the issues and challenges that impact the children and families the program serves.

Policy 7.3: Retention of Qualified Staff

1. The State Organization has a succession plan for key staff at the state and local levels.
2. The State Organization retains staff qualified to carry out its program goals.
3. CASA of Iowa has a written job description for each position or group of similar positions which clearly specifies qualifications and responsibilities.
4. Administrative and/or supervisory responsibility is assigned to staff qualified by experience and training and is determined by the employee's job classification.
5. All staff meet all applicable state registration, licensing or certification requirements for their assignment and/or use of professional titles.
6. The State Organization, in its ongoing planning process, details the type and number of staff required to accomplish the program's goals and objectives.

Policy 7.4: New Staff Orientation

1. CASA of Iowa provides new staff orientation introducing the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model, Standards for State Organizations who are publicly administered, Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs, Role of the Local Program, and the program's policies and services.

Procedure: Refer to [New Staff Orientation Checklist](#)

2. Newly hired state office staff, local program coordinators complete the CASA pre-service training within six (6) months of hire.

Policy 7.5: Staff Development

The State Organization facilitates the development and progression of staff through training and leadership opportunities.

1. The State Organization implements a training and development plan for staff that is reviewed annually and ensures that all state and local staff complete 12 hours of continuing education annually to improve knowledge and skills to fulfill the requirements of their respective positions and/or advance the CASA/GAL mission. Administrative assistants, who do not provide advocate supervision, are required to complete 6 hours of continuous education.
 - a. All staff must complete at least one (1) hour of continuing education in diversity, equity and inclusion.
 - b. Staff development documentation is maintained by the State Organization.
2. The training and development plan prepares local program coordinators to effectively support advocates who work with children who have experienced abuse or neglect. The training and development plan provides information about child welfare, law and legal process, trauma-informed care, child development, cultural competency, inclusion, and diversity issues, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and other relevant subjects.
3. CASA of Iowa utilizes a CASA Coach model (peer coordinator model equivalent) where local program coordinators provide supervision to the coaches and hold them accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities. See [8.10 Coach Model](#).

Policy 7.6: Supervision and Evaluation of Staff

1. CASA of Iowa provides adequate supervision for its staff and holds staff accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.
2. CASA of Iowa follows the DAS policy and procedures for periodic evaluation of staff to review performance against established criteria at least annually. This process includes:
 - a. Active employee participation.
 - b. Assessment of job performance related to the quality and quantity of work defined in the individual performance plan established with the employee for the reporting period.
 - c. Clearly stated objectives for future performance.
 - d. Opportunity for employee self-evaluation.
 - e. Recommendation for further training and skill building, if applicable.
 - f. The opportunity for the employee to include written comments and discuss the review with the supervisor before the evaluation is finalized and submitted for administrative review and signature.
 - g. A signed copy is provided to the employee and DIA Human Resources.
3. CASA of Iowa follows DAS policy and procedures, which are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, for disciplinary action and termination of employment, including violations of program policy and/or documented substandard performance.

4. The local program coordinator holds regularly scheduled case conferences with coaches to review progress on each case.
 - a. The frequency of individual or group supervision is arranged on the basis of staff needs, the complexity and size of the workload and the local program coordinator's familiarity with assignments.
 - b. Coaches participate in a performance review with the Local program coordinator annually.

Policy 7.7: Human Resource Records

1. CASA of Iowa adheres to the State of Iowa's human resource record policies as noted in [Policy 7.1](#).

Standard 8: Volunteer Administration

Standard 8 Statement: CASA of Iowa follows written policies for recruiting, screening, training, supervising, recognizing and retaining advocates to fulfill the role and duties of court appointed special advocates/guardian's ad litem, in accordance with applicable laws, rules, regulations and standards.

Policy 8.1: Recruitment of advocates

1. The local program has a written, inclusive plan for recruiting and selecting advocates who reflect the diversity of children served.
 - a. The recruitment plan includes CASA/GAL program Guiding Principles (Standard 2), measurable goals, and strategies to attract a diverse advocate pool.
 - b. The recruitment plan includes measurable goals and strategies for community collaboration, media outreach, speaking engagements and other appropriate recruitment efforts.
2. Recruitment efforts and materials should reflect a diverse population and be geared toward inclusion of people of color, men and other minority groups. CASA program staff are to initiate contact with any individual who expresses interest in serving as a CASA advocate.
3. The standardized recruitment materials also include
 - a. Purpose and role of the CASA/GAL advocate.
 - b. Qualifications to become a CASA/GAL advocate.
 - c. Minimum time commitment required.
 - d. Equal opportunity statement.
4. Once an individual inquires about the program or files an application, program staff enter the individual's name and contact information in CAMS. Contact notes are entered into the Inquiry Modal. **Procedure:** [CAMS Staff User Guide: Inquiry Dashboard](#)
5. CASA of Iowa staff refer potential advocates and coaches to other local programs within Iowa, or to another state CASA organization, if the applicant might be eligible for or prefer to serve in another CASA program.

Best Practice:

Local programs use standardized materials to recruit advocates which includes:

1. Online application in CAMS
2. [CASA of Iowa Program Fact Sheet](#)
3. [CASA Job Description](#)

Policy 8.2: Screening of Prospective Advocates

An advocate CASA/GAL is an individual who meets qualifications, has successfully completed pre-service training, serves under the supervision of the program, and is appointed by the court to advocate for children who come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect as defined by the

state child welfare laws. The program completes all screening consistent with [Policy 5.2](#) before the advocate is assigned to a case and all screening is documented in the data system.

