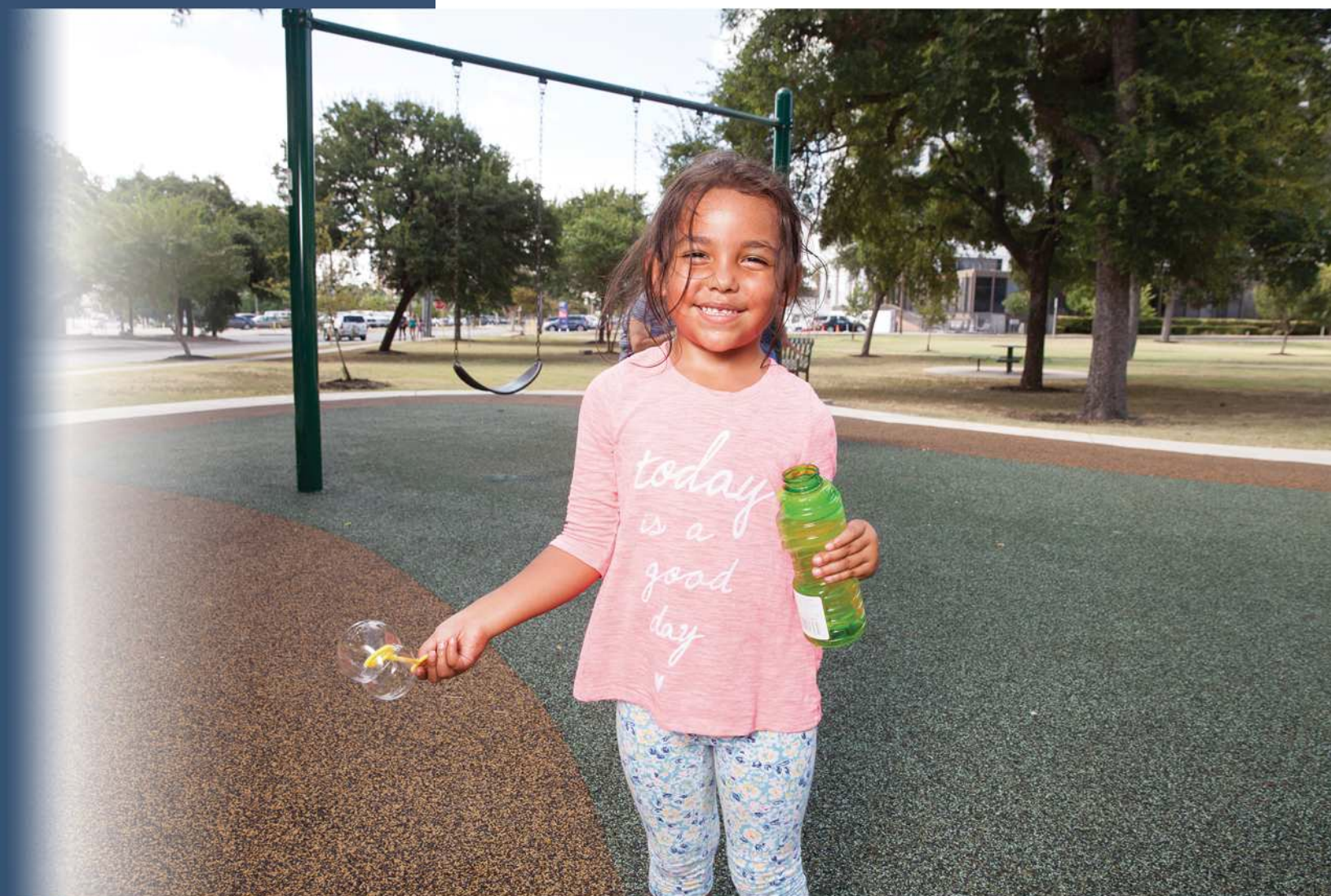




STRENGTHENING THE VOICES
OF CASA STATEWIDE

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

TEXAS CASA EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS RESOURCE MANUAL 4



2017 EDITION

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VOLUNTEER HR MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

*Rating	Indicator	Met	Needs Work	N/A
E	The organization has a clearly defined purpose of the role that volunteers have within the organization.			
E	Job descriptions exist for all volunteer positions in the organization.			
R	The organization has a well-defined and communicated volunteer management plan that includes a recruitment policy, description of all volunteer jobs, an application and interview process, possible stipend and reimbursement policies, statement of which staff has supervisory responsibilities over what volunteers, and any other volunteer personnel policy information.			
E	The organization follows a recruitment policy that does not discriminate, but respects, encourages and represents the diversity of the community.			
E	The organization provides appropriate training and orientation to the agency to assist the volunteer in the performance of their volunteer activities. Volunteers are offered training with staff in such areas as cultural sensitivity.			
R	The organization is respectful of the volunteer's abilities and time commitment and has various job duties to meet these needs. Jobs should not be given to volunteers simply because the jobs are considered inferior for paid staff.			
R	The organization does volunteer performance appraisals periodically and communicates to the volunteers how well they are doing, or where additional attention is needed. At the same time, volunteers are requested to review and evaluate their involvement in the organization and the people they work with and suggest areas for improvement.			
R	The organization does some type of volunteer recognition or commendation periodically and staff continuously demonstrates their appreciation towards the volunteers and their efforts.			
A	The organization has a process for reviewing and responding to ideas, suggestions, comments and perceptions from volunteers.			
A	The organization provides opportunities for program participants to volunteer.			

*Rating	Indicator	Met	Needs Work	N/A
A	The organization maintains contemporaneous records documenting volunteer time in program allocations. Financial records can be maintained for the volunteer time spent on programs and recorded as in-kind contributions.			

***Indicators ratings: E=essential; R=recommended; A=additional to strengthen organizational activities**

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TEXAS CASA STANDARD: 7 VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

The CASA/GAL program follows approved written policies for its volunteers regarding recruitment; application, selection and screening; training; supervision; volunteer roles and responsibilities and dismissal.

7. A. VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

1. The CASA/GAL program is inclusive and has a written plan for recruiting and selecting volunteers who reflect the children served.
2. The recruitment plan demonstrates that inclusiveness and diversity are essential components of quality advocacy and includes targeted strategies to attract a diverse volunteer pool.
3. The CASA/GAL program prepares a standardized packet of written information to recruit volunteers which includes the following:
 - a. Purpose and role of the CASA volunteer.
 - b. Qualifications.
 - c. Minimum time commitment required.
 - d. Equal opportunity statement.
 - e. Community collaboration, media outreach, speaking engagements and other appropriate strategies are employed to recruit volunteers.
4. The CASA/GAL program informs potential volunteers of, and refers them to other CASA/GAL programs, National CASA or Texas CASA if the applicant might be eligible for or prefer to serve in another CASA/GAL program.

7. B. VOLUNTEER APPLICATION, SCREENING, SELECTION AND TRANSFER PROCESS

1. A CASA/GAL program has written policies or procedures for recruiting, screening, training and appointment of volunteers to cases.
2. A CASA volunteer is an individual who is at least 21 years of age and has successfully passed the application and screening process, been trained by and serves under the supervision of the CASA/GAL program and is appointed by the court to advocate for children who come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect as defined by the state child welfare laws.
3. A qualified CASA volunteer who transfers to a new program must complete, at a minimum, training regarding the local court, laws, program policies and procedures, investigation and report writing.
4. The CASA/GAL program has a policy regarding the reactivation of volunteers who have been inactive for more than one year. The policy shall include guidelines under which a volunteer would not have to be retrained. The program shall document the specific information when reactivating a volunteer without retraining.

5. A CASA volunteer is an individual who respects a child's inherent right to be safe, establish permanence and have the opportunity to thrive.
6. All CASA volunteer applicants are required to:
 - a. Complete a written application containing information about educational background, training, employment history and experience working with children.
 - b. Submit the names of three or more references that are unrelated to the applicant.
 - c. Authorize the CASA/GAL program and other appropriate agencies and provide the necessary information for them to secure the following record checks:
 - i. Social security number verification.
 - ii. Texas criminal record check obtained from the Texas Crime Information Center maintained by the Texas Department of Public Safety.
 - iii. National criminal record check obtained from the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigations.
 - iv. Texas Public Sex Offender Registry check maintained by the Texas Department of Public Safety.
 - v. National Sex Offender Registry check maintained by the United States Department of Justice.
 - vi. The Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry maintained by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.
 - d. Participate in an in-person interview(s) with CASA/GAL program personnel.
7. The CASA/GAL program is required to secure the following:
 - a. A completed written application for each applicant containing information about educational background, training, employment history and experience working with children.
 - b. Three or more references, either written or documented by the program in writing, which are unrelated to the applicant.
 - c. Record checks on each volunteer applicant including:
 - i. Social security number verification.
 - ii. Texas criminal record check obtained from the Texas Crime Information Center maintained by the Texas Department of Public Safety.
 - iii. National criminal record check obtained from the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigations.
 - iv. Texas Public Sex Offender Registry check maintained by the Texas Department of Public Safety.
 - v. National Sex Offender Registry check maintained by the United States Department of Justice.
 - vi. The Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry maintained by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.
 - d. Conduct a personal interview in-person with the volunteer applicant.
8. If the prospective volunteer has lived in another county and that jurisdiction is not covered by the national criminal background check utilized, the CASA/GAL program secures county and state criminal record checks and a child abuse registry or child protective services check where per-

missible by law in any county and state in which the person has resided for the previous seven (7) years.

9. If a volunteer applicant refuses to sign a release of information form or submit the required information or fingerprints for any of the checks required, the CASA/GAL program rejects the application. This policy is stated on the volunteer application form.
10. Barred Felony or Misdemeanor Offense: A volunteer whose background check produces a conviction, guilty plea, plea of no contest, acceptance of deferred adjudication or pending charge is barred from being a volunteer if the charge is any level of offense under: *see complete list of penal codes under Standard 5.C.9.
11. Ten-Year Bar for Felony Offenses: A volunteer whose background check produces a conviction, guilty plea, plea of no contest, acceptance of deferred adjudication or pending charge that includes any grade of felony, other than for offenses listed in Standard 5.C.9. (above) is barred from being a volunteer for 10 years after the offense, after which time the CASA program will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the offense as well as other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant as a CASA volunteer.
12. If an applicant is found to have committed a misdemeanor or felony that is unrelated to Standard 5.C.9., including a misdemeanor drug-related offense, or would not pose a risk to children and would not negatively impact the credibility of the CASA/GAL program, the CASA/GAL program will consider the extent of the rehabilitation since the misdemeanor or felony was committed as well as other factors that may influence the decision to accept the applicant as a CASA volunteer.
13. If the charge that is barring the volunteer is not final a review of the application may be made if the charge is dismissed, a finding of not guilty or other determination of innocence is entered.
14. A volunteer whose background check produces information that includes a group of offenses or information that if considered separately would not bar an applicant, may result in the disqualification of a volunteer if it is determined that the offenses constitute a problematic pattern.
15. A volunteer shall be barred if the volunteer knowingly or intentionally places a child, through the actions of the volunteer, in contact with a person whose criminal history involves a felony offense or offense under Standard 5.C.9.
16. The CASA/GAL program's volunteer selection procedures ensure that those not selected are treated with dignity, respect and, if appropriate, referred to alternative volunteer opportunities.
17. All screening is completed before the volunteer is assigned to a case and written verification is on file at the program office.
18. The CASA/GAL program repeats the required record checks for each active volunteer at least every two years.
19. A qualified CASA volunteer who transfers to a new program must complete the full application and screening process.
20. CASA volunteers cannot serve as foster, foster/adopt or adoptive parents for any child whose conservatorship is through DFPS unless the volunteer is related to the child or placement occurred prior to June 1999.
21. CASA volunteers cannot serve as DFPS mediators nor have any contractual relationship with DFPS.

7. C. VOLUNTEER TRAINING

1. The CASA/GAL program delivers training to volunteers using the National CASA Volunteer Training Curriculum or its equivalent. All such training materials are subject to review and revision by Texas CASA. The purpose of the training is to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of volunteers so that they can fulfill the roles and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer.
2. The training consists of and the program documents at least 30 hours of required pre-service training and 12 hours of required in-service training per year. The number of in-service training hours required for newly trained volunteers will be adjusted (or prorated) dependent on the time of year the volunteer is trained.
3. The training program is reviewed annually and revised based on the CASA/GAL program's assessment of its training needs.
4. Guest speakers such as attorneys, judges, agency representatives and volunteers may deliver the training under supervision of staff.
5. Pre-service training includes the following topics:
 - a. Roles and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer.
 - b. Operation of the court, court process and child welfare system.
 - c. Dynamics of families including mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence and poverty.
 - d. Relevant state laws, regulations and policies.
 - e. Relevant federal laws, regulations and policies, including the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Multi Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA).
 - f. Confidentiality and record keeping practices.
 - g. Child development as well as the background and needs of children served by the program.
 - h. The nature and effect of child abuse and neglect.
 - i. Permanency planning.
 - j. Community agencies and resources available to meet the needs of children and families.
 - k. Communication and information gathering.
 - l. Effective advocacy.
 - m. Cultural competency.
 - n. Special needs of the children served.
6. The CASA/GAL program documents that volunteers successfully complete at least 30 hours of pre-service training during which the volunteer must spend a minimum of 10 hours in personal contact with and under the supervision of the program staff delivering the training sufficient for staff to evaluate the applicant's appropriateness to serve as a volunteer.
7. In addition to the 30 hours of pre-service training, if allowed by the court, the program requires each volunteer to visit the court served by the CASA/GAL program while the court is in session to observe abuse/neglect proceedings before appearing in court for an assigned case.
8. The CASA/GAL program provides ICWA compliance information and resources to all volunteers.
9. In-service training opportunities must include, but are not limited to, cultural competency on an annual basis, disproportionality, disparity in outcome training, and recognizing abuse.

7. D. VOLUNTEER SUPERVISION

1. The CASA/GAL program provides supervision which is appropriate to the volunteer's needs and complexity of the case assignment and holds volunteers accountable for the performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.
2. Supervisors are easily accessible and provide timely and thorough guidance to CASA volunteers through personal contact at least once per month.
3. For staff assigned to supervision as a full-time function, the staff will not supervise more than 30 active volunteers or a maximum of 45 cases. In the event the staff is required to perform duties other than supervision of volunteers, the number of volunteers the staff can supervise shall be reduced pro rata.
4. The CASA/GAL program supervisor holds regularly scheduled case conferences with volunteers to review progress on each case and written case records.
5. The CASA/GAL program has in place mechanisms for volunteer recognition.
6. The CASA/GAL program has written procedures for the support and supervision of volunteers.
7. The CASA/GAL program supervisor conducts an in-person review of the case and evaluation of the volunteer's work on the case as a component of case closure.
8. A volunteer will not be assigned more than two cases at a time. An exception may be granted in the discretion of the CASA/GAL program staff; however, the decision to permit a higher case-load shall be documented as to the justification for and reasonableness of the exception. Under the exception, a volunteer will not be assigned to more than five cases.
9. The minimum ratio of volunteers to assigned cases is 80%.

7. E. VOLUNTEER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The roles and responsibilities of the CASA volunteer are clearly communicated through written policies, job descriptions and training, and are reinforced through the supervisory process.
2. The CASA/GAL program maintains a current manual of volunteer policies and procedures.
3. Each volunteer receives a copy of the volunteer policies and procedures and provides signed acknowledgement of reading and understanding the policies.
4. The CASA/GAL program volunteer policies and procedures specify the role of the CASA volunteer, developed with the input and approval of the court (if not already determined by statute).
5. Written roles and responsibilities will include the following. The advocate will:
 - a. Identify and advocate for the best interest of the child by obtaining first hand a clear understanding of the needs and situation of the child, by conducting an ongoing review of all relevant documents and records and by interviewing the child, parents, social workers, teachers and other persons to determine the facts and circumstances of the child's situation.
 - b. Have regular and sufficient in-person contact with the child where they live to ensure in-depth knowledge of the case and make fact-based recommendations to the court. The CASA volunteer shall meet in-person with the child once every thirty (30) days at a minimum. An exception may be granted:

- i. If the child(ren) are placed more than 1 but less than 3 driving hours away, CASA will meet in person with the child(ren) at least once every three months.
 - ii. If the child(ren) are placed more than 3 driving hours away, CASA will meet in person with the child(ren) at least once every six months.
 - iii. In addition to in-person contact, have other types of monthly age appropriate contact with the child(ren) including telephone calls, emails, video conferencing and letters as applicable for the child's age and interests.
 - c. Communicate with the DFPS caseworker after appointment and at least one time per month for the duration of the case.
 - d. Meet in person with the child's primary placement provider, in a timely manner, after placement occurs. Communicate with the placement provider at least once per month thereafter for the duration of the child's case.
 - e. Advocate for the child's best interests in the community through regular contact with attorney ad litem, mental health, educational and other community systems to assure that the child's needs in these areas are met and seek cooperative solutions by acting as a facilitator among parties.
 - f. Determine the child(ren)'s permanent plan, access the educational portfolio and health passport and make recommendations regarding permanency, and education and medical services, as appropriate.
 - g. Appear at all hearings to advocate for the child's best interests and provide testimony as needed.
 - h. Provide at every hearing reports which include findings and recommendations, including specific recommendations for appropriate services for the child and, when appropriate, the child's family.
 - i. Participate in all case-related meetings.
 - j. Monitor implementation of service plans and court orders assuring that court-ordered services are implemented in a timely manner and that review hearings are held in accordance with the law.
 - k. Inform the court promptly of important developments in the case through appropriate means as determined by court rules or statute.
 - l. Maintain complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances and return all records to the program after the case is closed.
 - m. Communicate at least once monthly with CASA supervisor and participate in case conferences as scheduled.
 - n. Participate in in-service training.
6. The CASA/GAL program's volunteer policies and procedures include but are not limited to the following:
- a. The CASA volunteer reports any incident of child abuse or neglect, or any situation in which the CASA volunteer has reason to believe that a child is in imminent danger to the appropriate authorities and the CASA supervisor, as mandated in the Texas Family Code.
 - b. The CASA volunteer does not engage in the following activities:
 - i. Taking a child to the volunteer's home or any home other than the child's current placement.

- ii. Giving legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
- iii. Making placement arrangements for the child.
- iv. Giving money or expensive gifts to the child, the child's family or caregiver.
- v. Taking a child on an overnight outing.
- vi. Any activities which are likely to result in a conflict of interest or expose the program or volunteer to criminal or civil liability.
- vii. Allowing the child to come into contact with someone the volunteer knows has a criminal history involving violence, child abuse, neglect, drugs, or a sex-related offense.
- c. A volunteer may, on an individual case basis, get written permission from the local program for an exception to an action listed under 7.E.6.vii. If a request for an exception is made, a volunteer must disclose if anyone who resides with the volunteer, or that the child might come in contact with through the volunteer, does not meet the background requirements of Standard 5.C.9. A reason for granting or not granting an exception must be documented in the case file.
- d. The CASA volunteer discusses all recommendations concerning the case with the program supervisor prior to submitting recommendations to the court.
- e. CASA program supervisors do not alter reports or recommendations without the knowledge and agreement of the CASA volunteer.
- f. The CASA/GAL program has a clear policy to resolve conflicts between a volunteer and the program supervisor regarding the handling of a case, reporting of information or the recommendations to be included in a report to the court.
- g. A CASA volunteer should not be related to any parties involved in the case or be employed in a position and/or affiliated with an agency that might result in a conflict of interest.
- h. Social media policy.
- 7. When the CASA/GAL program has made the decision to allow volunteers to provide transportation to children, it has the necessary liability insurance to cover the program. In addition it has policies and procedures which assure the CASA volunteer:
 - a. Has passed a motor vehicles division record check.
 - b. Provides annually to the program a copy of a valid current driver's license, a safe driving record and adequate personal automobile insurance.
 - c. Insurance must be the required state minimum.
 - d. Obtains permission of the CASA supervisor or director.
 - e. Obtains permission of the child's legal guardian or custodial agency.
 - f. Is knowledgeable of the potential personal risk of liability.
 - g. Chooses to accept the responsibility.

7. F. DISMISSAL OF A CASA VOLUNTEER

- 1. The CASA/GAL program has policies and procedures that specify the conditions for disciplinary action and non-voluntary dismissal of volunteers.
- 2. Appropriate grounds for dismissal of a CASA volunteer include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Taking action without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the role or authority of the CASA/GAL program.

- b. Engaging in ex-parte communication with the court.
 - c. Violating a program policy, court rule or law.
 - d. Failing to complete required pre-service and in-service training.
 - e. Failing to demonstrate an ability to effectively carry out assigned duties.
 - f. Falsifying a volunteer application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process.
 - g. Having allegations of child abuse/neglect brought against them.
 - h. Experiencing an irresolvable conflict of interest.
3. The CASA/GAL program's policies and procedures specify the person or persons with authority to dismiss a volunteer.

7. G. VOLUNTEER RECORDS

1. The CASA/GAL program maintains a written confidential record for each volunteer that contains, at minimum:
- a. Application.
 - b. Emergency and identifying contact information.
 - c. Job description.
 - d. Reference documentation.
 - e. Documentation of all records checks.
 - f. Training records.
 - g. Performance evaluations and any other applicable documentation related to performance.
 - h. Documentation of volunteer status.
 - i. Copy of volunteer's current driver's license, motor vehicles records check and verification of automobile insurance (if program allows transportation).
 - j. Documentation of personal interview.
2. Written policies outline when and if, volunteers have access to their records and detail the procedures for review, addition and correction (by volunteers) of information contained in the record.
3. The CASA/GAL program retains the record after a volunteer has left the program in accordance with the program's records retention policy.

TEXAS CASA STANDARD: 11 CASA CASES

The CASA/GAL program maintains complete, accurate and current case records and follows written policies for acceptance and assignment of CASA cases.

11. A. CASE RECORDS

1. The CASA/GAL program maintains complete, accurate and current records for each child served, which include:
 - a. Biographical or other identifying information.
 - b. Background on the nature of the presenting problem or reason for referral by the court.
 - c. Court reports and any court orders related to the service being provided.
 - d. Social service case plan.
2. Records for all children served are kept up to date through:
 - a. Current contact entries.
 - b. Periodic progress notes or summaries.
3. The CASA/GAL program maintains copies of all volunteer reports, correspondence concerning the case, notes from telephone or in-person consultations between the program staff and volunteers and requires its volunteers to turn in their case records including all notes when the case is closed.
4. Information entered into the case record by program staff is specific, factual and pertinent to the nature of the situation.
5. Upon case closure a record (e.g. court order, case closure summary, recording in database) is made of the date and reason for closure.
6. The CASA/GAL program has written operational procedures, consistent with legal requirements and with the policy on confidential information governing the retention, maintenance, protection, destruction and return of case files when the case is closed. Procedures should include:
 - a. Hard copy files are kept a minimum of seven (7) years from case closure unless there is a court or statutory requirement that dictates otherwise.
 - b. Electronic children's case records are kept a minimum of seven (7) years from case closure unless there is a court or statutory requirement that dictates otherwise.
 - c. Electronic children's case files are backed up on a separate system at least once a week and the backup is kept off site.
7. The CASA/GAL program has established procedures for the legal and programmatic release, in writing, of volunteers when a case is closed or when a volunteer is removed from a case.

11. B. ACCEPTANCE, ASSIGNMENT AND CLOSURE OF CASES

1. The CASA/GAL program has procedures for the acceptance and assignment of cases.
2. A CASA volunteer is sworn in by the judge before appointment to a case.

3. Cases are accepted by the program without discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability or religion.
4. When possible, a CASA volunteer is assigned at the earliest possible stage of the court proceedings.
5. Written referral criteria is developed by the court and the CASA/GAL program and is reviewed at least every two years and changed as program resources change.
6. All appointments and assignments are made by an appropriate written order of the court.
7. The CASA/GAL program, in cooperation with the court, retains the right to determine which cases it can serve appropriately. Determining factors can include the limits of the program's resources, including volunteer availability, capacities, legal authority and mission.
8. A CASA/GAL program or the court notifies all parties and agencies involved in the case of the CASA volunteer's appointment and dismissal.
9. Ethnicity, national origin, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability and social economic status are considered in the appointment of volunteers to cases.
10. Volunteers are assigned to cases with consideration to their experience, knowledge, skills, availability and case type preference.
11. In determining volunteer case-load the following must be assessed:
 - a. Nature and difficulty of the current case-load and proposed case.
 - b. Work and time required to serve each child or to complete each task.
 - c. Past and current performance of Minimum Expectations of Service to a Case (Standard 7.E.5.a.-o.)
12. A CASA/GAL program maintains complete case assignment records including:
 - a. Name of volunteer.
 - b. Name of the child.
 - c. Date of assignment.
 - d. Date of dismissal or closure

TEXAS CASA STANDARD: 2. B (M1-9) MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY

1. The CASA/GAL program follows written policies and procedures regarding access to, use of, and release of information about the children it serves to ensure that the confidentiality of children and their families is maintained at all times.
2. CASA staff and volunteers respect the child's right to privacy by maintaining confidentiality.
3. CASA volunteers take an oath of confidentiality upon completion of training and sign a statement of confidentiality upon acceptance of each case.
4. CASA staff sign a statement of confidentiality upon hire.
5. The CASA/GAL program demonstrates its compliance with applicable statutory requirements pertaining to confidentiality of client information by ensuring that its policy, procedures and practices are consistent with all applicable laws and regulations.
6. Access to records is limited to the court, authorized agency personnel and others outside the agency whose request for access to confidential information is permitted by statute or the court.
7. All confidential electronic and hard copy correspondence, files and records are safely and securely maintained.
8. Controls exist that enable records to be located at any time.
9. The CASA/GAL program has a policy to protect confidential information of governing body and advisory committee members, staff, volunteers and donors.

Section 1

BACKGROUND CHECKS



**Executive Director Resource Manual
2017 Edition**

FBC & ABCS BACKGROUND CHECK POLICIES

It is the upmost importance to ensure all board, staff, and volunteers are properly screened. This safeguards the safety of the children CASA serves and is a requirement in the national and state standards. Furthermore, when internal transitions and shift of duties and responsibilities occur in a program, it is paramount to not miss any steps in regard to the background check process. The background check process pertains to the board, staff, and volunteers. It is advised your program conduct an internal audit for background checks quarterly for the incoming volunteer, board and staff and National Criminal re-checks as needed every two years. The simplest way is to compare your board, staff, and volunteer roster to your FBC and ABCS subscription work-list.

All present and future board, staff, and volunteers must have the following:

- FBC (Finger Print Check)
- ABCS (Automated Background Check System with DFPS)
- SSVN (Social Security Number Verification)

Employees are required to have an updated copy of their vehicle insurance, copy of driver's license, and Department of Motor Vehicle driving record in their file. If your program allows volunteers to transport children they too will need to have an updated copy of their vehicle insurance, copy of driver's license, and Department of Motor Vehicle driving record in their file. If your program does not allow volunteers to transport children these records are not needed.

SSVN

The fingerprint check does not include social security number verification. A private vender, such as First Advantage or Lexus Nexus, must be used to check social security numbers. Private vender fees differ and your program is free to choose their preferred vender.

FBC

It is best practice for the Executive Director to be the primary administrative users for the Texas Department of Public Safety account. By law, only the two approved users can have access to the management system and only these two persons can review the criminal history results of board, volunteer, and staff.

The FBC is a 4 in 1 service, meaning 4 checks are ran when a finger print check is done.

1. National Criminal History
2. State Criminal History (rap back feature)
3. National Sex Offender Registry
4. State Sex Offender Registry (rap back feature)

The state criminal history check has a rap back feature. This feature eliminates the need for programs to run a Texas criminal recheck, per National and Texas CASA Standards. Since your program is automatically notified of any criminal activity and/or sex offenses, you will not need to run a recheck on these state records. Persons previously printed and checked remain in the system perma-

nently and your program will receive notifications until you are no longer subscribed to an individual's record.

There is currently **no rap back feature for national criminal history activity**. The rap back feature is only for the state of Texas. This means the program must recheck criminal history on board, staff, and volunteers every two years using a name-based check.

To perform a re-check for national criminal history you must run a name-based criminal history check through a private vendor such as First Advantage or Lexus Nexus. To run a national sex offender registry check, go to NSOPW.gov (National Sex Offender Public Website). This two-year re-check will be in effect as long as there is no rap back service for national criminal history check or national sex offender registry check. It is good practice to set a reminder or tickler in your database system several months prior to the two-year expiration date for board, staff, and volunteers.

There are circumstances that make fingerprints unable to be read. If after two attempts to have fingerprints read the program may document the failed attempts and do a national name based check.

ABCS

The Automatized Background Check Service is the child abuse and neglect registry check. This site provides whether the applicant has any CPS history in Texas. The FBI fingerprint check does not include CPS history check. These are two separate checks that must be done on every board member, staff, and volunteer.

The ABCS is a rap back service. Once your program is subscribed to a person it is not necessary to do a re-check. Your program will be notified of any activity in Texas for the duration of your subscription.

If the board member, volunteer, or staff has lived outside of Texas within the past seven years a check must be done in the state in which the resided in the previous seven years. Your program must contact that state's Central Registry Center (CRC) and request a child abuse registry check if allowable in that state.

ACCESSING ABCS

Similar to Case Connection, each local program should identify a staff member or two in the specialized role of ABCS Representative. All ABCS users will access the new system through the HHS Enterprise Portal. You will need to register on the portal and log in at <https://hhsportal.hhs.state.tx.us/>. Additional information is available on the log in page.

RESOURCES & GUIDES FOR ABCS

DFPS has created and updated resources and training materials for the enhanced ABCS system. These resources are also available on the ABCS page of the DFPS website.

A webinar on background check requirements is available in CASA College LMS. To access the archived webinar, please log into the CASA College LMS and search for "Background Check Requirements." You will find the two handouts from the webinar under "Resources" on the left side of the screen. If you do not have a CASA College LMS account, please visit the CASA College E-Learning page to learn how you can get started.

UNSUBSCRIBING TO FBC AND ABCS

Whenever a CASA volunteer, staff member or board member leaves your CASA program, make sure to unsubscribe them from the FBC and ABC Rap Back checks **within 48 hours**. This way, you will not continue to receive notifications of new criminal and child abuse activity for those individuals who are no longer involved with your organization.

BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR PARTNER ADVOCATES

Any person helping or assisting the primary advocate on a case and who has or may potentially have access to a child must have all background checks ran including FBC, ABCS, and SSNV. When in question whether a person needs the full background checks, please contact the Texas CASA office for assistance.

NOTIFICATION OF BACKGROUND CHECK AND PRE-SERVICE TRAINING COMPLETION TO THE COURT

Programs must notify the court that each volunteer being sworn in has been completely vetted and has completed the pre-service training. There are different ways to do this, but it must happen before or at time a case is assigned to an advocate. It is best practice to ask your presiding judge their preference in receiving this information.

Examples of notification:

- Provide one document with all those being sworn in including their ABCS, FBC, and training completion dates.
- Include a place for these dates on the Oath or court order (an example of the Oath can be found in Section 2 of this manual).

***In the Resource section of this manual you will find:**

- Texas CASA Background Check Checklist
- Background Check Storage Requirements
- Offline Applicant User Guide
- Fingerprint-Based Background Check (FBC) Resource Guide

Section 2

VOLUNTEER TRAINING



**Executive Director Resource Manual
2017 Edition**

CASA PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

PHILOSOPHY

Initial training is part of the process of preparing CASA/GAL volunteers. The National CASA volunteer training curriculum focuses on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to be a successful CASA/GAL volunteer, as identified by local programs and in the National CASA Association Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs.

Some content, of course, requires advance preparation by the facilitator to include specifics relevant to the local jurisdiction, such as state laws and local program procedures.

The curriculum is learner-centered, interactive, and experiential. It uses case-based material to engage volunteers in practicing skills that they will use on the job. It is guided by the belief that adults are responsible for their own learning. This philosophy, along with key principles of adult learning, shaped the structure and process of the curriculum and determined the role of the trainer.

Your primary role with this training curriculum is facilitation. Your responsibility as a facilitator is to make the learning process as easy as possible by establishing and maintaining a positive learning climate and by engaging participants in the curriculum activities that will prepare them for CASA/GAL volunteer work. While it is important that you, as a facilitator, make this training yours, it is also important to do so within the philosophy, approach, and framework of the training design.

FRAMEWORK

The Facilitator Edition of the curriculum contains information to help you facilitate the curriculum. A section called Facilitator Prep offers facilitation tips and information regarding the advance preparation required for each chapter. The Supplies Checklist describes everything you will need to take to each training session. The body of each chapter in the Facilitator Edition contains both volunteer pages as they appear in the Volunteer Manual and facilitator pages with instructions for facilitating each activity. A separate box called the Facilitator Toolkit holds additional materials for each chapter, including handouts, overheads, posters, and cards. To prepare to facilitate the curriculum, read through the Facilitator Edition and make notes in the margin about how you will facilitate the activities.

The curriculum is designed to be delivered in sessions of approximately three hours (not including breaks) that may be combined for all-day sessions. To maximize the use of face-to-face training time, some sessions have homework assignments. The total time required for this initial training, excluding breaks, homework, and other outside activities, is thirty hours.

Optional Extended Learning activities expand the curriculum beyond this timeframe. Local programs will need to schedule in-service training to address additional topics and to cover curriculum topics in more depth.

A special note about the Independent Study Edition (ISE): Even in the ISE model, some group training time is required. If you are using the ISE, plan to meet in person with any trainee for a minimum of ten hours, which includes both group screening and training time. In addition, Chapter 3 of the ISE should always be conducted in a group setting, and it is recommended as a best practice that Chapters 1 and 10 also be completed in a group. This is a set of materials designed to help smaller and more rural programs offer training to volunteers on an individual basis. Other programs may also wish to

use these materials as “make up” content if a volunteer misses a chapter during an in-person pre-service training.

Not every potential volunteer is a good candidate for the ISE.

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING MANUALS

For National CASA Pre-Service Facilitator and Volunteer Training Manuals refer to the National CASA website at casaforchildren.org. The 2017 Pre-Service curriculum is available for download on the National CASA website.

The three approved pre-service volunteer trainings are:

1. Classroom training
2. Flex Learning curriculum
3. Independent Study Edition (ISE)

Pre-Service hours must add up to 30 hours with at least 10 hours in person contact with and under the supervision of the program staff. The 30 hours does not include the required court room observation hours.

Under Standard 7.C.5 pre-Service topics must include:

- a. Roles and responsibilities of a CASA volunteer.
- b. Operation of the court, court process and child welfare system.
- c. Dynamics of families including mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence and poverty.
- d. Relevant state laws, regulations and policies.
- e. Relevant federal laws, regulations and policies, including the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Multi Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA).
- f. Confidentiality and record keeping practices.
- g. Child development as well as the background and needs of children served by the program.
- h. The nature and effect of child abuse and neglect.
- i. Permanency planning.
- j. Community agencies and resources available to meet the needs of children and families.
- k. Communication and information gathering.
- l. Effective advocacy.
- m. Cultural competency.
- n. Special needs of the children served.

SEQUENCE, SCHEDULE & ADVANCE PREPARATION

The sequence of information moves from general to specific, using activities that build on each other from simple to more complex. By the end of the training, if presented as designed, participants will have practiced using all the skills they will need in their work as CASA/GAL volunteers.

Different programs will schedule the training class differently based upon the size of their community, geographic area served and availability of volunteers. You will determine the best training schedule to present the information and also be as accommodating to volunteers enrolled in your pre-service training classes. You may change the schedule from one training session to the next!

Advance preparation is necessary for each chapter to reflect specifics such as state laws, local policies, program procedures, and forms. Advance Preparation instructions, found at the beginning of each chapter in the Facilitator Edition, offer direction on where such preparation is necessary.

Source: Adapted from the National CASA Association

SAMPLE: CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER PRE-SERVICE TRAINING SCHEDULE

Training Day 1: Saturday, February X, 20XX 9:00am – 4:30pm (7.5 hours)		Staff & Guest:
9:00 - 10:30am	Introductions/Welcome The CASA/GAL volunteer role (Chap. 1) Understanding child abuse and neglect	(Name), Training Coordinator & (Name), Executive Director
10:30 – 10:45am	BREAK	
10:45am – noon	Principles and concepts guiding CASA (Chap 1) Training expectations/looking ahead Working your case	
noon – 1:00pm	WORKING LUNCH Harris - Price case/video SPEAKER: Let's hear from volunteers	(Name), CASA Volunteer
1:00 – 2:30pm	Introducing the Law, CPS and Courts (Chap 2) SPEAKER: Law and the Courts Development of child abuse and neglect laws	
2:30 – 2:45pm	BREAK	
2:45 – 4:30pm	SPEAKER: Judge's perspective Introducing CPS and the court process (Chap 2) Roles in a juvenile/family court case Homework Sign up for court observation times	(Name), County Judge
Training Day 2: Tuesday, February X, 20XX 6:00pm – 9:00pm (3 hours)		Staff & Guest:
6:00 – 7:00pm	DFPS overview SPEAKERS – CPS overview and partnership	(Name), CPS Investigator (Name), CPS Supervisor/ Caseworker
7:00 – 7:15pm	BREAK	

Training Day 1: Saturday, February X, 20XX 9:00am – 4:30pm (7.5 hours)		Staff & Guest:
7:15 – 9:00pm	Developing cultural competence (Chap 3) Diversity and cultural heritage Culturally competent advocacy Homework	(Name), Training Coordinator (Name), Program Director

Training Day 3: Thursday, February X, 20XX 6:00pm – 9:00pm (3 hours)		Staff & Guest:
6:00 – 6:45pm	Values exercise (Chap 3) Principles that guide us	(Name), Training Coordinator & (Name), Program Director
6:45 – 7:15pm	SPEAKER – Foster homes 101	(Name), Foster Parent
7:15 – 7:30pm	BREAK	
7:30 – 8:00pm	SPEAKER- Communicating with your CASA kid	(Name), Therapist
8:00 - 9:00pm	Understanding families/family strengths (Chap 4) Stress in families Homework	(Name), Volunteer Supervisor

Training Day 4: Tuesday, February X, 20XX 6:00pm – 9:00pm (3 hours)		Staff & Guest:
6:00 – 7:30pm	SPEAKER – Substance abuse treatment provider Chapter 4 – Risk factors for child abuse and neglect	(Name), Recovery Center (Name), Training Coordinator & (Name), Program Director
7:30 – 7:45pm	BREAK	
7:45 – 9:00pm	SPEAKER - Educational advocacy for foster children	(Name), Education Liaison (Name) School District

Training Day 5: Thursday, February X, 20XX 6:00pm – 9:00pm (3 hours)		Staff & Guest:
6:00 – 7:00pm	Understanding children (Chap 6) The needs of children How children grow and develop	(Name), Training Coordinator
7:00-7:30pm	The importance of family to a child (Chap 5) Child attachment/Separation SPEAKER- Children’s Advocacy Center	(Name), Children’s Advoca- cacy Center
7:30 – 7:45pm	BREAK	
7:45 – 9:00pm	Permanence for children	(Name), Volunteer Supervisor

Training Day 6: Saturday, February X, 20XX 9:00am – 4:30pm (7.5 hours)		Staff & Guest:
9:00 - 10:30am	Court reports (Chap 9) Write your own court report	(Name), Training Coordinator &
10:30 – 10:45am	BREAK	
10:45 – 12:00	Principles and concepts that guide CASA (Chap 1) Training expectations/looking ahead Working your case	
12:00 – 1:00pm	WORKING LUNCH Crime Victim’s Compensation Video: What can we do about child abuse	(Name), Executive Director
1:00 – 2:30pm	Case study examples – ROLE PLAYS	
2:30 – 2:45pm	BREAK	
2:45 – 3:30pm	SPEAKER – Attorney panel	(Name), Board President (Name), Attorney (Name), Attorney
3:30-4:30pm	Communicating as a CASA volunteer (Chap 7) Dealing with conflict Understanding confidentiality	

Tuesday, February X, 20XX 6:00pm – 9:00pm		Staff & Guest:
6:00 – 7:30pm	Wrapping up	(Name),
7:30-7:45	Break	(Name),
7:45-9:00pm	Documentation Self-care	(Name)

To become a CASA volunteer volunteers must successfully complete Pre-Service Training including:

- 30 hours of training with 10 hours being in class training
- Court room observation

Source: Texas CASA Quality Assurance Indicators of Compliance 2016 Edition

SAMPLE: INDEPENDENT STUDY EDITION TRAINING SCHEDULE

AGENDA	TIME FRAME	TRAINING MODE	DATE(S)
Interview	After screening, prior to beginning independent study	One-on-one	October 1
Chapter 1	As soon as possible after interview	Group (3 ½ hours)	October 9
Chapter 2 Court room observation		Independent	
Debrief Chapter 2 Chapter 3	Four to five days after Chapter 1 session	Group (4-5 hours)	October 14
Chapter 4		Independent	
Chapter 5		Independent	
Chapter 6		Independent	
Chapter 7		Independent	
Debrief Chapters 4-7	One to two weeks after Chapter 3 session	Group or one-on-one (approx. 4 hours)	October 23
Chapter 8		Independent	
Chapter 9		Independent	
Debrief Chapters 8 & 9 Chapter 10	One week after debriefing sessions for Chapter 4-7	Group (4-5 hours)	October 30
Swearing In			

Source: National CASA Volunteer Training Curriculum

FLEX LEARNING BLENDED TRAINING

Flex Learning Blended Online and In-Person Volunteer Training

National CASA's Flex Learning curriculum is a blended approach to training that combines in-person and online delivery of information. The training occurs in five sessions. Each session contains approximately 3 hours of self-guided work that participants complete online, and a 3-hour in-person session that participants attend as a group. The online sessions introduce the participants to the key elements for CASA/GAL work, allow them to interact with others, explore new ideas, and obtain tools for effective child advocacy. The in-person sessions use case studies to introduce participants to a variety of dynamics including poverty, mental health issues, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc. By using this method, volunteers not only obtain experience with different types of cases but also in how to complete a thorough investigation. The facilitator is also able to ascertain volunteer readiness and competency. Flex Learning will not replace the traditional 30 hour in-person pre-service training, but rather it will give CASA/GAL programs an alternative way of providing pre-service training to their volunteers. Per Texas CASA Standard 7 7.c.(6), 10 of the 30 required training hours must be in person. This is also in addition to court room observation during pre-service training, Standard 7 7.c.(7).

FLEX LEARNING: VOLUNTEER TRAINING CURRICULUM PROGRAM READINESS CHECKLIST:

The brief assessment below was designed to help CASA/GAL programs determine if they are ready to implement the Flex Learning Curriculum.

The CASA/GAL Program is able to:

- Offer a 3-hour in-person training weekly for five weeks.
- Assess volunteers for their suitability to participate in this type of training (see Volunteer Assessment Forms).
- Communicate with volunteers via email.
- Limit the number of participants (refer to the National CASA website for class size limitations)
- Pay the course fee (refer to the National CASA website for fee amount)

The Facilitator is able to:

- Access a computer with a high-speed internet connection, a current web browser and Adobe Reader version 9 or higher and Flash version 10 or higher. (Note: some activities will require linking to YouTube.)
- Demonstrate a comfort level with technology.
- Answer volunteer questions on basic technical issues, including posting to discussion forums, using the Internet, and the minimal technical requirements to participate in the course.
- Monitor the online portions of the training daily or several times a week.
- Learn new training materials. Some of the activities and information are straight from the 2007 edition, other activities are new. In particular, the in-person sessions follow a new format.

- Facilitate dialogue education sessions focused on case studies.
- Participate in a 90-minute Flex Learning Training of Facilitators Webinar prior to implementing.
- Draw upon previous facilitation experience, preferably with the National CASA 2007 Edition Core Curriculum.
- Adequately screen volunteer suitability using online interaction as well as in-person interaction. (Note: the classroom time is reduced by half compared to the traditional model.)

