

## CONNECTING WITH YOUR FOSTER CHILD'S CASA

Your foster child's CASA will hope to develop a strong relationship with you. CASAs know that resource parents are knowledgeable about the children in their care and can share information that helps CASAs serve as effective advocates. Ideally:

- CASAs and resource parents will work together to schedule monthly CASA visits at a time that's mutually agreeable.
- CASAs and resource parents will promptly respond to each other's calls and emails. CASAs sometimes need to reach out after visits to make sure the information they plan to report to judges is still up-to-date, and it's helpful when resource parents reach out to tell CASAs about new developments in the children's lives.
- While CASAs ask lots of questions, they often can't answer yours. They are bound by confidentiality rules and can share very little about what they know, except in their reports to judges. (Attorneys, but not resource parents, get copies of those reports) If you have questions about your foster child's family or history, the CASA will suggest you speak to the DCPD caseworker. If you have a legal question, the CASA will refer you to the child's Law Guardian.

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## CASA of MIDDLESEX COUNTY is...

a non-profit inspired by a judge. Our program has served local children since 2007. In the busy, adult-centered court system, we strive to keep children's best interests at the forefront. Our volunteers are supervised by Peer Coaches and CASA staff, who can be reached at the number/email below.

CASA of Middlesex County  
732-246-4449  
[info@casaofmiddlesexcounty.org](mailto:info@casaofmiddlesexcounty.org)  
[www.casaofmiddlesexcounty.org](http://www.casaofmiddlesexcounty.org)

Thank you so much for the incredibly important role you play in children's lives. Resource parents offer tremendous support to children in need.

*"Nothing you  
do for children  
is ever wasted."*

*~ Garrison Keillor*

## A RESOURCE PARENT'S GUIDE TO CASA

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate. In New Jersey and nationwide, judges appoint CASAs to speak up for children involved in court cases because of parental abuse or neglect. All of the children served by CASA of Middlesex are in foster care.

CASA of Middlesex matches trained CASA volunteers with the children judges appoint us to serve. CASA's role is to help ensure that the children are protected from further harm and end up in safe, permanent homes where they get the resources, care, and support they need to thrive.

CASA volunteers (called CASAs) meet regularly with the children they serve and speak to resource parents and others who know the children--teachers, school personnel, therapists, medical personnel, siblings and birth parents. The CASAs then report to judges about what the children need and how to keep them safe.



## IF CASA IS APPOINTED TO SERVE YOUR FOSTER CHILD...

The Judge overseeing the child's case wants more information about how the child is doing and what the child needs. The CASA volunteer will call to arrange a visit to your home. CASAs have to meet with the children they serve at least once a month.

While visiting, the CASA will talk with the child to see how things are going. If the child is too young to talk, the CASA will observe the child and talk with you instead. You can expect the advocate to spend about 30 minutes to an hour in your home.

The conversation will vary, depending on the child's age, but the CASA will likely ask the child about school, the adjustment to the foster home, favorite activities, the child's hopes and wishes, and whether the child has any concerns or needs help with anything.

The CASA will also want to hear your thoughts about how the child is doing and will ask a range of questions about the child's behavior, health, school, parent/sibling visits, and overall well-being. The CASA will check in with you periodically to see if anything has changed.

Throughout the case, the CASA will be gathering information from multiple sources to help assess the child's needs and whether he or she can safely return.

**Advocate:**

**Contact:**

## CASAs are ...

Community members who have undergone extensive training and background screening to become child advocates. They became CASAs because they believe vulnerable children deserve to have someone speaking up exclusively for them.

## CASAs are not ...

Paid employees. Their service is strictly on a volunteer basis. They do not work for DCPD, and they are not attorneys, although their professional backgrounds may include social work or the law.

## Our purpose ...

The role of the CASA is to gather and report information to the court. CASA of Middlesex's advocates, staff, and board work diligently to promote children's best interests so they can grow up in safe, stable homes where they have the opportunity to heal and thrive.

## Comprehensive Advocacy

CASA's advocacy is guided by New Jersey law and standards set by both the Administrative Office of the Courts and National CASA. Below is a brief overview of what CASA volunteers are expected to do:

- The CASA will thoroughly investigate the child's circumstances. This includes interviewing people who know the child well, like biological and resource parents, teachers, counselors, and daycare providers, and reviewing pertinent records.
- The CASA will submit a written report to the judge before most hearings with child-specific recommendations about the child's well-being and where the child should live.
- The CASA will, per National standards, "ensure their advocacy extends to all aspects of the child's life."
- The CASA will work with, but not for, the child's DCPD caseworker and Law Guardian to facilitate services.
- The CASA will monitor compliance with court orders.

