

Life Stories Ambassador Program

Information Packet

2019



Part I: Sign Up

1. You will receive periodic emails about upcoming events.
2. Go to www.lifestoriesweld.org/ambassador
3. Sign in using password:
4. Find an event that works for you and click on the associated link.
5. Sign up for a time slot.
6. Life Stories will send you a reminder email 2 days before the event.
7. If you cannot make your timeslot for some reason, please email sharon@lifestoriesweld.org as soon as you find you can't make it.

Part II: Dress Code

1. Dress appropriately for the weather. Shorts/skirts are acceptable in the summer as long as they are at least fingertip length.
2. No ripped or stained clothing.
3. No offensive logos or graphics.
4. No Spaghetti Strap, strapless, low cut tops or tops that expose midriff.
5. Wear comfortable clothing – you will likely stand for the entirety of your shift. Tennis shoes, sandals, active wear, jeans, capris are all approved.

Part III: At the Event

1. Arrive 5 minutes before your time slot.
2. Bring your own beverages or food, especially for events outside in the summer.
3. Receive instructions from the staff person about your duties at the booth for that day.

Part IV: General Information about Life Stories

A. Life Stories History:

In 1993, the Weld County Child Abuse Coalition recognized the need for a cooperative approach to investigating and responding to child abuse and neglect. Out of this acknowledgment, Life Stories Child & Family Advocacy (formerly A Kid's Place) was established.

Life Stories provides two Nationally Accredited programs: The Child Advocacy Center and the CASA Program (Court Appointed Special Advocate). We are the only agency in the state of Colorado to simultaneously house both accredited programs. We also provide Darkness to Light prevention workshops to adults about preventing, recognizing and reacting responsibly to child sexual abuse.

Life Stories programs work to reduce the trauma of child abuse so that children can begin the process of healing.

On average, there are over 7,000 referrals of child abuse and neglect received in Weld County annually. As agencies convene to deal with the issues surrounding abuse and neglect, it is necessary that a collaborative effort is made to help the children and their families. This joint method improves the services provided to and recovery of child victims and their families. Life Stories is an essential partner in this process.

B. Life Stories Mission

Life Stories provides advocacy and support for abused and neglected children by advancing coordinated investigations, prosecution and victim services.

C. One Minute Speech

At Life Stories Child & Family Advocacy, we believe that every child should live a life free of abuse in a safe, permanent home. We listen to stories and advocate on behalf of children who have been abused and neglected so that our children will have a better tomorrow.

D. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

Your main job as an ambassador, aside from bringing a greater awareness to the agency in general, is to help us recruit CASA volunteers!

1. Overview

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) is a program which intervenes on behalf of abused and neglected children. Because we are limited by the number of volunteers we have, only the most severe cases are assigned a CASA volunteer.

CASA volunteers are at least 21 years of age, community volunteers trained by Life Stories Staff. **They are appointed by a judge to work first, last and always in the best interest of the child at the heart of a case.**

CASA volunteers visit the children weekly, monitor the case progress and ensure that the child's treatment needs are met, spending 10-15 hours a month working on the child's case. The volunteer reports their findings directly to the court with the ultimate goal of finding a safe and permanent home for that child.

CASA involvement has proven to provide better outcomes for children involved in substantiated cases of child maltreatment. The CASA Volunteers make sure that the abuse and neglect that the children originally suffered at home does not continue as abuse and neglect at the hands of the system.

When a CASA is assigned to a case they are given a CASA Supervisor who will be with them for the duration of the case. The supervisor will assist the CASA in writing court reports and will be with the volunteer for all court appearances.

3. Requirements to becoming a CASA volunteer

Volunteers must:

- Be at least 21 years old
- Pass a background check
- Commit to volunteer 10-15 hours per month
- Commit to at least 18 months of service
- Be able to write a court report for each hearing

E. The Child Advocacy Center (CAC)

Though you will not be directly recruiting volunteers to work at the Child Advocacy Center, it is a central component to the work done by Life Stories and thus it is important for you to understand its purpose, the resources it provides, who can use the center and so forth.

