Texas CASA

OPTIMA DATA MANAGEMENT GUIDE

TEXAS**CASA**
Court Appointed Special Advocates
★ **FOR CHILDREN**

STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

Version 2.0 – November 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Just about everyone in the CASA network has stories that demonstrate how CASA made a difference for a child and family. But how do we demonstrate our impact quantifiably? How do we speak the language of funders, legislators and community partners?

The answer is data.

CASA, just like other nonprofits, needs to understand if and how our services are effective. Data allows us to tell our story of effective advocacy in a quantifiable way so that the public can see, in concrete terms, how children and families benefit from having a CASA volunteer. It allows us to define and identify CASA effectiveness, to determine and forecast trends and changes in the child welfare system, and to understand how to improve. Aggregate, statewide data pushes our story even further—to describe CASA in terms of widespread numbers and impact.

If each CASA program follows different definitions, sets up their data in different ways, and does not have a foundation of common ground to build their customizations upon, we cannot accurately and successfully tell our story, nor succeed as a network toward our goal of serving every child and family in Texas that needs a CASA. This is a story we must work together to tell.

This guide defines two types of Optima data, identifies common reports, lists basic data definitions, addresses Optima rules, describes recommended practices—all in an effort to create and ensure uniformity, consistency and accuracy in our data management practices across the state.

We are at a critical juncture of change in the Texas child welfare system. Let's meet these challenges in a unified way, using the same tools and practices, to demonstrate how CASA programs provide an essential service. Working together to tell the valuable story of CASA means we can make a difference for children and families for many years to come!

Vicki Spriggs
Texas CASA CEO

OPTIMA DATA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Types of Data Entered Into Optima

There are two main types of data that users enter into Optima.

Baseline data relates to child, case and volunteer counts, and is the basis for local programs' reporting to Texas CASA through the Online Data Manager (ODM).

Advocacy data relates to actions taken and information collected by CASA during the pendency of the case, and is the basis for QA case file checks.

	Baseline Data	Advocacy Data
What is it?	Data entered (mostly) at case opening/closing, used for basic Optima reports "Entry" information – factual data, not based on any action taken	Data entered throughout the case, to show the advocacy actions taken / information gathered by CASA "Activity" information – data collected on actions taken during the pendency of the case
Field examples	Child's or Volunteer's Name, Age, Gender, Ethnicity Placement Information Parent Information Case Legal Status	All contact logs indicating advocacy actions taken by CASA Associated Party Data All Documents Collected
How to verify*	Exception Reports	Contact Log Reports

*It is impossible for Optima to self-check entries by users for accuracy or quality.

TYPES OF REPORTS IN OPTIMA

The Optima system has four different types of reports to assist users in (1) reporting on data entered, and (2) verifying accuracy of data entered by individual users:

Basic Data Reports are reports provided to all users of Optima and based on established formulas and logic per National Standards.

Custom Data Reports are reports requested by users and built by Optima. Texas' quarterly reports live here, as well as many one-off reports that individual programs have requested. One-off reports are not necessarily designed on the Standards logic and therefore should not be used for official reporting purposes without testing to ensure report logic conforms to Standards.

Exception Reports are designed to help administrative users find missing information that would affect the Basic Data Reports' (and perhaps Custom Data Reports') accuracy if not corrected.

Ad-hoc Reports are created from scratch by users.

BASIC DATA REPORTS Reports provided by Optima	CUSTOM DATA REPORTS Reports requested by users
These live in the Reports button of Optima, except for the headings of "Custom Reports" and the "Exception Reports" headings Optima provided to all programs nationwide We need to make sure that their data definitions match ours	These are one section of reports inside one Optima Basic Reports section Each program can request their own custom reports. Some programs share them with all Texas programs, some use them for specific, internal purposes They're not designed to "talk" to the Basic Reports. Testing is needed to see which reports work with Basic Reports for data verification purposes
EXCEPTION REPORTS Reports provided by Optima to cross-check for missing data needed to run Basic Data Reports	AD-HOC REPORTS Reports created from scratch by users
Exception reports are two sections of reports in the Optima Basic Reports section (case/child and volunteer) These function only to report empty fields in the case file that are necessary to ensure Basic Reports run accurately The goal is that each Exception Report returns zero (0) results before pulling Basic Reports for submission purposes	These function only to report empty fields in the case file that are necessary to ensure Basic Reports run accurately The goal is that each Exception Report returns zero (0) results before pulling Basic Reports for submission purposes

GENERAL OPTIMA DATA MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

It is recommended that accountability for data accuracy is held by all users of Optima in the program, and that designated staff regularly conduct data accuracy checks and work with users to resolve any issues.

Supervisors approving contact logs, and/or those entering information about new and closing cases, carry responsibility to ensure accuracy, quality and consistency of user entries across their caseload.

It is recommended that program administration adopt processes to ensure the ongoing accuracy of both baseline data and advocacy data program-wide, so that quarterly reporting **(baseline data)** and QA checks **(advocacy data)** are accurate and meet Standards. This booklet has a section including recommended and best practices programs can choose to implement for both baseline and advocacy data types.