1. Qualifications of CASA Applicants

- a. An 'approved' CASA advocate with the Iowa CASA program is an individual who:
 - i. is at least 19 years of age; recognizing that the National CASA standard is 21 years of age.
 - ii. meets program qualifications.
 - iii. has participated in an in-person interview.
 - iv. has provided all documentation for screening and passed background checks.
 1. if an applicant refuses or fails to provide the necessary documentation for screening, the application is denied.
 - v. has provided three (3) qualifying reference checks unrelated to the applicant.
 - vi. has completed all pre-service training requirements.
 - vii. has taken an oath of confidentiality and been sworn as a CASA advocate by a local Juvenile Court judge.
- b. Persons who are employed by the Iowa Child Advocacy Board, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Inspections and Appeals, the district court, or are an employee of an agency with which DHS contracts for services for children cannot be CASA advocates or coaches.
- c. Those who do not meet qualifications or are unable to complete and pass all screening requirements cannot be a CASA advocate or coach. Those not selected must be treated with dignity, respect and, if appropriate, referred to alternative advocate opportunities.
- d. A qualified advocate who transfers from an out-of-state CASA program must complete the full application and screening process for CASA of Iowa.
- e. Potential advocates must possess the following qualifications:
 - i. Have a genuine interest in advocating for children, their rights and needs.
 - ii. Have time to perform CASA duties and a schedule which allows for the completion of mandatory duties.
 - iii. Commit initially to a one (1) year case assignment as a CASA and understand that a CASA is expected to continue case responsibilities until the case or the assignment is terminated by the Court.
 - iv. Commit to the use of the CAMS data system for case management, assessment and reporting.
 - v. Commit to receiving 12 hours of in-service training annually.
 - vi. Have the ability to interact with people involved in the child welfare system - child, family, and professionals.
 - vii. Have the ability to communicate effectively both in verbal and written presentations.

2. Application

All prospective advocates must complete an application prior to consideration for admittance into the CASA program.

Best Practice: The preferred method for application is for the potential advocate to complete the application online in CAMS in its entirety and then submit.

1. If an applicant cannot or does not wish to apply online, they can complete a paper application. **Resource:** [Application](#)
2. CASA program staff or an office volunteer will enter the application into CAMS.

3. CASA Interview

The CASA applicant is required to participate in a personal, **in-person** interview with CASA staff. The interview must be completed before an applicant can begin pre-service training.

Best Practice: The interview process is a way for the local program coordinator or designated staff to meet with the applicant and get to know more about the prospective advocate. The interview questions cover several areas regarding the applicant's life. It is used as a way to understand what life, work and/or other advocate experiences the applicant has encountered. By knowing more about the applicant, the local program coordinator will be better able to match an advocate with a specific case.

Procedure:

1. The local program coordinator or designee schedules a time to meet with the applicant to conduct a personal interview.
2. Use the CASA [Interview Questionnaire](#) to document the interview responses. A copy of the completed interview questionnaire must be uploaded to the CAMS Application dashboard.

4. Personal Reference Checks

- a. All applicants must have a minimum of three (3) positive references, all of whom are unrelated to the applicant and have known the applicant a minimum of one year, on file prior to being approved for admittance into the CASA Program.
- b. If a negative reference is received, the local program coordinator will take the information into consideration when screening the applicant and request an additional reference if warranted.
- c. The applicant must provide a valid email address for all personal references.

Best Practice: The local program coordinator reviews the personal references as part of the screening process for the applicant. The local program coordinator may also want to contact DHS supervisors regarding the names of applicants. DHS may be aware of potential conflicts of interest with some applicants.

Procedure: [CAMS Staff User Guide: Reference Checks](#)

5. Approval of Applications

After the applicant has participated in an interview, has provided three favorable reference checks and these items are uploaded to CAMS, the application can be approved.

Procedure: [Refer to CAMS Staff User Guide: Processing an Application](#)

6. Background Checks

- a. Background checks must be successfully completed on all potential coaches and advocates before the advocate is able to accept a CASA case assignment.
- b. Applicants who refuse to sign required background check releases will not be considered for acceptance into the CASA program.

Procedure:

1. The following forms need to be completed and signed by each potential Advocate:
 - a. [DHS Child Abuse Registry Check Form](#)
 - b. [Iowa Child Advocacy Board Form](#)
2. Background checks will be completed during the advocate's pre-service training process.
3. State office staff will enter the background check results on the advocate's face sheet in CAMS.

7. Screening Applicants with a Criminal History

- a. Applicants with the following convictions, pending charges or child abuse registry findings will not be approved:
 - i. felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense
 - ii. felony or misdemeanor child abuse or neglect and related crimes
 - iii. domestic abuse
 - iv. founded child physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect (Denial of Critical Care) documented on the abuse registry
 - v. felony or misdemeanor acts that would pose a risk to children or to program credibility. Examples include:
 1. Personal violent crimes: assault, battery, harassment and other violent crimes such as cybercrime
 2. Inchoate crimes: aiding and abetting, attempt and conspiracy
- b. An applicant found to be convicted of other types of misdemeanors or felonies that would not pose a risk to children or program credibility may be approved by requesting an exception to policy by the Administrator after review in consultation with the local program coordinator.

Procedure: [CAMS Staff User Guide: Requesting a Background Exception](#)

8. Screening Advocates for Reactivation

- a. Advocates may take a leave of absence from active case assignment up to 24 months.
 - i. **Approved advocates who are unable or unwilling to accept a case assignment in a 6-month period must be placed on appropriate leave by entering an "Alert" in the advocate's CAMS record.**
 - ii. Leave status reaching 24 months with no planned date for reactivation in the program, will result in the dismissal of the advocate from the program.

- b. 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.
- c. If the inactive advocate completed continuing education while on leave, the coordinator will assess if any additional training is needed prior to assigning the advocate a case.
- d. Advocates who exit the program and return within one year can be reinstated without having to reapply or participate in pre-service training.
 - i. The local program coordinator will assess the advocate's need for refresher training on core aspects of the advocate role and deliver training accordingly; consider the continuing education the individual completed prior to exiting.
 - ii. Update the advocate status in CAMS.
- e. Advocates who exit the program and return greater than one year must reapply to become a CASA advocate and complete the screening process, pre-service training and take a new Oath of Confidentiality before being assigned to a case.

Procedure: Refer to [CAMS Staff User Guide: Advocate Status](#)

Policy 8.3: Advocate Training

1. Pre-Service Training

CASA of Iowa staff deliver training to advocates using an equivalent curriculum that has been pre-approved by the National CASA/GAL Association.

