

Session 4

4



TEXASCASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN



OVERVIEW

This is a 3½-hour session. Although times may vary based on the number of participants, we have created a sample timeline based on an evening class beginning at 6:00 p.m. and ending at 9:30 p.m. Please adjust the timeline as needed to fit your training and class size.

Keep in mind that some people in the training likely have personal experience with mental health issues. Remember to be sensitive to this, and work to compassionately support participants in learning to self-assess how their own experiences might affect their advocacy.

As you present the mental health information in this session, stress that CASA/GAL volunteers do not have any role or responsibility in diagnosing mental illness in parents and/or children.

It is important for participants to understand that while mental illness and poverty are risk factors for child abuse and neglect, most people affected by mental illness and poverty do not abuse or neglect their children. When working on a case that involves either mental illness or poverty, participants should always focus on the parent's ability to provide a safe home as outlined by the Minimum Sufficient Level of Care.

SUPPLIES AND CHECKLIST

Supplies:

- Name tents from previous class

Flip charts:

- Your “parking lot”
- Your expectations
- Your group agreements
- A flip chart for each group to use during the Greene case study exercise

Handouts:

- Research your program’s release of information policies to give an overview during this presentation. If appropriate, make copies of your program’s release forms that participants will use in their work as CASA/GAL volunteers.
- Copies of your program’s guidelines around documentation and/or utilizing Optima (see sample at the back of this guide)
- Copies of the Greene case study materials
- Copies of the Session 4 Evaluation

Additional information:

- The poverty Pre-Work debrief activity asks participants to estimate the following:
 - What is the minimum wage in Texas?
 - What are the current poverty guidelines for a family of four in Texas?
 - What percent of people of color in Texas falls within the poverty guidelines?
What percent of the white population in Texas falls within the poverty guidelines?
- Answers are included in the facilitation guide for that activity; however, it is recommended that you research these questions before this session to ensure the data you have is up to date. If you’d like to find additional information about children living in poverty, the National Center for Children in Poverty offers many resources on its website. Visit nccp.org for more information.

Slide 1



- Greet participants with enthusiasm as they arrive and invite them to grab their name tents.
- Once participants have found a seat, fade your background music out and welcome your class back for session 4!
- Lead everyone in an opener exercise.

INTRODUCE TRAINING GOALS

Advance to slide 2



- Briefly go over the training topics for this session to help learners feel oriented to the day’s agenda, including when they can anticipate a break.

PREWORK RECAP

Advance to slide 3

- Celebrate and thank your trainees for the time they invested in completing their Pre-Work. Invite any questions learners have in response to their Pre-Work, and capture any questions that will be covered later on the parking lot.

Advance to slide 4

Competency Category	Knowledge, Skills and Attributes Development in Chapter 4
CASA/GAL Role	Understands how to obtain relevant confidential information.
Foundation of Knowledge	Understands how mental illness affects families and adolescents with mental health disorders. Understands strategies to advocate for children and adolescents with mental health disorders. Understands how poverty can impact families and children.
Sound Judgment	Understands the confidentiality requirements of being a CASA/GAL volunteer.

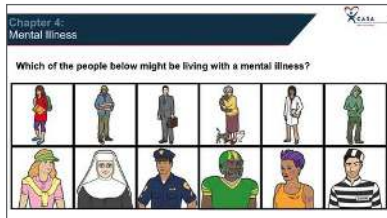
- Explain that this slide shows which topics from the Competencies Checklist they’ll be tackling together today.

Advance to slide 5



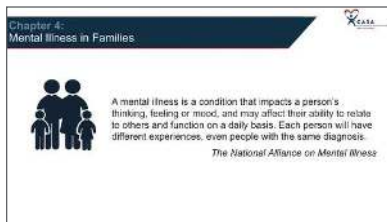
- Engage participants in a brief review of Pre-Work by asking them what they learned about mental illness, whether any of the information they read surprised them and what they found helpful. Move quickly through slides six through fifteen to briefly reiterate what volunteers read in Pre-Work and answer any questions.