BASELINE DEFINITIONS

Texas Baseline Definitions

These data definitions are limited to those items that inform programs' ODM submissions, and include four components: Optima Lookup Table Term, Texas CASA Term, Where to Find in Case File, and Proposed Texas CASA Definition.

They are based on how a user enters a new case in Optima, which corresponds to the left-most column in the table. Download the baseline definitions Excel spreadsheet.

TWO IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT BASELINE DATA DEFINITIONS & ENTRIES IN OPTIMA

Lookup Table Disclaimer

As your program most likely already has items in each of the lookup tables defined below, it's important that lookup table changes are made in such a way that historical cases do not lose data integrity.

DO NOT DELETE any Lookup Table choice your program has used in the past. If you want to eliminate a choice in favor of something else, INACTIVATE the old option. This will ensure your old cases keep their historical data.

Then you are free to add new choices, and only those choices that are ACTIVE will show up in the Lookup Table going forward.

Case Start/Petition Date*, Case Assigned Date, and Assigned to Program Date

All three of these dates are important to record in each case file, in order to ensure that the child, case, and volunteer counts pull accurately on reports. In order for the Texas custom report set to calculate case, child and volunteers correctly, all three of these dates must be within the same month; though oftentimes, all of these occur on the same date:

Case Start Date* – currently listed as "Petition Date" on the Case Details page in the Case Information section (top of screen). **This is the date your program accepted/ opened the case** (and is generally the same date the CASA program was appointed).

*This field is used to count **new cases** on Texas custom reports.*

*This field name will be changing from "Petition Date" to "Case Start Date" in Optima in the future. Also, there is a new Texas Custom Exception Report, (Reports>Custom>No Petition/Case Start Date) to assist you with this field.

Case Assigned Date – listed in the Assignment Details screen; (click the magnifying glass next to the name of the persons in the Case Assignments section in the middle of the Case Details page). **These are the dates that the supervisor and the volunteer were assigned to the case.** For staff, it is generally the date the CASA program was appointed to the case. For volunteers, it is the date the volunteer signed their appointment documents and began service.

*These fields are used to count new **volunteer assignments** on Texas custom reports.*

Assigned to Program Date – listed on the Child Details screen; (click the magnifying glass next to the child's name in the Children in Case section in the middle of Case Details page). This is the date the child was assigned to the program; and generally will be the same date the CASA program was appointed, unless additional children are added to the case after it begins.

*This field is used to count **new children** on Texas custom reports.*

OPTIMA-ODM GLOBAL RULES

These rules, the basis for local programs' current reporting to the ODM, along with ODM formulas and the Data Definitions previously covered, will provide Optima with the tools they need to make Texas-specific reports.

RULE 1: Texas' child-case count and volunteer count reporting is done by fiscal year quarter.

Beginning of Year: Sept. 1

Fiscal Quarters:

Q1: Sept. 1 – Nov. 30	Q2: Dec. 1 – Feb. 28/29
Q3: March 1 – May 31	Q4: June 1 – Aug. 31

RULE 2: Texas counts children/cases only ONCE per year, based on assigned-to-program date, as defined previously.

If the child/case is active on Sept. 1 (carry over from previous year), they are counted in the BOY report and never again in that fiscal year.

If the child is assigned to the program after Sept. 1, they are counted on the quarterly report that encompasses the date the child was assigned to the program.

RULE 3: Texas counts volunteers only ONCE per year, based on their first case assignment of the year.

If the CASA has a case on Sept. 1 (carry over from previous year), they are counted in the Beginning of Year (BOY) report and never again in that fiscal year, despite further case assignments.

Otherwise, the CASA is counted in the quarterly report encompassing the date of their first case assignment in the fiscal year, and never again in that fiscal year, despite further case assignments.

RULE 4: Child/volunteer age is counted as of the LAST day of the fiscal quarter.

When calculating ages of children and volunteers on the BOY or Quarterly reports, their age is as of the last day of the reporting period.

RULE 5: Texas closes cases based upon program closure date, as defined above.

BASELINE DATA

Recommended Practices to Ensure Accuracy of Baseline Data

Consistency Checks – The program has an established process to ensure cases are opened and closed consistently (all fields are entered in the same manner for every case).

> **Recommendations:**
>
> - Supervising/administrative staff ensure regular consistency checks among the staff responsible to enter/close cases to ensure understanding and application of the process established
> - Baseline data definitions support program staff consistency in data entry

Exception Reports – The program has an established process for regularly running, at minimum, the recommended exception reports to ensure all baseline data has been entered, and for quickly correcting any findings.

Administrators can use exception reports to ensure that all appropriate **baseline data** fields have an entry, HOWEVER, this entry may or may not be "correct" – exception reports will only check that the field has an entry, not the accuracy of the entry made.

