Texas CASA

OPTIMA DATA MANAGEMENT GUIDE

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

STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

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

The answer is data.

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

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

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

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

Vicki Spriggs

Vicki Spriggs
Texas CASA CEO

OPTIMA DATA MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Types of Data Entered Into Optima

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

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

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

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

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

TYPES OF REPORTS IN OPTIMA

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

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

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

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

Ad-hoc Reports are created from scratch by users.

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

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

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

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

TEXAS CASA NETWORK DATA DEFINITIONS

Texas CASA Network Data Definitions

The Texas CASA network has established Data Definitions, for use in key fields in local programs' Optima systems. Included are Baseline Definitions (relating to statistics, counts and ODM reporting), Advocacy Definitions (relating to Optima Activity Types), and CFE Definitions. Visit the Optima Data Management Toolkit to view and download the Data Definitions spreadsheet.

Process for adding or requesting changes to definitions or activity types to REQUIRED TABLES for the CASA network in Texas:

On an on-going basis, as needed to continue to strengthen our network data collection efforts, any of the following persons/entities may request changes or additions to Texas CASA network definitions and/or locked tables in Optima:

- A local Texas CASA network program

- Texas CASA network Optima Liaison

- Texas CASA staff

The entity requesting a change or addition to Definition or Lookup Table(s) is responsible to submit a written recommendation to the Data Committee to include the specific

Definition and/or Lookup Table and the proposed changes/additions. The written request shall be made to their Regional Representative.

The Data Committee will be responsible to review and reassess the Texas CASA network definitions and locked tables, with an eye toward innovation and creation of new definitions and locked tables to support changing and expanding CASA network program needs. Membership will consist of:

- Regional Representatives (6)
- Additional Network Program Members (up to 6 members)
- The Texas CASA Optima Liaison
- Select Texas CASA Staff
- At least one member of the Texas CASA Board of Directors

The CASA Data Committee shall be responsible for review of the request. The entity requesting a change will have an opportunity to explain their request to the committee. The committee will deliberate, gather additional information, as needed, and determine what, if any, recommendations to the board will be made for the network moving forward.

The Data Committee will make a recommendation to the board based on a 75% agreement from the committee. The board will review the request and vote during a regularly scheduled board meeting. The requester will be notified by their Regional Representative of the recommendation and action take by the board within 10 days. The network will be notified within 10 days of the board approved action and any changes that may impact the network programs.

Process for adding or requesting changes to definitions or activity types to REQUIRED TABLES for individual programs in the CASA network:

A program wishing to track additional data within a locked table may create a proposal requesting the addition of a "sub-type." All sub-types, or an additional, custom field, must tie directly to a locked table choice. Any combination choices or choices that do not directly link to a locked table value are not eligible for inclusion.

A program wishing to make this request will submit a written data proposal to the Program Operations Director at Texas CASA. In consult with the Texas CASA Optima Liaison, the Program Operations Director will review the proposal for alignment to the locked table choice(s) and forward to Evinto. Generally, the conversion will take 10 business days from submission based on Evinto's schedule.

Evinto is not in a position to monitor for compliance with Texas CASA requirements. Evinto can temporarily unlock a program's tables, add the sub-types, and lock the tables again in order to add additional custom tracking that continues to fall within the locked tables for aggregate data.

THREE IMPORTANT DATES FOR EACH FILE IN OPTIMA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OPTIMA-ODM GLOBAL RULES

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

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

Beginning of Year: Sept. 1

Fiscal Quarters:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BASELINE DATA

Recommended Practices to Ensure Accuracy of Baseline Data

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

Recommendations:

- Supervising/administrative staff ensure regular consistency checks among the staff responsible to enter/close cases to ensure understanding and application of the process established

- Baseline data definitions support program staff consistency in data entry

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

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

Recommendations:

- Supervising/administrative staff are responsible for clearing exception reports; if possible, one person is assigned this task for the program

- Designated exception report person(s) works with the case supervisor(s) assigned to the case to quickly resolve exception report findings (and to continue coaching staff on established practices for Optima use)

- All exception reports are run by the designated staff person(s) no less than monthly

Recommended Exception Reports – [Visit the Optima Data Management Toolkit](#) for a Description Sheet of each Texas ODM Report in Optima. The Description Sheets provide additional details on each of the ODM reports, and include specific Exception Reports to run to ensure accuracy.

