

# **Standards for State CASA/GAL Organizations**

*2009 Edition*

A National CASA Association

Resource Library Publication

National Court Appointed  
Special Advocate Association

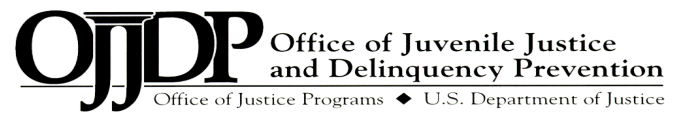
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# **The National CASA Association Mission Statement**

The mission of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association, together with its state and local members, is to support and promote court-appointed volunteer advocacy so that every abused or neglected child can be safe, establish permanence and have the opportunity to thrive.

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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Implementation .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>State Standards at a Glance .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Standard 1: Mission.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Standard 2: Governance, Ethics and Compliance with Laws and Regulations .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Standard 3: Planning, Assessment and Evaluation .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Standard 4: Human Resource Management.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Standard 5: Financial and Risk Management.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Standard 6: Public Relations .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Standard 7: Quality Assurance.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Standard 8: National CASA Affiliation .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Standard 9: New State Organization Development.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Standard 10: Inclusiveness and Diversity .....</b>	<b>33</b>

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# Introduction

Having a set of quality standards to measure a state organization's operations demonstrates that the organization:

- Respects and is committed to quality service to the local programs
- Utilizes established policies and procedures necessary for effective management
- Manages its financial affairs prudently, is financially sound, and is committed to the principles of public disclosure
- Continually evaluates its services and operations

The National CASA Association issued standards and recommended management practices for local CASA/guardian ad litem (GAL) programs in 1990. A year later, compliance with the standards became a mandatory condition of membership in National CASA. In 1994, the board of directors appointed a committee to review the existing standards, recommend management practices and provide revisions and updates. The *Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs* resulted. It contains standards, requirements and implementation guidelines for local program members of the National CASA Association, referred to in the body of the document as CASA/GAL programs. The standards committee incorporated the Code of Ethics document into the local CASA/GAL standards in 2000. In an effort to promote and maintain high-quality, consistent and ethical governance and management at both the state and local level, *Standards for State CASA/GAL Organizations* was developed in 1998. In 2003 the state standards were reviewed and revised by members of the National CASA network, Standards Committee and National CASA Board of Trustees, resulting in the 2004 edition. In 2009 the National CASA Board of Trustees approved this edition of the *Standards for State CASA/GAL Organizations*.

## Navigating this Document

This document is organized into sections dealing with specific areas of governance and organizational management. Under each standard, requirements are provided specifying how the standard is implemented. The document as a whole provides a framework for quality governance and organizational management. The standard statement in each section defines the most effective overall approach to manage a particular aspect of state organization governance and operation. The requirements incorporate the standards into program operations by specifying the practices that carry out the intent of the standard.

**Note: The term “local CASA/GAL program” includes stand-alone CASA/GAL programs, publicly administered CASA/GAL programs or CASA/GAL programs under the umbrella of another organization.**

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# Implementation

**National CASA believes that a commitment to quality is a commitment to the children we serve. The National CASA quality assurance system encourages, inspires and helps our state organizations and local CASA/GAL programs to achieve their greatest potential and deliver high-quality advocacy on behalf of the children we serve. National CASA recognizes the diversity of our CASA/GAL network and the need for flexibility in the quality assurance system.**

Compliance with standards will be measured through a comprehensive organizational self-assessment. Through the self-assessment process, state organizations will evaluate both strengths and opportunities and identify areas where further development, training or technical assistance is needed. During this process the state organization will analyze whether the organization has established efficient, ethical and effective governance and management policies and practices.

Compliance with state standards is a condition of National CASA membership. Please contact National CASA for clarification, interpretation or technical assistance with the state standards. We are eager to work with you to increase the effectiveness of your organization.

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# State Standards at a Glance

**Standard 1:** The state organization has a mission and purpose that is consistent with the goal of developing and supporting quality volunteer advocacy in court for children who are abused and neglected.

**Standard 2:** The state organization has a body responsible for governing the organization, overseeing compliance with all applicable laws and regulations and ensuring ethical conduct.

**Standard 3:** The state organization engages in a strategic planning and assessment process to establish its goals and priorities and to evaluate its effectiveness in achieving its mission.

**Standard 4:** The state organization has written policies for recruitment, selection, inclusion, training and performance, which are guided by generally accepted human resources practices.

**Standard 5:** The state organization manages its operations in accordance with generally accepted financial and risk-management practices.

**Standard 6:** The state organization provides information and education to promote CASA/GAL advocacy for abused and neglected children.

**Standard 7:** The state organization promotes the integrity and quality of the CASA/guardian ad litem program and the delivery of the highest quality advocacy services to children who are abused and neglected.

**Standard 8:** The state organization is a member of the National CASA Association and meets its standards, requirements and policies.

**Standard 9:** The state organization engages in comprehensive planning for the initiation and start-up of its operations.

**Standard 10:** The state organization is committed to inclusiveness and diversity as essential values. It demonstrates these qualities in its own operation and promotes them in local program governance, management and quality advocacy for the state's abused and neglected children.

