

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has continued to evolve since we first heard about it in the past few weeks. Our primary concern is always for the wellbeing of the children, families, volunteers, and staff who are associated with Illinois CASA.

While this is a time of uncertainty and fear for all of us, it's likely that our children in foster care are suffering the most. Many of these children have experienced severe trauma and are currently separated from their loved ones. Over the next few days, weeks, and months, we will be particularly mindful of not compounding those traumas by abandoning our children when they need us the most. We promise to do our best to continue our advocacy, while also ensuring the safety of Illinois CASA staff and volunteers.

There have been new guidelines about how we interact socially including the use of social distancing, minimizing participation in large gatherings, and changes in business operations. We continue to closely follow the evolution of COVID-19 and its potential impact on the operations of Passaic County CASA and the child welfare system. As things evolve, our operations may continue to change, so we appreciate your flexibility. As of Monday, March 16:

- Out of an abundance of caution, we have decided to **cease in-person home visits for the rest of March**. It is our hope that limiting in-person contact will protect our volunteers, our families, and the community at large. In order to continue our advocacy, we are requesting that each volunteer make a "virtual visit" using the most appropriate technology for the situation. Suggested platforms are Facetime calls, Skype, Google Duo, or Whatsapp.
- **For all court hearings scheduled for March CASA volunteers should check with the local program for information regarding an upcoming hearing.**
- **All CASA court reports are still due two weeks prior to the scheduled court hearing, and it is vital that all Optima contact logs be entered in real-time. With in-person visits temporarily halted, it's even more important than ever for volunteers to gather up-to-date, in-depth information and documentations to round out in their court reports.**
- **All Illinois CASA office operations will continue as normal however in a remote set up. All meetings and interviews will be held remotely (conference call or webinar). Staff can be reached directly by email, cell phone or by leaving a message at the office for a return call.**
- For this reason, **we are postponing the Illinois CASA State Conference 2020**. We are exploring additional methods of delivering the conference. Please stay tuned for more details.

- **If you have an urgent need that requires an in-person visit to the CASA office, please call before you plan to visit to determine if your needs can be accommodated as we will have extremely limited staff onsite.**
- We will continue to recruit volunteers, hold information sessions, and facilitate initial volunteer training because, to put it frankly, child abuse and neglect do not take a day off. Illinois CASA local programs are preparing to do much of the above online through video conferencing and webinars.
- **Illinois CASA webinar trainings will continue for all active CASA volunteers to support you in this unprecedented time.**

We encourage all of our volunteers, staff, and supporters to stay informed and protect themselves and others. Please continue to visit this page for updates.