



**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates

**FOR CHILDREN**

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**THE NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED  
SPECIAL ADVOCATE ASSOCIATION**

CASA/GAL Pre-Service Volunteer Training Curriculum

# Pre-Work Handouts

**CHAPTER SIX**

**HEARST** *foundations*



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## CHAPTER 6

# Pre-Work Handouts

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## Pre-Work Instructions

This section details the work you need to complete before the next classroom session. Completing this work prior to the session will allow you to fully participate during the training session and build the knowledge and skills you need to be an effective and successful CASA/GAL volunteer.

Please read through the Pre-Work handouts found in this document. Reading this information prior to the session will give you a foundation in several concepts covered in the chapter, including: domestic violence, cultural prejudices, preconceived notions and the impact of these perceptions on information disclosure to volunteers by the accused in cases, importance of practicing culturally competent child advocacy, risks associated with stereotyping and implications of institutional bias. You will also have hands-on practice activities that explore culture and perceptions, culturally competent child advocacy, and an individual action plan designed to increase your cultural competence.

# Understanding Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and emotional abuse. The frequency and severity of domestic violence can vary dramatically; however, the one constant component of domestic violence is one partner's consistent efforts to maintain power and control over the other.

Domestic violence ranges from threats of violence to hitting to severe beating, rape and even murder. Victims and perpetrators range in age, racial, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, education level, occupational attainment, and geographic and religious affiliation. Abuse by men against women is by far the most common form, but domestic violence does occur in same-sex relationships, and some women do abuse men.

## ***The Power & Control Wheel...***

Abusive relationships are based on the mistaken belief that one person has the right to control another. When the actions described in the spokes of this wheel don't work, the person in power moves on to actual physical and sexual violence. The relationship is based on the exercise of power to gain and maintain control. The dignity of both partners is stripped away.

*Adapted from a model developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, Minnesota.*



## **Understanding Domestic Violence, Cont'd.**

### ***Causes***

Domestic violence is not caused by illness, genetics, gender, alcohol or other drugs, anger, stress, the victim's behavior or relationship problems. However, such factors may play a role in the complex web of factors that result in domestic violence. Domestic violence is learned behavior; it is a choice. It is learned through observation, experience and reinforcement (perpetrators perceive that it works). It is learned in the family, in society and in the media.

### ***Legal System Response***

The legal system can respond to domestic violence as a violation of criminal and/or civil law. While definitions and procedures differ from one state to another, physical assault is illegal in all states. Law enforcement can press charges in criminal court with the victim as a witness. Victims may also secure a restraining/protective order and, in rare instances, may bring a civil lawsuit.

Availability and willingness of court personnel to act in domestic violence cases vary widely. Unless judges and attorneys, including prosecutors, have been educated about the dynamics of domestic violence, protective laws are inconsistently enforced. The repeated pattern of the abused spouse bringing charges and subsequently dropping them, often discourages law enforcement personnel from giving these cases their immediate attention. Thus, the victim is re-victimized.

The other setting in which the legal system and domestic violence may intersect is a court hearing regarding allegations of child abuse and/or neglect. As a CASA/ GAL volunteer, you should be aware that a determination of domestic violence within the child's home will significantly influence placement decisions and what is expected of the non-abusing parent to retain/regain custody. The standard risk assessment, conducted by child welfare agencies to evaluate whether a child needs to be removed from his/her home, generally includes domestic violence as a factor that negatively relates to the child's safety at home. A child found to be living in a violent home is more likely to be removed. A child abuse or neglect case may also be substantiated against the battered parent for "failure to protect" the child because the victim did not leave the batterer, even if the victim lacked the resources to do so or it was not safe to do so.