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# Standard 1: Mission

**The state organization has a mission and purpose that is consistent with the goal of developing and supporting programs that provide quality volunteer advocacy in court for children who are abused and neglected.**

## Mission

1. The state organization's mission statement is:
  - Consistent with the mission and standards of National CASA
  - Written
  - Adopted by the organization's governing body
2. The state organization's activities are consistent with the identified needs of local programs.
3. Working in partnership with National CASA and local CASA/GAL programs, the state organization provides core services including but not limited to:
  - Support and provide technical assistance to local CASA/GAL programs
  - Support new CASA/GAL programs in development in the state
  - Create opportunities for communication, networking, information sharing and support for CASA/GAL program staff
  - Disseminate current information to local CASA/GAL programs regarding the following issues that affect the work of CASA/GAL programs: federal and state legislation, policy changes, trends in child welfare, court improvements and court decisions
  - Increase awareness of CASA/GAL work and the needs of children who are abused and neglected by providing information to targeted groups and to the public
  - Provide information and technical support to local CASA/GAL programs about resource development
4. The state organization has established communications methods through which it informs local programs about:
  - Pending legislative policy or regulatory changes that could impact the CASA network
  - Opportunities for local input into legislative policy or regulatory issues



- Opportunities to educate local representatives regarding issues of importance to CASA programs and the children they serve

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# Standard 2: Governance, Ethics and Compliance with Laws and Regulations

**The state organization has a body responsible for governing the organization, overseeing compliance with all applicable laws and regulations and ensuring ethical conduct.**

## **A. Roles of the Governing Body**

1. Ensures program's compliance with applicable federal and state statutes, court rules, executive orders and appropriate regulations
2. Establishes and evaluates the organization's goals, develops resources and approves policies
3. Provides the organization access to legal counsel with relevant legal expertise to clarify the meaning of laws or regulations governing its program operation, and provides legal counsel as needed
4. Maintains personnel policies and periodically reviews and adopts needed changes
5. Procures sufficient financial resources, ensures a balanced budget and manages resources prudently in order to support the organization's provision of services
6. Appoints the chief executive officer/program administrator and delegates authority and responsibility for organizational and financial management and policy implementation
7. Holds the chief executive officer/program administrator accountable for the organization's performance
8. Evaluates the management's handling of the organization's financial affairs
9. Reviews financial reports at least quarterly, comparing actual versus budgeted expenditures and revenues
10. Ensures corrective action is implemented when deficiencies in fiscal management are identified
11. Examines and approves the organization's audited financial statements, operating budget and fiscal policies

12. Reviews planned fundraising activities to ensure they are congruent with mission and organizational priorities

## **B. Governing Body Procedures**

1. In a nonprofit organization, the state organization's bylaws or written operational procedures:
  - Describe the organizational structure and responsibilities of the governing body
  - Establish the mechanisms for selection, rotation and duration of membership and for election of officers
  - Set the minimum number of formal meetings of the full governing body at four times per calendar year
  - Set the quorum for these meetings so at least a simple majority of the current membership of the governing body is present
2. In a publicly administered program, the governing body:
  - Has a written description of the organizational structure of the program and responsibilities of the governing body
  - Sets the minimum number of formal meetings at four per calendar year
3. The state organization has an established procedure for arriving at an organizational decision in a timely manner, and that procedure includes notification of and input from local programs.
4. The governing body of the state organization maintains a written record of every meeting. The written record accurately reports all actions taken by the governing body and includes a summary of the governing body's deliberations. The written record also includes reports of board committees. The written record is prepared in a timely manner and copies are made available to members of the governing body. A master copy of the written record is kept with the organization's official documents.
5. The nonprofit governing body reviews organizational and governing documents no less frequently than every four years.

## **C. Program Administration**

1. Clear lines of accountability and authority exist at all levels of the organizational and management structures and are formalized in an organizational chart which shows lines of accountability. All employees, along with members of the governing body and committees, receive a formal orientation to the organizational structure.

2. If the state organization is a nonprofit and under the umbrella of a parent organization, a written agreement is developed that:
  - Details the rights and responsibilities of the state organization and the umbrella organization
  - Includes procedures for resolving situations in which a conflict of interest exists between the state organization and its parent organization
  - Contains the protocol for resource development activities of both organizations
  - Sets a timeframe of no more than two years for review and possible revisions of the agreement
3. Communication and collaboration between employees and governing body and committee members is promoted by:
  - Providing opportunities for in-person meetings
  - Providing opportunities to serve on committees as appropriate
  - Maintaining brief records of committee meetings

#### **D. Governing Body Membership and Orientation**

1. The governing body includes members who represent local CASA/GAL programs.
2. The governing body reflects the diversity of the children served and has members who bring a range of skills, backgrounds and knowledge that support the state organization in fulfilling its mission.
3. A nonprofit state organization that has paid staff should ensure that the positions of chief executive officer, board chair and board treasurer are held by different individuals. Organizations without paid staff should ensure that the positions of board chair and treasurer are held by different individuals.
4. The members of the governing body are qualified to carry out their responsibilities for adopting or recommending agency policies; selecting and evaluating the chief executive officer/program administrator; engaging in strategic planning, financial oversight, resource development and diversity outreach; and maintaining court and community relationships.
5. The state organization governing body includes individuals with various capabilities:
  - Skills and experience to serve at a policy-making level
  - Ability to advocate for sufficient financial resources for the organization to carry out its work
  - Knowledge of the court system and the communities served