The steps to offering the Flex Learning Curriculum can be found on the National CASA website at casaforchildren.org

SAMPLE: FLEX LEARNING VOLUNTEER TRAINING SCHEDULE

The CASA Volunteer Pre-Service Training consists of 5 in-person 3-hour classes and 5 online classes totaling 30 mandatory hours. Court room observation is in addition to the 30 hours.

Date/Time	Topic	Speakers
June 1, 20xx 6-7:30pm	Orientation	Executive Director Program Director Trainer
June 2, 20xx 3 hrs credit	Session 1 (online)	Complete by June 7
June 8, 20xx 6-9pm 3 hrs credit	District Judges Session 1 The Role of CASA/GAL Intro to Child Abuse & Neglect Values Participants in a Case	District Judge
June 9, 20xx 3 hrs credit	Session 2 (online)	Complete by June 14
June 15, 20xx 6-9pm 3 hrs credit	Session 2 DFPS/Conservatorship & Investigations The Greene Case	CSV Supervisor Invest. Supervisor
June 16, 20xx 3 hrs credit	Session 3 (online)	Complete by June 21

Date/Time	Topic	Speakers
June 22, 20xx 6-9pm 3 hrs credit	Session 3 Laws Governing Child Abuse Effective Court Reports The Amarillo Case	Assistant Attorney General
June 23, 20xx 3 hrs credit	Session 4 (online)	Complete by June 28
June 29, 20xx 6-9pm 3 hrs credit	Session 4 Child Development Older Youth The Brown Case Advocate Documentation	
June 30, 20xx 3 hrs credit	Session 5 (online)	Complete by July 7
July 2, 20xx 10am - 1pm 3 hrs credit	Cultural Diversity CASA Volunteer	Guest Speaker CASA Volunteer
July 8, 20xx 6-9pm 3 hrs credit	Section 5 Redd Case Debrief Court Report Review	

Continuing Ed: You will be required to complete 12 hours of Continuing Education each year that you are an active volunteer. A variety of trainings and activities will be offered throughout the year to help volunteers complete this requirement.

ONLINE CORE ADVOCACY SKILLS TRAINING

WHAT IS OCAST?

Texas CASA created an interactive e-learning course, Online Core Advocacy Skills Training (OCAST), to walk you through everything that happens when a child comes to the attention of CPS. Within the course, there are six modules that take one to two hours each to complete, with a quiz at the end of each module. Participants will receive a brief follow-up survey and will be able to print their grades as proof of completion.

WHO IS OCAST FOR?

OCAST is recommended for all CASA staff, volunteers and stakeholders. The new CASA College Learning Management System (LMS) includes OCAST as well as new e-learning materials we are developing for both volunteers and program staff and board.

Some local CASA programs currently include the full Online Advocacy Skills Training (OCAST), developed by Texas CASA, in their pre-service volunteer trainings – however, **please be mindful that only Lessons 1 through 4 of OCAST specifically address and count towards pre-service volunteer training curriculum requirements in the Texas CASA Standards. OCAST can count for up to 10 hours of pre-service training.**

The Online Advocacy Skills Training (OCAST) covers these six lessons:

- Lesson 1) A Child Comes to the Attention of the Child Protective System
- Lesson 2) Ex-Parte Hearing to Adversary Hearing
- Lesson 3) Status Hearing to Initial Permanency Hearing
- Lesson 4) Subsequent Permanency to Final Hearing
- Lesson 5) Trial/Adoption
- Lesson 6) Permanent Managing Conservatorship

Lessons 1-4 of the OCAST curriculum substitute for Chapter 2 of the 2007 National CASA Association Volunteer Training Curriculum, “Introducing the Law, the Child Protection System & the Courts.” The remaining chapters of the National CASA curriculum must still be incorporated in volunteer pre-service training.

Chapter 2 of National CASA’s curriculum takes three hours. CASA programs that incorporate Lessons 1-4 of OCAST into their trainings can calculate and include the number of hours volunteers take to complete Lessons 1-4. Typically, these lessons should take between five and six hours total. Programs can use their training agenda to document all pre-service volunteer training hours.

Please note that, although Lessons 5 and 6 of OCAST do not count for pre-service training, they can be used for in-service training opportunities.

USING GUEST SPEAKERS TO SUPPORT VOLUNTEER LEARNING

Many CASA and GAL programs invite guest speakers to lead portions of their volunteer training. Effective experts can make volunteer training come to life. They present content they use every day, have current real-world examples to share and are often important players in the local court community.

However, by bringing in a terrific guest speaker, you may unintentionally rob your volunteers of valuable learning opportunities. Volunteers master the content presented and gain confidence and competence when they apply the information by completing the activities in the curriculum. But they may not be able to apply the information in the lecture-only format used by many guest speakers.

Read the scenarios below describing how three programs utilize guest speakers. Which one is most like your situation? The italicized comments after each scenario offer ideas about how to make the situation more conducive to volunteer learning.

SCENARIO 1:

I invite Judge William Mason to be a guest speaker because he is one of our juvenile court judges and is also a former high school teacher. He teaches Chapter 2 with me, taking responsibility for teaching Unit 1 (The Development of Child Abuse and Neglect Laws) and the last part of Unit 2 (Juvenile Court Process). He presents the content and I lead the volunteers through the activities in the manual. He stays for the entire session and enjoys talking with volunteers during their break. At the end of the session, he thanks the volunteers for taking on this challenging and rewarding work.

Response: Clone this judge and send one to every program in the country! His use of the volunteer training curriculum sends a powerful message about his respect for the training program and his commitment to the volunteers' learning experience.

SCENARIO 2:

Gloria Francis comes to my training to talk about the Department of Children and Families. She covers a range of topics: winterization assistance for clients; social worker assignments to cases; and recent budgetary issues in her organization.

Response: Decide what content you would like to invite Ms. Francis to teach and send her the guest speaker letter from the Training of Facilitators curriculum. This letter provides a brief description of the approach of the curriculum and also lets her know that after her presentation volunteers will be completing an exercise in order to apply Ms. Francis' content to their role as a CASA/GAL volunteer.

SCENARIO 3:

Dr. Jennifer Leeks is a well-known child psychologist who teaches at a university in my town. I invite her to attend my training whenever her busy schedule permits so she can teach the volunteers about the effects of abuse and neglect on child growth and development-the subject of her dissertation and her ongoing research. The volunteers are very interested in Dr. Leeks' energetic lecture and are happy to know our community has such a knowledgeable resource.

Response: How about inviting Dr. Leeks to do an in-service training or to be a keynote speaker at your state conference? Her remarks and focus would probably be well received by your more seasoned volunteers.

These are just a few examples of how guest speakers can enhance the learning experiences of your volunteers, especially as resources for in-service training. If you have never attended a Training of the Facilitators workshop but would like a copy of a sample letter for guest speakers, contact Brian Washburn, training director, at brianw@nationalcasa.org.

Source: National CASA Association

Document Author: Cindy Bizzell, National CASA Association Curriculum Advisory Committee

ARRANGING FOR GUEST SPEAKERS

At several times during the training there is the opportunity to use guest speakers. The use of outside presenters in training has both advantages and drawbacks. Let's look briefly at what those might include.

Advantages of Including Guest Speakers

- Guest speakers can add an element of realism to the training topic. They can bring expertise that the facilitator may not possess.
- Guest speakers introduce variety to the training setting, which can perk up interest as new subjects are introduced or old subjects are reinforced.
- Guest speakers can reinforce information presented by the facilitator or can add new dimensions to a topic.

Disadvantages of Including Guest Speakers

- Bringing in guest speakers means giving up some measure of control over the information your participants receive.
- Guest speakers can surprise not only your participants but you as well. Sometimes it is a pleasant surprise and sometimes not so pleasant.
- Guest speakers may repeat information you have already covered, or cover information that you had hoped to save for a later time.
- Guest speakers may not show up, may not show up on time, or may cancel at the last minute.
- Guest speakers may not give participants the opportunity to apply new material and practice skills.
- Guest speakers may be experts on their subject matter, but may not be familiar with adult learning principles.

How to Increase the Advantages & Reduce the Disadvantages

The key to including guest speakers successfully in your agenda is to be certain that you and they are prepared. When preparing for a guest speaker, consider the following:

- Give your speakers as much advance warning as possible. This gives them plenty of time to prepare.
- Give your guest speakers specific information about your expectations of their presentation, including topics you would like them to cover and how long you expect them to present.
- If the speaker is covering particularly difficult or controversial subjects, you may want to discuss with your speaker the concerns that you want participants to address following the presentation.
- Be sure to find out if the speaker wishes to hand out any additional information, and decide who will make the copies. If you are going to make copies, set a deadline for the materials to be prepared, in your hands, and ready for copying.
- If your speaker is making the copies, be certain he/she knows the correct number of participants.
- Be sure to prepare participants to receive your speaker. Briefly describe who the speaker is, what area he/she represents, and what will be discussed. This saves the speaker from having to use valuable time to deal with these clarifications.
- Keep the speaker and the group to the time schedule. When five minutes remain in the allotted time, you may want to stand and state that there is time for one last question.
- If the speaker is wandering too far off track, you may want to redirect the conversation back to the agreed upon topics by asking the speaker to describe something related specifically to that topic. (For example, "A few minutes ago you mentioned PL 96-272. Could you explain further what your role is in relation to that law?")
- If the group is wandering too far off track, you may want to redirect the conversation in much the same way. If there are questions being asked of the speaker that would be more appropriately handled at another time, redirect the group and make sure the questions are posted on the Parking Lot so that you can address them later.
- At the end of the presentation, be sure to thank the speaker.
- After the speaker has left, ask the group if they have any follow-up questions or concerns based on the speaker's presentation.
- If the speaker did not use the National CASA Association Volunteer Training Curriculum, schedule time to complete the application and future use activities in the curriculum after the speaker is finished.
- Be sure to respond to requests for feedback from your speakers. They may want to know how the group responded, how the presentation was regarded, etc. Discuss it with them as positively and yet honestly as possible.

Source: *National CASA Facilitator Training Manual*, © 2007

PRINCIPALS OF ADULT LEARNING

ACCOUNTABILITY

Adults learn what they are ready and able to learn. In that sense, they are accountable to themselves. Educators, in this situation, the designers of the National CASA/GAL Volunteer Training Curriculum as well as the facilitators are accountable for the design and process of training for ensuring that learning materials are accessible, relevant, culturally appropriate, and useful. They are not, however, accountable for the actual learning.

Adult learners have to take responsibility for their own learning. However, if people in a training session are not learning, those responsible for the training must examine their part in the accountability equation. As a facilitator, questions to ask yourself include: Did I prepare carefully? Was the Needs Assessment thorough and accurate? Is the design of the training appropriate? Is my facilitation careful and effective? Am I listening to the learners? Are my evaluation and follow-up providing the necessary information to me? To the learners?

AFFIRMATION

It helps adults to hear simple encouragement of their efforts, such as “Well done!” “Good question!” “Yes!” or “Very interesting!” Affirmation means generous encouragement and loud and clear recognition of the effort the participant is making to learn new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It is one way that facilitators can convey respect.

What is encouraged is the learning, not just the product. The product may be brilliant or not, but what you want to encourage is the effort. What you want to avoid is the “plop.” A plop occurs when an adult learner responds to a question, asks a question, or ventures an opinion, and the facilitator's response is a blank stare, silence, or a move to the next activity without reference to what the person said.

A plop can happen because a facilitator is absorbed in the content, worried about covering the material, concerned about time, or just doesn't hear the participant. Whatever the reason, this response or failure to respond is destructive to learning. You will be lucky if the person returns after experiencing a plop. Facilitators who focus on respect and affirmation reduce the risk of plops.

AUTONOMY OF LEARNER

A goal of the volunteer training is preparing reasonably autonomous volunteers who can think critically and exercise good judgment. What better place to start encouraging this personal autonomy than in the actual training sessions?

The training design supports participants' autonomy in a variety of ways, including sharing information about the learning activities, involving participants in hands-on exploration and application of content, and providing discussion questions that encourage participants to express their ideas and opinions. Facilitators can support learner autonomy by honoring participants' unique perspectives and welcoming their honest responses—including ones that challenge the material.

CONGRUENCE

Congruence in the training situation means that facilitators do what they say. Participants learn how to behave from how the facilitator behaves, so you need to do what you are teaching. For example, if you want participants to strive to be culturally competent, you need to model this behavior. If you want participants to work well as a team with their co-learners, you need to model effective teamwork with your co-facilitator.

Are you modeling behavior that you want participants to translate into their interactions with their supervisor? With the child they represent? With caseworkers?

DIALOGUE

An exchange among equals occurs in a training situation when each person's ideas, feelings, and experiences are valued. The learning takes place in the exchange between participants as they examine the training content, question it, and consider its value, usefulness, and applicability to their lives. The principle of dialogue encourages participants to transform the content and make it their own.

EVALUATION

Evaluation involves looking for clear and precise indicators of success in the learning of skills, knowledge, and attitudes. But how do the learners know that they have learned something new? And how do you, as the facilitator, know that you have done your job?

In the approach used in the Volunteer Manual, participants can assess for themselves whether or not, or to what degree, they met the objectives for each chapter, based on the activities they complete during the course of the chapter. Since adult learners are responsible for their own learning, only they can determine what they have learned. Asking what they learned from a homework assignment or what questions remain about a topic are ways that you can encourage participants to engage in evaluating their own learning.

As a facilitator of this curriculum, your responsibility is to make the learning process as easy as possible by establishing and maintaining a positive learning climate and by engaging participants in the curriculum activities that will prepare them for CASAIGAL volunteer work. You can evaluate your success

informally through participants' comments and your observations of their engagement in the learning. You can also request specific feedback from participants about aspects of the learning experience.

IMMEDIACY

Immediacy makes for high motivation. When learners use new content immediately, within the training session, they know that they understand it because they have used it. Clearly connecting the training activities with the CASA/GAL volunteer work that they will be doing in the near future reinforces the immediacy.

INCLUSION

The question here is, “Is everyone on board?” The alternative to inclusion is exclusion. When an adult learner feels excluded, little or no learning takes place. This principle is clearly related to respect, immediacy, relevance, and accountability.

The design of the training and the behavior of the facilitator assure inclusion. Each gesture of respect and courtesy is an expression of this principle. Learning people's names and using them, affirming each person's contributions, and using small groups help create inclusion. Establishing guidelines for language and participation (e.g., having the group create their own group agreements) also encourages inclusion.

LEARNING BY DOING

People learn more when they are actively involved in the learning process. Learning by doing engages people more than merely listening to someone talk about a subject. This engagement of learners is not only an indication that they are learning, it is how they learn! Without it, little or no learning takes place. Malcolm Knowles's (1980) research showed that adults learn twenty percent of what they hear, forty percent of what they both hear and see, and eighty percent of what they do or discover for themselves.

RELEVANCE

Adults learn faster and more permanently when the material is significant to them and to their current lives. The facilitator can emphasize relevance by connecting the content and activities to what the learners already know, to what is important to them, and to what they will be doing in the future as CASA/GAL volunteers. Relevance is also closely related to immediacy. If adults do not see the immediate relevance of the content, they quickly figure out that they don't need to know it.

RESPECT

According to Malcolm Knowles's research, respect is the prime factor in adult education. Another word for respect is courtesy. Although it may be shown differently in different cultures, respect transcends culture. The task for the training facilitator is to discover how to show respect. Since you want CASA/GAL volunteers to show respect for those with whom they work, ask yourself, “How can I model showing respect in the training course?”

Respect is conveyed in small and large ways. For example, creating a welcoming atmosphere by having nametags, greeting participants individually, and providing breaks and refreshments all demonstrate respect. Pre-screening to determine whether the program is a match for the person's needs, acknowledging and utilizing participants' knowledge and strengths in the training, and genuinely inviting participation also embody this principle.

How will you know if you have successfully conveyed respect? When adults feel respected, they are more likely to engage with the material, to speak up, to ask questions and even challenge the content and the facilitator, to apply the content in unexpected ways, and to suggest changes or alternatives to what is planned. Respecting learners creates an energizing experience for everyone involved—facilitators and participants alike.

SAFETY

Learning involves taking risks. Adult learners typically worry about making a mistake or appearing foolish. As a facilitator, you need to provide a learning environment that balances the challenges of learning new skills with a sense of safety that allows your participants to risk exploring or doing something new. Treating people with respect, addressing them by name, being supportive, affirming their contributions, and asking for feedback about the process all help establish safety.

TASK & PROCESS MAINTENANCE

In any group activity, there is the need to get the job done and the need to protect and nurture the group that is doing the job. The first is called task maintenance, and the second is process maintenance. As a facilitator, you need to attend to both and to support participants to do the same, especially when they are working in small groups.

TIME & REINFORCEMENT

Facilitators need to give adults time to learn. Just as each learner has her or his own pace, so does each facilitator. The principle of time invites facilitators to accommodate their own personal style to the needs of their adult learners. Facilitators often get focused on covering the content and try to teach more than people can learn in the time allotted. If you get overly focused on covering the material, you may miss the point, which is for participants to learn.

The learner not only needs time to master the new knowledge, skills, and attitudes but also needs to have this mastery reinforced at every opportunity. As a facilitator, you can reinforce learning in various ways, including the following:

“When you introduce new learning activities, make sure you mention what participants will be learning and why it is important.

“Keep making the connection between what they are learning now and what they learned before or already know. Such phrases as “Remember when you learned about (specific content) or practiced (a skill) in the last session?” can link the old and new. This reinforces what they learned previously.

“Encourage participants to apply a concept to a number of case situations rather than only one, or to practice a skill more than once and to continue practicing outside the training session.

Adapted from Training Through Dialogue: Promoting Effective Learning and Change with Adults, Jane Vella, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

Source: Strategic Volunteer Retention Training, National CASA Association

NINE LEARNER TYPES

The following learning principles are important to keep in mind when planning and conducting training activities for adults. They are adopted from Xavier University Train the Trainer Workshop, delivered by Edward E. Jones, Ed.D.

1. **Motivation** Learners must be motivated before they will learn.

Learning requires your student to take action. Often this action is internal and is initiated by the student. He/she freely chooses to act or not to act-to do something to acquire the knowledge, attitude, or skill you are teaching. You cannot motivate your learners. Your learners have to motivate themselves.

"If I can't motivate my learners, then what can I do?" A motive is a desire in response to a need, which causes a person to act. A study (1980) by the American Productivity Center says, "Since motivation comes from within, a worker (student) is more motivated to perform well if he or she understands what is going on. The more I understand what is going on, why it is going on, how it affects me, and what's in it for me, the more I will tend to support... its goals."

How do I help my learners become motivated?

- **Show your learners, "What's in it for me?"** Don't assume they feel your class or subject is useful and valuable to them. Show them the value or use. It is well to keep in mind that what's valuable for one person may not be valuable for another. It then becomes your job to show the whole class how every experience can be a beneficial learning experience.
- **Use the learning itself as a motivator.** When your learning sessions are rich and rewarding, when learners feel they have enlarged the limits of their minds, when they can see useful application for the things they've just learned, then they'll be motivated to continue to learn more. Motivation is internal but you have the responsibility to provide a positive learning climate.
- **Use praise liberally.** Call it positive reinforcement, a pat on the back, encouragement, and support for a job well done. Praise your learners for the little things they do well. Don't wait for the "big success." The key here is to praise often but be natural and above all sincere! Don't make things up because you'll be discovered as a phony. Learners want praise but they want genuine praise.
- **Make course objectives clear when setting expectations.** Then challenge learners to achieve them. For some, having a goal to attain is the motivation to attain it. Make sure that class work following is clearly relevant to achieving the objectives. This will help maintain the motivating challenge of striving to attain the goal.

This is not a complete listing of motivators and motivating techniques. Such a list does not, and cannot, exist. Because each person is different, with unique qualities, experience levels, needs and desires, each will be motivated differently. Some will be motivated entirely by knowing "what's in it for me?" Others need a complex array of motivators.

2. **Utilization** Learners must see a use for the material being learned.

Your instructor role is specifically geared to helping people (the employees of your company or organization) do their jobs better. These employees / learners are looking for help with their jobs. Remember the adult learner is problem centered. If they cannot see how the subject matter will help them (be useful), they won't be inclined to try very hard to learn it.

Often you present material, which is "background" or "foundation" material. Well and good, but do make certain they realize the material is relevant and that you intend to build on it. Learners must see the connection between your "background" material and solid, usable job applications.

Show your learners how the material can be used:

- **First, paint the "big picture."** They need to see how the material you're teaching fits their job. Show how all the material has application to them. Let them know that it's not just interesting but useful.
- **Watch out for too many "war stories."** These may be interesting to you and fun to tell but are they practical for the learners? Remember, these are adult learners and are problem solution centered.
- **Being entertained by too many stories may well turn them off.** If the story brings perspective, then by all means use it. But don't use it just because it's your favorite.
- **Much of the material in your class will fall into two categories "nice-to-know" and "need-to-know."** Many times your learners won't be able to discriminate between the two. You will have to point out what's background and what's critical to their performance.
- **The "How can I use this back on the job?", and "What will you teach that will help me with my problem?" questions are going to be on the minds of your learners throughout the class.** The answers should be on your mind and a part of your presentation.

3. **Stimulus** Learners are stimulated through the five senses.

Your mind, like your muscles becomes active when the bodily senses are stimulated. The learners who come to your classes are no different. Their sensory equipment must be activated before their minds will realize and accept the facts, concepts and skills you wish them to learn.

There are few stimuli that will activate all five senses simultaneously. Since you'll have to select among these senses, it will be useful to know that some are much more vital to the learning process than others. Here's a breakdown of how we learn what we know today:

- 75% through the sense of sight
- 13% through the sense of hearing
- 6% through the sense of touch
- 3% through the sense of smell
- 3% through the sense of taste

Clearly, visual stimuli should have a large part in the learning process. But, you must also realize the more senses student uses while learning, the faster and more efficiently he / she will learn.

When an instructor uses words alone, learners retain some of the facts. They retain 3-1/4 times more information if he/she uses pictures alone. But they retain 6-1/2 times more if the instructor uses both words and pictures.

To stimulate learning through the senses:

- Use *visual stimuli* whenever possible to get your point across. Learners remember more of what they see.
- Appeal to several senses simultaneously for the most efficient learning.
- Use strong stimuli for greater response: vivid pictures, loud noises, and bright colors.
- Vary the stimuli. Repetition of even a strong stimulus becomes monotonous and weakens the desired response.
- A stimulating presentation requires more preparation, but if a subject is worth remembering, it's worth presenting so it will be remembered.

4. **Interest Learners must be interested in the learning.**

You can't assume your student is interested in learning just because he's/she's in the class. We do know he'll/she'll be thinking about something that interests him/her. Your job is to generate interest in the course materials.

The difference between interest and motivation is subtle, for they often work in a *cause-and-effect relationship*. If interest is high, there will be little need for motivating a class. If motivation is applied throughout training, the interest problem is solved. We treat them here as separate to emphasize the necessity for including both in your classes: hold the learners' attention and make them want to learn.

How can you keep learners interested?

- **First, you, the instructor, must be interested.** Learners quickly "turn off" to an instructor, who appears to be disinterested in the subject, is listless or seems tired or bored.
- **Build interest throughout the session.** The interest learners bring to class can quickly be lost. Arouse curiosity and increase enthusiasm as new material is introduced. Vary your methods.
- **Hold interest once you've gotten it.** Some tools you can use are: visual aids, student participation, humor, or a combination of these. Perhaps a change of pace in the presentation or in the physical surroundings will be necessary.
- **You must also be interested in the learners.** They'll respond to genuine interest and enthusiasm, which involves them personally.

Get your student's interest aroused early in your session. You may want to consider some variety in your class opening. Instead of handling all the administrative material and then student introductions, start with an exercise that will have them interacting right from the start (team questions for you about the course, or "why I'm here and what I want to get out of this class" are a couple of examples). This approach gets them involved quickly, covers the introduction dilemma and starts your class with student interest high.

If your trainees aren't interested, check yourself, not them. After all, they are your trainees, in your class, learning *your* subject. And it's your job to keep them interested. Remember the materials, which keep adults interested and problem centered. And involvement creates interest.

5. **Transfers** Learners learn easily when they can make “transfers”.

Learners always arrive in your class with some prior knowledge. They may already understand the basics of the subject; they may possess considerable misinformation; they may know nothing about the subject. They will have some knowledge or understanding about something, and it is your job to use that knowledge to enhance the learning process. We call this the principle of “Transfer.”

Building on what a class knows, working from the known to the unknown, is termed “positive transfer.” When prior knowledge interferes with the new learning, “negative transfer” is taking place.

Negative transfer can be avoided by emphasizing new learning as something to build upon. People resist changing ideas that they have long accepted. Instructing them in new ideas will be easier if they are not confronted with the necessity of unlearning the old ways.

Relating new ideas to known facts can affect positive transfer. Some of the mystery of a grill or oven is removed when a student can relate new information to something that is familiar to the student. This allows him/her to grasp the new concept by having a mental picture to which the new facts can be tied.

To use the principle of transfer:

- Always proceed from the known to the unknown.
- Relate new ideas to familiar facts by *analogies* and *comparisons*.
- Emphasize new ideas, concepts or methods as *better*, not different from old ways.

6. **Logic** Learners must see the logic of the material.

Our thought processes may begin with our sensory equipment, but we do have such a thing as “think-power” which is rooted in the mind and which utilizes logical reasoning processes. All information entering the mind is screened by an analytical procedure that rejects, or at least questions, ideas that don’t make sense. Use the principle of logic to prepare your lesson so it will be logical to this reasoning mechanism of the mind.

The principle of logic involves two things:

- **Each point must make sense by itself.** The ideas or concepts you present must appear inherently logical. To help accomplish this, try these methods:
 - Give the “why” behind your point. People want to know the reason behind a procedure, method or principle. They want to know what caused it and/ or what effects will result.
 - Lead up to the point by presenting several facts of varying situations which all point to the desired conclusion. Your learners may draw the conclusions themselves, in which case they’ll have learned better.
 - State your point then ask the learners to apply it to specific instances. This reasoning will help them see what makes a general point true.
- **The points must come in a logical sequence.** Put your ideas in an order which establishes the clear relationship between points and which will be understood by the student. Logical sequences which can be employed are:

- *Whole-to-part*: Giving the big picture first, then the specific parts.
- *Magnitude*: Large to small, or vice versa.
- *Importance*: Start with the most important item, and work to the least.
- *Geographical*: Taking things in the order of their physical relationship, whether they're store locations or equipment in the restaurants.
- *Difficulty*: From the easier or known to the more difficult or unknown.
- *Performance*: Present a procedure in the order it is performed.

7. *Immediate Application* Learners need application to improve the learning.

This principle directs you to try out the skills or verbalize the facts just acquired. In effect, tell your learners, "You've just learned it; now do it, here in the classroom." As they begin actually applying what they've just heard or seen, they:

- Establish more relationships between the parts of the course.
- Perfect or test their understanding of the subject.
- Get involved.
- Develop still stronger motives for learning.

The methods and techniques used for class participation can be used to apply the Principle of Application. The point here is: have learners do and verbalize as soon as possible after their exposure to new facts.

An effective way to use this principle is to have your learners give (write-present-discuss) an application of the concepts to their own situations "back home." This could be done individually or in teams. The key is to "do it now." Thus, the principle of "immediate application" is activated.

8. *Participation* Learners learn better when they are actively involved in the training.

If a student doesn't participate in the class—that is, doesn't say anything, or get involved other than sitting there—what does that tell you?

Such behavior can indicate how much the person is getting from the class. Sometimes these learners do get a lot but usually it is an indication of lower learning. A good rule to follow is the more participation—the more learning. **Without active participation your learners won't be doing the thinking and applying that leads to increased learning.** This is particularly true with adult learners who, for the most part, aren't used to long periods of uninterrupted sitting.

As an instructor you must **plan for participative activities for everyone in the class.** Give them things to do—this gives them a chance to ask questions and comment on the materials being taught. They feel they are a part of the learning situation and not just passive receivers. But, a word of caution is also in order. Participation just for participation's sake is a waste of time for you and the learners. To have them "break into small groups" because you like to do that isn't going to be effective. Make sure you have a planned purpose to your activity.

Active participation includes:

- **Oral:** Asking questions of the whole class, assigning some learners to explain various sub-points or having them conduct a demonstration. Encourage voluntary contributions, challenge or questions.
- **Written:** Working on group problems or exercises, individual tasks, “pop quizzes”, flip chart summaries, or case solutions.
- **Group Work:** Group discussions, small team exercises, role-plays, case studies, projects for later presentation.
- **Physical Assembly** of components -machines, instruments, or layouts; performing or demonstrating an activity (such as ringing a cash register, writing a ticket, checking in a guest at the front desk).

This principle operates not only for the benefit of the student but for the instructor as well. With properly planned participation, you are now free to work with individual learners, observe student groups and prepare yourself for the next session. Learners don't want to see and hear only you all day and you will quickly tire if you have to be “on stage” all day.

Remember the principle of **Stimulus**—involving many of the senses? Participation is an effective way to get more of the senses involved and increase the learning. When we discussed Stimulus, we said that words alone are not very effective. We remember more of what we do and say than of what somebody else says or does—**because we're involved**. Don't use involvement for its own sake but to increase learning. So, get 'em involved!

9. Repetition Learners use repetition to assist learning.

The world of advertising knows well the effect of repeating a message. Stop and think how many times you've seen the same ad on TV or in print. They want to imprint the product on your mind. And it's the constant repetition that does it. Let's see how this works in training.

Notice each time you have a “refresher” session the Desirable Learning Curve holds constant (because your desired student progress hasn't changed) but the Forgetting curve shows less and less fall off. In other words, your learners are remembering more and getting closer to your desired learning level.

In his many cassette tape programs, Earl Nightingale tells his listeners, “a message read or heard several times a day for eight days is virtually memorized; at the end of 30 days the memory retains 90% of the message.”

No, it is not expected that you repeat your message like a tape recorder in your classes, but it does show you how the mind works in retaining material and the importance of repetition in your learning situation.

Source: Yale University Library

IDENTIFY YOUR LEARNING STYLE

Identify Your Learning Style

Read each question or statement and circle the most appropriate answer. Some will be difficult to answer, but try to respond according to how you would react most often.

☐

1. You usually remember more from a class lecture when:

- a. You sit near the front of the room and watch the speaker
- b. You do not take notes but listen very closely
- c. You take notes (whether or not you look at them again)

☐

2. You usually solve problems by:

- a. Using an organized, systematic approach with lists, schedules, etc.
- b. Talking to yourself or a friend
- c. Walking, pacing, or doing some other physical activity

☐

3. You remember phone numbers (when you write them down) by:

- a. "Seeing" or "visualizing" the numbers in your mind
- b. Repeating the numbers orally
- c. "Writing" the numbers with your finger on a table or wall

☐

4. You find it easiest to learn something new by:

- a. Watching a demonstration of how to do it
- b. Listening to someone explain how to do it
- c. Trying to do it yourself

☐

5. You remember most clearly from a movie:

- a. The setting, scenery, and costumes
- b. What the characters said, background noises, and music
- c. The feelings you experienced during the movie

☐

6. When you go to the grocery store, you:

- a. Walk up and down the aisles to see what you need
- b. Silently or orally repeat the grocery list
- c. Usually remember what you need from the list you left at home

7. You are trying to remember something and so you:

☐

- a. Try to see it happen in your mind
- b. Hear in your mind what was said or the noises that occurred
- c. Feel the way "it" reacted your emotions

8. You would learn a foreign language best by:

☐

- a. Writing and using workbooks
- b. Listening to records or tapes
- c. Attending a class in which you read and write

9. You are confused about the correct spelling of a word and so you:

☐

- a. Try to "see" the word in your mind
- b. Sound it out
- c. Write the word several different ways and choose the one that looks right

10. You enjoy reading most when you can read:

☐

- a. Descriptive passages that allow you to create mental pictures
- b. Dialogue between characters
- c. Stories with a lot of action in the beginning (because you have time sitting still)

11. You usually remember people you have met by their:

☐

- a. Faces (you forget names)
- b. Names (you forget faces)
- c. Mannerisms, motions, etc.

12. You are distracted most by:

☐

- a. People
- b. Noises
- c. Environment (temperature, comfort of furniture, etc.)

13. You usually dress:

☐

- a. Neatly (in a particular style)
- b. Fairly well (but clothes are not very important to you)
- c. Comfortably (so you can move easily)

14. You can't do anything physical and you can't read, so you choose to:

☐

- a. Watch TV or look out a window
- b. Talk with a friend
- c. Move slightly in your chair or bed

YOUR LEARNING MODALITY PROFILE

A "learning modality" is a way of using sensory information to learn. People use three basic modalities to process material into memory. They are:

- **Visual:** learn from seeing
- **Auditory:** learn from hearing
- **Kinesthetic:** learn from touching, doing, moving

1. From the survey the Identifying Your Learning Style survey, count the total number of responses for each letter and write them below.

_____ **Visual**

_____ **Auditory**

_____ **Kinesthetic**

2. On the chart below, shade in the area showing the number of responses you had in each category.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Visual														
Auditory														
Kinesthetic														

UNDERSTANDING YOUR LEARNING STYLE

Three of your five senses are primarily in learning, storing, remembering, and recalling information. Your eyes, ears, and sense of touch play essential roles in the way you communicate, perceive reality, and relate to others. People are more likely to remember and be able to apply information they have learned from a combination of learning modes.

Generally, each person has one predominate learning style. However, some people have a balance between two or even all three senses. It is important to know your primary sense of learning so that you can get the most from any learning opportunity. The adage "know thyself" is particularly important when you are facilitating other people's learning experiences. Because you are more engaged and more comfortable with some training activities than others, you may have to resist a natural tendency to favor you own learning style and neglect the other modalities. When you do that, you risk

losing many of your learners or requiring them to work harder to learn. The training curriculum is designed to incorporate a range of learning aids to help learners who prefer different learning modalities.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING MODES

Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has trouble paying attention during verbal activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talks to self aloud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is in motion most of the time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observes rather than talks or acts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoys talking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes physical activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is organized in approach to tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is easily distracted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taps pencil or foot while studying
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has more difficulty with written directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoys doing activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is usually a good speller 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes to be read to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't read frequently
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memorizes by seeing graphics and pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memorizes by steps in a sequence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has poor spelling skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is not too distractible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoys music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes to solve problems by physically working through them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finds verbal instructions difficult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whispers to self while reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will try new things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has good handwriting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remembers names 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is outgoing by nature; expresses emotions through physical means
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remembers faces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is easily distracted by noises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses hands while talking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses advanced planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hums or sings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dresses for comfort
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doodles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is outgoing by nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoys handling objects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is quiet by nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoys listening activities 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is meticulous, neat in appearance 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notices details 		

SUGGESTED LEARNING AIDS

Use these aids to sharpen your particular dominate learning modality or to strengthen a weaker one. Pay attention to the different activities you do daily to help all three of your modalities.

Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use guided imagery • Form pictures in your mind • Take notes • See parts of words • Use "cue" cards • Use note cards • Use photos • View videos • Create charts, graphs, and maps • Conduct demonstrations • Draw or use drawing • Use exhibits • Use mnemonics (acronyms, mind maps, rhymes, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use audio recordings • Listen to videos or music • Speak or listen to speakers • Make up rhymes or poems • Read aloud • Talk to yourself • Repeat things orally • Use rhythmic sounds • Have discussions • Listen carefully • Use oral directions • Sound out words • Use theater • Say words in syllables • Use verbal mnemonics (poems, rhymes, word links, lyrics) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pace or walk as you study • Physically do the task • Practice by repeated motion • Breathe slowly • Role play • Exercise • Dance • Write • Write on surfaces with finger • Take notes • Associate feelings with concepts & information • Write lists repeatedly • Stretch or move in chair • Use verbal mnemonics (word links, rhymes, poems, lyrics)

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Handout 6-33

Recommended Strategies to Deal with Disruptive Behaviors

LEARNER'S DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR	FACILITATOR STRATEGIES OR ACTIONS THAT MEET THE LEARNER'S AGENDA AND CONTINUE THE LEARNING
Engages in side conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Behave as if you know the side conversation is class related, and ask the participants to add their thoughts. ◆ If you're lecturing or leading a discussion, slowly move into the part of the room where the disrupters are; continue the lecture or discussion, and don't look at them as you continue. ◆ Change the pace of the activity; do something dynamic (for instance, have participants use flipcharts or put them into small group discussions). ◆ Re-form the groups, separating the disrupters. ◆ At the start of the next session, revisit the class norms and ground rules.
Talks too much; monopolizes discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ If the learner is on the subject, begin talking with him or her and summarize the learner's point. Then turn to others and invite their participation: "What does everyone else think?" ◆ Avoid making eye contact with the disrupter for a while. ◆ If he or she is off target, say, "Great point, but it's beyond the scope of our class. . . . Let's talk about this together outside of class." ◆ Put the learner's issue on a Parking Lot flipchart for later discussion. ◆ Change the pace of the activity and have participants do solo work for a short time.
Complains; is negative about the class or organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ask if others feel the same way. If they don't, then offer to assist or listen to the disrupter during a break. ◆ If others do feel the same way, facilitate a "productive tangent." ◆ Acknowledge the complaint, then turn group discussion to strategizing how to overcome it. ◆ Write the issue on the Parking Lot flipchart. ◆ If the complaint is valid, incorporate it into the action planning to have the learner address the issue.
Daydreams; is not really "in the class"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Change the current activity to make it more dynamic or involving. ◆ If the daydreaming is organization related and more than one person is doing it, acknowledge it and allow a short discussion; then move on.

Heckles the facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Talk to the disruptive learner privately during a break and ask how the class could be better meeting his or her needs. ◆ Frequently link content to the job. ◆ Give the learner your attention in a learning-oriented way rather than encouraging the heckling. ◆ Change the activity so that the participants are interacting with each other rather than with you. ◆ If the heckling continues, talk privately with the person. Ask if the class is meeting her or his needs. If not, or if she or he doesn't want to be there, acknowledge and support that within the constraints of the program. If the disruptions continue, send the disrupter back to the job. ◆ Give the person the spotlight for a few minutes. ◆ Turn the exchange into a discussion by implying that there are multiple points of view and all should be addressed. Ask for other opinions from the rest of the group.
Challenges the facilitator on content or technique; is a know-it-all	
Tells jokes or clowns around at inappropriate times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Give the learner attention by reengaging him or her in the content without acknowledging the joking behavior. ◆ If the jokes are intended to relieve tension, help the group by bringing up the discomfort directly or put them in small groups so they can discuss more comfortably. ◆ When a joke is funny and told at the right time, laugh! ◆ Deal with it in front of the group; it can't be ignored. First, give her or him a chance to retract: "I'm sure you didn't mean that the way it sounded..." If she or he does retract, move on. If the person does not retract, say, "That view isn't in keeping with the values of our organization, and we can't have any more of that." Speak with the person during break, and report the behavior to her or his manager, if necessary. Revisit norms and ground rules concerning respect for others.
Makes an inappropriate remark (such as a sexist or racist one)	
Does other work, reads the newspaper, or takes/makes cell phone calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Speak to the disruptive learner during a break and point out that his or her behavior leads you to believe the class is not meeting his or her needs. Ask how the class can better serve those needs, and try to do that. ◆ Acknowledge the pressure. Negotiate with the participant to appear engaged so that his or her behavior doesn't affect the rest of the group.

continued on next page

Handout 6-33, continued

Recommended Strategies to Deal with Disruptive Behaviors

LEARNER'S DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR	FACILITATOR STRATEGIES OR ACTIONS THAT MEET THE LEARNER'S AGENDA AND CONTINUE THE LEARNING
Is silent; doesn't participate verbally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Offer the opportunity to attend another session at a time that would be less pressured. ♦ Create opportunities for the learner to participate safely in pairs or small groups. ♦ Pace some activities so there is time for reflection before participants discuss and share opinions. ♦ If you can tell by the learner's body language that she or he is engaged, listening, reacting, and thinking, consider simply leaving that learner alone.
Is withdrawn from the group—interpersonally, physically, or both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Ask the person at the next break what is going on and how you can help. Deal with the issue accordingly after that. ♦ Have small groups rotate the persons presenting. ♦ Encourage groups to have all members actively involved.
Goes off on a tangent; misses the point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Find one thing to agree with in what the learner has said. ♦ Affirm and compliment his or her effort to stay engaged with the content. ♦ Say, "That would be a logical assumption; however, the truth is...." If his or her effort is contrived to see what you'll do, the most effective behavior is to address the content of the question rather than to take the bait.

Source: Adapted with permission from Deborah Davis Tobey and Deb Tobey LLC, 2003.

AUDIOVISUAL AIDS

Flip charts, Power Point presentations, videotape, or DVD presentations-bring your training message home in a direct, easily understandable form. They serve several important purposes:

- They emphasize and clarify key learning points.
- They represent complex concepts and tasks in easily understandable graphic form.
- They increase trainees' interest and attention and help them remember what they have learned.
- They appeal to the imagination and the senses and spark creative thinking (particularly in the case of video presentations).

In order to assist you in the facilitation of volunteer training, the 2007 revision of the National CASA Association Volunteer Training Curriculum is accompanied by a toolkit that includes posters, cards, photographs, handouts, and overhead transparencies.

The curriculum also includes a DVD that features items such as short film clips and electronic presentation slides. Instructions on how to incorporate these materials into your training sessions can be found in the Facilitator Edition of the curriculum.

When creating or selecting additional visual aids, consider the following questions:

- Is it simple?
- Is it accurate?
- Is it visually clear?
- Is it readable?
- Is it relevant?
- Is it interesting?
- Does it communicate a single idea?

OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCIES & ELECTRONIC PRESENTATIONS

Keep the contents simple. Limit yourself to one concept or topic per page. Use active, not passive, verbs. (For example, write "Distribute code sheets," not "Code sheets should be distributed.") Keep sentences short. Underscore, use bold text, or capitalize key words for emphasis.

Make it easy to read. Use approximately six to eight words per line and no more than six lines per page. Leave sufficient space between lines. Use a large, readable font (at least 32 point).

Use color for emphasis, but limit yourself to no more than three colors per slide.

During your presentation, speak to the audience, not to the screen. For emphasis, use a pointer, pen, or pencil on the transparency itself to direct participants' attention to specific items. (Don't point to the screen.)

Placing a Projector Screen

Although a white wall or even a sheet will do, a high-quality, well-placed screen will make images more visible and therefore more effective.

To determine the correct screen size, follow the “two-and-six” rule:

- One-half the screen width should equal the distance to the closest person.
- Six times the screen width should equal the distance to the farthest person.

For best viewing, place the screen in a corner and angle it toward the center of the room.

Special Notes on Overhead Transparencies

Overhead transparencies are an effective, inexpensive instructional aid. They are especially useful when your audience is too large to permit use of flip charts or chalkboards. They're also easy to produce. You can buy the necessary supplies at art supply or business stationery stores. In addition, they are flexible: you can edit or revise the content on short notice.

One of the pluses of transparencies is that you can write directly on the transparency with water-soluble marking pens or grease pencils. This allows you to circle, underline, or highlight important points and even to add trainees' comments during group discussions. If you want to reveal points sequentially, cover part of the transparency with an opaque sheet of paper.

Before the session, practice with your overhead projector and focus the projections clearly. Arrange the transparencies in order and always have a spare lamp on hand. During the session, time your display of each visual appropriately and leave a transparency on the screen for no more than four minutes.

(Participants will begin to lose interest after that.) When changing transparencies, turn off the projector or cover the projecting screen, so that the bright light will not distract your trainees.

Special Notes on PowerPoint

PowerPoint is a dynamic format for presenting information. It combines text, movement, graphics, and more into a slide format that you can design. Familiarity with the software is required in order to make the best use of this tool.