Advance to slide 6



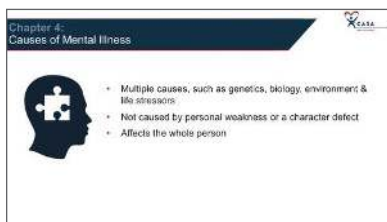
- Ask the class to consider which of the individuals pictured on the slide might be living with a mental illness. Give the group a moment to consider this, and then, if participants don't say it themselves, explain that mental illness is invisible: you can't tell just by looking at someone whether or not they are living with mental illness.

Advance to slide 7



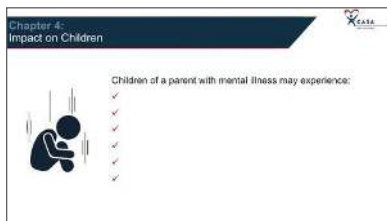
- Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the definition of mental illness on the slide. Then ask the class for their thoughts on what causes mental illness.

Advance to 8



- Briefly go over the factors that can contribute to experiencing mental illness. Emphasize that although mental illness is often very stigmatized in our society, it's imperative that they understand mental illness is not caused by personal weakness.

Advance to slide 9



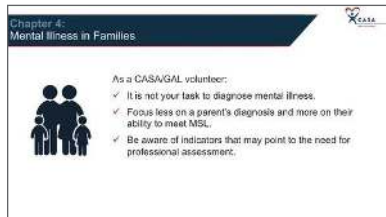
- Ask the class, "What are some things that a child of a parent with an untreated mental illness may experience?" See slide 10 for some possible answers.

Advance to slide 10



- Quickly go through these responses, including inappropriate levels of responsibility or “parentification,” self-blame, anger or anxiety, instability, school-related problems, and shame or isolation.

Advance to slide 11



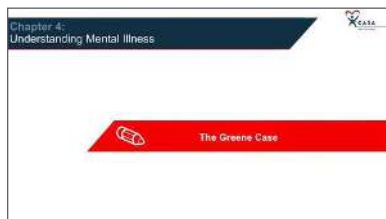
- Emphasize the importance of focusing on a parent’s ability to meet the MSL for their child, regardless of their diagnosis. Remind volunteers that it’s not their role to diagnose mental illness, and that if they have concerns about possible indicators of mental illness to consult with their supervisor.

Advance to slide 12



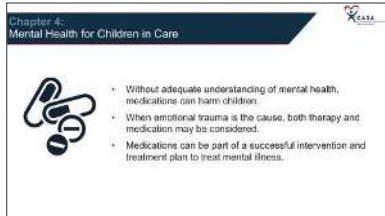
- This slide shows some possible indicators of mental illness, including social withdrawal, behavior changes and hopelessness. Keep in mind that many of these can also be responses to trauma. It’s very important to advocate for trauma-informed interventions and supports whenever appropriate.

Advance to slide 13



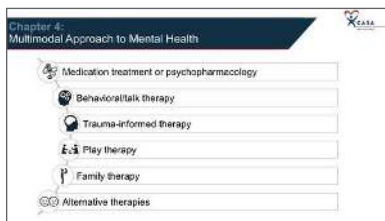
- Ask the class for their thoughts on the following questions:
 - How might parental mental illness affect Marky Greene?
 - What might you do as a CASA/GAL volunteer to gather additional information about the impact of parental mental illness on Marky?

Advance to slide 14



- Ask for a volunteer to describe what it means to take a multimodal approach to managing mental health disorders in children.

Advance to slide 15



- Share any program-specific information about multimodal resources volunteers should be aware of in your area.

Advance to slide 16



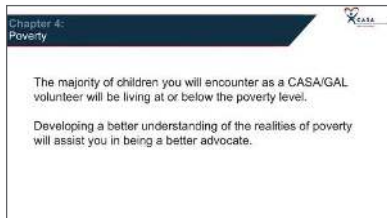
- Briefly go over useful questions advocates should ask a doctor prescribing medication for their child, included in their Pre-Work on page 158.
- Divide participants into groups of three or four and ask them to discuss the question below based on the information they read for Pre-Work:
 - How might CASA volunteers advocate for a youth with mental health needs that are not being met?
 - In the large group, have participants share their answers and any other questions that arose.

