

## **WHAT IS A COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE?**

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a concerned volunteer appointed by the Juvenile Court to represent the best interest of an abused or neglected child. The appointment of CASA is governed by Indiana Law.

## **WHO CAN BE A CASA?**

Responsible adults, willing to give their time to be trained and to serve in the best interests of children, may submit an application to be considered for the program. The most important qualifications will be: concern for children and families in need; willingness to deal constructively with complex emotional issues; maturity to remain objective; belief in the basic human rights of children and the value of family systems; a commitment to completion of the training program; and willingness to work with others in the system.

## **WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF A CASA?**

Ultimately, our goal is to aid the child in attaining a secure and permanent environment. Recommendations to the Court must consider plans which least interfere with family autonomy, are least disruptive of family life, impose the least restraint, and provide reasonable opportunity for participation by the child's parent, guardian or custodian. In addition, the CASA will make recommendations which provide the child with a safe and secure environment, see that each child and family receive needed services, and insure that each case is reviewed regularly.

## **WHAT KIND OF TRAINING WILL I RECEIVE?**

Each CASA will receive formal professional training before being assigned to a child. This training will provide the volunteer with information on the juvenile justice system and will assist in the development of the necessary skills to successfully fulfill the role of a CASA. After being assigned to a case there will be additional, on-going training and educational programs offered.

## **WHAT DOES A CASA DO?**

As a CASA you will become a part of a team of concerned individuals in Monroe County who are dedicated to protecting children and serving families in need.

A CASA talks with everyone who has pertinent information which will be of assistance in making decisions concerning the child and his/her family. The CASA communicates with the child, family members, social workers, school officials and others who have information which will aid in understanding the family situations.

The CASA writes reports to the Court summarizing findings and making recommendations for rehabilitative and protective services. The CASA also attends all Court hearings of the case and is sometimes asked to explain and elaborate on his/her report.

Following the initial Court hearing the CASA remains on the case to insure that necessary services are received until termination of the Court's involvement.

## **HOW MUCH TIME WILL THIS TAKE?**

Most CASA's will be assigned to only one case at a time. The amount of time required will depend on the individual case and the status of that case. A specific number of hours is not required. However, the CASA is expected to make the time commitment to provide the child with the necessary services. This typically ranges from two to five hours per week.

## **WHAT TYPE OF CHILDREN WILL I ENCOUNTER?**

Children in the program will range in age from infancy to eighteen years and will be of any race, religion, or socio-economic background. Most are involved with the Court because of abuse or neglect. Other characteristics will vary from child to child, but one thing is certain—the child needs your help.

As a CASA volunteer you will have the opportunity to help shape a child's life. The obligations of a CASA are serious. Your involvement will have significant impact on the child and his/her family.