

Personal Tips From CASAs

1. Listen very carefully to all parties before making any conclusions. You are a fact finder.
2. Keep a notebook for each case and record specific dates, times and types of meetings, conversations, etc. This will be helpful when writing your report and defending your information if needed. Remember that any such notebook can be subpoenaed into court. Be careful not to write derogatory remarks in any form.
3. Don't burn bridges...you may have to cross them later.
4. Facilitate...do not do the work that needs to be done by parents or other family members that are seeking custody.
5. Encourage...do not enable. It is easy to get sucked into someone's world of dependency.
6. Ask questions...of social workers, attorneys, supervisors, and other CASAs. Don't expect to know the answers.
7. Don't be afraid to be creative. Just because it hasn't been done or isn't policy, doesn't mean it can't be. Look for new ways to solve old problems. If there are no other suggestions or alternatives, there is nothing to lose by asking. Please let your program supervisor know of your ideas.
8. Try not to let the adults make the case about them or you. Keep bringing the focus back to the best interest of the child.
9. Always be as honest with the children as they can understand. Be reliable.
10. Know when to walk away. When the children are in a safe, healthy place it may be time to leave. It does not have to be Utopia. Material things are not as important as the physical, mental, and emotional health of a child.
11. Playing Santa Claus undermines those parents, relatives, foster parents, etc. that may not be able to provide the children with expensive gifts.
12. You are not the therapist. Don't let the parties make you one.