Advance to slide 17



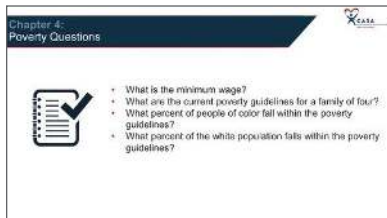
- Explain that poverty is a very common issue faced by the families we work with, so understanding the realities of it is imperative.

Advance to slide 18



- Explain that some people struggle to meet basic needs but still earn too much money to qualify for government services.

Advance to slide 19



- Have participants try to guess the the answers to the following questions, shown on the slide. Answers are included here, but be sure to research these questions before class to ensure this information is up to date:

- What is the minimum wage in Texas?

Answer: In Texas, the minimum wage follows federal guidelines, which is currently \$7.25 per hour.

- What are the current poverty guidelines for a family of four?

Answer: The 2018 poverty line for a family of four is \$25,200.

- What percent of people of color fall within the poverty guidelines?

Answer: In 2016, 21 percent of the African-American population and 20 percent of the Hispanic population in Texas fell beneath the poverty line.

- What percent of the white population fall beneath the poverty line?

Answer: In 2016, 8 percent of the white population fell beneath the poverty line.

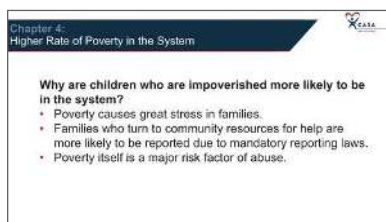
- Use the following questions to connect this information with the work volunteers will be doing on their cases:
 - Why do you think this information is relevant for your work as a CASA/GAL volunteer?

- What are common stereotypes about why certain populations experience poverty at a higher rate? How does our society’s history of racial discrimination contribute to these stereotypes?
 - Would you have to make changes in your life to live below the poverty threshold in Texas? If so, what kind of changes would you make?
 - What skills or strengths does it take to live in poverty and provide for your family?
- Open a brief discussion about families living in poverty who rely on public transportation. How might lack of personal transportation impact a parent’s ability to access services and attend visits in your area? Help participants think through what obstacles might be faced by those who must rely solely on public transportation. You might mention the following reasons a parent might not show up for an appointment:
 - Public transportation took too long or did not run on schedule.
 - They didn’t have the money to pay for public transportation.
 - They couldn’t walk the distance from home to the transit stop or from the transit stop to the location of the appointment.
 - They couldn’t take extra time off from work to accommodate the transit schedule.
- Help participants see that a missed appointment might not mean a parent doesn’t care about their children; instead, it might be a result of the barriers and challenges faced by families in the system.

ACTIVITY 4D: RATE OF POOR CHILDREN IN THE SYSTEM

7:05 – 7:20

Advance to slide 20



- Have the participants think back on the article they read in the Pre-Work: “Why Are Poor Children More Likely to Be in the System?” Pose the question, “Why are children who are impoverished more likely to end up the system?” and encourage a robust conversation. Be prepared to address and counter statements that are based in class bias or stereotypes.

Advance to slide 21

Chapter 4:
Higher Rate of Poverty in the System

Discuss:

- What effect might living in poverty have on access to health care, education and day care?
- What effect does current poverty have on future poverty?
- Are the experiences of families of color who are impoverished different from those of white families who are impoverished? Are race and income level interconnected?

- Ask participants to turn to a partner and answer the questions listed below. Assure participants that there are many factors involved in each issue.
 - What effect might living in poverty have on access to education, health care and day care?
 - What effect might current poverty have on the likelihood of future poverty?
 - How are the experiences of poor families of color different from those of poor white families? What about Native American families? How are race and income level interconnected issues?

Advance to slide 22

Chapter 4:
Risk Factors of Poverty

Children who are impoverished face a greater risk of impaired brain development due to exposure to a number of other risk factors including but not limited to:



- Inadequate nutrition
- Parental substance abuse
- Maternal depression
- Exposure to unsafe environments
- Low-quality daycare

- After five minutes of discussion, ask volunteers to share some of their answers with the large group.

