

Checklist for Applying the “Best Interest” Principle (for Activity 2E)

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you can use the following categories to evaluate and advocate for the best interest of children:

Safety: Child safety is paramount and best achieved by supporting parents within their community.

Permanence: Children and youth need and have the right to lifelong nurturing and secure relationships that are provided by families who have the skills and resources to meet their specific needs. Efforts to identify and secure permanence for children are continuous and integrated into all stages of involvement with children and families.

Well-Being: Children’s well-being is dependent upon strong families and communities meeting their physical, mental, behavioral health, educational and cultural needs.

Fostering Connections for Youth: As youth transition to adulthood, they benefit from services that promote healthy development, academic success and safe living conditions, as well as establish connections to caring adults who will commit to lasting supportive relationships.

Family Focus: Families are the primary providers for children’s needs. The safety and well-being of children is dependent upon the safety and well-being of all family members.

Partnership: Families, communities and the child welfare system are primary and essential partners in creating and supporting meaningful connections in a safe and nurturing environment for children and youth.

Respectful Engagement: Children, youth and families are best served when advocates actively listen to them and invite participation in decision making. Respectful engagement includes understanding and honoring of the family’s history, culture and traditions, as well as empowering them to meet their unique and individual needs through utilization of family strengths, and educating them regarding the child welfare process.

Professional Competence: Children are best served by advocates who respond to the evolving needs of communities, are knowledgeable of the

Checklist for Applying the “Best Interest” Principle, Cont’d.

historical context within which the child welfare system operates, provide respectful treatment to families and continually strive for professional excellence through critical self-examination.

Cultural Competence: Cultural competence is achieved through understanding and serving children, youth and families within a context of each unique family and community to help them achieve equitable outcomes. This includes, but is not limited to, families’ beliefs, values, race, ethnicity, history, tribe, culture, religion and language.