

# **CASA of East Tennessee, Inc.**

# **Volunteer Policies & Procedures Manual**

**Revised 2016**



**United Way  
of Greater Knoxville**  
**Funded Partner Agency**

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# **Welcome**

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The CASA Volunteer can make a tremendous difference in the life of a child. The CASA program provides the opportunity for caring adults to become actively involved in meeting the needs of abused, neglected, and abandoned children in Knox County.

CASA Volunteers advocate for many reasons; to make a difference in a child's life, to give back to the community, to utilize their own professional skills, to work with professionals in other fields or to make new friends.

The problems addressed by CASA Volunteers may be overwhelming. A CASA Volunteer may experience sadness, disappointment, or anxiety. The work may be difficult and time consuming. However, a CASA Volunteer may find through their experiences, an opportunity for growth and deep satisfaction in making a difference in the life of a child.

There are many ways that CASA Volunteers improve the life of a child:

- CASA Volunteers help the courts make timely and sound decisions for children.
- CASA Volunteers remind people involved in the system that the child's needs must be met as quickly as possible.
- CASA Volunteers play a direct, active and influential role in helping children achieve permanent, stable and loving homes.
- CASA Volunteers may reduce the amount of time that a child spends in foster care or is involved with the juvenile court, and may reduce the number of times a child is moved while in the court system.

These are many of the reasons that dedicated, compassionate, and committed individuals in Knox County choose to volunteer for the Court Appointed Special Advocates program. The children, families, social service workers, attorneys, judges, and many others are appreciative of this commitment to the lives of children and families.

## **I. The Volunteer Program**

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### **1.1 Overall Policy on Utilization of Volunteers:**

The achievement of the goals of this agency is best served by the active participation of citizens of the community. To this end, the agency accepts and encourages the involvement of Volunteers within all appropriate programs and activities. All agency directors and staff are encouraged to assist in the creation of meaningful and productive roles in which Volunteers might serve and to assist in the recruitment, training, and support of Volunteers from the community.

### **1.2 Purpose of Volunteer Policies:**

The purpose of these policies is to provide overall guidance and direction to staff and Volunteers engaged in volunteer involvement and management efforts. These policies are intended for internal management guidance only, and do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. The agency reserves the exclusive right to change any of these policies at any time and to expect adherence to the changed policy. Changes to or exceptions from these policies may

only be granted by the Executive Director, and must be obtained in advance and in writing. The Executive Director shall determine areas not specifically covered by these policies.

### **1.3 Scope of Volunteer Policies:**

Unless specifically stated, these policies apply to all Advocate Volunteers in all programs and projects undertaken by or on behalf of the agency, and to all departments and sites of operation of the agency.

### **1.4 Definition of 'Volunteer':**

A 'Volunteer' is anyone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation, performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the agency. A 'Volunteer' must be officially accepted and enrolled by the agency prior to performance of the task. Unless specifically stated, Volunteers shall not be considered as 'employees' of the agency.

### **1.5 Employees as Volunteers:**

The agency does accept the services of staff as Volunteers. This service is accepted provided that the volunteer service is provided totally without any coercive nature, involves work which is outside the scope of normal staff duties. Family members of staff are allowed to volunteer with the agency. When family members are enrolled as Volunteers, they will not be placed under the direct supervision or within the same department as other members of their family who are employees.

### **1.6 Clients and Relatives as Volunteers:**

Agency clients and relatives of clients shall not serve as Volunteers.

### **1.7 Service at the Discretion of the Agency:**

The agency accepts the service of all Volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the agency. Volunteers agree that the Executive Director may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the Volunteer's relationship with the agency. The Volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to sever the Volunteer's relationship with the agency. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the Volunteer's supervisor.

### **1.8 Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities:**

Volunteers are viewed as a valuable resource to this agency, its staff, and its clients. Volunteers shall be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to be treated with respect, the right to effective supervision, the right to full involvement and participation, and the right to recognition for work done. In return, Volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the goals and procedures of the agency. Volunteers should not be utilized to displace any paid employees from their positions.

