Working With Biological Parents: 10 Key Takeaways

1. Practice empathy. It is not our role as CASAs to be judgmental.
2. Visits can be difficult for both the parents and the child. Especially during supervised visits, the setting is oftentimes unnatural and unfamiliar. Visits can sometimes feel uncomfortable for the youth and their parents; therefore, it is important as CASAs to be supportive and kind.
3. Be polite and professional when interacting with bio parents. Parents are not typically familiar with the CASA program so it is important to introduce yourself and your role. Remember that as a CASA, you are a representative of Voices for Children.
4. Visitation can range from supervised to unsupervised. Supervised visits can take place in public, group home, DPSS office, etc. and are supervised by an individual approved by the Court. Unsupervised visits can be for extended period of time (e.g. over a holiday break).
5. CASAs cannot SUPERVISE visits. CASAs can only OBSERVE visits. If visitation orders are supervised, please be sure to have an approved party present at in-person visits before attending.
6. If the goal of reunification is to reunify with biological parents, you will be interacting with them regularly when the child is returned home. For example, you will need to set up visits through the parents. This is another reason why it is important to always been kind and professional because we want parents to know we are a team players.
7. Always stick to the $20 spending limit. Parents come from all socioeconomic backgrounds, in which some may not be as fortunate as yours. We do not want to cross any boundaries by buying their children material things they themselves cannot afford.
8. If you need help or have any questions, ALWAYS CALL YOUR ADVOCACY SUPERVISOR.
9. Observing visits can be extremely beneficial for court reporting purposes. Court reports are our greatest avenue to the Judge. When submitting your court report, make sure you are as detailed as possible.
10. Children want to go home. Even if we feel it is not a good idea, children want to live with their families in the homes in which they are familiar. It is never okay to speak negatively about families or placements around your case children.