- Ability to reflect the interests of community, local programs and children served and to advocate for culturally responsive delivery of service
  - Other specialized skills needed to carry out the objectives of the program
- 6. The nonprofit state organization develops and utilizes, on an ongoing basis, the following:
  - Job descriptions for board members
  - Board recruitment strategies
  - Established mechanisms for selection, screening, election, rotation and duration of office for the board.
- 7. The members of the governing body receive formal orientation to the state organization’s goals, objectives, structure and methods of operation; are familiarized with its services; and are provided with key documents related to governance and board responsibilities.
- 8. The governing body establishes an effective, systematic process for education of and communication with members—including formal orientation—to ensure they are aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities, are knowledgeable about the programs and activities of the organization and can carry out their oversight functions effectively.
- 9. Members of the board of a nonprofit state organization should evaluate the performance of members of the governing body as a group and individuals no less frequently than every three years, and should have clear procedures for removing board members who are unable to fulfill their responsibilities.

## **E. Ethics**

1. The state organization establishes policies to govern ethical conduct of members of the governing body, committee members and volunteers.
2. The policies that govern ethical conduct should be built on values that the organization embraces and should highlight the expectations for those who work with the organization. Policies should address areas of confidentiality and respect that should be afforded to clients, consumers, donors, governing body members, employees and volunteers.
3. The state organization upholds the credibility, integrity and dignity of the CASA mission by conducting all business in an honest, fair, professional and compassionate manner.
4. The chief executive officer/program administrator, employees, paid consultants and governing board or committee members of the state organization serve in accordance with written policies governing conflict of interest, accountability and delegation of authority.

5. A lawyer who sits on the state board may also provide pro bono legal counsel as long as the roles have been clarified by the governing body in order to keep the two functions separate.
6. The state organization shall maintain a written conflict of interest policy approved by the governing body. This policy shall govern the conduct of members of the governing body, program staff and paid consultants, and shall be signed annually by each of these individuals. The conflict of interest policy will:
  - Require that those associated with the organization in the capacities named above will not use their relationship with the organization for personal or professional gain
  - Identify and define conduct and transactions in which a conflict of interest exists or has the potential to exist and warrants disclosure
  - Prohibit employees, paid consultants, governing body and committee members of a nonprofit or public state organization from having direct or indirect financial interest in the assets, leases, business transactions or professional services of the organization
  - Identify other specific conduct which is prohibited
  - Establish the requirement that the individual involved make timely disclosure of the conflict or potential for conflict in the transaction
  - Mandate that disclosed conflicts, and the actions taken in response, be recorded in official board minutes
  - Include a procedure for recusal from the transaction or decision by the person with the conflict or potential conflict
  - Include a procedure for dismissal or other appropriate discipline of the person involved with the conflict in the event said person fails to disclose the conflict prior to becoming involved in the transaction or decision affected by the conflict
  - Require governing body members to adhere to the organization's whistleblower policy

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# Standard 3: Planning, Assessment and Evaluation

**A state organization engages in a strategic planning and assessment process to establish its goals and priorities and to evaluate its effectiveness in achieving its mission.**

## Planning, Assessment and Evaluation

1. The state organization develops a written strategic plan every four years that incorporates long- and short-term goals necessary for fulfilling the organization's mission.
2. The strategic planning process provides a mechanism for obtaining input from the organization's governing body or advisory council, local CASA/GAL program staff and other key constituents. The strategic planning process includes assessment of:
  - Local program needs
  - Delivery of services to local CASA/GAL staff and programs
  - Local program staff satisfaction
  - State organization financial and human resources
  - State organization governance and management
3. The strategic plan includes:
  - Local program needs
  - Provision of the core services as specified in Standard 1:3
  - The development of resources to achieve the state organization's mission
  - The ways the state organization will address the inclusiveness and diversity needs at the state and local levels, including outreach, staffing, volunteer recruitment and training (see Standard 10.1)
  - The desired outcomes for each of its services and criteria for measuring whether and to what extent they are achieved
  - The activities that will be undertaken to accomplish the objectives
  - A timeline for accomplishing the stated activities
  - Parties responsible for accomplishing the stated activities and objectives

4. The state organization conducts a comprehensive evaluation of its effectiveness in accomplishing its strategic plan at least every year to determine:
  - The degree to which the organization is achieving its objectives and priorities
  - The degree to which the organization uses its human and financial resources efficiently
  - Strengths, weaknesses and strategies for correcting deficiencies and improving organizational performance
5. The state organization submits results of its evaluation of the strategic plan and any changes to organization's mission, objectives, goals and activities to its governing body. The results are made available, upon request, to state organization personnel and local programs.
6. The state organization establishes and maintains a system for collecting the information and program data necessary from local programs to evaluate the state organization's effectiveness.
7. The state organization receives from each local program a copy of its National CASA Annual Local Program Survey and/or other annual statistical reports.
8. The state organization maintains written policies and procedures regarding what uses will be made of the collected data, for the purpose of building transparency and public trust.
9. The state organization completes and submits the National CASA Association Annual State Organization Survey.



