



Dallas CASA Online Communication and Social Media Policy and Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers

Dallas CASA believes that social media, when used appropriately, can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support and sense of community for those of us engaged in advocacy for children who've been abused or neglected. We also believe it is important that those who choose to engage in social media understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss Dallas CASA-related topics. Our ability to serve children depends entirely on the trust and support of our community, and it is critical that we handle the confidential information entrusted to us responsibly.

The following expectations, along with both positive and negative social media examples, are intended to give you guidance in both promoting and protecting Dallas CASA, and to protect the children we serve.

Online Communication and Social Media Expectations:

1. Never reveal confidential information. Sharing stories that illustrate the value of Dallas CASA advocacy for children is often the most powerful way to engage the public in our cause and promote empathy for the children we serve. However, our standards and policies prohibit the sharing of confidential information.

It is unacceptable to discuss online any identifiable details of current cases. This includes names, ages, case-specific details, time-specific statements and the sharing of photographs. It is acceptable to discuss general details and to use non-identifying pseudonyms and non-time specific statements so long as the information provided does not contain information recognizable to the family or others associated with the family or case. For example, use general terms such as "youth" instead of "13-year-old girl." You should be careful to protect the dignity of families, children and social agencies, even if they are not named.

2. Use common sense. Don't put anything online that you would not want to see with your name attached to it on the front page of the paper where your boss, your mom, our judges, your co-workers and neighbors can read it. Remember, it is possible that you will work with this judge, supervisor, caseworker, lawyer, etc. again in the future or even bump into them on the street, so don't burn bridges. Even if you don't see them again, Dallas CASA definitely will and it is important not to hurt Dallas CASA's relationships because such injury can harm the ability of Dallas CASA to serve children.

3. Keep in mind that anything you say online is not private. Evaluate what you say about your role as a child advocate in advance to make sure that your online statements

will not affect your position in the courtroom when you are advocating for a Dallas CASA child.

Privacy settings can prevent sharing information with a casual observer, but there is no guarantee that your settings will operate as you intend. Social networking sites routinely make system updates which may reset privacy options, leaving users unprotected without their knowledge. Some content, such as your name and profile picture, is viewable to anyone with a search engine regardless of your privacy settings. Material posted via social networking can be purposefully or accidentally shared with others not originally intended to view the material.

As a volunteer or staff person advocating a position in a contentious legal proceeding, you can expect that others in the case will research your social networking presence to learn more about your background and beliefs, the people with whom you associate and your memberships and activities. Exercising caution and good judgment with your social networking activities will help you avoid unwanted scrutiny, contribute to the good reputation of Dallas CASA and put you in the best possible position to accomplish great things for the children served by Dallas CASA.

4. Don't be a hero. If you see something negative posted about CASA online, don't jump to our defense immediately because you might just feed the flames of someone who just wants to pick a fight online. Please inform us if you see a negative representation of Dallas CASA online and we will determine the best way to respond or not.

5. Be transparent. Identify yourself and your role at Dallas CASA (staff/volunteer/board member) when you discuss Dallas CASA-related matters. Write in the first person. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. **Be clear that you are speaking for yourself, that the opinions expressed are solely your own and do not necessarily represent the views of Dallas CASA.**

6. Be considerate. Remember that anyone, including Dallas CASA volunteers and Dallas CASA staff, may be actively reading what you publish online. If you have suggestions for improvements, please go through the proper channels to air your concerns and share your suggestions. Always show proper consideration for other's privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory, such as politics and religion.

Always consider how other parties on a case might feel about your statements. While we recognize the tremendous work that Dallas CASA volunteers do every day, be careful about implying that another party on a case did not do their job adequately, or accidentally insulting anyone involved with the case, as you could hurt feelings and damage both your and CASA's relationship with those involved in this system.

7. Be accurate. Even though your posts may be primarily made up of personal opinion, do your research well and check that your facts are accurate. Make sure you have

permission to post any copyrighted information (e.g., research, statistics), and be careful about posting or linking to items that may contain viruses. Be the first to admit and correct your own mistakes.

8. Try to add value. Does your posting provide worthwhile information and perspective? Does it help people better understand and feel more connected to our cause? Does it build a positive sense of community?

9. Always comply with the law in regard to copyright/plagiarism. Never post someone else's work without their express permission (other than short quotes that comply with the "fair use" exceptions).

10. Be aware of laws related to libel and defamation of character. Defamation of character can lead to lawsuits against the author of the statement and will reflect negatively on the Dallas CASA cause. In choosing your words or content, imagine your supervisor, your family and all parties on your Dallas CASA case are reading everything you post.

In #8 and #9 above, Dallas CASA only wishes to raise awareness of these issues. We believe this is an area in which our staff, volunteers and supporters should be aware of possible risk and try to inform themselves, but we are not offering any legal advice on these matters.

Social Networking Rules:

- Avoid referring to, posting photos of or revealing information about a child, a family or a case.
- Avoid comment about the courts, attorneys, foster parents, Child Protective Services or others you encounter through your staff or volunteer role.
- CASA volunteers and staff may not friend children served by CASA, respondent parents, the children's extended family or kin or kinship care providers.
- Please do not "friend" your CASA child. In the event that someone without access to the child is looking for him or her, this precaution will prevent the child from being located through your social networking profile. It also encourages healthy boundaries.
- We recommend that you keep your privacy settings at a level that restricts your content to people who are your "friends," "connections" or "in your circle."
- We recommend that you choose a profile photo and a profile name that would not embarrass you or the agency in court, or divulge personal information about you or your family that you would not want shared.

- We strongly discourage you from using your social networking profile to comment on divisive social, legal or political matters, especially those related to child welfare.
- We hope you will please “fan us” on Facebook, “follow us” on Twitter and join our LinkedIn group, but do not post material related to specific cases, judges, attorneys or associated parties.
- If you find the job rewarding, challenging or interesting (and we sincerely hope you do), we encourage you to tell others, but please do so without discussing a particular case or person.

Positive Social Media Examples:

These sample posts tell the CASA story without revealing confidential information about cases.

#1: Had a blast with my CASA child at Adventure Park. ESPECIALLY, the go- carts, which we did over and over. What a hoot!

#2: Great day at court as a CASA volunteer! Can’t believe what a difference one adult can make to a child. Learn more at <http://www.dallascasa.org>.

#3: Happy to have played a part in an awesome adoption for my CASA kid & help them have a good future! Become a CASA volunteer. <http://www.dallascasa.org>. (This could also be about a family reunification, etc.)

#4: Parade of Playhouses, NorthPark Center! Support abused children by purchasing a raffle ticket to win an awesome child’s playhouse! <http://www.dallascasa.org/parade-of-playhouses>

#5: Helped my CASA kids get the school supplies & clothes they needed for a great start to school this year! I’m rooting for their success!

Negative Social Media Examples:

These sample posts either reveal too much information about a case or take a stance that could be damaging to future CASA relationships.

#1: Great day in court as a CASA volunteer! I was the only one up there who knew the child well and was able to help get the judge make a good recommendation.

#2: Finally the judge ruled correctly on my CASA case! So happy to see my CASA kids get to a happy home.

#3: Had a blast yesterday with my 10-year-old CASA kid at Adventure Park. He loved the go-carts, which we did over and over. What a hoot!

#4: Just attended the graduation of my CASA kid from _____