Here are some tips for using PowerPoint presentations:

- Test your presentation before class.
- Make sure your presentation is not too fancy. Too much animation or too many color changes might distract from the content of your presentation.
- During the presentation, remember that your audience is in front of you. Don't turn your back to them while reading off the slides. PowerPoint is a prop, not another participant.

VIDEOTAPES & DVDS

Videotapes and DVDs can be useful tools for training and are especially helpful for audio and visual learners. You can use videos prepared on a particular subject or clips from a movie to illustrate a point in a “real life” situation.

Here are some tips for using a videotape or DVD:

- Test the VCR or DVD player before the presentation to be sure you know how to use it properly.
- Choose videos or excerpts that run no more than fifteen or twenty minutes.
- Preview the video before presenting.
- Make sure the screen is big enough for everyone in the group to see.

FLIP CHARTS

Flip charts are inexpensive, flexible, and versatile teaching aids. You can prepare them ahead of time or use them to record the workshop proceedings as events unfold.

Prepare flip charts ahead of time to:

- Display the agenda
- Give instructions for activities
- Outline key points in your subject-matter presentation
- List examples of these key points
- List questions related to the presentation
- Exhibit a diagram, bar graph, pie chart, flow chart, or table

When you use flip charts to record the ongoing workshop proceedings:

- Ask participants to post responses to questions.
- Write down participants' contributions to the workshop activities (questions, answers, solutions to problems, examples).
- Record key points that evolve from group discussion.
- Record the problems identified and the conclusions reached during group discussions.

Here are some hints for using flip charts:

- Pencil basic points (in note or outline form) on the paper before the presentation, and then write over the pencil with a marker during the presentation.
- Be sure the materials are in proper sequence.
- Flip to each sheet only when it is needed during the presentation, not before.
- Use a separate sheet for summary points rather than flipping back through the pages when summarizing.
- Use a variety of marker colors, but no more than three colors on one page. Also, stay away from light colors. Make sure colors do not bleed through to the next sheet.

- Leave the bottom third of each page empty. This makes it easier for people in back to see and leaves room for adding things later.
- Brighten the charts visually by boxing or underlining words and using simple shapes or designs.
- Talk to the audience, not the floptical, and have someone else do the writing during brainstorming sessions.
- Keep the lettering and graphics simple and large enough for everyone to see, and use print rather than cursive lettering.
- Make sure the floptical is put together securely and will not fall apart during the presentation.
- Leave a blank sheet of paper between visuals in a floptical to cover the next visual until it is needed. This will reduce distractions for the learners.
- Rehearse with the visual before the presentation. Be sure you have enough blank sheets of paper and fresh markers for the entire session.

PREPARING AND USING CHALKBOARDS AND WHITEBOARDS

Chalkboards/whiteboards serve much the same purpose as flip charts and involve the same considerations. Here are a few tips that apply solely to chalkboards/whiteboards:

- Start with a clean board.
- Erase writing thoroughly whenever making a change.
- Write legibly and be sure the letters are large enough to be seen from the back of the room.

For whiteboards, make sure your markers are fresh. Also, ensure proper ventilation in the training room, as some individuals are allergic or sensitive to the odor of the markers.

Adapted from A Step-By-Step Guide to Successful Training, ARCH National Resource Center, Chapel Hill, NC, 1993.

LOGISTICS

Logistical concerns include the location and facility for the training event, seating arrangements, equipment needed, materials, food and lodging needs of participants and providers, registration procedures, travel and parking concerns, and budgeting.

SELECTING A TRAINING SITE

Training that is otherwise well planned can fail completely if the facility is inadequate. Rooms that are too small, too hot, too cold, or poorly arranged can distract from learning. While you don't always have the luxury of budgeting for conference centers and catered meals, every step you do take to provide participants with a comfortable learning environment makes it easier for you to concentrate on your participants and for them to concentrate on the learning.

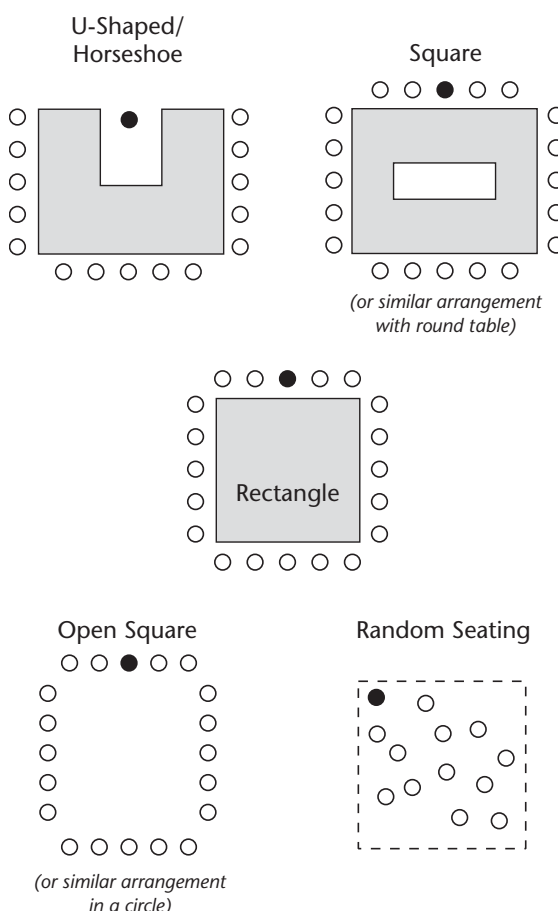
Consider the following questions in determining the location and facility you will use:

- What training facility would be most central for the participants?
- How many participants are you expecting?
- Is the training space flexible enough to accommodate large group activities as well as small group and pair work?
- Will participants need lodging, meals, or snacks during the training?
- Are the potential facilities barrier-free and accessible for people who are physically challenged?
- Is parking available? At what cost? Is public transportation needed or available?
- What are the facility costs? Are there free, public meeting spaces?

Develop a facilities catalog. As you visit or use different spaces, keep a list of what services they offer and at what costs. Ask participants to comment on the facility and the location in their evaluations, and record their reactions for future consideration.

SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

Various group seating arrangements are sketched below (● = trainer/panelists). These arrangements are appropriate for both knowledge training and skill training. They provide for close interaction between trainer and participants, and allow participants to see and hear each other as well. The leader is part of the group, rather than isolated behind a table or podium, to reduce the image of power and to strengthen group identity. When audiovisuals are used, it is important that all participants are able to see and hear.



ON THE DAY OF TRAINING: PEACE OR PANIC

On the day of training, panic should not be the standard condition. A certain amount of nervousness is a healthy sign that you are “up” for the activity, that you are excited about the day and the experiences you will be sharing with the participants. The way you control the nervousness and use it to your advantage in motivating similar excitement in others begins to set the climate in which learning will occur.

The key factor in control is knowing that you are adequately prepared. You have selected a training site that provides for the physical comfort of adult learners. Your materials are ready and waiting to be unpacked. You have confirmed the arrival of any other presenters or trainers. Participants have received confirmation of their attendance and you expect full attendance. Best of all, you are offering training that specifically responds to the needs of those who will be attending. Hopefully, they will arrive with a positive attitude and high expectations.

You will need to see personally that the room is set up properly in advance of the arrival of the participants. Plan where registration or sign-in will take place, and where refreshments will be served during breaks.

What will you do **today** to maintain enthusiasm?

BE THE FIRST TO ARRIVE & THE LAST TO LEAVE

- Try to arrive at least thirty minutes before the first participant.
- Check the room arrangements and be certain there are enough chairs.
- Set up any equipment and check its operation.
- Set up a sign-in area. Lay out any materials you want participants to pick up when they first arrive.
- Distribute any materials you want at each seat.
- Put materials in the order they will be used.
- Are all the training materials ready to go? Are handouts available, overheads ready, and equipment operating?
- Are charts, including the Parking Lot, Expectations page, Ground Rules, and Agenda posted?
- Identify nonsmoking and smoking areas. Locate a coat rack, restrooms, stairs, etc.

- Check on arrangements for breaks and refreshments. Provide a list of local restaurants if there's a break for a meal that is not provided.

AT THE END OF THE DAY

Whether you have met for a three-hour session, a full day, or more than one day, you want to send participants off with the same enthusiasm and excitement with which they began. When closing activities have been completed and participant evaluations have been returned, be a gracious host:

- Thank the group for attending.
- Congratulate them on a productive session.
- Confirm any homework or follow-up activities.
- Follow up on any unaddressed questions on the Parking Lot flipchart.
- Thank other trainers or presenters for contributing.
- Announce the schedule for any upcoming sessions.
- If this is the last session, review the Expectations flipchart and make a plan to address any that were unmet.
- Wish everyone success and a safe trip home.

Frequently, participants want to linger and talk with you about their specific needs. This is an opportune time to get reactions to the session that may be most valuable in assessing its effectiveness. Be willing to listen.

Review the sessions with all trainers and review the written evaluations. Determine whether changes are needed, and come to agreement on what will be done.

Survey the room. Is all equipment properly cared for? Have trainees left any personal possessions behind that you should return to them? Are extra materials put away or packed for return to the office?

SUMMARY: MURPHY'S LAW

Murphy's Law—whatever can go wrong will, at the most inopportune time—may be a factor in the life of every trainer, but it does not have to be insurmountable if you:

- Prepare for problems you can predict.
- Keep your sense of humor!

National CASA Association

SAMPLE: POST TRAINING INTERVIEW

The purpose of the Post Training Interview is to begin to develop a working relationship with your volunteer by providing:

- An initial exchange of tangible information about communication and logistics
- An understanding of what motivates the volunteer and how you can best supervise them
- A plan for moving forward as colleagues on your case

Before your meeting, prepare the materials you'll need:

Forms for volunteer to sign today:

- Volunteer acceptance of assignment
- Confidentiality agreement
- Volunteer oath along with background and training requirements met
- Transportation release form

Handouts to give volunteer today:

- Getting Started packet
- Optima User's Guide for Volunteer Advocates
- Acronyms list with definitions
- Contact log checklist (optional)
- Hard copy of the volunteer acceptance and assignment that they'll sign (optional)
- Hard copy of the court order appointing CASA (optional)
- Badge—don't forget to make their badge!

NOTE: *Feel free to give the volunteer a folder with any of the above handouts, but be sure to remind them that all case-related documentation must be returned to CASA at the conclusion of the case for appropriate archival or shredding.*

Volunteer Name _____ Today's Date _____

Volunteer phone number(s): _____

Supervisor _____

Introductions

1. The training team told me you were a great match for this case because...
2. Introduce yourself briefly. (how long you've worked at CASA, what you enjoy most about working at CASA, your educational and/or professional background)

3. What brought you to CASA? How did you hear about us, and what made you want to volunteer? What are you most excited about?
4. What do you do in your non-CASA life? *(opportunity to explore ways that their existing skills can be utilized as a CASA)*
5. What are you most apprehensive about in starting your CASA work? *(opportunity for early coaching/assurance, identifying areas of future growth)*

Communication & Availability

6. When are you generally available to do your CASA work (days/evenings/weekends)? Do you foresee a reason you would be unable to participate in hearings and case meetings during day-time hours? *(Remind volunteer to let you know if he/she is going on vacation or will be otherwise unavailable for a long period of time.)*
7. Are you able to read/answer email on a regular basis? Are you comfortable texting with me/with parties to the case? *(Explain your typical communication style, how often you like to be in touch with your volunteers, and explore how they prefer to communicate. Explain that you will email out an important monthly newsletter and that CASA will email on every-other-week CASA volunteer newsletter to be on the lookout for.)*
8. Which phone number and email do you prefer to use for your CASA work? *(If the volunteer plans to use different contact info than is listed in Optima, please be sure to note that here.)*
9. Discuss your schedule and the various ways to contact you. Make sure they receive your business card with your office, cell and Google voice numbers. Discuss your schedule and availability with them, and let them know what they can expect regarding your communication and response time to them.
10. Discuss the CASA chain of command to the volunteer, and how to contact each. Explain that if you are not available or if they preferred to talk with someone else for some reason, who to contact for assistance. (You→ Team Leader→ Director of Advocacy)
11. Review confidentiality expectations with the volunteer.

Supervision & Expectations

12. What style of supervision leads you to your best performance? What has worked for you in the past? What has not? What are your expectations of me as a supervisor? *(opportunity to talk about your typical supervision style and start thinking about how to best meet the volunteer where he or she is)*
13. What is your general style for managing conflict? *Discuss with volunteer any potential areas of conflict that you foresee with the case, including with parents or other parties. (opportunity to "crisis plan": what you'll do if you're upset with me, and vice versa)*

Boundaries & Self-Care

14. Make sure the volunteer knows if there are times that you prefer not to be called, and ask about any boundaries that the volunteer has about his or her own time. Discuss the importance of setting personal boundaries as a self-care practice.
15. Discuss healthy good-byes and remind the volunteer that his or her relationship to the child/ren on the case is intended to be a temporary one. Make sure the volunteer understands that a

goodbye visit with CASA kids is expected in the event that he or she has to leave the case early or when the case closes.

CASA/GAL Minimum Expectations

16. Review the minimum expectations of a CASA volunteer GAL. You can use the corresponding pages in the Getting Started packet as a guide.
 - a. Visit your CASA child/ren at least once per calendar month.
 - b. Make contact monthly with: CPS caseworker, parents, attorneys on case, children's therapists.
 - c. Make regular contact, as needed with: children's teachers, involved family members, parents' service providers (if you have a signed release).
 - d. Document ALL case activity in Optima, and have all notes for previous month entered and up-to-date by the 5th of each month.
 - e. Complete 12 hours/year (or 1 hour/month) of continuing education and document those hours in Optima.

Optima

17. Conduct a brief Optima training. Remind the volunteer of the Optima training and handout they received in Class 2. You can also use the Optima info in the Getting Started packet as a guide, but be sure to cover the following:
 - a. Add the volunteer to the case in Optima.
 - b. Ensure that the volunteer has his or her Optima login information written down (There's a spot on the Optima page of the Getting Started packet for the volunteer to write this information, which can be found on the W Drive: Supforms→ Case Management→ OPTIMA).
 - c. Have the volunteer log in to view the Volunteer Dashboard.
 - d. Click on the "Personal Info" button and discuss the ability for the volunteer to update his or her own information, as needed.
 - e. Click on the "About" tab and encourage the volunteer to fill this information out based on the current case they are working and other case preferences.
 - f. Remind the volunteer that when updating Optima with new schools, placements, or associated parties, they can use the form located on the Volunteer Resource Area of the CASA website to request an addition to those drop-down menus if the option they need is not listed. Walk them through the process of logging into the Resource Area of the website (username: advocate, password: casatravis) and show them where they can find Optima forms, the Optima guide, and the troubleshooting form.
 - g. Show the volunteer how to enter Continuing Education hours in Optima.
 - h. Go over the minimum volunteer expectations regarding Optima, including that their notes be entered and up-to-date by the 5th of each month. Give them the Optima User's Guide for Volunteers, and refer to page 11, "Advocate Responsibilities."
18. It's a good idea to give the volunteer at least one piece of Optima "homework" before they leave today's meeting. For example, you could ask the volunteer to update their contact information and enter a contact note of this meeting within 24 hours.

Next Steps

19. Make plans for accompanying the volunteer to his or her first visit with the child/ren on the case and with the parent(s) on the case.
20. Make sure the volunteer is aware of the next court hearing, when the court report will be due, and any other case-related meetings that have been scheduled.
21. It's a good idea to give the volunteer at least one case-related task and a plan and timeline for completing that task. This will help them begin to practice and get used to the GAL role.

During your meeting today, make sure to provide the volunteer with the following basic/administrative information:

- Ask if the volunteer needs to be reimbursed for their fingerprinting. If so, provide them with the Fingerprinting Reimbursement Form, to be submitted to the Director of Finance & Operations.
- Remind the volunteer about the importance of attending Swearing In, and be prepared to provide them with the next ceremony date/location.
- Touch on the importance of updating CASA with renewed driver's license & updated insurance regularly.
- These can be scanned & sent to (insert appropriate staff), mailed or copied by you (or you can snap a photo if you aren't meeting at the office)
- Check understanding of Continuing Education and its importance. Remind volunteer that expectation is 12 hours per year, and show volunteer how to enter CE hours in Optima.
- Ensure that the volunteer is familiar with (program's website if applicable) and specifically with the Volunteer Resource Area. Show the volunteer how to login using username "_____" and password "_____".
- Let the volunteer know that any printed case-related materials will need to be returned to you at the time of case closure for shredding.

After your meeting:

- Complete the notification of assignment and email to all parties to the case to make them aware of the volunteer. Be sure to include his or her contact information.
- Upload a copy of this interview to the volunteer's page in Optima, and give the hard copy to the Volunteer Relations Specialist.
- Email the volunteer to follow-up from your meeting. In the email: welcome them to the case, provide the URL to Optima and remind them to bookmark the link, remind them of the login info for the Volunteer Resource Area of the website, and remind them of any action items or next steps that you discussed during the meeting.

Source: CASA of Travis County

SAMPLE: CASE MATCHING FORM

Name _____ Date _____

Have you provided the Volunteer Relations Specialist with updated copies of your auto insurance & driver license? If not, these items can be faxed to _____ or emailed to _____.

Please list any changes to your contact information since applying: _____

Are you fluent in any other languages besides English? _____

What kind of experiences, knowledge or training do you have that we should consider when matching you with a case?

Do you have any hobbies or interests that we should consider when matching you with a case?

Are there any lifestyles, practices or beliefs that would hinder your ability to be objective? (e.g. sexual orientation, religious beliefs or immigration status of children, family members, professionals, CASA supervisors, placements, adoptive homes, etc.)

Are there any case dynamics with which you would refuse to work? (e.g. domestic violence, sexual abuse, children who are perpetrators, children with gender identity issues, severe physical disabilities, severe mental disabilities, etc.)

If yes, please explain:

Are you willing to work with another CASA volunteer on a large sibling group case? _____

Is there anything in your schedule that would keep you from accepting a case within a few days of completing training?

Are there any weekdays that you would consistently not be available to attend court or meetings?

Would anything restrict you from carrying out your requirements as an advocate including getting to court, or visiting a child in their home or any other place in Travis County?

If yes, please explain:

Travel Limitations

Remember that the child/children you're appointed to could change placements at any time while you are on the case!

I would be able to take a case that involved the following degree of travel:

_____ Monthly travel to areas within 60 miles of (insert destination for your program)

_____ Quarterly travel to areas located 61-180 miles from the (insert location)

_____ Twice yearly travel to areas located over 181 miles from the (insert location)

Do you travel to any other U.S. cities on a consistent basis (for work, family, etc.)? _____

If so, which cities and how often? _____

If so, would you be interested in taking a case that involved travel to or around these areas?

Please ask your supervisor for additional clarification as to how frequently visits should occur on your specific case.

Comments _____

Source: CASA of Travis County

SAMPLE: PRE-SERVICE VOLUNTEER CHECKLIST

(Insert CASA Program Name)

Volunteer: _____

Activity _____ Date _____

Application received _____

Reference checks completed 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Interview completed _____

Orientation attendance _____

Training commitment signed _____

Copy of driver's license received _____ Expiration date: _____

Proof of automobile insurance _____ Expiration date: _____

DMV driving record received _____

ABCS verification _____

FBC verification _____ National name-base 2yr check due: _____

Social security number verification _____

30 hours of training completed _____

Court observation completed _____

Oath signed _____

Confidentiality agreement signed _____

Transportation agreement signed _____

Swearing-in completed _____

Staff's signature: _____ Date: _____

SAMPLE: PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEER CHECKLIST

Name: _____

Date Received: Application _____ Orientation _____

Photo Release _____

Screening _____ Driver's License _____ Car Insurance _____

Casa ID _____ Photo _____ Optima _____

Background Checks _____

Fingerprint Background Check Date Verified _____

ABCS Date Verified _____

Social Security Number Verification Date _____

References _____ Date Received _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Day 1 _____ Day 2 _____ Day 3 _____

Day 4 _____ Day 5 _____ Day 6 _____

Total Hours = 30 hrs Excluding Court Room Observations (10 Hours Are In-Person)

Certificate _____ Oath _____ Policy & Procedures _____

Confidentiality Agreement _____

Court Room Observations _____

1st Hearing _____ 2nd Hearing _____ 3rd Hearing _____

Sworn In _____

Source: Adapted from Casa of El Paso

SAMPLE: CASA OATH



(Insert CASA Program Name)

“Court Appointed Special Advocates”

OATH

I, _____ do solemnly promise and pledge that I will faithfully execute the duties of a Court Appointed Special Advocate as assigned and appointed by the District Courts of **(counties served)** Counties, State of Texas and, will to the best of my ability, to preserve the confidentiality of any and all information received, holding all such matters in strictest confidence, to be divulged only in accordance with the rules and guidelines of the courts, and then, only in the furtherance of the best interests of the child or children.

And I furthermore promise and pledge that as a Court Appointed Special Advocate, in carrying out my duties as such, the paramount concern will be the best interests of the child or children to whom I may be assigned.

So help me God.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Sworn By: _____ Date: _____

_____ completed the following:
_____ Pre service Training
_____ FBC (fingerprint based criminal background check)
_____ ABC (child abused & neglect registry check)
_____ Court room observation

Source: CASA 69, Inc.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Volunteers are required to obtain 12 hours of in-service training per year, Standard 7.c.2. The number of in-service training hours required for newly trained volunteers will be adjusted (or prorated) dependent on the time of year the volunteer is trained. In-service training opportunities must include, but are not limited to, cultural competency on an annual basis, disproportionality, disparity in outcome training, and recognizing abuse.

There are many ways staff can ensure volunteers honor their commitment of obtaining the minimum of 12 in-service hours per year. First, approach the situation with creativity. Make sure that not every in-service training session offered is presented in the same old lecture format. Research on adult education suggests that it needs to be interactive and relevant to maintain interest. What about a video, a multi-ethnic panel discussing disciplinary practices within different cultures, a foster parent panel, a tour and orientation at a child caring institution, a debate about how to define the minimum sufficient level of care or how to know when it's time to file a termination of parental rights petition?

In-service hours can also be attained while staffing the volunteer's case. For example, the volunteer's child has been diagnosed with depression and the volunteer and supervisor discuss the topic of mental illness and children. The volunteer can do further research on this topic and learn how to better advocate for his child and earn in-service hours at the same time.

Second, be flexible. Make sure that some sessions are offered during the day, the evening and the weekend hours and not always on the same day of the week. Varied locations are also important, especially if the program operates over a large geographical area. Rotate training sites. Make sure transportation reimbursement is provided if possible and that baby-sitting is available. Offer refreshments.

Remember that not all training takes place in groups. If a particularly insightful article appears in a magazine or journal, have it copied and mailed or emailed to volunteers or leave a stack in the office so they can pick one up the next time they have business there. If the court allows, advocate supervisors may bring articles and a training log for them to complete to the courthouse while the volunteer waits on their case to be called.

The Texas CASA website offers e-learning courses and online training materials. The Texas CASA Learning Center also offers a variety of resources that are categorized in multiple ways to help staff and volunteers find what they need, including by Library, by Topic and by Target Audience. CASA College e-learning courses are self-paced and available on demand, making it easy for staff and volunteers to learn on their own schedule. National CASA also offers webinars and has a book list. There are many resources for volunteers and staff to earn in-service hours listed in Section 5 of this manual.

Urge your volunteers to sign up to receive the Texas CASA newsletter to get updates on policy changes and upcoming trainings and webinars. Encourage volunteers to "piggy-back" on local social services training events whenever possible. Likewise, if a volunteer is able to attend a relevant medical, legal or educational seminar because of their own professional or personal interests, request that they present a short workshop, share the materials or complete a report.

Third, make sure that all training presented meets the standard of cultural competency. Seek out diversity of presenters, materials and viewpoints. Make sure cultural considerations are discussed as they relate to the children in the program. Insist that a designated portion of ongoing training focus on cross-cultural issues.

Fourth, simplify record-keeping. Using your data base system that your volunteers can access is an easy and paperless option. A Texas CASA program sends out self-addressed post cards to its volunteers at the beginning of each year. Each card has spaces to fill in detailing what training was attended on what date for how many hours. Volunteers return their post cards at the end of the month so training hours can be posted by staff. A high rate of return is assured by offering a prize to the volunteer whose card is randomly drawn from the group. Many programs use volunteers to call their peers when records indicate that the requisite number of training hours has not been completed. Other programs make calls to each volunteer on a pre-announced day each month to collect their volunteer hours and in-service training hours for that month. Whatever method a program utilizes, training records are an important part of each volunteer's file for evaluation purposes and ultimately to determine compliance with basic policy.

Adapted from: Achieving Our Mission, National CASA Association

CASA TIPS FOR IN-SERVICE TRAINING

National CASA standards require that volunteers receive 12 or more hours of in-service training per year. The following are best practices and helpful hints regarding in-service training:

- Maintain a variety of opportunities for volunteer advocates, including workshops offered at the local program as well as news about other opportunities in your community.
- List the upcoming trainings on your program's website along with upcoming trainings in the community.
- Ask the Volunteer Coordinators for their input on what they have observed volunteers are lacking or areas the volunteers could use more training.
- Send out a Survey Monkey type survey to volunteers on what trainings they would like more of including dates and times they prefer.
- Partner with another organization to offer joint training sessions on topics of mutual interests so that you can share the costs.
- During pre-service training, provide trainees with a list of upcoming training opportunities and ask them to schedule their first six hours of in-service training.
- Maintain a training opportunities section on your web site and in your newsletter. Update the information on a regular basis.
- Include a variety of interesting and relevant topics; use area experts, your own staff and your own volunteers.
- Movie nights are popular, and can also be a great recruitment opportunity. Select a relevant and thought-provoking documentary (*From Place to Place*, *Aging Out*, *Healing Neen*) and after the movie, bring discussion around to relevancy for advocacy. Encourage volunteers to bring a friend that has been interested in CASA. Everyone can enjoy the movie (and popcorn!) and you have some potentials hooked a bit further. (Dramas are not encouraged to use for in-service nor are crime TV series.) There are several NOVA and PBS specials that are relevant.
- Be flexible! Keep an assortment of books, a collection of videos and a list of informative web sites which volunteers can explore to earn self-study credit. Book lists can be found on the National CASA website. Books, articles, and podcasts by Dr. Bruce Perry and Dr. Karen Purvis for example are usually always relevant to CASA children and families. Print or email book lists from the National CASA website.
- Make use of the "Activities to Extend the Learning" in the pre-service training curriculum, allowing volunteers to complete these activities in groups or on their own time for credit.
- Schedule workshops at the local program office on all the topics you wish you could explore more during pre-service training. Examples include:
 - Ask a therapist or psychologist to speak on an aspect of mental illness, such as childhood depression or ADHD.
 - Ask someone from a local domestic violence shelter to discuss their services and explain the barriers that domestic violence victims face in leaving an abusive home.
 - Ask someone from a local chemical dependency treatment facility to talk about drug problems in your community.

- Invite a special education teacher or other educational advocate to give tips about working in the special education system.
- Gather volunteers to focus on building skills for interviewing families or writing court reports.
- Bring in attorneys to give extra training on providing testimony in contested settings.
- Invite representatives from several local social service agencies to discuss the services they provide to children and families involved in the child welfare system.
- Be sure to track volunteer in-service training completion and keep in touch with volunteer advocates about their requirements. Record volunteer training in your database system so that you can easily document it for audits. Keep training logs online for easy access for volunteers.

Independent in-service training requires documentation which could include but is not limited to a training agenda or providing the CASA supervisor with an Independent in-service record, training log, or email receipt from a webinar or online training course. The record would include title of training, location, number of hours spent, and a learning essay. The CASA supervisor will make the determination of the number of hours credited to the volunteer.

Below is a sample schedule of in-service opportunities. Dinner is served during the trainings; therefore, they are called "Café CASA." This can also be offered at noon and your program can serve lunch. Your program can consider providing lunch every other time and the alternate trainings can be "brown bag" lunches.



SAMPLE CASA CAFE SCHEDULE

Date	Organization	Time	Presenters	Subject
January	TDFPS	5:30pm-7:30pm	(Name)	Educational Passport Educational Advocacy in and out of the system for the children that we serve.
February	Early Childhood Intervention	5:30pm-7:30pm	(Name)	Learn what Early Childhood intervention can do for your CASA children and when to request ECI.
March	The Brush UP – CASA Catch-Up	5:30pm-7:30pm	CASA Staff	Learn new CPS Regs, Laws, and brush up on investigation, court reports, monitoring.

Date	Organization	Time	Presenters	Subject
March	Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners	5:30pm-7:30pm	(Name)	Learn how the SANE Program works and how they help our CASA children.
April	*The Bridge Tour 804 Quail Creek	5:30pm-7:30pm	(Name)	Tour of the Bridge Children's Advocacy Center.
May	Poison Control Center	5:30pm-7:30pm	(Name)	Poison Control Center – What you need to know in an emergency
June	Down and Dirty with Drug Abuse	5:30pm-7:30pm	(Name)	Drug abuse revealed. No figures just live.
June	Legal Aid of North West Texas	5:30pm-7:30pm	(Name)	What services does Legal Aid provide to our community?
July	Cal Farley's Boys Ranch	5:30pm-7:30pm	(Name)	Services and programs that Cal Farley's provides to the youth that we serve
July	Shaken Baby Syndrome *Amarillo Polk Street	8:00am-?	Shaken Baby Alliance	Identify Shaken Baby Syndrome & Serious Injuries to Infants / Children
August	Psychotropic Drugs and Children	5:30pm-7:30pm	The Pavilion	How do psychotropic medications affect the children we serve?
September	Amarillo Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse	5:30pm-7:30pm	(Name)	What services does ACADA provide to addicted parents and children
October	Panel on Reporting Sexual Abuse	5:30pm-7:30pm	(Name)	Tour the Pavilion, see the services they provide to the children we serve.
November	Panhandle Independent Living Center	5:30pm-7:30pm	(Name)	Find services available to the physically challenged in our community.

Source: Amarillo Area CASA

TEXAS CASA LMS WEBINAR DETAILS—LOGIN REQUIRED THROUGH TEXAS CASA WEBSITE

Case Advocacy

- **The Seven Habits of the Highly Effective CASA** (broadcast June 11, 2014)

Presented by Brenda Sweeten, MSSW, LCSW Lecturer/Field Education Director University of North Texas Social Work.

Strengthen your advocacy by adopting some effective “habits” – things that you do and apply consistently throughout your work, communication and interaction with children, families and system stakeholders.

- **Reasonable Efforts** (broadcast March 12, 2014)

Presented by Judge Leonard Edwards, Consultant, Mentor Judge Center for Families, Children & the Courts Administrative Office of the Courts.

This webinar explains how important the “reasonable efforts” finding is to children and families in the child protection system. It also explains:

- what reasonable efforts means,
- how reasonable efforts were written into federal and then state law,
- when the reasonable efforts finding must be made, and
- what the consequences of a “no reasonable efforts” finding are.
- This presentation will address strategies CASA volunteers can use on issues related to reasonable efforts and how to bring these up in court proceedings.

- **How to “Stand Tall” in Court** (broadcast May 15, 2013)

Presented by the Honorable Darlene Byrne, 126th Judicial District Civil Court and Key Richardson, Program Director, CASA of Travis Co.

This webinar will inform CASA volunteers how to “stand tall” in court—how to advocate, do your best in oral recommendations from a local program perspective and also from the perspective of a judge.

- **Testifying 201** (broadcast December 19, 2012)

Charles G. Childress, Attorney at Law, Austin, discusses strategies and best practices for testifying in court.

- **A Judicial Perspective on CASA Court Reports**

Presented by Darlene Byrne, 126th Judicial District Court Judge for Travis County, Austin.

CASA advocacy is grounded in promoting permanency and the best interest of each child. One of the most effective tools to accomplish quality advocacy is the CASA court report. But are we getting the right information to the court that will provide our judges with the type of factual data and needed recommendations to help them make the best decisions possible for children?

Hear from Judge Darlene Byrne, one of the most esteemed judges presiding over these cases, for a judicial perspective on essential elements of a CASA court report.

Educational Advocacy

- **Introducing the Educational Advocacy Toolkit** (broadcast March 11, 2015)

In this webinar, Training and Communications Director Leslie Palmer explains what it means to be a Fierce Advocate and what you can expect from the Fierce Advocate Series. She also introduces you to the Educational Advocacy Toolkit and the many helpful resources that are a part of it, such as:

- A short, introductory video,
- A manual for volunteers (and anyone else who is a Fierce Advocate), and
- A facilitator guide for CASA trainers.

- **Response to Intervention (RTI): What CASA Volunteers Need to Know** (broadcast November 12, 2014)

Presented by Pamela Bell, Ph.D., Program Director, and Mary Ndande, Ph.D., M.S.S.W., SSHRA-V – Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, UT Austin.

Learn about Response to Intervention (RTI):

- How RTI data may be used in the special education evaluation process,
- How to advocate for educational and transition needs of students in foster care, and
- RTI-related website resources.

- **Surrogate Parent Training** (broadcast September 10, 2014)

Presented by Ian Spechler with Disability Rights Texas. This webinar will teach the CASA network about:

- Obtaining and reviewing important school records,
- Requesting evaluations,
- Participating in an ARD (Admission, Review and Dismissal) meeting,
- Accountability requirements for IEPs (Individualized Education Programs),
- Protecting a student's rights during discipline proceedings, and
- Ensuring services to transition into adulthood.

- **Transforming Educational Outcomes for Foster Children** (broadcast January 16, 2013)

Presented by Tiffany Roper, Assistant Director, Texas Children's Commission, this webinar focuses on educational outcomes and primarily discusses the Texas Blueprint findings, its' recommendations and strategies and how to provide effective educational advocacy.

Medical Advocacy:

- **Behavioral Health Services Under Medicare** (broadcast April 8, 2015)

Presented by Richard LaVallo, Legal Director at Disability Rights Texas. In this webinar, LaVallo covers:

- Behavioral health services under Medicaid’s Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT),
 - Behavioral health services under the mental health rehabilitative services provisions,
 - Due process protections afforded to foster children to ensure the provision of medically necessary behavioral health services, and
 - How to advocate for behavioral health services on behalf of foster children.
- **Mental Health Considerations: Working with Children and Youth** (broadcast May 14, 2014)
Presented by Seanna Crosbie, LCSW, Director of Program Services, Austin Child Guidance Center.

This webinar provides information on how to appropriately serve children/youth who have experienced or witnessed abuse/neglect, domestic violence or other traumatic events. Learn how trauma impacts a child’s development, ways you can effectively field difficult questions from children/youth, and how to ensure you are best supporting their healing through your actions and language.
 - **Mental Health Advocacy for Children in Foster Care** (broadcast April 9, 2014)
Presented by Lynda E. Frost, J.D., Ph.D., Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, The University of Texas at Austin.

Dr. Frost talked about the mental health advocacy in relation to trauma, behavior management and other mental health issues that CASA should be aware of.
 - **Addressing Issues of Grief and Loss for Children in Foster Care** (broadcast February 12, 2014)
Presented by Adam Robe, CEO, Foster Care Alumni of America; Speaker/Trainer/Author at Robe Communications, Inc.

How can you help a foster child cope with the inevitable grief and loss they experience just by coming into care? This presentation offers specific and practical strategies and insights to strengthen your advocacy for children experiencing grief and loss.
 - **Prenatal Drug and Alcohol Exposure – What CASA Should Know and Do** (broadcast January 8, 2014)
Presented by M. Connie Almeida, Ph.D., LSSP, Director of Behavioral Health Services for Fort Bend County.

Many of the children and families that CASA’s are assigned to have mental health and substance abuse disorders. Both have implications for effective advocacy. This webinar will provide participants critical information about not only the effects of prenatal drug and alcohol exposure, but screening, assessment, treatment and interventions that can promote better outcomes for children.
 - **Behavior Management and the Use of Restraints on Foster Children** (broadcast March 20, 2013)
Presented by Dr. Lynda Frost, Director of Planning and Programs, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health this webinar discusses the use of restraints in relation to psychotropic medications, behavior management and any new requirements that CASA volunteers may need to be aware of.
 - **Mental Health Needs of Children in Foster Care** (broadcast August 15, 2012)

Presented by Dr. Connie Almeida, Director of Behavioral Health Services, Fort Bend County, this webinar provides an overview of the mental health needs of children in foster care from birth through young adulthood. Participants will gain further understanding of the manifestation of mental health disorders in children and adolescents. The impact of mental health on learning, relationships and well-being will be discussed.

- **Impact of Trauma from Adverse Childhood Experiences** (broadcast June 20, 2012)

Presented by Dr. Lynda Frost, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health.

The effects of trauma can be profound and long-lasting. The enduring impact of adverse childhood experiences can shape the lives of youth and adults, presenting physical, psychological, and social challenges. Webinar participants will learn about the latest research on childhood trauma and interventions designed to minimize its impact.

- **Psychopharmacology for Children in Substitute Care** (broadcast May 16, 2012)

Presented by Lynn Crismon, Dean of the College of Pharmacy at The University of Texas at Austin.

- **Trauma Informed Advocacy**

Presented by Dr. Karyn Purvis, Director of the TCU Institute of Child Development. Child victims of abuse and neglect often suffer from trauma that impacts their functioning in every area of their life. Many of the emotional and behavioral symptoms treated by mental health professions and through psychopharmacology are not adequately recognized as symptoms of trauma. CASA volunteers and those working in related systems (CPS, schools, placement providers) also need to view the child's emotional and behavioral state through this lens which informs our most basic understanding of the child's needs.

Transitioning Youth

- **Youth Self-Advocacy** (broadcast on June 17, 2015)

In this webinar, Texas CASA Liaison for Director and Board Development Deedra Baker explains how to understand what each youth needs to learn and experience in their journey to adulthood, and how to promote, at every turn, opportunities for increasing their self-advocacy.

- **Flux – Life After Foster Care** (broadcast August 13, 2014)

Presented by Angie Cross, Foster Care Alumni of America-Tx Chapter.

Learn about the culture of foster care and how to support older youth and explore the emotional issues inherent to making the transition from foster care to adulthood.

- **Improving Outcomes for Older Youth in Care** (broadcast November 21, 2012)

Presented by Angie Cross, Volunteer Chapter Engagement Manager, Foster Care Alumni of America (FCAA), this webinar provides resources to help CASA volunteers improve the outcomes for youth in care and transitioning youth.

Permanency

- **Attorneys and CASA – Permanency Options** (broadcast December 11, 2013)

Presented by F. Scott McCown, Clinical Professor at the UT Austin School of Law and Director of the Children’s Rights Clinic.

This webinar discusses how the Attorney Ad Litem (AAL) and CASA / GAL can work together to achieve true permanency for children, particularly children in Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC).

- **Adoption Advocacy** (broadcast November 13, 2013)

Presented by Jackie Hubbard, CPS Division Administrator and Jillian Bonacquisti, CPS Adoption Program Specialist, this webinar focuses on the legal requirements and policy practices to advocate for permanency.

- **Engaging Families Through Diligent Recruitment** (broadcast June 19, 2013)

Presented by Debbie Williams, Permanency Specialist, CASA of Collin County, McKinney.

Hear from CASA staff involved in a five-year DFPS grant that seeks to find permanent homes for children, particularly children with special needs and children that have been in care for a long time. CASA advocates provide “enhanced work” in these cases, receive extra training, and have been instrumental in securing lifelong connections and permanent homes for children.

- **Permanency Values and Advocacy** (broadcast July 18, 2012)

Presented by Elaine DeBose, Casey Family Foundations, this webinar shares some youth stories, and have CASA staff and volunteers think about their own values and gain new tips and skills related to permanency and advocacy.

General Advocacy

- **The Life Cycle of Human Trafficking** (broadcast February 11, 2015)

Presented by Saul Castellanos, CEO, Freedom Youth Project Foundation.

Learn more about Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST), and understand why everyone has a stake in preventing children from being trafficked.

- **New Laws & Other Successes from the 84th Legislative Session** (broadcast July 8, 2015)

In this webinar, Texas CASA’s Public Policy team will break down (almost) everything that happened during the 84th Legislative Session related to the child protection system, including an overview of CASA’s state funding for the next two years. The webinar will include highlights of some of the most important ways that our Legislative Advocacy Teams (LATs) helped pass our highest-priority bills and will give you concrete information about how this new legislation will impact the children you serve beginning Sept. 1, 2015.

- **CASA Family Finding Initiative** (broadcast December 10, 2014)

Presented by Anjuli (AJ) Barak, CASA of Travis County Family Finding Specialist.

Compelling evidence shows that children who have some connection with members of their birth family and symbolic relatives have improved behavior, improved school performance and more hope in their lives. This webinar will explain the family finding process and explore resources available to make the job of tracking down and engaging family members more efficient. It will

also detail family finding as an alternate volunteer opportunity for experienced CASA volunteers as a volunteer retention strategy.

- **Latin American Children's Extraordinary Support (LACES)** (broadcast October 8, 2014)

Presented by Doris Foulkes, president of LACES.

Hispanic children removed from their parents by CPS – due to abuse, incarceration or deportation – are often left without any relatives to care for them in the U.S. Learn more about what happens with the families being deported, what Latin American Children's Extraordinary Support (LACES) is doing to support them, and how CASA can still work to keep these children connected to their families.

- **Communicating with Children** (broadcast July 9, 2014)

Presented by Adam Robe, CEO, Foster Care Alumni of America; Speaker/Trainer/Author at Robe Communications, Inc.

It is important to understand what children hope for, feel and think. It is equally important to help children understand who you are and what your role as a CASA volunteer is in their lives. Gain new skills and relation building strategies.

- **Communicating Effectively in the Child Welfare System** (broadcast April 17, 2013)

Presented by Beth Boone, Consultant and Alternative Dispute Resolution, Mediation Services of America, this webinar discusses effective ways CASA volunteers can use their communication skills:

Difficult situations create stressful emotions and distance between people working for the same goal – the good of a child. We will discuss twelve strategies to improve our interactions with others by addressing: 1) internal emotions and reactions and 2) communication strategies to connect with another.

- **Process for CASA to Report Concerns about Children's Placements** (broadcast March 21, 2013)

Presented by Amii J. Leiner of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), this webinar describes DFPS' new process that allows CASA volunteers to report concerns about paid foster placements (foster homes, group homes, and RTCs) and ensures that these are forwarded to the person who can properly address them.

- **Advocacy for Dual System Youth**

Presented by Ryan Miller of CASA of Travis County, this webinar will explore the juvenile system and the realities of dually-involved youth (youth in the conservatorship of CPS who also have juvenile charges). It will also cover areas in which CASA volunteers and agencies can become involved in advocacy in the juvenile system.

- **Key Elements of Resiliency**

Presented by Deedra Baker, Quality Assurance Manager at Texas CASA. Working with child abuse victims can take an emotional toll on volunteers and staff who not only see the impact of abuse and neglect on children but also struggle with the impact of a broken system on children who need to heal. Understanding and recognizing the influence of this work on our own lives is key to identifying strategic practices that can help us continue to do the work we find so worthwhile. Webinar participants will be able to identify two to three things they can immediately implement to build their resilience for child advocacy.

- **Better Outcomes for Children** (broadcast February 20, 2013)
Presented by Sonia Kotecha, Director of Volunteers, CASA of Travis County, this webinar:
explores attitudes about disproportionality and the underrepresentation of particular groups.
introduces strategies to improve inclusion, recruitment and retention.
- **Advocating for Undocumented Youth** (broadcast October 17, 2012)
Presented by Pamela K. Parker, Special Projects Attorney, DFPS, this webinar:
 - Focuses attention on the importance of citizenship and immigration issues for foster children and youth.
 - Demonstrates simple tool for identifying children who need help.
 - Introduces the most common citizenship and immigration options available to foster children.
 - Discusses the role of the foreign consul's office.
 - Explains where and how to get more help.
- **How Advocates Can Be Big Voices for Little Texans at the Capitol** (broadcast September 19, 2012)
Presented by Andrea Sparks, Director of Public Policy and Outreach, Texas CASA, this webinar discusses the opportunities for CASA volunteers, staff and board members to get involved in legislative advocacy at the state capitol.