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# Standard 4: Human Resource Management

**The state organization has written policies for recruitment, selection, inclusion, training and performance, which are guided by generally accepted human resources practices.**

## A. Administrator Oversight

1. The chief executive officer/organization administrator is responsible for the management of the state organization.
2. The chief executive officer/organization administrator has the following qualifications:
  - Education and/or training in a related field
  - Management skills and experience to effectively administer the organization's human and financial resources
3. The chief executive officer/organization administrator:
  - Plans and coordinates with the governing body the development of the state organization's policies
  - Attends or is represented by a designee at all meetings of the governing body and its committees
4. The chief executive officer/organization administrator is given personnel management authority by the governing body and ensures that personnel management is carried out in accordance with written agency policy.
5. The chief executive officer/organization administrator is responsible for the overall fiscal management of the organization and reports to the governing body at least quarterly on the organization's financial status.
6. When the replacement of a chief executive officer/organization administrator becomes necessary, the governing body:
  - Designates an interim chief executive officer/organization administrator
  - Develops a strategy for the delegation of authority and tasks for the interim director in the absence of the chief executive officer/organization administrator
  - Charges a committee with responsibility for conducting a formal search for a new CEO/organizational administrator

- Provides the resources needed to carry out the search effectively

## **B. Retaining Qualified Employees**

1. The state organization retains employees qualified to carry out its goals.
2. Administrative and/or supervisory responsibility is assigned to employees qualified by experience and training.
3. The state organization employs and retains only persons who are qualified according to the job description for the position they occupy.
4. State organization employees meet all applicable state registration, licensing or certification requirements for their assignment and/or use of profession.
5. The state organization, in its ongoing planning process, details the type and number of personnel required to accomplish the organization's goals and objectives.
6. The state organization has a written job description for each position or group of similar positions which clearly specifies qualifications and responsibilities.
7. The state organization manages its clerical and administrative systems, including accounting, bookkeeping, personnel records and statistical reporting, and assigns appropriately skilled personnel to carry out those tasks.

## **C. Personnel Policies**

1. Personnel policies and practices specify the responsibilities of paid personnel and are equitable, clear and consistent.
2. The state organization complies with applicable laws and regulations governing fair employment practices.
3. Personnel policies and practices are provided to all employees and are outlined in a handbook which covers:
  - Personnel practices
  - Working conditions
  - Wage policy and benefits
  - Insurance protection
  - Required and supplemental training and development opportunities
  - Equal employment opportunity policy
4. State organization personnel salaries and benefits are established by considering practices of similar agencies and organizations or, in the case of a public entity, are in compliance with salary and benefit levels set by appropriate executive or legislative bodies.

5. The state organization maintains written operational procedures regarding grievances to provide personnel the fair and equitable opportunity and forum to lodge formal complaints and appeals, where allowed by state law.
6. The state organization acts on formal complaints in accordance with its procedures, keeps all documentation on file and informs the complainant of resolution.
7. Procedures allow for the annual participation of personnel in management's review of personnel policies and for written notification to personnel by management of any changes in these policies.

#### **D. Promotion of Workforce Diversity**

1. The state organization actively recruits, selects and promotes qualified employees reflective of the children served, and administers its personnel practices without discrimination based upon age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability or religion.
2. The state organization's personnel recruitment and selection practices are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
3. The state organization is in compliance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Act.
4. The state organization has a written equal opportunity policy which clearly states its practices in recruiting, selecting and promoting personnel.
5. The state organization publicizes its equal opportunity policy in its personnel recruitment materials.
6. The state organization makes an effort to ensure its facility is free of barriers that restrict the employment of or use by physically challenged employees.
7. The state organization develops and implements a plan to diversify the workforce to promote cultural competency and equal opportunity.

#### **E. Recruitment and Selection of Qualified Employees**

1. Recruitment and selection procedures ensure that the personnel needs of the state organization are adequately met.
2. All applicants for paid employment with the state organization program are required to:
  - Complete a written application containing information about educational background and training, employment history and experience working with children
  - Submit the names of three or more references, at least two of whom are unrelated to the applicant
  - Authorize the state organization and other appropriate agencies to secure a state and local criminal records check as

well as a national criminal records check, sex offender registry and child protective services check as permissible by state law