- a. All prospective CASA advocates must attend a minimum of 30 hours of CASA pre-service training prior to assignment to a case.
 - 1. The applicant/prospective advocate must complete an interview, reference checks and sign background check forms before proceeding to training.
 - 2. The prospective advocate must be in Training status in CAMS before they can be registered for training.
- b. CASA of Iowa maintains a minimum of one staff person certified as a Master Training of facilitators with the National CASA/GAL Association. Certified staff are allowed to conduct a Training of Facilitators to train other staff to deliver pre-service training. Verification of all completion must be retained for all staff who are certified trainers by either National CASA/GAL or the State Organization.
 - 1. The local program documents that each pre-service training facilitator completes 12 hours of continuing education annually to include topics related to facilitation, child welfare and CASA/GAL mission.
 - 2. Guest speakers shall not deliver the curriculum unless trained to facilitate the CASA/GAL training or a CASA/GAL Training Facilitator co-facilitates the content.

- c. The State Organization ensures that the training facilitator(s) offer the current, approved curriculum and prohibit the use of curriculum or materials that have been retired.
- d. CASA of Iowa verifies and documents that all advocates successfully complete the required pre-service training including:
 - 1. Training dates.
 - 2. Name(s) of facilitator(s).
 - 3. Verification that the facilitator has been trained as specified above.
 - 4. Participant attendance and completion records.
- e. All pre-service training must be completed within one year of the application date or within 6 months of the initiation of pre-service, whichever ends first. **Anyone in training status who does not meet this criteria must be exited from the program.**
- f. In addition to the 30 hours of pre-service training, if allowed by the court, the program requires each advocate to visit the court served while the court is in session to observe abuse/neglect proceedings before appearing in court for an assigned case.
- g. In addition, before being sworn in, all prospective CASA advocates must:
 - 1. Complete an orientation session
 - 2. Complete security awareness training
 - 3. Read and sign acknowledgement of the Iowa CASA Advocate Policy Manual which includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Conflict of Interest policy
 - b. Confidentiality policy
 - c. Social Media policy
 - d. Equal Opportunity / Anti-Discrimination / Anti-Harassment policy**
 - e. Transportation policy
- h. A qualified advocate who transfers to another local CASA program must complete, at a minimum, training regarding the local court and report writing for the new jurisdiction. All advocates within CASA of Iowa receive the same pre-service training on laws, program policies and procedures, and investigation.
- i. A qualified advocate who served in another state must apply and complete the onboarding process and pre-service training before being sworn-in as a CASA advocate in Iowa.

Best Practice:

During the CASA pre-service training, the local program coordinator will provide the CASA Advocate and Coach Policy Manual, which includes Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality, Social Media, Transportation and Equal Opportunity/Anti-Discrimination/Anti-Harassment. The local program coordinator will review each document in detail to help advocates understand the policies.

2. Continuing Education

- a. **Local program coordinators will offer and provide a sufficient number of opportunities for program advocates to acquire 12 hours of continuing education per calendar year. To meet the varying learning needs of advocates, coordinators must use various delivery methods (classroom, distance learning, webinars, independent study, community-based training/conferences, etc.) when providing educational opportunities.**
- b. Topics will be related, but not limited to: diversity, equity, inclusion; child welfare laws and practices; security awareness; case-specific topics; and skills of advocacy.

- c. All CASA advocates and coaches shall complete a minimum of 12 hours continuing education per calendar year related to best-interest advocacy, to be prorated from the month sworn in through the end of the calendar year. (i.e., an advocate sworn in July would need five hours of continuing education before December 31).
- d. Books/articles shall account for no more than four (4) hours of continuing education per calendar year.
- e. **Informal training (coordinator conversations) shall account for no more than three (3) hours of continuing education per calendar year. Training is defined as a structured process to reinforce an existing skill or impart a new skill that increases the volunteer's ability to advocate for the child's best interests. Supervision is not considered training.**

Policy 8.4: Swearing In Ceremony

An advocate is sworn in by the judge or court personnel before appointment to a case as permitted by local court practice.

1. After the advocate has successfully completed the screening process, background checks and all sessions of the CASA pre-service training curriculum, they are eligible to be sworn in by the court.
2. The advocate must read the [Iowa Code sections](#) in preparation to take the Statement of Confidentiality Oath and be sworn in by the presiding juvenile court judge or designee prior to accepting a case.
3. An appointment ceremony is conducted by the judge or designee using the Oath of Confidentiality [form](#). The advocate and judge sign the Statement of Confidentiality Oath and the judge signs the advocate's certificate of completion.
4. The State Organization provides an identification badge for all sworn advocates. The State Organization also provides pre-signed certificates to local program coordinators who will create certificates for each advocate as needed.
 - a. Request signed certificates from the state office.
 - b. Request an identification badge through the state office.

Best Practice: Local program coordinators may be able to arrange for the local judge to attend the final training session and swear in all the advocates at one time. The advocate receives the certificate and identification badge at the conclusion of the appointment ceremony.

Procedure:

1. The local program coordinator is responsible to schedule a time with the Judge for the appointment ceremony.
2. Local program coordinators, or designees, enter the sworn-in date into the advocate's record in [CAMS: Completion Checklist](#).
 - a. Entering the Sworn-In date in CAMS will signal successful completion of the training process and the advocate status in CAMS will be 'Approved'.
3. A copy of the oath is uploaded to the advocate's face sheet in CAMS; the original is given to the advocate.

Policy 8.5: Acceptance, Assignment and Closure of Cases

Local program coordinators accept orders for case assignments from the local judge, assign an advocate and Coach to each case and submit a proposed order to the judge for the CASA appointment.

