



## **Guidance from the Kentucky CASA Network on Returning to Work, Social Distancing, and Program Operations During COVID-19**

\*Updated November 6, 2020

Please note this document should serve as guidance and recommendations from the Kentucky CASA Network for consideration and adoption by each individual local CASA program board of directors as it pertains to reopening offices and returning to program operations. These recommendations are based on [Executive Orders](#) currently in place from the Commonwealth of Kentucky as well as [recommendations from the CDC](#).

The Kentucky CASA Network recommends that local CASA programs continue to telework and provide remote advocacy services until at least January 15, 2021\* in order to protect the health of children and families, staff, volunteers, and our local communities and to be consistent with Kentucky's "Healthy at Work" phased reopening of businesses. Specific recommendations and guidance in subject areas are outlined below.

**The KCN staff will be prioritizing teleworking with limited time in the office through at least December 31, 2020. All KCN trainings and events will be virtual through at least March 31, 2021\*.**

### **Assess Readiness and Return to the CASA Office and Develop Plans for Reopening for CASA Program Staff:**

- ☐ Use local and state public health information to determine when to reopen your physical CASA office for both employee access and outside visitors.
- ☐ Allow staff to choose whether to return to the workplace or not, based on their assessment of their personal health risk to themselves or their families. Staff with a health concern should be allowed to telework. Review this timeline and assess the local health risk every 30 days.
- ☐ Programs should assess mental, emotional, and physical health when considering an employee's return.
- ☐ Programs should consider access to childcare due to childcare closings and track for the phased reopening of childcare services.

### **When the Program Reopens, Maintain Social and Physical Distancing Measures:**

- ☐ Rearrange workstations to increase physical distancing. Do not have employees share offices.
- ☐ Restrict access to common areas, break rooms, and conference rooms.
- ☐ Mark six-foot distances on the floor of the offices.
- ☐ Prioritize using phone and videoconferencing even among employees in the office.

- Create rotating work schedules.
- Require the use of facial masks and coverings when staff are outside of their office space [per Executive Orders](#).
- Restrict all non-essential travel. Allow employees the option of attending future in-person trainings based on their comfort level.
- Establish clear policies regarding illness, including not allowing access to the CASA office if staff are ill or have a fever.
- Ensure hand sanitizer is available to all employees.
- **\*Prioritize conducting board meetings virtually via videoconferencing platforms through at least January 15, 2021.**
- **\*Encourage not hold fundraisers or events that will bring in more than 10 people through at least January 15, 2021 seeking approval through local/state guidelines.**
- When interviewing, follow [National CASA/GAL's guidance](#) on interviewing volunteers and employees during COVID-19. Virtual interviews can be conducted but an in-person interview should be completed by at least one staff or board member prior to an offer of employment; proper social distancing requirements should be met during this in-person interview.
- Consult National CASA/GAL Association's guidance regarding [maintaining confidentiality](#) and [alternatives to in-person signatures](#).

### **When Program Operations Reopen:**

- **\*Follow [Executive Orders](#) regarding group gatherings for trainings and meetings, especially [recommendations for "red county" reductions](#).**
- Prioritize and offer virtual trainings for the required 12 hours of continuing education each year.
- **\*Do not begin new in-person pre-service training before January 15, 2021.**
- Restrict non-essential visitors, volunteers, and other activities. Allow on a case-by-case basis only when doing the work remotely is not possible. Prioritize remote check-ins with volunteers versus having them come into the office.
- Require the use of facial masks and coverings for CASA staff when meeting with volunteers. Provide masks to volunteers.
- Follow local policies on returning to court. Maintain social distance and require staff to wear a face covering when attending court. Do not require CASA volunteers to attend court in-person if they are not comfortable.
- **\*Encourage and prioritize virtual visits with CASA children until at least January 15, 2021. Continue to complete an exception form for the virtual visits each month. Every monthly contact should be documented with either an exception form or completed screening questions (see below).**
- If necessary, due to case concerns and emergencies, begin face-to-face home visits but have a procedure that volunteers and staff must follow for proper social distancing and wearing masks during visits, prioritizing meeting in outdoor settings (parks, backyards, patios). We also recommend contacting the family prior to but on the day of the visit to [ask screening questions](#) (Google Form example from CASA of Graves County & Southwest KY) and for supervisors to ask screening questions of volunteers prior to but on the day of the visit, including documentation in the case file. Please see [these tips](#) for interactions with children during COVID-19 from CASA of West Kentucky. For programs that are allowing in-person visits with masks and social distancing, [consider using this waiver from the National CASA Association](#).

Please see this [link to a letter from the Children's Bureau commissioner](#) about the requirement to initiate a petition to terminate a parent's rights if the child has been in foster care for 15 out of the most recent 22 months (the 15/22 requirement). Jerry Milner writes, "In light of the devastating impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on child welfare systems and applicable exceptions to the 15/22 requirement, I cannot emphasize how strongly I urge agencies to carefully consider whether it is appropriate to terminate a parent's rights pursuant to the 15/22 requirements."

As the school year begins again, please review this [one-page list of courtroom questions](#) to address education during COVID-19 from the American Bar Association.

**THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE UPDATED EVERY 30 DAYS AND PROVIDED TO LOCAL PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT 2020 AND 2021\*.**