- Attend and participate in personal interviews, if requested
  - Verify the accuracy of the information submitted on the written employment application
3. At a minimum, the state organization verifies the information provided on the application regarding licensures, education and certifications.
  4. The state organization secures references from a minimum of three persons.
  5. The state organization secures a criminal background check on each employee prior to hire. The state organization secures a state and local criminal records check as well as a national criminal records check, sex offender registry and child protective services check as permissible by state law.
  6. If the state organization permits staff to transport children or drive on behalf of the organization, the applicant shall provide to the organization at the time of the application:
    - Copy of a valid current driver's license
    - Evidence of adequate personal automobile insurance
  7. The state organization secures a motor vehicle division records check on each employee who drives on behalf of the organization.
  8. The state organization has policies and procedures in place to verify the following prior to state organization staff members transporting children:
    - Staff member obtains permission of the supervisor or director
    - Staff member obtains permission of the child's legal guardian or custodial agency
    - Staff member is knowledgeable of the potential personal risk of liability
    - Staff member chooses to accept the responsibility
  9. If an applicant refuses to sign a release of information form or submit to required information or fingerprints for any requested records check required in 6.E.2, the applicant is rejected by the state organization. This policy is stated on the employee application form.
  10. The state organization's selection process for all employees includes an assessment of the applicant's awareness of and sensitivity to the cultural and socioeconomic factors of the children and families the local CASA/GAL programs serve.
  11. Any applicant found to have been convicted of, or having charges pending for, a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse or neglect

or related acts that would pose risks to children or the state organization's credibility is not accepted for employment. This policy is stated on the employee application form.

12. If an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is unrelated to or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the state organization, the state organization will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony was committed as well as other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant for employment.
13. The chief executive officer/program administrator or designee notifies all applicants, in writing, of their application status when the position applied for is filled.

## **F. New Employee Orientation**

1. The state organization provides new employees an orientation to its mission and purpose, policies and services that includes, but is not limited to:
  - Information about confidentiality laws and the employee's responsibility to abide by these laws
  - Information about the state organization's structure, service mandates and professional ethics, including sexual harassment and nondiscrimination policies
  - Lines of accountability and authority within the organization
  - Information about pertinent laws, regulations and policies
  - Information about the mission and purpose of CASA/GAL programs on local, state and national levels

## **G. Employee Training and Development**

1. The state organization plans and implements a training and development program for employees to improve their knowledge, skills and abilities.
2. The training and development program is reviewed annually and revised based on the state organization's assessment of its training needs.
3. The training and development program includes the opportunity for employees to pursue continuing education to improve knowledge and skills and fulfill the requirements of their respective positions.
4. The training and development program provides information related to children who are abused or neglected and in the court system, including topics of cultural competency, inclusion and diversity issues.

## **H. Employee Supervision**

1. The state organization provides adequate supervision for its employees.

2. The state organization delegates supervisory responsibility and holds employees accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.
3. Frequency of individual or group supervision is arranged on the basis of employee needs, the complexity and size of the workload and the newness of the assignment.
4. Supervisors are easily accessible and make every effort to provide quick and thorough guidance to employees.

## **I. Employee Performance Evaluation**

1. The state organization develops and implements a system for the periodic evaluation of all employees.
2. At least once a year, the performance of employees is evaluated by the person to whom they are accountable, using a standardized evaluation form, to review their performance against established criteria. The employee is an active participant in this process.
3. Employee evaluations include:
  - Assessment of job performance in relation to the quality and quantity of work defined in the job description and to the performance objectives established in the most recent evaluation
  - Clearly stated objectives for future performance
  - Recommendations for further training and skill-building, if applicable
  - Opportunity for employee self-evaluation
4. Employees are given the opportunity to sign the evaluation report, obtain a copy and include written comments before the report is entered into the personnel record.
5. Evaluations of the CEO/organization administrator are conducted by the governing body, which:
  - Evaluates the performance of the chief executive officer/organization administrator in writing at least annually against written performance criteria and objectives established for the time span between evaluations
  - Provides for the participation of the chief executive officer/organization administrator in the evaluation process and his/her review, signature on the review and response to the evaluation before it is entered into the personnel record

## **J. Employee Discipline and Termination**

1. The state organization has written policies and procedures for the termination of employees that are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

2. The state organization's personnel policies and practices specify the conditions for disciplinary action and non-voluntary termination of employees, including violations of program policy and/or documented substandard performance.
3. The state organization's policies and procedures specify the person or persons with authority to terminate or discharge an employee.

## **K. Maintaining Personnel Records**

1. The state organization maintains a written personnel record for each employee that contains:
  - Identifying information and emergency contacts on the application
  - Job description
  - Reference documentation
  - Security check documentation
  - Verification of education for professional and administrative personnel
  - Training records
  - Performance evaluations
  - Disciplinary actions
  - Termination summaries
  - Letters of commendation
  - Time attendance records
2. Written policies grant employees access to their records and detail the procedures for review, addition and correction by employees of information contained in the record.

## **L. Whistleblower Policy**

1. The governing body of the state organization adopts a whistleblower policy that provides members of the governing body, staff and volunteers a procedure for reporting unethical, inappropriate or illegal activities by members of the governing body, staff or volunteers. The policy affords the reporter protection in making a good-faith report about such activities.

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# Standard 5: Financial and Risk Management

**The state organization manages its operations in accordance with generally accepted financial and risk management practices.**

## **A. Budgeting**

1. The state organization has a written budget which guides the management of its financial resources based on:
  - Funding anticipated during the fiscal year
  - Fixed and incremental costs of operating the state organization
  - Identification of potentially changing costs and conditions
2. The budget is reviewed and approved by the governing body prior to the beginning of the fiscal year.
3. The governing body has a policy for the review and approval of deviations from and revisions to the budget.

