

## Screening & Eligibility FAQs

### **Can I attend a CASA Information Session if I am not yet 21?**

A volunteer must be at least 21 years old to begin service as a CASA; however, anyone may attend an Information Session. If you are nearing your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, you are welcome to attend an Information Session to get started in the application process.

### **I like to travel. Can I still be a CASA?**

Absolutely! Unless you will be away frequently and for long durations, your vacation or travel plans are not likely to interfere with your advocacy. If you keep your supervisor informed of everything going on with your case, he or she may be able to fill it for you if an important meeting comes up while you are away.

### **Does the 18-month commitment apply to active duty military families?**

Yes. We ask that all CASAs, regardless of their situation, commit to their case for a minimum of 18 months. Before applying, active-duty military and their spouses should consider the likelihood of a transfer or long deployment within the next 18-24 months.

### **I may get a new job or start graduate school soon. Should I wait to apply?**

Possibly. It depends where you plan to work or enroll, what you'll be doing or studying, and whether you can make your CASA commitment a priority. Please call (858) 598-2230 or email [volunteer@speakupnow.org](mailto:volunteer@speakupnow.org) and we will be happy to discuss your individual situation.

### **I work full time Monday through Friday and it isn't easy for me to get away from work. Does this mean I can't be a CASA?**

Not necessarily! Many of our CASAs work full time, though some have more flexible schedules than others due to school, family, and other circumstances. As a CASA you can expect to spend about 10-15 hours a month working on your case, including time spent with the child, time spent in meetings and court, and time spent communicating with professionals, family members, and caregivers. A portion of this time does require some daytime flexibility, so we recommend that you discuss this opportunity with your employer. Many employers are very supportive after learning more about the program.

Hearings (usually every six months) are held during the day, as are most meetings. In most cases, meetings are scheduled with sufficient advance notice, but you may need to plan for flexing your work time or shifting your schedule by a couple hours (about once a month) to allow for a meeting during typical business hours. A dedicated staff supervisor will partner with you on the case, so if you become ill or unexpectedly need to work or travel, for example, you have some backup. That said, we ask that CASAs be present at court and actively attend meetings whenever possible.

### **If I've already had a background check and fingerprinting, will I need to do it again?**

Yes. We are not able to see the results of any previous background checks you've gone through and must perform a new check so we can directly receive and review the results. Background checks and fingerprinting are required for all volunteers new to Voices for Children, as well as for all active CASAs every four years.

**Do I need to be a U.S. citizen to volunteer?**

No, but we do require proof of legal U.S. residency. If you have lived in the United States for less than two years, we will also ask for a background check from your last country of residency. If accepted into training, you will need to request an in-English criminal history report as soon as possible and submit it to the training coordinator *before* you begin training.

**Do I need a California driver license?**

A valid U.S. - issued driver license is required from the state in which you legally reside. You must also have a minimum of two years of licensed driving experience in the U.S. on record with the DMV. Driving experience with a permit does not apply.

**What if I don't have a vehicle?**

CASAs may visit a variety of locations throughout San Diego County and should be prepared to drive when necessary. If you don't have your own vehicle, you will need access to reliable transportation. CASAs are encouraged not to use public transit on a regular basis for outings.

**I drive a motorcycle. Is this OK?**

You will need access to a car for outings with your case child or when facilitating visits between siblings. CASAs are prohibited from transporting their case child(ren) on a motorcycle.

**When will I need to submit my DMV history and proof of insurance?**

If accepted into training, we will ask that you provide your DMV history (up to 10 years) and proof of insurance prior to graduation, so we suggest getting these as soon as possible. In addition, you may not have more than three minor moving violations in the past three years, and no major moving violations in the past four years. If you have lived in the United States for less than two years and have a driving history in another country, you must also provide a history report from your last country of residence.

**I have a DUI on my record. Will that affect my eligibility?**

You are eligible if at least four years have passed since the DUI conviction date. You may not have any major moving violations, such as a DUI, within the past four years. In addition, you may not have more than three minor moving violations in the past three years.

**How do I find out how many violations I have on my record?**

Please contact the Department of Motor Vehicles.

**Can I be a CASA if I'm a recovering addict/alcoholic?**

You are welcome to apply if you have been sober for at least two years.

**I may have a misdemeanor or felony on my criminal record. Would this make me ineligible?**

Eligibility will be based on the date and nature of the offense, as well as surrounding circumstances. Please provide on your application as many details as possible regarding the situation. You may also contact us at (858) 598-2230 to discuss.

**Can I advocate for a child who lives close to my home or work?**

Case assignment is based on need, not location. We ask that you be as open-minded and flexible as possible, as it is not unusual for foster children to change home placements frequently.

**Do you reimburse for mileage?**

Yes! We reimburse 35 cents per mile, and will provide tracking forms for you to use during your CASA service.

