

Session 7



TEXASCASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN



OVERVIEW

This is a 3½-hour session with a sample timeline based on a training taking place from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Please adjust the timeline as you see fit to match your program's class size and timing.

The material in this chapter about educational advocacy and advocacy for older youth is intended to briefly introduce these crucial issues. Consider scheduling additional in-service training on the subjects.

Acknowledge and build on what participants already know about working with older youth. Connect the content with their personal experience—we were all young people once upon a time! We can use our own experiences and memories to strengthen sensitivity to the needs of youth.

At the end of this session, be prepared to talk about the court report writing assignment included in Pre-Work for Session 8. You will email the class a Word version of your program's court report template; they will use it to write a report for the Redd case and then email their report to you.

You will also need to share with them your program's instructions for writing a court report and a de-identified court report from another case as an example of how they can organize the information. Be sure to give the class a clear deadline for when they will need to complete this assignment, and emphasize the importance of meeting deadlines in their CASA work. We suggest giving participants one week to complete this activity, and providing strengths-based feedback to help participants gain confidence and skills.

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 Brown case study exercise

Handouts:

- Kinship Benefits handout
- Case study materials for the Brown case
- Copies of the Session 7 Evaluation

Videos:

- The Bailey’s Story video
- The Randy’s Story video

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 7!
- 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

Chapter 7: Pre-Work Recap

Read pages 226-260, Statistics on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care through Initial Case Notes for the Brown Case, and complete the following:

- Watch the "In Brief: How Resilience is Built" video and think about relationships you had as a youth that helped you build resilience.
- Listen to the Childhood Reflections audio clip.
- Complete the Questions Based on K-12 Experiences activity.

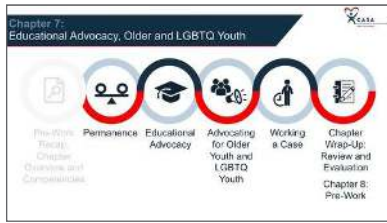
- Celebrate and thank your trainees for the time they invested in completing their Pre-Work. Invite any questions learners have in response to their Pre-Work, and capture any questions that will be covered later on the parking lot.

Advance to slide 4

Competency	Knowledge, Skills and Attributes Development in this slide
Foundations of Knowledge	Understands the factors that contribute to a child's resilience. Understands the importance of resilience in overcoming trauma in children. Understands concurrent planning. Understands options for permanence for the child. Understands how CASA/CAL advocacy differs for young children and older youth. Knows strategies to address educational challenges. Understands the issues faced by LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system.

- Explain, "This slide shows which topics from the Competencies Checklist we'll be tackling together today."

Advance to slides 5 and 6



- Start with a quick reminder about resilience and its importance to teens. Ask them to recall the “Childhood Reflections” audio clip from their Pre-Work and to verbally share examples of ways they saw the youth exhibit resilience. Ask them to recall the Ecological Model of Factors Affecting Resilience diagram from their Pre-Work. Connect participants’ discussion about ways the youth demonstrated resilience to the factors affecting resilience shown on the graphic (e.g., a child’s thoughts and behaviors, family, school, local community and the wider society).
- Share with the class that research has shown that individuals differ widely in their responses to stress. With regard to children in particular, we should be aware that it is never too late to learn how to improve stress responses. By teaching youth the tools to build resilience, advocates can help to diminish the negative effects of adversity. Individual coping strategies and good social support systems play an enormous and positive part in healing from childhood trauma.
- As CASA/GAL advocates, volunteers should be looking for positive, caring adults in each child’s social environment and should advocate for ways to strengthen those ties when appropriate.
- Divide participants into two groups, and have each group reflect on either the Greene case or the Amarillo case (from previous sessions). Ask them to identify three factors on the diagram that are present in Marky’s or Maria’s case and discuss the following questions:
 - What impact did these factors have on the case?
 - How could a CASA/GAL volunteer help nurture resilience in Marky or Maria?
 Have the groups share back their responses in the larger group.

