

What Is a CAAVA Guardian *Ad Litem*?

A CAAVA guardian *ad litem* is a highly trained volunteer available to serve as the “eyes and ears” of the court. CAAVA volunteers gather reliable information and make independent recommendations to protect the best interests of vulnerable adults involved in state court proceedings, such as guardianships.

Who Can Request a Volunteer?

Only the presiding judge may appoint a CAAVA guardian *ad litem*. Attorneys and others may ask the judge to appoint a CAAVA volunteer.

What Will the CAAVA Volunteer Do?

The CAAVA volunteer will first review the case file and may, if requested, meet with the judge. The volunteer will conduct interviews with the vulnerable adult, other parties, experts, and other interested persons involved in the case.

If appropriate, the guardian *ad litem* will obtain and review medical records, bank statements, or other relevant documents. Once the volunteer has gathered the necessary information, he or she will compile a report summarizing the findings and making a recommendation.

This report will be given only to the presiding judge. The judge may choose to share the report with parties or their attorneys. The guardian *ad litem* will also attend all hearings and may testify if called upon to do so.

How Do You Request a Volunteer?

The first step is to sign an agreement with CAAVA. Once that is done, requests for volunteer guardians *ad litem* may be made by phone, fax, email, or mail.

CALL: (405) 208-4021

FAX: (405) 601-2134

EMAIL: okcaava@gmail.com

MAIL: 600 N.W. 23rd Street, Ste. 106,
Oklahoma City, OK 73103

To request a volunteer, you will need to provide the following information:

- The case name and number
- The district court and name of the presiding judge
- Contact information of the person making the request (either the judge or someone acting on the judge’s behalf)

A CAAVA representative will follow up to ask if the judge would like to meet with the volunteer first. We will also inquire if the judge intends to draft the order appointing the volunteer or wishes CAAVA to provide a draft order.

If the judge drafts the order, it should specify that the volunteer is authorized to access the case file and that court filing fees and costs, including obtaining a copy of the case file, are waived. A sample order is available upon request.

Generally, a volunteer will be assigned within 5 business days. Please let the Volunteer Coordinator, Catheryn Koss, know if the matter is urgent.

What Will the Volunteer Need?

It is helpful if you provide a copy of the court file to the volunteer. However, the volunteer can obtain a copy of the file from the court clerk’s office.

Please be sure to let the volunteer know about any conferences or hearings that are scheduled. If a date is changed, please contact the volunteer through the CAAVA office to notify us of the change.

CAAVA volunteers receive extensive training, but they are not necessarily attorneys. Please let them know about procedural issues.

Allow the CAAVA volunteer to attend meetings, conferences, and hearings both in open court and in chambers.

Communicate what you would like to know about the case to the volunteer.

Does CAAVA Charge a Fee?

No, there is no fee for a CAAVA guardian *ad litem*. CAAVA has a pool of highly-trained, committed volunteers.

Funding to administer the program is provided by private donors and foundations, including the Oklahoma Bar Foundation, the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council, and corporate and individual contributors.

**For more information about CAAVA,
call (405) 208-4021 or email
okcaava@gmail.com**

Who Are CAAVA Volunteers?

CAAVA volunteers bring to the program diverse personal and professional backgrounds. They include educators, social workers, attorneys, health care providers, accountants, and business retirees. What they all share is a common commitment to protecting the rights of vulnerable adults.

More information about the current certified CAAVA volunteers is available upon request.

How Are Volunteers Certified?

CAAVA volunteers complete an extensive training and certification process. They receive more than 50 hours of core training in such areas as mental and developmental disability concerns, confidentiality and other ethical issues, elder abuse and exploitation, end-of-life issues, guardianship law, and court procedures.

Once volunteers have completed this core training, they must demonstrate sufficient competency and knowledge by passing a comprehensive written test and writing a sample court report.

Criminal background checks are conducted on every potential volunteer.

Certified volunteers continue to receive training and assistance with cases through monthly volunteer meetings facilitated by the Volunteer Coordinator.

What Is CAAVA?

Court-Appointed Advocates for Vulnerable Adults (CAAVA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit membership organization established to advocate for the best interests of vulnerable adults who are 18 years old or older within Oklahoma's state court system.

The organization is dedicated to the belief that all individuals are entitled to a life of dignity, independence, and self-determination for as long as possible.

The CAAVA program was created in 2002 by the Oklahoma Legislature to provide needed assistance for vulnerable adults involved in the court system. Through formal agreements with participating judges, CAAVA utilizes community volunteers as guardians *ad litem*.

The CAAVA volunteer is an appointed officer of the court who works alongside attorneys, adult protective services, social workers, and others. The volunteer serves as a vital information link between the court and the vulnerable adult.

"If I had my druthers, every case involving adult guardianship would have a CAAVA volunteer in the courtroom. The court can't have too much information in these cases"

Hon. Larry A. Jones
Special Judge, Oklahoma County District Court,
Seventh Judicial District

Protecting the Best Interests of Vulnerable Adults in the Court System



How a Volunteer Guardian *Ad Litem*

Can Help

OKLAHOMA



Court-Appointed Advocates for Vulnerable Adults

(405) 208-4021

www.caava.org