



GUARDIAN AD LITEM

Jackson County CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that mobilizes community volunteers and staff Guardians ad Litem who work closely together and act as advocates for children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect and are under the jurisdiction of the Jackson County Family Court. Our clients face multiple risks, including permanent separation from their birth families due to factors such as substance use disorders, untreated mental health, and intimate partner violence, all of which are often the rooted effects of poverty, community violence, and intergenerational trauma. In order to mitigate these risks, CASA Volunteer Advocates engage in fact-finding and relationship building with their child clients in order to make recommendations about all their needs. Collaboration with our child clients and their families is one of our most crucial values and is what promotes excellent advocacy and just outcomes in a complex child welfare system.

Our model is simple: Every child client is assigned a volunteer advocate, who has been rigorously screened and extensively trained, and a guardian ad litem/staff attorney who advocates for their best interest. This team has access to staff social workers and child welfare experts who help them provide individualized advocacy grounded in evidence-based practices. Together, they assure the best possible outcomes for their children and increase the likelihood for families to be reunited.

At Jackson County CASA, we value our volunteer advocates, each other, and most importantly the children we serve. We work hard, love to learn, celebrate our successes, and support one another, all while having a ton of fun! **And best of all, Jackson County CASA is expanding its services and will soon represent all children in Jackson County under the Court's jurisdiction.** This means that we are doubling our service population and that's why we need you! With more staff, Jackson County CASA will be able to work toward its vision of ensuring every child involved with the Jackson County Family Court due to abuse or neglect will grow up in a safe and permanent home.

OUR VALUES

Connection: We believe that every person deserves meaningful relationships with supportive and loving adults, family, and community, and preservation of their cultural heritage, traditions, and identity.

Respect: We value people of all backgrounds and identities and believe that every person deserves to be honored, included, and heard.

Collaboration: We recognize that effective progress and problem-solving require diverse voices, ideas, and perspectives.

Integrity: We honor our commitments to our children and the Court with transparency, honesty, and fairness.

Responsibility: We maximize our resources and support through accountability to our children, stakeholders, and community.

GENERAL STATEMENT OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Guided by Missouri Guardian ad Litem Standards, the Guardian ad Litem leads the agency's multi-disciplinary team and provides high-quality, child-centered legal representation while promoting timely permanency with a focus on safety and family preservation for up to 125 children. They are guided by the best interests of their child clients at all times and exercise independent judgment on behalf of them in all matters. The Guardian ad Litem works closely with the child's Volunteer Advocate and Case Specialist and together they evaluate the needs of their child clients to make appropriate recommendations and advocate zealously for them.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED

Manager of Legal Services

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Lawyering

- In accordance with the Missouri Guardian ad Litem Standards, leads CASA's passionate Volunteer Advocates and child welfare experts on their cases by providing high-quality legal representation and directing the investigation and advocacy necessary to achieve the best interests of child clients.
- Works closely with the Volunteer Advocate and/or Case Specialist to investigate the child's circumstances and wishes to evaluate and recommend services that will benefit the child and their family.
- Conducts face-to-face visits with child clients with a focus on building trusting and strong professional relationships and to provide legal counseling, when necessary. Visits with clients should occur as often as necessary to achieve these goals and are dependent on whether the client is assigned a Volunteer Advocate or Case Specialist. Older youth clients will require more frequent visitation by their Guardian ad Litem.
- Interviews and engages the child's parents and family in case planning.
- Prepares for and fully participates in court proceedings, including examining and cross-examining witnesses, offering testimonial and other documentary evidence, and filing motions, responses, and other pleadings.
- Facilitates the participation of the child client's participation in court hearings, as appropriate.
- Advocates for timely hearings, timely provision of necessary services, and timely compliance with court orders.
- Attends and actively participates in case related meetings, including 72 Hour Meetings, Team Decision Making Meetings, Stability Staffings, and Family Support Team meetings, and other collateral matters (e.g. IEP meetings).
- Monitors court orders and advocates for the implementation of timely and necessary services for clients.
- Complies with Missouri's Guardian ad Litem Standards, Rules of Professional Conduct, and local court rules.

Specialized Knowledge

- Develops a proficient understanding of child welfare best practices, trauma-informed care, and permanency outcomes for children who are system-involved, and the effects of separation from family on children.
- Remains current and well-informed about all aspects of federal and state laws, rules, regulations, and policies relating to child welfare and practice as a Guardian ad Litem.
- Creates and maintains strong community partnerships with agencies and community actors with specialized knowledge regarding family-finding and permanency.
- Partners with the Manager of Volunteer Training and Pro Bono Managing Attorney to create and provide high quality and relevant continued education for Volunteer Advocates and Pro Bono Attorneys.

Customer Service

- Collaborates with and values the role of every CASA team member. The Guardian ad Litem will make every effort to include Volunteer Advocates in case decisions.
- Communicates regularly with Volunteer Advocates, Advocate Supervisors, and Case Specialists, both verbally and in writing, with relevant information concerning the child and the case and considers their feedback.
- Attends and participates in internal case transfer meetings and case staffings with Volunteer Advocates and other CASA team members.
- Introduces Volunteer Advocates to the Court and legal parties.
- Requests, reviews, and files Volunteer Advocate Court Reports and provides meaningful feedback to Volunteer Advocates about their Court Reports, when necessary.
- Attends and participates in monthly and quarterly Volunteer Advocate engagement events, such as appreciation and continuing education events.
- Provides intentional and personalized recognition to Volunteer Advocates, when necessary.

