

**Parent Visitation Observation Form**

CASA volunteers play an integral role in painting a picture of what is happening in a child’s life for the Court. The Courts need a good depiction of the parent-child relationship to determine what is in the best interest of the child. It is critical for CASAs to understand the dynamics of the parent-child relationship to make a good, informed recommendation about the parents’ access to a child and reunification. When observing visits, CASA volunteers should look for several factors. The parent-child visitation observation tool can be used to assist CASA volunteers when assessing the parent- child relationship before, during, and after family visits. This tool can be used simultaneously with the court report template as it can also be a preparation tool for testifying in court. The purpose of the form is to formalize what the volunteer should be observing during family visitations. The form allows the volunteer to look at both the positive aspects as well as areas for improvement in the parent- child visits and relationship. It can also provide guidance as to how to assess and advocate for the immediate needs of the family. The attorneys and judge may ask for CASA’S observations during visits and what tools and/or advocacy, if any, did CASA use during these visits. The tool will ensure CASA is well prepared to provide detailed testimony about their visit observations.

The CASA volunteer should meet with a parent before visits to share any information about their children they feel would be important for the parent to know. For example, if CASA knows a child is dysregulated for any reason prior to the start of the visit, that information should be shared with the parent to assist with giving the parent and child the opportunity for an optimal visitation experience. It is also an opportunity for CASA to observe if the parent can respond appropriately to their dysregulated child or if they may need additional support services, tools, or resources to assist with this task. CASA can share the parent-child visitation form with a parent to prior to a visit as well if it is appropriate. CASA should gauge if sharing the tool will create a positive or negative situation for the parents. It could have a positive impact in that it could guide the parents to be more attentive with their child during the visits, but CASA should be aware that this could create anxiety for some parents. This is a case-by-case situation and should be staffed with the CASA Supervisor prior to the visit to determine the best course of action.

During parent-child visits, CASA volunteer advocates are trained to amplify the positive and help parents value the possible in themselves and their children. By modeling during parent-child visitations, advocates gently guide parents to support their children’s optimal cognitive, emotional, and social development. CASA should study the parent-child assessment form prior to the visit so they can be prepared on what to observe. CASAs should be cautious of notetaking during visits to ensure parents don’t feel that are being watched creating an uncomfortable setting. If CASAs feel they must take notes during the visit, please share this with the parents prior to the visit and inform them why and how the notes will be utilized.

After the visitation ends, CASA should share their observations with the parents. It is an opportunity to inform the parents of anything that needs to be addressed. The hope is that the parents continue to make progress in improving the relationship with their child as the case progresses. CASA should make sure parents know their concerns so the issues can be addressed rather than just taking notes of the observed visit and reporting back to the Court. If a parent doesn’t know the concerns, they cannot correct the issues. The observation form is used during the family visit to gather the needed information. This form is in Spanish and English.