## **II. Volunteer Management Procedures**

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### **2.1 Maintenance of Records:**

A system of records shall be maintained on each Volunteer with the agency, including dates of service, duties performed, evaluation of work, and awards received. Volunteers and appropriate staff shall be responsible for submitting all appropriate records and information to the Recruitment and Training Coordinator and/or other appropriate staff members in a timely and accurate fashion. Volunteer personnel records shall be accorded the same confidentiality as staff personnel records. The agency shall maintain Volunteer personnel records for a period of up to three (3) years after a Volunteer has left the program.

## **2.2 Two Hat Policy:**

Members of the agency's Board of Directors are not accepted as direct service Volunteers with the agency.

## **2.3 Conflict of Interest:**

No person who has a conflict of interest with any activity or program of the agency, whether personal, philosophical, or financial shall be accepted or serve as a Volunteer with the agency.

It is the policy of CASA of East TN that all employees and volunteers should enjoy the same treatment during their service to the organization. No CASA volunteer or employee may: be the immediate family member, member of the same household, or have an ongoing close, personal relationship with an employee of Knox County Juvenile Court. If an application for service is received by CASA of East TN by a potential employee or volunteer who meets any of the above three (3) categories, this policy may be excepted by majority vote of the Board of Directors.

All determinations regarding volunteer applications submitted by persons previously employed by CASA shall be reviewed on a case by case basis. The same standard shall apply for applications for employee positions submitted by persons who previously served as CASA volunteers.

CASA of East TN volunteers may also serve as foster parents through the Department of Children's Services or any contracted service provider, but shall not: Service cases through CASA of East TN which include a child that resided in their home at any time as a foster placement. Service cases through CASA of East TN that arise as a result of the same allegations that brought a child into their home as a foster placement.

## **2.4 Representation of the Agency:**

Volunteers are not authorized to make any action or statement that may significantly affect the agency. These actions may include, but are not limited to, public statements to the press, coalition or lobbying efforts with other organizations, or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations. Volunteers are authorized to act as representatives of the agency as specifically indicated within their volunteer descriptions and only to the extent of such written specifications.

## **2.5 Confidentiality:**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a Volunteer Advocate, whether this information involves a single staff, Volunteer, client, or other person or involves overall agency business.

Failure to maintain confidentiality will result in termination of the Volunteer's relationship with the agency or other corrective action.

## **2.6 Professionalism:**

In the effort to respect the rights of the children and their families, CASA Volunteers are expected to conduct CASA business in a professional manner at all times. This would include but is not limited to the following:

- Returning phone calls from the child/ren and their family in a timely manner.
- Visiting the child/ren on a regular basis (at least once a month).
- Remaining committed to representing the best interest of the child/ren at **every** stage of the case.

As representatives of the agency, Volunteer Advocates, like staff, are responsible for presenting a positive image to clients and to the community. Volunteers shall dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties.

Volunteer Advocates shall not perform CASA duties while under the influence of alcohol, non-prescription drugs, or other controlled substances. These include the inappropriate use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs or medications, including exceeding the prescribed or directed dosage.

## **2.7 Phones:**

Volunteers are never to give out their home phone number. The personal use and disclosure of cellular phones and cellular phone numbers by Volunteers may be at their discretion. Volunteers are permitted to give the CASA office numbers, (865) 215-6457 or (865) 329-3399. When a Volunteer receives a call at the CASA office they will be notified as soon as possible.

## **2.8 E-mail:**

CASA Volunteers are encouraged to establish 'CASA Only' email accounts to help maintain privacy. Email can often be useful when contacting other professionals involved in a case, but is not the primary method of contact with children and families.

Court reports may be emailed to CASA staff for the purpose of editing and filing. Volunteer Advocates shall not send court reports to any party involved in a case other than CASA staff members.