1. Acceptance and Assignment

- a. Advocates are not assigned to more than two cases at a time unless approved by a supervisor.
- b. Any party to a case can request a CASA assignment but the Judge decides if a request is granted. **Resource:** [Request for CASA Assignment](#)
- c. All appointments and assignments are made by an appropriate written order of the court. When an [Order for CASA-GAL Assignment](#) or [Order for Court Appointed Special Advocate Assignment](#) is entered, the local program coordinator, in consultation with a coach, selects a trained advocate to serve on the case.
- d. When possible, an advocate is assigned at the earliest possible stage of the court proceedings.
- e. Cases are accepted and assigned regardless of age, race, ethnicity, national origin (ancestry), color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability or physical challenge.
 - i. Racial and ethnic, cultural and religious diversity issues of the advocate are considered during the assignment process.
 - ii. When the court orders an advocate on a case which requires interpreter services, the local program coordinator will request those services through the State Organization as needed.
- f. Advocates are assigned to cases with consideration to:
 - i. Experience, knowledge and skills.
 - ii. Nature and difficulty of the current assignments.
 - iii. Specific circumstances and availability of the advocate.
 - iv. Case type preference in relation to the specifics of the case.
- g. The local program accepts and assigns cases consistent with the Guiding Principles (Standard 2), statutory authority, National CASA/GAL Association Core Model and program capacity.
- h. CASA assignments must consider conflict of interest as outlined in the conflict of interest policy.
- i. The local program staff notifies all parties and agencies involved in the case of the advocate's appointment and release.
- j. Definition of a CASA Case
 - i. A CASA case consists of the child or siblings grouped into one case as defined by the court. Half or full biological siblings, or step-siblings may be separated into different cases by the court. In this situation, CASA of Iowa defines a "case" using the children identified in the court case, regardless of the connection of biological or legal parents
 - ii. For purposes of entry into the CAMS data system, a child cannot be linked as an active child in more than one case.
 - iii. If the court separates a family into two separate cases, the local program coordinator will also separate the CASA case into two cases in the data system.

1. A separate and unique report to the court must be filed for each hearing on each case, regardless of any biological or legal connection to another case.
2. The same CASA advocate is encouraged to serve in both cases.
- iv. If the court merges two cases into one, the local program coordinator will also merge the two CASA cases into one case in the data system.

Best Practice:

Since selecting the best advocate fit for a case is crucial, the local program coordinator can consult the DHS case manager assigned to the case to learn about case dynamics and needs.

Procedure:

1. After selecting the advocate, a proposed [Order for CASA-GAL](#) or [Order for Court Appointed Special Advocate](#) is submitted to the court by the local program coordinator.
 2. A proposed [Revocation of Order for Court Appointed Special Advocate Assignment](#) is submitted by the local program coordinator when there is no available advocate to accept the case.
 3. Upon receipt of an Order for Court Appointed Special Advocate or GAL Advocate, program staff begins a case record for the child(ren) in CAMS.
 4. The assigned advocate must accept the case in CAMS before gaining access to the case record.
 5. For each case assignment, advocates must sign a Notice of Acceptance/Confidentiality Agreement to acknowledge and affirm their willingness to accept the case, and abide by the confidentiality and conflict of interest provisions as outlined by National CASA/GAL and CASA of Iowa.
 - a. The Notice of Acceptance is an internal document and should not be filed with the court unless requested by the judge.
 - b. The Notice of Acceptance is to be uploaded to the case face sheet in CAMS.
 6. After receiving an Order for Court Appointed Special Advocate or Order for CASA-GAL, program staff notifies interested parties of the advocate's appointment to the case.
 - a. Notices are also provided to any individual who becomes a party during the life of the case. **Resources:** [Announcing CASA](#), [Parent Information](#), [CASA and You](#)
 7. The CASA coach, and/or local program coordinator, if there is no coach, will assign the case to the advocate and assist the advocate in ascertaining certain information from the case file, while gathering information to complete the first child assessment **within the first 60 days of assignment** and preparing questions for interested parties.
2. Court appointments when there are no available advocates
 - a. CASA of Iowa strives to accept all case referrals received.
 - b. There may be times when there are no advocates available to take the case. In this event, the case referral will be denied. If the court had already filed an order assigning the CASA program coordinator to the case, see procedure below to revoke the order.

Best Practice: If a case referral is denied, talk with the party about why the case cannot be accepted. If an order of Revocation must be filed with the court, include the reason for the

revocation in the order. It is also best practice to email the judge directly and explain to him or her why the case cannot be accepted for assignment to a CASA Advocate.

Procedure:

A proposed [Revocation of Order for Court Appointed Special Advocate Assignment](#) is submitted by the local program coordinator when there is no available advocate to accept the case.

3. Courtesy Visits / Courtesy Requests

- a. Local Courtesy Visit Requests. CASA of Iowa allows its advocates and local program coordinators to provide local courtesy visits and subsequent reports within the state. There are two kinds of courtesy CASA advocates:
 - i. An advocate whose geographic location is advantageous for visiting the child or family while reporting to the assigned CASA advocate on the case in another county -OR-
 - ii. An advocate who is needed to cover the entire case. Case parties physically live in a different county from the originally assigned local program coordinator and the coordinator does not have anyone willing to travel for the case.
- b. Out of State Requests: CASA of Iowa *does not accept* out of state requests to perform courtesy visits for other CASA/GAL programs. While an advocate is appointed in Iowa, the individual is not appointed by the other state's court of jurisdiction to represent the interests of the child. An Iowa advocate would not be considered a state employee or acting within the scope of their employment for purposes of the state Tort Claims Act (chapter 669) in this situation.

Procedure:

In scenario 3.a. i. (listed above), the following steps are completed:

1. Originating local program coordinator seeks a courtesy advocate from the courtesy coordinator.
2. After identifying an available courtesy advocate, the originating coordinator submits a proposed [Order for Court Appointed Special Advocate](#) that is modified to identify the individual as a courtesy CASA advocate.
3. The courtesy advocate will sign a [Notice of Acceptance/Confidentiality agreement](#) and a copy will be uploaded to the child's record in CAMS.
4. Originating coordinator adds the courtesy advocate as a party in EDMS and consults with the coordinator's supervisor about how to handle the courtesy assignment in CAMS.
5. The courtesy advocate visits the child a minimum of once every 30 days or if visiting family, visits as often as needed. When visiting a child, the courtesy advocate gathers information from child, school/daycare and placement providers.
6. The courtesy advocate emails notes about each visit to the originating local program coordinator who enters the notes in CAMS or delegates that responsibility to the assigned advocate. The assigned advocate will complete the report to court in CAMS.
7. The originating local program coordinator, or designee, files reports to the court, **approves the reports in CAMS and enters the EDMS filing date in CAMS.**
8. The originating local program coordinator completes a training needs assessment for the case with the courtesy advocate and provides identified training needs to the courtesy coordinator.

