



# Voices for Children CASAs: Ambassador Program

## Mission

Voices for Children, CASAs of Boulder County builds a healthier community by delivering services, support, and advocacy to children who have experienced trauma.

## Vision

We believe that all children deserve to have a safe, nurturing environment where they can thrive.

## Historical Context

VFC was established in 1985 as part of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASAs) movement, which emerged in the late 1970s to provide best-interest advocacy for abused and neglected children. For 38 years, VFC has remained dedicated to providing Boulder County's most vulnerable children with CASAs volunteers who ensure their needs are met as they navigate the child welfare system.

## Ambassador Program Overview

### Purpose and Objectives

CASAs Ambassadors are volunteers with either current or past case experience, who support the program by bringing the CASAs volunteer perspective into broader program goals and procedures. The following objectives were identified by the VFC Leadership Team and Board of Directors as imperative guiding principles for the organization over the next three years. CASAs Ambassadors will play a crucial role in achieving these objectives.

#### 1. Match every child with a CASAs

- Further develop and sustain the CASAs program.
- Ensure quality training for each CASAs that includes a standard of practice in working with Boulder County.
- Exist to give a voice to children who have experienced trauma.

#### 2. Build an enduring and visible presence in the community

VFC understands that enduring organizational stability scaffolded by stable funding sources and thoughtful fiscal policies will ensure that CASAs volunteers continue serving children who need it the most. This stability, in tandem with a strong engagement plan, will attract volunteers and funders alike.

3. Use the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to guide the organization's future, creating alignment with community partners, building a volunteer body that more closely represents the children served, and intentionally centering inclusivity in operating standards. More than 50% of the children VFC served in 2022 come from racially and ethnically minoritized groups. In conducting an environmental scan of community, board, and staff stakeholders, it became clear that the organization needs to engage in structured and accountable DEI efforts.

## Role Description

The purpose of the CASA Ambassador position is two-fold. Ambassadors will 1) support the CASA program and its volunteers and 2) support the organization with community awareness and engagement efforts.

## Coaching and Support for CASA Volunteers

CASA volunteers require and deserve competent coaching and support in order to provide effective and appropriate advocacy for the children they serve. VFC strives to offer quality and consistent support to volunteers, which will maximize the CASA's strengths and minimize limitations. Specific tasks may include:

1. Assisting with onboarding of new CASA volunteers to share experience with the volunteer role and answer questions
  - a. Attend CASA 101 information sessions with VFC staff
  - b. Participate in initial CASA interviews
  - c. Assist in pre-service training curriculum development and facilitation
2. Assisting new CASAs on their first cases to provide support and insight when appropriate
  - a. Accompany the CASA on their first visit with the child(ren)
  - b. Attend the first court hearing(s) with the CASA
  - c. Assist the CASA in identifying and securing community resources
  - d. Check in as needed to provide support, coaching, and motivation for the CASA
3. Assisting active CASAs in their advocacy work as needed
  - a. Volunteer to provide transportation when the CASA is unable
  - b. Visit with the child(ren) if the CASA is unable for an extended period of time (e.g., medical emergencies, extended travel)
  - c. Supervise visits between child(ren) and family members (additional training required)
  - d. Provide mentoring and coaching during Wellbeing Assessments

## Community Awareness

Support from the community is vital in the work that VFC does to support children who have experienced trauma. Ambassadors may help with building partnerships, creating awareness, and recruiting volunteers by representing VFC in the community and speaking from the perspective of a CASA volunteer. Specific tasks may include:

1. Attending community events and being a representative for VFC
  - a. Volunteer for a booth shift at a community event
  - b. Canvas or post fliers that promote VFC's mission in shared spaces (e.g., restaurants, rec centers, churches, etc.)

- c. Present about VFC's mission to community partners (e.g., college classes, volunteer groups, etc.)
2. Assisting with VFC events
  - a. Assist in planning and execution of CASA events (e.g., CASA Connections, Appreciation and Awareness events, etc.)
  - b. Assist Development team in planning and execution of annual events (e.g., Night of Hope)
  - c. Assist in content collection for marketing materials, website and social media, annual impact report, etc.

## Expectations

- Report to the Program Officer, subject to review after 90 days and annually.
  - When working with an appointed CASA, remain in good communication with the case Advocate Supervisor and notify immediately of any notable concerns, questions, or case updates.
- Must have CASA experience of at least one year and have served successfully on at least one case.
- Must be in good standing with the CASA program, as evidenced by:
  - Providing an updated background report
  - Being up to date on Continuing Education Units (12 per year)
  - Remaining up to date on all VFC Policies and Procedures
  - Demonstrating good communication with the Program Officer and/or CASA staff
- Demonstrate strong professionalism, teamwork, communication, and interpersonal skills.

## FAQs

1. Who is a good candidate for the Ambassador role?

Seasoned CASA volunteers who are not currently serving on a case due to capacity or time limitations, but would like to stay involved and support the program, are good candidates for the Ambassador role (you may be an Ambassador and serve on a case at the same time).

Additionally, CASA volunteers who have special skills, training, or experience that will benefit the program are good candidates for the Ambassador role (e.g., training in language interpretation, legal or therapeutic experience, etc.).

2. How does it work?

Ambassadors will be requested by VFC staff on an as needed basis. The period after a new class of CASAs is sworn in may be a busier time for Ambassadors, as these new CASAs will be getting started on cases and may need additional support from experienced CASA volunteers. The Program Officer may also reach out as needed to Ambassadors to help with CASA 101 information sessions and pre-service training. The Development Officer and/or Engagement Officer may reach out as needed for assistance with community events.

3. How much additional time can I expect to commit?

The work of Ambassadors will fluctuate depending on the time of year, the needs of the program, and your own capacity to take on responsibilities and tasks. On average, Ambassadors can expect anywhere from two to 10 hours per month of additional volunteer work. Ambassadors retain the right to turn down any tasks or step away from the role at any time.

4. What is the difference between an Ambassador and Advocate Supervisor? VFC also used to have Peer Coordinators – how is this different?

The Ambassador role is unique from the Advocate Supervisor and Peer Coordinator roles, primarily because it is less intensive and supervisory. Advocate Supervisors will remain the primary point of contact for all CASA volunteers, and Ambassadors will support as needed. Ambassadors are not responsible for managing case files in Optima, editing or filing court reports, conducting monthly case reviews, or evaluating volunteer performance.

5. How will I maintain confidentiality?

Ambassadors will sign and adhere to VFC's general Policies and Procedures, which includes a confidentiality statement. When an Ambassador is working with an appointed CASA or directly with a child(ren) or family, they may be subject to additional confidentiality documents and/or policies.