

The Volunteer Council was established to provide informed recommendations and suggestions to the network, based on the insights gathered from the Advocate survey they developed. The members were organized into three sub-committees: Retention, Recruitment, and Training. Each sub-committee reviewed and analyzed the survey results and feedback, engaging in discussions to develop actionable strategies. We are grateful for their time and dedication to this council. Below are the key recommendations and strategies derived from the survey findings.

## RECRUITMENT

### **Consistent Approach: Create a consistent messaging approach across your program**

#### SUGGESTIONS

- Consistent approach and messaging surrounding expectations and role
- Develop a brief elevator speech for your program on what CASA is and why volunteers are needed
- Use volunteer testimonials
- Utilize materials from Texas CASA's statewide recruitment & awareness campaign

### **Enhance follow-up process: Ensure program is keeping track of volunteers throughout the recruitment to case assignment process**

#### SUGGESTIONS

- Develop a tracking process for inquiries, orientation attendance, completion of pre-service, and case acceptance
- Personal follow-up calls made from an Advocate to people who have expressed interest
- Identify and re-evaluate areas where high volume of volunteer dropouts occur

### **Utilize Senior Leadership: Senior leadership and Board members involved in recruitment efforts**

#### SUGGESTIONS

- Leadership & Supervisor introductions at orientation and/or pre-service
- Board members commitment to recruit in their communities, affiliations
- Board members alternate attending orientation, swearing-in, other volunteer events

## RETENTION

### **Optima & Documentation: Survey respondents described significant issues with data entry and feeling overwhelmed by the increasing administrative tasks for the advocate role.**

#### SUGGESTIONS

- Provide training in Optima in pre-service training & in-service training - explore implementation voice to text options or pre-existing apps
- Discuss documentation expectations during orientation & throughout pre-service and make sure they are clearly understood
- Hands on training, support & understanding needed with Optima documentation, expectations, & use of Optima

### **Support: Survey feedback showed many advocates experience burnout, issues with communication, and feelings of isolation and frustration. More individualized support in these areas could be helpful.**

#### SUGGESTIONS

- Foster a sense of community through social gatherings, mentorship/partnership programs, discussion groups/panels

- Inservice topics to include: legal/court process, legal terms, working with partners and parties, court report writing
- 1:1 time with supervisors for individualized mentorship, emotional support & appreciation
- Address potential burnout/fatigue by providing concrete opportunities for advocates to share & cope with immediate needs. Seek ways to keep the advocate engaged to serve the organization without the emotional capacity of being on a case or between a case
- Encourage & make a welcoming space for advocate's voices to be heard, their opinions expressed, & a feedback loop with results

## TRAINING

### **Court System Responsibilities: Increase training in court report writing, interacting with parties, presenting in court**

#### SUGGESTIONS

- Develop a court report template that includes sample language, what needs to be included, and what to emphasize
- Provide guidelines or "do's and don'ts" for interacting with parties
- Practice interactions and presenting in court via role-play or mock trial; discuss court room decorum

### **Interpersonal Relationships Skills: Interacting with parents, families, caregivers**

#### SUGGESTIONS

- Define CASA's relationship and responsibilities for those outside the network
- Role-play or activities that allow trainees to practice realistic interactions with parents, families, caregivers
- Provide guidelines for what information needs to be gathered, how to ask, and best practices for communication

### **RTC, Group Homes & Juvenile Justice: Interacting with care staff and site expectations**

#### SUGGESTIONS

- Provide basic understanding of what to expect at RTCs, group homes, and juvenile detention visits

## LIST OF RESOURCES

### RECRUITMENT

[The CASA Effect Awareness Campaign](#)

[Recruitment Bounty: A Treasure Trove of Tips](#)

[The Art of Recruitment](#)

[Coaches for CASA](#)

[Keep Calm and CASA Monthly Zooms](#)

[Social Media Guidebook & Content Bank](#)

[Clergy, CASA & Community Toolkit](#)

[Men of CASA](#)

### RETENTION

[STAR Program Portal for Volunteer Supervisors](#)

[Coaching Playbook](#)

[Understanding the Roles in a CPS Case - handout](#)

[Optima Data Management Guide](#)

Utilize speech-to-text apps for Optima notes

## TRAINING

[Volunteer Coaching Advocacy: Best Practices for](#)

[Testifying in Court](#)

[Trial Prep PDF](#)

[QRTP & RTC STAR Zoom](#)

[Supporting Dual-Status Youth](#)