## **2.9 Abuse Reporting:**

According to the *Tennessee Code Annotated* § 37-1-403, CASA Volunteers must report all suspected incidents of abuse or neglect to the Child Protective Services division of the Department of Children's Services.

*(Any person) having knowledge of or called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition which is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect, or which on the basis of available information reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect shall report such harm immediately... The report shall include, to the extent known by the reporter, the name, address, and age of the child, the name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, and the facts requiring the report. The report may include any other pertinent information.*

According to the *Tennessee Code Annotated* § 37-1-613, CASA Volunteers must report all suspected incidents of child sexual abuse to the Child Protective Services division of the Department of Children's Services.

*(Any person) who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been sexually abused shall report such knowledge or suspicion immediately... Any person making a report of child sexual abuse in good faith will be immune from any civil or criminal liability.*

The CASA Volunteer must phone the Department of Children's Services' Emergency Abuse Hotline number at **1-877-237-0004**. After making a report to this emergency number, the CASA Volunteer should report that information to CASA staff. In the event the child/ren are in imminent risk of harm, the appropriate authorities should be contacted immediately, then CASA staff. At all times the safety of the child/ren and the CASA Volunteer should be the priority.

## **2.10 Transportation of Clients:**

Transportation of clients or their family members is strictly prohibited. CASA clients are not permitted in the Volunteer's home.

## **2.11 Gifts:**

The giving or receiving of gifts is strongly discouraged, as it could be construed as a Conflict of Interest to the case proceedings.

## **2.12 Personal Data Changes:**

It is the responsibility of each Volunteer to promptly notify the office staff of any changes in personal data. Personal mailing addresses, telephone numbers, number and name of dependents, individuals to contact in the event of an emergency, and other relevant changes should be given to the Recruitment and Training Coordinator and/or other appropriate staff members.

## **2.13 Access to Volunteer Files:**

Access to Volunteer files is limited to appropriate staff.

## **2.14 Whistleblower Policy:**

CASA of East TN is committed to high standards of ethical, moral, and legal conduct. This policy aims to provide an avenue for employees and volunteers to raise concerns and to reassure that they will be protected from reprisals or retaliation for whistleblowing.

This Whistleblower Policy is intended to provide protections for employees and volunteers who raise concerns regarding the conduct of an employee, volunteer, or board member of CASA of East TN such as incorrect financial reporting; unlawful activity; activities that are not in line with CASA of East TN policy; or activities that otherwise amount to serious improper conduct.

Harassment, reprisal, or retaliation for reporting good faith concerns under this policy will not be tolerated. Every effort will be made to treat the complainant's identity with appropriate regard for confidentiality. This policy protects a person who makes allegations in good faith. Allegations made in bad faith may result in disciplinary action.

All reports under this section shall be made to the Executive Director, unless the conduct involves the Executive Director, in which case the report shall be made to the President of the Board of Directors. If the conduct involves the Executive Director and the President of the Board of Directors, then the report shall be made to the other non-offending officers of the Board of Directors. If the conduct involves all officers, then the report shall be made to the non-offending members of the Board of Directors.

This policy does not abrogate or replace any applicable duty to report illegal conduct to law enforcement as mandated by state or federal law.

# **III. Volunteer Recruitment and Selection**

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## **3.1 Position Descriptions:**

Volunteer staff, just as paid staff, require a clear, complete, and current description of the duties and responsibilities of the position which they are expected to fill. This description will be given to each accepted Volunteer Advocate and utilized in subsequent management and evaluation efforts.

### **3.2 Recruitment:**

Volunteers shall be recruited by the agency on a pro-active basis, with the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community. Volunteers shall be recruited without regard to gender, handicap, age, race or other condition. No final acceptance of a Volunteer shall take place without a specific written Volunteer Position Description.

CASA of East Tennessee, Inc. will not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. This agreement not to discriminate shall pertain to recruitment, training, hiring, discharge, promotion, or any condition, term or privilege of employment, acceptance and utilization of volunteers, assignment of volunteers to cases, membership on the Board of Directors, and the provision of service to all cases.

