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CHAPTER 10

Pulling It All Together

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CHAPTER 10

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HOMEWORK RECAP

The facilitator may have assigned homework in preparation for a wrap-up activity.



GOAL

In this chapter, I will identify ways to take care of myself while doing CASA/GAL volunteer work, become familiar with local office procedures, revisit the importance of focusing on the child's needs, and review my personal expectations of the training experience and the course material.



OBJECTIVES

By the end of this chapter, I will be able to . . .

- ✓ Develop strategies to take care of myself and stay motivated in my work as a CASA/GAL volunteer
- ✓ Take steps to ensure my personal safety while volunteering
- ✓ Identify how the CASA/GAL program will support me in my volunteer work
- ✓ Follow local CASA/GAL program office procedures for case assignment, obtaining records, submitting court reports, and documenting hours and expenses
- ✓ Explain how a child's sense of time requires moving quickly to achieve permanency
- ✓ List the principles of permanency and articulate how they will help me be an effective advocate
- ✓ Identify any of my expectations that were not met in training, and address—or make a plan to address—any remaining expectations

Self-Care for Volunteers

Success in this work requires strong internal and external support systems and self-confidence. Confidence is built on the skills you have developed during this training, the determination you feel to carry out the mission of the program, and the many personal strengths you bring to the work. This chapter will address how to build and maintain positive support for doing this work and will provide a chance for you to review the knowledge you have gained during the training.

Activity 10A: Sustaining Your Motivation

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you will work with difficult emotional issues. It is important that you recognize the impact this work has on you and that you think about how to take care of yourself. In the large group, respond to the following questions:

- What is one thing you've done in the past to sustain yourself or renew your motivation during a difficult or frustrating time period?
- How will you sustain your motivation in your role as a CASA/GAL volunteer?
- How will you create boundaries for yourself so you do not become overly involved in the problems of the children and families with whom you will work?

Activity 10B: Personal Safety Tips

Part 1: Self-care also involves staying safe. Listen as the facilitator talks about volunteer safety.

CASA/GAL Volunteer Safety

This program is highly invested in keeping you—the CASA/GAL volunteers—safe. If you ever have a question or concern about the safety of any aspect of your work or if you feel apprehensive or fearful, you should immediately consult with CASA/GAL program staff. The safety tips below are mostly common sense and good advice whether you are doing CASA/GAL volunteer work or not.

- **Think ahead.** Know the situation and know where you're going in order to look confident.
- Meet a parent or another person in a **neutral place** initially, and if necessary, thereafter.
- **Be aware** of the immediate area.
- **Tell someone** where you'll be, how long you'll be there, and when you expect to return. If plans change, call and let that person know.
- Keep safe, but **be respectful** of the neighborhoods and homes you are entering.
- **Travel in pairs** if necessary.

- You may want to **avoid carrying a bag**.
- **Trust your instincts.** If you are really uncomfortable, take protective action—walk away.
- **Don't share personal information** about yourself or your family, especially your phone number(s) and address. Home addresses can easily be found on the Internet using a home phone number. All correspondence and communication should flow through the CASA/GAL program office.
- If you witness or see signs of illegal activity, **get out** of the situation as soon as you can.

Part 2: In the large group, brainstorm additional ideas about how to increase your personal safety.

Activity 10C: CASA/GAL Volunteer Support

Part 1: Listen to an overview of the support available to you as a CASA/GAL volunteer. What other support do you think you might need?

**Support from
CASA/GAL
Program Staff****Volunteer Support**

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you need support in the work you do. Your work touches many disciplines—child abuse and neglect, criminal justice, child growth and development, family systems, social services, and the law. Few people are experts in all these fields. As CASA/GAL volunteers, you come from all walks of life and have various work and educational backgrounds. You are effective advocates because you work energetically and creatively to improve the lives of abused and neglected children. You need support and encouragement as you make recommendations to the court about what is in the best interests of the children for whom you advocate.

PROGRAM STAFF SUPPORT

A strong relationship with program staff is vital; they will assign cases, monitor case progress, review reports and records, and help solve problems. They can offer resources, answer questions, and support you in your work.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

In-service training allows you to take advantage of opportunities for additional learning about the many facets of CASA/GAL volunteer work that are introduced in this core training curriculum. National CASA standards require 12 hours per year of in-service training. Local program staff will outline the resources available for in-service training.

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Within program guidelines, working with other CASA/GAL volunteers is an effective way to strategize, problem-solve, and get moral support in this work.

SELF-CARE/PERSONAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

Because of the time demands, stress, and frustrations that can be part of CASA/GAL volunteer work, it is important to have social and emotional support, and to take care of yourself so you don't burn out.

Part 2: Answer the following questions in the space provided.

What are your local in-service training requirements?

Who will you call if you have questions about your first case?

Activity 10D: Local Administrative Procedures

Every CASA/GAL program office has specific procedures for case assignment, obtaining records, submitting court reports, documenting hours and expenses, and any other required administrative work. The National CASA standards for your case file are listed on the following pages.