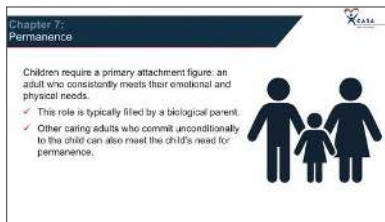
ACTIVITY 7B: BAILEY’S STORY

Advance to slide 7



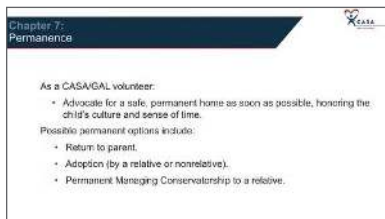
- Play the video “Bailey’s Story” from Stories of Aging Out. Then proceed to the next slide to give an overview of the information in the Volunteer Manual about permanence.

Advance to slide 8



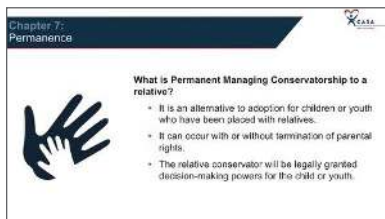
- Emphasize the importance of a primary attachment figure and a strong sense of belonging.

Advance to slide 9



- Address the need for urgency in advocating for permanency.

Advance to slide 10



- Distribute copies of the Kinship Benefits handout. Ensure that volunteers have a clear understanding of what it means for the court to grant Permanent Managing Conservatorship to a relative or fictive kin. This is sometimes called a kinship guardian. Explain what types

of benefits relative caregivers can qualify for. Make sure the following points are clearly understood by participants.

- Currently, if a relative or fictive kin becomes licensed by a foster agency **and has the child placed in their care for at least six months after becoming licensed**, they may be able to qualify for Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) once they are granted Permanent Managing Conservatorship of the child. **This entails payments from the state of \$400 to \$545 per month, approximately equal to monthly adoption assistance benefits.**

- Because the child must be placed in this home for a full six months *after* the home has become licensed in order to qualify for PCA benefits, it's important to explore this option early on the case. If child advocates wait to explore the possibility of foster licensure until nine months into a case, this will cause the case to be extended and permanency to be delayed.

- Not all relative placements are able to meet the requirements to become a licensed foster home (and thus be eligible for PCA payments).

- Encourage volunteers to talk with their supervisor about ways they can advocate for relative placements. **The extra financial support can make all the difference for a relative who is licensed and allow the child to stay within their lifetime family network.**
- Explain the role of a DFPS kinship worker and how volunteers can expect to collaborate with them when working a case that involves a relative placement.
- Stress the importance of advocating for every kind of appropriate assistance for relative caregivers. Advocates should research other social services and financial and emotional support options for families and make sure they are getting all the benefits they can. To help relative placements be sustainable, it's important for them to have the benefit of this work by volunteers. Trauma-informed care training can be helpful for some relative placements, as well as support from a trauma-informed family therapist. Consider recommending that family members watch the video series on the Texas CASA Learning Center called "Trust-Based Relational Intervention" to learn concrete skills, and to search the center for more information on the topic.



Share a brief story to help participants understand what kind of circumstances could lead to a relative being granted PMC rather than adopting a child.

Advance to slide 11



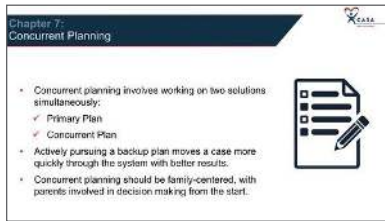
- Share that for children like Bailey, long-term foster care and 'aging out' become the default plan, which is never a good outcome. We believe that all children deserve a safe and positive future, and this includes finding permanency and a strong sense of connection and belonging.

Advance to slide 12



- Ask the large group how Bailey found permanence and how she did not. How could a CASA volunteer have helped improve Bailey's permanency outcome?

Advance to slide 13

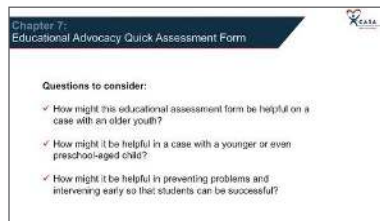


- Provide a brief overview of concurrent planning, ensuring volunteers understand what it is and why it's so important. Reiterate that the CASA/GAL volunteer explores all available options for permanency while providing cultural-sensitive feedback to parents about their progress toward reunification. If you have time, share an example from a case that illustrates why pursuing a strong backup plan for permanency is in the child's best interest.