## **B. Financial Resources**

1. The state organization procures adequate financial resources and manages them prudently in order to support its provision of services.
2. The state organization seeks to diversify and balance its sources of funding.
3. The state organization maintains its tax-exempt status, if applicable.
4. The state organization seeks to conserve its financial resources by:
  - Taking advantage of benefits allowed tax-exempt organizations, when applicable
  - Maintaining sound policies regarding purchasing and inventory control
  - Using competitive bidding, where applicable, in accordance with board policy and laws or regulations

## **C. Financial Reporting and Compliance**

1. The state organization maintains its nonprofit status by complying with the appropriate federal and state regulations governing nonprofit organizations.



2. The nonprofit state organization makes timely payments and reports to the Internal Revenue Service and to other taxing authorities, as required by law.
3. All nonprofit state organizations must file a 990 annually.
4. The state organization complies with federal, state and other funders' requirements with regard to independent fiscal review and/or audit of the organization's financial operations.
5. If the state organization receives government funding, it is in compliance with regulations that prohibit spending government funds for lobbying activities.
6. The state organization is accountable to its governing body for prudent financial management.
7. The state organization ensures that an annual report, which includes financial, statistical and service data summary information, is available.
8. Whenever the actual expenditure of funds exceeds \$200,000 annually, an audit of the nonprofit state organization's financial statements, which conforms to generally accepted auditing standards, is performed. The audit occurs annually within nine months of the end of the fiscal year and is carried out by an independent certified public accountant approved by the governing body. Additionally,
  - A designated committee of the governing body, such as finance or audit review committee, or a designated member of the governing body reviews the audit findings and meets with the independent auditor as necessary
  - The auditor's report is reviewed and formally approved or accepted by the governing body and is made available for public inspection
  - When a management letter has accompanied the audit, the nonprofit state organization's governing body promptly reviews and ensures that management acts on its recommendations
9. Whenever the actual expenditure of funds exceeds \$50,000 and is less than \$200,000 annually, a financial review of the nonprofit state organization's financial statements is performed. The review occurs annually within nine months of the end of the fiscal year and is performed by an independent certified public accountant approved by the governing body.
10. Whenever the actual expenditure of funds is under \$50,000 annually, a compilation of the nonprofit state organization's financial statements is performed. The compilation occurs annually within nine months of the end of the fiscal year and is performed by an independent certified public accountant approved by the governing board.
11. In a state organization operated under public auspices, an audit is conducted periodically. It covers all years since the previous audit was conducted by an independent auditor, and is conducted in accordance with

law or regulation governing audits of the financial operations of a public agency.

#### **D. Financial Accounting and Record Keeping**

1. The state organization receives, disburses and accounts for its funds in accordance with sound financial practices and generally accepted accounting principles.
2. The state organization adheres to written operational procedures in regard to accounting control when the program has the authority. These procedures include:
  - Descriptive chart of accounts
  - Prompt and accurate recording of revenues and expenses
  - Maintenance of a filing system which contains account records and receipts
  - Safeguarding and verification of assets
  - Control over expenditures
  - Separation of duties to the extent possible
  - Internal financial controls
3. The review and monitoring of the state organization's financial management is delegated to its governing body or to the appropriate committee or entity when the organization is under public auspices.
4. The state organization uses the accrual method of accounting.
5. The state organization uses a financial management system that ensures the segregation of restricted funds.
6. When the state organization has the authority, its policies and procedures require that:
  - All personnel with financial responsibilities are oriented to the bookkeeping system and are retrained with regard to any changes
  - Systems prevent or detect fraud or abuses of the system, such as control, use and review of the system by more than one person
  - The nonprofit state organization's accounting records are kept up-to-date and balanced on a monthly basis
  - Bank statements are reconciled to the general ledger on a monthly basis

#### **E. Fundraising**

1. The nonprofit state organization's governing body sets policies and exercises control over fundraising activities carried out by its employees and volunteers.
2. The nonprofit state organization conducts solicitations of individuals, groups, corporations and other potential funders in an ethical manner.

3. The nonprofit state organization provides potential funders with an accurate description of the program, its purpose and services, as well as the financial need for which the solicitation is being made.
4. The nonprofit state organization spends funds in accordance with the purposes for which they were solicited, except for reasonable costs for administration of the fundraising activities.
5. The nonprofit state organization performs a cost-benefit analysis prior to engaging in fundraising activities.
6. The nonprofit state organization establishes controls on processing and acknowledging contributions in accordance with applicable laws.

