



Social Media Policy

Child Advocates of Silicon Valley believes that social media can be a powerful tool to increase awareness, support, and sense of community for those of us engaged in advocacy for children who have been abused and neglected. We believe that a thoughtful approach to conversation and interaction among people online (on blogs, social networking, link-sharing, etc.) can enhance the reputation of Child Advocates and help recruit needed supporters and volunteers.

While Child Advocates encourages staff, board members and volunteers to join the global online conversation, it is important that those who choose to do so understand what is recommended, expected, and required when they discuss CASA-related topics, whether at work or on their own time. Our ability to serve children as a national cause depends on the trust and support of the public, and it is critical that in telling our story, we responsibly handle the confidential information entrusted to us.

The following ten guidelines will help you engage in online conversations about your involvement with Child Advocates in an appropriate way. This policy document is built largely on the National CASA recommendations:

1. **Be transparent.** Identify yourself and your role at Child Advocates of Silicon Valley (staff/volunteer/board member) when you discuss 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 those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of National or State CASA or Child Advocates of Silicon Valley (unless, of course, you are posting as part of your employment responsibilities for a program, e.g. as a communications or online outreach manager).
2. **Always comply with the law in regard to copyright/plagiarism.** Never post someone else's work without his or her express permission (other than short quotes that comply with the "fair use" exceptions).
3. **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 Child Advocates. In choosing your words or content, imagine your CASA Supervisor and your family reading everything you post.
4. **Be respectful.** Don't pick fights. Be the first to admit 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.
5. **Be considerate.** Remember that anyone, including fellow volunteers and Child Advocates staff, may be actively reading what you publish online. Refrain from any communication intended to bash or embarrass Child Advocates, the National or State CASA programs, families, board members, donors or your colleagues. If you have suggestions for

improvements, please state them constructively or, better yet, go through the channels outlined in our Grievance Procedure to air your concerns and share your suggestions.

6. **Be accurate.** Even though your posts may be primarily personal opinion, do your research well and check that your facts are accurate. Make sure you have permission to post any copyrighted or confidential information (e.g., images, statistics) and be careful about posting or linking to items that may contain viruses.
7. **Be committed.** If you decide to jump into online communication, do so with a commitment to post regularly and well. Link to others and show your unique contributions. Make it interesting and have fun!
8. **Try to add value.** Does your posting provide worthwhile information and perspective? Does it help you, your coworkers, volunteers and supporters better understand and feel more connected to our cause? Does it build a positive sense of community?
9. **Respect work commitments.** Please remember that blogging and other social networking activities—unless specifically assigned as part of your employment—are personal and should be done on your own time. The obvious exception is if you have specifically been assigned to perform an online activity related to your responsibilities as a Child Advocates employee or volunteer.
10. **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, respect for the children's and families' rights to privacy in regard to personal information must adhere to the confidentiality restrictions imposed by law and Child Advocates policies and procedures.

Above all, it is unacceptable to discuss online any identifiable details of cases. It is acceptable to discuss general details and to use non-identifying pseudonyms 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 “child” 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. Never post photos of the child's face or anything that could easily identify the child's placement, school, extracurricular activity, etc.

It is advised that volunteers and staff not link to the personal pages (or become online social networking “friends”) of families or children they may encounter in their capacity as a CASA. This includes, but is not limited to, instant messenger names, blogs, photo sharing sites and social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. Exercise caution in use of email and exchanging email addresses.