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

Recommendations:

- Supervising/administrative staff are responsible for running cross-check reports; if at all possible, one person is assigned this task

- Programs run cross-check reports no less than quarterly before ODM submission, as another layer of checks to ensure baseline data accuracy

Cross-Check Reports To Verify Baseline Data

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

Best Practices for Ensuring Ongoing Baseline Data Accuracy

In addition to Recommended Practices:

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

    -   Children at Start of Month + New Children – Closed Children = Children at End of Month

    -   Cases at Start of Month + New Cases – Closed Cases = Cases at End of Month

    -   Volunteer Child Ratio as of last day of Month

        o   Recommend printing and maintaining a file of related reports each month

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

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

CHILD/CASE LEGAL STATUS

An important note about service at appointment:

If a program is appointed prior to the 262, they must begin advocacy work and documentation immediately.

If a case does not end in legal conservatorship to DFPS at the 262, the CASA program must close the case, unless the child continues to be subject of a SAPCR in a court ordered services case.

Regarding Legal Status:

Texas ODM requires children's Legal Status be reported; the ODM reports pull this data from the Child's Information section. (Click the magnifying glass next to the child's name to edit their Information, including their Child Status).

Child Status changes via court hearing; thus Status changes should occur on the same date as the hearing in which the court ordered the status change.

Status changes from COS to TMC/JMC or TMC to PMC shall not be entered as new cases in Optima, rather the Legal Status should change within the same case.

Texas CASA Standards allow CASA programs to serve children with the following statuses and circumstances:

- **Joint Managing Conservator (JMC)** – child subject of a SAPCR in temporary joint custody between two parties until the Final Hearing or other order of dismissal from the Court

- **Permanent Managing Conservator (PMC)** – child subject of a SAPCR whose custody has been given to DFPS, a relative, or other party, with or without termination of parental rights

- **Temporary Managing Conservator (TMC)** – child subject of a SAPCR in temporary custody of DFPS until the Final Hearing or other order of dismissal from the Court

- **Court Ordered Services (COS)** – child subject of a SAPCR whose parents are participating in Court Ordered Services

Under current statutes, Texas CASA programs cannot serve children/youth/young adults with no Legal Status. The only exception to this is for CASA programs that are appointed to serve the case prior to the 262/Adversary/Show-Cause hearing; if a reporting period falls after the CASA program's appointment but before the 262 hearing, the program may report those children as Status Pending:

- **Status Pending** – (for reporting purposes only) a child whose pending case has been appointed to the program in a Texas CASA reporting quarter, and the 262 is pending at the end of that quarter

  A youth in Trial Independence generally has no legal status; these young adults should be released from CASA service. If a youth/young adult of age 18+ remains in an active SAPCR case, then CASA may continue service and should report the youth's status per current court order.

ADVOCACY DATA

Recommended Practices to Ensure Accuracy of Advocacy Data

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

Considerations:

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

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

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

Recommendations:

- Supervising/administrative staff establish a process for determining quality assurance indicators have been met on assigned cases

- Case file and/or report checks are done regularly and case supervisors/volunteers are supported in logging quality contacts

- Checks are conducted as often as possible

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

Considerations:

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

There are no Optima reports that will show results for CASA court reports filed or

documents collected (including email correspondence, if it is uploaded to the Documents section and a corresponding Contact Log is <u>not</u> made).

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

Recommended Optima Reports For Advocacy Measures

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

1. **Contact Logs – Activities/Hours by Supervisor**: Pulls Contact Log Activity Types entered by Volunteers and Staff, by Supervisor, for a date range. It groups the contacts by person who entered them, then case.

    a. Requires input of date range and supervisor name

    b. A program using this will need to make sure to check through each person to ensure all the contacts for the case are captured (if multiple staff make entries into one case, for instance)

2. **Contact Logs – Case Contacts – By Supervisor**: Pulls all the data (except the narrative) entered on each contact log for a case, for a date range.

    a. Requires input of date range, supervisor and case name (this report pulls one case at a time)

    b. This report will show, at a glance, the activity that's been done in a case for a date range, including all users who entered a contact log in the chosen case, and includes the names of the people contacted (anyone whose name is checked in the contact log), the activity type, date and type of contact, and who made the contact. It also sums the hours of each contact log.