ACTIVITY 7D: EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

7:05 – 7:15

Advance to slides 14 and 15

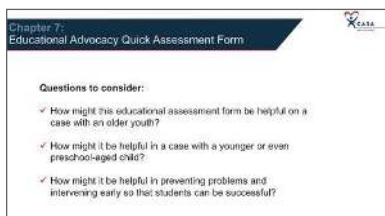


- Remind the group about the case information they reviewed about Jessica Brown as part of their Pre-Work. As a large group discuss what educational advocacy might look like for Jessica. Guide the class to consider how the Educational Advocacy Quick Assessment Form on page 261 of their manual might be helpful:
 - How might a tool like this be helpful in a case with an older youth?
 - How might it be helpful in a case with a younger or even preschool-aged child?
 - How might it be helpful in preventing problems and intervening early so that students can be successful?

ACTIVITY 7E: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

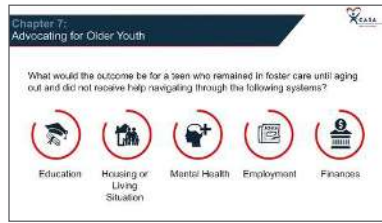
7:15 – 7:20

Remain on slide 15



- Ask volunteers to recall the experiences they wrote about as part of the Connecting to Your K-12 Experiences exercise in their Pre-Work. Ask the large group: How might your own experiences in school affect your advocacy for a child?

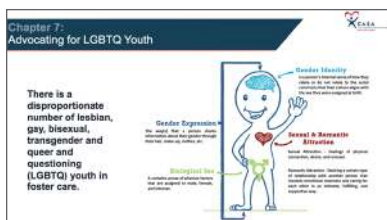
Advance to slides 16 and 17



- Ask participants to consider the statistics they reviewed on page 226 of their Pre-Work addressing youth aging out of foster care. Ask them to consider what the outcome for Bailey might have been if she had aged out of foster care without anyone to help and support her. Ask each participant to brainstorm what issues Bailey might face in each of the following systems:
 - Education
 - Housing or living situation
 - Mental health
 - Employment
 - Finances
- Stress the importance of providing age-appropriate advocacy for youth before they age out of the system. If there are any useful resources for older youth in your area, share those with volunteers.

ACTIVITY 7G: LGBTQ YOUTH

Advance to slide 18



- Transition into a discussion of advocating for LGBTQ youth. As you guide this discussion, be sensitive to how participants respond to the topic and use this opportunity to look for professionalism, appropriateness and an ability to meet all youth with an attitude of respect, care and non-judgment. If a participant makes negative remarks and does not appear open to a change of perspective, they should not be accepted into CASA service. If they do appear open to learning and shifting biased beliefs, engage in a coaching process prior to assignment. Make sure to follow up with their supervisor so that they are required to take further training to ensure they can serve youth without causing harm.

- Using the graphic on the slide, briefly explain the following components of identity:
 - **Gender identity** is a person’s psychological sense and internal experience of their gender.
 - **Biological sex** refers to a designation assigned at birth based on what genitals, reproductive anatomy and chromosomes an individual is born with.
 - **Gender expression** refers to how a person chooses to express their gender identity (this could include clothing, makeup, hair, name and pronoun).
 - **Sexual and romantic attraction** refers to one’s own feelings about which gender(s) one feels attracted to.
- Ask the class to think back to when they were teenagers. Was there a difference about them that they were proud of? Did they feel accepted by everyone? Did their peers ever make fun of them for any part of who they were? If so, how did they feel or respond? Did they make fun of anyone else? How did that person respond? Ask if anyone would like to share. It’s okay if no one does; this can be a very personal topic.

Advance to slide 19



- Play the Randy’s Story video.
- Ask the class to consider what obstacles LGBTQ youth might encounter in the foster care system that could hinder their ability to maintain their identity. Then ask how a CASA volunteer could help.
- For some participants who have not previously engaged in learning about the experiences of LGBTQ folks, the LGBTQ glossary that they reviewed for their Pre-Work might feel overwhelming. Let the class know that they do not need to memorize these definitions—the important thing is to be respectful, open to learning and supportive of their CASA youth’s identity.
 - Mention the importance of not outing CASA youth (or anyone!) without their explicit permission to do so.
 - Encourage them to work with their supervisor around wording in court reports and other communication to protect the youth’s information.
- Offer resources for further learning:
 - GLSEN.org (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) provides current resources on supporting LGBTQ students. They offer trainings for adults, as well as support groups and events at school. They also offer educational advocacy. The group’s name is pronounced “glisten.”
 - PFLAG.org (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) offers support groups and social events specifically geared toward adults who are connected to or related to

LGBTQ people. They are open to those who may have negative or homophobic feelings, and offer a process for learning acceptance and letting go of bias. There are PFLAG and GLSEN groups in 21 Texas cities and towns.

