



## Liberty/Chambers Counties Policy and Procedure

### 6.6 Transporting Youth in the Foster Care System

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It is recognized by the Liberty/Chambers County CASA Management and Board that a limited subset of youth in the Foster Care system and regularly seen by their advocates may benefit from extra time and attention given by their volunteers and therefore, may grant those volunteers permission to transport children under limited conditions and certain guidelines.

#### **Goals and Conditions:**

The transportation goal should be to develop and enhance the trust and bond between the advocate and the child; to foster open and more effective communication and give the child a sense of a “normal life” experience. This could be something as simple as going to “McDonalds” for lunch, going to a sporting event, the park or to the zoo. Common sense and good judgement should be used in every situation and the child’s welfare and safety should always be paramount.

#### **Conditions and Guidelines:**

It is recognized that the role of CPS and CASA is quite different and this should be respected and never confused or blurred. Children’s Protective Service, as named, works with all foster care children, under many conditions and transport children for many reasons. CASA’s role in transporting ideally would be limited to the Goals and Conditions described above, but at the Executive Directors discretion CASA advocates may transport for other reasons if CPS and CASA agree on the need and conditions and then sign off accordingly; however, no DFPS Intense level child shall ever be transported by CASA.

All destinations should be public places and a child should never be taken to a private residence or to an Advocates home or anywhere other than child’s current placement.

Transportation of children is not mandatory. It is recognized that many children will be ineligible to transport and that some advocates will not be comfortable with assuming the liability involved. It is expected that this may be the more common occurrence and that transporting will be a small part of the organizations work.

Transporting should ideally support the child’s plan of service, be well thought out in advance, with input, permission and sign-off from the CASA Executive Director in consultation with the CASA Advocate Coordinators, sign-off from the CPS Case Supervisor, as well as, notification given to the RTC, Foster Parent or Primary Care-giver that an individual in their facility or home will be driven to an identified location and returned after the event or outing.

The Executive Director and CASA Advocate Coordinators will make transport decisions based on each individual case and may for any reason rescind or deny approval to transport a child. Any willful breach of this policy and procedure will be taken very seriously by the CASA leadership and may result in the volunteer transporter being removed from the CASA program.

All forms attached to this Policy and Procedure must be completed and signed off by the Executive Director and the CPS Supervisor which includes but is not limited to the Volunteer Transportation Request Form. Approval will be limited to each requested transport. The CASA transporter should allow three to five business days for



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CPS to consider and respond to each transport request. A signed copy of the Volunteer Transportation Request Form should be taken with the Advocate while performing the visit.

#### **Drivers and Passengers:**

Prior to any transport, it is recognized that the CASA advocate transporting any child has read this document and understands the risks and limitations of this policy and procedure, does this in a voluntary capacity, and is knowledgeable of the potential personal risk and accepts all personal and legal liability.

The CASA advocate must have been serving for a minimum of six months before consideration will be given to transport an individual.

The volunteer must possess a valid up-to-date Texas Driver's License, a copy of which shall be kept on file in the CASA office.

The volunteer must provide proof of current automobile liability insurance of at least \$100,000 Bodily Injury, each person and \$300,000 Bodily Injury, each occurrence and \$100,000 Property Damage, each occurrence; including a copy of the coverage, the declarations page and agent information in the automobile. Copies will be kept on file in the CASA office and must be updated every six months. This is the Advocate's responsibility.

The volunteer must give CASA permission to obtain or provide a current copy of their driving record from the Texas DMV. A copy will be kept on file in the CASA office. The driver also must not have had more than two moving violations or accidents within the past three years or have ever been convicted of a DWI or driving under the influence at any time.

The vehicle used shall have an up-to-date safety inspection from the State of Texas prior to transport and possess airbags and safety harnesses. The child may never be transported by motorcycle or scooter. Every occupant of the vehicle must wear seatbelts and shoulder harnesses at all times while the vehicle is moving. No texting or talking on a cell phone will be allowed while the vehicle is moving and no smoking will be allowed at any time while the child is in the automobile. Only CASA's and DFPS approved individuals should be in the vehicle with the children during the transport. Advocates or other individuals in the vehicle are prohibited from carrying weapons, including knives, firearms, or ammunition of any kind while transporting. This is in concordance with Texas CASA Standard 10.F.6.

The volunteer shall obey all traffic rules and particularly not exceed the posted speed limit.

No child under 6 should be transported and those between 6-12 years of age should be harnessed in the backseat of the vehicle with 6-7 year old children riding in an approved car seat. Automobile safety is a priority and the volunteer will report immediately to the Executive Director if there is an accident or moving violation of any kind.