**Relationship Building**

*Remember this…*

1. Changing the norm takes time. Be patient with professionals, and remember, a little bit of sugar and honey doesn’t hurt!
2. Asking what you can do to help is a great place to start, even if you can’t help at the moment, just hearing someone ask is always nice and will make a lasting impact.
3. ALL written communication should CC your advocacy supervisor, not because we don’t trust you, but so we can help on your case. We can only do that if we know all that is happening and what has been asked and answered.
4. Remember to find out when the next upcoming Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) is when you make your first call to the SSP. Those meetings are crucial for your case child and a great way to learn a lot about where the case is currently.
5. Remember to always keep the SSP updated on what you know, and never put surprises in your Court reports!
6. For visits, have the first one at the placement, and just get to know them a bit. Find out what the child is interested in so that way you can plan around their interests for future visits!
7. Remember, some children/teenagers may be resistant to you at first, but PLEASE don’t give up. Consistency is key to these kids, that is what will build trust and a long lasting bond.
8. Please remember to never make promises, as we all know, life happens and sometimes we may break them. Additionally, never ‘cancel’ on your case child, always ‘reschedule’ if you need to move a visit around.
9. Take pictures! (if your case child is open to it). It is a great way to create normalcy for your case child, and many of them have no pictures of themselves at all from their childhood.
10. When it comes to caregivers, remember, they can make your life a lot harder or a lot easier! They are a plethora of information for your court reports. Try to form a good relationship with them, and collaborate when it comes to scheduling visits. Try your best to work around their schedule.
11. Also remember, when it comes to caregivers, not everything is as sinister as it may appear. Don’t jump to conclusions, ask questions and talk to your advocacy supervisor if there is a concern, but please do not react until you know the facts.
12. When it comes to attorneys, we only make contact with the child’s attorney, not the parents. They are the ace up our sleeve, but the day to day tasks are handled by the SSP so we should always reach out to them first with any needs that arise.
13. At school, never wear your CASA badge or VFC tee-shirt. We never want to ‘out’ these children for being in foster care. You should definitely attend school meetings and IEPs, but if you run into their friends in the halls, let the child introduce you as whoever or whatever they want to and just go with it!
14. Always remember to contact your advocacy supervisor, we are here for YOU! We are always open to listening, helping, and collaborating however we can. For the first two months on your case please contact us weekly, after that, at least one time per month.
15. And lastly, please remember, we are not here to fix all of the problems in this child’s life, and we are not here to change their world. But you WILL make a ***huge*** impact by just being a consistent adult in their life and being someone they can rely on, it truly can change the trajectory of their life.