3. **Contact Logs – Case Notes – By Supervisor**: Gives a complete list of case notes made in Contact Log.

    a. Requires input of date range and supervisor name

    b. Lists date, user, title, activity type, contact type, and hours of all contact logs entered for a date range

    c. Use for training purposes, making sure contact log Activity Type, People Contacted, and Notes all match for QA compliance

4. **No Contact Logs – For Case – By Supervisor**: This report shows by supervisor, any case that is missing a contact log with a chosen activity type. Recommend to run for one supervisor and one activity type at a time for accurate results.

   a. Requires input of date range, supervisor name and activity type

   b. Reports by supervisor, all cases that are missing a contact log of a chosen activity type

   c. Recommend to use to determine if certain contact log types are missing from a case for a date range

5. **Custom Reports > Case Contacts - by Supervisor - by Date**: This report shows by case, the Associated Parties and Others Contacted listed in all contact logs for the case for a date range.

   a. Requires input of date range, supervisor name and case name/number

   b. Reports by supervisor and for one case at a time, all persons contacted during a date range.
   The person's name, title, and date of contact displays

Best Practices For Ensuring Ongoing Accuracy Of Advocacy Data

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

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

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

   i. supervisors check their assigned cases for Minimum Standards compliance

   ii. administrative staff conduct random case checks (or utilize the reports listed previously) to ensure users are submitting quality/accurate data

   iii. coaching/follow up between administrators and supervisors on consistency, quality and accuracy of entries

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

HOW TO: CHANGE LOOKUP TABLES

Lookup Table Disclaimer

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

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

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

Changing Lookup Tables in Optima

Before making any changes, determine what changes are needing to be made:

1. **I want to add new options to the Lookup Table that have never been there before.** Simply add the options to the lookup table, and advise users of the definitions and uses of the new options.

2. **I want to correct the spelling or form on an existing option, without changing the meaning of the option** (ex: updating OAVG to OVAG in the eligibility types Lookup Table). Simply make the correction, and all places where OAVG was listed will now list OVAG. (This will affect all cases, both active and closed).

3. **I want to update a table, to replace the options currently there, and eliminate the previous options.** (Used when changing an entire set of options in a Lookup Table – for instance, when updating Optima's default Lookup Table options or converting the program's Lookup Table options to more closely align to Texas CASA's Baseline Data Definitions). THIS IS A MULTI-STEP PROCESS. Carefully follow the instructions below to avoid eliminating information you will need. If you need assistance, make a Help Desk Ticket in Optima or call Texas CASA's Optima Liaison.

   A. Add the new Lookup Table options to the system. Do not add the new item if it is already in your Lookup Table.

   B. Choose the date/date range for which the change from old options to new options will occur.

   C. Run a list of Active Children and Closed Children, for the chosen date range, for the Lookup Table options you're eliminating.

   D. This will give you a list of children who have the Lookup Table options you're getting rid of – update all these kids with the appropriate new Lookup Table

option.

E. After all the kids have a new option, then Inactivate the old Lookup Table option.

HOW TO: MAKE CASE CHANGES
REOPEN, SEVER/MERGE, TRANSFER, SUPERVISOR/VOLUNTEER

To re-open a case that continued after CASA sought dismissal (and the legal case continued under the same cause number): Navigate to the closed case file, and click the Re-open Case button under Case Closing Information. Use the date the CASA program was reassigned to the case as the new petition date. Update the child's assigned to program and the volunteer and supervisor assigned to case dates.

This will result in the re-opened child/case and volunteer assignment being counted in the upcoming ODM quarterly report as new child(ren) and new case.

To re-open a case for children that had a previous case closed by the court within or beyond one year: Simply open a new case, using the new Petition Date, Cause Number and CASA Program Assignment date. If documents from the previous case may be helpful or applicable, it's recommended that all those documents are scanned in together as "Historical Documents" in the new file.

To sever a case (when the court orders children in one case to be separated into multiple cause numbers): In the original case, close the child who is to be severed out. (Do not close the case, just the severed child(ren)).

Open a new case, with the Case Start / Petition Date, Supervisor Assigned to Case Date, and Child Assigned to Program Date all within the same month, and on or after the date the court ordered the child to be severed.

This will result in the severed child and their new case being counted in the upcoming ODM quarterly report as a new child(ren) and new case.

To merge a case (when the court orders children in separate cases be merged into one cause number)*:

Close the case that the court ordered to be merged into another.

Add the children in the closed case to the merged case (the case that will remain open going forward), with the Case Start / Petition Date, Supervisor Assigned to Case Date, and Child Assigned to Program Date all within the same month, and on or after the date the court ordered the child to be severed.

This will result in the merged child(ren), but not the case, to counted in the upcoming ODM quarterly report as a new child(ren).

For a case that transfers jurisdiction within the program's service area*:

Close the case that the court ordered to be transferred.

Open a new case in the new jurisdiction, with the Case Start / Petition Date, Supervisor Assigned to Case Date, and Child Assigned to Program Date all within the same month, and on or after the date the court ordered the child to be severed.

This will result in the transferred child and their new case being counted in the upcoming ODM quarterly report as a new child(ren) and new case.