Basic information

- Life Stories has two CAC locations, one located at the Greeley office and one located in Fort Lupton for south county use. The purpose of a CAC is to provide a child-focused environment to gently support child victims of sexual and physical abuse and their non-offending family members/guardians. The CACs encourage a coordinated multidisciplinary response to the investigation, prosecution and treatment of child abuse.
- The CAC interviews children up to the age of 17 and in certain cases we will interview developmentally delayed adults.
- Life Stories works with 20 partnering agencies in Weld County and interviews can only be set up through such proper law enforcement agencies.

F. Darkness to Light Stewards of Children

Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children is a two-hour, video-based training conducted by a staff member of Life Stories. The presentation can be given to any community group but is particularly fitting for individuals who work directly with children. It is a nationally distributed, evidence-based program that aims to educate adults to be responsible for preventing, recognizing, and reacting to child abuse. It encourages awareness but also teaches skills and presents crucial tools needed in order to respond appropriately to child abuse suspicions, allegations, and investigations. It ultimately aims to protect all children in our community.

Part V: Representing Life Stories

Guidelines for representing Life Stories

- **Be transparent:** Identify yourself and your role as Life Stories volunteer when you discuss Life Stories related matters. 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 yours and do not necessarily represent the views of any CASA program.
- **Be respectful:** Be the first to admit you don't know and correct your own mistakes. You should show proper consideration for other's privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory, such as politics and religion.
- **Be accurate.** Even though you are encouraged to be yourself and your personal opinions, please do come to the event having thoroughly read this training manual. Do your research well and the rest will come more easily.
- **Try to add value and keep it positive.** With every conversation the goal is to provide worthwhile information and perspective. How can you make people feel more connected to the cause? Does it build a positive sense of community?
- **Don't reveal confidential information.** Sharing stories that illustrate the value of 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, it is unacceptable to discuss any identifiable details of cases or children whether in our program or not.***

Tips on Engaging People

- **Invite people in:** Making eye contact, saying hello and inviting people inside the booth are all great ways to make first contact with a passer-by. The booth is

designed to be interactive, so take advantage of the handouts, giveaways, and/or children's activities.

- **Ask Questions:** Have you ever heard of Life Stories? How do you know about CASA? Do you see child maltreatment as a problem in your community? Questions are a great way to get to know our cause from other people's perspectives and immediately engage people.
- **Be goal oriented:** the goal is to get people to sign up, donate, to attend an event and more! Enter every interaction with an idea of where you would hope for it to end
- **Keep it Light and Have Fun:** Child abuse and neglect is a heavy subject, but it is also an opportunity for hope. We want people to feel motivated by the problem so that they can become a part of the solution. If people see you having fun, they will be inclined to join in.

Review of Collateral Materials

- **Event Advertisements:** Give out event pamphlets or advertisement sheets to any individual who stops by the stand. The more people who know about our events, the more people will show up!
- **Pamphlets:** Pamphlets are better for people who show any interest. Give one to any person who donates, signs up for the e-newsletter or expresses interest in volunteering. Give a pamphlet even if someone is just more interested in the work Life Stories does. We hope to better inform them so that they can better engage their friends and family.
- **Outreach Specialist Business Card:** Anyone who expresses an interest in becoming a CASA volunteer or ambassador should be given a business card for the Outreach Specialist. This way they have an immediate personal contact they can make to ask more questions or to begin the application process.
- **Volunteer Information Sheets (ex: Steps to Becoming a CASA, application):** Important information for people who are extremely interested in volunteering. Someone who expresses a great interest and an eagerness to volunteer can be given additional resources to begin the process as soon as they get home!
- **Swag** – feel free to give out swag and/or candy as instructed by the staff person you are with

Life Stories is an Equal Opportunity Employer and will not discriminate against its employees, applicant or volunteers on the basis of race, religion, creed color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, or physical handicap. Equal employment/volunteer opportunity will be extended to all persons of the employer/employee/volunteer relationship including recruitment, hiring, training, promotion, discipline, lay off and termination. (EOE) Life Stories reserves the right to terminate the Ambassador applicant at their discretion if applicant's suitability for the program becomes in question.