9. The courtesy coordinator maintains responsibility for training the courtesy advocate and for providing support, recognition and retention activities.
10. The originating local program coordinator receives dashboard credit for a) the case, b) the assigned advocate and their hours and miles, c) for the case, and d) for the children.
11. The courtesy coordinator receives dashboard credit for the courtesy advocate and their hours and miles. They do not receive credit for the case.
12. When the courtesy advocate completes his/her responsibilities, the originating program coordinator will submit a proposed [Order to Release CASA Advocate](#).

In scenario 3.a.ii. (listed above), the following steps are completed:

1. The local program coordinator from the county of case origin seeks an available advocate from the area needed (referred to as the receiving coordinator).
2. The receiving coordinator assumes all responsibility for the advocate and the case. The only exception to this is that the local program coordinator of case origin has to file the court report in EDMS.
3. Duties assumed by the receiving coordinator would include a) training assessment based on case needs, b) training delivery, c) monthly update and d) advocate recognition and retention activities until the case is removed from the receiving coordinator's caseload.
4. The receiving coordinator must send a finalized PDF copy of the CASA report to court to the local program coordinator of case origin who **approves the reports in CAMS and enters the EDMS filing date in CAMS**.
5. The local program coordinator from the receiving county gets dashboard credit for a) the case, b) the advocate and c) hour/miles of the advocate.

4. Closure of Cases

- a. The entry of an order discharging a child from the jurisdiction of the court shall automatically serve to terminate the appointment of the advocate.
- b. The local program coordinator may request that the CASA advocate and/or program appointment be dismissed.

Procedure:

1. The court reserves the right to terminate the appointment of an advocate and can do so in any court order. When a CASA appointment is terminated, program staff will follow the policies and procedures in the [CAMS Staff User Guide: Closing a Case](#).
2. If the CASA program is removing the advocate and program from the case, the Coordinator will file a proposed [Order to Release CASA and Program](#).
3. If the current advocate resigns or is removed from the case, the local program coordinator may wish to appoint a new advocate to the case by filing a proposed [Order to Release CASA Advocate](#) to remove only the advocate, not the CASA program. A new Order to Appoint CASA will be prepared by the local program coordinator and submitted to the judge for approval. Upon receipt of the Order, the program staff will notify the parties of the new advocate appointment.
4. Local program coordinators will notify the Clerk of Court of the change in appointment and have the previous advocate/Coach de-indexed from the case in EDMS and if appropriate, the new advocate indexed to the case.

5. Advocate assignments must be updated in CAMS according to the [CAMS Staff User Guide: Case Assignment](#) to document accurate history of the advocate's case assignments.

Policy 8.6: Supervision of Advocates

1. The local program coordinator and support staff provides timely supervision appropriate to the advocate's needs and complexity of the case assignment and holds advocates accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities as outlined in the advocate policies and procedures.
2. The local program coordinator must maintain communication with each advocate and coach a minimum of one time per month by video conference, telephone or in-person meetings. These meetings should include the following conversation:
 - a. Assess case circumstances to determine if safety issues for the advocate are present. If so, assess the advocate's safety needs.
 - b. Advise advocates on the resolution of case issues by providing thoughtful questioning, case-specific training, resources and options.
 - c. A contact note is entered in CAMS. Refer to [CAMS Staff User Guide: Volunteer Facesheet Notes](#) for the procedure.
3. CASA caseload goals are set annually by the State Organization. Program staff supervising advocates full time will not supervise more than 30 active advocates or a maximum of 45 cases. If the staff person is required to perform duties other than supervision of advocates, the number of advocates supervised shall be reduced pro rata. Adjustments to the caseload goals will be made based on percent FTE hours, program support, percentage of time performing FCRB and other ICAB duties and other designated responsibilities.
4. Local program coordinators are responsible for the following advocate and case management tasks related to advocate and case management:
 - a. **Local program coordinators establish a written protocol that addresses office procedures for handling emergency and non-emergency CASA related issues. Local office protocols must be approved by or submitted to the state office and then shared with advocates and coaches.**
 - b. The local program coordinators hold regularly scheduled case meetings with advocates to review the issues or progress of the case and needs of the child(ren). The coordinator maintains notes about case conferences with advocates on the advocate's facesheet in CAMS.
 - c. Approve [Advocate Monthly Update](#) in CAMS.
 - d. Expect and encourage advocates and coaches to attend meetings and hearings for children on their own. Situations that may require attendance by the local program coordinator include:
 - i. With a first-time advocate for support and to answer questions.
 - ii. When an advocate is unable to attend.
 - iii. When an advocate requests the local program coordinator's attendance.
 - e. In lieu of the advocate or coach, attend family team meetings, foster care review board meetings, court hearings or other staffing's with advocates only if needed.

- f. Ensure that reports are submitted in a timely manner by communicating with advocates regarding deadlines. Edit reports as needed. Communicate with the advocate regarding any concerns contained in the CASA report.
 - i. Local program coordinators do not change the content of an advocate's report without consultation.
 - ii. Distribute the CASA report to the legal parties prior to each hearing and in accordance with local protocols. If a parent or intervener does not have an attorney, a copy of the CASA report must be distributed to the individual.
- g. If an advocate is unable to attend a court hearing, the local program coordinator will attend or make arrangements for telephonic participation on the advocate's behalf if there is no scheduling conflict.
- h. Hold advocates accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.
- i. Assure advocates are assigned to no more than two (2) cases at one time.
 - i. If assigned to more than 2 cases in CAMS, the system will request the reason for the additional appointment and request approval from a supervisor
- j. Maintain case records and advocate records in accordance with [Standard 10: Data and Records](#).
- k. Notify the CAMS account designee when a new advocate or coach needs an account created in CAMS. [CAMS Staff User Guide: New User/Login](#)
- l. Assess each advocate using the Training Needs Assessment in CAMS within four weeks of case assignment. Deliver identified training topics to meet identified needs.

