

Child Advocacy Center of the Ninth Judicial District Volunteer Program

The Child Advocacy Center recognizes that volunteer support is a critical component of the program's success. Volunteers will be recruited, screened, and trained to match a variety of Center needs, such as helping with client services, administration, community education and awareness, and special projects.

All volunteers will receive orientation training and an overview of the services of the CAC. Volunteers will complete an initial application which will include two character references. A formal criminal background release form will also be signed by the volunteer and processed by the appropriate staff.

Orientation training will be provided to all volunteers, with office and child volunteers receiving training on services of the CAC, issues of confidentiality, emergency procedures, and any relevant policies and procedures. Specific training will be provided based on the tasks involved in the volunteer's job description.

Volunteer Job Description Administrative Support Specialist Child and Family Greeter

Given the developmental stage of the CAC, the initial volunteer needs will require some flexibility, and will become more specialized as the services of the CAC develop.

Tasks may include:

- Answering phones and greeting visitors to the CAC
- Providing clerical support in the development and organization of CAC work spaces
- Creating forms and educational outreach materials with support from staff
- Assist visiting children and families by greeting them, and helping them to feel comfortable at the Center
- Have all visitors sign in on a visitor clipboard -- explain that this helps us know who is in the office at all times, and helps us keep everyone safe.
- Help keep the office clean and welcoming to children and families

If you are notified that children are coming into the Center, tasks may include:

- Contacting staff and additional volunteers to arrange to come to the Center
- Greet and welcome the parent/caregiver and child to the CAC
- The parent or child may have lots of questions - it's okay to not know the answer, and, in fact, we won't know many of the answers until *after* the child's interview
- Encourage the children to go into the play area and explain that this is a room for kids to play or just relax - it may help to have the caregiver give the child permission to play there
- Join the child in the play area and follow their lead regarding play activity
- Approach all children and families with respect

A few things NOT to do:

- Don't make promises - sometimes we are tempted to make unrealistic promises when we see a child in crisis, but promises we can't keep may further damage the child's ability to trust
- Don't ask what happened, or talk about any allegations of abuse
- Don't approach children abruptly or attempt to hug or touch them - it is okay to hug if *they* initiate it, but be mindful of the fact that the child may have recently been hurt by touch
- Don't *force* a child to separate from their parent if they are not ready - it may take several attempts before the child is engaged in the playroom; try engaging the parent in conversation if they are able as this can sometimes provide a helpful distraction allowing the child to "find" the playroom
- Don't try to influence the child's play - children, especially abused children, come in many different developmental stages, and should not be made to do "something their age" etc., especially at this time

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency, such as someone who appears threatening, or a suspected perpetrator is attempting to come in the Center, notify staff immediately. If staff are not available, contact 911 immediately.

Take Care of Yourself!

Please share with staff things that are difficult for you, or questions you may have about the process. Volunteers are a critical part of the Center's activities, and often the first contact a child and family has with the Center.

Volunteer Job Description Community Education/Outreach

Community education and awareness are critical components of a successful program. The Child Advocacy Center recognizes that there are many opportunities for volunteers to be involved in helping to raise awareness about the importance of the prevention and awareness of child abuse, as well as the services of the Child Advocacy Center.

Volunteer opportunities may include:

- Representing the CAC at community events or programs
- Participating in special events such as organization and distribution of blue ribbons during April's Child Abuse Prevention awareness campaign
- Participating on the Center's Speakers Bureau, which might include presenting or co-presenting to civic groups, parent groups, and children's groups
- Developing specialized handouts on child abuse for specific populations
- Participating in the development of brochures or newsletters for target populations
- Helping with special fundraising events