## **F. Disbursement of Funding**

1. State organizations that disburse funding to local programs have a written policy guiding the award process. The written policy:
  - Describes the decision making process
  - Requires local program input into the derivation of the formula used in the decisions to grant funds, unless such formula or distribution of funds is prescribed by the funder
  - Identifies the person or entity of the state organization that makes the final decision regarding the grant formula and/or awards
  - Explains the mechanism and timeframes for disbursal of funds and publication of fund recipients
  - Is transparent
2. The state organization that disburses funding to local programs has a written policy regarding oversight of the funds. The policy includes:
  - Requirement for a written agreement between the state organization and the local program that stipulates the terms and conditions of funding and includes financial reporting requirements and programmatic reporting requirements
  - Requirement that local programs that receive funding adhere to all applicable federal and state laws, rules and regulations regarding the use of funds
  - A description of the monitoring process including timeframes and grantor and grantee responsibilities
  - A description of consequences for non-compliance with the grant terms and conditions
3. The state organization shall follow all applicable federal and state laws, rules and regulations relating to the disbursement of funding.

## **G. Facility and Workplace Management**

1. The state organization operates from offices that provide a safe, well maintained physical environment for its personnel, volunteers and visitors.
2. The state organization takes reasonable measures to maintain its equipment and ensure it is used as intended.
3. The state organization maintains a work environment for its personnel and volunteers that is conducive to effective performance.
4. The state organization's facilities comply with applicable ADA standards, fire safety codes and regulations.
5. The nonprofit state organization plans for the dispersal of property in the event of its dissolution.

## **H. Risk Management**

1. The state organization protects its physical, human and financial resources by evaluating, preventing or reducing the risks to which they are exposed.
2. The state organization has liability protection for the board, organization, state staff and state volunteers through the court, state statute or private insurance coverage.
3. The governing body has responsibility for determining the extent and nature of the liability protection needed for state personnel and state volunteers, when applicable laws are unclear or silent.
4. The governing body has a plan for regularly reviewing potential liability to the organization and staff and establishes the necessary protections for preventing or reducing exposure.
5. The state organization evaluates and reduces its potential liability by:
  - Assigning the risk management function to a person or committee whose job description includes responsibility for risk management policies and activities
  - Ensuring that appropriate bonding, self-insurance or external coverage is adequate to meet the potential liability of the state organization
  - Developing a process to identify risks in terms of their nature, severity and frequency
  - Avoiding risk through loss prevention and risk reduction
  - Evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of the risk-management function
6. The state organization carries workers' compensation insurance and other insurance as deemed necessary based upon evaluation of its risks, and protects itself through means such as indemnification, participation in a risk-pooling trust or obtaining external insurance coverage.

7. The state organization requires that all persons with authority to sign checks, handle cash and contributions or manage funds be bonded, or that the program maintains appropriate insurance coverage to cover losses which may be incurred.
8. The state organization informs its governing body, officers, employees and volunteers of the amount and type of coverage that is provided on their behalf by the program.
9. The state organization annually reviews its insurance coverage with its insurance carrier to ensure adequate coverage.
10. The state organization requires appropriate automobile liability insurance and operator's licensing for employees who use the organization's motor vehicles, or their own, for organizational business.
11. The state organization requires that staff, volunteers and governing body members immediately notify the state organization of any criminal charges.
12. Licenses or other evidence of compliance are prominently displayed in the office.

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# Standard 6: Public Relations

**The state organization provides information and education to promote CASA/GAL advocacy for abused and neglected children.**

## Public Relations

1. The state organization conducts an ongoing program of public information and education to provide an understanding of the organization's purpose, function and place in judicial proceedings and the community social service system.
2. The state organization has a process for seeking the input of local CASA/GAL programs to coordinate public education efforts through:
  - Establishing a public education committee or team
  - Sharing materials developed for public education purposes among programs
  - Surveying local programs annually to determine needs and suggestions for public education activities
3. The state organization disseminates public information to increase awareness of the needs and problems of the children it serves.
4. The state organization has a system in place for referring volunteer inquiries to the appropriate local CASA/GAL program.
5. The state organization makes known its role, functions and capacities to other agencies, community organizations, governmental bodies and corporations, as appropriate to its services and as a basis for interagency cooperation and coordination of services.
6. The state organization works closely with representatives from the legal and social services communities, other child advocacy programs, community service and civic groups, as well as with businesses, to accomplish its purposes.
7. The state organization works in partnership with local programs and National CASA to provide timely information concerning newsworthy events, stories and occurrences that may raise awareness of the CASA/GAL movement.
8. The state organization collaborates with local programs and National CASA to ensure that public education efforts meet the needs of local programs and avoid overlap and duplication.

9. When the state organization plans statewide publicity, local programs are given sufficient notice to prepare for the possibility of increased inquiries.
10. The state organization has a written crisis management plan addressing issues that may have a significant impact on the programs' credibility, reputation or funding at the local, state or national level. The crisis management plan mandates that information be shared among national, state and local organizations in a timely manner, subject to confidentiality limitations.

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# Standard 7: Quality Assurance

**The state organization promotes the integrity and quality of the CASA/GAL organizations and the delivery of the highest quality advocacy services to children who are abused and neglected.**

## **Quality Assurance**

1. The state organization provides support to local CASA/GAL programs to ensure compliance with state and national standards.
2. The state organization demonstrates compliance with National CASA's standards through the National CASA quality assurance process.