Listen and note highlights in the space provided as CASA/GAL program staff review local procedures related to case assignment, obtaining case forms or records about your case, submitting court reports, making requests for reimbursement, etc. The facilitator will hand out copies of written information regarding office procedures, along with sample time sheets, reimbursement forms, and other forms you will use in your work as a CASA/GAL volunteer.

In the large group, share your questions.

CASE ASSIGNMENT

OBTAINING CASE FORMS & RECORDS

SUBMITTING COURT REPORTS

DOCUMENTING HOURS & EXPENSES

National CASA Standards Regarding Case Records

For each child served, the CASA/GAL program maintains a case record that includes:

- Biographical or other identifying information
- Background on the nature of the problem or reason for referral by the court
- Court reports and any court orders related to the service being provided
- The service plan

Entries made in the case record are specific, factual, and pertinent to the nature of the service. These include:

- Current contact entries
- Periodic progress notes or summaries

Records for all children served are kept up-to-date.

The CASA/GAL program requires volunteers to turn in their case records, including all notes, when the case is closed.

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Focusing on the Needs of the Child

A child's sense of time is very different from an adult's. If an infant or toddler waits for a hearing, that wait is a significant portion of his/her life. Likewise, a school-aged child who is uprooted from family, school, and friends does not view a month (or three or four) as a short period of time. As a CASA/GAL volunteer you must keep in mind a child's sense of time, and work to achieve permanency for a child as quickly as possible.

Activity 10E: A Child's Sense of Time

The facilitator will ask for volunteers to read aloud the information below about what time means to a child. Listen and then share with a partner a personal experience that shows the difference in your perception of time now and when you were 5 or 10 years old, or the difference between how you perceive time and how a child you know perceives time.

A Child's Sense of Time: The Impact of Court Continuances

The following excerpt was prepared for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ):

Children have a very different sense of time from adults. Short periods of time for adults seem interminable for children, and extended periods of uncertainty exacerbate childhood anxiety. When litigation proceeds at what attorneys and judges regard as a normal pace, children often perceive the proceedings as extending for vast and infinite periods.

The passage of time is magnified for children in both anxiety levels and direct effect. Three years is not a terribly long period of time for an adult. For a six-year-old, it is half a lifetime, for a three-year-old, it is the formative stage for trust and security, and for a nine-year-old, it can mean the difference between finding an adoptive family and failing to gain permanence because of age. If too much time is spent in foster care during these formative years, lifetime problems can be created.

Court delays caused by prolonged litigation can be especially stressful to abused and neglected children. The uncertainty of not knowing whether they will be removed from home, whether and when they will go home, when they might be moved to another foster home, or whether and when they may be placed in a new permanent home is frightening.

The Publication Development Committee, Victims of Child Abuse Project, Honorable David E. Grossmann, chairman, *Resource Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*, Reno, Nevada: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 1995.

*Nosotros somos culpables de muchos errores y muchas faltas,
pero nuestro peor crimen es el abandono de los niños
negándoles la fuente de la vida.
Muchas de las cosas que nosotros necesitamos pueden esperar,
los niños no pueden,
ahora es el momento,
sus huesos están en formación, su sangre también lo está
y sus sentidos se están desarrollando,
a él nosotros no podemos contestarle mañana,
su nombre es hoy.*

We are guilty of many errors and many faults,
but our worst crime is abandoning the children,
neglecting the fountain of life.
Many of the things we need can wait.
The child cannot.
Right now is the time
bones are being formed, blood is being made,
senses are being developed.
To the child we cannot answer "Tomorrow."
The child's name is "Today."

Gabriela Mistral, Nobel Prize-winning poet from Chile

Activity 10F: Principles of Permanence

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you should always focus your advocacy on permanence for the child. After the facilitator describes the principles of permanence, go stand near the sign with the principle that seems most significant to you at this point. Discuss with others who chose the same principle how it will be important to your work as CASA/GAL volunteers.

Principles of Permanence

- Constantly examine your own value system.
- Carefully examine the child protection agency case record.
- Ask the parents why they think they lost custody of their child.
- Recognize that the "system" should be operating on the child's sense of time.
- Understand grief and what moving and waiting do to children.
- Stay child-centered and family-focused.
- Recognize parents' strengths, but do not ignore their failings.
- Be a team player.
- Aggravate the system if you have to—be a catalyst for change.
- Work for justice—act with mercy.

Contributed by Jane Malpass, consultant, North Carolina Division of Social Services, and Jane Thompson, attorney, North Carolina Department of Justice.

Training Wrap-Up

Activity 10G: Experienced CASA/GAL Volunteer

Listen as a current CASA/GAL volunteer describes his/her experiences:

- Receiving a court order or assignment
- Meeting a child
- Assessing a child's needs
- Building a relationship with the child protective services agency
- Following a case as it progresses

In the large group, share any questions you have for the volunteer.

Activity 10H: Your Expectations of Training

Review the expectations chart that you brainstormed as a group during Activity 1K. Remove from the flipchart (or cross out) any expectations you posted that were met during the training.

The facilitator will address—or make a plan to address—any remaining expectations.

