

## CASA Screening and Qualifications

San Joaquin County CASA's screening procedure is designed and implemented to ensure that those sworn in as CASA volunteers are of good character, competent to fulfill the role of a CASA volunteer, and willing to commit the time and energy necessary to effectively present and advance the best interests of a child or children in proceedings involving child abuse and neglect.

Some factors of a potential volunteer's background may cause him or her to be automatically excluded from becoming a CASA. "Automatic exclusion" factors are not subject to staff discretion. Other factors are left to the discretion of program staff and shall be evaluated individually for each applicant.

The San Joaquin County CASA program has adopted and adheres to the following screening procedures for potential CASA volunteers:

1. Arrest and/or conviction of the following crimes:

- Crimes against a child;
- Felony;
- Sex crime(s).

Arrests without convictions are subject to thorough review by program staff and acceptance into the program is subject to approval. Convictions are an automatic exclusion (regardless of time frame).

2. Undergoing prosecution at the time of application: Exclusion is automatic with the exception of certain infractions (vehicle code misdemeanors).

3. Convicted of a misdemeanor crime within five years before applying to CASA: With the exception of vehicle code infractions, exclusion is automatic. Applicants with a prior history (i.e. misdemeanor) are subject to thorough review by program staff and acceptance into the program is subject to approval (see item #5).

4. Motor Vehicle Code Infractions/Violations (using DMV Pointy System):

- Exclusion is automatic for drivers with any 2-point violation on their current driving record (within the last three years).
- Exclusion is automatic for drivers with any cumulative total of 3 points or more on their current driving record (within the last three years).
- Drivers with any vehicle code infraction that involves a child (example(s): child not in seat belt, child not in car seat, etc.).
- Drivers with any driving under the influence type of violation (alcohol and/or drugs) within the last 10 years will not be accepted. A driver whose violation has been over 10 years is subject to thorough review by program staff and acceptance into the program is subject to approval.

5. Acts punishable as a crime, arrests and/or conviction other than specified above: CASA Program staff may or may not exclude applications after consideration of factors including but not limited to the following as evidence of good character and rehabilitation:

- Incident demonstrating unlikelihood of repetition; Activities since the incident including employment or participation in therapy or education that would indicate changed behavior.
- The nature of the incident(s);
- Period of time since the incident(s) was committed and the number of offenses.
- Circumstances surrounding the commission of the Character references;
- Granting by the Governor of a full and unconditional pardon;
- A "Finding of Factual Innocence" as described in Penal Code Section 851.

Subject to thorough review by program staff and acceptance into the program is subject to approval.

6. CPS involvement in family. Exclusion is automatic when:

- Parent or child who is or has been an adjudicated dependent or has been placed under informal supervision of any county's children's social services agency;
- Spouse or significant other of a parent of a child who has been an adjudicated dependent or has been placed under informal supervision of any county's children's social services agency;

- Adult whose acts have been responsible for a child being placed under informal supervision of any county's children's social services agency.

7. Parent, Spouse, Significant Other or Household Member of a child who has been the subject of a CPS Report:

CASA Program staff may or may not exclude application after consideration of factors including but not limited to the following as evidence of good character and rehabilitation:

- The nature of the report(s);
- Period of time of the report(s);
- Number of report(s);
- Circumstances surrounding the report(s);
- Outcome of the CPS referral.
- Subject to thorough review by program staff and acceptance into the program is subject to approval.

8. Persons providing services to children and/or their parents within the child welfare and/or juvenile court system:

Exclusion is subject to program staff review and determination for conflict of interest.

9. Foster Parent(s): Automatic exclusion for San Joaquin County foster parents due to conflict of interest. Foster parents who take out-of-county children only may be eligible but are subject to thorough review by program staff and acceptance into the program is subject to approval.

In addition to the items noted above, potential CASA volunteers can be turned down for any of the following reasons:

1. Lack of reliable transportation
2. Extensive or problematic history of child or domestic abuse
3. History of substance abuse
4. Failure to sign release of information form for background checks
5. Time and commitment conflicts
6. Unresolved personal issues
7. Inability to understand or perform the role of a volunteer child advocate
8. Inadequate written or oral communication skills
9. Lack of tolerance
10. Boundary issues
11. Lack of flexibility

**Qualifications for CASAs**

1. At least 21 years of age
2. Ability to keep all client and court information confidential
3. Ability to respect and relate to people from various backgrounds and lifestyles in a variety of settings
4. Ability to gather and accurately record factual information
5. Ability to demonstrate sound judgment and character
6. A basic understanding of child development and family relationships
7. Ability to work independently as required, as well as the ability to accept supervision and direction as needed.

**Because parts of the application and screening processes are confidential (e.g. references), San Joaquin County CASA reserves the right to exclude applicants and trainees from becoming a CASA volunteer without informing them of the reason for the exclusion.**

**I have read & understand this document, and agree to abide by it.**

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