ACTIVITY 4E: POVERTY AND NEGLECT

7:20 – 7:30

Advance to slide 23

Chapter 4:
Poverty vs. Neglect

Are the following safety issues?

- A family does not have a refrigerator.
- A family lives in a rental unit with holes in the floor.
- A family lives in a car.
- A family does not have a regular podiatrist.
- A family does not have electricity.
- A family does not have money to buy the mother's antidepressant medication.
- A family does not have a crib for their infant.
- A family has one parent who uses drugs.

- Ask the participants to recall the scenarios that they examined on child safety. In the large group, have participants describe the factors they considered when completing the sentences in the scenarios.

Advance to slide 24

Chapter 4:
Poverty vs. Neglect

What keeps a family from asking for help?

- Culture
- Language or literacy barriers
- Immigration issues
- Child's age
- Thinking a problem is only temporary
- Pride
- Embarrassment or shame

- Encourage participants to think about these situations from different perspectives by asking questions like:
 - Are cultural issues present that might cause the family not to ask for help?
 - Are there language or literacy barriers that prevent the family from accessing resources?

- Are there immigration status issues or other factors that may prohibit the family from feeling safe in seeking support?
- Is the situation temporary or permanent?
- What is the age of the child?
- Are other risk factors present, such as substance abuse or untreated mental health disorders?

ACTIVITY 4F: OBTAINING CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS

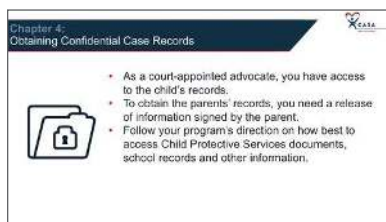
7:30 – 7:40

Advance to slide 25



- Ask participants to recall the information that they read about obtaining confidential records as Pre-Work. Note that, in general, CASA/GAL volunteers have much broader access to the confidential records of an assigned child than they do to those of the child’s parents.
- Mention any program-specific policies about how to request confidential information. For instance, are your volunteers required to get permission from a parent’s attorney before having a parent sign a release of information allowing access to their confidential records? Does your program recommend that volunteers ask parents to sign releases the first time they meet them, when they might be most willing to sign?
- If appropriate, distribute copies of your program’s release forms that participants will use in their work as CASA/GAL volunteers, and tell participants how to access these forms once they are appointed to a case.

Advance to slide 26

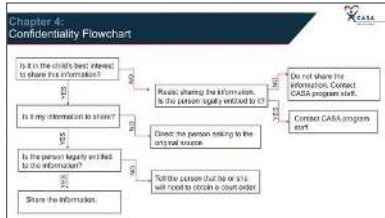


- If time allows, have participants discuss the following questions in small groups:
 - List several types of confidential records concerning children and how having access to these records would benefit you as a CASA/GAL volunteer. What is one important confidential record concerning Marky Greene that you would want to review?
 - List several types of confidential parental records and how having access to that information would benefit you in your volunteer role. What is one parental record you want to review in the Greene case?
 - Ask groups to report back in the large group.

ACTIVITY 4G: CONFIDENTIALITY AND THE CASA VOLUNTEER

7:40 – 7:50

Advance to slide 27



- Ask participants for any questions on the information that they learned about confidentiality from reviewing the manual and your policies and procedures as part of their Pre-Work. Walk the class through the confidentiality flowchart featured on the slide to help participants

understand how they can determine whether or not to share information. Answer any questions and reiterate that volunteers can always check in with their supervisor if they are unsure about whether something is confidential.

ACTIVITY 4H: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH PROFESSIONALS

7:50 – 8:00

Advance to slide 28



- Ask the participants to recall the information they read about the necessity of timely, effective communication as Pre-Work, and provide a brief overview. Remind participants that as CASA/GAL volunteers, they will need to speak with numerous people during the life of the case,

many of whom will have different mandates and rules to follow. Each may have information critical to the information gathering process. Keeping lines of communication open with all parties and professionals is essential.

Advance to slide 29



- Have the class brainstorm 10 attributes of good communication in CASA/GAL volunteer work. Capture this list on a flip chart.