**Exception to Age Statement:** Due to National CASA Guidelines, all advocate volunteers must be at least 21 years of age.

### **3.3 Interviewing:**

Prior to being assigned or appointed to a position, all Volunteers will be interviewed to ascertain their suitability for and interest in that position. The interview, reference check, and background screening process should determine the qualifications of the Volunteer, their commitment to fulfill the requirements of the position, and should answer any questions that the Volunteer might have about the position. Interviews may be conducted either in person or by other means.

### **3.4 Criminal Records Check:**

As appropriate for the protection of clients, Volunteers shall be required to submit to criminal background screening. Volunteers who do not agree to the background check will not be accepted as a Volunteer.

Any applicant who has been charged with or convicted of any felony is not eligible to become a CASA Volunteer.

Any applicant who has been convicted of, or has charges pending for a misdemeanor involving a sex offense, drug related offense, child abuse or neglect, or any other related acts that would pose risks to children or the CASA program's credibility is not accepted as a CASA Volunteer. This would also include Department of Children's Services or Child Protective Services investigations or involvement, and/or Knox County Juvenile Court dependency and neglect proceedings.

If an applicant has committed a misdemeanor that is unrelated to or would not pose a risk to children or negatively impact the creditability of the CASA program, the Executive Director will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor was committed and any other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant as a CASA Volunteer.

**It is important to understand that completion of CASA Volunteer Training does not guarantee assignment of a case.** However, the CASA program staff works to ensure that those not selected are treated with dignity, respect and, if appropriate, referred to alternative volunteer opportunities.

## **IV. Volunteer Training and Appointment**

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### **4.1 Orientation:**

All Volunteers will receive a general orientation on the nature and purpose of the agency, an orientation on the nature and operation of the program or activity for which they are recruited, and a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of the position which they are accepting in that effort. The pre-service training shall consist of 33 hours of instruction.

### **4.2 Staff Involvement in Orientation and Training:**

Staff members with responsibility over delivery of services should have an active role in the design and delivery of both orientation and training of Volunteers. Those staff who will be in a supervisory capacity to Volunteers shall have input in the design and delivery of on-the-job training regarding Volunteers assigned to them.

### **4.3 Volunteer Involvement in Orientation and Training:**

Experienced Volunteers should be included in the design and delivery of Volunteer orientation and training.

### **4.4 Acceptance and Appointment:**

Service, as a Volunteer Advocate with the agency, shall begin with an official Notice of Acceptance or Appointment to a Volunteer Position. No Volunteer Advocate shall begin performance of any position until they have been officially accepted for that position and have completed all necessary screening and paperwork requirements. At the time of final acceptance, each Volunteer shall complete any and all necessary enrollment paperwork and shall receive a copy of their Volunteer Description and Agreement of Service with the agency. Each Volunteer Advocate shall be sworn in by the Court of jurisdiction before assignment to a case.

In order to match the individual gifts and strengths of a CASA Volunteer with children and families, program staff work diligently to find the best match between children and Advocates. Every effort will be made to assign a case to a new Advocate within 90 days after completion of Volunteer Training and all other requirements.

Program staff will contact the Advocate when a match has been found. Advocates should be honest about their interest, comfort level, and availability (including time constraints) before accepting a case. The Advocate has every right to refuse a case assignment, but is expected to accept a case within 90 days after completion of training and meeting all additional requirements.

### **4.5 Case Files:**

**Volunteer Advocates will receive copies of the case files as well as any documentation received during the court proceedings.** These files can be subpoenaed, and therefore should be well maintained and should contain only information appropriate for all parties involved in the case to read. **These shall be returned to the CASA office at the conclusion of the case.**

### **4.6 Ex parte Communication and Court Testimony:**

Ex parte communication, or discussion of the case with the Judge or Magistrate/referee without all parties present, is not allowed.