> **Recommendations:**
>
> - Supervising/administrative staff are responsible for clearing exception reports; if possible, one person is assigned this task for the program
> - Designated exception report person(s) works with the case supervisor(s) assigned to the case to quickly resolve exception report findings (and to continue coaching staff on established practices for Optima use)
> - All exception reports are run by the designated staff person(s) no less than monthly

Recommended Exception Reports – The following lists include Exception Reports that are recommended for the program to run BEFORE attempting to collect data for submission to ODM. These reports should run with 0 results.

Exception Reports

CASES / CHILDREN	VOLUNTEERS	CUSTOM
Open Children – Missing Assigned to Program Date – by Supervisor	Active Volunteers – Missing Sworn Date – by Supervisor	No Petition/Case Start Date
Un-Approved Contact Logs – by Supervisor	Active Volunteers – Missing Birthdate – by Supervisor	
Active Children – Missing Birthdate – by Supervisor	Active Volunteers – Missing County	
Active Children – Missing Eligibility	Active Volunteers – Missing Race – by Supervisor	
Active Children – Missing Race	Active Volunteers / Applicants – Missing Background Check	
Active Children – Missing Zip Code	Discharged Volunteers – Missing Discharge Date – by Supervisor	
Active Children – No County – by Supervisor	Un-Approved In-Service Training	
Active Children – No Permanent Plan		
Active Children – No Petition – by Supervisor		
Assigned Volunteer – with No Assigned Child		
Cases – No Legal Status		
Closed Children – Missing Final Placement		
Petitions – Missing Children		

Cross-Check Reports – The following reports can serve as a quick check for program administration to check accuracy of quarterly baseline data. If these reports do not return matching results, this indicates a possible error in data entry (see Exception Reports section above).

   Recommendations:

   - Supervising/administrative staff are responsible for running cross-check reports; if at all possible, one person is assigned this task
   - Programs run cross-check reports no less than quarterly before ODM submission, as another layer of checks to ensure baseline data accuracy

Cross-Check Reports To Verify Baseline Data

Type of Count	Corresponding Quarterly Submission Report(s)	Comparison Reports		
Child Count *(pull all for the same date range, and the child numbers should be equal across all these reports)*	Custom > Texas ODM Fiscal Start (BOY) Child-Case Submission + Texas ODM Quarterly Child-Case Submission)	Active Children > Active All Alphabetical	Active Children > Child Demographics	Active Children > Active – By Supervisor
The above reports will verify the total number of children served, YTD as of the end of the previous fiscal quarter				
Case Count *(pull all for the same date range, and the case numbers should be equal across all these reports)*	Custom > Texas ODM Fiscal Start (BOY) Child-Case Submission + Texas ODM Quarterly Child-Case Submission	Case Statistics > Active Cases – by Supervisor		
The above reports will verify the total number of cases served, YTD as of the end of the previous fiscal quarter				
Volunteer Count *(pull all for the same date range, and the volunteer numbers should be equal across all these reports)*	Custom > Texas ODM Fiscal Start (BOY) Volunteer Submission + Custom > Texas ODM Quarterly Volunteer Submission	Assigned Volunteers > Caseload – by Supervisor	Assigned Volunteers > Volunteer Demographics	
The above reports will verify the total number of assigned volunteers, YTD as of the end of the previous fiscal quarter				

Best Practices for Ensuring Ongoing Baseline Data Accuracy

In addition to Recommended Practices:

1. Data check is conducted by program administration immediately following the close of each month, to ensure that the following formulas are true:

    - Children at Start of Month + New Children – Closed Children = Children at End of Month
    - Cases at Start of Month + New Cases – Closed Cases = Cases at End of Month
    - Volunteer Child Ratio as of last day of Month
        o Recommend printing and maintaining a file of related reports each month

2. All Child/Case and Volunteer Exception Reports run no less than weekly by one person on staff, who is then responsible to coach the assigned staff on correcting any identified errors as soon as possible (same day is best).

3. Cross-check reports are run by program administration each month, to ensure the ongoing accuracy of data **before submission to the Texas CASA ODM**.

ADVOCACY DATA

Recommended Practices to Ensure Accuracy of Advocacy Data

Quality Check – The program has an established process to check quality of advocacy, on an ongoing basis.

Considerations:

Programs could utilize the QA case check form (in Sample Resources section of this guide), or establish their own form to check that Minimum Standards are met on each case. Some programs may wish to establish their own form in order to add other quality indicators important to their program (a local program example is in the Sample Resources section).

As much of the advocacy data "lives" within the Contact Log entries, it's important that Activity Type – Contacts / Others Contacted – Notes all tell the same story within each Contact Log.

There is no automated check for Minimum Standards required advocacy actions in Optima. However, below are several recommended reports for use by case supervisors and/or administrative staff, to support accuracy of Contact Log entries.

Recommendations:

- Supervising/administrative staff establish a process for determining quality assurance indicators have been met on assigned cases
- Case file and/or report checks are done regularly and case supervisors/volunteers are supported in logging quality contacts
- Checks are conducted as often as possible

Contact Log Reports – The reports that follow can assist program administration/case supervisors in conducting Quality Assurance (advocacy data) checks.

Considerations:

The reports check for contacts made or not made in a specified time period (and generally these reports pull by Activity Type, not Subject).