SAMPLE 1: TRAINING LOG

Volunteer Name: _____

Start Date: _____ Current Service Period: _____

Training Activity: _____

Date scheduled	Date completed	Title of Conference/Topic	Hours

Source: Voices For Children, Inc. CASA of Brazos Valley

SAMPLE 2: TRAINING LOG

In-service Training Evaluation

Name of Staff or Volunteer _____

Name of training, book, tape, article, etc: _____

Name of trainer, author, etc: _____

Date of Training: _____

Number of training hours: _____

Summary of content of the training: _____

What was the training intended to teach? _____

Will the training apply to your work with CASA? _____

Yes _____

No _____

If yes, please explain: _____

What was most helpful about the training? _____

What was the least helpful? _____

Please comment on any interest for future CASA trainings: _____

Volunteer signature

Date

Casework Supervisor

Date

Source: CASA of El Paso

Section 3

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES



**Executive Director Resource Manual
2017 Edition**

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT, POLICES AND PROCEDURES

This section is intended to give the Executive Directors an in-depth understanding of the day-to-day job responsibilities and expectations of a Volunteer Coordinator/Advocate Supervisor (VC from this point forward). One of the many documents included in this section is a handbook for VC that your program can easily adopt and customize to fit your specific in-house procedures and policies if your program does not already have one. This is a best practice handbook that will be helpful to incoming coordinators and a good review and reference guide for seasoned coordinators.

- This section also includes:
- Minimum Expectations
- Samples Documents
- Volunteer Supervision
- Volunteer Evaluations

For a more comprehensive, best practice guide to volunteer supervision and retention refer to The Art of Coaching for Volunteer Retention on the Texas CASA website. This section focuses on procedures and structuring daily tasks rather than developing coaching skills. However, getting to know your volunteers and learning how to be a successful “coach” is a daily practice and should be a part of the CV’s ongoing training.

MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS HANDBOOK

SUPERVISION OF ADVOCATES

Objectives:

The VC will:

1. establish an atmosphere of trust and confidence to enhance the relationship with the Advocate
2. guide and supervise the Advocate through clearly stated expectations, open lines of communication, and a rapid response to questions or concerns

Communication:

The VC will:

- schedule monthly meetings with the Advocate
- prepare a Case Review completing as much as possible prior to the meeting so that the time can be focused on the needs of the Advocate (In the event the Advocate is not available this should be recorded in the Supervisor/Volunteer Contact Sheet.)
- maintain frequent contact via telephone or e-mail between the scheduled meetings to sustain strong communication and provide opportunities for the Advocate to ask questions, seek guidance, or express concerns about the case

Tips for Supervision:

1. Advocacy work is demanding, sometimes frustrating, or even frightening. Frequent contact will offer the Advocate opportunities to express concerns and frustrations.
2. Ensure that the Advocate is aware of the difference they are making. They have not had the opportunity to compare their case to others, which would broaden their perspective. Identify successes that have occurred because of their work.
3. If an Advocate has difficulty meeting deadlines or appears to struggle with management of time, schedule a meeting and express concern and a willingness to help seek a solution. The problem may be due to a need for more direction, a lack of emotional involvement with the child(ren), time constraints, or other factors. It may be helpful to remind the CASA of the important contribution they are making to the lives of the child(ren). If the problem persists discuss the Advocate's commitment and analyze their desire to continue working on the case. Further concerns should be discussed with the Executive Director.
4. The Advocate will experience a sense of empowerment as they successfully meet the challenges of the CASA role, employ the strategies taught during training, and receive positive reinforcement from the VC. Guide the Advocate in their performance of their role rather than doing it for them.

5. Plan future meetings as a team allowing the Advocate to make suggestions about areas they want to address.
6. Good communication concerning all aspects of the case, including the exchange of information, is vital to the Advocates confidence and success.

CASE ASSIGNMENT

Objectives:

The Volunteer Coordinator (VC) will:

1. become acquainted with the Advocate and their ability
2. give the Advocate the necessary tools to begin the case and a clear understanding of where to find answers
3. empower the Advocate to set goals for the case and effectively advocate for the child(ren)
4. learn the specifics of the case

The Advocate will gain an understanding of:

1. the specifics of the case
2. the steps that will be taken.
3. where to find information and answers to questions

Volunteer Personnel File:

The Volunteer Personnel File may contain:

- personal Interview notes completed by the Executive Director
- evaluations of the Advocate's previous performance, if applicable
- identification of the Advocate's strengths, needs, and any previously noted areas of supervisory concerns
- The file should be carefully reviewed when working with a new Advocate.

The Advocate File Folders will:

- be prepared and given to the Advocate as their working file
- be prepared using Advocate file "shell" folders and contain the necessary documents for case acceptance
- include copies of new case files received by the CASA program
- follow a standard format by placing the case information on the right side of the folder

Referring to the report obtained by the CASA program begin to fill out the New Case Data Sheet and contact the CPS caseworker to include any missing facts.

After gaining a clear understanding of the case and gathering the preliminary information, make contact with the Advocate.

First Contact:

Contact the Advocate within five days of court appointment, introducing yourself if necessary. State that a case has been matched to their profile, and ask if they will consider accepting it.

Information at this point will be limited. Give the Advocate the general case specifics omitting confidential information (i.e. number and ages of children, reason for removal, current placement). If the Advocate is interested in accepting the case schedule an appointment at the CASA office within the next 1-2 days to review the file. At that time, the Advocate will formally accept or decline the assignment.

Formal Acceptance:

The VC will arrange a private location for the Advocate to review the Advocate File Folder, explain the organization of the material and present any new information. The Advocate will review the material and make note of questions concerning the case. The VC should check with the Advocate periodically during their review of the case.

After the review is complete the Advocate will either accept or decline the case. If the Advocate accepts they will sign the Case Acceptance and Case Confidentiality forms in the Advocate file folder. If the Advocate declines they should be reminded that the confidentiality agreement signed during training forbids release of any information related to the case.

The questions that developed during the review may indicate areas in which the Advocate needs clarification. The VC will use this opportunity to review possible sources of information and begin to guide the Advocate in the role of CASA.

Case Review:

The next step is to complete an Initial Case Review, found in the Advocate file folder or the electronic version. Complete the checklist at the top of the page. Identify areas that may be of concern for the Advocate. Complete, with the Advocate, the Tentative Plan, recording the agreed procedure which will include: read the case files at CPS; meet the child and foster parents, and parents if applicable; introduction to Attorney ad Litem (AAL) and CPS caseworker; gather information about potential relative placements for the child; and any other steps the VC and Advocate agree need to be taken in these first weeks. Inform the Advocate that the VC will notify all parties that the case has been accepted. Schedule a Case Review, to be held in two weeks. Establish possible dates and times when the Advocate will be free to read the CPS file.

Before the Advocate leaves:

Make two copies of the Case Acceptance and Case Confidentiality forms and one copy of the Initial Case Review sheet. Place a copy of each in the Advocate's File Folder. Explain the forms in the case plan and remind them that the Case Related Time Logs begin with the acceptance meeting. Confirm that the Advocate has all the VC's contact information and answer any questions that may remain. Identify the location of the Advocate mail folders and explain that case documents and other communication will be placed there.

After the Advocate leaves:

Place original Case Data Sheet, Case Acceptance, Case Confidentiality, and Initial Case Review in the Case File and a copy of each in the Advocate's Personnel File. Notify all parties by letter or fax of the Advocate's assignment within 2 working days. Schedule a time for a meeting with the caseworker and the Advocate to read CPS files. Notify the Advocate of the appointment. Submit a New Case Data Sheet to the Program Director within 3 working days of acceptance.

READING CPS CASE FILES

Objectives:

The VC will:

1. instruct the Advocate on the reading of the file and how to obtain relevant information
2. accompany new volunteers to the CPS office or as requested

The Advocate will:

1. become familiar with the format of CPS files and forms
2. learn to locate needed information
3. become familiar with the facts of the case

Preparation:

Establish the date and hour for the appointment at the CPS office with an approximate length of time necessary to accomplish the objective.

Review the rules of confidentiality especially with regard to maintaining the anonymity of the abuse reporter.

Reading the Case File:

New Advocates will need assistance during the first case reading. Explain each section of the CPS records. The Advocate should make note of appropriate information for future use and indicate which pages need to be copied.

Discuss questions that may emerge during the reading. Encourage further investigation of the case (i.e. Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), special medical disorders, etc.) and identify sources for relevant information (internet, books, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) resources). Commend the Advocate for insight into specifics of the case.

If copies of records are needed determine with the caseworker who will be responsible for this task. Locate the equipment and demonstrate its operation.

Conclusion:

Establish with all Advocates a routine for dialogue regarding the facts of the case and their personal reaction. Explain that meetings with the VC are the appropriate setting for discussion of questions, problems, and emotional responses.

Reactions of the Advocate will allow the VC to clarify misconceptions or biases, identify emotional involvement, gain a better understanding of their assessment skills, and plan for future guidance.

MEETING THE CPS CASEWORKER

Objectives:

The VC will:

1. help establish a positive working relationship with the CPS caseworker
2. provide guidance in the most effective method to obtain information from the caseworker

The Advocate will:

1. build a positive working relationship with the caseworker
2. listen to the caseworker's perception of the case
3. obtain additional information related to the case

Preparation:

Schedule a meeting with the caseworker, immediately following the reading of the files if possible.

Prior to the meeting review the role of the caseworker, the numerous tasks for which they are responsible, and the demands of their job. Discuss methods of communication that have been successful (e-mail, telephone, fax, etc.) with that particular caseworker.

Identify questions the Advocate needs to ask. Review what information is appropriate from the caseworker and possible alternative sources for other details. Remind the Advocate of the need to remain independent, neutral and to corroborate information from the original source. For example: The caseworker could report that the mother in the case has not been attending parenting classes: the Advocate would need to verify this with the parenting class provider's attendance records.

Discuss with the Advocate strategies to build a positive working relationship with the caseworker, recognizing that they both are working toward a common goal with the welfare of the child at the center.

Consider what contact information should be obtained from the caseworker and what should be shared. Remember that it is CASA policy not to give out advocate's personal contact information to anyone other than professionals involved with the case and their consent must first be obtained.

Meeting the Caseworker:

Accompany new Advocates to the first meeting with the caseworker. After introductions explain that you and the Advocate work together, but the Advocate will be the primary contact person and will be responsible for court appearances, observational visits, and case contacts. Confirm dates for future hearings or meetings and request that the Advocate be apprised of changes in dates or times. Provide contact information for you and the Advocate. At this time, the Advocate will take charge of the meeting asking the predetermined questions.

Conclusion:

After the meeting answer any questions the Advocate may have about the meeting or the case-worker. Clarify any misconceptions or biases that may have emerged about the caseworker or CPS. Use this opportunity to assess the professional interaction skills of the Advocate.

Review the plan for the case and encourage the Advocate to contact you at any time with questions or concerns. Confirm the next scheduled meeting.

MEETING THE CHILD(REN) AND FOSTER PARENTS

Objectives:

The VC will help the Advocate:

1. establish their role as the Court Appointed Special Advocate.
2. establish a positive relationship with the child(ren) and foster parents.
3. develop a procedure to obtain information about the child from the foster parents or caretaker.
4. develop techniques for handling difficult questions.

The Advocate will:

1. begin to establish a positive relationship with the child(ren) and foster parents.
2. obtain information from the foster parents or caretakers regarding the child(ren).

Preparation:

Preparation for the first meeting should include:

- supply the Advocate with contact information for the foster parent/caretaker
- procedure for initial contact by telephone and an age-specific introduction to the child
- review of key points such as: how to handle difficult questions, no promises are made to the child,
- review of some behaviors that might be expected from the child(ren) and an appropriate response; i.e. a child may be indiscriminately affectionate, hostile, or aloof
- reflection on rules of professional deportment; i.e. never be negative about child(ren)'s parents and maintain the boundaries of the CASA role
- need to be sensitive to age of child(ren) and appropriate interactions
- discussion of methods for securing information from caretaker with understanding that all facts should be corroborated with the original source
- reminder to schedule the appointment at a mutually convenient time and request directions
- preview of approved contact information The Advocate must always notify the caretakers with adequate advance notice if there is any change in the appointment.

Visit with the child(ren):

CASA Standards of Performance state that the Advocate should visit the child, at their place of residence, a minimum of one time per month if the child lives within 120 miles of (insert program's county/counties) and a minimum of one time per quarter if the child lives within 240 miles of (insert program's county/counties).

Plan the visit:

- determine who shall take the lead in this first contact.
- observe the Advocate's performance, making suggestions when appropriate
- provide child(ren), if age-appropriate, contact information including CASA's toll-free number

It is CASA policy for communication from the child to come through the CASA office. The Advocate should not give personal home or office numbers. It is CASA policy not to give out Advocate's personal contact information to anyone other than professionals involved with the case.

Conclusion:

Summarize the visit and include constructive comments on the Advocate's performance. Encourage the Advocate to voice any concerns, comments, or questions about the child's behavior or other aspects of the meeting.

Review the Advocate's plan for the case, encourage communication, and confirm next scheduled meeting.

MEETING THE PARENTS

Objectives:

The VC will help the Advocate:

1. establish their role as the CASA
2. establish positive relationship with the parents
3. develop techniques for skillfully gathering information and handling difficult questions

The Advocate will:

1. establish their position as a CASA.
2. begin to build a positive relationship with the parents if possible.
3. gain information about the family, history of child(ren), and present circumstances

Preparation:

The VC will review the following with the Advocate:

- the process of introduction and techniques for developing a working relationship with the parent(s).

- how to establish that the Advocate has been appointed by the judge to be the Guardian ad Litem (GAL)
- making a differentiation between CASA and Texas Child Protective Services (TCPS)
- the meaning and role of GAL and CASA
- CASA's responsibility, which is to advocate for the child.

The VC will accompany the Advocate on at least the first visit to the parents. The Advocate can expect parents may be upset about the removal of their child(ren) and, therefore the first meeting may be difficult for the Advocate, especially if this is a first experience. To help prepare for the initial encounter discuss a variety of ways the parent(s) may react. Develop a plan of action for responding to difficult questions as: "Are you going to help me get my kids back?" "When can they be returned to me?"

Design questions that will reveal the parent(s) understanding of:

- why the child(ren) were removed
- what support systems the parent(s) have
- relatives who might be considered for placement of the child(ren)

Discuss additional information the Advocate would like to obtain and how to word the questions in a positive, non-accusatory manner.

Discuss the contact information that will be appropriate to give to the parent(s). Advocates should have available business cards with their name, the CASA office phone number and address.

**Insert your program's communication policy regarding Advocates giving their person phone numbers to parents.

Example: It is CASA policy for communication from the parent to come through the CASA office and not to the Advocate's personal home or office.

If a call is made to the parents from the Advocate's home, office, or cell phone, they are encouraged to dial *67 first to block the number and prevent the receiving party from using Caller ID. It is important that the parent does not experience any confusion about the CASA role and that the Advocate's personal and work identity be protected.

The first visit to the parent(s) home should be scheduled although subsequent ones may be both announced and unannounced.

If counsel has been appointed or retained by the parents the Advocate will need permission to make the initial contact and determine if the attorney wishes to be present for the first meeting.

After necessary arrangements have been made review, with the Advocate, the format for the initial visit. Remind the Advocate to notify all parties if there is any change in the appointment.

The meeting:

CASA Standards of Performance state that the Advocate should have face to face contact with the parents a minimum of one time per month. Preferably, contact will occur at the parent's residence unless their whereabouts are unknown or there are safety concerns.

Plan the visit:

- determine who shall take the lead in this first contact.

- clarify the Advocates role
- observe Advocate's performance, making suggestions when appropriate
- pose predetermined questions to the parent(s)
- provide parent(s) with appropriate contact information

Conclusion:

Following the meeting schedule time to discuss:

- reaction of the Advocate to the parent(s)
- information gathered during the interview
- assessment of parent's willingness to provide information
- evaluate the parent's understanding of why children were removed
- constructive feedback on Advocate's performance
- review advocate's plan for handling the case
- identify any initial concerns for and/or needs of the child(ren)
- encourage the Advocate to call with any concerns, questions, or problems
- confirm next scheduled appointment

OBSERVATION OF SUPERVISED VISITS

Objectives:

The VC will review:

1. rules for observation
2. tools to assess interaction between child(ren) and parent(s)

The Advocate will:

1. follow the rules for observation
2. assess the interaction between child(ren) and parent(s)

Preparation:

CASA Standards of Performance state that the Advocate will observe a minimum of one court ordered supervised visit per month. To prepare for these observations the Advocate should have previously met with the child(ren) and the foster parents. The Advocate may decide, on occasion, to schedule an additional meeting with the child(ren), foster parents, or parents prior to or following a supervised visit, especially if the child resides out of the county.

Outline for the new Advocate how the visits are arranged by the CPS office. The caseworker should be advised of the Advocate's intent to attend and time and date should be confirmed. Supervised visitations are frequently rescheduled, therefore the Advocate may want to confirm, with the CPS

worker, the day of the scheduled visit. Remind the Advocate not to interfere with the time allotted for child(ren) and parent(s) to visit.

Review:

- behaviors to be noted
- interaction of parent(s) with the child(ren)
- child(ren)'s reaction to parent(s)
- interaction to or among siblings

If relatives other than parent(s) are involved, discuss how this may influence the visit.

The Supervised Visit:

Record observations of the visit. For novice Advocates the VC may be present to answer questions and interject information/directions as needed.

Conclusion:

- Discuss reactions to the visit.
- Summarize observations and information gathered.
- All information must be documented.
- Remind the Advocate to contact the foster parents or caretakers within 3 days following the visit to assess any change in behavior of the child(ren)

The Advocate will observe the visit from the CPS room, not in the company of the parent(s) and child(ren). In the event of inappropriate behavior the CPS caseworker needs to be notified immediately and will intervene. If redirection of parents is warranted, it is the responsibility of the caseworker, not the Advocate.

TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN

Objectives:

The VC will:

1. present policy and training requirements for transportation of children
2. gather and provide information to the ED for a decision of approval/ non-approval
3. maintain transportation-approval renewal dates

The Advocate will:

1. understand policy and training requirements for transportation of children
2. complete all requirements and obtain approval before transporting any child

Preparation:

For a restricted number of cases, volunteers may request to transport a child or children 12 years of age or over at the discretion of the Executive Director. If a volunteer requests to transport a child, the following information should be gathered (for each child for whom the request to transfer is being made) and submitted to the ED:

- Child's level of care
- For a child with a level of care of specialized or intense, written recommendation(s) from the therapist and/or RTC about the volunteer transporting the child
- Copy of the volunteer's current driver's license and proof of insurance
- Copy of the volunteer's returned TDPS Motor Vehicles Records Check
- Transportation Agreement signed by the volunteer, the VC, and the CPS caseworker
- Emergency Procedures signed by the volunteer and the VC

Conclusion:

Once transportation of a child has been approved by the ED following (insert program's name) policy, the VC will ensure that the transportation training has been completed before the volunteer transports. The training will consist of the VC reviewing and providing the volunteer with a copy of the Transportation Policy, Transportation Agreement, Emergency Procedures. The VC will file a copy of all of the above in the Case File.

The VC will also note the date that the transportation approval will expire (6 months from date of ED approval). On or before the date of expiration of approval, the VC will submit the above again if the volunteer wishes to continue to transport.

COURT REPORTS

Objectives:

The VC will:

1. present format for the court report
2. assist in identifying appropriate information to be included

The Advocate will:

1. understand what information is necessary for an effective report
2. become familiar with the format for the court report

Preparation:

Review the Court Report that defines the information needed for each section and identifies the source. (i.e. "The therapist recommended that Bobby's individual counseling be increased to 2 times a week during this next transition period.")

To prepare for presentation in court it is important for the VC and Advocate to:

- read from each party's perspective
- remain factual
- present material in a neutral manner
- include specific requests and directions from the judge
- determine date for completion of the report allowing time for corrections or revisions The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for CASA and Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) requires the court report be sent to all parties 5 days prior to the court date. The DFPS court report will be received 10 days prior to the hearing and a copy must be given to the advocate. Contact the CPS caseworker if the report is not received 10 days prior to the court date.

Contact the Advocate prior to the completion deadline for the court report to clarify any questions and reconfirm the due date.

Review of Court Report:

Read the court report, making suggestions where appropriate. (Microsoft Word has a tool that highlights editorial changes.) Determine the method for communication with the Advocate to finalize the report. Comments should highlight positive sections as well as those that need to be changed.

Although the report must have CASA program approval before being finalized it primarily represents the voice of the Advocate in court. The VC assists in the development of this document but the Advocate does the writing. After the court report is finalized, no changes will be made to the document without the volunteer's consent.

Filing and distribution of the Court Report:

After the report is finalized, signed by the Advocate, the VC, and the Program or Executive Director, it is the responsibility of the VC to ensure that a copy of the report is filed with the court and e-filed to distribute to all parties on the case.

The VC must ensure that a copy is distributed to:

CHILD VICTIMS COMPENSATION APPLICATION

Objectives:

The VC will:

1. Assist the Advocate in filing a Child Victims Compensation (CVC) application for each eligible child within the first 5 months of CASA's assignment to the case.

The Advocate will:

1. provide data necessary for the Child Victims Compensation application

Basic Qualification Requirements

A child is eligible to apply for CVC funds IF:

Residency

- The crime must occur in Texas to a Texas resident or a United States resident, or
- the crime must involve a Texas resident who becomes a victim in another state or country that does not have crime victims' compensation benefits for which the victim would be eligible.

Reporting the Crime

The crime must be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency within a reasonable period of time, but not so late as to interfere with or hamper the investigation and prosecution of the crime.

Filing for Compensation (TCCP, Art.56.37.)

You must file the application within three years from the date of the crime. The time may be extended for good cause, including the age of the victim or the physical or mental incapacity of the victim.

Cooperation (TCCP, Art.56.45.)

A claim may be denied or reduced if the claimant or victim has not cooperated with the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

The VC will guide the Advocate through the process of filing an application for each child they are advocating for, if eligible.

Remind the Advocate to send the permanent caretaker or closest relative of the child a Crime Victims Compensation packet to explain the funds available to the child(ren) for needed assistance related to the recovery of their crime once Medicaid, insurance or all other forms of payment have been exhausted.

COURT HEARINGS

Objectives:

The VC will review:

1. strategies that will help the Advocate be most effective during the hearing
2. all stages of the court hearing

The Advocate will:

1. develop an understanding of the court hearing process
2. employ strategies that will focus on the best interest of the child(ren)

Preparation:

Although the Advocate has observed at least three hours of court hearings during initial training, it is appropriate to review the format. Hearings may have different objectives and purposes so allow time prior to the appearance at each hearing to analyze the procedure and answer questions that may have arisen.

Further preparation will include:

- review of facts to support recommendations
- rehearse the presentation of Advocate's recommendations
- review of materials to bring to court (Any notes brought into the courtroom can be requested and reviewed by all parties. The Advocate may want to highlight areas of concern and vital information in their court report prior to the hearing.)
- review of order of persons participating
- reminder that each attorney has the right to question the person presenting a report
- confirm date and time of the hearing
- determine an appropriate arrival time
- a reminder that the interaction of various parties prior to the hearing could provide important information. It is the responsibility of the VC to notify the Advocate of any change in date or time of the hearings.

The Court Hearing:

Upon arrival at the court provide an opportunity for the Advocate to communicate any last-minute questions or concerns.

As the case is called the Advocate must give their name and relation to the case to the court reporter and take their place in the courtroom. Communication between the Advocate and VC during the hearing may take place in the form of written questions, which will be exchanged.

It is the responsibility of the VC to ensure that all parties to the suit have a copy of the CASA court report.

The Court Hearing Notes will be completed by the VC or other designated CASA staff during the proceedings.

Conclusion:

At the close of the hearing the VC should:

- summarize the proceedings with the Advocate.
- answer questions about the process, information exchanged or behavior of participants
- determine if there are areas in which the Advocate feels a need for more guidance
- give a constructive evaluation of the Advocate's performance with an emphasis on positive aspects of their performance
- make a copy of the completed Court Hearing Notes for the Advocate's records. If copy facilities are not available this may be done at the CASA office and placed in the mail folder or scanned for electronic records.
- express the appreciation for the Advocate's time, commitment, and dedication. Written acknowledgment by email, note or card, of their importance to the child(ren) and the case is also appropriate.

PERMANENCY CONFERENCE MEETING (PC)

Objectives:

The VC will provide:

1. a clear understanding of the purpose and format of the PC
2. information and techniques to assist the Advocate during the PC

The Advocate will:

1. become familiar with their role in a PC
2. develop the skills to support the cause of their child(ren)

Preparation:

To prepare for this meeting the VC will:

- review the purpose of the PC
- define the timeframe and what format can be expected
- discuss the progress of services for both parents and child(ren), if applicable
- explore services or recommendations that the Advocate may want to address during the meeting
- identify the appropriate time to advocate for these services

The PPT:

The VC should attend the PC with the Advocate to:

- provide support during the meeting
- introduce previously agreed upon topics that may be overlooked by the Advocate
- observe the Advocate's performance
- complete the PPT Meeting Notes
- file a copy of the notes in the office case file and place a copy in the Advocate's mail folder

Conclusion:

- Summarize with the Advocate the information presented and any progress made during the PC.
- Review important information gleaned during the meeting
- Identify the steps to follow up decisions made.
- Provide constructive evaluation on the Advocate's performance.
- Confirm the next scheduled meeting.
- As always, encourage the Advocate to communicate concerns or questions.

MEDIATION

Objectives:

The VC will:

1. provide a clear understanding of the purpose and format of mediation
2. direct the CASA in the most effective way to advocate for the child(ren)

The Advocate will:

1. understand the process of mediation and their role

Preparation:

Clarify the purpose of mediation as it relates to the Advocate's case. Outline the recommendation of CASA and discuss the possibility of negotiations according to the best interest of the child(ren). At any time during the mediation the VC and/or the Advocate may request a recess for private discussion.

Review the rules of confidentiality. No part of the discussion during the mediation process may be repeated. All notes taken during the session must be shredded or given to the mediator at the close of the meeting.

It is permissible to report only the results of mediation - an agreement was reached, or no agreement was forthcoming. If an agreement was successful the terms may be reported.

Mediation:

The role of the VC at mediations includes:

- observation of the performance of the Advocate
- support of the Advocate
- reminding the Advocate to raise concerns information through verbal prompts or written messages
- request for private conference with the Advocate if necessary
- verification that any agreement is reviewed and signed by the Advocate and VC
- confirmation that copies of agreement are in hand at the close of mediation

Conclusion:

Summarize with the Advocate the progress of the mediation. Review the agreement, if one was reached, and decide what steps are necessary to carry out its terms. Provide a positive, constructive evaluation of the Advocate's performance.

TRIALS

Objectives:

The VC will:

1. review strategies to enable the Advocate to present a strong and effective argument
2. clarify the format and process to assure a confident performance by the Advocate

The Advocate will understand:

3. the process and be confident in their role as advocate for the best interest of the child(ren)
4. the importance of well documented, clearly stated information supporting their recommendations

Preparation:

The Advocate should:

- review the case file at CPS
- contact all sources just prior to the trial so information is current
- create a base of factual information, i.e. timeline, outline, etc.
- discuss this information with the VC

The VC and Advocate need to:

- meet to outline the CASA recommendations and the supporting facts
- ensure that information has been gathered from all sources and is current
- review Tips for Testifying
- understand that important information that has been omitted during questioning may be interjected through an independent statement to the court as GAL

The VC will arrange a meeting with the attorney most closely aligned with the CASA position. The attorney, VC and Advocate will discuss the upcoming trial, relevant information, grounds (if applicable) and the type of question that will be asked. If the Advocate is under time constraints regarding the trial, the attorney can advise the approximate point when they will be called to give testimony.

If termination is recommended define the evidence and ascertain that it is in accordance with the Texas Family Code and in the best interest of the child(ren).

If a court report is being filed, deadlines should be established so the process can be finalized. The day before the trial contact the Advocate to air any concerns, discuss new information, review the recommendations, and confirm the time.

The Trial:

The Advocate should be prepared to pass written information to the attorney as needed during the trial. If the Advocate can be present for only a portion of the trial, the VC will fulfill that responsibility and take notes so the CASA can be fully informed. The VC should be present for the entire trial.

Prior to their testimony convey to the Advocate the confidence of the VC in their ability to perform successfully.

Conclusion:

At the conclusion of the trial commend the Advocate for a complicated and challenging achievement. Discuss the emotions that surfaced during the trial, the outcome, and answer any questions the Advocate may have. Inquire if there were areas where the Advocate felt that more guidance was needed.

Express the gratitude felt by all at CASA for the Advocate's time, dedication, and commitment to the case. Follow up with a thank you card signed by the VC and the Executive Director and let them know that they made a real difference in the life of the child(ren).

State that contact will be made for a meeting to plan the next step or close the case, depending on the outcome of the trial.

CLOSING A CASE

Objectives:

The VC will:

5. complete forms to bring case to closure
6. provide time for Advocate to summarize all aspects of the case

The Advocate will:

7. complete closure procedures
8. express emotional reactions to the process, the outcome of the case and experience closure

Preparation:

The VC will complete the Performance Measures and the Supervisor Evaluation of Volunteer At Case Closure forms. Select, at random, two people who were involved in the case (i.e. AAL, CPS Supervisor, parent therapist, District Attorney, etc.) and mail a Program Evaluation Survey Letter and a Program Evaluation Survey form, with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to them.

The VC, Program Director and the Executive Director will evaluate the performance of the Advocate and discuss recommendations for their continued involvement with the program.

Advocate Conference:

The VC and Advocate will bring closure to a case at a scheduled conference.

- Confirm that answers on the Performance Measures, based on the Advocate's involvement, are accurate.
- This instrument will provide the basis for evaluation, discussion of the Advocate's strengths as well as areas of growth.

- Ascertain the advocate's plans for future involvement - if it has predetermined that they are eligible to continue in the CASA role.
- If the Advocate is interested in taking another case after a period of time, discuss a target date for their return.
- The Advocate will sign the performance measures.
- The Advocate will receive a copy of their evaluation forms.
- Collect all of the Advocates records for the case. If the Advocate has additional records elsewhere, instruct the Advocate to return them to the CASA office to be shredded or deleted from their emails and hard drives.

Upon closure of a case the Advocate is no longer serving as a GAL. Remind the Advocate any further contact with the child(ren) will be a personal decision with the approval of the permanent caretaker.

Conclusion:

The VC will complete the following forms and distribute as stated:

- Performance Measures form: place original in the Closed Case File and give a copy to the Program Director within 3 working days.
- Supervisor Evaluation of Volunteer Form: place original in Volunteer's Personnel File and give one to the Program Director within 3 working days.
- Program Evaluation Survey: place the originals of the returned forms in the Closed Case File and give a copy to the Program Director. A copy may also be sent to the Advocate, if it is a favorable appraisal of the Advocate's involvement.

Notify the Executive Director of the Advocate's decision regarding future cases.

**Send the Advocate a card of congratulations for their work and helping the child(ren) achieve safety and permanency.*

COURTESY COLLABORATIONS

Objectives:

The VC will:

1. establish the procedure to request help from a different CASA program to obtain assistance with a case assessment.

The Advocate will:

1. understand and follow procedure when seeking help from another CASA program

Preparation:

Courtesy collaborations are requests to another CASA program or Courtesy CASAs provided by Texas CASA for assistance in gathering information about placement outside the local area. Courtesy collaborations may be requested if an emergency visit is needed or when a child is placed in

another city and a potential caretaker in that city has requested to be considered for placement and a home assessment is needed. The Home Assessment Interview can then be completed by phone with the assisting CASA agency performing the home visit.

The Texas CASA web site has all the information and documents needed to request a courtesy visit from a Courtesy CASA. To access this information, log onto www.texascasa.org and search for "courtesy collaboration."

Some CASA programs do not perform courtesy collaborations. In fact, National CASA has expressed concerns regarding a potential lack of legal authority and, consequently, a breach of confidentiality in sharing information with another program. These concerns may be alleviated by providing the assisting program with a court ordered request for a courtesy collaboration.

The National CASA web site will identify all existing programs in the United States. To access this information log onto www.nationalcasa.org and search by the zip code.

If no CASA program exists in a particular area, search surrounding counties.

It is important to have all data regarding the placement and contact information available before initiating the request procedure.

Courtesy Collaboration:

Once a program is located the Advocate will:

- inquire if the program performs courtesy collaborations or would be able to with a court ordered request
- if so, establish contact with the staff person who handles courtesy collaborations
- introduce him/herself and explain the request

The collaborating agency will request:

- a copy of the court order appointing CASA as Guardian ad Litem
- a letter from the Advocate identifying the person(s) to be visited
- the information needed
- contact information for placement
- and may request an order from the presiding judge requesting a courtesy collaboration of their program

The VC will:

- provide a copy of the Courtesy Collaboration Request form letter for completion by the Advocate and/or a court order requesting the courtesy collaboration
- obtain a court ordered request for courtesy collaboration (if needed)
- review the completed Request form letter and fax the material to the collaborating agency
- help the Advocate determine an appropriate time line to receive needed information. The Advocate will continue contact with collaborating staff personnel as needed.

Conclusion:

The Advocate will complete the Thank You Letter for Courtesy Collaboration and forward it to the VC who will then review it and send it to the collaborating agency.

What is Family Group Decision Making?

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) describes a variety of practices to work with and engage children, youth, and families in safety and service planning and decision making, including Family Group Conferences (FGC), Circles of Support (COS), and Family Team Meetings (FTM). CPS began using FGDM in the conservatorship stage of service in 2003 and expanded the practice into the investigative stage in 2007 and into the family based safety services stage in 2009.

This section of the DFPS intranet provides easy access to tools for FGDM, as well as background and rationale for the practice of FGDM in Texas.

How It Works

First, CPS will tell families they can help make a plan. Then, CPS will set up a meeting. The family helps pick the time, place, and who attends. Families can invite anyone who is important in their children's lives.

A **Family Team Meeting** happens most frequently while children live with their families. It's a quick way to deal with safety concerns.

A **Family Group Conference** happens most frequently when children have been removed from their families for a short time. It's up to the family to decide if they want to have one.

Basic Values

- All children should be free from harm.
- Children are best raised in families.
- Families should care for their children.
- Families can make safe choices.
- Children are safest when families and CPS work together.
- Families must be respected.
- Families are the experts and can learn about their own strengths and needs.
- Children should be removed only when there is a strong risk of harm.

Why Family Group Decision Making?

- Families know best about children and their needs.
- There is less trauma for children.
- Culture, dignity, and values are respected.
- Fathers and families are involved more often.
- It can find and use community supports as available.

POTENTIAL VOLUNTEER INTAKE

Receiving the call: Any staff person can and should take a call from a potential volunteer. If the recruiter, or staff person who normally takes inquiry calls is out, find out their level of familiarity with the program, talk with them more about volunteer opportunities and answer any questions they may have. Using the Inquiry Card gather initial information about the potential volunteer.

Sample phrases:

- Thank you for your interest.
- How did you find us? Hear about us? (Fill in space on form)
- (Name) is our Recruitment specialist and she will be so glad that you called. If I can quickly gather some basic information I will leave this on her desk (or in her box) and she will contact you as soon as possible. What is that first name please?

Let the potential volunteer know you will be passing the information on to the appropriate person, and that they will receive a follow up call in the near future with more information from that person. Please be sure to get all of their contact information at the top of the form (address, phone, e-mail, etc).

Receiving the application: Stamp the application with the date the application was received. Pass on a copy of the application to the appropriate person (same as above).

Sample Inquiry Card:



Inquiry Call Info

DATE _____

"Thank you for your interest and calling!" Person taking this call:

How did you find us _____ Which One: _____

Name _____

Email _____

Phone (cell) _____ (any other) _____

Address _____

County _____ TX Zip _____

Interested in Advocate _____ Friends of CASA _____ Other _____

Notes:

Source: Texas CASA, Inc.

PROCEDURES TO REPORT ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-5400

Advocates who are informed of suspected abuse or neglect by professionals or others involved in a case must direct that person to make the report. They must then report the allegations and any concerns to the CPS caseworker and VC.

Any advocate who suspects abuse or neglect must report their concerns to the VC. In addition, any first-hand knowledge of abuse or neglect must be reported to the DFPS Child Abuse Hotline within 72 hours. Informing the VC of the hotline call is optional.

Any Volunteer Coordinator who suspects abuse or neglect must report their concerns to the ED. In addition, any first-hand knowledge of abuse or neglect must be reported to the DFPS Child Abuse Hotline within 48 hours.

Source: Adapted from Voices for Children, Inc. CASA of Brazos Valley

VOLUNTEER SUPERVISION

CASA volunteers do not get paid for their work, but that does not mean program managers should be reluctant to establish guidelines for their behavior. These are people who are handling sensitive, confidential information in sometimes volatile situations. They must adhere to strict regulations in their actions and be accountable for those actions if they are inappropriate.

When a program operates under a set of well-planned guidelines, the court is then assured of quality control. The judge knows the volunteer is guided by someone who has a thorough knowledge of children, families, statutory requirements and the social service delivery system. The professional staff defines the framework for the volunteer's conduct, and ensures that the recommendations reflect realistic expectations that are within the parameters of the court's jurisdiction.

A good CASA manager establishes guidelines to deal with problems before they arise. These guidelines should be spelled out to the volunteers throughout recruiting, screening and training, the job description, the policy manual, the confidentiality statement, and in the interview. Reiterate the guidelines in training, and when a volunteer is assigned a first case.

Volunteers should feel free to express their frustrations, ask for advice, or just vent their feelings. These consulting sessions can produce positive results by diffusing anger, preventing inappropriate actions, recommending alternatives, or heading off burnout. It is also a good idea to supply volunteers with an emergency number where someone from the program can be reached after office hours. While the staff should not make a habit of taking off-hour phone calls, someone does need to be available in the event of an emergency.

The CASA supervisor can also reinforce volunteers through non-crisis, positive feedback. If someone is a great fact-finder but writes poor reports, consider giving that volunteer special instruction on preparing written information. If a volunteer is meticulous and responsible but afraid to speak in court, consider visiting the courtroom during a case and giving that person honest feedback on his or her performance. Each volunteer will bring a unique set of skills and needs to the program. Some will need a great deal of guidance to complete a case, while others will acquire the information and skills they need. Individual differences in volunteers require individual attention.

Because the role of the CASA volunteer is unique and most easily understood by others doing the same work, volunteers can benefit enormously from peer group meetings. Regularly scheduled volunteer meetings can give volunteers the chance to raise questions, ask for advice, compare progress, and identify recurring problems. Regular meetings also are a chance for the supervisor to offer support and encouragement to the volunteers. This time can be used to relay program information to volunteers, such as the number of children served, number of volunteer hours contributed, feedback from the judge, and suggestions on ways to improve the program's operations. Volunteers should also be kept up-to-date on federal and state legislation affecting the children they service and the volunteer's ability to serve them, research findings, and new community resources. Maintaining on-going contact with the volunteers allows them to feel a part of the program and share in its successes.

Another effective supervision strategy is to hold regularly scheduled staff meetings for paid employees and volunteers. Having an established time set aside for "debriefing" keeps the lines of communication open.

Source: "Volunteer Supervision and Consultation" National CASA

HOW MUCH SUPERVISION IS ENOUGH?

The issue of adequate supervision is hotly debated in volunteer management circles. It is an especially relevant question for Volunteer Coordinators since the majority of the volunteer's duties are conducted off-site. Clearly, the answer varies depending on the volunteer but there are some guidelines to assist those in a supervisory role. The first is the National CASA Association Standard which states, "For employees assigned to supervision as a full-time function, the employee will not supervise more than 30 volunteers or a maximum of 45 cases." While maintaining this ratio obviously raises personnel costs, to do less would put CASA programs in the same position as many social service agencies: children's needs going unnoticed and unmet due to lack of adequate staff. Public and judicial support for such an advocacy program would quickly fade as would volunteer motivation.

The next point is that supervision like anything else having to do with human relationships is not static. It is influenced by the environment in which it occurs. For example, personnel changes, even positive ones like a promotion from within the ranks or the long-awaited addition of a new staff member, often trigger a temporary need for more structure and a return to step by step decision making. Volunteers may be unsure of how to relate to their former colleague or miss the special attention from the previous supervisor and attempt to circumvent the "new order." Adjusting to change is a gradual process and collaboration at the supervisory level is a must.

Lastly, appropriate supervision is a function of two interrelated factors: how much autonomy the volunteer is given and how frequently contact is maintained. Both exist on parallel continua. Each volunteer requires a slightly different setting on each scale. For example, a new volunteer needs relatively frequent and elaborate direction. On the other hand, you may have an experienced volunteer whose work is top quality but who has a problem with deadlines. That type of person performs well autonomously but requires a "high" setting on the frequency of contact scale to make sure the report gets in on time. Assessing where each volunteer falls on the two scales and dealing with him/her accordingly makes supervision much more effective.

Source: Achieving Our Mission, National CASA Association

RATIONALE FOR VOLUNTEER TO SUPERVISOR RATIO

National CASA's requires its member programs to assure that volunteer CASA/GALs have adequate supervision. The recommendation is that programs assign no more than 30 volunteers to one full-time supervisor. This recommendation is based on the collective thinking of experienced CASA staff and represents the minimum standard, which states "For employees assigned to supervision as a full-time function, the employee will not supervise more than 30 volunteers or a maximum of 45 cases. In the event the employee is required to perform duties other than supervision of volunteers, the number of volunteers the employee can supervise is reduced pro rata."

Factors considered in arriving at the 30:1 ratio:

- Supervisors need to have at least general knowledge of each case in order to provide appropriate and timely consultation to the volunteer. The supervisor should also have enough knowledge of a case and sufficient time available to step into the volunteer's place in an emergency when a volunteer is unavailable.
- Supervisors must be accessible to volunteers at all times. They must be available in emergencies twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week or have a system established that allows a volunteer to contact someone for advice or consultation during such times.
- Examples of situations in which a volunteer might need after hours assistance would be a situation in which he/she was notified by social workers or law enforcement of a crisis involving an assigned child who required immediate action by an agency or the court.
- Supervisors should hold regular one to one conferences with each volunteer to discuss case activities as well as the volunteer's overall development and performance. When a volunteer is new and/or assigned to a very active case, this could require meetings weekly and telephone contact more often.
- Supervisors should be available to attend court hearings with volunteers to provide support and to monitor performance. Experienced volunteers may not need supervisors at every hearing, but they should be available for contested hearings at a minimum.
- Supervisors are required to oversee the preparation of the volunteer's written report to the court. This includes consulting with the volunteer on the recommendations to be made and reviewing the report with the volunteer to assure that it conforms to law, court rule, and program policy.
- Supervisors should facilitate regular peer meetings of volunteers for the purpose of providing and reinforcing training, disseminating information, and as a means of support for the volunteers. A monthly meeting of groups of no more than 10-15 volunteers has been recommended as the most successful model.
- Supervisors should provide frequent feedback to volunteers on their performance and a formal evaluation at least quarterly.

Supervisors should be provided adequate time for professional development that allows for maintaining up to date knowledge and skills in the areas of child abuse and neglect; juvenile justice and court procedures; advocacy; and volunteer management. They should also be given adequate time for seeking support from colleagues and other CASA/GAL staff to relieve the stress inherent in this kind of position which has a high burn out rate.

Source: Adapted from National CASA Association

MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS OF SERVICE TO A CASE

Texas CASA Standard 7. 5. Written roles and responsibilities will include the following.

