

Relationship Building Training

Introduction—Training Coordinator

- Welcome
 - Explanation of class format
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Building Relationships

Meeting/Talking to the Social Services Practitioner

- Start by asking what you can do to help!
- Be sure on the first phone call to ask when the next TDM, CFT, or any other meeting type will be, and ask to be invited. Give Supervisor's e-mail for contact.
- Find out the case plan/goals for the child.
- For reunification cases, find out how often the child visits with their parents, what are the limitations of visits (supervised, unsupervised, etc.), and what are the case plans for the parents.
- Ask with whom the child is permitted / not permitted to have contact
- Ask the social services practitioner how often they would like you to check in and find out their schedule and the best way to contact them. **NOTE: If you email with an SSP, be sure to CC your supervisor on all emails! This is important, as it keeps us updated on the case, and in case your emails are subpoenaed they can come from your supervisor's email box, not yours.** Remember, you are working with one child or sibling group, while social services practitioners have high caseloads and work with the entire family.

Meeting the Child

- The first visit should be short.
- It is best to meet on-site at their placement for the first meeting.
- Explain your role to the child; ask if they have any questions.
- Child may be very resistant and may choose to not talk to the CASA. Be patient! Alternatively, they may be extremely affectionate and "latch on" right away.
- Set boundaries in the beginning, i.e. do not exceed spending limit. Focus on relationship with child. Establish rules for outings.
- Ask the child what you can do to help them but do not make promises!
- Don't ask child too many questions; let the child share things with you if and when they are ready. Be a good listener.
- Remember, it is about the child's interests, not your interests! You may help expose the child to new things, but they need to feel comfortable.

- Keep in mind the \$20 spending limit. Google “100 free things to do in Riverside County” for outing ideas. Ask your supervisor if they have suggestions. Be creative!
- Create normalcy for the child(ren). Bring a camera and take pictures on outings. Many CASAs like to make the child(ren) a photo book!

Meeting the Caregivers

- Introduce yourself to the group home staff or foster parents.
- Learn their policies and procedures. Ask for a copy of the rules if it is a group home placement.
- Learn their schedule and be respectful of it!
- Observe other children at the facility or home, and watch your child’s interactions with the caregivers, other children, etc.
- Check in with caregivers before each visit to find out how child is doing and how their behavior has been. Let them know how your outing with child was upon your return.
- Always maintain your composure in front of the caregivers.
- Group homes hold quarterly Treatment Team Meetings (TTM) for each child. Find out when these occur for your case child and attend these meetings.
- **If the caregiver or the child says they do not want a CASA, we do not just remove you from the case, if this does happen on your case, please talk to your supervisor before doing anything else!**

Meeting the Attorneys

- Call to introduce yourself as the CASA and leave your contact information.
- The minor’s attorney can be an excellent resource. You can share all confidential information with the minor’s attorney.
- While you cannot share information with the parents’ attorneys, they are still an important part of the team, care about the children, and want the best outcome for the family!
- Attorney’s representing Non-Minor Dependents are not Guardian Ad Litem as they are for youth under 18. As such, their role changes. CASAs must be aware that the non-minor should be the one to contact their attorney to ask for services or assistance as they are now an adult.
- **You must always CC your supervisor on any e-mail you send or receive.**

Meeting the Teachers and School Personnel

- Drop off your court order at the administration building. Find out the contact information for the teacher.
- Schedule a time to meet with the school counselor and/or teacher if appropriate. Bring your court order to this meeting. Oftentimes it is easier to e-mail.
- Find out if the child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Let the teacher know that you would like to attend and be involved in meetings regarding your child’s education.
- Remember, even if you do not hold educational rights, you can be an excellent advocate for your case child within the school system.

- Keep track of your child's grades and their behavior in school.
- You can only gather information from the teacher. Do not share confidential information with teachers.
- **Always CC your supervisor on any e-mails you send.**

Meeting the Parents and Other Family Members

- If your case is a reunification case, it is important to meet the parents and observe interactions with their children. You must observe visits between children and parents.
- Remember to keep an open mind and remain objective.
- Take the time to meet other family members that are involved in the child's life.

Working with your Advocacy Supervisor

- Your Advocacy Supervisor will work to empower you to be as successful as possible in your advocacy efforts for your case child, by:
 - Insuring all expectations of the Court are met.
 - All rules, policies and procedures are followed.
 - Providing Continuing Education opportunities for you to continue to develop.
 - Providing small group opportunities so you may share your experiences with others and learn from face to face interactions with Supervisors and other CASAs
 - Meeting with you within first 45-60 days of time on your case to discuss case planning and strategic advocacy ideas.
 - Conducting annual achievement meetings to review your efforts over the prior year and set goals for the coming year.
 - Monthly contact, or more if needed, to discuss the case.
 - Attending all meetings with you such as, but not limited to, CFTMs, IEPs, and Court Hearings.
 - We know there are a lot of policies to remember! Your advocacy supervisor has promised to remind you of policies, procedures and rules of court to keep you on track on your case. Should you slip up on your case, your supervisor will invite you to meet to collaborate on a Policy Reminder to bring you back on track to ensure your success!
 - However, continued failure to follow policies where a reminder meeting has been held, could result in an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Termination.
- Your Advocacy Supervisor will promise to guide you in your advocacy efforts so you do not break any policies, procedures or rules of the court.
- Your Advocacy Supervisor is your right hand on your case. They are there to help you every step of the way and should be contacted at least once per week for the first 60 days on your case, and then no less than once per month for the duration of your advocacy service.
- Your supervisor has the final say on all actions you take on your case. Failure to adhere to and follow this supervision may result in termination from the case.

Communication/Confidentiality Issues

- **The CASA is an Information Gatherer NOT Giver!**
 - The CASA will GIVE information to the following: VFC staff, the social services practitioner with the Department of Social Services (DPSS), and the minor's attorney.
 - The CASA will GATHER information from all other parties—parents and other family members, parents' attorneys, therapists, teachers, foster parents, group home staff, etc.
 - Refer to the DPSS social services practitioner when asked to give information that you are not permitted to share. When in doubt, do not share information and talk with your advocacy supervisor!!!

- **Contact Info for CASA**
 - You are permitted to use your cell phone number
 - Do NOT give out work or home phone number as it can be traced to an address.
 - Please notify the training coordinator and/or your advocacy supervisor of any changes to your contact information so that we can update our system.

- **E-mails, Letters, faxes, cards.**
 - **ALL** written communication must be seen by VFC. This includes emails, letters, faxes, etc.
 - Procedure for emails: Always make sure your supervisor is CCed when you send an e-mail and when you give your e-mail to another person ask them to CC your supervisor. If someone e-mails you and forgets to CC your supervisor, respond, CC your e-mail, thank them for the email and let them know you have copied your supervisor for any further correspondence.
 - CASAs should set up an email to use exclusively for CASA work. You cannot use a shared email account with another person (i.e., joint account with spouse) due to confidentiality concerns.

Closing/Additional Questions

- Work as a team.
- Be consistent and do not give up.
- Attend small group meetings and continuing education trainings.
- Call your advocacy supervisor!