ACTIVITY 4I: THE GREENE CASE

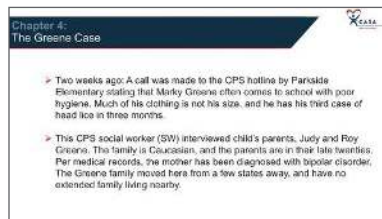
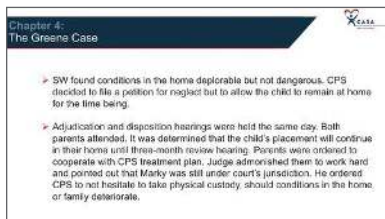
8:10 – 9:00

Advance to slides 30 and 31



- Ask class what they remember about the Greene case from their Pre-Work.

Advance to slides 32 and 33



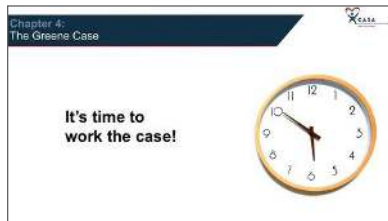
- Quickly summarize what we know so far about this family's situation.

Advance to slide 34



- Recap from session 3 how case studies work and remind participants about the four roles: Runner, Scribe, Moderator and Questioner. Explain that as they collect information they should be synthesizing that info to make recommendations to the court.
- Give each group about 35 minutes for interviews and an extra five minutes to discuss recommendations, and ensure that each group has a flip chart to capture their recommendations.

Advance to slide 35



- Once participants have begun working in small groups, monitor each group to be sure they understand the activity, but be careful not micromanage the groups. Be sure to monitor the time.

Interviews available for the Greene case:

(This list is for your use only. Groups must decide who they want to interview.)

- Marky Greene: First Contact
- Marky Greene: Second Contact
- Former Landlords of the Greenes
- Intensive In-Home Family Therapist: Monica Morales
- Parents: Judy and Roy Greene
- School Nurse and Marky's Teacher
- CPS Caseworker Ryan Headon: First Contact
- CPS Caseworker Ryan Headon: Second Contact

- Invite groups to move around, stretch and take a few minutes to read other groups' recommendations posted on flip charts around the room.
- Hand out the debrief questions, and ask the small groups to discuss them for several minutes. Afterward, go through these questions in the larger group, and address any other questions participants may have about the case.

ACTIVITY 4J: TAKING NOTES

9:00 – 9:20

Advance to slide 36



- At the start of this activity, make sure each small group has a copy of the Greene case study interview with Monica Morales, the intensive in-home family therapist. Ask each group to have one person read the interview aloud to their group. Then, working individually, participants should summarize the interview into one paragraph for their case notes. This activity is intended to simulate the process of pulling out key information from an interview to record for later use when writing the volunteer court report.

- Ask for a few volunteers to share their notes in the large group. Point out what worked well and any ways they might improve their notes. Stress the importance of keeping thorough notes throughout their case, and explain why this is so essential (e.g. they're used for court report writing, trial preparation and communication of case updates with supervisor).
- Explain your program's expectations and guidelines around documentation and case notes. Distribute handouts of your program's guidelines around documentation.

REVIEW, EVALUATION AND PRE-WORK ASSIGNMENT

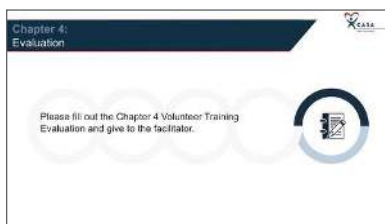
9:20 – 9:30

Advance to slides 37 and 38



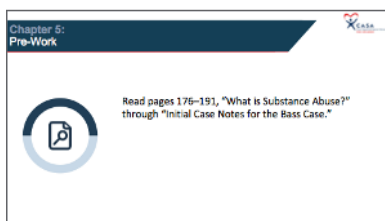
- In summary, briefly review the objectives found at the beginning of the chapter to check in about volunteers' comfort level with the content. Answer any remaining questions.

Advance to slide 39



- Hand out copies of the Session 4 Evaluation and collect them before participants leave.

Advance to slide 40



- Go over assigned Pre-Work for session 5 and ensure everyone has a clear understanding about what to tackle before the next session.
- Lead everyone in a closing activity.