The advocate will:

1. Identify and advocate for the best interest of the child by obtaining first hand a clear understanding of the needs and situation of the child, by conducting an ongoing review of all relevant documents and records and by interviewing the child, parents, social workers, teachers and other persons to determine the facts and circumstances of the child's situation.
2. Have regular and sufficient in-person contact with the child where they live to ensure in-depth knowledge of the case and make fact-based recommendations to the court. The CASA volunteer shall meet in-person with the child once every thirty (30) days at a minimum. Fifty percent (50%) of the visits should be in the child's placement. An exception may be granted:
3. If the child(ren) are placed more than 1 but less than 3 driving hours away, CASA will meet in person with the child(ren) at least once every three months.
4. If the child(ren) are placed more than 3 driving hours away, CASA will meet in person with the child(ren) at least once every six months.
5. In addition to in-person contact, have other types of monthly age appropriate contact with the child(ren) including telephone calls, emails, video conferencing and letters as applicable for the child's age and interests.
6. Communicate with the DFPS caseworker after appointment and at least one time per month for the duration of the case.
7. Meet in person with the child's primary placement provider, in a timely manner, after placement occurs. Communicate with the placement provider at least once per month thereafter for the duration of the child's case.
8. Advocate for the child's best interests in the community through regular contact with attorney ad litem, mental health, educational and other community systems to assure that the child's needs in these areas are met and seek cooperative solutions by acting as a facilitator among parties.
9. Determine the child(ren)'s permanent plan, access the educational portfolio and health passport and make recommendations regarding permanency, and education and medical services, as appropriate.
10. Appear at all hearings to advocate for the child's best interests and provide testimony as needed.
11. Provide at every hearing reports which include findings and recommendations, including specific recommendations for appropriate services for the child and, when appropriate, the child's family.
12. Participate in all case-related meetings.
13. Monitor implementation of service plans and court orders assuring that court-ordered services are implemented in a timely manner and that review hearings are held in accordance with the law.
14. Inform the court promptly of important developments in the case through appropriate means as determined by court rules or statute.

15. Maintain complete records about the case, including appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child and the child's life circumstances and return all records to the program after the case is closed.
16. Communicate at least once monthly with CASA supervisor and participate in case conferences as scheduled.
17. Participate in in-service training.

A CASA Volunteer shall not:

- Take action without program or court approval that endangers the child or is outside of the CASA program role or powers of the CASA/GAL program.
- Take a child to the volunteer's home or any other home other than the child's.
- Give legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
- Make placement arrangements for the child.
- Give money or expensive gifts to the child, the child's family or caregiver.
- Take a child on an overnight outing.
- Cause a child or family to become dependent on the volunteer for services that are provided by other agencies or organizations. Such activities may jeopardize the safety of the child, the integrity of the program, or the objectivity of the volunteer.
- Engage in activities which are likely to result in conflict of interest or exposes the program or volunteer to criminal or civil liability.
- Submit recommendations to the court without prior discussion with their supervisor.
- Knowingly put a child in contact with someone who has a criminal history involving violence, child abuse, neglect, drugs, or a sex-related offense
- Authorize medical treatment for the child(ren).
- Give the child(ren) medications or any types of vitamins.
- Give treats or feed the children without consulting the caregiver for dietary restrictions.
- Be especially careful when discussing issues in sexual abuse or other potential criminal cases.

Source: Section 2.7 Restricted Activities of Texas CASA Minimum Standards

SAMPLE: ADVOCACY FILE ASSESSMENT FORM

PROGRAM: _____						REVIEWER: _____						REVIEW DATE: _____	
CHILD INITIALS	AGE	DISTANCE	TMC/PMC /COS	VOL /STAFF	APT DATE	CHILD INITIALS	AGE	DISTANCE	TMC/PMC /COS	VOL/STAFF	APT DATE		
THE FILE CONTAINS DOCUMENTATION OF:						MONTH 1 DATE(S)	MONTH 2 DATE(S)	MONTH 3 DATE(S)	YES OR N/A= 1; No = 0				
Contact with the child(ren) where they live (50%) per standard minimum requirements. IMMEDIATE RESPONSE REQUIREMENT (1 hour = once a month 1-3 hours = every 3 months >3 hours = every 6 months *Must see child in placement 50% of the time)													
Other age-appropriate contact in months without face to face contact, (or in addition to) including phone, email, text, courtesy visits or other documented contact.													
Monthly communication with the caregiver, either face-to-face, email, text, phone or other documented contact.													
Monthly communication with CPS caseworker, either face-to-face, email, text, phone or other documented contact.													
Monthly communication with CASA supervisor, either face-to-face case conferences, email, text, phone or other documented contact.													
The current permanency plan for each child.						<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO							
Age appropriate educational advocacy, at least once in three months, to include face to face, email, text or phone contact with the school, teachers, ARD, viewing the educational portfolio or other documented educational advocacy contact.						(If applicable, record dates)							
Medical advocacy, at least once in three months, to include face-to-face, email, text, phone or other contact with medical providers, therapists, viewing the Health Passport viewing, other documented medical advocacy contact.						(If applicable, record dates)							
Legal advocacy, at least once in three months, to include face-to-face, email, text, phone or other contact with the attorney ad litem, immigration attorney, juvenile probation or other documented legal advocacy contact.						(If applicable, record dates)							
Participation in case related meetings, including documented attendance at permanency conference, family group conference, staffings or other case related meetings.						<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO							
Appearing at all hearings.						<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO							
Court reports that include findings and recommendations.						<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO							
Complete records about the case.						<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO							
SUM OF ITEMS REVIEWED (13)									SUM OF ALL POINTS				
MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS ASSESSMENT PERCENTAGE									SUM OF ALL POINTS / 13				

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE REQUIREMENT

Certain requirements in Texas CASA Standards and the HHSC contract with local programs require an immediate response if a determination is made that a program is out of compliance during the onsite quality assurance review. Immediate response requirements fall into one of two categories; risk to children and financial risk.

FACE TO FACE CONTACT

The following standard requires a minimum amount of face to face contact with a child(ren) to whom the CASA program is appointed.

- Standard 7: Volunteer Management (7.E.5.b.)

According to the standard, the advocate will:

- Have regular and sufficient in-person contact with the child(ren) where they live to ensure in-depth knowledge of the case and make fact-based recommendations to the court. The CASA volunteer shall meet in-person with the child(ren) once **every thirty (30) days** at a minimum. An exception may be granted:
 - If the child(ren) are placed **one to three driving hours** away, then CASA will meet in person with the child(ren) at least **once every three months**.
 - If the child(ren) are placed **more than three driving hours** away, then CASA will meet in person with the child(ren) at least **once every six months**.

If during a quality assurance review it is determined from the case assessment that the child(ren) in a case has not received the minimum face to face contact, an immediate response is required:

- Face to face contact with the child(ren) is required **within 10 business days** of the onsite review. The Executive Director is to submit a statement to Texas CASA that all children to whom the program is appointed have received the minimum face to face contact. This statement is due within that 10-business day period.

Volunteer assigned to more than 5 cases

The following standard prohibits any volunteer from serving on more than 5 cases:

- Standard 7: Volunteer Management (7.D.8.)

If during a quality assurance review it is determined that a volunteer has been assigned to more than 5 cases, an immediate response is required:

The volunteer is to be removed from any number of cases above 5 or a plan to remove the volunteer from additional cases must be submitted within 10 business days of the review.

The Executive Director will provide a statement to Texas CASA stating that the volunteer has been removed or will provide a detailed plan for removal, including timelines, within the 10 business days.

SAMPLE: VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATION SHEET

MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS OF SERVICE CASE FILE

Case: _____ Supervisor: _____ Month: _____
 TMC/PMC: _____ Volunteer: _____ Perm Goal: _____

The File Contains Documentation Of:	Volunteer	Supervisor	Both
Face-to-Face Contact with the child(ren) : -Within 1 hour – once a month -Within 3 hours – once every 3 months - Over 3 hours – once every 6 months *Must see child in placement, 70% of the time Placement Change since last month Y/N	Record dates	Record dates	Record dates
Other age appropriate contact in months without face to face contact, (or in addition to) including phone, email, text, courtesy visits or other documented contact.			
Monthly communication with the caregiver, either; face-to-face, email, text, phone or other documented contact.			
Monthly communication with CPS caseworker, either; face-to-face, email, text, phone or other documented contact.			
Monthly communication with CASA supervisor, either; face-to-face, case conferences, email, text, phone or other documented contact.			
A current permanency plan for each child.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
Age appropriate educational advocacy, at least once in three months, to include face to face, email, text or phone contact with the school, teachers, ARD, educational portfolio viewing or other documented educational advocacy contact.	(If applicable, record dates)		
Medical advocacy, at least once in three months, to include face to face, email, text, phone or other contact with medical providers, therapists, Health Passport viewing, or other documented medical advocacy contact.	(If applicable, record dates)		
Legal advocacy, at least once in three months, to include face to face, email, text, phone or other contact with the attorney ad litem, immigration attorney, juvenile probation or other documented legal advocacy contact.	(If applicable, record dates)		
Participation in case related meetings, including documented attendance at permanency conference, family group conference, staffings or other case related meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
Appearing at all hearings.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
Court reports that include findings and recommendations.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
Complete records about the case.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		
Has the plan changed since last month	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		

To Do: _____

Permanency Plan: _____ Concurrent Plan: _____

Cause Number		CASA appointment date	
Read CPS file date		Vol. appointment date	
Reason for Removal		Dismissal date /extension date	
Taken into Care		CPS Caseworker	
		CPS Investigator	

CRIME VICTIMS COMPENSATION REQUIREMENT

1. CVC preliminarily eligible?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2. If "yes" on question 1 is the CVC application	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete ____/____/____ <input type="checkbox"/> Submitted to OAG ____/____/____
3. Are they eligible?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4. If "yes" to question 3 is the CVC application, determination of benefits and how to file a claim for each child passed along to the PERMANENT caregiver at the close of the case?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date Sent ____/____/____

Above and Beyond Minimum Expectations:

Additional steps: (sibling contact, relative search, family engagement)

Concerns:

Action Steps:

INDIVIDUALIZED ADVOCACY AND ACTION PLAN

STANDARD 7.D.

The CASA advocate volunteer will be busy advocating for the child's needs, advocating for services for the child and family, monitoring the service plans, monitoring placements, communicating with everyone involved with the child's care and well-being, gathering information from the child's service providers and from the parent's service providers, looking for family connections and advocating for permanency.

Part of gathering information will involve contacting school personnel and viewing the educational portfolio, contacting mental health providers, contacting health providers and accessing the child's health passport, contacting relatives and anyone with a relationship to the child, and making recommendations to the court based on the information learned.

Typically, the CASA VOLUNTEER agrees to:

- Conduct a thorough, independent investigation on the basis of independently obtained information.
- Maintain confidentiality of all information regarding the case.
- Complete required documentation including records of contact, regular contact with program staff,
- monthly reports to CASA and Court Reports.
- Utilize support and supervision provided by program staff.
- Follow the CASA program's policies and procedures at all times.

In an effort to provide the highest level of quality advocacy, the CASA volunteer advocate and the CASA supervisor may create a specialized advocacy plan based on the unique needs of the child(ren) and family. This plan will more than meet the minimum expectations of service on a case and ensure the needs of the child are truly met.

(An agreement may include a unique advocacy plan like the sample below signed by both the CASA advocate and the CASA program)

SAMPLE: INDIVIDUALIZED ADVOCACY AND ACTION PLAN

This INDIVIDUALIZED ADVOCACY and ACTION PLAN has been agreed upon by:

CASA VOLUNTEER: _____ DATE: _____

PROGRAM STAFF: _____ DATE: _____

*Preferred phone: () _____

1. PLAN FOR VISITING CHILDREN:

Visit/observe children at their placement 1x every _____.

Visit/observe children at school 1x every _____.

Visit/observe children at daycare 1x every _____.

Phone/mail/email/facetime children, as appropriate, every_____.

2. PLAN FOR MEETING PARENTS:

Visit/observe parents when visiting children at _____ 1x every _____.

Monitor parents' compliance with Treatment Plan via treatment providers.

Phone/email contact with parents 1x every _____.

3. PLAN FOR MEETING RELATIVES:

Advocate for and attend Family Group Conference.

Advocate for Circle of Support.

Research and contact relatives and significant non-relatives of the child.

4. PLAN FOR MEETING WITH CHILD CARE PROVIDERS:

Visit with Foster Parents when visiting the children _____ x/month.

Phone/email contact to Foster Parents 1x every _____.

In-person contact with daycare staff 1x every _____ (when visiting children).

Phone/email contact with daycare staff 1x every _____.

5. PLAN FOR MEETING WITH SCHOOL PERSONNEL:

In-person contact with school personnel 1x every _____ (when visiting children).

Phone/email contact with school personnel 1x every _____.

6. PLAN FOR MEETING WITH HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS:

Advocate for and verify all children have a medical passport as soon as possible.

Monitor children's medical and mental health status via treatment providers.

Phone/email contact to children's therapist 1x every _____.

Phone/email contact to children's doctor 1x every _____.

7. CONTACT WITH PROFESSIONALS (CPS worker, AAL, attorneys):

Phone/email contact to caseworker 1x every _____.

Phone/email contact to AAL 1x every _____.

Attend all CPS staffings. (First one will be in _____.)

Attend any staffings held by other agencies/schools in relation to the children.

Access Case Connection information every _____.

8. ADDITIONAL CASE CONCERNS TO BE ADDRESSED:

SAMPLE 1: VOLUNTEER TIMESHEET

Month:	Supervisor Signature:																	Date:
Service to Child(ren):	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
Face-to-Face with Child(ren)																		
Face-to-Face with Parents/ Foster Parents / Relatives																		
Other Contact with Child/Foster Parents/Relatives																		
Any Contact with AAL																		
Any Contact with CPS caseworker																		
Supervision with CASA staff																		
Educational / Medical / Psychological Advocacy																		
Travel																		
Court Room Advocacy																		
Documentation/Court Reports / Reading files																		
Training (CEU's)																		
Fundraising																		
Mileage																		
Expenses																		
Service to Child(ren):	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	Total		
Face-to-Face with Child(ren)																		
Face-to-Face with Parents/ Foster Parents / Relatives																		
Other Contact with Child/Foster Parents/Relatives																		
Any Contact with AAL																		
Any Contact with CPS caseworker																		
Supervision with CASA staff																		
Educational / Medical / Psychological Advocacy																		
Travel																		
Court Room Advocacy																		
Documentation/Court Reports / Reading files																		
Training (CEU's)																		
Fundraising																		
Mileage																		
Expenses																		

Activity Explanation:	Face to Face ONLY
Face to Face with Child(ren):	Face to Face ONLY
Face-to-Face with parents / Foster parents / Relatives:	Face to Face ONLY
Other Contact with Child/Foster Parents/Relatives:	Includes email, phone, letters
Any Contact with AAL:	Includes emails, face to face, phone
Any Contact with CPS caseworker:	Includes emails, face to face, phone
Supervision with CASA staff:	Alana, Carls, or Trina- phone, emails, face to face
Educational / Medical / Psychological Advocacy:	Ensuring mental, physical and educational needs are being met (doctors, nurses, psychologists, cc
Travel:	To and from any activity
Court Room Advocacy:	Attending court hearing
Documentation/Court Reports / Reading files:	Writing court reports, reading any case files, completing forms, writing case notes, etc.
Training (CEU's):	Chat & Chew's, other trainings
Fundraising:	Dairy Fest, Casas for CASA, Light of Hope, etc
Expenses	Any mileage accrued doing your advocacy

National CASA Association

SAMPLE 2: VOLUNTEER CONTACT LOG

Case Name:	_____	Non-Case Hours:	_____
Month:	_____	Mileage:	_____
Case Hours:	_____	Training/Cont. Ed. Hours:	_____
Volunteer:	_____	Donations:	_____

Date	Person Contacted	Type of Contact	Amount of Time (in hours and minutes)			Mileage	Activity Type
			Case Hours	Non-Case Hours	Training/Cont. Ed.		

Signature of Volunteer

Date

Signature of Staff

Date

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT: ETHICAL ISSUES

Even with appropriate policies and procedures in place, the director or supervisor may find it difficult to communicate to volunteers the importance of strict adherence to the ethical standards required by the program. Two fairly universal practices are helpful in this regard.

The first is having each new class of volunteers sworn in by the presiding judge. This brief ceremony can be used to remind volunteers of their special relationship to the court and its attendant responsibilities. The judge (or the director, if the judge is unavailable) can emphasize the need for advocates to be thorough, timely, accurate, dependable and free from bias. Above all, (s)he can reinforce the necessity of handling case-related information in a professional and confidential manner.

The second practice which affirms the necessity of ethical conduct is the use of a confidentiality agreement. Most organizations have a volunteer sign one when (s)he is accepted into the program. It is good practice to reinforce its importance by executing a separate document each time a new case is assigned. In virtually all programs, a violation of client confidentiality is cause for immediate dismissal. This is an appropriate consequence for such a potentially devastating action. The importance of maintaining case information as confidential can hardly be over-stated. A breach in confidentiality can cause irreparable harm to the child and family involved. It can poison working relationships between CASA and the professional community and cast doubt on the utility of the program. It could even result in litigation.

For all these reasons, it is important that staff and volunteers are clear about what is meant by confidentiality in this context. Just as American citizens were constantly admonished during World War II that "Loose lips sink ships," CASA volunteers should be reminded that confidentiality violations can occur unwittingly. Something as simple as discussing a case in the hall, the elevator or the bathroom, or leaving information on the coffee table at home can have unforeseen consequences. In order to minimize risk, each CASA program should review their policy frequently with volunteers. How confidentiality is to be handled in staffing or team meetings of volunteers should be specifically covered.

Reminders in the newsletter, humorous posters on the wall, vignettes during training can all be used to reinforce the importance of confidentiality.

Ex-parte Communication

Another area of ethical quandary is ex-parte communication (communication about the specific details of a case with the judge outside the courtroom). From the volunteer's perspective, it almost seems that (s)he has been given two competing mandates: "advocate vigorously for the needs of the child" and "operate within the confines of the judicial system", however detrimental its frequent delays may be to the child. It is no wonder that CASA volunteers are frequently tempted to use their unique relationship with the judge to transmit information for the benefit of the child. Volunteers and staff cannot assume that the judge will automatically avoid inappropriate conversations. Advocates need to understand what constitutes ex-parte communication, the possible consequences its use and what alternatives exist for meeting the child's needs.

When Volunteer Desires to Change Relationship with the Child

A third area of ethical conflict occurs when a volunteer wants to change the nature of his/her relationship with the child for whom (s)he is advocating. A volunteer's sudden desire to become "Tonya's foster mother" or "Michael's visiting resource" presents a number of concerns for the program director and

supervisor. In one sense, it is not surprising that a person with a demonstrated commitment to children would become attached to a child who is “just another file” in a woefully inadequate system.

However, there is more to the equation than a child in need of a home and an adult willing to provide one. What is the plan for this child? How might the interjection of the volunteer in a care-taking role affect it? What is the volunteer's level of exposure to the child welfare system? How long have child and adult known each other? Does this person have what it takes to be a foster parent, visiting resource, adopting parent, etc.? How will the CASA program represent the child in the future if this change of roles occurs?

The director's response will obviously be conditioned by the answers to those and other questions. If no policies have been violated, it may be possible to put the volunteer on an extended leave of absence. Sometimes the volunteer's conduct has left the program with no option but dismissal. As always, the outcome will be determined by the best interests of the child who cannot be served by one person wearing the hats of caregiver and CASA volunteer at the same time. Nor can the volunteer simply be assigned to a different child. The potential for conflict of interest is too great. A foster or adoptive parent licensed or supervised by the local social service agency does not have the necessary freedom from competing interests to advocate vigorously. Even if the volunteer felt no pressure personally, any position (s)he took could be perceived by others as having been influenced by his/her foster or adoptive status.

Source: Achieving Our Mission, National CASA Association

CONFIDENTIALITY GUIDELINES

- As a Court Appointed Advocate, you may discuss your case with any party of the lawsuit—this includes parents, attorneys, TDFPS, and the children.
- All material copied from the TDFPS case record must be kept in the Child Advocates case file.
- Before discussing any elements of the case, discuss with your advocacy coordinator who has the “need to know” and what information should be shared.
- Communication with TDFPS caseworker is critical; let them know what information you are sharing.
- Court reports are not privileged information and can be shared with parties to the lawsuit.
- Although the court can release the name of a reporter of any alleged abuse, you may not divulge this information.
- You may discuss concerns and progress with contract service providers who are performing work for the child or parents on your case.
- You may provide necessary information to relatives about the child who is placed with them and about the child's family to enable the relatives to care for the child.
- You may provide necessary information about the child and child's family to foster and adoptive parents to enable them to care for the child.
- Criminal Records Check—you may request a criminal records check when necessary to complete a risk assessment, family assessment or other assessment (including home studies or child care arrangements) on any of the following parties:
 - Persons with a role of alleged perpetrator;
 - The alleged victim's parents or other person legally responsible for the child;
 - A person with whom the parent or other legally responsible person has placed an alleged victim; or
 - A person who is being considered for placement.
- You may share information about a person's criminal history as follows:
 - To the person whose history it is;
 - To an adult living with a child and the person whose history it is, if determined that the release of the information to the adult is necessary to ensure the safety or welfare of the child or adult; or
 - To other persons with the consent of the person whose history it is or on court order.
- HIV Status—You may not share information about parent's HIV status. TDFPS must release confidential information about child's HIV status if they confirm that release is necessary to secure appropriate care and protection for the child and to protect other's in the child's environment for HIV infection
- When in doubt, check with your advocacy coordinator.

Source: *Child Advocates, Inc.*

TIPS TO RESOLVING CONFLICTS WITH VOLUNTEERS

1. Clarify what the problem is; clarify what the problem is not.
2. Identify any common goals, values, assumptions.
3. Experiment until you find an approach that gets through effectively.
4. Keep conversations focused on issues, not personalities.
5. Use simple wording to explain your position. Practice your position in advance until you know it well and can say it effectively.
6. Rehearse positive interaction before the meeting.
7. Keep your attitude positive.
8. Clarify what you want/need from the other person. Distinguish between the two.
9. Watch out for old attitudes that are interfering with your current effort.
10. Make sure your body and verbal language are in agreement.
11. Don't get sidetracked into irrelevant arguments.
12. Speak in private if a difficult issue must be addressed.
13. Don't take their dislike personally.
14. Don't discuss them with other people. The walls have both ears and mouths.
15. Set a limit on what you will put up with and stick to it.
16. Remember that you are not God. 'Winning' may only mean arranging a tolerable working relationship, not solving all their personality defects.
17. Treat them nice, anyway. It may make them like you or it will, at worst, simply confuse them.

Source: Author: Steve McCurley, VM Systems. National CASA Association

VOLUNTEER EVALUATION

Volunteer Supervisors conduct an in-person review of the volunteer's work at case closure, or annually for cases lasting longer than 12 months. The program can choose to conduct semi-annual evaluations. Evaluations will consider case highlights, actions taken by the volunteer, volunteer strengths, and opportunities for improvement, and will be documented in writing and kept in the advocate's file.

The biggest single task of the supervisor is to provide feedback, informally as well as formally. According to Fisher and Cole, feedback should always be given in behavioral rather than personal terms; it is descriptive rather than judgmental. One definition of feedback is to provide a description of progress toward goals. Informal feedback consists of comments made by supervisors in the course of everyday communication such as, "The draft of your court report looked really good. You might want to add some more about the barriers to the mother's progress that you mentioned to me last week." Formal feedback is given in the volunteer evaluation or performance appraisal. In both cases, the objective is to help the volunteer measure up to predetermined and clearly communicated performance standards.

The first commandment of any appraisal or evaluation is "No surprises." If the volunteer is surprised at the content of his/her evaluation, it is a sure sign that the supervisor has not been effective in providing informal, ongoing feedback. The second commandment is "No one can measure performance without something to measure it against." The evaluation must start with a good job description that outlines goals, objectives and performance measures. McCurley and Lynch recommend conducting the session using the RAP method:

- Review the past.
- Analyze the present.
- Plan the future.

While a form may be helpful in this process the discussion between supervisor and volunteer is the main event. The supervisor should listen at least as much as (s)he talks. Stick to the basics: job proficiency, working relationships, comparison with the last review. If a reprimand is called for:

- Be specific.
- Focus on the problematic behavior rather than attitude or motivation.
- Let the volunteer know you and the program expect quality work and will help them where they are lacking.
- Put the reprimand in perspective and move on.

Other evaluation techniques which may be used independently or in conjunction with the standard supervisor/volunteer evaluation are self-assessment and peer review. In self-assessment, volunteers are provided with a questionnaire which they score themselves. It lists a number of factors related to job performance. This is the least threatening type of evaluation and can be a good place to start if a program has not had a system in place previously. Some programs incorporate a self-assessment into their formal evaluation procedure. If a supervisor finds that his/her score is not well correlated with that of the volunteer, some work is needed on supervisory skills.

The second alternative technique is peer review. Peer review offers volunteers the opportunity to learn from each other and view their colleagues as resources. Caution should be exercised with this style of appraisal. It demands that volunteers first be trained in how to offer feedback in helpful, non-

judgmental and constructive ways. Most supervisors are not particularly enthusiastic about doing evaluations. They think of them primarily as a system for dealing with problems. Evaluations are really a way to praise the majority of volunteers who are doing their job well. Evaluations can also serve as diagnostic tool. For example, they can help a supervisor determine if a volunteer is ready to take on new or increased responsibility, or, conversely, is suffering from burnout.

The third and final commandment regarding evaluations has already been made famous by athletic shoe manufacturer Nike in their ad campaign slogan "Just do it." Failing to conduct evaluations is both demeaning and demoralizing to volunteers. They require supervisory assistance and they need positive reinforcement to continue doing a job as challenging as child advocacy.

Source: Achieving Our Mission, National CASA Association

CONDUCTING THE EVALUATION

The evaluation session should be a two-way meeting. It is your chance to talk about the volunteer's performance, giving either praise or suggestions for improvement. It should also be the volunteer's opportunity to talk about how their participation can be enhanced, which might even include discussing their moving to a new volunteer position.

The easiest method of conducting the evaluation session is to follow the RAP method:

- Review the past.
- Analyze the present.
- Plan the future.

And here are some suggestions:

- Don't get overwhelmed by forms. Forms are helpful (and can particularly be so for your poor successor who may be trying desperately to find out what went on before she got there), but they are not the major concern during the discussion.
- Start with the job description. Begin by finding out if it in fact describes what the volunteer has been doing. Take notes so you can adjust it closer to reality. The major 'problem' with highly motivated volunteers is that they produce rapid 'scope creep' in their assignments. You don't want to discourage this, but you do want to know about it.
- Stick to the basics: job proficiency, working relationships, comparison with last review.
- Listen as least as much as you talk. When you schedule the session with the volunteer, tell them this is their opportunity to evaluate the volunteer program and you want their ideas on how to make things better both for them and for other volunteers.
- Remember that the evaluation may show as much what you need to do as it does what the volunteer needs to do.

DEALING WITH PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

If the evaluation does deal with some unsatisfactory performance by the volunteer, follow these simple guidelines when giving a reprimand:

- **Don't smile.** This is a serious subject, and you will simply confuse the volunteer if you are saying one thing and acting in a different manner.
- **Don't gunny sack;** i.e. don't save up a lot of small criticisms and drop them all on the volunteer at the same time. These should be dealt with in smaller segments during regular volunteer/supervisor conversations.
- **Be specific.** Talk about what the volunteer is not doing in the way you want them to.
- **Avoid vague comments,** particularly if they are about the volunteer's attitude or motivations as opposed to the volunteer's action or behavior.
- **Let the volunteer know how you feel.** Indicate that both you and program expect quality performance and that you are disappointed by the unsatisfactory work.
- **Put the reprimand in perspective.** If the volunteer has done good work in other areas or at other times, remind them of that good performance.
- **Don't repeat the reprimand.** Cover the area that needs improvement and move on.

Source: National CASA Association, ©1995, Steve McCurley. All rights reserved.

LOOKING FOR ALTERNATIVES TO FIRING

Before addressing development of a system for firing volunteers, it is important to note that the decision to terminate a volunteer should always be, in practice, a reluctant last resort.

Firing a volunteer is an admission that volunteer management has failed. It means that the interviewing system did not work, or the job design was faulty, or that training and supervision did not operate the way it should. It is as much an indictment of the agency as it is of the volunteer.

And it is crucial to remember that many situations that appear to warrant firing may actual be remediable by less stringent methods. Before contemplating firing a volunteer, see if any of the following approaches may be more appropriate and less painful:

- **Re-Supervise.** You may have a volunteer who doesn't understand that the rules of the agency have to be followed. This is a common problem for agencies who utilize youth volunteers, some of whom automatically 'test' the rules as part of their self-expression. Re-enforcement may end the problem.
- **Re-Assign.** Transfer the volunteer to a new position. You may, on the basis on a short interview, have mix-read their skills or inclinations. They may simply not be getting along with the staff or other volunteers with whom they are working. Try them in a new setting: and see what happens.
- **Re-Train.** Send them back for a second education. Some people take longer than others to learn new techniques. Some may require a different training approach, such as one-on-one mentoring rather than classroom lectures. If the problem is lack of knowledge rather than lack of motivation, then work to provide the knowledge.
- **Re-Vitalize.** If a long-time volunteer has started to malfunction, they may just need a rest. This is particularly true with volunteers who have intense jobs, such as one-time work with troubled clients. The volunteer may not realize or admit that they're burned out. Give them a sabbatical and let them re-charge. Practice 'crop rotation' and transfer them temporarily to something that is less emotionally draining.
- **Refer.** Maybe they just need a whole new outlook of life, one they can only get by volunteering in an entirely different agency. Refer them to the Volunteer Center or set up an exchange program with a sister agency. Swap your volunteers for a few months and let them learn a few new tricks.
- **Retire.** Recognize that some volunteers may simply reach a diminished capacity in which they can no longer do the work they once did and may even be a danger to themselves and to others. Give them the honor they deserve and ensure that they don't end their volunteer careers in a way they will regret. Assist them in departing with dignity before the situation becomes a tragic crisis.

All of these alternatives are both easier to implement and managerially smarter than making a decision to terminate a volunteer. They recognize that there are many reasons why a person may be behaving inappropriately and that some of these reasons have answers other than separating that person from the program. We strongly urge that you consider each of these alternatives before deciding to fire any volunteer.

Used by permission. Author: Steve McCurley Reprinted From: Grapevine, Jan/Feb 93

DISMISSAL OF AN ADVOCATE

There are times when a supervisor must be very clear and firm in directing a volunteer. This can be difficult when supervising an unpaid worker because there is a tendency to worry about appearing “ungrateful” for the volunteer’s contribution and commitment. However, it is important to remember that the volunteer has agreed to perform the duties of the position as outlined in the program policy manual. Anytime the volunteer violates these standards, he or she must be told what behavior was inappropriate and why. Always see the assistance of your immediate supervisor for guidance and advice.

Some violations of conduct may be so serious that a volunteer should be terminated immediately. Some of these include appearing in court or making contacts while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, offering drugs or alcohol to a child, any form of child abuse, breach of confidentiality, or an intentional violation of a court order. This is not an all-inclusive list, and it is up to each program to determine its own parameters. If termination becomes necessary, the supervisor should document the reason in a letter to the volunteer, keeping a copy for the volunteer’s file. These files should be maintained permanently. The volunteer’s supervisor should always consult with their immediate supervisor when any cause for disciplinary action arises.

Source: “Disciplinary Action,” National CASA

TEXAS CASA STANDARD 7.F DISMISSAL OF A CASA VOLUNTEER

The CASA/GAL program has policies and procedures that specify the conditions for disciplinary action and non-voluntary dismissal of volunteers.

Appropriate grounds for dismissal of a CASA volunteer include, but are not limited to:

- Taking action without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the role or authority of the CASA/GAL program.
- Engaging in ex-parte communication with the court.
- Violating a program policy, court rule or law.
- Failing to complete required pre-service and in-service training.
- Failing to demonstrate an ability to effectively carry out assigned duties.
- Falsifying a volunteer application or misrepresenting facts during the screening process.
- Having allegations of child abuse/neglect brought against them.
- Experiencing an irresolvable conflict of interest.

The CASA/GAL program's policies and procedures specify the person or persons with authority to dismiss a volunteer.

SAMPLE: CASA CASE EXIT INTERVIEW

1. What were the positive aspects of being a CASA volunteer on this case?
2. What were the negative aspects of being a CASA volunteer on this case?
3. Overall, do you feel you made a positive impact on this case?
4. How did in-service training assist you on this case?
5. What training did you feel that you lacked or needed to do your best on this case?
6. Case supervision is a form of ongoing training. Did you receive the support that you needed on this case?
7. Did the outcome of the case affect your feelings of accomplishment or lack of accomplishment on this case?
8. When will you be ready to take a new case?
9. What case dynamics in your next CASA case assignment would you prefer/feel would best match your skills and interests? (Examples: pre-school children; parents with drug abuse history, special needs children, TMC or PMC case)
10. If you are not ready to take a new case, would you be ready to assist with providing courtesy visits for another CASA program whose child is placed in your program's area?
11. Would you be interested in working with another CASA volunteer together on a case in a co-CASA situation?

Comments:

Signature of Volunteer Coordinator

Date

Signature of Advocate

Date

Source: Adapted from CASA of Travis County

SAMPLE: VOLUNTEER CLOSED CASE FORM



Volunteer Closed Case Evaluation Form

PLEASE SEND THIS COMPLETED EVALUATION TO THE ATTENTION OF CASA OF TRAVIS COUNTY'S PROGRAM DIRECTOR

CASA Volunteer Name _____ CASA Supervisor for this case _____

Case Name and Cause # _____ Date of case closure _____ # of months on the case _____

Please circle the number that best corresponds with your response.

1. Overall, I made a positive impact on this case.

Strongly Disagree
1

Disagree
2

Agree
3

Strongly Agree
4

2. I was supported by my Casework Supervisor as I worked this case.

Strongly Disagree
1

Disagree
2

Agree
3

Strongly Agree
4

3. Overall, I am satisfied with the experiences I had as a Court Appointed Special Advocate on this case.

Strongly Disagree
1

Disagree
2

Agree
3

Strongly Agree
4

4. The training and continuing education I received was helpful to me as I worked this case.

Strongly Disagree
1

Disagree
2

Agree
3

Strongly Agree
4

5. List ways the CASA program staff could have offered more or better support on this case.

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____

_____I would not like to volunteer as a CASA on another case.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

138 Texas CASA Executive Director Resource Manual 4: Volunteer Manual
Volunteer Management, Policies, and Procedures

Technical Assistance Bulletin

The mission of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association, together with its state and local members, is to support and promote court-appointed volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children so that they can thrive in safe, permanent homes. See Appendix B for more information about National CASA.

This Technical Assistance Bulletin presents ideas for using non-advocate volunteers in CASA/GAL programs.



Ideas for Using Non-Advocate Volunteers to Build Capacity in CASA/GAL Programs

Recruiting, training and managing volunteers can be both task and time intensive. For organizations that utilize volunteers, these activities are necessary to create an atmosphere that supports, nurtures and retains a healthy volunteer network.

But the era of customization is upon us. Everything from athletic attire, computers and even baby bottles can be customized to suit the patron's interests or needs. This has resulted in organizational changes in approaches to volunteer recruitment, training and management that require being flexible and providing a variety of volunteer opportunities. CASA programs that respond to this changing atmosphere can foster volunteers' further involvement in the organization as CASA/GAL advocates, board members, legislative advocates, fundraisers, administrative supporters and myriad other options.

This document provides a summary of activities for non-advocate volunteers and practices and policies that engage and promote volunteer commitment and service.

Benefits of Utilizing Non-Advocate Volunteers

Developing opportunities to accommodate various levels of volunteer commitment serves multiple purposes for the CASA/GAL program as well as the volunteer. The CASA/GAL program benefits from the service of non-advocate volunteers and may seize the opportunity to foster these relationships and develop them to increase volunteerism and contributions to the organization. This experience can serve as an introduction to the CASA/GAL program. Similarly, volunteers that once served as advocates may wish to take a hiatus from case assignments but remain connected to the program in some capacity. Programs that develop creative and flexible ways to keep volunteers engaged improve the chances of retaining volunteers and case re-assignment. At the very least, the CASA/GAL program preserves a valuable source of knowledge and experience of veteran volunteers that can be shared with new volunteers and build a culture of continuity and camaraderie. Remember, not everyone in your community will have the skills, desire and time to be an advocate volunteer but your organization should have an opportunity for various community members to volunteer their services.

Potential Activities for Non-Advocate Volunteers

Most, if not all, CASA/GAL programs benefit from the invaluable contributions of non-advocate volunteers. There are a number of ways a CASA/GAL program can utilize non-advocate volunteers, including:

- Preparing materials for a volunteer training class
- Writing/layout/editing/publication/distribution of the program's newsletter
- Designing a website
- Maintaining current information on a program website
- Recruiting volunteers: public speaking, staffing tables at events, talking to friends
- Hanging CASA posters in your community
- Providing data entry on a regular basis
- Inviting CASA staff to present a program to their community or civic group, recruiting volunteers, requesting a donation, etc.
- Getting CASA information out in their workplace via e-newsletter, posters, brochures in pay envelopes, etc.
- Getting CASA information out in their faith community via bulletin and/or newsletter inserts; speaking to small groups with a mission focus; speaking during worship; hanging posters; requesting a donation; etc.
- Making treats for volunteer trainings or recognition events
- Organizing a fundraiser
- Contacting businesses for in-kind donations: food, prizes in connection with a special event or for volunteer recognition, office supplies, etc.
- Presenting an in-service training workshop on a topic about which they have professional expertise
- Connecting CASA staff to potential donors and/or foundations
- Making their home, workplace or other facility available to the CASA program for training, volunteer recognition, special events, etc.
- Selling tickets for a fundraiser
- Writing thank-you notes for donations or after a special event
- Keeping a scrapbook of CASA program clippings/history/special events
- Serving on governing boards or advisory councils or their committees

Screening, Supervision and Training

Non-advocate volunteers, like advocate volunteers, need and benefit from training. The level and type of training depends on the volunteer's activities, access to the children being served and case information. Certainly, all volunteers should complete an application, undergo a screening process and participate in an orientation that provides an overview of CASA/GAL work. A higher standard of screening, training and supervision is required for non-advocates that have access to CASA/GAL case information and files and/or are "higher profile," such as speakers and program representatives. While National CASA does not currently have standards for the application and screening process for non-advocate volunteers, program staff should consider the following as they activate non-advocate volunteers.

Type of Activity	Screening, Training and Supervision
<p>Works around data and confidential information, or acts as a representative or speaker on behalf of the program. Non-advocate volunteers in this category typically have an ongoing engagement with the program, but do not carry cases. However, they come in contact with confidential information and/or children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of CASA/GAL non-advocate volunteer application and screening process consistent with CASA/GAL standards. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A brief application that captures pertinent information relative to the level of volunteerism (see sample) ○ Background checks ○ Two or three written and/or verbal—but recorded—recommendations ○ In-person interview of volunteer • CASA/GAL 101 or equivalent that provides the CASA/GAL history and mission • Confidentiality training and signing of a confidentiality agreement form • Identified tasks, goals and expectations • Supervision should be consistent with supervision provided if paid staff performed the tasks. Supervision must also be consistent with staff policies and procedures. Supervision may be provided by another volunteer. • Volunteer may be under the age of 21 depending on the assigned task
<p>Assists with monthly newsletter, mailings, fundraising, etc., but does not work around data and confidential information. This level of non-advocate volunteer's involvement can be inconsistent or revolve around special activities and tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of CASA/GAL non-advocate volunteer application and screening process. This level of volunteerism may not warrant the screening process as required by CASA/GAL standards and identified for those working around confidential information • CASA/GAL 101 or equivalent that provides the CASA/GAL history and mission • Confidentiality training and signing of a confidentiality agreement form • Identified tasks, goals and expectations • Supervision should be consistent with supervision provided if paid staff performed the tasks. Supervision must also be consistent with staff policies and procedures. Some tasks may allow for supervision to be conducted by another volunteer. Depending on the volunteer's level of expertise, familiarity with the program and the difficulty level of the task(s), supervision may not require frequent in-person oversight. It may be possible for supervision to be conducted by other means, such as telephone or email

Type of Activity	Screening, Training and Supervision
Plans and staffs CASA/GAL program events, fundraisers, etc. that do not include children and/or confidential information and data. These typically are single-event volunteers or those that seek volunteer-in-a-day opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of CASA/GAL non-advocate volunteer application and screening process. This level of volunteerism may not warrant a similar screening process as required by CASA/GAL standards. • CASA/GAL 101 or equivalent that provides the CASA/GAL history and mission • Confidentiality training and signing of a confidentiality agreement form • Identified tasks, goals and expectations • Supervision should be consistent with supervision provided if paid staff performed the tasks. Supervision must also be consistent with staff policies and procedures. A lower level of supervision that entails periodic check-ins and follow up in person, by email or telephone with the volunteer may suffice. Of course, this depends on the nature of the activity and the task that the volunteer is undertaking. Supervision may be delivered by another volunteer.

A CASA/GAL 101 type of training/orientation provides the volunteer with an overview of the history, mission, values and responsibilities and roles of the CASA/GAL program (local, state, and national levels). It should also include information on confidentiality and record-keeping, as well as a thorough review of the volunteer's roles and responsibilities. This information promotes the volunteer's insight into and understanding of the importance of their involvement and contribution. Volunteers that know the mission, significance of the cause and the impact of their contribution are more likely to be retained. Providing the appropriate level of training and supervision helps ensure that the volunteers are equipped with the necessary information and support to conduct their activities in a safe and pleasant environment with a high degree of satisfaction. Staff interaction with volunteers helps build rapport and convey the message that volunteers are appreciated.

Ideas to Cultivate and Retain Volunteers¹

There is a significant value to the organization and children served if high-quality volunteers are consistently cultivated and retained. Remember, volunteer is a pay grade not a performance level. As such, it is imperative to operate in a manner that gives volunteers a sense of belonging and willingness to continue to serve your organization. Some keys to volunteer retention include:

- Find or develop opportunities for volunteers to get involved right away. It is helpful to have a running list of various opportunities for volunteers. It may be helpful to ask the volunteer what activity or activities interest them.
- Have clear goals and expectations of what volunteers will do.
- Be flexible—have volunteer projects that can be accomplished on weekends and weekdays, morning and evenings. This kind of diversity of opportunity will enable volunteers to balance school, work, family and service!

¹ Adapted from "14 Things to Do to Keep Volunteers Around."

- Make sure volunteers understand the importance of the task they are doing and how it fits into the overall mission and organization.
- Never allow people to feel that you wasted their time or that they weren't really needed.
- Provide a structure so that those who want to can take on roles of greater responsibility. Encourage greater involvement by those who meet your advocate volunteer criteria. Examples of greater involvement may include board membership; lobbying (or advocacy) on behalf of CASA/GAL programs with state legislatures and government officials; fundraising, speaking engagements; marketing and public relations campaigns; legal consultation; and general administrative support.
- Give constructive criticism and evaluations of work performance. People want to do their best and want to know if they miss the mark.
- Give honest and sincere praise, say "thank you," make people glad they came and participated.
- Make the project an "event"—make working on it more interesting than staying home and watching it.
- Recognize volunteers in speeches, media, meetings, etc.
- Reward volunteers with shirts, pins, buttons, etc.
- Invite all volunteers to parties, retreats, picnics and other "off-duty" events.
- Identify a contact person and volunteer activity/project lead.

Enacting a plan to engage non-advocate volunteers requires a multifaceted approach. Cultivating volunteer relationships calls for creativity, commitment, flexibility, readily available volunteer opportunities and a collaborative staff approach. The safety of the children being served and the integrity of the program must always be at the forefront of any programmatic initiative. Policies and protocols should promote volunteer involvement and preserve both the integrity of the program and the children served. The contributions of non-advocate volunteers are invaluable. The added resources and support they contribute help provide a foundation and the capacity to build stronger CASA/GAL programs. The aforementioned recommendations present a framework that can be adapted by CASA/GAL programs to initiate and/or augment non-advocate volunteerism.