## Understanding Domestic Violence, Cont'd.

### ***Barriers to Leaving a Violent Relationship***

For people who have not experienced domestic violence, it is hard to understand why the victim stays—or returns again and again to reenter the cycle of violence. The primary reason given by victims for staying with their abusers is fear of continued violence and the lack of real options to be safe with their children. This fear of violence is real; domestic violence usually escalates when victims leave their relationships. In addition to fear, the lack of shelter, protection and support creates barriers to leaving. Other barriers include lack of employment and legal assistance, immobilization by psychological or physical trauma, cultural/religious/family values, hope or belief in the perpetrator's promises to change and the message from others (police, friends, family, counselors, etc.) that the violence is the victim's fault and that she could stop the abuse by simply complying with her abuser's demands. Leaving a violent relationship is often a process that takes place over time, as the victim can access resources she needs. The victim may leave temporarily many times before making a final separation.

*Adapted from Domestic Violence: A National Curriculum for Children's Protective Services,*

*Anne Ganley and Susan Schechter, Family Violence Prevention Fund.*

### ***Domestic Violence Statistics***

Read the statistics on domestic violence at:

<http://nc.casaforchildren.org/files/secure/community/programs/Training/2016%20Pilot/Domestic%20Violence%20Statistics.PDF>



## Sorting People Activity

In the Online Resources, click the link to the exercise called “Sorting People: Can You Tell Somebody’s Race by Looking at Them?”. Follow the instructions to complete the activity, and then consider the following questions:

- How did you do?
- What surprised you about the exercise?
- Think about the cases you’ve worked on so far. Did you observe any stereotyping in the Black, Bleux, Greene or Lavender cases? If so, how did it affect the families?

## Exploring Culture and Perceptions Activity

For each of the categories from the list below, think about your culture and life experiences, and how you would describe yourself, your family of origin or your current family situation to someone you know well. After you have some thoughts in mind, consider the following questions:

- Are there categories that you would be uncomfortable sharing in front of the large group?
- What contributes to your feelings of safety when you are asked to disclose personal information?
  - Race
  - Family Form (single parent, married with no children, etc.)
  - Ethnicity (cultural description or country of origin)
  - Gender
  - Geographic Identity (rural, urban; in the US, eastern, Midwestern, etc.)
  - Age
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Religion or Spirituality
  - Language
  - Disabilities
  - Socioeconomic Status (low-income, working-class, middle-class, wealthy)

Now imagine that you are Susan Mailer, the mother in the Lavender case, and you are describing yourself to someone who has power over your life—for instance, the caseworker, a judge, or an attorney. Answer the following questions:

- How do you think a caseworker or others might perceive you and what would be the implications?
- When you describe yourself to this person, what might you leave out or try to make fit what you think might be more acceptable to them? Why?
- If you had to do this often, what do you think would happen to these characteristics of yourself?

## Stereotyping vs. Cultural Competence

Stereotypes based on appearances can impact how a volunteer approaches and builds relationships with families and children. Stereotypes are rigid and inflexible. Stereotypes hold even when a person is presented with evidence contrary to the stereotype. Stereotypes are harmful because they limit people's potential, perpetuate myths and are gross generalizations about a particular group.

For instance, a person might believe that people who wear large, baggy clothes shoplift. Because some teenagers wear large, baggy jackets, this person may assume that teenagers shoplift. Such stereotypes can adversely affect a volunteer's interactions with children and others in the community. Even stereotypes that include "positive" elements (e.g., "they" are quite industrious) can be harmful because the stereotypes are rigid, limiting and generalized.

Unlike stereotyping, cultural competence can be compared to making an educated hypothesis. An educated hypothesis contains what you understand about cultural norms and the social, political and historical experiences of the children and families you work with. You might hypothesize, for example, that a Jewish family is not available for a meeting on Yom Kippur, or that they would not want to eat pork. However, you recognize and allow for individual differences in the expression and experience of a culture; for instance, some Jewish people eat pork and are still closely tied to their Jewish faith or heritage. Another example might be that some African American families celebrate Kwanzaa, while others do not.

As an advocate, you need to examine your biases and recognize that they are based on your own life and do not usually reflect what is true for the stereotyped groups. Everyone has certain biases. Everyone stereotypes from time to time. Developing cultural competence is an ongoing process of recognizing and overcoming these biases by thinking flexibly and finding sources of information about those who are different from you. Being aware of differences allows you to be informed about culturally competent child advocacy.

