

## Court Appointed Special Advocates

### Introduction

The Comptroller's office encourages its employees to volunteer as part of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program.

A CASA volunteer is appointed by a judge in a child protection case to represent the best interests of the child. CASA volunteers get to know the child, research case records, talk with family members, teachers, doctors, lawyers, social workers and others, and monitor the progress of the child and his or her family in the child protection system. They advocate for the best interests of the child in court, in school and in agency meetings. They make recommendations to the court regarding the child's current and future needs. Their independent evaluations help the judge make informed decisions in the case and help guide the child to a safe, permanent home as quickly as possible.

For more information, visit <http://texascasa.org/>.

### Policy

The Comptroller's office has the authority to grant up to five hours each month for an employee to participate in mandatory training or perform volunteer services for Court Appointed Special Advocates without a deduction in salary or loss of vacation time, sick leave, earned overtime credit or state compensatory time.

### Eligibility

An employee who is meeting the requirements of his or her position and who has not been counseled or disciplined for violation of attendance or leave policies within the last 12 months may be eligible for time away from work to volunteer as a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

### Approval

An eligible employee must have approval from his or her supervisor to participate in the program and may be required to provide documentation necessary to show that he or she was training or volunteering during each absence.

A supervisor may deny the request if the employee's absence may disrupt agency business or cause an additional burden on the employee's coworkers.

## **Withdrawing Approval**

A supervisor may withdraw approval if the employee becomes unable to meet the requirements of his or her position, is having attendance or leave issues, or for other legitimate business reasons. The supervisor, however, should allow a reasonable amount of time for the employee to give notice and for the program to reassign the employee's duties.

## **Accounting for Time**

Employees are not required to use leave to account for time away from the office to volunteer with the CASA program. It is considered time at work for the purposes of leave accounting.

## **Authority**

Texas Government Code §661.921