Partnering with Other Organizations

In addition to customizing volunteer opportunities for those who are interested in giving their time to your CASA/GAL program, collaboration with other organizations is critical. Consider joining with the volunteer center of your local United Way or partnering with other local organizations that offer volunteer opportunities for children. One strategy would be a joint recruitment campaign that would allow several similar organizations to increase public awareness and garner more volunteers. The theme could be helping children and could include various types of involvement—from CASA/GAL volunteers to foster parents to emergency shelter care providers.

Appendix A

Sample Non-Advocate Volunteer Application

Please print

First Name Last Name.....

Address..... City/State/Zip.

Telephone Social Security #

Date of Birth Spouse's Name.....

What types of volunteer work are you interested in doing?

.....

Personal information (please circle correct response):

Gender: Male Female

Race (optional):

Black White Hispanic/Latino Asian Native American Other:.....

Physical limitations: No Yes (please explain)

Education (highest level completed):

Grades 1-5 6-9 11-12 College Business Graduate School Technical/Vocational

Occupation (if applicable):

List previous volunteer experience:

Do you have any special skills/training?.....

.....

Languages: Fluent Read Write

.....

Volunteer availability (circle all that apply):

Number of days per week: 1 2 3 4 5

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Weekends No Preference

How did you learn about [CASA/GAL program name] (circle all that apply):

CASA Volunteer Word of Mouth Newspaper Radio/Print Ad Internet Search

Other (specify):

References:

Full NameTelephone/Email.....

Organization.....Relationship

Full NameTelephone/Email.....

Organization.....Relationship

Full NameTelephone/Email.....

Organization.....Relationship

In an emergency, notify:

Full NameTelephone

Volunteer hereby agrees to serve any client who is assigned regardless of race, sex, creed or national origin. I hereby authorize the CASA/GAL program and any law enforcement agency they authorize, to investigate my background to determine my fitness as a potential volunteer. I understand that failure to authorize this release of information and subsequent record checks will disqualify me from becoming a volunteer.

.....
(Signature/Volunteer)

.....
(Date)

.....
(Signature/Staff)

.....
(Date)

Appendix B

Overview of the National CASA Association

Over half a million children live in the foster care system today because they are unable to live safely at home due to some form of parental abuse or neglect. It is estimated that children who suffer abuse and neglect are 53% more likely to become juvenile delinquents and 38% more likely to become violent criminals as adults. A major factor in avoiding bad outcomes for an abused child is the presence of a concerned adult in that child's life. In 2007, over 243,000 abused and neglected children were able to have at least one consistent and concerned adult in their lives, a volunteer court appointed special advocate (CASA).

CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to advocate for the best interests of abused children and to ensure that they do not get lost in the overburdened legal system or languish in an inappropriate group or foster home. They stay with each child's case until the child is placed in a safe, permanent home with hope for a positive future. In some states, CASA volunteers are referred to as volunteer guardians ad litem (GALs).

The National CASA Association is a national organization of 954 local and state member CASA/GAL programs and satellite offices across the country. National CASA, headquartered in Seattle, WA, functions as a resource to support and increase the capacities of state organizations and local programs to serve more abused children and serve them better. We provide state and local program staff with training and assistance in a variety of areas, including program development, volunteer recruitment and training, program best practices, quality assurance, resource development and grant writing. We also provide local and state programs with grant funds to promote both program quality and growth to better meet the needs of abused children.

For more information, visit nationalcasa.org.



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Volunteer Closed Case Evaluation Form

Section 4

CASA CASE RECORDS



**Executive Director Resource Manual
2017 Edition**

KEEPING ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

This process is for paper files; however, whether program keeps hard copy or digital files, the program still must have both a master file and working file. “File” in this section refers to both hard copy and digital record keeping.

Like any agency that deals with the court or social service system, the CASA program must keep accurate records. One of the primary jobs of the program staff is to keep track of cases as they move through the system, notifying volunteers on the time and date of court hearings. The program must, at all times, be aware of the status of the case. It must also keep records of how a volunteer handles a case -- reports to the court, people contacted in the course of fact-finding, and any other activities in the line of work. When designing your record keeping system, you will also want to be able to compile case statistics in monthly and annual reports to keep tabs on the program's activities and assess its track record.

Here are areas for which you will want to design tracking/filing systems:

1. Master File and Working File

When CASA is appointed to a child through a court order, the program will obtain or receive a packet of information from the clerk or court administrator that contains all pertinent legal documents and notices. This includes copies of all pleadings filed with the court, a copy of the order appointing CASA, and the date and type of the next hearing scheduled.

These documents are the heart of your master/working case file. They should be placed in your master filing system under the child's name, or under the docket number (this can help ensure confidentiality). Many programs which use a manual system keep these records filed in chronological order. Any subsequent information about the case will be added to this file to give you a comprehensive picture of the case throughout its lifetime. This is also a good place to keep a record of communication between the CASA office and the volunteer.

The volunteer who is assigned to the case will also need a working case file. Make copies of your original documents, and give them to the volunteer at the time he or she is assigned to the case. As the volunteer works on the case, he or she can use this file as a place to also keep the dates and notes from interviews, information on how to contact various parties, and copies of reports provided by the caseworker or parents.

It is critical that volunteers realize that the materials contained in these files are confidential in nature and that they take precautions to safeguard their working file when it is in their possession. A procedure for destroying or returning working files to the program should be established. A time frame for keeping office files and procedures for destroying them should be agreed upon by the program and the court.

2. Schedule of Hearings (Docket)

For each case, you need to keep a complete record of court hearings. Your form should include:

- Court case number
- Date and type of hearing
- Child's name
- CASA volunteer's name
- Caseworker

- Changes in dates (i.e. continuances)

This information can be collected from the court docket, court orders, or verbal orders from the attorney general's office or the administrative office of the court. When you develop your system for keeping track of the case's hearing schedule, keep in mind that information will change frequently. Parties often ask for continuances, or the judge may determine additional information is needed before the hearing can be effectively concluded. The schedule of upcoming hearings should be a working document, able to accommodate change. It should also verify that the appropriate people have been notified of the change.

Sometimes the volunteer will be the first to know of a change in the schedule, and will notify the office. The staff should then try to confirm that information by contacting the court.

3. Volunteer File

A separate file should be maintained on each volunteer. The file includes:

- Completed application form and references
- Dates the volunteer completed pre-service training
- Signed agreement regarding confidentiality and adherence to program policy
- Record of any stated preference for types of cases or restrictions on case assignment
- Correspondence
- Volunteer's learning and training goals
- Performance appraisals
- Record of any disciplinary action taken by staff regarding the individual's conduct
- Cases assigned
- Date of background checks

4. Volunteer Time Records and Expense Report

One of the most effective statistics the CASA program can cite is the amount of volunteer time contributed to the program and the children it serves. By documenting the time contributed, you can make a credible argument for the value of volunteers -- an argument that can help you in your public relations efforts and in seeking support from funders.

If you decide you need only an accounting of the total number of hours each volunteer contributes a month, you can obtain the information by polling your volunteer pool when you prepare a monthly report. If you wish to know how much time a volunteer has spent on a particular case, have the volunteer include the figure in his or her final report to the program, or on the expense report form. Some programs even have the volunteer break down their hours in different categories -- how much time did he/she spend in court? In fact finding? In writing reports? In conferences with supervisors at the program? In case or treatment team consultation?

Although CASA is a volunteer program, many staff have found ways to reimburse volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses in the line of work. Volunteers typically submit expense reports at the end of each month. These should be handled just like expense account forms for any business, with breakdown of dollar amounts, reason for the expense, and documentation (receipts) attached.

Some programs cover a variety of expenses in their reimbursement practices, including mileage, long distance phone charges, child care (while on the job), and supplies.

5. Statistical Records

Although the primary goal of record keeping is to keep your program running smoothly and efficiently, there are other reasons why CASA programs should pay close attention to gathering accurate and timely statistics. Its benefits are often obvious to people in the system that have had firsthand experience with the program. But the general public can sometimes be a harder audience to convince—especially funders and the media.

When choosing projects to fund, most foundations and/or community service organizations want evidence that a cause is worthy, and that it effectively serves a community need. Testimonials alone aren't enough to convince these potential funders to hand over a check. They need to see hard data that illustrates the program's accomplishments.

Likewise, statistics can help you solidify your public image and credibility. Funders like facts—facts that show why your program was needed (abuse and foster care statistics), what it is doing (number of volunteers, the hours they spend on the job), and the results (number of children served, cost savings to the court). This information is also a powerful motivator in other public awareness projects. If you can quote positive figures in speeches, informational materials, or for fundraising projects, your program will be perceived as valuable and effective.

CASA programs should regularly collect and maintain accurate, thorough program data, and compile data on at least an annual basis. This should include:

Information on Children:

- Demographic information, including age, gender, ethnicity
- Total number of children served
- Number of new (not previously served by the program) children served
- Number of children whose cases were closed (dismissed by the court)
- Information on Volunteers:
- Demographic information, including age, gender, ethnicity, employment, status, education
- Status of volunteers (i.e. # assigned to cases, # inactive, # waiting for a case, etc.)
- Number of volunteer hours contributed
- Total length of time volunteer is assigned to a child

Other Information:

- Breakdown of types of cases (# of sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect)
- Number of children in the court's jurisdiction that needed a CASA volunteer vs. those who were assigned a volunteer
- Source of program referral (if multi-referral program)
- Case outcomes

Each program must determine what information is necessary for its needs and purposes. Privately funded programs can use the data in grant applications and to justify spending to funders. All programs can use the information in lobbying efforts. All programs can improve their position with local media through a well-planned information package featuring statistical information.

Software such as Optima and CasaManager can help your CASA program track and use this information. Using a database system has many benefits, for example if your funder wants informa-

tion about the number of CASA or GAL volunteers and the number of open and closed cases, you can quickly generate and print a report with that exact information.

Source: National CASA Association

VOLUNTEER FILE CONTENTS

A file is kept for every volunteer. The CASA volunteer file is confidential and the property of the CASA program. If a CASA volunteer moves and wishes to affiliate with a CASA program in another city, the CASA program, with the written permission of the volunteer, may release copies of pertinent volunteer documents.

Upon resignation or termination, the CASA program will take appropriate measures to ensure the confidentiality of the volunteer file in storage. Programs will keep the volunteer file for a period of not less than seven years, after which time it may be destroyed.

Standard 7.7.g

The CASA/GAL program maintains a written confidential record for each volunteer that contains, at minimum:

1. Application.
2. Emergency and identifying contact information.
3. Job description.
4. Reference documentation.
5. Documentation of all records checks.
6. Training records.
7. Performance evaluations and any other applicable documentation related to performance.
8. Documentation of volunteer status.
9. Copy of volunteer's current driver's license, motor vehicles records check and verification of automobile insurance (if program allows transportation).
10. Documentation of personal interview.

Source: Texas CASA, Inc.

CASA FILE CONTENTS

1. The CASA case file should be kept in a locked, secure location within the CASA office or password protected if the program keeps digital files.
2. The CASA case file should be routinely reviewed and maintained in an orderly and professional manner.
3. The following is a suggested file division for keeping documentation orderly and accessible:

CASA WORK PRODUCT - GENERAL

- File Face Sheet
- Case Management form
- Order of CASA appointment
- Volunteer Acceptance and Assignment
- CASA Notification of Volunteer Assignment—letters
- Volunteer Acceptance of Confidential Records
- Quarterly Conference form (initial and all subsequent forms)
- Transportation Release form (if applicable)
- Log notes documenting case activity and case contacts
- Notes from court hearings, PPT, ISP and ARD meetings
- Notes from Adoption Informational staffings
- Notes from Adoptive home studies *
- Notes from Adoption Selection staffings *

CORRESPONDENCE-GENERAL

- All case related correspondence (excluding legal documents), notices for hearings, PPT, PC, etc.
- Volunteer/Staff correspondence

CASA COURT REPORTS SECTION FOUR: DFPS REPORTS

- DFPS Plans of Service for each child and for parents
- Psychiatric/Psychological reports *
- ISP and/or TPR reports
- School reports, educational assessments, ARD reports
- Medical information/reports

- Other placement information

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

- Affidavit
- Original Petition
- Amended Petition (if applicable)
- Court Orders- Show Cause order, Temporary orders, Review Hearing orders
- Merits settings
- Pre-Trial Legal documents—Discovery

Source: *Texas CASA, Inc.*

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Human Resource Code (40.005E) provides that a person who is authorized to receive confidential information shall maintain its confidentiality and shall prevent disclosure of the information to a person who is not authorized to receive the information. It is a Class A misdemeanor to disclose, without authorization, confidential information contained in the TDFPS records, papers, files or communications.

In addition, a court order appointing a CASA/Guardian ad Litem may have language to ensure the confidentiality of information gathered as a result of the CASA/GAL role. For example, one such order states, "IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Guardian ad Litem shall not disclose any confidential information received from any agency or individual, except to the court and the parties in this case."

Lastly, The Texas Family Code has a subchapter on CASA which includes "Use of Information and Records, Confidentiality". The following information is located in Chapter 264: Child Welfare Services and section 264.600, Subchapter G: Court-Appointed Volunteer Advocate Programs.

Section 264.613(a) regarding Confidentiality states, "The files, reports, records, communications and working papers used or developed in providing services under this subchapter are confidential and not subject to disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may only be disclosed for purposes consistent with this subchapter" (which is Court-Appointed Volunteer Advocacy).

Section 264.613(b) states, "Information described above in (a) may be disclosed to:

- the department, department employees, law enforcement agencies, prosecuting attorneys, medical professionals, and other state agencies that provide services to children and families;
- the attorney for the child who is the subject of the information; and
- eligible children's advocacy centers.

Source: Human Resources Code, Texas Family Code

QUALITY ASSURANCE: VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT FILE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Volunteer files are reviewed and scored based on the inclusion of specific required documents. A numerical scoring system is used, with programs receiving either a "1" or a "0" for each document. Items not applicable are marked N/A. Programs must score 80% or higher on files reviewed to be in compliance with Texas CASA requirements.

MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS

- Written application
- Signed statement of confidentiality
- Documentation of three or more reference checks, which are unrelated to the applicant
- Written performance evaluations

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Record checks are completed on each volunteer including SSN verification, FBC check and a CPS abuse registry check.

- Social Security Number Verification
- FBC:
 - State and national criminal record check.
 - State and national sex offender record check.
- ABCS:
 - The Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry maintained by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

TRAINING

- Documentation of completion of at least 30 hours of pre-service training
- Documentation of at least 12 hours of in-service training annually
- Documentation of court observation hours

TRANSPORTATION (IF APPLICABLE)

- Motor vehicle division record check
- Copy of a valid driver's license
- Proof of adequate personal automobile insurance

Source: Texas CASA, Inc.

VOLUNTEER SCREENING & TRAINING FILE ASSESSMENT FORM

Program:	Reviewer:					
Review Date:	File 1	File 2	File 3	File 4	Points	
Volunteer Initials					Yes = 1 No = 0	# of
Date of Volunteer Appointment						
Staff Responsible for Maintaining File						
The file contains screening notification to the court (for volunteers as of September 1, 2016)					N/A	N/A
Signed statement of confidentiality.						
The file contains three or more references, either written or documented by the program in writing, who are unrelated to the applicant.						
The file contains verification of the volunteer's Social Security Number.						
The program verifies a national criminal record check via the Fingerprint-Based Background Check (FBC).						
The program verifies a state criminal record check via Fingerprint-Based Background Check (FBC).						
The program verifies national and state sex offender registry checks via (FBC).						
The file contains a Texas Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry check (ABCS).						
Rechecks are current per standards OR program verifies FBC and Automated Background Check System (ABCS).						
The file contains documentation of successful completion of 30 hours of pre-service training, at least 10 of which must be spent in face-to-face classroom time.						
The file contains documentation of courtroom observation (not included in the 30 hours of required pre-service training).						

The file contains documentation of 12 hours of in-service training annually.						
The file contains documentation of a performance evaluation conducted at case closure.						
Volunteer File Assessment Percentage (12)					Sum of all points	Sum of all points/ 48
When the CASA/GAL program has made the decision to allow volunteers to provide transportation to children, it secures the following:					Yes = 1; No = 0	#of Points
Proof that volunteer has passed a motor vehicles division record check.						
A copy of a valid driver's license.						
Proof of adequate personal automobile insurance.						
Volunteer File Assessment Percentage (15)					Sum of all points	Sum of all points/60

WRITTEN AGREEMENTS WITH COURTS

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

AGREEMENT BETWEEN

(CASA Program, Inc.) And (Court)

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlines the working relationship between (*COURT*) and (*CASA Program, Inc.*). Parties voluntarily choose to participate in this cooperative relationship and agree to make every effort to create and sustain a positive and successful collaboration that serves the best interest of children.

I. ASSIGNMENT:

- a. (*CASA Program, Inc.*) will be automatically assigned to all CPS cases by the local Court. CASA will be assigned at the earliest possible stage of court proceedings, though at any given time, the Department of Family and Protective Services, Presiding Judge, Attorney ad litem, or an attorney for the child's family may request that a case be reconsidered for CASA appointment.
- b. In turn, the CASA program, within the limits of its resources, capacities, and mission, determines those cases it can appropriately serve and submits an Order of Appointment or Withdrawal to the Presiding Judge. Case acceptance will be determined by the availability of a volunteer to meet the needs of the child and the standards outlined by National and State CASA as well as the Texas Family Code.
- c. (*Alternate verbiage for appointment: (CASA Program, Inc.), in cooperation with the court, retains the right to establish priorities for service as well as determine from among cases referred for appointment those it can serve appropriately.*)
- d. Priorities for Case Referral:
 - Child(ren) removed from the home and/or at imminent risk of being removed from the home.
 - A complex case involving serious allegations of sexual or physical abuse and/or neglect.
 - Permanency is an issue.
 - All ages up to 18 are appropriate for referral.

II. APPOINTMENT:

- e. CASA staff will review each case to determine if there are any areas of conflict before a volunteer is assigned. All volunteers will signify their agreement to carry out the obligations and duties as guardian ad litem by signing a "Certificate of Acceptance" to the case.
- f. Upon acceptance, the CASA Advocate is considered a sworn officer of the court and remains active on the case until legal permanency is attained or as directed by the court. If for any reason the CASA Advocate can no longer fulfill the duties and obligations of guardian ad litem or at such time the case is concluded by Court Order, Non-suit, or majority of the child(ren), the case file and related information will be returned to the CASA office immediately.
- g. CASA shall notify all parties of the case, including foster parents, in writing, of the assignment of a CASA Volunteer Advocate, and the CASA Volunteer's name and contact information.

III. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- a. UNDER THESE TERMS OF AGREEMENT, CASA WILL:

The role of the GAL will be filled by a trained and sworn CASA volunteer advocate under the professional supervision and consultation of a CASA Volunteer Supervisor. The CASA/GAL shall abide by the roles and responsibilities of a GAL, set forth in the Texas Family Code, below, and as further outlined in the CASA Program Policy and Procedure Manual.

- i. CASA shall notify all parties in the case, in writing, of the assignment of a CASA Volunteer Advocate and include the CASA Volunteer Advocate's name and contact information.
 - ii. Conduct an independent review, examine all relevant documents, and interview any persons having direct knowledge of the child(ren)'s and or family's situation to formulate an understanding of what is in the best interest of the child(ren).
 - iii. Provide the court with independent information, including written court reports, on findings and recommendations reflecting the best interest of the child to the court at each hearing and assure that all of the relevant facts are before the court.
 - iv. Attend all court hearings and submits a report to the court and the parties
 - v. Monitor compliance/non-compliance of parties to family service plans and court orders.
 - vi. Immediately report any incidents of suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.
 - vii. Maintain regular contact with the child/ren, caseworker, and Attorney ad litem
 - viii. Maintain confidentiality of all information obtained, with the exception of reporting information to the court
 - ix. Upholds the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between TDFPS and Texas CASA
- b. UNDER THESE TERMS OF AGREEMENT, THE COURT WILL:
- i. Appoint CASA to cases involving suits affecting the parent/child relationship by the Department of Family and Protective Services.
 - ii. Ensure that CASA staff/volunteers have reasonable access to court records.
 - iii. Swear in newly trained CASA volunteer advocates to serve as guardian ad litem
 - iv. Formalize the appointment of CASA with a written court order. When possible automatic appointment will be the practice. CASA will notify the judge if this practice is possible.
 - v. Encourage and facilitate the cooperation of court staff and officers of the court with CASA staff/volunteers.

We, the undersigned, have read and agree to the terms of the current MOU and will review the agreement at least every two years.

_____ Executive Director, (CASA Program, Inc.)	_____ Date	_____ Presiding Judge, (Court)	_____ Date
---	---------------	-----------------------------------	---------------

Source: *Quality Assurance Indicators of Compliance September 2016 Edition*

SAMPLE: CASA/GAL COURT ORDER

CAUSE NUMBER: _____

IN THE INTEREST OF:

CHILDREN

IN THE DISTRICT COURT

OF _____ COUNTY,

_____ JUDICIAL DISTRICT

ORDER APPOINTING CASA OF (Name) COUNTY

The court hereby orders the appointment of (CASA Program Name) in the above referenced matter. It is further ordered that:

1. The (CASA Program Name) is authorized to designate a responsible adult person who has met the criteria and has been sworn in as a (CASA Program Name) volunteer to act as a Court Appointed Special Advocate on behalf of the above-named child/children;
2. Upon presentation of this Order, the CASA volunteer and the CASA program staff shall have the right of access to and unredacted copies of all files, reports, records, communications, home studies and working papers used or developed in the investigation or in the provision of services to the child/ children in the possession of the Department of Family and Protective Services.
3. Upon presentation of this Order, the CASA volunteer and the CASA program staff shall have access to the medical, dental, police, educational, psychiatric, and mental health records of the child/children and potential caretakers of the children to the same extent as a parent or managing conservator, including inspecting and copying any records and consulting with any provider of services.
4. The CASA volunteer shall maintain any information received from any such source as confidential and will not disclose the same except in reports to the Court and parties to this cause;
5. The CASA volunteer or program staff shall have the right to maintain face to face contact with the above-named child/children;
6. The (CASA Program Name) shall receive prior notification of any hearings, staffings, investigations, depositions, or other proceedings concerning the child(ren), and shall be notified prior to any action taken on behalf of the child(ren) by any party;
7. The CASA volunteer or program staff shall have the right to appear and have the opportunity to testify or submit a report regarding best interest of the child/children and the basis for recommendations at all hearings or proceedings scheduled in this cause;
8. The CASA volunteer shall have the right to participate in case staffings, meetings and mediations by an authorized agency or person concerning the child.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20XX.

Judge _____ (name), _____ District Court

SAMPLE: COURT MOU WITH CASA

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

AGREEMENT BETWEEN

Name of the Court (Counties served)

And

CASA Program

Date:(DATE)

The following Memorandum of Understanding signed by (Name of the Court) (Counties Served) and (CASA Program) represents the mutually agreed guidelines for appointing a volunteer Guardian Ad Litem for children who have entered the foster care system.

Appointment:

(CASA Program) is automatically assigned to all CPS by the local Court. In turn, the CASA program, within the limits of its resources, capacities, and mission, determines those cases it can serve appropriately and submits an Order of Appointment or Withdrawal to the Presiding Judge.

Case acceptance will be determined by the availability of a volunteer to meet the needs of the child and the standards outlined by National and State CASA as well as the Texas Family Code.

At any given time, the Department of Family and Protective Services, the Presiding Judge, the Attorney ad litem, or an attorney for the child's family may request that a case be reconsidered for CASA appointment.

Assignment:

CASA staff will review each case to determine if there are any areas of conflict before a volunteer is assigned. All volunteers will signify their agreement to carry out the obligations and duties as guardian ad litem by signing a "Certificate of Acceptance" to the case.

Upon acceptance, the CASA advocate is considered a sworn officer of the court and remains active on the case until legal permanency is attained for the child/ren or as directed by the court.

If for any reason the CASA Advocate can no longer fulfill the duties and obligations of guardian ad litem or at such a time that the case is concluded by Court Order, Non-suit, or majority of the child/ren, the case file and all related information will be returned to the CASA office immediately.

Roles and Responsibilities of the CASA Volunteer:

- Provides the court with independent information regarding the child/ren involved in the case.
- Conducts an independent review, examines all relevant documents, and interviews any persons having direct knowledge of the child/ren's and or family's situation to formulate an understanding of what is in the best interest of the child/ren.
- Assists the court in assuring the best interest of the child/ren are served in relation to best interest and permanency

- Reviews issue of compliance and non-compliance with family service plans and court order
- Immediately reports and incidents of suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.
- Attends all court hearings and submits a report to the court and the parties
- Maintains regular contact with the child/ren, caseworker, and Attorney ad litem
- Remains actively involved until a permanent resolution is established or a formal dismissal by the court is received
- Maintains confidentiality of all information obtained, with the exception of reporting information to the court
- Upholds the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between TDFPS and Texas CASA

(Insert CASA Program) Executive Director listed below and the Presiding Judge for (Name of Court) (Counties Served) have reviewed the current MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) and will work to ensure compliance with its terms.

(Insert CASA Program)

Date

Insert name of the Court (Counties Served)

Date

Section 5

RESOURCES



**Executive Director Resource Manual
2017 Edition**

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Fingerprint-Based Background Check (FBC)

Resource Guide

March 2017

INTRODUCTION

Starting January 31, 2014 all CASA programs in Texas began using the Fingerprint-Based Background Check (FBC) for volunteers, staff and board members. As of August 31, 2016, all volunteer, staff and board members must have completed the FBC. The fingerprint-based background check, which meets Texas CASA Standards and the revised Texas Administrative Code, includes the following:

- Texas Criminal Record Check including Sexual Offenses
- National Criminal Record Check including Sexual Offenses

SETTING UP ACCOUNTS FOR FBC

CASA programs must establish **two** accounts in order to obtain FBC checks. The first account is with the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). This account will be used as the primary administrative account and is used to communicate results and notifications of new criminal activity. The second account is with MorphoTrust, the private vendor with which DPS has contracted to conduct the fingerprinting check and to process payments.

It is best practice for the Executive Director to be the primary administrative users for the Texas Department of Public Safety account. By law, only the two approved users can have access to the management system and only these two persons can review the criminal history and activity results of board, volunteer, and staff.

SETTING UP DPS USER ACCOUNT

1. Select a "Main User" within your program. This person will open the online DPS account and have access to check transactions and results. Programs may appoint any staff member as the Main User. Programs will have an opportunity later in the process to add additional users. All Users will be authorized to view all secure background information/checks for the entire program.
2. Before opening the online account, programs must prepare a brief statement on letterhead that references the CASA program and explains the purpose of the account. The statement must be saved electronically. Please see sample statement below:

Your Program Name is a Court Appointed Special Advocates program (CASA) in good standing with Texas CASA and utilizes the fingerprint-based background check record to screen volunteers and employees.

3. Use the link below to set up your program's DPS account:

<https://secure.txdps.state.tx.us/DpsWebsite/Signup/SecureSite/CriminalHistory/>

4. Once at the website, select: "Create New Organization" and "Continue".
5. Enter the Main User's email address and select "Continue".
6. Enter your program's name. Scroll down and choose "National Child Protection Act" (NCPA) from a drop-down that asks you to select your 411 classification.
7. Leave ORI field empty.
8. The site will prompt you to submit the statement (see #2) electronically as an attachment. The statement may also be faxed in, along with a cover sheet to: (512) 424-5011.
9. Training: You will be prompted to read five online modules that contain information on account management, including security requirements. Each module will take about 30 minutes to complete. After completing the modules you will be prompted to take an online test. After taking the test a certificate of completion will populate. Print the certificate for your records. You may also choose to print out the modules for future reference. **Anyone who is authorized as a user on the secure site account must complete the online modules and take the test.**
10. Additional Users can be added by providing the User's full name and email address. Users added will receive an email requiring them to complete the training.

***For any questions, assistance or status updates contact the **DPS helpline: (512) 424-5079.**

Step 3 & 4: Select Create new organization and select continue

Texas Department of Public Safety
Courtesy ~ Service ~ Protection

TXDPS CRS | SECURE SITE USER SIGNUP

Sign in | Support | Print

Secure Site User Signup

You are on the CRS Secure Site for legislatively authorized organizations.

Only legislatively authorized entities can access the Secure Criminal History portion of this website. If you are not legislatively authorized, then please create an account on the CRS Public Website.

DPS performs Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) searches on all applicant/users of CRS Secure Website. A person may be denied access to the CRS Secure Website if they fail to meet the DPS standards of use based on CHRI.

Choose an option. (Some options are only available if you are signed in.)

- ☒ Create a new Organization
- ☐ Modify an application already started.
- ☐ Add additional User

Continue...

TxDPS CRS Public Website

DPS also maintains CRS Public Website for access to public criminal records and other public applications. A CRS Public Website account is required for searching the Criminal History Conviction Database, submitting transactions for the Metals Registration Program, creating Public Sex Offender Subscriptions and downloading the Public Sex Offender Registry.

[Access CRS Public Website](#)

Step 5: Enter main user's email address, select continue

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Application

The organization represented on the account must be legislatively authorized to access the CRS Secure Website.

The application must be completed by an individual designated by the organization as an account manager.

The applicant must be willing to have their criminal history status verified.

Access is not guaranteed, not instantaneous and requires approval by the Department. Steps for applying for Secure Criminal History Access:

1. Enter email address. Instructions on accessing application at a later time will be forwarded to the email address.
2. Enter Organization / Agency Information
3. Create your user account
4. Invite additional user accounts
5. Submit Application

Have the following information available for all users to be added.

- Names of all users you wish to add.
- Unique e-mail addresses for each user requesting access.
- TX GC 411 Classification of your Organization / Agency.

Continue...

Step 6: Enter your program name and select NCPA

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Application Cont'd

When creating an account for an organization, enter the dba (doing business as) name.

Organization Information

Name (Required)

dba Texas CASA

TX GC 411 Classification

NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION ACT

Description

THE NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION ACT (NCPA) AS AMENDED BY THE INTERSTATE FOR CHILDREN ACT (VCA), ENACTED UNDER 42 U.S.C. SECTION 5119, PROVIDES AN AUTHORIZED PARTY, MEETING THE CRITERIA OF PUBLIC LAW 92-244, TO OBTAIN FINGERPRINT-BASED CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD INFORMATION CHECKS ON INDIVIDUALS PROVIDING SERVICES TO CHILDREN, THE ELDERLY AND THE MENTALLY IMPAIRED.

Criminal History Configuration

CHRI (Optional)

Continue...

Step 8: Submit electronic statement

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dba Texas CASA - Required Documents

In order to expedite the process of opening your account, you have to submit the following documents.

Failure to return the requested information may cause a delay in processing your application.

Send Documents

Choose a method to send documents

- ☒ Submit Electronically
- ☐ Submit By FAX

Intended Use Document

A letter drafted on company letterhead that describes the intended use of the criminal history record information (CHRI). This should include a description of your business, and who you plan to perform criminal history searches on. This document should be signed by a top administrative official of agency. Please include the primary contact name and phone number for this account.

Upload Document

Select Document (Required)

Browse... No file selected.

Continue...

FINGERPRINT BACKGROUND CHECK INFORMATION FORM

Volunteer Service Code: 11F272

Staff Service Code 11F26K

First Name _____ Middle Name _____

Last Name _____

Date of Birth _____/_____/_____ Email _____

Phone Number _____

Mailing Address _____

Maiden Names, alias names _____

Height _____ Weight _____ Hair color _____ Eye color _____

Gender _____ Race _____

For office use only:

ORI NUMBER _____

Staff Coupon Code _____

Volunteer Coupon Code _____

Payment Option One: NCAC Coupon Codes

The service will require a major credit card (VISA, MasterCard, Discover or AMEX) to purchase single use codes for the desired number of background check applicants. A program can pay for multiple applicants with one credit card.

Please follow these steps to initiate your new account and issue the requested number of NCAC coupon codes:

1. Complete and send the User Agreement, Credit Card Authorization and Customer Account Information forms to MorphoTrust's billing department VIA FAX ONLY at 615-871-0845. Forms available here: <http://www.l1enrollment.com/state/forms/tx/560d8bc98a7fc.pdf>
2. On the Customer Account Information form; the assigned primary and secondary contacts will be the ONLY recipients of NCAC coupon codes. It will be the assigned point of contact's responsibility to issue and control the NCAC codes provided.
3. Upon receipt and execution of the requested documentation, the primary contact will be provided with an Account Name specific to your request. Allow 3 - 5 business days for turnaround.
4. RETAIN ACCOUNT NAME issued for your records. You must provide this information to order additional coupons.
5. Codes must be supplied to the applicant by the program, prior to their appointment.

Once a credit card is authorized and on-file with MorphoTrust USA, it will not be charged until a purchased NCAC Coupon Code is redeemed during a fingerprint appointment.

A minimum of 10 (ten) NCAC coupons must be requested at any one time. Additional NCAC coupons can be requested by the primary or secondary point of contact via Email: TXUEPAC-counts@Morphotrust.com

Unless otherwise requested, all coupon codes will expire 6 (six) months from date of issuance or at the credit card expiration date, whichever comes first.

Any expired authorization codes will not be charged to your credit card. This feature is designed to assist in distribution control and assist in improving fraud prevention.

NOTE: A \$1 fee per code will be assessed on all codes purchased or used after 1/1/16

Payment Option Two: Pay For Each Check One at a Time

Programs may pay for the FBC via credit or debit card. To do this, programs must complete a Credit Card Authorization Form, available by request at billingaccounts@morphotrust.com and return via scan or fax (615-871-0845) to MorphoTrust. There is a 24-hour turnaround time from when MorphoTrust receives the authorization form to when programs can use their credit or debit card to pay for prints.

Programs that want to use this method of payment will need to schedule printing appointments for their volunteers and employees, as the company does not store and save the credit card information in between transactions.

Every appointment scheduled, whether online or by calling to schedule, will require the credit card number. Thus, programs would need to schedule all appointments (versus giving out their credit card number to volunteers and employees).

If you choose this method of payment, we recommend using a simple form to help narrow down availability. Asking volunteers their preferred day, time and location (several cities have multiple sites that provide printing) will help the CASA program schedule these appointments.

Payment Option Three: Reimburse Staff and Volunteers for Their Checks

CASA programs may choose to pass the cost of the FBC on to their volunteers or employees, and then choose whether to reimburse them or not. When volunteers or employees go online to schedule their appointment or schedule by phone, they will be asked to provide payment information (credit or debit card). They will also have the option of paying by check or money order when they arrive at the printing center.

If programs choose to reimburse volunteers or employees for the cost of the checks, they will need to establish a reimbursement process that includes retaining a receipt.

Scheduling a Fingerprint Appointment

Appointments are required to obtain fingerprints.

To get started,

Click on the link below:

<https://uenroll.identogo.com/#/>

1. Enter the service code Volunteers 11F272 or Staff 11F26K----->NEXT
(the screen will show TEXAS ISD VOLUNTEER or TEXAS ISD CONTRACTOR and is correct)
2. Click "Schedule or Manage appointment"----->NEXT
3. Enter the fields Name, Address, DOB, email, preferred method of contact----->NEXT
4. Eligibility. Enter Organization Number (ORI number for program----->NEXT
5. Every program is assigned their own ORI number (5 digits).
 - Citizenship. Country, City and state of birth----->NEXT
6. Answer Y or N questions. (Programs will vary as to coupon code or not, please check with your program to see what the payment plan is----->NEXT
7. Enter any maiden or previous names, height, weight, eye color, hair color, preferred language, gender, and race----->NEXT
8. Enter Mailing Address----->NEXT
9. Choose form of identification to bring with you (example Driver's License----->NEXT
10. This is where you would enter the coupon code if your program uses the codes. **It is very important to enter it correctly and exactly as it appears. If it is not entered exactly the same, it will not be a valid code.** This will not apply if paying with credit card or paying at the fingerprinting site.
11. Print fingerprint appointment sheet.

Programs **must** process all fingerprints using the Fast Pass/IdentoGo system. **DPS will not allow programs to seek fingerprinting from local law enforcement or other entities.**

Fingerprints are taken at one of 103 locations throughout Texas. You may view locations at the link below, and since locations open and close at random, we recommend checking this site regularly.

What to Expect at the Fingerprint Appointment

The applicant will provide their SSN and driver's license number or alternate form of identification number.

A photograph of the applicant will be taken.

If payment has not been made previously online, the applicant will be asked to pay for the printing via credit or debit card, check or money order.

All applicants (whether payment was made prior or during the appointment) will receive a receipt which has a Tracking Control Number (TCN). **CASA programs must get this receipt from the volunteer or employee as proof of fingerprinting.** The TCN is needed to track the fingerprints in case of a problem with the process, getting the results or other technical issues.

It is possible that the prints will be rejected due to poor print quality. Some skin conditions and other factors may make printing difficult. If a rejection occurs, MorphoTrust will attempt to contact the individual applicant by phone, email or mail to schedule a rescan.

Mobile Fingerprint-Based Background Check at Program Site

MorphoTrust offers an onsite or mobile printing service to programs that can schedule at least 30 or more appointments during a visit. Scheduling the mobile service can be done online. On the day of the visit, MorphoTrust will need a six to eight-foot long table and an area in which they can set up a small scanner and computer. The appointment system is still required. MorphoTrust can do a maximum of 50 prints in one business day. The mobile service is not offered in the evenings or on weekends.

Results

Following the appointment, the fingerprints, the demographic information and photo will be sent to DPS for processing. It will be returned to the CASA program within one to three business days via email. This email will contain a link which allows the program to view the results of the fingerprint-based background check.

There is no charge to view the results for the first time. Each additional view will incur a \$1.00 charge. **Programs may choose to print a copy of the results.** These printed copies **may not** be stored within an individual's personnel or volunteer or board file, but must be maintained in a separate and locked file. **If a program chooses to store the results electronically, they must follow all DPS and CJIS security policies and are subject to an electronic storage security audit.**

Rap Back Feature

The rap back feature is the automatic notification of criminal activity. The current fingerprint-based background check includes a state criminal activity rap back feature. If criminal activity and/or a sexual offense shows up in the FBC records, you will be notified by email from DPS. The email will contain a link to view the information. Just as with the original results, you will need to determine how or if you will save this information.

There is a \$1.00 fee to access this information and your program will be required to make payment prior to viewing the record. Be sure to save this information electronically, as any additional views from the website will also cost \$1.00.

This feature eliminates the need for programs to run a Texas criminal recheck, per National and Texas CASA Standards. Since your program is automatically notified of any criminal activity and/or sex offenses, you will not need to run a recheck on these state records. Persons previously printed and checked remain in the system permanently and your program will receive notifications until you are no longer subscribed to an individual's record.

There is currently no rap back feature for national criminal history activity. However, it is anticipated that the federal government will have such a feature in late 2015. The fee for this service is not yet known. Once this service is available, it will fully eliminate the need for any recheck of the components of the FBC.

When an individual leaves your program, you must disable your subscription for that person. By disabling the subscription, your program will no longer receive notifications of new activity.

CJIS Training

An additional mandatory online training on the specific security requirements for using the FBC was added in the spring of 2015. Programs were notified by email that this training must be completed by everyone who has access to FBC information, and renewed every two years. This was described as a step in preparing for the national criminal record rap-back feature.

DPS and FBI Audits

All organizations that have access to the FBC are subject to non-sanctioning audits of their security policies and practices as it relates to criminal history information. Programs are subject to an audit from DPS once every three years and from the FBI once every two years.

FBC FAQs

What does the FBC include?

The FBC includes Texas criminal history with sex offenses and national criminal history with sex offenses. The FBC satisfies the Texas CASA Standard for Social Security Verification.

What is not included in the FBC?

The FBC does not include a CPS abuse or neglect registry check or a motor vehicle check.

Who is required to complete the FBC?

All CASA programs in Texas are required to use the FBC for volunteers, board members and employees.

I have set up my DPS account but have not yet received my log in and password. Is there a delay?

The standard turn-around time is 3 business days. Please be sure to check your spam filter and disable any firewalls should you experience a delay in retrieving your DPS account information.

I keep seeing something about an ORI number. How do I locate my ORI number?

CASA programs are not assigned an ORI number when setting up their accounts and can disregard any fields that ask for this number.

Please note: An ORI number will be provided to your program as part of completing the new CJIS training requirement. The email notification includes an ORI number for your program that will need to be entered when registering for the training.

What is an ORG number? Should I disregard that number too?

The ORG number is an identifying number for your specific program and will be assigned to you as you open your online account with DPS. You will need this number to process payments and access results and before setting up an account with MorphoTrust.

Where will we send people to get printed?

You will choose from 84 current Identogo sites in Texas. Please check their website frequently, as new locations are added.

What if someone has already been printed through this process for other employment?

The only prints acceptable under the National Child Protection Act (NCPA) are those obtained by educators, childcare providers or other CASA programs. No other previous fingerprinting will meet the requirement, including those of law enforcement or past CPS employees. If an educator or childcare provider was previously printed, or a print was obtained by another CASA program in Texas, your program will need to subscribe to their record in the Fact Clearinghouse:

1. Click "Create Subscription" instead of "View Subscription" in the FACT Clearinghouse.
2. Scroll to the bottom and search for the individual by name, driver's license or state ID (SID).

If you have trouble finding the person, or do not know the SID, contact 512-424-2365 and use option 6 to reach the unit that can assist you.

3. After searching, select the correct record and subscribe.

Our local law enforcement agency is willing to provide us with fingerprint services. Can we use them?

No. You must use DPS and MorphoTrust to obtain your prints.

What happens if someone misses a scheduled appointment for their prints?

An individual who schedules an appointment and fails to show will need to reschedule, but there is a cancellation fee for missed appointments.

What if the prints are rejected?

Some people's prints may not be captured through the fingerprinting process, due to skin conditions, age, or other factors. If prints are rejected, the program will be notified and directed to reschedule for a second printing appointment. Prints rejected twice are automatically submitted by DPS for a name-based background check and the program will be notified of the results.

If a volunteer wants to pay for the check themselves, can that be used as a tax deduction?

Yes, if a volunteer pays for the FBC it is tax deductible. They must save their receipt.

What kind of documentation does the FBC provide?

Programs will receive an email following a print appointment. It will contain a link to view the actual record check. Programs are allowed to print a hard copy of the FBC results, but they must be stored in a secure location and may not be stored within a personnel file (or board or volunteer file) that others have access to. Although programs are allowed to maintain electronic storage of individual FBC results, doing so necessitates programs to follow a strict electronic security protocol and are then subject to an electronic data audit, which includes the requirements of a program IT specialist and special encryption software.

My volunteer asked for a copy of their FBC results. Can I give them one?

No, policy prohibits programs from distributing copies of FBC results, even to the individual printed. Individuals are able to check a box on the FAST Pass that indicates they want a copy sent to them, but there is a \$25 fee.

Whom do I call for help?

Depending on the issues you are having, you can reach out for assistance to four different places. If you email or leave a voice message, you must indicate you are an NCPA organization and describe the specific problem you are having. This will help your inquiry to be routed the person best able to help.

For questions related to the DPS application process, status, passwords, user ID, ORG ID and Fast Pass questions, contact:

Criminal History Inquiry Unit

512-424-5079

FACT@dps.texas.gov

For questions related to fingerprint services, including accessing the FACT Clearinghouse, FAST fingerprinting program, issues with the fingerprint vendor, or locating missing records, contact:

Fingerprint Services

512-424-2365

fingerprint.service@dps.texas.gov

For any technical questions or assistance, contact:

DPS Helpline

512-424-5079

For questions related to MorphoTrust payment account status, contact:

Billing Specialist

877-512-6962

For questions related to a DPS audit, contact:

Susanne Dial at Susanne.Dial@dps.texas.gov

TEXAS CASA BACKGROUND CHECK CHECKLIST

November 2015

The following background checks are required for **all volunteers, employees and board members**:

☐ Social Security Verification

- ☐ The finger-print based background check **meets** Texas CASA standard requirement for SSN verification. However, it is still required **in policy** and required by National CASA.