- Direct volunteers to the Texas CASA Learning Center to search for “Serving LGBTQ Youth: Promising Practices in Adoption and Foster Care” created by the All Children, All Families initiative of the Human Rights Campaign.
- Any other groups specific to your area.

BREAK

8:00 – 8:10

ACTIVITY 7H: THE BROWN CASE

8:10 – 9:00

Advance to slides 20 and 21

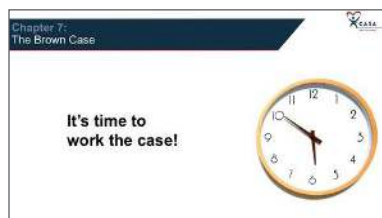


- Ask the class to briefly recap what they know so far about the Brown case. *Click through slides 21 through 24 to summarize the case information.*

Slides 22, 23 and 24



Advance to slides 25 and 26



- Remind the class how case studies work and recap the four roles: Runner, Scribe, Moderator and Questioner. Explain that as they collect information they should be preparing to make recommendations to the court.
- Give each group about 30 minutes for interviews.

Interviews available for the Brown case:

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

- Jessica Brown and School Guidance Counselor: Kenya Scott
- Angela Rodriguez
- June Miller: Former CASA/GAL Volunteer
- Foster Mother/Cousin: Candice Clark (First Contact)
- Foster Mother/Cousin: Candice Clark (Second Contact)
- Mother: Helen Brown
- Mother's Former Boyfriend: Wayne Pender

- After 30 minutes, give the groups five minutes to discuss and write down their recommendations.
- Ask participants to stand, stretch and walk around the room to read the other groups' recommendations.
- As a large group, debrief and address any questions.

ACTIVITY 7I: WRITING THE PARENTS' SECTION OF A COURT REPORT

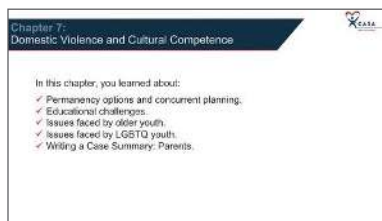
9:00 – 9:20

Advance to slide 27



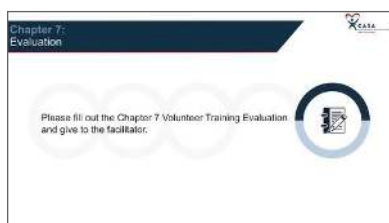
- Ask the class to write two or three paragraphs summarizing the parents' situations on the Brown case, based on the notes and interviews they read in the previous activity. It could be helpful to have on hand a short example of this section from another court report that you read aloud to help them get a feel for how the information is typically organized. Once they have completed writing this section, have them turn to a partner and compare what they wrote.
- Briefly outline your program's expectations around writing this section of the report and, if time allows, share an example of how this section could be written for the Brown case.

Advance to slides 28 and 29

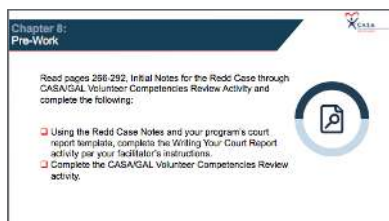


- In summary, briefly review the objectives found at the beginning of the chapter to check in about volunteers’ comfort level with the content. Answer any remaining questions.

Advance to slide 30



- Hand out copies of the Chapter 7 Evaluation and collect them before participants leave.
- Go over assigned Pre-Work for session 8 and ensure everyone has a clear understanding about what to tackle before the next session.



Note: Devote extra time to helping participants understand how to complete the court report writing assignment included in their Pre-Work. You will email them a Word version of your program’s court report template that they will use to write a report for the Redd case and email back to you.

Also include your program’s instructions for writing a court report, and consider including a de-identified court report from another case as an example of how they can organize the information. Give the class a clear deadline for this assignment. We suggest one week to complete this activity. Then, trainers should review and respond to each practice court report. Provide strengths-based feedback to help participants gain confidence and skills in writing reports on their case. Stress that this is an opportunity for participants to apply what they have learned so far and demonstrate their readiness to work a case independently.

- Lead everyone in a closing activity.