Resource: [CAMS Staff User Guide: Training Needs Assessment](#)

Best Practice:

- i. This assessment should be reviewed and updated as the Coordinator, the Coach and/or Advocate identifies additional training that the Advocate needs throughout the life of the case.
- ii. Best practice would be to complete this assessment in partnership with the Coach and Advocate to bridge each other's understanding of case issues and individual learning needs identified by any party. (Coordinator/Coach/Advocate)
- iii. Advocates identify training needs on training evaluations and through their monthly Advocate updates.
- iv. Coaches may identify training needs of the Advocates on their team via the individualized support they are providing to the Advocate throughout the life of the case.
- v. The Coordinator should consider what training should be delivered at each stage of the case and schedule training accordingly.
- m. Conduct a documented Case Progress Review of the advocate's performance six months after the advocate's first case assignment and annually thereafter in CAMS. [CAMS Staff User Guide: Progress Evaluation](#)
 - i. Concerns are addressed with the advocate as needed in between review periods and interim.
 - ii. Case Progress Reviews can be conducted at the request of the local program coordinator.

- n. Monitor and ensure that all advocates and coaches obtain 12 hours of continuing education training per year and track the hours and topics for each individual. Local program coordinators will use CAMS to track topics and hours of training. Monitor through the Advocate Dashboard, individual advocate facesheet and/or generating a [Volunteer Training Completion](#) report periodically throughout the calendar year.
 - o. When an advocate is no longer available to continue on an existing case, a local program coordinator may temporarily fulfill duties until an advocate is available to accept the case.
5. When the local program coordinator assigns both a CASA coach and advocate to serve a child, the coordinator shall carry out the following supervision and oversight duties:
- a. Assess the case circumstances to determine if safety issues for the advocate are present. If so, assess the advocate's safety needs.
 - b. Ensure case is assigned to advocate, including allowing the coach to conduct and facilitate the case assignment meeting.
 - c. Conduct a [Coach Training Needs Assessment](#) in CAMS within six weeks of completing coach training. Deliver identified training topics to meet identified needs.
 - d. Meet with Coaches a minimum of once a month to review cases.
 - e. Communicate with support staff to organize discovery on a new case and set up a file for the coach and advocate.
 - f. Meet with coaches to discuss any problems and plans involving advocates.
 - g. Conduct 6 month and annual reviews of each coach's work. Use [Coach Progress Review Form](#). Upload the Progress Review Form to the CAMS volunteer facesheet.
 - h. Notify coaches of conferences, seminars and meetings that will provide developmental opportunities.
 - i. Provide ongoing coaching, support and encouragement to coaches, who in turn will assist the advocates in working with the children to whom they are assigned.
 - j. Before distributing CASA reports to the court to the appropriate parties, complete the final edit of court reports written by advocates and edited by coaches. Reports are found on the [Court Report Dashboard](#).
 - k. File reports to the Court in EDMS.
 - l. Be present or available by telephone or in person for court hearings as needed to cover for a coach or advocate. When the advocate and coach are not able to attend a hearing, they will provide the earliest possible notice to the local program coordinator to arrange for coverage at the hearing.
 - i. Advocate will provide a written statement that includes any new, pertinent information received since the CASA report was submitted to the parties for the coach or local program coordinator to present at the hearing.
 - ii. Advocate will provide a telephone number that the individual 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.
 - m. Provide assistance as needed to coaches and advocates when they are closing a case.
 - n. Maintain professional relationships with the court, the Department of Human Services, attorneys and other service providers.

6. The local program coordinator conducts a review of the case and the advocate's performance of the job description of each advocate on an ongoing basis and as a component of case closure.
 - a. An advocate will participate in a case progress review after six months from the case assignment date, and annually thereafter.
 - b. If issues arise between the scheduled case reviews, an additional review can be performed.
 - c. All case reviews must be conducted with the advocate.
 - d. A copy of each case review must be provided to the advocate and kept in the advocate's record.
7. The local program has a **written** plan to retain advocates which includes mechanisms for advocate recognition.
 - a. Local program staff will maintain a personal, yet professional, relationship with the advocates.
 - b. Formal and informal recognition is part of the written plan to retain advocates.

Policy 8.7: Advocate Policy and Procedures

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. CASA of Iowa establishes and maintains written policies and procedures for program advocates that:
 - a. are approved by the Iowa Child Advocacy Board pursuant to Iowa Code 237.18, subsection 7.
 - b. are aligned with the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model and Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs.
3. Each advocate receives a copy of the current advocate policies and procedures and provides signed acknowledgement of reading and understanding the policies which is retained by the program in the advocate's record. The signed acknowledgement form must be done within 15 days of receiving the manual or revised manuals when required by the program staff.

Procedure:

1. Email a copy of the policy manual to the advocates.
2. Direct advocates to sign and return the [Acknowledgement of CASA Policies](#) form.
3. Upload the signed acknowledgement to the CAMS volunteer facesheet.

Resource:

[CASA of Iowa Advocates and Coaches Policy Manual](#)

Policy 8.8: Corrective Action

If any concerns arise relating to the performance of the professionals involved in the case, such concerns shall be relayed to the local program coordinator if the respective parties cannot resolve the concerns.

1. General concerns about CASA policy or procedures must be directed in the following order: local program coordinator to the CASA program manager. If needed, the CASA program manager will escalate the concern to the administrator.
2. When the local program coordinator and the advocate differ regarding recommendations made to the court; the advocate's recommendations will take precedence as long as they are consistent with Juvenile Code.
3. If an interested party has a grievance against an advocate, that individual can contact the local program coordinator regarding the concerns. If the local program coordinator is unable to resolve the concerns, the grievance will be referred to the State Office for resolution.
4. If a conflict or grievance occurs between the local program coordinator and an advocate, the administrator will be consulted for resolution.
5. If a conflict or grievance occurs between the CASA coach and an advocate, the local program coordinator will be consulted for resolution.
6. If a conflict or grievance occurs between the CASA coach and local program coordinator, the State Organization will be consulted for resolution.
7. If a violation of confidentiality has occurred, the local program coordinator will make arrangements for immediate dismissal of the advocate or coach.
8. The local program coordinator (in consultation with the administrator) may request the dismissal of an advocate or coach from the CASA program. Appropriate grounds for dismissal of an advocate or coach 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 or criminal activity brought against them.**
 - 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 and assigned case, of which the advocate is aware, and a subsequent CPSAS report substantiates the abuse.
 - j. The individual fails to report a conflict of interest. **Resource:** [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.**

Policy 8.9: Advocate Records

1. CASA of Iowa maintains a confidential electronic record for each advocate in CAMS that includes:
 - a. Application
 - b. Emergency and identifying contact information
 - c. Advocate job description (included in the documentation of personal interview)
 - d. Documentation of references
 - e. Documentation of all records checks (annual motor vehicle for those who transport)
 - f. Pre-Service and Continuing Education training records
 - g. Advocate progress evaluations
 - h. Documentation of advocate status (approved, on-leave, etc.)
 - i. If transporting children, the advocate's driver's license and verification of automobile insurance, along with signed Transportation Policy and Custodian/Guardian Authorization to Allow Transportation must be in the advocate's record.
 - j. Documentation of personal interview
 - k. Documentation of contact made between the local program coordinator and advocate every 30 days
 - l. Name of each child to which the advocate is or has been assigned
 - m. Date of each child assignment
 - n. Date of release from each assignment
2. CASA advocates are allowed to view any document in their advocate case file with the exception of personal references.
3. The local program retains the record a minimum of seven (7) years after an advocate has left the program.