CASA Volunteers may be asked to testify during court hearings about their observations of the child/ren and their family. During testimony, an Advocate may be asked questions by the judge or



magistrate, the guardian ad litem, attorneys for the state, or attorneys for the parents. Advocates may only testify in court regarding their own observations concerning the child/ren as well as any statements of which they have personal knowledge made by parties named in the case. It is important to bring documentation to these hearings to remain clear and correct during testimony.

#### **4.7 Documentation and Advocate Statistics:**

CASA Volunteers shall keep accurate and detailed documentation regarding contact with the child/ren and their family. This may include, but is not limited to, phone conversations and text messaging, emails, and home visits. To facilitate the continual and necessary process of program planning and resource development, Advocates are asked to document the number of hours and activities on their case. **Advocates report their hours and activities to the Recruitment and Training Coordinator by submitting a CASA Volunteer Monthly Report form by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the following month.**

#### **4.8 Continuing Education:**

Just as staff, Volunteers should improve their level of skill during their terms of service. Additional training and educational opportunities should be made available to Volunteers during their connection with the agency. This continuing education may include both additional information on performance of their current volunteer assignment as well as more general information. Continuing education may be provided either by the agency or through educational workshops provided by other qualified community resources. **The Volunteer shall be required to participate in 12 hours of In-Service Training per calendar year after the completion of their first year of service. Volunteer Advocates shall report continuing education hours to the Recruitment and Training Coordinator through their CASA Volunteer Monthly Report or by submitting a CASA In-Service Credit form.** Volunteers should be able to provide documentation for any continuing education training attended upon request by CASA staff.

#### **4.9 Advocate Safety:**

It is important that Volunteer Advocates take safety precautions. CASA Volunteer safety is paramount. Volunteers should use their own discretion in determining if a situation is unsafe and should always err on the side of personal safety. Advocates shall report to their advocate supervisor if a situation does not feel safe. CASA program staff and/or other Volunteers are available to accompany Advocates on home visits as well as other casework activities as needed.

## **V. Volunteer Supervision and Evaluation**

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#### **5.1 Requirement of a Supervisor:**

Each Volunteer who is accepted to a position with the agency must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for direct management of that Volunteer. This supervisor shall be responsible for day-to-day management and guidance of the work of the Volunteer, and shall be available to the Volunteer for consultation and assistance. The supervisor shall discuss all recommendations to be made on a particular case with the Volunteer prior to the court appearance on the case. The supervisor may alter a Volunteer's report for clarity and grammar. The supervisor is prohibited from altering the substance of a Volunteer's report or recommendations without the approval of the Volunteer.

#### **5.2 Acceptance of Volunteers by Staff:**

Since individual staff are in a better position to determine the requirements of their work and their own abilities, no Volunteer will be assigned to work with a staff person without the consent of that staff person.

### **5.3 Staff Volunteer Management Training:**

An orientation on working with Volunteers will be provided to all staff. In-service training on effective volunteer utilization will be provided to those staff who are highly involved in volunteer management.

### **5.4 Lines of Communication:**

Volunteers are entitled to all necessary information pertinent to the performance of their work assignments. Primary responsibility for ensuring that the Volunteer receives such information will rest with the direct supervisor of the Volunteer. Lines of communication should operate in both directions, and should exist both formally and informally. Volunteers should be consulted regarding all decisions that would substantially affect the performance of their duties.

### **5.5 Absenteeism:**

Volunteers are expected to perform their duties on a regularly scheduled and timely basis. If expecting to be absent from a scheduled duty, Volunteers should inform their staff supervisor as far in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements may be made. Continual absenteeism will result in a review of the Volunteer's work assignment or continued service.

### **5.6 Evaluations:**

Volunteers shall receive periodic evaluations to review their work. The evaluation session is utilized to review the performance of the Volunteer, to suggest any changes in work style, to seek suggestions from the Volunteer on means of enhancing the Volunteer's relationship with the agency, to convey appreciation to the Volunteer, and to ascertain the continued interest of the Volunteer in serving in that position. The evaluation session is an opportunity for both the Volunteer and the agency to examine and improve their relationship.