There are no Optima reports that will show results for CASA court reports filed or documents collected (including email correspondence, if it is uploaded to the Documents section and a corresponding Contact Log is not made).

If a program has combined Activity Types, staff must consider same when auditing. All reports are merely lists, summaries or sums of the data all users put into a program's Optima. User knowledge/ability, software limitations, and local program needs and decisions all factor into the way data is collected and audited program-to-program. These reports can be used as coaching tools for staff to ensure activities are appropriately recorded in the file.

Recommended Optima Reports For Advocacy Measures

Reports > Contact Logs: Understanding that most of the advocacy (QA) data lives in the contact logs (and especially the narratives), here is a list of recommended reports to pull for various advocacy checks.

1. **Contact Logs – Activities/Hours by Supervisor:** Pulls Contact Log Activity Types entered by Volunteers and Staff, by Supervisor, for a date range. It groups the contacts by person who entered them, then case.
    a. Requires input of date range and supervisor name
    b. A program using this will need to make sure to check through each person to ensure all the contacts for the case are captured (if multiple staff make entries into one case, for instance)

2. **Contact Logs – Case Contacts – By Supervisor:** Pulls all the data (except the narrative) entered on each contact log for a case, for a date range.
    a. Requires input of date range, supervisor and case name (this report pulls one case at a time)
    b. This report will show, at a glance, the activity that's been done in a case for a date

range, including all users who entered a contact log in the chosen case, and includes the names of the people contacted (anyone whose name is checked in the contact log), the activity type, date and type of contact, and who made the contact. It also sums the hours of each contact log.

3. **Contact Logs – Case Notes – By Supervisor**: Gives a complete list of case notes made in Contact Log.
    a. Requires input of date range and supervisor name
    b. Lists date, user, title, activity type, contact type, and hours of all contact logs entered for a date range
    c. Use for training purposes, making sure contact log Activity Type, People Contacted, and Notes all match for QA compliance

4. **No Contact Logs – For Case – By Supervisor**: This report shows by supervisor, any case that is missing a contact log with a chosen activity type. Recommend to run for one supervisor and one activity type at a time for accurate results.
    a. Requires input of date range, supervisor name and activity type
    b. Reports by supervisor, all cases that are missing a contact log of a chosen activity type
    c. Recommend to use to determine if certain contact log types are missing from a case for a date range

5. **Custom Reports > Case Contacts - by Supervisor - by Date**: This report shows by case, the Associated Parties and Others Contacted listed in all contact logs for the case for a date range.
    a. Requires input of date range, supervisor name and case name/number
    b. Reports by supervisor and for one case at a time, all persons contacted during a date range.

    The person's name, title, and date of contact displays

Best Practices For Ensuring Ongoing Accuracy Of Advocacy Data

In addition to Recommended Practices: The program has established a method by which Standards (and any additional activity tracking identified by the program) are recorded in Optima on each case, on an ongoing basis.

1. Program establishes a case-by-case Minimum Standards check (see Sample Resources for a sample form; or the program could opt to use the QA form, also included in the Resources)

2. The process could include any and/or all of these measures:

    i. supervisors check their assigned cases for Minimum Standards compliance
    ii. administrative staff conduct random case checks (or utilize the reports listed previously) to ensure users are submitting quality/accurate data
    iii. coaching/follow up between administrators and supervisors on consistency, quality and accuracy of entries

3. The reports listed previously will help administrative staff to coach supervisors on consistency, depth and accuracy of advocacy data entered by users. Unless the program has established a case-by-case check method (see Sample Resources), advocacy data checks should be conducted monthly/quarterly, and coaching time set up between administration and supervisor staff toward consistency and accuracy.

TEXAS CUSTOM REPORT SERIES

This series of reports has been developed for the CASA network. Below is a brief explanation of each of these reports, and in the subsequent pages, please find important detail about each report.

1. **Texas ODM Fiscal Start (BOY) Child-Case Submission** – Count of children / cases and demographics at start of Fiscal Year, to be used for ODM BOY report.

2. **Texas ODM Fiscal Start (BOY) Volunteer Submission** – Count of assigned volunteers and demographics (on active cases) at start of Fiscal Year, to be used for ODM BOY report.

3. **Texas ODM Quarterly Child-Case Submission** – Count of new children / cases in a date range, with demographic and county breakdowns, to be used for ODM quarterly child submissions.

4. **Texas ODM Quarterly Volunteer Submission** – Count of new children / cases in a date range, with demographic breakdowns, to be used for ODM quarterly child submissions.

5. **Texas PChV (Percent of Children Served with a Volunteer)** – Lists all active children in a date range, and their supervisor and volunteer assignments. Totals all children with and without a volunteer.

6. **Texas VCR (Volunteer-Case Ratio)** – Lists all active cases in a date range, and their supervisor and volunteer assignments. Totals all cases with and without a volunteer.

7. **2-Year Volunteer Retention Rate** – Based on the sworn date and discharge date of volunteers; for use in QA.

8. **No Petition/Case Start Date** – Lists all active cases missing a Petition/Case Start Date.