For a case that transfers jurisdiction outside the program's service area: Simply close the case; the Court Closure Reason will be "transferred jurisdiction."

*Volunteers will lose access to the notes / documents in closed case files. It is recommended programs run the Case Notes Report (Reports > Contact Logs > Case Notes) for the entire case that is closing and upload the report into Documents of the new case file, so the Volunteer can reference old notes. Supervisors will still have access to the closed case to pull records as needed.

To change an Active Volunteer to Paid Staff or vice-versa: Generally, the program will need to release them from their cases in the previous role, and create a new log in for the individual. Create a Help Desk Ticket with Evinto Solutions to ensure this process is handled correctly given the individual's circumstances.

SAMPLE RESOURCES

1. Local Program Sample Monthly Case File Audit (for advocacy data check)

2. Creating And Managing Users of Optima

3. Volunteer Applicants (Pending Volunteers) Instructions

4. Volunteer Record Instructions

5. Case Instructions

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

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

1.A Monthly required contacts table:

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3
Child F2F			
Child Other			
Placement			
CASA Sup			
CPS			

1.B Quarterly required advocacy/contacts table:

Parent	Legal	Education	Medical

CREATING & MANAGING USERS OF OPTIMA

Creating First Time User Names

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

   firstname.lastname

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

   firstname.lastname

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

   Staff: Use program-provided email address

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

VOLUNTEER APPLICANTS (PENDING VOLUNTEERS) INSTRUCTIONS

Changing Applicants to Advocates

1. Our Program use the VOLUNTEER STATUS when:

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

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

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

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

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

2. Sworn advocate statuses:

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

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

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

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

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

VOLUNTEER RECORD INSTRUCTIONS

Creating New Supervisor Records

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

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

2. Convention for Background Checks:

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

   Start date = date check was run

   Complete date = date check results returned

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

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

   The position that manages the supervisors in the organization.

Creating New Volunteer Records

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

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

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

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

Updating Demographic Information

1. The following DEMOGRAPHICS must be completed:

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

Entering Emergency Contact Information

1. The EMEREGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION to be added is:

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

Placing Advocates ON LEAVE

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

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

Entering Continuing Training HOURS for an Advocate

1. All Training HOURS will be calculated in increments of:

   One-quarter hour (0.25)

Entering Continuing Training MILEAGE for an Advocate

1. All Training MILEAGE will be calculated in increments of:

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

Entering Continuing Training NOTES for an Advocate

1. All Training NOTES will contain information regarding:

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

Entering Non-Case Activity HOURS for an Advocate

1. All Non-Case Activity HOURS will be calculated in increments of:

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

Entering Non-Case Activity MILEAGE for an Advocate

1. All Non-Case Activity MILEAGE will be calculated in increments of:

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

Entering Non-Case Activity NOTES for an Advocate

1. All Non-Case Activity NOTES will contain information regarding:

   In accordance with local program policies.

Discharging an Advocate

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

   Proof of unsubscription from background checks.

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

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

3. An Advocate is ELIGIBLE FOR REHIRE when:

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

CASE INSTRUCTIONS

Starting a New Case

1. For the CASE NUMBER, our program uses:

   The cause number assigned by the presiding court.

2. For the CASE NAME, our program uses:

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

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

   County and jurisdiction of the court presiding over the case.

4. A PRIORITY CASE in our program is:

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

Entering a Child: Required, Critical, and Important Fields

1. Children are ASSIGNED TO PROGRAM on a date that reflects:

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

2. The other Important fields for our program are:

Child Name – Removed from and Date – Languages – Disabilities

Child Legal Status – Child Status Date

Child Demographics – Birthdate, Gender, Race, Ethnicity

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

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

VOCA = all children Assigned to Program

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

CFE = all children whose case is assigned to CFE program

Entering Program Assignments – SUPERVISORS

1. The POINT OF INTERVENTION is captured in our program when:

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

Entering Program Assignments – VOLUNTEERS

1. The POINT OF INTERVENTION is captured in our program when:

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

Entering Current Placement

1. A REASONABLE DISTANCE is defined by:

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

2. An IN COUNTY placement is defined by:

   Child placed in their home county.

Entering Petitions and Allegations

1. The PETITION NUMBER used by the program is:

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

Entering Future Hearings and Past Hearings

1. Volunteer COURT REPORTS are due:

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

2. HEARING PARTICIPANTS in our program include:

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

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

Closing a Case and Closing a Child

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

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

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

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

3. A SAFE AND PERMANENT HOME is defined as:

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

4. PROGRAM CLOSURE REASON is defined as:

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

5. COURT CLOSURE REASON is defined as:

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