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# Standard 8: National CASA Affiliation

**The state organization is a member of the National CASA Association and meets its standards, requirements and policies.**

## National CASA Affiliation

1. State organization staff members participate in the activities of National CASA and communicate regularly with National CASA staff regarding the needs and activities of the programs in their state, and provide timely information and documentation about the state organization's operations, as required by National CASA.
2. The state organization uses the name CASA or identifies itself as a member of National CASA on all promotional materials.
3. When using the National CASA trademark (including word marks, slogans and logos), the state organization adheres to the graphic standards and requirements of National CASA.
4. The state organization adheres to the resource development, government relations and other approved protocols of National CASA.
5. The state organization works in partnership with National CASA before taking a position on national legislative issues.
6. The state organization informs and coordinates with National CASA prior to meeting with members of Congress or federal agency officials regarding national legislative or funding issues.
7. The state organization informs developing and existing programs in its state about National CASA activities, services, membership requirements and benefits.
8. The state organization supports National CASA's efforts to collect data and assists in securing it from local programs as needed.
9. The state organization informs National CASA about local program situations that could have impact beyond the state (for example: lawsuits, executive or legislative considerations or negative publicity), as well as financial or grant obligation failure.
10. If the state organization has a fundraising auxiliary or affiliate, the state makes that entity aware of National CASA standards and protocols.

11. The state organization informs National CASA when it becomes aware of local programs that do not meet National CASA standards.
12. If the state organization has standards, it provides a copy to local programs, its governing body, staff and the National CASA Association.

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# Standard 9: New State Organization Development

**The state organization engages in comprehensive planning for the initiation and start-up of its operations.**

## **New State Organization Development**

1. A systematic planning process guides the development of a newly organized state organization and includes the involvement of the community.
2. A representative steering or planning committee is created to guide the initial development activities.
3. The planning committee conducts a written needs assessment to document the need for a state organization.
4. The needs assessment includes:
  - Interviews with key players (e.g., local CASA/GAL programs and personnel, judges, government officials responsible for child protective services, attorney representatives, judicial representatives and child advocates)
  - Baseline statistics (e.g., numbers of local CASA/GAL programs, active volunteers, children served annually, children not served annually and unserved jurisdictions)
  - Diversity outreach and cultural competency information
  - Written summary documenting the findings of the assessment
5. The state organization prepares a written plan with goals and objectives to guide the first year and beyond, including:
  - Procurement of financial and other resources
  - Designation of responsibility
  - Timelines
  - Outcome measures
  - A mission statement
  - Personnel and volunteer recruitment, selection and training
  - First-year operational budget
  - Establishment of organization as a legal entity
  - Administrative structure of state association

- Diversity outreach and cultural competency
  - Application for provisional National CASA membership
  - Need for liability insurance
  - Development of a state governing body
6. The development of the first governing body of a nonprofit state organization includes:
- Preparation of job descriptions for members of the governing body
  - Identification of skills needed on the governing body
  - Development of governing body recruitment strategies
  - Development of election and screening procedures
  - Training of governing body members
7. If the state organization will be under the umbrella of a parent organization, a written agreement is developed which addresses:
- Responsibilities and rights of each group
  - The protocol for fundraising activities of both organizations
  - Timeframe for review and possible revisions of the agreement
  - Procedures for resolving situations in which a conflict of interest exists between the state organization and the parent organization

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# Standard 10: Inclusiveness and Diversity

**The state organization is committed to inclusiveness and diversity as essential values. It demonstrates these qualities in its own operation and promotes them in local program governance, management and quality advocacy for the state's abused and neglected children.**

## Inclusiveness and Diversity

1. The state organization adopts and implements an ongoing, written plan to guide and measure progress in diversifying its governing body, staff and volunteers (see Standard 3.3). As part of the planning process, the organization:
  - Identifies the goals and activities established by the organization, as well as progress made toward achieving those goals, and identifies future goals and activities
  - Engages individuals who can help the organization identify and understand the needs of the children served and the actions the organization can take to address these needs in governance, recruitment, cultural competency education and training, supervision, retention, evaluation and advocacy from a diversity perspective
  - Creates and implements an ongoing written plan, with measurable actions in the areas addressed above, that is part of the organizational strategic plan implemented by the governing body, staff and volunteers
  - Monitors the progress of these actions at least once every year
2. The state organization strongly encourages and engages in reciprocal relations with its local programs around issues of diversity and inclusion. The state organization:
  - Demonstrates leadership to local programs and works in partnership with local programs to address issues of diversity and inclusiveness
  - Engages local programs in identifying and understanding the actions the programs can take to address these needs in governance,

recruitment, cultural competence education and training, supervision, retention, evaluation and advocacy

- Creates and implements an ongoing written plan that is part of the organizational strategic plan, engaging local programs and providing measurable actions that will demonstrate progress
3. The state organization reaches out to effect change for children on a state level.
  4. The state organization makes known its role, functions and capacities to other agencies, community organizations and government bodies as appropriate to its services and as a basis for interagency cooperation and coordination of services.
  5. The state organization works closely with representatives from legal and social services communities, other child advocacy programs, community service organizations and civic groups to address the need for systemic changes that address issues of diversity, inclusion, disproportionality and disparate outcomes.