

CASA of Yellowstone County

Our Mission

To advocate for a safe and permanent home for abused and neglected children in Yellowstone County.

Our Vision

To provide a highly trained volunteer Advocate for every abused and neglected child in the Yellowstone County court and foster care systems.

CASA of Yellowstone County

- Non-Profit
- Member of the National CASA Association—standards and accreditation
- Memorandum of Understanding with the 13th Judicial District. The agreement between the Court and CASA of Yellowstone County.
- Unique to our community (one of 15 local programs in Montana)

CASA/GAL Statute

Appointment Of Court-Appointed Special Advocate -- Guardian Ad Litem

41-3-112. Appointment of court-appointed special advocate -- guardian ad litem. (1) In every judicial proceeding, the court shall appoint a court-appointed special advocate as the guardian ad litem for any child alleged to be abused or neglected. If a court-appointed special advocate is not available for appointment, the court may appoint an attorney or other qualified person to serve as the guardian ad litem. The department or any member of its staff who has a direct conflict of interest may not be appointed as the guardian ad litem in a judicial proceeding under this title. When necessary, the guardian ad litem may serve at public expense.

CASA/GAL Statute

41-3-112. Appointment of court-appointed special advocate -- guardian ad litem. Continued;

(2) The guardian ad litem must have received appropriate training that is specifically related to serving as a child's court-appointed representative.

(3) The guardian ad litem is charged with the representation of the child's best interests and shall perform the following general duties:

CASA/GAL Statute

Continued:

- (a) to conduct investigations to ascertain the facts constituting the alleged abuse or neglect;
 - (b) to interview or observe the child who is the subject of the proceeding;
 - (c) to have access to court, medical, psychological, law enforcement, social services, and school records pertaining to the child and the child's siblings and parents or custodians;
 - (d) to make written reports to the court concerning the child's welfare;
 - (e) to appear and participate in all proceedings to the degree necessary to adequately represent the child and make recommendations to the court concerning the child's welfare;
 - (f) to perform other duties as directed by the court; and
 - (g) if an attorney, to file motions, including but not limited to filing to expedite proceedings or otherwise assert the child's rights.
- (4) Information contained in a report filed by the guardian ad litem or testimony regarding a report filed by the guardian ad litem is not hearsay when it is used to form the basis of the guardian ad litem's opinion as to the best interests of the child.
- (5) Any party may petition the court for the removal and replacement of the guardian ad litem if the guardian ad litem fails to perform the duties of the appointment.

WHAT DOES A CASA/GAL DO?

- ✓ VISITS WITH THE CHILD(REN) AT LEAST MONTHLY
- ✓ REVIEWS CPS FILE-SCHOOL RECORD-HEALTH RECORDS
- ✓ INTERVIEW CAREGIVERS, TEACHERS, PROVIDERS and PARENTS

WHAT DOES A CASA/GAL DO?

- ✓ SUBMITS MONTHLY REPORTS TO THE ATTORNEYS AND CPS WORKERS
- ✓ FILES HEARING REPORTS FOR COURT HEARINGS-ALL PARTIES RECEIVE HEARING REPORTS
- ✓ BECOME THE EXPERT ON THE CHILD(REN)

Key Components of The Volunteer Role



Information
Gathering



Facilitation



Advocacy



Monitoring

Information Gathering

- **INFORMATION GATHERING**
- **To Gather Information Means . . .**
- Carrying out a systematic inquiry to discover & examine the **FACTS** by
 - ✓ **Reviewing** all documents and records
 - ✓ **Interviewing** all relevant individuals
 - ✓ **Visiting** with the child at least once per month
 - ✓ **Identifying** possible permanent placements for the child

Facilitation

- **Communicating** with all relevant parties about the information the CASA has received regarding the child
- **Cooperating** with all the adults in the case to seek and establish the best possible solutions to the child's needs

Facilitation

- **How a CASA Facilitates**

The CASA report is the most effective way to achieve the **Facilitation** aspect of the CASA Advocate's job. The report shares the knowledge the CASA has regarding the child and which needs are met or unmet

Facilitation

The CASA, as the one constant in the child's life, has historical knowledge that no other parties may have.

ADVOCACY

To Advocate Means . . .

- Identifying and supporting the best interests of the child by:
- **Recommending** relevant services and resources to meet the child's needs
- **Appearing** at all court hearings to be the voice of the child in the courtroom

ADVOCACY

- **Informing** all relevant parties of important developments in the case
- **Shining** a light on the unmet needs of the child

MONITOR

To Monitor Means . . .

- Observing and checking the progress or quality of something over a period of time by:
- **Maintaining** regular contact with the child until the case is dismissed, keeping in mind cases that are on the road to reunification or adoption can come undone

CASA of Yellowstone County

TODAY— There are over 300 children being served by nearly 200 community volunteers trained as Court Appointed Special Advocates

This week—approximately 800 children “in care” in Yellowstone County

OBSERVATIONS

- Not enough Case Workers to support and monitor families and children at the outset of an investigation.
Who is going to come back and check on the children and family next week?
- CPS workers are stuck with outdated technology and software

OBSERVATIONS

- Services for children, parents and guardians are overloaded or stretched thin
- Drugs and Mental Health are at the core of nearly every abuse and neglect case

OBSERVATIONS

- Bottleneck at the state level processing adoption paperwork
- Caseworkers carry two to three times the suggested caseload

IDEAS!!

- In Yellowstone County, a CPS unit devoted to working with families in their homes
- Better pay for CPS workers— local clinics and agencies are hiring workers away with out a problem
- Investment in the development, training and support of Child Protective Service Worker
- Updated software for case management

THANKS FOR LISTENING

QUESTIONS?

More information

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