

Volunteer-Child Relationship Dilemmas Worksheet Handout

Dilemma 1

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you are on your way to your very first visit with a nine-year-old girl named Susan. Right before you leave, you call the paternal grandfather, who is caring for Susan, and find out that she just had some teeth pulled and some other dental work done. He mentioned the dentist prescribed some mild painkillers and antibiotics. He already phoned them in to the pharmacy, but he doesn't have a car to go get them. Since you pass the pharmacy on the way, he was wondering if you could swing by and pick them up. You think back to training and what you learned about providing transportation. The prescriptions are already paid for. Why not pick up a milkshake too? Susan's mouth is going to be sore from all the dental work, and this would be a great way to start out your relationship as her volunteer advocate. You know the milkshake may be too much, but . . . What do you do?

Crux of the dilemma

Potential consequences

One possible solution



Dilemma 2

About eight months into a case, you are unable to reach Ms. Jones, the birth mother of the child for whom you're advocating. Johnny has been back in Ms. Jones's care for about three weeks. Ms. Jones successfully moved into her own apartment so she had a separate residence from her on-again, off-again boyfriend. One of the parameters set forth in court was that the boyfriend was never to be at her apartment when Johnny was there, because he had not completed his court-ordered services. You've had a great relationship with Ms. Jones, and one day you spot her at a grocery store. You stop to make small talk and then leave the store. As you drive out of the parking lot, you see Ms. Jones getting in a car with her boyfriend. You know that the boyfriend is not supposed to have contact with Johnny, and you're worried that Ms. Jones has violated the court order. You also know that Ms. Jones usually gets home around 3:30, after getting Johnny from the bus stop. You really want to see her once more before your case goes back to court, and seeing Johnny again would really help you know how he is doing. You think, why not swing by today to see if you can grab a few moments with both of them to check in? That would allow you to provide the most up-to-date information in your report. You know you should call first, but often she hasn't returned your calls. What do you do?

Crux of the dilemma

Potential consequences

One possible solution

Dilemma 3

You have been advocating for a 15-year-old girl named Jessie for more than a year. She has been moved to a residential placement in the central part of the state, about an hour away. Her father passed away when she was nine years old, and her mother is currently incarcerated. She is an only child and has no family support system. When you go to visit, you learn that her birthday is next week and all she wants is to go to Olive Garden for dinner. You think about the best interest of the child and decide she would have no other way of celebrating her birthday. Your program does not allow you to transport children, so know you shouldn't take her, but . . . What do you do?

Crux of the dilemma

Potential consequences

One possible solution

Dilemma 4

You have been advocating for a 16-year-old boy named Kyle for almost a year. You've come to know everyone involved in his life pretty well, including his stepmother, Beth, who Kyle looks up to like his own mother. Beth confides in you that she and Kyle's father have been arguing a lot and sometimes he hits her. She wants to get help, but she doesn't know what to do. You know the local domestic violence shelter would offer services, but Beth states that she doesn't feel comfortable disclosing this information to anyone else. Beth then says that she is worried about Kyle's father and his lack of anger

management, because she has witnessed him “losing it” with Kyle during visitation. Beth is worried that if this information is revealed, Kyle’s father might not be considered as a future placement. What do you do?

Crux of the dilemma

Potential consequences

One possible solution

Dilemma 5

You have developed a great working relationship with Michele, the birth mother in your case. The case is going well, and there is talk of returning all four of her children home. At this time, the agency’s only concern is that Michele’s budget is very tight; she will have to maintain employment in order to make ends meet. She has an unsteady employment history and has previously disclosed that she is stressed about the idea of having all four children return home at once. One day you are meeting with Michele when she leans in close and says she has a secret. She asks you to “pinky swear” that you won’t tell anyone. You really want to find out what the secret is, but you also don’t want to break Michele’s trust. She leans in to tell you that she is expecting another child and will have to leave her job to prepare for the birth of the new baby. What do you do?

Crux of the dilemma

Dilemma 5, Cont'd.

Potential consequences

One possible solution

Dilemma 6

You have been working with a teenage sibling group for almost a year. Yolanda, the youngest of the four siblings, is at a local youth shelter after running away from her former placement to see her sisters, who are all placed in another county. You are at the shelter for a visit and a team meeting with the shelter staff to discuss Yolanda's case. During the meeting, Yolanda becomes so upset that she runs out of the shelter and goes to her sister's foster home nearby. You accompany staff to the foster home in an effort to persuade Yolanda to return voluntarily to the shelter. Yolanda agrees to cooperate with the staff, but upon her return she confides in you that she is lonely and doesn't have anyone to talk to. She isn't allowed to use the phone after a certain hour and she'd like to have a cell phone to stay in contact with her sisters. She asks you to purchase one for her. What do you do?

Crux of the dilemma

Potential consequences

One possible solution

Dilemma 7

You have just been appointed to the case of an eight-year-old boy who was recently placed into a group home due to unsafe behavior. The social worker advises you that he is in a three-week black-out period, during which he cannot have visitors or participate in any outside activities. You think this is grossly unfair to the child. You've addressed your concerns with the group-home staff, the caseworker and the child's attorney. You've even included it in your court report, to no avail. You tell the social worker how disappointed you are that they aren't doing their job. The conversation goes nowhere, and you are even more frustrated. You decide to go home to unwind. While searching the Internet, you come across a Facebook page for child advocates. You think to yourself that this would be a great opportunity to voice your frustrations to other like-minded individuals, but you know you can't provide any information that would compromise confidentiality. What do you do?

Crux of the dilemma

Potential consequences

One possible solution