Best Additional Helpful Custom Reports

These reports were not part of those developed in the Texas Report Series above but are good tools for CASA programs.

Board Report: Lists children / cases by county, with opens and closes, for a month date range, and shows the previous month for comparison.

Case Contacts – by Supervisor – by Date (formerly titled Case Contacts – by Supervisor): Lists all persons contacted on a case, for a date range. Lists ALL occurrences of contact, and for anyone who entered a Contact Log in the case.

Texas VOCA Desk Audit Report (formerly titled Texas Tom's Report): Developed as a one-stop report for all case-related information needed to send for the annual VOCA desk audit. Run for the date range and select all for the other options.

Texas Volunteer Contacts – Mileage by Date (formerly called Texas Voca Mileage): Lists all VOLUNTEER made contact logs approved in the date range, by supervisor and case. Suitable for use for totaling Volunteer Hours and Mileage for VOCA/CVC RFRs.

If your program has Activity Types that are not VOCA activities, place an asterisk at the end of the Activity Type, and this report will total those contact logs in the "Non Voca Hours" row.

Texas Staff Contacts – Mileage by Date (formerly called Texas Voca Supervisor Mileage): Lists all STAFF made contact logs approved in the date range, by supervisor and case. Suitable for use for totaling Staff Mileage for VOCA/CVC RFRs, and for showing staff direct service hours.

If your program has Activity Types that are not VOCA activities, place an asterisk at the end of the Activity Type, and this report will total those contact logs in the "Non Voca Hours" row.

SAMPLE RESOURCES

1. Local Program Sample Monthly Case File Audit (for advocacy data check)
2. Volunteer Basic Optima Training for Case Review & Entry
3. Texas CASA General Program Practices

Sample Monthly Case File Audit
Use this form each month to audit for three consecutive months.

CASE FILE AUDIT: All five items below should be checked for each child involved in the case.		
1. **Advocacy Assessment**	For each child: A. Monthly required contacts complete? <table><tr><td></td><td>Month 1</td><td>Month 2</td><td>Month 3</td></tr><tr><td>Child F2F</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Child Other</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Placement</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>CASA Sup</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>CPS</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table> B. Quarterly required advocacy/contacts complete? <table><tr><td>Parent</td><td>Legal</td><td>Education</td><td>Medical</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	If Yes, go to 2 If No, immediately search previous emails, and/or make appropriate emails/calls to complete the advocacy, and create contact log to show it was done.
2. **File Review**	For each child: A. Educational file reviewed? Date:_____ For the case: A. CPS file reviewed? Date:_____	If Yes, go to 3 If No, immediately schedule appointment to review file within 10 days, create contact log to show it was done.
3. **Hearing/ Permanence Plans**	For each child: A. Permanency plan correct? For the case: A. Next hearing scheduled? B. Last 90 days of hearings entered and show appropriate status?	If Yes, go to 4 If No, immediately pull prior Volunteer Calendars to find and update status of each hearing held. Same day, seek court orders from district clerk or court coordinator. Create contact log to show this was done.
4. **Associated Parties**	Using the most recent available court order: A. All parties are connected to the case? B. All parties contact info correct? C. All parties contact info complete?	If Yes, go to 5 If No, immediately add missing parties and/or update their contact information to match the court's order.
5. **Document Search**	Search for and open documents to ensure accuracy: A. Regarding hearings held in the last 90 days: - CASA report for each? - CPS report for each? - Court orders for each? B. Are all original appointment documents present? - Order of appointment - Confidentiality - Acceptance - Removal Affidavit - Original Petition for Protection - Original Order Setting	If Yes, Complete If No, immediately gather appropriate documents and upload them to the case file.

VOLUNTEER BASIC TRAINING
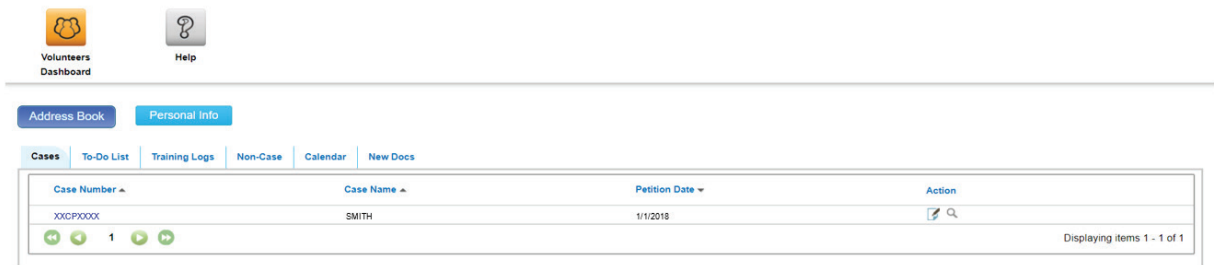
Log in with your provided credentials

Username: firstname.lastname

First Password: 123456

Welcome **jane.doe**

Change Password | Log Off

The first time you log in

1. Change your password. Click "Change Password" beneath your name in the upper right corner of the screen and choose a new password
2. Update personal information by clicking "Personal Info"
3. Verify that all information is correct
4. **Add**   Emergency contact – if none is listed, click the green "Add" button and input contact information for at least one person to contact in case of emergency
5. Return to the home screen by clicking "Volunteers Dashboard"

Volunteers Dashboard

Cases Tab – View all active case assignments

- Select a case to view by clicking the underline case number. This will open the Case Details page. This page displays information about the case, including the case assignments, children in the case, current placements and family members sections. It also is where contact logs, documents and other information about the case is stored.