It is important to recognize that child-rearing practices vary across cultures. For instance, the following mainstream US child-rearing practices may be viewed as harmful to children by people from other countries: isolating children in beds or rooms of their own at night, making children wait for food when they are hungry, requiring children to wear painful braces on their teeth, forcing young children to sit in a classroom all day or allowing infants to "cry it out."

## **Stereotyping vs. Cultural Competence, Cont'd.**

Conversely, practices that are culturally acceptable elsewhere may be misunderstood in the United States. One example is the Southeast Asian practice of “coin rubbing,” a traditional curing method in which heated metal coins are pressed on a child’s body. This practice is believed to reduce fevers, chills and headaches. Because it generally leaves red streaks or bruises, it can easily be misdiagnosed as child abuse by those who don’t understand the intention behind this cultural practice.

Practicing culturally competent child advocacy entails being aware and respectful of the cultural norms, values, traditions and parenting styles of those with whom you work. Striving to be culturally competent means cultivating an open mind and new skills and meeting people where they are, rather than making them conform to your standards. Each child and each family is made up of a combination of cultural, familial and personal traits. In working with families, you need to learn about an individual’s or family’s culture. When in doubt, ask the people you are working with. It might feel awkward at first, but learning how to ask questions respectfully is a vital skill to develop as you grow in cultural competence. Once people understand that you sincerely want to learn and be respectful, they are usually very generous with their help.

# 10 Benefits of Practicing Culturally Competent Child Advocacy

1. Ensures that case issues are viewed from the cultural perspective of the child and/or family:
  - Considers cultural norms, practices, traditions, intra-familial relationships, roles, kinship ties and other culturally appropriate values
  - Advocates for demonstrated sensitivity to this cultural perspective on the part of caseworkers, service providers, caregivers or others involved with the child and family
2. Ensures that the child's long-term needs are viewed from a culturally appropriate perspective
  - Takes into account the child's need to develop and maintain a positive self-image and cultural heritage
  - Takes into account the child's need to positively identify and interact with others from his/her cultural background
3. Prevents cultural practices from being mistaken for child maltreatment or family dysfunction
4. Assists with identifying when parents are truly not complying with a court order and when the problem is culturally inappropriate or a result of non-inclusive service delivery
5. Contributes to more accurate assessment of the child's welfare, family system, available support systems, placement needs, service needs and delivery
6. Decreases cross-cultural communication clashes and opportunities for misunderstandings
7. Allows the family to utilize culturally appropriate solutions for problem solving
8. Encourages participation of family members in seeking assistance or support
9. Recognizes, appreciates and incorporates cultural differences in ways that promote cooperation
10. Allows all participants to be heard objectively

*Adapted from a document created by CASA for Children, Inc., Portland, Oregon.*

# Institutional Bias Checklist for Volunteers

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, ask yourself:

- What assumptions have I made about the cultural identity, genders and background of this family?
- What is my understanding of this family's unique culture and circumstances?
- How are my recommendations specific to this child and this family?
- Would I make the same recommendations if this were a white child or a white family versus an African American, Latino, Asian American or Native child or family?
- What evidence has supported the conclusions I have drawn and how have I challenged unsupported assumptions?
- Have reasonable efforts (or active efforts in ICWA cases) been made in an individualized way to match the needs of the family?
- Have relatives been fully explored as preferred placement options as long as they can protect the child and support the permanency plan?
- Are there family members and/or other important people who have not been contacted who should be involved in this process?
- What services are being offered to allow the child to remain at home or reunify the family (as applicable)? Are these services culturally appropriate? How are these services related to the safety threat?
- Are this child and family receiving the same level and tailoring of services as other children and families?

Other things to consider:

- If applicable, has Special Immigration Juvenile Status (SIJ) been filed?
- If applicable, have individualized efforts been made to ensure the needs and safety of LGBTQ youth?
- Have all resources available to the family of the child been explored (military, federal, tribal, state/local, etc.)?
- Are there organizations in the community that might serve as resources for the child?
- What active efforts have been made to determine if the child is covered under the Indian Child Welfare Act? Has there been communication with the relevant tribe(s)? If not, has the Bureau of Indian Affairs been notified?

