

Interim Procedures re: COVID-19 Pandemic

Effective: June 2, 2021

Expiration: September 1, 2021

Approved: Jenny Stotts, Director | June 1, 2021

Zachary Saunders, Judge | June 1, 2021



Athens CASA takes seriously the health and safety of our staff, volunteers, partners and clients. We are continuing to monitor the developing information and professional guidelines regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Please see below for our protocols regarding essential operations during the pandemic. Please know that these protocols may continue to change and evolve as we continue to weigh the risks and recommendations shared by public health professionals against the essential nature of our mission and work. *As expressed below, these protocols will remain in effect until September 1, 2021, unless otherwise rescinded, modified or extended.*

In the event that ANY volunteer or staff member is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 at any time or has come into contact with a person suspected or known to have contracted COVID-19, they are restricted from any in-person activity relating to their duties with Athens CASA until they have been free of symptoms for 10 days, have completed the recommended quarantine period or have received a written authorization to return to duties from their physician.

Office Hours

The CASA office will continue to remain open during any time that the Athens County Courthouse is open. CASA staff may be working remotely during regular office hours. CASA Volunteers should call, text or email CASA Staff before stopping by the office.

CASA Volunteer Supervision and Case Staffing should occur virtually when feasible. CASA Volunteers are asked to follow the CDC recommendations for unvaccinated individuals to continue to wear a mask indoors when entering the CASA office.

Court Hearings

- Volunteers may participate in court hearings via Zoom or in-person. If attending in-person, a mask must be worn at all times.
- “Health Check” via temperature readings upon entering the courthouse may be required
- While masks are not required in the public spaces of the courthouse, Judge Zachary Saunders has ordered that individuals wear masks inside of the courtroom.
- Any party experiencing COVID19 symptoms or who has been exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 patient within the past 14 days is prohibited from attending.

Visits with Children

In most circumstances, in-person child/family visits are permitted to occur. CASAs are asked to use discretion when determining if face to face contact with a child should occur and should consult with their CASA Supervisor. If the child or the CASA is at higher risk for contracting the

virus or if the CASA or the child/placement provider is unable to complete the visit in light of recommended quarantine measures, it should not occur. See below for additional guidance regarding in-person visits. In the event that monthly face-to-face contact with a child is not occurring, the CASA should talk to their CASA Supervisor as an exception letter signed by the director MUST be completed. If an exception has been filed, weekly contact with a collateral contact via phone, text, email or video chat is REQUIRED. If the child is too young or otherwise not able to participate in a phone call or video chat, the weekly contact should occur with the caregiver.

Many residential treatment facilities have already taken steps to restrict in-person visitation. In these circumstances, CASA Volunteers should coordinate with facility staff to maintain the required contact via phone, email, text or video chat (weekly) with the child and/or facility staff. Plans should be documented in Optima.

The procedures for modifying monthly face-to-face contact with children are in accordance with National CASA standards.

Additional requirements and considerations are included below:

- Complete technology-assisted visitation with children, families and service providers when possible
- Maintain regular (weekly) contact with case parties when face to face monthly contact is not occurring.
- Wear a mask in accordance with CDC guidelines.
- Complete interviews outside whenever possible (for example: complete visit with child on the porch or in the yard)
- Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet when completing interviews
- Wash and sanitize hands before and after visits
- Cancel the visit if you or the party have a fever or other symptoms of COVID19
- Notify the CASA Director if they have been exposed to COVID19 or test positive and have had contact within the past 14 days with clients and/or staff.

Protocols for completing in-person contact with a child, case party or service provider:

- Consult with CASA Supervisor to determine the most appropriate type of case contact.
- When scheduling the visit:
 - Verify that the parties to be visited have not exhibited symptoms of COVID19
 - Inquire if any parties to be visited have had contact with any persons confirmed to have COVID10
 - Inquire as to who will be in the home during the visit
 - Suggest that all parties wear masks
- Call the day prior to the scheduled visit to reconfirm the above information.
- CASA Volunteers should not complete the visit if they or any of the parties exhibit any symptoms of COVID19

- CASA Volunteers are encouraged to wear masks in accordance with CDC guidelines and open conversations with caregivers about masks during visits.

Case Review Meetings

Athens Co. Children Services continues to hold virtual or phone case reviews and SARs.

Continuing Education

As many in-person trainings are currently on hold, CASA Volunteers are reminded that they are still required to maintain 12 hours of continuing education each year, with at least 3 of those hours in Rule 48-approved courses. CASA Volunteers are encouraged to seek out web-based training opportunities. The CASA office will share these opportunities as they arise. The CASA staff are working on migrating select training modules to a fully online format.