Case Details Sections

Case Information – View case number, case name, petition date, current legal status and any notes

🔍 **OPTIMA TIP: Click this icon under the "Action" section to view more information**

Case Assignments

Name ▲	Type ▲	Supervisor	Assigned ▼	Released ▼	Reason ▲	Contact Info ▲
Jones, John		☑	1/1/2018			555-555-5555 john@casagalveston.org
Doe, Jane		☐	1/12/2018			555-555-5555

⏮ ◀ 1 ▶ ⏭   Displaying items 1 - 2 of 2

Case Assignments – You will already be listed on the case assignment section
- Note the assigned date – this will be required information on a court report

Children in Case

Name ▲	AKA/Alias ▲	Gender ▲	Child Age ▲	Close Date ▼	Volunteer ▲	Supervisor ▲	Next Hearing ▼	Action
Smith, Mary		Female	5		Doe, Jane	Jones, John	2/10/2018	🔍

⏮ ◀ 1 ▶ ⏭   Displaying items 1 - 1 of 1

Children in Case – This section contains information about the child/children in the case
- Click on the magnifying glass to view or add more information about the child, including language, any disabilities, and schools attended
- Add new information by clicking the "Add" button in the appropriate section.

Current Placements

Add

Name ▲	Placement ▲	From ▼	Reason ▲	With Siblings ▲	Contact Name ▲	Contact Info ▲	Action
Smith, Mary	Foster Home - Non-Relative	1/1/2018	Abuse/Neglect	None	Parent, Foster	555-555-5555	🔍

⏮ ◀ 1 ▶ ⏭   Displaying items 1 - 1 of 1

Current Placements – This section contains information about the child/children's current placement(s)
and the date placed
- Click the magnifying glass to view more information about the placement
- Past placements can be viewed in Placement History in the last section

Family Members

Add

Name ▲	AKA ▲	Relationship ▲	Active ▲	Deceased ▲	Contact Info	Action
Brown, Ashley		Mother	☐	☐	555-555-5555 ashleybrown@gmail.com	🔍
Smith, Mark		Father	☐	☐		🔍

⏮ ◀ 1 ▶ ⏭   Displaying items 1 - 2 of 2

Family Members – View all known family members and their contact information
- Add family members by clicking the "Add" button

Name	Type	Subject	Date	Hours	Status	Action
Doe, Jane	Education Contact	Request Grades	1/16/2018	.25	Pending	🔍
Jones, John	Attended Hearing/Court	Adversary Hearing	1/16/2018	3	Approved	🔍

Contact Logs – Contact logs are a record of each contact you make regarding the case

Click "Add" to create a new contact log and include all required information:

- Person contacted
    - If they are already listed as an "Associated Party" (see below) check the box next to their name
    - If they are not, add their information in the field titled "Others Contacted"
- Activity date – date the activity occurred (note: it will auto-populate with TODAY's date)
- Activity type – choose the type of contact from the dropdown
- Subject – description of the contact
- Contact type – choose the method of contact from the dropdown (phone, email, face-to-face, etc.)
- Hours – record time spent travelling and during the contact in decimals (30 minutes = .5 hours)
    - Remember, if you have multiple contact logs for one visit, you will only count the time on one log!
- Mileage, if applicable
    - Remember, if you have multiple contact logs for one visit, you will only count the mileage once!
- Notes – be thorough and describe the contact. If it was an email, you can copy the content of the email into this field. Notes will be extremely helpful when composing a court report, and the more detail included the better!

    Volunteers and supervisors record all contacts they make for the case in this section

- **Associated Parties –** This section lists all individuals that have been identified as "associated" with this case
    - They are the individuals listed on the person contacted box of the contact log
        - If you are consistently contacting someone and adding their information as "Others Contacted," it is helpful to add them as an "Associated Party" – ask your supervisor for more information
        - View this section to find contact information for attorneys, caseworkers and placement

- **Documents** – All documents related to the case are uploaded to the documents tab
  - As soon as you are assigned you should be reading all documents, beginning with the oldest document (last page of documents) so that you see the oldest/first documents before the newer ones – click the magnifying glass to begin downloading the file
  - Any documents you receive should be uploaded by you or your supervisor to this area (ex: IEPs, educational records, psychological evaluations, medical records, etc.). All paper documents should be securely destroyed after uploading.
    - Click "Add" to upload the file
      - Select the file type – ask your supervisor if you are unsure what type to select
      - Select the date of the document
      - Click "Save"

- **Hearings** – View list of all hearings for the case, along with when the report for that hearing is due and the type of hearing