☐ Fingerprint-Based Background Check (FBC)

- ☐ Meets Texas CASA standard requirement for state and national criminal background and state and national sex offender registry.
- ☐ Meets Texas CASA standard requirement for out of state resident (previous seven years) criminal background checks.

☐ Texas Abuse and Neglect Registry Check (ABCS)

- ☐ Meets the meet Texas CASA standard requirement for Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry by Texas DFPS.
- ☐ **Does not** meet Texas CASA standard requirement for **out of state** resident (previous seven years) abuse and neglect registry check.

The two-year recheck Texas CASA standard requirement is met through rap-back services provided through the FBC check* and the ABCS. The recheck requirement is still required in policy, ex: "Rechecks are required every two years for any check not enrolled in rap-back service."

*FBC rap-back service for national criminal checks projected availability in 2016

Motor Vehicle Checks

The following check is required for all **employees** (at hire):

- ☐ Motor Vehicle Division Records Check

If the program's policies permit or stipulate that employees **transport children or drive on behalf of the program**, the following are required:

- ☐ Copy of Valid Driver's License
- ☐ Proof of Adequate Personal Automobile Insurance

If the program permits **volunteers to transport children**, the following are required **annually**:

- ☐ Motor Vehicle Division Records Check
- ☐ Copy of Valid Driver's License
- ☐ Proof of Adequate Personal Automobile Insurance

FBC Storage Requirements

June 2015

The security requirements related to local CASA program access to the Fingerprint-Based Background Check are outlined in the mandatory online trainings and are included in the online training manuals. All programs are required to meet these security requirements and should regularly review their program's policies and procedures related to these records.

Criminal History Records Storage

- Historically, CASA programs have obtained criminal history records from a variety of sources and stored the results within personnel or volunteer files.
- Retaining these records (either in hard copy or electronic version) demonstrated compliance with screening requirements.
- Records were retained per the program's record retention policy; typically destroying personnel and volunteer files 7 years following their separation from the program.

FBC Storage

Security requirements of FBC records necessitate a change in how these records are stored. Programs will need to choose from one of three storage options outlined below:

Option One-Do Not Store FBC Results

As long as you are subscribed to an individual's record, you have the ability to view the results at any time, effectively eliminating the need to print or electronically store the results.

Pros

- DPS is responsible for assuring the security of the online account; programs would not need to do anything further to protect the information.
- No paper copies, no locked cabinet storage, no electronic storage space used.
- Risk of unauthorized viewing of the records is greatly minimized.

Cons

- Additional views after the first view are \$1.00 per record.
- Viewing and clearing an individual's record through the online account may not provide programs sufficient tracking.
- Programs would likely need to add something to personnel and volunteer files that indicate the record was obtained, reviewed and cleared. This could be a separate form, or added to an existing form.
- When an employee or volunteer leaves the program, the program must unsubscribe from the record. Without storing a copy at that time, the Verification Form would be the only documentation of a cleared record in the event of a later question or incident.

Option Two-Print a Hard Copy

Programs are allowed to print a copy of the FBC results. This option will require strict and separate storage. Records may not be stored within individual personnel or volunteer files. They must be kept in a separate file and that file must be kept in a locked and secure location to which access is restricted to those employees authorized by DPS to view the records.

Pros

- Programs retain the actual documentation of the record, thus eliminating the need for an additional tracking or verification form.
- Programs are easily able to self-audit, without paying the \$1.00 per view charge.
- A copy of the record is available after unsubscribing to an individual record, in the event that documentation is needed.

Cons

- Separate storage apart from the individual's file.
- Continued locked and restricted access storage is required through the document destruction timeline.
- Programs must maintain strict tracking of record destruction timelines.

Option Three-Store an Electronic Copy

Although this option may appeal to programs moving toward paperless operations, it is the option that requires programs to implement the strictest and most complex IT security protocols.

Pros

- The actual record is retained, eliminating the need for a separate verification or tracking form.
- If **all** security requirements are met, it can be saved within an electronic personnel or volunteer file.
- Programs are able to self-audit, without paying the \$1.00 per view charge.
- The actual record is available after unsubscribing to an individual record, in the event that documentation is needed.

Cons

- Electronic storage requires a dedicated IT staff, encryption software and a file management system dedicated and stored with restricted access.
- Non-compliance with security requirements determined through an FBI or DPS audit could result in a program having to take costly and far-reaching measures to correct deficiencies, including a complete wipe of all existing records from all devices/servers.
- Programs must maintain strict tracking of record destruction timelines. (Records would have to be purged and overwritten.)
- IT staff would have to be vetted when servicing the network or server which contains the FBC/CHRI information.
- Password(s) have to be different for all individuals accessing the information.

Texas CASA Quality Assurance

The Texas CASA Quality Assurance monitoring review process has historically included verification of required screening through a random personnel and volunteer file audit, which included viewing the criminal history results.

To ensure local program compliance with DPS and FBI security requirements, Texas CASA will no longer view actual criminal history information. The following process will now be used to assess and ensure required screening has occurred:

1. Texas CASA will continue to randomly review personnel and volunteer files.
2. For selected files, the reviewer will require the program to access the individual's FBC results (either through the online account, the hard copy or the electronic copy).
3. Without sharing the results with the reviewer, the program will examine the record and initial a QA form provided by the reviewer indicating they have reviewed the record and attest that it contains no barred offenses.

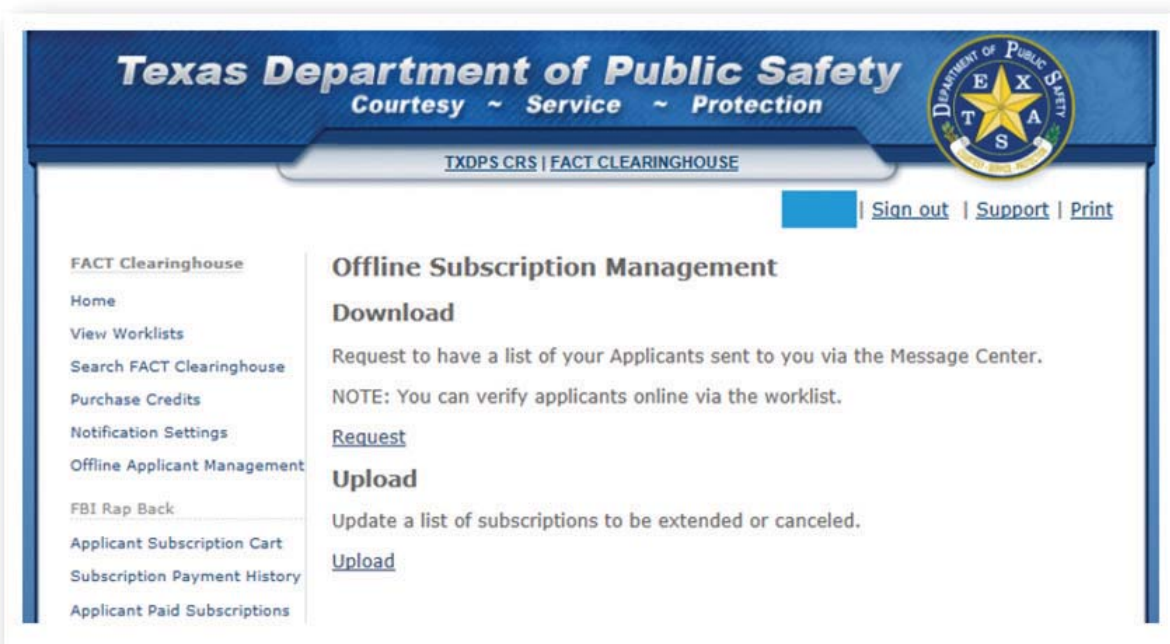
OFFLINE APPLICANT MANAGEMENT USER GUIDE

The Offline Applicant Management system is designed to allow you to manage your subscriptions in the FACT Clearinghouse. When you first log in and click FACT Clearinghouse you'll notice the new **Offline Applicant Management** option on the left hand side of the screen. With this system you'll be able to request a list of all active subscriptions for your account. You'll also be able to disable, validate, or create large numbers of subscriptions at once by uploading files to the website.



OFFLINE APPLICANT MANAGEMENT

When you first get to this page you'll notice two options, **Download** and **Upload**. You can click **Request** under the Download section to request lists of applicants your agency is currently subscribed to. This includes a list of all active subscriptions, as well as your 90 and 30 day validation lists, which is a list of all applicant records you're subscribed to that need to be validated in the next 90 and 30 days respectively. The **Upload** section is where you can upload files to disable, validate, or subscribe to records en masse. We will go over both of these options below.



DOWNLOADING YOUR APPLICANT LIST

By clicking on **Request** from the previous screen, it will take you to the **Download** page. Here you have 3 options, **90-day Verification**, **30-day Verification**, and **All Active Subscriptions**. The 90 day and 30 day verification lists will provide you a list of all applicants your agency is subscribed to that need to be validated in within that time period. All subscriptions in the clearinghouse must be validated once a year in order to stay subscribed. The **All Active Subscriptions** option will give you a full list of every applicant your agency is subscribed to. Once you've made the selection you want, click

request and the list will be sent to your message center. Click on **Message Center** on the left side of the page to view your messages.

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TXDPS CRS | FACT CLEARINGHOUSE

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FACT Clearinghouse

- Home
- View Worklists
- Search FACT Clearinghouse
- Purchase Credits
- Notification Settings
- Offline Applicant Management
- FBI Rap Back
- Applicant Subscription Cart
- Subscription Payment History
- Applicant Paid Subscriptions

Account Management

- New User Sign up
- My Account
- Message Center**
- Help & Support

Additional Services

- Criminal History Search
- Sex Offender Registry
- FACT Clearinghouse
- UCR - Summary
- UCR - NIBRS
- Other Services & Information

Offline Subscription Management

Download Subscription Listing

Request a Subscription Listing file by choosing one of the options below; you will receive it in your message center as an attachment.

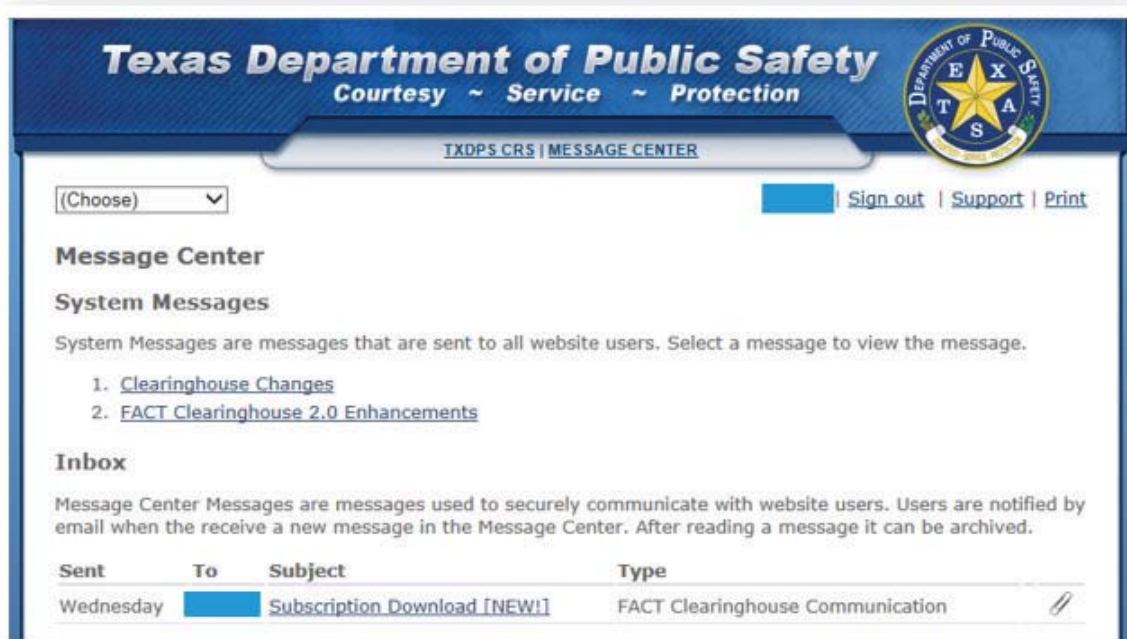
File Type

- ☒ 90-Day Verification
- ☐ 30-Day Verification
- ☐ All Active Subscriptions

- **ISSUE: Opening the Attachment from Message Center doesn't work**
Depending on how your computer is configured you may encounter issues if you choose to "OPEN" the attachment, so it is suggested that you save the attachment before opening it.
- **ISSUE: Subscription Listing does not open in Excel**
Once saved, you should be able to open the attachment in Excel. If you are not able to, first open Excel, then from the File menu choose the file you downloaded.
- **TIP: Validating & Canceling Subscriptions**
Edit the "Action" column in your Subscription Listing file with the action you want to perform by entering a V (for Validate) or C (for Cancel). Use the upload page to submit your Subscription Listing page to update your subscriptions.

[Back](#) [Request](#)

In your **Message Center** you'll see a new message once the file is done processing. Click on the new message to see the requested file.



Here you can see the total number of applicants you're subscribed to, and can select the file to view them. The file is an XML which can be opened in Excel.



When you first open the file you may want to adjust the column widths to better see the information. You can see the columns for the **SID**, **ORI**, **OCA**, **Name**, **Date last validated**, if it has a **Texas subscription**, if the SID is eligible for FBI Rap Back, if it has an active **FBI Rap Back subscription**, and a **Validate/Cancel** field.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	SID	ORI	OCA	NAM	VAL	HasTexasSubscription	IsRapbackEligible	HasFbiSubscription	Validate/Cancel
2	23456789	TXEXAMPLE		Testerson,Test	2016-02-02	Y	-	N	?V/C
3	34567890	TXEXAMPLE		Fry, Phillip J	2016-02-02	Y	-	N	?V/C
4	23456789	TXEXAMPLE		Houser, Douggy	2016-02-02	Y	-	N	?V/C
5	34567890	TXEXAMPLE		Example, Iam A	2016-02-02	Y	-	N	?V/C
6	23456789	TXEXAMPLE		Bulwinkle, Rocky A	2016-02-02	Y	-	N	?V/C
7	34567890	TXEXAMPLE		Shepard, Commander	2016-02-02	Y	-	N	?V/C
8	23456789	TXEXAMPLE		East, Kanye	2016-02-02	Y	-	N	?V/C
9	34567890	TXEXAMPLE		Leno, Ray	2016-02-02	Y	-	N	?V/C
10	23456789	TXEXAMPLE		Reeves, Neo	2016-02-02	Y	-	N	?V/C
11	34567890	TXEXAMPLE		Rockatansky, Jax	2016-02-02	Y	-	N	?V/C

SID—Number assigned to that specific applicant’s prints.

ORI—Purpose that individual was printed that allows you to see the record.

OCA—Miscellaneous number different for each agency, this is not a required field.

VAL—The last date the record was validated.

HasTexasSubscription—Shows if you are currently subscribed to that applicant’s Texas record.

IsRapbackEligible—Shows if the applicant’s SID is eligible for FBI Rap Back. This will depend on what ORI the applicant was printed.

HasFBISubscription—Shows if you have an active FBI Rap Back subscription.

Validate/Cancel—This field is used for one of the upload options, which will be explained later in this guide.

With this list you can work through the names offline. This can be especially useful for the new validation system, which requires you to validate all applicants that you’re subscribed to once a year. Once you have a list of SID’s you want to cancel or validate, you can upload them to do the desired action.

CPS COLLABORATION WITH THE CHILD'S ATTORNEY AND GUARDIAN AD LITEMS

When the department files a suit with the court to obtain custody of a child, the court must appoint an attorney ad litem (AAL) and a guardian ad litem (GAL) to represent the interests of the child. The attorney may also be appointed as the child's guardian ad litem, or another person can be appointed to serve in that role. The primary difference between the two is that the AAL has a duty to advocate for what the child wants (with some limitations), while the guardian ad litem must act in the child's best interest.

The caseworker should always try to maintain a good working relationship with both the AAL and the GAL. This will require consulting and sharing information on a regular basis, keeping the AAL and GAL informed about case developments, reporting progress or changes related to the child's service plan, considering any concerns or objections the ad litem may have before making a recommendation for the child's case plan, and responding to the AAL's and GAL's requests to meet with the child.

At times, the worker may disagree with the position or recommendations of the AAL or GAL on an issue. In such circumstances, the worker should be prepared to articulate why the worker believes his or her position better meets the needs of the child.

The caseworker has the following responsibilities to work with the child's AAL and GAL:

1. Information must be shared in a timely manner with AAL and GAL. The law requires caseworkers to share events documented in the child's file. See Texas Family Code (TFC) §264.117(a). In order for the AAL or the GAL to perform effectively, access to information about the child and the child's circumstances is essential.

Therefore, staff is required to:

- a. Use the following timeframes for sharing information with the child's AAL and GAL:
 - Critical events must be shared within 24 hours. These include:
 - unauthorized absence (see 6572 When a Child Runs Away); or
 - a child's death (see 6573 When a Child Dies).
 - Written notice of planned placement changes must be received at least 48 hours prior to the planned change (see explanation below).
 - Significant events must be shared within seven days, or sooner as appropriate. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a child's medical emergency or surgery;
 - a sudden serious illness; suspension or expulsion from school;
 - a death in the family;
 - a referral of abuse or neglect in the foster family or facility, juvenile detention or similar serious legal problem;
 - a significant change in a child's service plan; or
 - emergency placement changes.

- Ongoing information and updates should be compiled in the required court reports, which must be received by the AAL and GAL no later than the 10th day prior to the hearing?TFC §263.3025, §263.303, and §263.502.
- b. Document agreement for communication on the Communication Plan with AAL and GAL Form (2071) that has been developed for staff to complete with the child's AAL and GAL to document the agreement on method/frequency of communication. One copy is given to the AAL and GAL and the originals are kept in the child's record.
 - c. Give notice of placement changes.

Caseworkers are legally required to give the AAL 48 hours advance written notice of a planned placement change. Policy is requiring the same for GALs. If a letter is sent, it must be received 48 hours before the planned placement change. For emergency placement changes, the case- worker must provide written notice to the AAL and GAL within 7 days.
 - d. File documentation in child's record.

Documentation of the notice to the AAL and GAL (copy of email, fax, or letter) must be retained in the child's case file. When it is feasible, the worker should also discuss planned changes with the child's AAL and GAL by phone or other means ahead of time so that the child's representatives can contribute relevant information to the decision-making process.
2. Contact with Child or Caretaker must be facilitated if requested by AAL or GAL.

Under TFC §107.006, the AAL and GAL are allowed immediate access to a child. Under TFC §107.004, the AAL must meet prior to every court hearing with the child, if four years of age or older, or with the child's caretaker, if the child is younger than four years of age, unless the court finds at hearing that the AAL has shown good cause why such contact was not feasible or in the child's best interest.

If an AAL or GAL asks to meet with the child or caretaker, the caseworker must facilitate a meeting or telephone conference. Ongoing communication with the child and/or caretaker is a vital part of any advocate's responsibility and greatly benefits the child's interest.
 3. Access to child and information relating to the child.

Under TFC §107.006, the AAL and GAL are allowed access by court order to any information about the child, with the exception that any medical, mental health, or drug or alcohol treatment record that is privileged or confidential under other law may only be released to the AAL or GAL in accordance with the other law.

 - a. Except as provided by Subsection (c), in conjunction with an appointment under this chapter, other than an appointment of an attorney ad litem for an adult or a parent, the court shall issue an order authorizing the attorney ad litem, guardian ad litem for the child or amicus attorney to have immediate access to the child and any information relating to the child.
 - b. Without requiring a further order or release, the custodian of any relevant records relating to the child, including records regarding social services, law enforcement records, school records, records of a probate or court proceeding, and records of a trust or account for which the child is a beneficiary, shall provide access to a person authorized to access the record under Subsection (a).
 - c. A medical, mental health, or drug or alcohol treatment record of a child that is privileged or confidential under other law may be released to a person appointed under Subsection (a) only in accordance with the other law.

Access to records about the child must be provided if requested by AAL or GAL.

Drug/Alcohol Treatment Records

The department may only release a child's drug/alcohol treatment records if the child has specifically consented to that disclosure by signing and authorizing the disclosure on the required consent. Before disclosing a child's drug/alcohol treatment records to the AAL or GAL, staff must verify that the child has signed the Consent for Release Form (2060) and specifically authorized the disclosure. The child must be given a copy of the consent form and the original retained in the child's case file. However, the department does not need the child's consent to release information about the department's own assessment of the child, including whether the child is believed to have a substance abuse problem or a need for treatment.

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Confidential Information Required

As the conservator for a child, the department can consent on the child's behalf to disclosure of the child's confidential and protected medical information and mental health records. The department can consent to disclosure of the child's drug/alcohol treatment records only if the child also consents.

The law requires that the persons to whom this information is disclosed be informed that the information and records are confidential and may not be further disclosed.

The AAL and GAL must sign the Acknowledgement of Receipt of Confidential Information Form (2061) before the child's medical, mental health, or drug/alcohol treatment records may be released to them. The release of HIV and AIDS-related information about the child to the AAL or GAL is medical information covered under this Acknowledgement of Receipt of Confidential Information form and does not require a separate Form 2757 for that purpose.

Texas Law Regarding AALs and GALs.

Attorney ad litem (AAL)

'Attorney ad litem' means an attorney who provides legal services to a person, including a child, and who owes to the person the duties of undivided loyalty, confidentiality, and competent representation. See Texas Family Code §107.001(2). For information about the powers and duties of an AAL for a child, see TFC §107.003 and §107.004.

Notice to Attorney ad Litem.

- a. The department shall notify the attorney ad litem for a child in the conservatorship of the department about each event involving the child that the department reports in the child's case file.
- b. The department shall give a child's attorney ad litem written notice at least 48 hour before the date the department changes the child's residential care provider. The department may change the child's residential care provider without notice if the department determines that an immediate change is necessary to protect the child. See Texas Family Code §264.117.

Guardian ad litem (GAL)

“Guardian ad litem” means a person appointed to represent the best interest of a child. The term includes:

- a. a volunteer advocate appointed under Subchapter C;
- b. a professional, other than an attorney, who holds a relevant professional license and whose training relates to the determination of a child's best interests;
- c. an adult having the competence, training, and expertise determined by the court to be sufficient to represent the best interests of the child; or
- d. an attorney ad litem appointed to serve in the dual role.

See Texas Family Code §107.001(5). For information about the powers and duties of a GAL for a child, see TFC §107.002.

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Texas Family Code

Sec. 107.002. POWERS AND DUTIES OF GUARDIAN AD LITEM FOR CHILD.

- (a) A guardian ad litem appointed for a child under this chapter is not a party to the suit but may:
 - (1) conduct an investigation to the extent that the guardian ad litem considers necessary to determine the best interests of the child; and
 - (2) obtain and review copies of the child's relevant medical, psychological, and school records as provided by Section [107.006](#).
- (b) A guardian ad litem appointed for the child under this chapter shall:
 - (1) within a reasonable time after the appointment, interview:
 - (A) the child in a developmentally appropriate manner, if the child is four years of age or older;
 - (B) each person who has significant knowledge of the child's history and condition, including any foster parent of the child; and
 - (C) the parties to the suit;
 - (2) seek to elicit in a developmentally appropriate manner the child's expressed objectives;
 - (3) consider the child's expressed objectives without being bound by those objectives;
 - (4) encourage settlement and the use of alternative forms of dispute resolution; and
 - (5) perform any specific task directed by the court.
- (b-1) In addition to the duties required by Subsection (b), a guardian ad litem appointed for a child in a proceeding under Chapter [262](#) or [263](#) shall:
 - (1) review the medical care provided to the child; and
 - (2) in a developmentally appropriate manner, seek to elicit the child's opinion on the medical care provided.
- (c) A guardian ad litem appointed for the child under this chapter is entitled to:
 - (1) receive a copy of each pleading or other paper filed with the court in the case in which the guardian ad litem is appointed;
 - (2) receive notice of each hearing in the case;
 - (3) participate in case staffings by the Department of Family and Protective Services concerning the child;
 - (4) attend all legal proceedings in the case but may not call or question a witness or otherwise provide legal services unless the guardian ad litem is a licensed attorney who has been appointed in the dual role;
 - (5) review and sign, or decline to sign, an agreed order affecting the child; and
 - (6) explain the basis for the guardian ad litem's opposition to the agreed order if the guardian ad litem does not agree to the terms of a proposed order.
 - (7) have access to the child in the child's placement;
 - (8) be consulted and provide comments on decisions regarding placement, including kinship, foster care, and adoptive placements;
 - (9) evaluate whether the child welfare services

providers are protecting the child's best interests regarding appropriate care, treatment, services, and all other foster children's rights listed in Section 263.008;

(10) receive notification regarding and an invitation to attend meetings related to the child's service plan and a copy of the plan; and

(11) attend court-ordered mediation regarding the child's case.

- (d) The court may compel the guardian ad litem to attend a trial or hearing and to testify as necessary for the proper disposition of the suit.
- (e) Unless the guardian ad litem is an attorney who has been appointed in the dual role and subject to the Texas Rules of Evidence, the court shall ensure in a hearing or in a trial on the merits that a guardian ad litem has an opportunity to testify regarding, and is permitted to submit a report regarding, the guardian ad litem's recommendations relating to:
 - (1) the best interests of the child; and
 - (2) the bases for the guardian ad litem's recommendations.
- (f) In a nonjury trial, a party may call the guardian ad litem as a witness for the purpose of cross-examination regarding the guardian's report without the guardian ad litem being listed as a witness by a party. If the guardian ad litem is not called as a witness, the court shall permit the guardian ad litem to testify in the narrative.
- (g) In a contested case, the guardian ad litem shall provide copies of the guardian ad litem's report, if any, to the attorneys for the parties as directed by the court, but not later than the earlier of:
 - (1) the date required by the scheduling order; or
 - (2) the 10th day before the date of the commencement of the trial.
- (h) Disclosure to the jury of the contents of a guardian ad litem's report to the court is subject to the Texas Rules of Evidence.
- (i) A guardian ad litem appointed to represent a child in the managing conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services shall, before each scheduled hearing under Chapter [263](#), determine whether the child's educational needs and goals have been identified and addressed.

ACRONYMS USED IN CASA CASES

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
AACAP	American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
AAL	Attorney ad Litem
AAP	American Academy of Pediatrics
ABA	American Bar Association
AD/HD	Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ADA	Assistant District Attorney
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder (now ADHD)
ADOL	Adolescence Directory Online
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ALTC	Alternative Long-Term Care
APS	Adult Protective Services
APSAC	American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children
ARC	AIDS Related Complex
ARD	Admission, Review, and Dismissal
ASFA	Adoption and Safe Families Act
BASC	Behavioral Assessment Scale for Children
BFH	Basic Foster Home
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
CA	Cocaine Anonymous
CAC	Children's Advocacy Center
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocate
CBCL	Child Behavior Checklist

CCL	Child Care Licensing
CHADD	Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder
CHINS	Child In Need of Supervision
COS	Circle of Support
CPA	Child Placement Agency
CPOS	Child's Plan of Service
CPS	Child Protective Services
CVC	Crime Victims' Compensation
CVS	Conservatorship Services
CWLA	Child Welfare League of America
DFPS	Department of Family and Protective Services
DHS	Department of Human Services
DOB	Date of Birth
DPU	Deferred Prosecution Unit
DRC	Dispute Resolution Center
DRO	Domestic Relations Office
DSMIVR	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th Edition, Revised)
DSR	Dispute Resolution
ED	Executive Director
ESL	English as a Second Language
FAS	Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
FBSS	Family-Based Safety Services
FGC	Family Group Conferencing
FPOS	Family Plan of Service
FTT	Failure to Thrive Syndrome

GAL	Guardian Ad Litem
GED	General Equivalency Diploma
GLBT	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender
HESGH	Health, Education, Social, & Genetic History
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICAMA	Interstate Compact on Adoption & Medical Assistance
ICPC	Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
ISD	Independent School District
ISP	Individualized Service Plan
JPD	Juvenile Probation Division
LD	Learning Disabilities
LOC	Level of Care
MEPA	Multi-Ethnic Placement Act of 1994
MHMR	Mental Health/Mental Retardation
MINS	Minor In Need of Supervision
MMPI	Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory
NA	Narcotics Anonymous
NACA	National Association of Child Advocates
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
NCAC	National Children's Advocacy Center
NCASAA	National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association

NCCAN	National Clearinghouse for Child Abuse and Neglect
NCMEC	National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
NCYL	National Center for Youth Law
NGLTF	National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
NSOR	National Sex Offender Registry
OJJDP	Office of Juvenile Delinquency Prevention
OV	Oldest Victim
P1	Priority 1
P2	Priority 2
PAL	Preparation for Adult Living
PIAT	Peabody Individual Achievement Test
PINS	Person In Need of Supervision
PMC	Permanent Managing Conservator/Conservatorship
PO	Probation or Parole Officer
POS	Plan of Service
PPC	Permanent Possessory Conservator/Conservatorship
PPT	Permanency Planning Team
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAD	Reactive Attachment Disorder
RAPR	Refusal to Accept Parental Responsibility
RO	Ruled Out
RTB	Reason to Believe
RTC	Residential Treatment Center
SPCA	Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
SSI	Supplemental Security Income

TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TDFPS	Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
TFC	Texas Family Code
TFH	Therapeutic Foster Home
TMC	Temporary Managing Conservator/Conservatorship
TPC	Temporary Possessory Conservator/Conservatorship
TPR	Termination of Parental Rights
TYC	Texas Youth Commission
UA	Urinary Analysis
WAIS-R	Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale—Revised
WIC	Women, Infants and Children
WISC-III	Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—Revised
YFT	Youth for Tomorrow

Adapted from Department of Family and Protective Services, Basic Skills Training

CONSERVATORSHIP TIMELINE—DFPS

HANDBOOK APPENDIX 5400

Day	Activities Required	Discussion and Comments
0	Ex parte order before Removal	The 365-day clock starts when DFPS gets temporary managing conservatorship (TMC), which may be ex parte (Texas Family Code §§262.101 External Link , 262.102 External Link)
0	Emergency ex parte order after removal	If the emergency possession is without a court order, an ex parte hearing must be held on the first working day after removal (maximum 3 days) (Texas Family Code §262.106 External Link).
14	Non-emergency order	If removal is ordered after a noticed hearing, the temporary order remains in effect until further order of the court and the next hearing is the status hearing.
14	Full adversary hearing, temporary orders, or return to the parent or relative are required	Court must inform each parent in open court that parental rights may be restricted or terminated unless the parent is willing and able to provide a safe environment for the child (Texas Family Code §262.201(c) External Link).
15	Request to identify the court of continuing jurisdiction; motion to transfer (TFC §155.201 et seq)	If the court has rendered temporary orders, DFPS must request the identity of the court of continuing jurisdiction (Texas Family Code §262.202 External Link). Transfer is mandatory, but does not affect the time limits for permanency. A motion to transfer may be filed outside the time limits in Chapter 155 External Link (Texas Family Code §262.203(b) External Link).
45	File service plan	DFPS must file its service plan not later than 45 days from the date DFPS is appointed TMC (Texas Family Code §263.101 External Link).
60	Status hearing	Court must hold a hearing to review the child's status and the permanency plan within 60 days after TMC is awarded (Texas Family Code §263.201 External Link). Court must inform each parent in open court that parental rights may be restricted or terminated unless the parent is willing and able to provide a safe environment for the child (Texas Family Code §263.006 External Link).
170	Permanency progress report	DFPS must file a permanency progress report and serve it on all parties at least 10 days before each permanency hearing (Texas Family Code §263.303 External Link).

Day	Activities Required	Discussion and Comments
180	Initial permanency hearing	<p>Ten days before the hearing, notice of the hearing and a copy of the permanency plan is provided to the parties, foster parents, and ad litems, including volunteer advocates (Texas Family Code §263.301(b)External Link; §263.3025(a)External Link).</p> <p>The court reviews the caseworker's efforts to locate and serve the parties (Texas Family Code §263.301(c)External Link; also in 263.306(2)External Link).</p> <p>The child must attend the hearing, unless specifically waived by the court (Texas Family Code §263.302External Link).</p> <p>The court informs each parent in open court that parental rights may be restricted or terminated unless the parent is willing and able to provide a safe environment for the child (Texas Family Code §263.006External Link).</p> <p>The specific duties of the court are explained in Appendix 5531: Requirements for the Court in a Permanency Hearing.</p>
290	Permanency progress report	File a permanency progress report and serve it on all parties at least 10 days before each permanency hearing (Texas Family Code §263.303 External Link).
300	Permanency hearing	<p>Court may shorten, but may not extend the 120-day deadline for subsequent permanency hearings (Texas Family Code §263.305External Link).</p> <p>All requirements for initial permanency hearing apply.</p>
364	Extension order	<p>The court may extend the time by an additional 180 days from the original deadline if the court finds that there are extraordinary circumstances (Texas Family Code §263.401(b)External Link).</p> <p>The court may not grant additional extensions (Texas Family Code §263.401(c)External Link); however, the court may place the child with a parent for up to 180 days of monitoring (Texas Family Code §263.403External Link).</p>

Day	Activities Required	Discussion and Comments
365	Commencement of trial on the merits or dismissal	<p>A trial on the merits results in a final order.</p> <p>A final order is an order that does one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returns the child to a parent • Grants managing conservatorship to a relative or other person • Appoints DFPS as permanent managing conservator without terminating the parent-child relationship (within the limits of §263.404External Link) • Appoints DFPS as permanent managing conservator after terminating the parent-child relationship <p>If a final order results in termination and an award of permanent managing conservatorship to DFPS, the court must hold a Placement Review Hearing within 90 days of the final order and every six months thereafter to review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child's placement; • DFPS's permanency plan for the child; • DFPS's progress toward achieving that plan; and • any other issues. <p>The requirements for these hearings are set out in Texas Family Code §§263.501-503External Link and summarized in Appendix 5581: Requirements for the Court in a Placement Review Hearing. The Placement Review Hearing continues as long as DFPS is managing conservator.</p>
410	Permanency progress report (during extension)	DFPS must file a permanency progress report and serve it on all parties at least 10 days before each permanency hearing (Texas Family Code §263.303 External Link).
420	Permanency hearing (during extension)	All requirements for initial permanency hearing apply.
540	Deadline for the final permanency hearing (Another permanency progress report is required 10 days before this hearing)	<p>The case must be dismissed on the next Monday following 18 months from the date that temporary managing conservatorship was granted to DFPS, unless either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the court has commenced a trial on the merits (Texas Family Code §263.401(b)External Link); or • the child has been placed with a parent for up to 180 days of monitoring (Texas Family Code §263.403External Link)

Day	Activities Required	Discussion and Comments
**	Special rule when temporary placement for monitoring breaks down	<p>The court may order DFPS to continue as temporary managing conservator for not more than 180 days with the child placed in the home of a parent for monitoring.</p> <p>The court order must include specific findings of the grounds for the order and must establish a dismissal date not more than 180 days after the order is entered (Texas Family Code §263.403(b)External Link).</p> <p>If DFPS removes the child during the monitoring period, the deadline for dismissal or entry of a final order is the original dismissal date or 180 days after the removal of the child, whichever is later (Texas Family Code §263.403(c)External Link).</p>

CPS RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Forms 2530 and 2530s (Spanish) can be downloaded at dfps.state.tx.us.

As a child or youth in foster care I have the right to:

SAFETY AND CARE

1. Be told:
 - Why am I in foster care?
 - What will happen to me?
 - What is happening to my family (including brothers and sisters)?
 - How is CPS planning for my future?
2. Good care and treatment that meets my needs in the most family-like setting possible. This means I have the right to live in a safe, healthy, and comfortable place. And I am protected from getting hurt, treated with respect, and have some privacy for personal needs.
3. Be told the rules by a person at the place where I am living.
4. Be free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harassment from any person in the household or facility where I live.
5. Be treated fairly.

FAMILY AND OTHER CONTACTS

1. Live with my siblings who are also in foster care, if possible. If I am not living with my siblings, I have the right to know why. If there are no safety or other compelling reasons why I cannot live with my siblings, it is my caseworker's job to try and find a home where I can live with my siblings.
2. Visit and have regular contact with my family, including my brothers and sisters (unless a court order or case plan doesn't allow it) and to have my worker explain any restrictions to me and write them in my record. I have the right to file a court petition to request access to my sibling(s) if I have been separated from my sibling(s) because of an action by DFPS.
3. Visit and have contact with persons outside the foster care system. These visitors can be, but are not limited to teachers, church members, mentors, and friends.

HAVE A NORMAL LIFE

1. Speak and be spoken to in my own language. This includes Braille if I am blind or sign language if I am deaf. If my foster parents or caregiver does not know my language, CPS will give me a plan to meet my needs to communicate.
2. Go to school and get an education that fits my age and individual needs.
3. Have my religious needs met.

4. Participate in childhood activities that are appropriate for my age and maturity, including youth leadership development, foster family activities, and unsupervised childhood and extracurricular activities (including playing sports, playing in the band, going on field trips, spending time with friends, etc.).
5. Privacy, including sending and receiving unopened mail, making and receiving private phone calls, and keeping a personal journal, unless an appropriate professional or court says that restrictions are necessary for my best interest.
6. Personal care, hygiene, and grooming products and training on how to use them.
7. Comfortable clothing for my age and size and similar to clothing worn by other children in my community. I also have the right to clothing that protects me against the weather. If I'm a teenager, I should have the reasonable opportunity to select my clothing.
8. Have my personal items and gifts at my home and to get additional things within reasonable limits, as planned for and discussed by my caregiver and caseworker, and based on my caregiver's ability.
9. Personal space in my bedroom to store my clothes and belongings.
10. Be informed of search policies (going through my personal items). I have the right to be told if certain items are forbidden (or if I am not allowed to have them) and why. If my belongings are removed, it must be documented.
11. Healthy foods in healthy portions for my age and activity level.
12. Seek employment, get paid for work done at my placement (except for routine chores or work assigned as fair and reasonable discipline), keep my own money, and have my own bank account in my own name, depending on my age or level of maturity.
13. Give my permission in writing before taking part in any publicity or fund raising activity for the place where I live, including the use of my photograph.
14. Refuse to make public statements showing my gratitude to a foster home, child-placing agency, or operation.
15. Not get pressured to get an abortion, give up my child for adoption, or to parent my child, if applicable.

DISCIPLINE

1. Be free of any harsh, cruel, unusual, unnecessary, demeaning, or humiliating punishment. This means I should never:
 - Be shaken, hit, spanked, or threatened with being shaken, hit, or spanked
 - Be forced to do unproductive work
 - Be denied food, sleep, access to a bathroom, mail, or family visits
 - Have myself or my family made fun of, or
 - Be threatened with losing my placement or shelter
 - Be treated in a way meant to embarrass, control, harm, intimidate, or isolate me by use of physical force, rumors threats, or inappropriate comments.

2. Be disciplined in a manner that is appropriate to how mature I am, my developmental level, and my medical condition. I must be told why I was disciplined. Discipline does not include the use of restraint, seclusion, corporal punishment, or threat of corporal punishment.
3. Be informed of emergency behavioral intervention policies in writing. I have the right to know how they will control me if I cannot control my behavior, and to know how they will keep me and those around me safe.

PLANS FOR ME WHILE IN CARE

1. See my caseworker at least once a month and in private.
2. Receive a complete plan that addresses my needs and services, including transition activities when I am 14 or older that plans for my life as an adult, to include a career, college or help enrolling in an educational or vocational job training program. I also have the right to a copy or summary of my plan and the right to review it.
3. Actively participate in creating my plan for services and permanent living arrangements. I have the right to ask someone to act on my behalf or to support me in my participation. At age 14, I have the right to invite two or more additional people of my choosing, that are not my foster parent or caseworker, to participate in my case planning meetings.
4. If I am an older youth:
5. If I am age 14 or older, I have the right to one or more Circle of Support Conferences or Transition Planning Meetings.
6. If I am age 14 or older, I have the right to be told about services, programs and benefits available to me when I leave care (PAL, Education and Training Voucher program, College Tuition and Fee Waiver, STAR Health-Medicaid, Extended Foster Care, etc.).
7. If I am age 16 or older, I have the right to attend Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) classes and other state and regional activities as required or appropriate to my plan for services.
8. If I am age 16 or older, I have the right to get help in obtaining a place to live and information on the cost of housing when aging out of care, so that I can plan for my future independence.

MEDICAL

1. Good medical, dental, and vision care, and mental health and developmental services that adequately meet my needs. I have the right to also request that the care or services be separate from adults (other than young adults) who are receiving services.
2. Not be forced to take unnecessary or too much medication.
3. Be involved in decisions about my medical care:
 - I may consent to my own treatment in some cases if allowed by the health care provider. For example, the law allows me to consent to my own counseling for suicide prevention, drug or alcohol problems, or sexual, physical or emotional abuse, and I can agree to be treated for serious contagious or communicable diseases.
 - If I am pregnant and unmarried, I can agree to hospital, medical or surgical treatment, other than abortion, related to the pregnancy. If I have a child who is in my legal care, I can consent to all medical care for my child.

- If I am 16 years old or older, I have the right to ask a judge to legally authorize me to make some or all of my own medical decisions, such as which kinds of medications I should take.

LEGAL/COURTS

- Contact and speak privately to: my caseworker, attorneys, ad litem, probation officer, court appointed special advocate (CASA), and Disability Rights of Texas at any time.
- Go to court hearings and speak to the judge, including talking to the judge about where I am living and what I like to see happen to me and my family.

RECORDS

- Expect that my records and personal information will be kept private and will be discussed only when it is about my care.
- A copy of the CPS Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care and that they be explained to me in my primary language or in any means that successfully explains it to me.
- Have a credit report run annually beginning at age 14, be informed of the results, and receive assistance in interpreting the report and disputing any inaccuracies.
- Receive help with getting my driver's license, social security card, birth certificate, and state ID card if I am age 16 or older.
- Get necessary personal information within 30 days of leaving care, including my immunization records, proof of Medicaid enrollment, information about how to set up a Medical Power of Attorney, and information contained in my education portfolio and health passport.

COMPLAINTS

1. Make calls, reports, or complaints without being punished, threatened with punishment, or retaliated against; and I have the right to make any of these calls privately and anonymously if I choose and the call center permits it. Depending on the nature of the complaint, I have the right to call:
 - The DFPS Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline at 1-800-252-5400.
 - The HHSC Ombudsman for Children and Youth currently in Foster Care at 1-844-286-0769.
 - The DFPS Office of Consumer Affairs at 1-800-720-7777.
 - Disability Rights of Texas at 1-800-252-9108.
2. To get information from my caseworker, attorney, CASA, or any other individual in my case about where I can make my complaint if I have one.

PEER COORDINATOR MODEL

The Peer Coordinator Model uses seasoned volunteers to support, coach, and supervise advocate volunteers. The model is the result of a collaborative effort between National CASA and several CASA programs. It is useful for all CASA/GAL programs—big and small, urban and rural, government run and nonprofit—and is supported by National CASA.

The purpose of this model is:

- To create a fluid system of coaching and support for advocates
- To strengthen connections to the program, rather than to its people
- To expand the shared knowledge base
- To build solid relationships between all staff, paid and unpaid
- To provide a CASA advocate for every child in care

The goal of the Peer Coordinator Model is to serve more children without having to equally increase staff and budget. It is about working smarter, not harder, and about increasing retention by building stronger relationships between all of the organization members: paid staff, unpaid staff and advocates.

Please note: The Peer Coordinator Model places strong emphasis on support of and connection with volunteers. As such, the coaching, motivation, and leadership Moving Forward for Children training modules will be valuable to all CASA/GAL programs.