Record Keeping

- Assists in the maintenance of appropriate case files and other records.
- Ensures all case related activities performed are promptly updated and/or documented in CASA's online database Optima.

Professional Integrity and Development

- Completes required training and documentation for qualification as a Guardian ad Litem in Jackson County Missouri.
- Completes a minimum of 12 hours of annual continuing education programming. Will identify personal development goals and training opportunities that will prioritize DEI and child welfare best practices.
- Uses a strengths-based practical approach to help the case team accomplish its identified goals.
- Commits to understanding and complying with the Missouri Guardian ad Litem Standards, the Professional Rules of Conduct, and other court rules.
- Engages in respectful and collaborative relationships with Volunteer Advocates, clients, and community partners.
- Shares in the agency-wide responsibility of Volunteer Advocate recruitment, engagement, and retention.
- Maintains strict confidentiality of Jackson County CASA's clients, volunteers, staff, and donors.
- Embraces a culture of continued development by participating in an annual performance review with the Managing Attorney and documents one's own milestones and achievements, as well as opportunities for growth.
- Maintains memberships and actively participates in attorney and/or bar associations to maintain visibility.
- Maintains a positive image of Jackson County CASA and provides excellent customer service at all times.
- Acts in the best interest of Jackson County CASA and its clients at all times.

Other Duties

- As needed, facilitates Legal Training for new Volunteer Advocates as part of CASA's Pre-Service Training.
- Completes CASA Pre-Service Training within three months of start date.
- Performs other related duties as requested by the Director of Legal Services, Vice Presidents of Operations, and President/CEO.

QUALIFICATIONS and ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

EDUCATION and EXPERIENCE

- Active member in good standing with the Missouri Bar.
- At least one year experience in child welfare or human services field.
- Demonstrated commitment to providing client-centered advocacy and representing children and youth.
- Familiarity with the issues that impact CASA's clients and their families, including the effects of poverty, trauma, intimate partner violence, substance use disorders, untreated mental health, and SOGIE.

ESSENTIAL QUALITIES

- Outstanding written and verbal communication skills, as well as strong attention to detail.
- Ability to exercise objectivity in assessing and making recommendations for children and families.
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships in a diverse, inclusive, and multidisciplinary environment. Must value collaboration and teamwork.
- Empathetic and solution-oriented, using a blameless problem-solving approach.
- Committed to remaining current on research and best practice standards regarding volunteer retention and child welfare and carrying out and teaching these practices.
- Promotes the dignity and well-being of all clients, staff, and volunteers.
- Comfort with respectful confrontation.
- Practices healthy professional boundaries and observes self-care practices.
- Strong organizational skills with the ability to juggle multiple assignments and meet short deadlines.
- Ability to work with minimal supervision.
- Must be able to demonstrate adaptability due to the potential for changing duties and responsibilities during the agency's expansion. Optimism is a must.
- Commitment to Jackson County CASA's mission and values.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

- Must submit to and pass a criminal and child abuse and neglect background check.
- Must have flexibility to work some nights and weekends.

- A valid driver's license and reliable personal transportation are required for this position. Some travel within Jackson County and surrounding areas will be required. Mileage will be reimbursed.

SCHEDULE and WORK LOCATION

- This is a full time (40 hours/wk), exempt position. Most work will be conducted M-F, 8:30am-5pm. Some evening and weekend hours will be required. Ability to work some hours remotely. Jackson County CASA is located at 2544 Holmes, KCMO 64108.

PHYSICAL and MENTAL DEMANDS and WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Prolonged periods of both standing, walking, and sitting at a desk and working on a computer will be required. Will be required to use hands and fingers frequently. Will climb and descend stairs, grasp, handle, feel, and operate objects, tools, and controls. Will be required to bend, kneel, and crouch; speak, hear, and read both in quiet, loud, private and public settings, both large and small. In-office and out-of-office public contact with people. Vision abilities include close and distant vision, and the ability to adjust focus.
- Must be able to lift and move up to 25 pounds.
- A great deal of in-person contact with people outside of the office environment will be required.
- The noise level of the office environment is often low to moderate. Position is subject to the usual office interruptions associated with providing service and performing multiple duties in an office environment.
- Proper grooming and hygiene is required. Attire for this position is professional but there may be times that attire is business casual, as determined by the setting.
- Reasonable accommodation will be made to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the essential duties and responsibilities.

SALARY

Salary range starts at \$70,000.

BENEFITS

Benefits include 15 days paid time off & 15 days paid leave earned within the first year of employment, and paid holidays. 100% employer paid health insurance, 100% employer paid dental, vision, life, and long-term disability insurance. Simple IRA with match. Employee Assistance Program. Jackson County CASA is a child-centered, supportive, and collegial work environment.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Submit a cover letter and resume to hr@jacksoncountycasa-mo.org.

Please submit a detailed cover letter indicating your interest and qualifications for this position. Resumes submitted without a cover letter will not be considered. No phone calls please.

OUR COMMITMENT

Jackson County CASA is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer committed to building and supporting a culturally diverse and inclusive work environment that values all staff members' backgrounds and perspectives. We encourage applications from all qualified individuals without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, national origin, marital status, disability or veteran status. We are committed to providing reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities.

This job description provides a general, but not comprehensive, list of essential responsibilities and qualifications required. It does not represent a contract of employment and Jackson County CASA reserves the right to change the job description and/or posting at any time without advance notice.