- **Placement History** – View the child's placement history, including placement type, date placed, date removed and contact for the placement

Volunteers Dashboard

Training Logs Tab – View all in-service training hours accrued – you must have 12 hours each calendar year!
- Click "Add" to create an entry for each training attended
- Include this information:
- Date training occurred (both schedule and complete date)
- Training topic – select the option that most closely fits the topic of your training
- Ex: If you read a book, select book and record 1 hour for every 100 pages read (350 pages=3.5 hours)
- Hours – record the number of hours spent in training
- Mileage – record the number of miles travelled to attend training
- Notes – if you are reading a book, include responses to questions provided with the book in this area
- Click "Create" to save

New Docs Tab – If a new document has been uploaded to Optima and you have not viewed it, it will be visible in this section until you view the document

- All documents listed under New Docs will also be visible on the Documents tab for the specific case
- This is a useful way to make sure no documents are missed as they are uploaded

Welcome **jane.doe**
Change Password | Log Off

Tasks for New Optima Users:
- Log in and change your password from 123456
  - Note: if you get locked out and cannot log in, do not click the "Help" button. Contact your supervisor to have your password reset.
- Add an emergency contact if one is not listed
- Update personal information
  - Add your "CASA email" if it is not already listed
- Explore the database and get comfortable with where information is located
  - Review the Optima Contact Log Table for details about recording contacts
- View your assigned case
  - Read all documents (beginning with the oldest document and finishing with the most recent)
  - Review all associated parties
- Record time reviewing case in Contact Log as "Case Research"

Questions? Contact your supervisor for help with Optima.

Thank you to CASA of Galveston County for providing this helpful information for volunteers!

<u>CREATING AND MANAGING USERS OF OPTIMA</u>

Creating First Time User Names

1. User Names for **Program Staff** are done in the convention:

   firstname.lastname

2. User Names for **Volunteers** are done in the convention:

   firstname.lastname

3. Email addresses for **Program Staff** and **Volunteers** can be:

   Staff: Use program-provided email address

   Volunteers: If program provides an email address, it should be associated with the volunteer's Optima. Otherwise, the volunteer should provide an email address that they will use for CASA business, and the program should use the provided email address for the volunteer's Optima account.

<u>VOLUNTEER APPLICANTS (PENDING VOLUNTEERS) INSTRUCTIONS</u>

Changing Applicants to Advocates

1. Our Program use the VOLUNTEER STATUS when:

   Interview Pending = Prospective volunteer who has completed application and is awaiting pre-training interview

   Application Denied in Screening = Prospective volunteer whose application was denied for any purpose prior to swearing in

   In Training = Prospective volunteer who has successfully completed pre-training interview and has been given materials to begin training

   Background Checks Needed = A volunteer who needs background checks before swearing in (or attending training, depending on program practice)

   Need to Swear In = A volunteer who has completed all pre-service requirements and needs to be sworn (once sworn, the volunteer becomes Active)

2. Sworn advocate statuses:

   Active = sworn, current on training / background checks, and "immediately assignable"

   Assigned = Active volunteer, assigned to an active / open case and child(ren)

   Inactive = ONLY USE when discharging a volunteer from the program; program should also unsubscribe from background checks the same day they make a volunteer Inactive

   Available = can be assigned a new case immediately (whether currently assigned a case or not)

   Unavailable = cannot be assigned a new case immediately (whether currently assigned a case, or on a break)

VOLUNTEER RECORD INSTRUCTIONS

Creating New Supervisor Records
1. The fields to be entered when creating a New SUPERVISOR record are:

    Name – Birthdate – Race – Ethnicity – Gender – Address – Background Check Dates

2. Convention for Background Checks:

    Social Security Check – CPS Background (ABCS) – Driving Record – Background Check (FBS) all use the same convention:

    Start date = date check was run
    Complete date = date check results returned

    When all are completed, fill out the Background Check Date at the top of the screen and check the Background Check Complete box.

3. The person assigned to SUPERVISORS as the administrative supervisor will be:

    The position that manages the supervisors in the organization.

Creating New Volunteer Records
1. The fields to be entered when creating a New VOLUNTEER record are:

    Name – Birthdate – Race – Ethnicity – Gender – Address – Background Check Dates – Date of Preservice Training – Date of Swearing In

2. The person assigned to VOLUNTEERS as the administrative supervisor will be:

    The position responsible to maintain volunteer files; generally the Volunteer Coordinator or Program Director.

Updating Demographic Information
1. The following DEMOGRAPHICS **must** be completed:

    Birthdate (for age calculation) – Gender – Race – Ethnicity

Entering Emergency Contact Information
1. The EMEREGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION to be added is:

    Name – Phone Number – other relevant contact information of a person CASA should call in case of an emergency

Placing Advocates ON LEAVE
1. When an advocate goes on leave, the time from start to end will be calculated as:

    The volunteer's supervisor should ask the volunteer to provide the dates they will be unable to take cases, and when they anticipate to return to the program to be assigned. These should be the dates entered in Optima.