Final Wrap-Up Option 1: 10I

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Activity 10I: CASA/GAL Volunteer Jeopardy

Divide into teams of three to five people, with no more than six teams total. The facilitator will roll a die to see which team will start (e.g., die shows three; team three begins) and that team (e.g., team three) chooses a category and dollar amount. The team that is currently playing should choose a spokesperson to state their responses.

The facilitator will show the “answer” for the chosen category and amount. Your team spokesperson will give your response in the form of a question. It is fine to refer to your training manual. You have about 20 to 30 seconds to answer. If the team that is playing answers correctly, play proceeds to the next highest numerical team (e.g., team four) to choose a new category/dollar amount. If the response is incorrect or is not posed in the form of a question, the die should be rolled to see which of the remaining teams will have an opportunity to provide a correct response (e.g., die shows one; team one gets a chance). This step will be repeated until a team responds correctly. Once a correct response is obtained, play proceeds to the team number following the one that originally chose the category/amount (e.g., team four).

After teams have chosen all dollar amounts in all categories, you will play Final Jeopardy. Each team announces its total amount of money prior to teams placing their bets. Each team then determines how much (up to the total) they will wager, and writes the wager amount on an index card, which is turned in to the emcee. The Final Jeopardy “answer” is displayed, and each team must write the “question” on an index card in the time allotted and turn it in to the emcee. Beginning with the team with the least money, each team’s wager will be announced, then their “question.” If the team responded correctly, they receive the amount wagered; if incorrect, they lose that amount. After all teams’ responses have been announced, the money will be totaled and the winning team announced.

Of course, the real winners are the children who benefit from your new knowledge and skills that will be used to advocate for their best interests!

Adapted from materials contributed by the Alaska CASA program.

Final Wrap-Up Option 2: 10J and 10K

Activity 10J: The Circle of Knowledge

In the large group, brainstorm all of the possible people, agencies, and reports that might be involved with or have knowledge of a child. Be as specific as possible. The facilitator will record your responses. What do you notice about your list?

UNIT
1

Activity 10K: The Jenkins Family Case

This activity relies on the material about the Jenkins family case that you read for homework.

Part 1: In small groups, look at the list of interviews/information available in the Jenkins case. Imagine you are in the shoes of Sue Wright, the CASA/GAL volunteer on the case, and you've been on the case for only two weeks. You have just 21 days to gather as much relevant, factual information as possible before the disposition, in order to present a report that minimally includes placement recommendations for the children, any other recommendations affecting their welfare, and recommendations for initial orders concerning the parents.

Your group's job now is to discuss what you know about the Jenkins/Brown family, what you feel you need to know in order to make good recommendations, and who might have that information. In 21 days you'll only be able to obtain six interviews, so you must prioritize your choices according to what each person might have to offer and then choose the six you believe will help most. There are 20 prepared "interviews" or reports available from the facilitator, 15 that were noted in your homework reading and five that you'll have to find, either by choosing certain interviews that name additional interviewees or reports, or by choosing them blindly from the list below. The facilitator will give six interviews to each group as you request them. You may take all six at once or one at a time in any sequence.

Part 2: Once you have the information from all six chosen interviews, as a group, write a brief list of recommendations for placement of the children and services that you believe are necessary for their well-being, along with support for your conclusions. Choose one person to be the group's spokesperson and be ready to present your conclusions to the large group. Ask questions at any time.

Activities 10J and 10K created by Kalamazoo County CASA, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

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INTERVIEWS/INFORMATION AVAILABLE

Andrew Ames, emergency room doctor

Frank Brooks, children's attorney

Bonnie Brown, Theresa's paternal aunt (Duane Brown's sister)

Duane Brown, father

Kate Cantrell, Theresa's paternal grandmother (Duane Brown's mother)

Thomas Cole, Jan Jenkins's attorney

Jim Elroy, CPS worker

Ellie Elston, neighbor and childcare provider

Jan Jenkins, mother

Elizabeth Kindly, Grace Kindly's niece and Jan Jenkins's high school friend

Grace Kindly, shelter care foster mother

Long bone scan report

Irma Mendino, emergency room doctor

Florence Night, emergency room nurse

John Ralston, Duane Brown's attorney

Luella Santos, visitation aide

Jennifer Stanley, future foster mother

Armando Vasquez, Sr., character reference only

Laura Jenkins Vasquez, maternal grandmother (Jan Jenkins's mother)

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CASA/GAL Volunteer Pledge

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, I pledge to . . .

- Stay up-to-date on the laws that affect the children and families with whom I work, including confidentiality laws
- Continue to increase my cultural competence and serve all children without bias
- Use the resource lens when working with families
- Remain aware of how my views about mental illness, domestic violence, substance abuse, and poverty affect the work that I do
- Focus on permanency as the goal for the children with whom I work
- Use the communication skills I have learned to collaborate with others on a case
- Conduct thorough investigations
- Write court reports that present the best interest of the child, and submit the reports on time
- Continue to learn and to take care of myself

Signature

Date

Congratulations on completing training—and welcome to the CASA/GAL volunteer program! Thank you.