**I used to be a CASA for Voices for Children. How can I be reinstated?**

If it has been less than two years since you left our CASA Program, you'll need to submit a new application. You may also need to repeat some of the training. In addition, we'll ask that you submit a new copy of your driver license, as well as updated insurance information.

If it has been more than two years since you left the program, we'll ask that you attend an Information Session, complete a CASA Volunteer Application, interview with a Voices for Children staff member, and attend all in-person classes. You will also need to complete the online court report training. (Other online training is required only if you have not previously completed it.) If you have been away from the program for four years or longer, we'll need to fingerprint you again.

**I completed training to be a CASA/GAL in another county. Will I need to go through training again?**

Yes. All volunteers new to Voices for Children must complete our entire online and classroom curriculum, as program specifics and training requirements may vary from other regions.

**Can I be a CASA if I want to adopt or foster a child?**

If you are interested in adopting or fostering a child, we encourage you to explore those paths before applying to be an advocate. You may not be a CASA while you hold an active foster parent license (even if there are no foster children currently in your home) or while you seek an adoption through the County of San Diego, as both are conflicts of interest to CASA service. If you are a former foster parent or your adoption process has closed, you are welcome to apply to the CASA Program.

**Do I need to live in San Diego?**

While it is not a requirement to reside in San Diego County, most of our volunteers live or work in San Diego or nearby cities, such as Oceanside, Escondido, El Cajon, and Chula Vista. If you are interested in volunteering with Voices for Children in Riverside County, [click here](#) for more information. For information about CASA/GAL programs outside San Diego or Riverside counties, visit [www.casaforchildren.org](http://www.casaforchildren.org).

**I am not computer savvy and don't use e-mail or the Internet. Will this be a problem?**

To be a CASA you will need to be reasonably comfortable with using a computer. A computer and speakers will be needed for online training and court report writing, and email communication may be necessary during your CASA service. In addition, the *CASA Courier*, our newsletter for volunteers, is distributed via email—as are invitations to exclusive CASA events!

**Will I get to choose the gender and age of the child(ren) I work with?**

Our CASAs work with children of all ages and genders. Case assignment is based on need. Though we encourage you to share your preferences, we ask that you be as open-minded and flexible as possible.

**Can I be matched to a child who practices the same religion I do?**

Religion is not a factor in the matching process. A volunteer's religious or spiritual practices, beliefs, and affiliations are outside the professional role of a CASA. For this reason, CASAs are not permitted to



discuss religion with their case children, nor are they permitted to discuss any religious or spiritual beliefs they may have.

**I have an active foster parent license but no foster children in my home right now. Am I eligible?**

You are not eligible at this time, as this may be seen as a conflict of interest to your CASA service. You are welcome to apply when your license is inactive.

**I'd like to advocate for a particular child. How do I make this request?**

We do not assign CASAs to advocate for a child with whom a relationship already exists. This is to help ensure objectivity, as well as the integrity of Voices for Children and the CASA Program.

**Can my spouse and I do this together? Can I involve my children?**

While it is not unusual for couples to apply and go through training together, for confidentiality reasons and to help ensure effective advocacy, we do not assign more than one person to a case. CASAs may not introduce their case children to family and friends or discuss case details with them. If you graduate from Advocate University, Voices for Children's training program, friends and family are more than welcome to attend the ceremony.

**Are there other ways to help if I'm not eligible to be a CASA right now?**

Our greatest need is for more Court Appointed Special Advocates. If you are not eligible or able to become a CASA at this time, please call (858) 598-2230 or email [volunteer@speakupnow.org](mailto:volunteer@speakupnow.org) to inquire about general volunteer opportunities.

**I have a lot of experience with foster youth and the foster care system. Does this make me a better candidate?**

One does not need prior knowledge of the foster care system to be a CASA volunteer. We will provide all the training you need. It is important to know that CASAs must avoid any situation that puts their objectivity into question. For this reason, you may not be eligible to be a CASA if you currently work with foster youth, their families, or organizations serving this population. Please call (858) 598-2230 and we will be happy to help you determine eligibility.

**I have no legal experience and have never been to court or written a court report. Does this mean I'm not qualified?**

Absolutely not! No legal or court-writing experience is required. We will provide all the training that you need.

**Can I be a CASA if I used to be a foster child?**

Yes!

**I have no children of my own. Can I still be an effective CASA?**

Many of our CASAs do not have children. Others have little or no experience working with children but still make wonderful advocates. Just bring a desire to help and support children and Voices for Children will provide all the training you need!

**For other frequently asked questions:** Please visit <http://www.speakupnow.org/faqs/>



**For other questions concerning eligibility:** Please email [volunteer@speakupnow.org](mailto:volunteer@speakupnow.org) or call (858) 598-2243.