Procedure: [CAMS Staff User Guide: Managing Volunteer Records](#)

Policy 8.10: CASA Coach

1. **The Model**
 - a. A written job description is available for the coach role.
 - b. All coaches must complete 12 hours of continuing education each calendar year.
 - c. Full-time local program coordinators will not supervise more than 15 coaches.
 - d. A coach will not oversee more than 10 advocates.
 - e. The local program has a plan for managing cases assigned to a coach in the event the coach leaves or becomes unavailable.
2. **Qualifications of a CASA Coach**
 - a. A coach candidate who is in good standing as an advocate has no additional application requirements. In addition to meeting all requirements of a CASA advocate, the individual shall be invited by a local program coordinator to serve in the role of coach.

- i. A determination may be made to end the CASA coach role if either the coach or the local program coordinator deems appropriate.
- b. A coach candidate who has never been a CASA advocate or has not been an advocate in recent years, but who is considered to have alternate comparable experience, shall complete the following requirements:
 - i. The administrator must approve the comparable alternate experience as a coach.
 - ii. The candidate must complete all on-boarding and pre-service training activities of the advocate and coach roles.

3. CASA Coach Responsibilities

- a. 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.
- b. A more complete description of the coach role and responsibilities are outlined in the [Advocates and Coaches Policy Manual](#).
- c. **When a coach leaves or becomes unavailable, the coordinator will:**
 - i. **resume supervision responsibilities for the advocates assigned to the former coach or,**
 - ii. **re-assign advocates to other trained coaches, and**
 - iii. **update the coach assignment in CAMS on each volunteer page sheet by end dating the coach assignment and assigning another coach if applicable.**

Standard 9: Public Education and Engagement

Standard 9 Statement: CASA of Iowa communicates and actively engages with stakeholders and the general public, to provide information and build support for the CASA/GAL mission, and the needs of children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

Policy 9.1: Educate and Engage the Public

1. The local program executes the State Organization's written plan for public information, outreach and education activities to provide an understanding of the program's purpose, function and role in judicial proceedings and the community social service system that is consistent with the National CASA/GAL Association Core Model and National CASA/GAL Association Brand Guidelines and Intellectual Property Standards. ICAB utilizes a coordinated, statewide public communications and community engagement strategy that includes:
 - a. The role of the local program coordinator in conveying information to the public. The local program coordinator is responsible for carrying out that role.
 - b. An ongoing program of public information and education to provide an understanding of the program's purpose, function and place in judicial proceedings and the child welfare system. At least annually, the local program coordinator will have personal contact with the following individuals or groups to assess the working relationship between them and the CASA program:
 - i. Judge
 - ii. County Attorney
 - iii. Juvenile public defender and children attorneys/GALs
 - iv. DHS
 - v. Contracted service provider agencies
 - c. Outreach to make known the CASA program's role, functions and capacities to other agencies, community organizations, governmental bodies and corporations as appropriate.
 - i. Local program coordinators will perform public speaking engagements.
 - ii. Local program coordinators will work with the state office on how to respond to local media requests.
 - d. The use of standard identification for program staff, coaches and advocates.
 - i. Personalized business cards will be provided to coaches and advocates using the standard template **provided by the state office**.
 - ii. Personalized name badges will be provided to coaches and advocates after successful completion of the pre-service training requirements.
2. The local program disseminates public information to broaden awareness about the needs of children it serves and the benefits of CASA/GAL advocacy for those children.
3. The local program collaborates with representatives from the legal and social services communities, other child advocacy programs, community service and civic groups, as well as, with businesses to advance the CASA/GAL mission and to foster interagency collaboration and coordination of services for children. Local program coordinators are encouraged to participate in child welfare collaborations within their communities.

- a. Per the Memorandum of Understanding with DHS, each local program is required to have Locally Agreed-Upon Procedures documented with the DHS offices they serve. This is reviewed and updated as needed every three (3) years.
 - b. The format for the agreed-upon procedures can be located in Google Drive (search Agreed Upon Procedures) or by contacting the CASA program manager.
4. The local program works in partnership with the State Organization to disseminate timely information concerning newsworthy events, stories and occurrences to advance the CASA/GAL mission and benefit the children served.
5. The local program follows the State Organization's written crisis management plan that addresses issues that may have significant impact on the credibility, reputation or funding at the local, state or national level.
 - a. ICAB is committed to taking a preemptive, agency-wide approach to planning for crisis management. All CASA staff are directly supervised by the State Organization's leadership/management team, consisting of the administrator and deputy administrators. Staff are to immediately report to management concerns, questions and information which might have a significant impact on the credibility, reputation or funding at the local, state or national level within 24 hours, subject to confidentiality limitations.
 - i. Advocates are to be made aware of the need to report similarly to their local program coordinator.
 - ii. Crisis examples may include death of a child served, harm to a child by a caregiver or advocate, an advocate's failure to adhere to program policy resulting in harm to a child, or media providing negative information about the work of the CASA program.
 - b. Management will assess situations with gathered facts, and inform as appropriate other key contacts (e.g. ICAB Chair; DIA; Iowa Governor's Office; National CASA staff) about the developments involving the Iowa CASA program and the potential significant negative impact on program goals or operations.
 - c. If a crisis arises at a state level which would specifically impact a particular local program, management will inform the local program coordinator(s).
 - d. Legal and media issues will be directed toward the appropriate state-level personnel. Written responses will be prepared and released in a clear, concise manner with consultation of DIA or the Iowa Governor's Office if needed.
 - e. Crisis intervention needs of CASA coaches, advocates and staff will be addressed on an individual basis, in consultation with the affected person(s). Intervention will occur within 72 hours of the incident, and counseling needs arranged timely.