### **5.7 Staff Responsibility for Evaluation:**

It shall be the responsibility of each staff person in a supervisory relationship with a Volunteer to schedule and perform a yearly evaluation and to maintain records of the evaluation.

### **5.8 Corrective Action:**

In appropriate situations, corrective action may be taken following an evaluation. Examples of corrective action include the requirement of additional training, re-assignment of a Volunteer to a new position, suspension of the Volunteer, or dismissal from volunteer service.

### **5.9 Reasons for Dismissal:**

Nothing in this section limits the policy described in section 1.7.

Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, theft of property or misuse of agency equipment or materials, abuse or mistreatment of clients, taking action that endangers a child, initiating ex-parte communication with the court, failure to abide by agency or court policies and procedures, failure to meet physical or mental standards of performance, falsifying application information, existence of child abuse allegations against the Volunteer, criminal proceedings or convictions, existence of a conflict of interest that cannot be resolved, failure to report all suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect to the Department of Children's Services, and/or failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties.

### **5.10 Concerns and Grievances:**

Decisions involving corrective action of a Volunteer may be reviewed for appropriateness. If corrective action is taken, the affected Volunteer shall be informed of the procedures for expressing their concern or grievance.

### **5.11 Resignation:**

Volunteers may resign from their volunteer service with the agency at any time. It is requested that Volunteers who intend to resign provide advance notice of their departure and a reason for their decision.

### **5.12 Exit Interviews:**

Exit interviews, where possible, should be conducted with Volunteers who are leaving their positions. The interview should ascertain why the Volunteer is leaving the position, suggestions the Volunteer may have on improving the position, and the possibility of involving the Volunteer in some other capacity with the agency.

## **VI. Volunteer Support and Recognition**

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### **6.1 Access to Agency Property and Materials:**

As appropriate, Volunteers shall have access to agency property and materials necessary to fulfill their duties, and shall receive training in the operation of any equipment. Property and materials shall be utilized only when directly required for agency purposes.

### **6.2 Recognition:**

An annual Volunteer recognition event will be conducted to highlight and reward the contribution of Volunteers to the agency. Volunteers will be consulted and involved in order to develop an appropriate format for the event.

### **6.3 Informal Recognition:**

All staff and Volunteers responsible for volunteer supervision are encouraged to undertake on-going methods of recognition of volunteer service on a regular basis throughout the year.

## RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF VOLUNTEER MANUAL

This is an important document intended to help you become acquainted with CASA policies. The contents of this manual may be changed at any time at the discretion of the CASA Board of Directors with immediate effect upon all volunteers. No changes in any policy or rule will be made without a quorum of the members of the Board. Please read the following statements and sign below to indicate your receipt and acknowledgment of the Volunteer Manual.

1. I have received and read a copy of the CASA Volunteer Manual. I understand that the policies, rules and guidelines described in it are subject to change at the sole discretion of CASA's Board of Directors at any time.
2. I understand that my volunteer service can be terminated at will, either by myself or CASA.
3. I am aware that during the course of my volunteer service confidential information will be made available to me in regard to clients and their cases. I understand that this information is critical to the success of CASA and must be kept confidential. In the event of termination of volunteer service, whether voluntary or involuntary, I hereby agree not to violate this confidentiality or exploit this information with anyone.
4. I understand that should the content be changed in any way, CASA may require an additional signature from me to indicate that I am aware of and understand any new policies.
5. I understand that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand the above statements and agree to abide by all terms and conditions of CASA policies.

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*I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby acknowledge that I understand,  
accept, and will abide by the Policies and Procedures set forth in the  
CASA of East Tennessee, Inc. Volunteer Manual.*

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Signature of Volunteer

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Date

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Signature of Witness

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Date