Many state and local CASA organizations have provided assistance and information. We thank CASA of Maricopa County (AZ), CASA of Contra Costa County (CA), Child Advocates, Inc. in Houston, and CASA of Lane County (OR) for their commitment and contributions.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

As you begin to explore the model of peer coordination ensure that your program has sought legal counsel so the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act and any state laws can be considered. We also recommend you consult your state CASA/GAL office to see if there are other programs exploring the model as well as if the state office knows of any state laws or unique circumstances that might prohibit or discourage use of the model.

Your program staff and board should engage in a review of insurance considerations, including workers compensation, to explore implications of such a model; participate in learning opportunities about the model; and undergo an organizational assessment to determine need and readiness, including considerations around budget, training, recruitment, staffing and organizational culture. Following this level of exploration, you should develop a written plan and time line for implementation of the model.

Fully investigating these topics while you are in the exploration phase of the model will help avoid potential setbacks after implementation.

The National CASA standards include requirements for the exploration and implementation of the peer coordinator model or any model of volunteer coordination of advocates. Please review Standard 6.G.6. and 7 for the current requirements

Source: National CASA

HEALTH PASSPORT ACCESS FOR LOCAL CASA PROGRAMS

WHAT IS THE HEALTH PASSPORT?

Health Passport is a patient-centered, internet-based health record. It makes a foster child's information available to authorized providers and medical stakeholders, such as Caseworkers, Medical Consenters, and CASA. The data in Health Passport is not a child/youth's complete medical record, but it does contain information on patient demographics such as:

- Doctor visits for which claims have been submitted
- Allergies
- Lab test results
- Immunizations
- Filled medications
- Assessments including CANS and FSNA's
- Hospitalizations

There are also electronic Texas Health Steps, dental and behavioral health forms available through Health Passport.

LOCAL CASA PROGRAM HEALTH PASSPORT ACCESS

Local CASA programs are granted access to the HP of children to which they are appointed by the court. **CASA staff members are the only individuals who are granted access through a DFPS process and password.** CASA volunteers and other CASA staff must view the electronic HP from the computer of the authorized user.

For staff with current access to the Health Passport

Once your program has established and run the new ABCS check on all current HP users, nothing more needs to be done and you will no longer be required to renew your access each year.

For New Users or First Time Program Access:

1. Executive Directors or Program Directors will designate CASA staff member(s) who will serve as the Designated Health Passport User for their program.
2. Designated Health Passport Users (DHPU) will complete online training at: www.foster-caretx.com. (See Attached HP Training Instructions)
3. Local programs will notify Ophelia Jaushlin at DFPSHealthPassport@dfps.state.tx.us of persons who have been named DHPU. These persons must have completed the online training and have undergone the ABCS abuse/neglect registry check. Local CASA programs must submit three forms:

- a. NEW- A copy of the individual's "Internal Collection and Security Agreement Form" (Attached)
 - b. NEW- A copy of the individual's "Background Check Letter/Email from the DFPS Centralized Background Check Unit." (Attached)
 - c. CASA External User Contact Information Form (Attached)
4. If Texas CASA receives inquiries from a local program about not receiving HP access despite turning in forms, Texas CASA will pass on the inquiry to DFPS. If DFPS has processed the forms, they will indicate so in communication back to Texas CASA.

ENDING HEALTH PASSPORT ACCESS

CASA programs must notify Texas CASA and Ophelia Jaushlin at DFPSHealthPassport@dfps.state.tx.us prior to a DHPU separation from the program, if possible. If prior notice is not possible, programs will notify Texas CASA and Ophelia Jaushlin within 3 business days of the separation.

CASA HEALTH PASSPORT ACCESS AND FILE STORAGE

1. Most CASA programs will have one DHPU (Designated Health Passport User).
2. Programs serving in metropolitan areas will have additional DHPU based upon the number of children served. For programs serving more than 250 children annually, additional CASA staff members may become users up to a total of 5 per program.
3. The DHPU will access the HP either by themselves or along with the volunteer which the court has appointed. If the volunteer is present they may view the HP along with the DHPU.
4. HP users must take precautions outlined in the User Agreement to protect the child's HP record from electronic viewing and access to printed copies of portions of the HP.
5. If there is a need to print a portion of the HP, a copy will be stored in the CASA office file and a copy may be filed in the case file which is in the custody of the CASA volunteer.
6. The office file will be stored in a locked file cabinet when not in use. The CASA volunteer will protect the confidentiality of the child's health information.
7. Like all HP users, CASA HP users must read and comply with the Non-Medical Health Passport User Agreement.

SECURITY REPORTS

1. Superior Heath provides DFPS with daily security reports. If indicated, CPS will contact Texas CASA when a situation requires review. An example would be a CASA staff person accessing a child's HP record after DFPS conservatorship has been dismissed.
2. When CPS refers a situation for review, Texas CASA will contact the local program to discuss and report findings to CPS. Texas CASA may require a written plan explaining action to be taken and how further improper use will be prevented.
3. Texas CASA maintains written records of all internal reviews with local CASA programs and provides a response to CPS by email containing the findings of the review and any corrective actions taken.

4. Failure to comply with the User Agreement can result in the CASA staff member losing HP access.

OBTAINING THE IMPACT PERSON IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

1. In order to access a child's HP record, the DHPU must have one of three identifiers and the child's name. The possible identifiers include:
 - a. Social Security Number
 - b. Medicaid Identification Number
 - c. IMPACT Person Identification Number (PID)
2. To obtain the child's PID, the CASA program will email the request for an IMPACT Identification number (PID) to the caseworker directly and cc: the caseworker's supervisor.
3. If a response is not received within 3 days (unless the information is urgently needed), the CASA program will forward the email to the designated point of contact or back-up contact for the Region.
4. Email requests should have the following information:
 - a. Child's name with exact spelling
 - b. Date of birth
 - c. County of conservatorship
 - d. Cause number
 - e. CASA staff's office & cell number
5. A CASA volunteer reviewing the case file at CPS may request a copy of one the following forms which contain the child's PID #:
 - a. Placement Authorization Forms 2085
 - b. Medical Consent Form 2085 B
 - c. Case File Cover Sheet

FAQS

Where do I get the forms to apply for HP access?

For first time users, contact Ophelia Jaushlin at DFPS, DFPSHealthPassport@dfps.state.tx.us, to request the appropriate forms.

How long will it take to get access once I have turned the forms in?

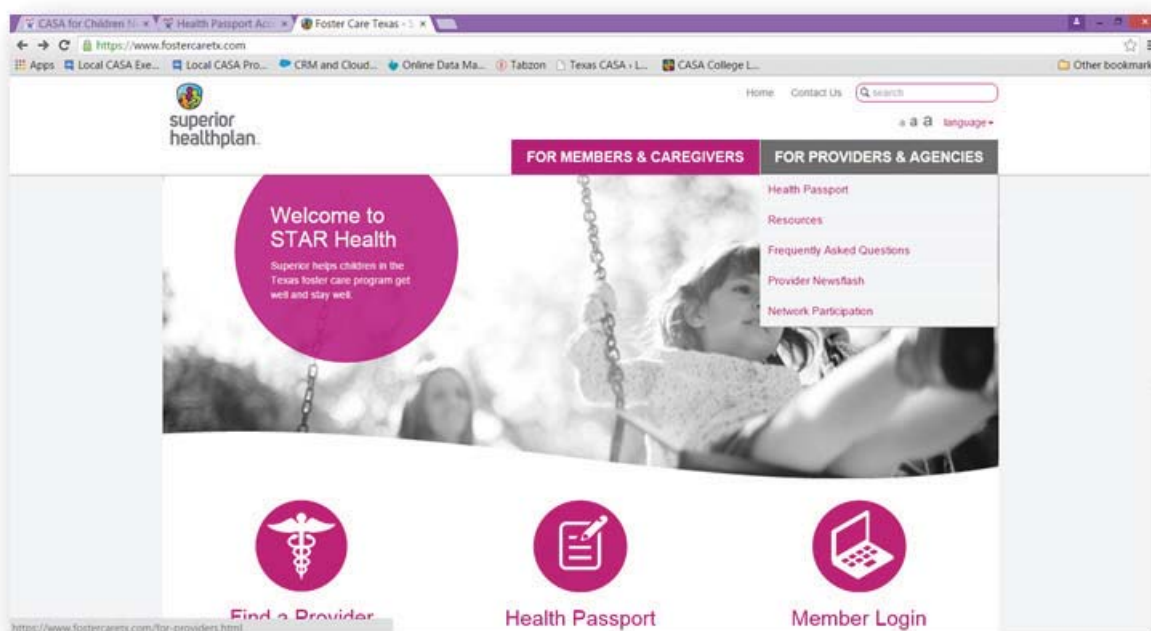
Allow at least one month for DFPS to process the request, the background check and the DFPS External User authorization.

What if it has been more than 30 days and I have not heard back from CPS Medical Services?

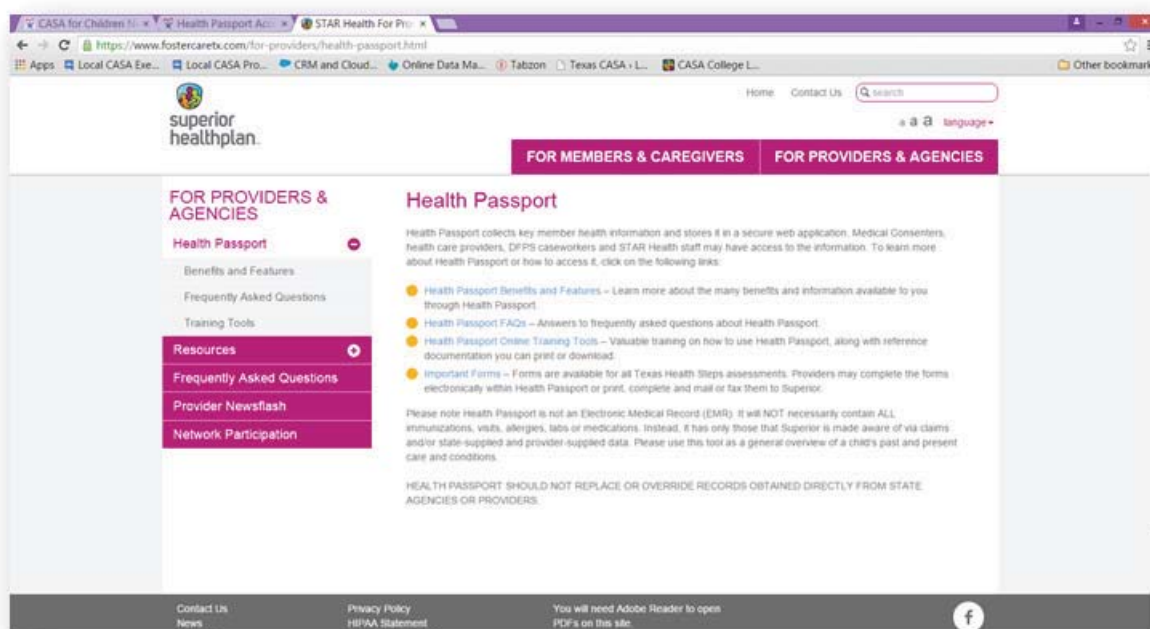
You may contact DFPSHealthPassport@dfps.state.tx.us directly to inquire if you have not heard back. Individuals are contacted directly with either access granted, need for more information or denial based on background checks.

HEALTH PASSPORT TRAINING INSTRUCTIONS

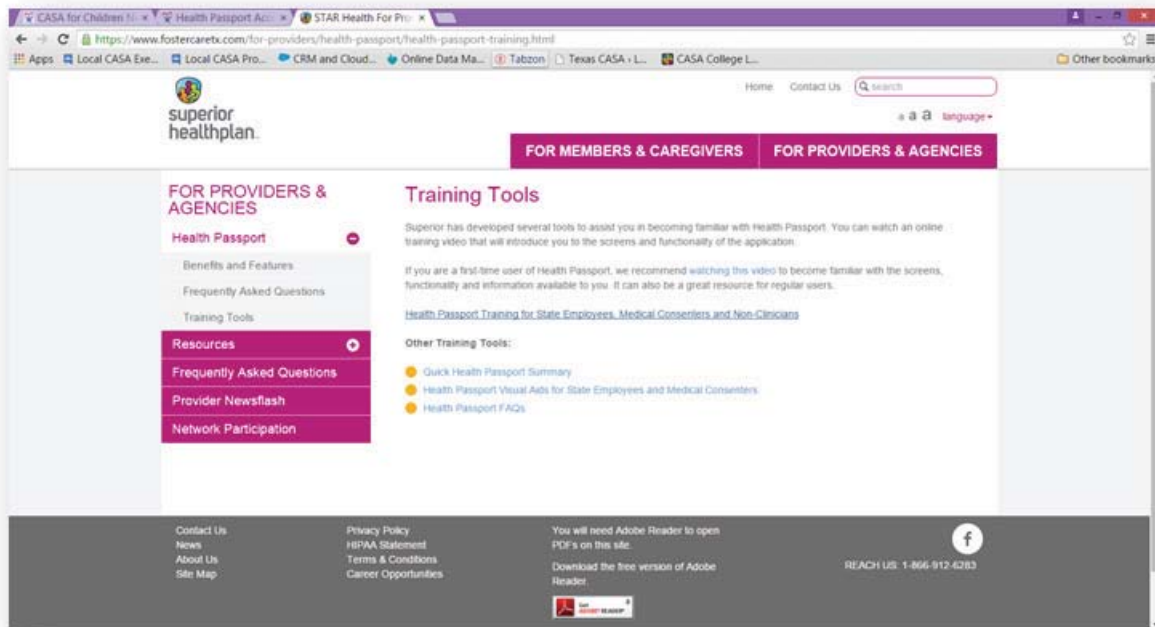
1. Go To www.fostercaretx.com and click on the "Health Passport" tab at the top (See RED Arrow).



2. Click on "Health Passport Online Training Tools"



3. Click on "Health Passport Training for State Employees, Medical Consenters and Non-Clinicians," and the training will begin. Please make sure your computer audio is turned on.



4. The Health Passport training should load and then begin.

TEXAS CASA LMS WEBINAR DETAILS

CASE ADVOCACY

The Seven Habits of the Highly Effective CASA (broadcast June 11, 2014)

Presented by Brenda Sweeten, MSSW, LCSW Lecturer/Field Education Director University of North Texas Social Work.

Strengthen your advocacy by adopting some effective “habits” – things that you do and apply consistently throughout your work, communication and interaction with children, families and system stakeholders.

Reasonable Efforts (broadcast March 12, 2014)

Presented by Judge Leonard Edwards, Consultant, Mentor Judge Center for Families, Children & the Courts Administrative Office of the Courts.

This webinar explains how important the “reasonable efforts” finding is to children and families in the child protection system. It also explains:

- what reasonable efforts means,
- how reasonable efforts were written into federal and then state law,
- when the reasonable efforts finding must be made, and
- what the consequences of a “no reasonable efforts” finding are.
- This presentation will address strategies CASA volunteers can use on issues related to reasonable efforts and how to bring these up in court proceedings.

How to “Stand Tall” in Court (broadcast May 15, 2013)

Presented by the Honorable Darlene Byrne, 126th Judicial District Civil Court and Key Richardson, Program Director, CASA of Travis Co.

This webinar will inform CASA volunteers as to how to “stand tall” in court—how to advocate, do your best in oral recommendations from a local program perspective and also from the perspective of a judge.

Testifying 201 (broadcast December 19, 2012)

Charles G. Childress, Attorney at Law, Austin, discusses strategies and best practices for testifying in court.

A Judicial Perspective on CASA Court Reports

Presented by Darlene Byrne, 126th Judicial District Court Judge for Travis County, Austin.

CASA advocacy is grounded in promoting permanency and the best interest of each child. One of the most effective tools to accomplish quality advocacy is the CASA court report. But are we getting the right information to the court that will provide our judges with the type of factual data and needed recommendations to help them make the best decisions possible for children?

Hear from Judge Darlene Byrne, one of the most esteemed judges presiding over these cases, for a judicial perspective on essential elements of a CASA court report.

EDUCATIONAL ADOCCACY

Introducing the Educational Advocacy Toolkit (broadcast March 11, 2015)

In this webinar, Training and Communications Director Leslie Palmer explains what it means to be a Fierce Advocate and what you can expect from the Fierce Advocate Series. She also introduces you to the Educational Advocacy Toolkit and the many helpful resources that are a part of it, such as:

- A short, introductory video,
- A manual for volunteers (and anyone else who is a Fierce Advocate), and
- A facilitator guide for CASA trainers.

Response to Intervention (RTI): What CASA Volunteers Need to Know

(broadcast November 12, 2014)

Presented by Pamela Bell, Ph.D., Program Director, and Mary Ndande, Ph.D., M.S.S.W., SSHRA-V – Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, UT Austin.

Learn about Response to Intervention (RTI):

- How RTI data may be used in the special education evaluation process,
- How to advocate for educational and transition needs of students in foster care, and
- RTI-related website resources.

Surrogate Parent Training

(broadcast September 10, 2014)

Presented by Ian Spechler with Disability Rights Texas. This webinar will teach the CASA network about:

- Obtaining and reviewing important school records,
- Requesting evaluations,
- Participating in an ARD (Admission, Review and Dismissal) meeting,
- Accountability requirements for IEPs (Individualized Education Programs),
- Protecting a student's rights during discipline proceedings, and
- Ensuring services to transition into adulthood.

Transforming Educational Outcomes for Foster Children

(broadcast January 16, 2013)

Presented by Tiffany Roper, Assistant Director, Texas Children's Commission, this webinar focuses on educational outcomes and primarily discusses the Texas Blueprint findings, its' recommendations and strategies and how to provide effective educational advocacy.

MEDICAL ADVOCACY:

Behavioral Health Services Under Medicare

(broadcast April 8, 2015)

Presented by Richard LaVallo, Legal Director at Disability Rights Texas. In this webinar, LaVallo covers:

- Behavioral health services under Medicaid's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT),
- Behavioral health services under the mental health rehabilitative services provisions,
- Due process protections afforded to foster children to ensure the provision of medically necessary behavioral health services, and
- How to advocate for behavioral health services on behalf of foster children.

Mental Health Considerations: Working with Children and Youth(broadcast May 14, 2014)

Presented by Seanna Crosbie, LCSW, Director of Program Services, Austin Child Guidance Center.

This webinar provides information on how to appropriately serve children/youth who have experienced or witnessed abuse/neglect, domestic violence or other traumatic events. Learn how trauma impacts a child's development, ways you can effectively field difficult questions from children/youth, and how to ensure you are best supporting their healing through your actions and language.

Mental Health Advocacy for Children in Foster Care (broadcast April 9, 2014)

Presented by Lynda E. Frost, J.D., Ph.D., Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, The University of Texas at Austin.

Dr. Frost talked about the mental health advocacy in relation to trauma, behavior management and other mental health issues that CASA should be aware of.

Addressing Issues of Grief and Loss for Children in Foster Care (broadcast February 12, 2014)

Presented by Adam Robe, CEO, Foster Care Alumni of America; Speaker/Trainer/Author at Robe Communications, Inc.

How can you help a foster child cope with the inevitable grief and loss they experience just by coming into care? This presentation offers specific and practical strategies and insights to strengthen your advocacy for children experiencing grief and loss.

Prenatal Drug and Alcohol Exposure – What CASA Should Know and Do (broadcast January 8, 2014)

Presented by M. Connie Almeida, Ph.D., LSSP, Director of Behavioral Health Services for Fort Bend County.

Many of the children and families that CASA's are assigned to have mental health and substance abuse disorders. Both have implications for effective advocacy. This webinar will provide participants critical information about not only the effects of prenatal drug and alcohol exposure, but screening, assessment, treatment and interventions that can promote better outcomes for children.

Behavior Management and the Use of Restraints on Foster Children (broadcast March 20, 2013)

Presented by Dr. Lynda Frost, Director of Planning and Programs, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health this webinar discusses the use of restraints in relation to psychotropic medications, behavior management and any new requirements that CASA volunteers may need to be aware of.

Mental Health Needs of Children in Foster Care (broadcast August 15, 2012)

Presented by Dr. Connie Almeida, Director of Behavioral Health Services, Fort Bend County, this webinar provides an overview of the mental health needs of children in foster care from birth through young adulthood. Participants will gain further understanding of the manifestation of mental health disorders in children and adolescents. The impact of mental health on learning, relationships and well-being will be discussed.

Impact of Trauma from Adverse Childhood Experiences (broadcast June 20, 2012)

Presented by Dr. Lynda Frost, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health.

The effects of trauma can be profound and long-lasting. The enduring impact of adverse childhood experiences can shape the lives of youth and adults, presenting physical, psychological, and social challenges. Webinar participants will learn about the latest research on childhood trauma and interventions designed to minimize its impact.

Psychopharmacology for Children in Substitute Care (broadcast May 16, 2012)

Presented by Lynn Crismon, Dean of the College of Pharmacy at The University of Texas at Austin.

Trauma Informed Advocacy

Presented by Dr. Karyn Purvis, Director of the TCU Institute of Child Development. Child victims of abuse and neglect often suffer from trauma that impacts their functioning in every area of their life. Many of the emotional and behavioral symptoms treated by mental health professions and through psychopharmacology are not adequately recognized as symptoms of trauma. CASA volunteers and those working in related systems (CPS, schools, placement providers) also need to view the child's emotional and behavioral state through this lens which informs our most basic understanding of the child's needs.

TRANSITIONING YOUTH

Youth Self-Advocacy (broadcast on June 17, 2015)

In this webinar, Texas CASA Liaison for Director and Board Development Deedra Baker explains how to understand what each youth needs to learn and experience in their journey to adulthood, and how to promote, at every turn, opportunities for increasing their self-advocacy.

Flux – Life After Foster Care (broadcast August 13, 2014)

Presented by Angie Cross, Foster Care Alumni of America-Tx Chapter.

Learn about the culture of foster care and how to support older youth and explore the emotional issues inherent to making the transition from foster care to adulthood.

Improving Outcomes for Older Youth in Care (broadcast November 21, 2012)

Presented by Angie Cross, Volunteer Chapter Engagement Manager, Foster Care Alumni of America (FCAA), this webinar provides resources to help CASA volunteers improve the outcomes for youth in care and transitioning youth.

PERMANENCY

Attorneys and CASA – Permanency Options (broadcast December 11, 2013)

Presented by F. Scott McCown, Clinical Professor at the UT Austin School of Law and Director of the Children's Rights Clinic.

This webinar discusses how the Attorney Ad Litem (AAL) and CASA / GAL can work together to achieve true permanency for children, particularly children in Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC).

Adoption Advocacy (broadcast November 13, 2013)

Presented by Jackie Hubbard, CPS Division Administrator and Jillian Bonacquisti, CPS Adoption Program Specialist, this webinar focuses on the legal requirements and policy practices to advocate for permanency.

Engaging Families Through Diligent Recruitment (broadcast June 19, 2013)

Presented by Debbie Williams, Permanency Specialist, CASA of Collin County, McKinney.

Hear from CASA staff involved in a five-year DFPS grant that seeks to find permanent homes for children, particularly children with special needs and children that have been in care for a long time. CASA advocates provide "enhanced work" in these cases, receive extra training, and have been instrumental in securing lifelong connections and permanent homes for children.

Permanency Values and Advocacy (broadcast July 18, 2012)

Presented by Elaine DeBose, Casey Family Foundations, this webinar shares some youth stories, and have CASA staff and volunteers think about their own values and gain new tips and skills related to permanency and advocacy.

GENERAL ADVOCACY

The Life Cycle of Human Trafficking (broadcast February 11, 2015)

Presented by Saul Castellanos, CEO, Freedom Youth Project Foundation.

Learn more about Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST), and understand why everyone has a stake in preventing children from being trafficked.

New Laws & Other Successes from the 84th Legislative Session (broadcast July 8, 2015)

In this webinar, Texas CASA's Public Policy team will break down (almost) everything that happened during the 84th Legislative Session related to the child protection system, including an overview of CASA's state funding for the next two years. The webinar will include highlights of some of the most important ways that our Legislative Advocacy Teams (LATs) helped pass our highest-priority bills and will give you concrete information about how this new legislation will impact the children you serve beginning Sept. 1, 2015.

CASA Family Finding Initiative (broadcast December 10, 2014)

Presented by Anjuli (AJ) Barak, CASA of Travis County Family Finding Specialist.

Compelling evidence shows that children who have some connection with members of their birth family and symbolic relatives have improved behavior, improved school performance and more hope in their lives. This webinar will explain the family finding process and explore resources available to make the job of tracking down and engaging family members more efficient. It will also detail family finding as an alternate volunteer opportunity for experienced CASA volunteers as a volunteer retention strategy.

Latin American Children's Extraordinary Support (LACES) (broadcast October 8, 2014)

Presented by Doris Foulkes, president of LACES.

Hispanic children removed from their parents by CPS – due to abuse, incarceration or deportation – are often left without any relatives to care for them in the U.S. Learn more about what happens with the families being deported, what Latin American Children's Extraordinary Support (LACES) is doing to support them, and how CASA can still work to keep these children connected to their families.

Communicating with Children (broadcast July 9, 2014)

Presented by Adam Robe, CEO, Foster Care Alumni of America; Speaker/Trainer/Author at Robe Communications, Inc.

It is important to understand what children hope for, feel and think. It is equally important to help children understand who you are and what your role as a CASA volunteer is in their lives. Gain new skills and relation building strategies.

Communicating Effectively in the Child Welfare System (broadcast April 17, 2013)

Presented by Beth Boone, Consultant and Alternative Dispute Resolution, Mediation Services of America, this webinar discusses effective ways CASA volunteers can use their communication skills:

Difficult situations create stressful emotions and distance between people working for the same goal – the good of a child. We will discuss twelve strategies to improve our interactions with others by addressing: 1) internal emotions and reactions and 2) communication strategies to connect with another.

Process for CASA to Report Concerns about Children's Placements (broadcast March 21, 2013)

Presented by Amii J. Leiner of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), this webinar describes DFPS' new process that allows CASA volunteers to report concerns about paid foster placements (foster homes, group homes, and RTCs) and ensures that these are forwarded to the person who can properly address them.

Advocacy for Dual System Youth

Presented by Ryan Miller of CASA of Travis County, this webinar will explore the juvenile system and the realities of dually-involved youth (youth in the conservatorship of CPS who also have juvenile charges). It will also cover areas in which CASA volunteers and agencies can become involved in advocacy in the juvenile system.

Key Elements of Resiliency

Presented by Deedra Baker, Quality Assurance Manager at Texas CASA. Working with child abuse victims can take an emotional toll on volunteers and staff who not only see the impact of abuse and neglect on children but also struggle with the impact of a broken system on children who need to

heal. Understanding and recognizing the influence of this work on our own lives is key to identifying strategic practices that can help us continue to do the work we find so worthwhile. Webinar participants will be able to identify two to three things they can immediately implement to build their resilience for child advocacy.

Better Outcomes for Children (broadcast February 20, 2013)

Presented by Sonia Kotecha, Director of Volunteers, CASA of Travis County, this webinar:

- explores attitudes about disproportionality and the underrepresentation of particular groups.
- introduces strategies to improve inclusion, recruitment and retention.

Advocating for Undocumented Youth (broadcast October 17, 2012)

Presented by Pamela K. Parker, Special Projects Attorney, DFPS, this webinar:

- Focuses attention on the importance of citizenship and immigration issues for foster children and youth.
- Demonstrates simple tool for identifying children who need help.
- Introduces the most common citizenship and immigration options available to foster children.
- Discusses the role of the foreign consul's office.
- Explains where and how to get more help.

How Advocates Can Be Big Voices for Little Texans at the Capitol (broadcast September 19, 2012)

Presented by Andrea Sparks, Director of Public Policy and Outreach, Texas CASA, this webinar discusses the opportunities for CASA volunteers, staff and board members to get involved in legislative advocacy at the state capitol.

EQUITABLE OUTCOMES QUESTIONNAIRE CARD

CASA VOLUNTEERS, ASK YOURSELF:	YES	NO	N/A
CASA CHILD(REN)/YOUTH(S)			
Is the child Native American under the Indian Child Welfare Act? If yes, have I contacted the child's tribe?			
Has Special Immigration Status for Juveniles been filed, if applicable?			
Am I ensuring the needs and safety of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) youth in each placement?			
Am I asking the child what they want and need?			
Are my recommendations specific to the unique needs of this child?			
Are the child's strengths identified and encouraged?			
If the youth is of color, LBGT or identifies with other minority groups, am I ensuring the child receives proactive messages that celebrate their identity?			
If the youth is of color, LBGT or identifies with other minority groups, am I ensuring the child receives protective messages that prepare them for hostility they may face?			
BIRTH FAMILY/FICTIVE KIN			
Has every effort been made in order to find and engage all important adults in the child's life (family, friends, kin, etc.)?			
Am I aware of the birth family's unique culture and circumstances?			
Are the family's strengths identified and encouraged?			
Am I asking family members what they want and need?			
FOSTER/ADOPT FAMILY			
Is placement in foster care and/or adoption outside the child's family considered as the last resort option?			
Am I ensuring my recommendation to place (or not to place) the child with potential foster/adoptive families is based on the best interests of the child, and not based on any biases or assumptions?			
If the child is placed with a family of a different religion, culture or racial identity than the child, am I ensuring the family understands the necessity of the child to develop a healthy sense of self based on the child's personal identity/ies?			

CASA VOLUNTEERS, ASK YOURSELF:	YES	NO	N/A
ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER			
How are my recommendations specific to the unique needs of this child's family?			
What conclusions have I drawn about the child or their family based upon my personal racial, gender/sexual orientation, class and/or religious identities?			
What evidence supports conclusions I have reached in this case?			
What evidence challenges my assumptions in this case?			
How has the child protection court's past involvement with this family influenced my recommendations?			
Can I distinguish between poverty and neglect in this case?			

CIRCLE OF SUPPORT CONFERENCE GUIDE

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- Facilitator welcomes everyone to the meeting and expresses appreciation for participants taking the time to be present.
- Facilitator/co-facilitator introduces themselves and asks each person to identify themselves and their relation to the youth.
- Facilitator/co-facilitator provides information regarding provision of meal/snack, time frame group will be together, direction to restrooms, facility use rules and breaks.

YOUTH OPENING (OPTIONAL)

- The meeting begins with the youth's choice of a welcome that has been previously identified by the youth as a tradition for gatherings. The welcome may consist of a prayer, moment of silence, singing, etc.

DESCRIPTION OF COS

- Facilitator briefly states how the conference works and reviews conference agenda.
- Facilitator explains confidentiality and has participants sign the form.
- Facilitator suggests ground rules for communication/interaction and asks for additions.
- Facilitator explains purpose of flip chart documentation and recording of transition plan.

PURPOSE OF CONFERENCE

- Facilitator asks caseworker to articulate the purpose and goals/objectives (what they hope to accomplish) for the meeting. This is an opportunity to set a positive tone.
- Facilitator then may ask others what they hope to accomplish during the meeting.

HOPES AND DREAMS FOR YOUTH

- Begin with the youth, then parents, then family/friends and ask individuals to state their hopes and dreams for the youth, now and in the future.
- Other participants will be asked to offer their hopes and dreams.
- Discuss that decisions made during the conference will reflect on what is important for the youth.

YOUTH STRENGTHS

- Begin with youth, then parents, then family/friends and ask individuals to state the youth's strengths. Strengths can include personality, skills and knowledge.

- Other participants will be asked to state the youth's strengths.

YOUTH NEEDS AND CONCERNS

- This section will begin with the youth identifying what their current and future needs, concerns and fears are related to aging out of foster care.
- Other participants will be asked to share what they feel are current and future needs/concerns for the youth.
- The facilitator will guide the participants to consider areas including educational, personal, family/community/Caring Adults, employment, housing and PAL services.
- Discuss requirements to meet special needs identified (developmental/psychological).
- Sibling and family contact/visits may be addressed.

RESOURCES

- Discuss resources available to the youth such as family, housing, PAL benefits, location of youth transition center, Caring Adult contact information, and community agencies.
- Offer resources that will be available to help the youth and participants in planning.
- Give an opportunity for everyone to participate and provide resources/services.

YOUTH AND CIRCLE OF SUPPORT PRIVATE TIME (OPTIONAL)

- Prior to breaking, inform the group about the process for private time.
- Explain that they will have as much time as needed.
- Guidelines for what is needed for each goal should be: Who, What/How, When.
- Group may be provided with paperwork tools to assist in developing their plan.
- Youth/group may decide which participant(s) will write and guide the group.
- Ask the group to have the youth or an identified spokesperson present the plan.
- Ask group to appoint someone to monitor the plan after the conference to ensure everyone is doing what they agreed to at the COS.
- *Meal or refreshments are provided for all participants, with professionals not participating in the Circle of Support taking theirs to an outside room.

PRESENTATION OF YOUTH'S TRANSITION PLAN

- Allow youth or group spokesperson to introduce the transition plan.
- Follow up and ask questions to make it more specific (if not already done).
- Ask all participants if they agree with the plan and facilitate further discussion if necessary.
- Youth and participants sign the plan.

DISCUSS RE-CONFERENCE (IF NEEDED)

- Facilitator suggests that a re-conference should be scheduled.
- Youth and participants discuss a time frame for next re-conference considering immediacy of need, age of youth and graduation date.

CLOSING

- Facilitator thanks everyone for patience and participation.
- Meeting may end with the youth's choice of a ritual/tradition.

WEBSITE RESOURCES

CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND YOUTH

Administration for Children & Families (ACF)

www.acf.hhs.gov/fact-sheets

www.acf.hhs.gov/media/press/2017/child-abuse-neglect-data-released

January 2017 – Child abuse, neglect data

The Administration for Children & Families (ACF) is a division of the Department of Health & Human Services. ACF promotes the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals and communities.

Administration for Children & Families (AFC) – Children’s Bureau

www.afc.hhs.gov/cb

Part of the Department of Health and Human Services, The Children’s Bureau (CB) focuses on improving the lives of children and families through programs that reduce child abuse and neglect, increase the number of adoption, and strengthen foster care.

Helpful resources on the site: Child Maltreatment Report, Human Trafficking, The New Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast Series, Resource Library

Building Bridges Initiative

<http://www.buildingbridges4youth.org/workgroups/youth-family/products-resources>

Building Bridges is a national initiative working to identify and promote practice and policy that will create strong and closely coordinated partnerships and collaborations between families, youth, community - and residentially - based treatment and service providers, advocates and policy makers to ensure that comprehensive mental health services and supports are available to improve the lives of young people and their families.

Child Welfare Information Gateway

www.childwelfare.gov

Child Welfare Information Gateway promotes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families by connecting child welfare, adoption, and related professionals as well as the public to information, resources, and tools covering topics on child welfare, child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care, adoption, and more.

A service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, we provide access to print and electronic publications, websites, databases, and online learning tools for improving child welfare practice, including resources that can be shared with families.

American Institutes for Research (AIR)

<http://www.air.org/topic/families-communities-and-social-systems/child-welfare>

AIR is one of the world's largest behavioral and social science research and evaluation organizations. AIR's mission is to conduct and apply the best behavioral and social science research and evaluation towards improving people's lives, with a special emphasis on the disadvantaged.

American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC)

www.apsac.org/resources

APSAC is a nonprofit national organization focused on meeting the needs of professionals engaged in all aspects of services for maltreated children and families. This site includes resources, legislation, and information on state chapters.

Child Trauma Academy

www.childtrauma.org

Child Trauma Library

<http://childtrauma.org/cta-library/>

The Child Trauma Academy (CTA) is a not-for-profit organization based in Houston, Texas working to improve the lives of high-risk children through direct service, research and education. Current research projects, training activities, publications, and progress reports are included on this site.

Child Welfare Information Gateway

www.childwelfare.gov

Making Healthy Choices: A Guide on Psychotropic Medications for Youth in Foster Care

Childwelfare.gov

Child Welfare Information Gateway promotes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families by connecting child welfare, adoption, and related professionals as well as the public to information, resources, and tools covering topics on child welfare, child abuse and neglect, and more. This site provides access to print and electronic publications, websites, databases, and online learning tools for improving child welfare practice, including resources that can be shared with families.

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)

www.cwla.org

CWLA is an association of public and private nonprofit agencies that assist abused and neglected children and families through a wide range of services. The site offers information on their programs, publications, resources, and upcoming conferences and trainings.

Foster Care & Adoptive Community

www.fosterparents.com

This site provides training, resources, links, and articles for foster and adoptive parents.

Indian Country Child Trauma Center (ICCTC)

www.icct.org

The ICCTC was established to develop trauma-related treatment protocols, outreach materials, and service delivery guidelines specifically designed for American Indian and Alaska Native children and their families. This site offers links to resources and various publications.

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

www.missingkids.com

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children provides services, resources and technical assistance to child victims of abduction and sexual exploitation, their families and the professionals who serve them. NCMEC provides the most comprehensive resources regarding missing children, child sexual exploitation, child safety and prevention, law enforcement training and victim and family support.

National Children's Advocacy Center

www.nationalcac.org

This agency provides prevention, intervention, and treatment services to physically and sexually abused children and their families with in a child-focused team approach.

National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)

www.nicwa.org

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) works to address the issues of child abuse and neglect through training, research, public policy, and grassroots community development. NICWA also works to support compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA), which seeks to keep American Indian children with American Indian families.

National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW)

www.nsopw.gov

The Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW) is an unprecedented public safety resource that provides the public with access to sex offender data nationwide. NSOPW is a partner-

ship between the U.S. Department of Justice and state, territorial, and tribal governments, working together for the safety of adults and children. NOSWP mobile App is now available.

Native American Children's Alliance (NACA)

www.nacalliance.com

The Native American Children's Alliance (NACA) is a national, nonprofit organization consisting of Native American child abuse professionals and allied partners dedicated to end the epidemic of child abuse in Indian Country. NACA exists to ensure the children and families who are victims of violent crimes in Indian Country are afforded services, victims' rights, notifications, cultural considerations and justice.

NACA supports these efforts by providing multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary child abuse training to professionals from federal, state, local and tribal agencies, as well as community awareness and prevention tools.

Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) America

www.preventchildabuse.org

PCA America is a nationally recognized organization for the prevention of child abuse through media, training, and technical assistance. The site has several links, resources, along with facts and statistics, activity tool kits, and newsletter subscription.

The Child Abuse Library Online

calio.org

CALiO™ provides a comprehensive collection of research literature, databases, statistical references, how-tos and much more in one easy-to-use location. CALiO™ Collections is freely accessible to those who are not associated with a CAC. CALiO™ Collections includes publications from government agencies as child welfare organizations, videos, audio files, professional journal articles, reports, and more. CALiO™ Collections resources are freely available from the CALiO™ homepage.

Texas Foster Youth Justice Project

www.texasfosteryouth.org

Free Legal Help for Current and Former Foster Youth: 1-877-313-3688

The Texas Foster Youth Justice Project helps current and former foster youth in Texas. The organization helps foster youth understand their legal rights; provide legal advice, assistance, guidance and representation in enforcing foster youth rights; also educate the general public about the legal needs and concerns of foster youth. 2016 Guide for Aging Out available online.

LAW & ADVOCACY

American Bar Association Center on Children & the Law

www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law/child_law.html

The goal of the ABA Center on Children and the Law is to improve the lives of children through advances in law, justice, knowledge, practice, and public policy. This site includes child welfare tips and great child advocacy links. The ABA Juvenile Justice Committee is dedicated to monitoring the legislative, fiscal, policy and administrative changes.

Casey Family Programs

www.casey.org

Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families across America. Their site offers an extensive library of child welfare research, best practices and policy tools.

Foster Care Alumni of America

www.fostercarealumni.org

www.fostercarealumni.org/texas-chapter

The Foster Care Alumni of America mission is to connect the community of alumni together to be an extended family for one another, a source of support and information, and a network of people with a shared culture and experience and to transform foster care practice and policy by working with alumni allies. This site includes resources and links to foster parenting and adopting, updates in policies and advocacy, research and data.

National American Indian Court Judges Association (NAICJA)

<https://naicja.wildapricot.org>

The NAICJA is committed to strengthening and enhancing tribal justice systems through a holistic approach--training and supporting tribal judges and personnel, providing support and technical assistance to attorneys working in tribal judicial systems, developing tribal and state judicial relationships, and providing education about the importance of tribal judicial systems to federal, state, and tribal stakeholders.

National Center for Youth Law (NCYL)

www.youthlaw.org

The NCYL is a California based non-profit law firm that helps low-income children achieve their potential by transforming the public agencies that serve them. This site offers helpful links and resources to advocacy, legislation, fact sheets, youth law news, mental health in youth, education, and foster care.

National Children's Alliance (NCA)

<http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org>

National Children's Alliance (NCA) is the national association and accrediting body for Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs). A Children's Advocacy Center is a child-friendly facility in which law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, mental health, medical and victim advocacy professionals work together to investigate abuse, help children heal from abuse, and hold offenders accountable.

National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)

<http://www.ncjfcj.org>

The NCJFCJ is a nonprofit corporation that seeks to continuously improve the family court system and court practices and to raise awareness of the core issues that touch the lives of our nation's children and families. Their website includes a resource library with subjects including child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, juvenile justice, mental health and much more.

National Court Appointed Special Advocates

www.casaforchildren.org

The National CASA website includes information on state programs, links to resources, and training material, manuals and guides.

Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention

www.ojjdp.gov

OJJDP provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization.

Psychotropic Medication Utilization Parameters for Children and Youth in Foster Care, 2016

dfps.state.tx.us

U.S. Department of Justice Office of Tribal Justice

www.justice.gov/otj

This office provides a single point of contact within the Justice Department for meeting the broad and complex federal responsibilities to federally recognized Indian tribes.

Partnership for America's Children

www.4americaschildren.org

<https://www.4americaschildren.org/meet-our-members#Texas>

The Partnership for America's Children is a network of nonpartisan child policy advocacy organizations that represent child policy advocacy organizations that represent children and their needs at the local, state, and national level within and across states. Child advocacy research resources and trainings included on the site.

Texas Foster Youth Justice Project

www.texasfosteryouth.org

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The Annie E. Case Foundation

<http://www.aecf.org>

The foundations advances research and solutions to overcome the barriers to success, help communities demonstrate what works and influence decision makers to invest in strategies based on solid evidence.

The foundations make grants that help federal agencies, states, counties, cities and neighborhoods create more innovative, cost-effective responses to the issues that negatively affect children: poverty, unnecessary disconnection from family and communities with limited access to opportunity.

KID COUNT data center

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

KIDS COUNT is a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and a premier source of data on children and families. Each year, the Foundation produces a comprehensive report — the KIDS COUNT Data Book — that assesses child well-being in the United States. The indicators featured in the Data Book are also available in the Data Center.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Center for Assessment and Policy Development

<http://www.capd.org/white-privilege/>

CAPD approaches all of its work with a lens that recognizes social justice and equity as among the factors that contribute to community and population well-being, and structural racism, white privilege and racial and other inequities (related to gender, LGBTQ status, wealth and/or country of origin) as among issues needing to be addressed. Website includes highlighted documents, publications and presentations.

Class Matters

www.classmatters.org

This website is a great resource for understanding class values and how class influences how people view the world.

Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook

http://files.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/library/T0087_culturematters.pdf

This cross-culture workbook is designed for Peace Corps volunteers, but provides an excellent resource for cross-culture awareness in America as well as for learning how to interact with people of another cultures in a respectful and successful manner. Each chapter contains many resources.

National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI)

<https://www.nbcdi.org/>

The National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) is at the forefront in delivering culturally relevant resources that respond to the unique strengths and needs of Black children around issues including early childhood education, health, child welfare, literacy, and family engagement.

The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond

<http://www.pisab.org>

The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB), is a national and international collective of anti-racist, multicultural community organizers and educators dedicated to building an effective movement for social transformation. The website includes resources, programs, and workshops.