Entering Continuing Training HOURS for an Advocate
1. All Training HOURS will be calculated in increments of:

    One-quarter hour (0.25)

Entering Continuing Training MILEAGE for an Advocate
1. All Training MILEAGE will be calculated in increments of:

    Current federal mileage reimbursement rate OR Texas CASA reimbursement rate – as listed in the program's own policies. Some programs do not reimburse for travel and thus this will not apply.

Entering Continuing Training NOTES for an Advocate
1. All Training NOTES will contain information regarding:

    Topic / Format of training – summary of lesson - # of hours – the lesson's relation to volunteer's CASA work

Entering Non-Case Activity HOURS for an Advocate
1. All Non-Case Activity HOURS will be calculated in increments of:

Same as case activities, and/or in accordance with local program policies.

Entering Non-Case Activity MILEAGE for an Advocate
1. All Non-Case Activity MILEAGE will be calculated in increments of:

Same as case activities, and/or in accordance with local program policies.

Entering Non-Case Activity NOTES for an Advocate
1. All Non-Case Activity NOTES will contain information regarding:

In accordance with local program policies.

Discharging an Advocate
1. When an advocate leaves the program, the following DOCUMENTS must be uploaded:

Proof of unsubscription from background checks.

2. Before DISCHARGING AN ADVOCATE, the following fields must be completed:

Discharge date – Discharge reason – Eligible for rehire. Recommended to add a note in Documents about the circumstances of departure.

3. An Advocate is ELIGIBLE FOR REHIRE when:

The "Eligible for Rehire" box is checked – volunteer left after the conclusion of their currently assigned case; gave appropriate notice; did not have background check issues or other bars to service at departure.

CASE INSTRUCTIONS

Starting a New Case
1. For the CASE NUMBER, our program uses:

   The cause number assigned by the presiding court.

2. For the CASE NAME, our program uses:

   The case name assigned by the presiding court. (Generally the oldest child's last name).

3. For CASE COUNTY and CASE JURISDICTION, our program uses:

   County and jurisdiction of the court presiding over the case.

4. A PRIORITY CASE in our program is:

   Defined by local program practice and policy. Texas CASA does not provide a definition or reporting requirements for priority cases.

Entering a Child: Required, Critical, and Important Fields
1. Children are ASSIGNED TO PROGRAM on a date that reflects:

   Date the court signs order appointing the CASA program to the case. (Regardless of when the program assigns a volunteer).

2. The other Important fields for our program are:

   Child Name – Removed from and Date – Languages – Disabilities
   Child Legal Status – Child Status Date
   Child Demographics – Birthdate, Gender, Race, Ethnicity

3. The Grants, Programs and Services to be reflected in ELIGIBILITY are:

Children may have multiple Eligibility Types, depending upon the programs, grants, or other identifiers your program wishes to track.

VOCA = all children Assigned to Program

OVAG = all children involved in OVAG project (generally all children assigned to staff paid by the OVAG grant)

CFE = all children whose case is assigned to CFE program

Entering Program Assignments – SUPERVISORS
1. The POINT OF INTERVENTION is captured in our program when:

   Defined by local program practice and policy. Texas CASA does not provide a definition or reporting requirements for point of intervention. Assigned to Program date can be used.

Entering Program Assignments – VOLUNTEERS
1. The POINT OF INTERVENTION is captured in our program when:

   Defined by local program practice and policy. Texas CASA does not provide a definition or reporting requirements for point of intervention. Date volunteer was assigned to case can be used.

Entering Current Placement
1. A REASONABLE DISTANCE is defined by:

   Child placed in CPS Region they were removed from, but outside their home county.

2. An IN COUNTY placement is defined by:

   Child placed in their home county.

Entering Petitions and Allegations
1. The PETITION NUMBER used by the program is:

Same as Case Number = the cause number assigned by the presiding court.

Entering Future Hearings and Past Hearings

1. Volunteer COURT REPORTS are due:

   In accordance with local program policies; generally 10-15 days before the hearing is to occur.

2. HEARING PARTICIPANTS in our program include:

   For Statutory Hearings: All named children and parents in the SAPCR case + all others present.

   For Non-statutory Hearings (motion, progress, etc.): Those persons the hearing pertains to (could be all named in SAPCR or not).

Closing a Case and Closing a Child

1. The VOLUNTEER PERMANENT PLACEMENT RECOMMENDATION ACCEPTED is defined as:

   Defined by local program practice and policy, not required by Texas CASA.

2. The CASEWORKER PERMANENT PLACEMENT RECOMMENDATION DIFFERENT is defined as:

   Defined by local program practice and policy, not required by Texas CASA.

3. A SAFE AND PERMANENT HOME is defined as:

   Defined by local program practice and policy, not required by Texas CASA.

4. PROGRAM CLOSURE REASON is defined as:

Used in all child / case closures – choose reason from Texas CASA definition list.

5. COURT CLOSURE REASON is defined as:

ONLY USED IN CASES WHERE THE COURT DISMISSED ALL PARTIES AND THE CASE CLOSED LEGALLY – use Texas CASA definition list.