Best Practice:

Through continuous collaboration, local program coordinators will maintain a proactive working relationship with judges, attorneys, DHS, service providers and other parties involved in cases, as well as maintain a positive community presence. Public support is a significant factor in maintaining credibility and staying-power.

Standard 10: Data and Records

Standard 10 Statement: CASA of Iowa compiles, maintains, manages and reports quality data and information in accordance with applicable laws, policies and/or standards. The program maintains complete, accurate and current case records and advocate files. **The State Organization reviews data from local programs for accuracy.**

Policy 10.1 Collect Data for Reporting

1. The local program collects the information needed to complete the National CASA/GAL Association's six-month and annual surveys. [CAMS Staff User Guide: National CASA Annual Survey](#)
 - a. The State Organization reviews and confirms with National CASA data received from each local program via a copy of its National CASA Annual Program Survey and/or other statistical reports.
2. CASA of Iowa utilizes CAMS for the collection of data with the following safeguards:
 - a. Operational procedures governing use of the tool, system and/or software.
 - b. Confidentiality policies concerning electronic data and information sharing via electronic media exist to respect the child's right to privacy.
 - c. Review of all decisions regarding electronic files by program management.

Policy 10.2 Retain Child and Case Information

1. The local program utilizes the court's electronic management data system (EDMS) and CAMS to maintain complete, accurate and current records for each child served, which include:
 - a. Name of the child.
 - b. Name of advocate.
 - c. Date of appointment by the court.
 - d. Date of assignment of case to advocate.
 - e. Date the case is closed by the court.
 - f. Date the vol is released from the case.
 - g. Biographical or other identifying information.
 - h. Background on the nature of the presenting problem or reason for referral by the court.
 - i. Court reports and any court orders related to the service being provided.
 - j. **Social service case plan, or another document from the child protection agency indicating the plan for the child is stored in the court's EDMS and is accessible to the assigned advocate, coach and local program staff.**
2. Advocates have access to the entire court file through EDMS after being indexed to the case.
 - a. Requests for paper copies of the initial case file documents can be granted. Any subsequent case file information received during the life of the case will be electronically provided to the advocate and coach through EDMS.
 - b. Paper documents must be maintained in a secure location by the advocate and coach. Violation of this confidentiality constitutes a serious misdemeanor.

3. Records for all children served are kept up to date through:
 - a. Current contact entries
 - b. Periodic progress notes and summaries
4. The local program maintains copies of all advocate reports, written correspondence concerning the case, and significant case updates and issues discussed through non-written communications (such as in-person meetings or phone calls) not otherwise included in advocate reports or written correspondence, and requires its advocates to turn in their case records including all notes when the case is closed. Documentation is maintained in CAMS.
5. Upon case closure, a record (e.g., court order, case closure summary, recording in database) is made of the date and reason for closure in CAMS.
 - a. Upload any final documents authored by CASA to the CAMS case record. Once all CASA information is uploaded, any paper or other electronic documents must be shredded or deleted.
 - b. Refer to the [CAMS User Guide: Closing a Case](#) for more information on procedural steps for closing the case in the data system.
 - c. If the CASA program is closing a case before the court case is dismissed, notify the clerk of court in the county of the case record to have the advocate and/or coach removed as a notified party in EDMS.
 - d. Send the feedback survey link to the advocate electronically if possible or hard copy if requested.

Resources:

- [Email template for case closure](#)
 - [Case Closure Advocate Survey](#)
- e. Send the interested party feedback survey link to all interested parties involved in the case, including the coach, if applicable.

Resources:

- [Email template for case closure](#)
- [Case Closure Interested Party Survey](#)

6. If a closed case re-opens with the CASA program, a new case record is established in CAMS to preserve the integrity of the data in the previous case record. **Procedure:** [CAMS Staff User Guide: Closed Cases that Reopen.](#)
7. CASA of Iowa procedures for retention, maintenance, protection, destruction and return of case files when the case is closed include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Electronic records are kept at least a minimum of seven (7) years from case closure; all physical copies (office, advocate and coach) are properly destroyed within two weeks of case closure.
 - b. Electronic children's case files are backed up on a separate system at least once a week and the backup are kept off site.
8. CASA of Iowa has established procedures for the legal and programmatic release, in writing, of advocates when a case is closed or when an advocate is removed from a case. [See 8.5.](#)

Standard 11: Network and Membership

Standard 11 Statement: CASA of Iowa's local programs maintain membership with the National CASA/GAL Association, are an affiliate of CASA of Iowa and meet the standards, requirements and policies.

Policy 11.1 Member of the National CASA/GAL Association for Children

1. CASA of Iowa maintains membership and works cooperatively and collaboratively with the National CASA/GAL Association for Children.
2. CASA of Iowa adheres to all National CASA/GAL Association standards, policies and agreements
3. CASA of Iowa follows all NCASA protocols.
4. CASA of Iowa provides a copy of the NCASAA Core Model and Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs to the Iowa Child Advocacy Board and the program staff, and reviews these with the administrative authority periodically to strengthen understanding and clarity of the role and requirements of local CASA/GAL programs in advancing our shared mission.
5. CASA of Iowa recognizes that existing programs contemplating expansion to a new county, regionalization, merger, or a change in governance structure must adhere to the applicable procedures of the NCASA Program Membership process.

Policy 11.2 Affiliation with the State Organization

1. Local programs maintain affiliation with the State Organization.
2. Local programs are provided services available through the State Organization which may include:
 - a. Technical assistance
 - b. Resource materials
 - c. State conference
 - d. Regional and all-staff meetings
 - e. Professional development opportunities
 - f. Web resources
3. The local program complies with policies and procedures set forth by the State Organization. When the local program believes a conflict exists between National CASA/GAL Association standards and state standards, laws, regulations or court rules, the local program and state organization present the perceived conflict to the National CASA/GAL Association. CASA of Iowa recognizes the National CASA/GAL Association will review the conflict and determine which takes precedence.