*Adapted from material created by the  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.*

## Culturally Competent Child Advocacy Activity

Think about a time when you felt categorized because of the way you identify yourself, and write responses to the following reflection questions. How did you feel? How would a foster child feel?

Think of concrete ways to incorporate culturally competent advocacy into the Lavender case. Referring to the article on 10 Benefits of Practicing Culturally Competent Child Advocacy, what are three (3) things a CASA/GAL volunteer could do to practice culturally competent advocacy in the Lavender case? Some examples are:

- Learning about the spiritual practices of Lavender's family in order to address the caseworker's potential assumptions about the smell in their house
- Educating yourself about Lavender's family's culture regarding adult-child relationships so that the lack of eye contact between adults and children isn't misconstrued as a child safety issue or family dysfunction
- Informing yourself about the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act and how it applies to the case; verifying whether or not Lavender and her mom are enrolled in a tribe; informing the tribe about the case
- Recognizing the importance of cultural ties
- Understanding the role of extended family in Lavender's culture
- Objectively assessing the safety of Lavender's home situation

# Tips on How to Become More Culturally Competent

- Learn about your culture and values, focusing on how they inform your attitudes, behavior and verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Don't think that "good" and "right" values exist in your own culture exclusively; acknowledge that the beliefs and practices of other cultures are just as valid.
- Question your cultural assumptions: Check their reality, rather than immediately acting on them.
- Accept cultures different from your own and understand that those differences can be learned.
- Learn to contrast other cultures and values with your own.
- Learn to assess whether differences of opinion are based on style (communication, learning or conflict) or substance (issue).
- Practice the communication loop; don't rely on your perceptions of what is being said.
- Examine the circle in which you live, work, and play (this reflects your choice of peers). Expand your circle to include people of other races, cultures, values, and beliefs.
- Learn more about the history of racism and oppression in the United States.
- Continue to read and learn about other cultures. Do your homework: Know something about another culture group prior to approaching them.
  - Follow appropriate protocol: Know and demonstrate respectful behavior based on the values of the group.
  - Use collaborative networks—churches, synagogues, mosques and other spiritual groups, community organizations or other natural support groups of that culture.
  - Practice respect.
- Understand that any change or new learning experience can be challenging, unsettling and tiresome; give yourself a break and allow for mistakes.
- Remember the reciprocal nature of relationships—give something back.
- See developing cultural competence as a fulfilling and resourceful way to live.
- Be courageous enough to address biased thinking when you hear it in others.

*Adapted from materials developed by CASA for Children, Inc., Portland, Oregon.*



# Individual Action Plan for Cultural Competence

Prepare a plan to become more culturally competent. Use the following format to create the plan.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Specific**: Write a very specific goal that clearly defines what you are going to do to improve your cultural competence skills.

**Measurable**: Identify how you will measure your progress. (How will you know when you have achieved your goal? Will something look different? Will you receive certain types of feedback?)

**Attainable**: Is this goal within your reach? The goal should stretch you slightly so you feel challenged, but it should be realistic and within your ability to achieve.

**Realistic**: Identify personal strengths or favorable factors in your environment that will support your progress.

**Timely**: Set a deadline by which you will accomplish this plan of action.

Benefits: What are the benefits (for you, for others) of setting and accomplishing this goal?

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature/Date

# Initial Case Notes for the Amarillo Case

## CPS Case File

Last Name of Case:			<b>Amarillo</b>		
Legal Number(s):			<b>11-7-012345-6</b>		
Child(ren)'s Name	DOB	Age	Ethnicity	Sex	Current Location
Maria Amarillo	May 18	16 years	Hispanic	F	Foster Care Placement  Stanley & Karen Becker
Joanna Amarillo	Sept 1	6 years	Hispanic	F	Same
Graciela Amarillo	Aug 19	4 years	Hispanic	F	Same

Current Placement	Address	Phone
Foster Parents: Stanley & Karen Becker	406 N. Dale Street	555-5874

Attorneys for	Attorneys	Phone Numbers
Mother	Jody Franken	555-9894
Father	Mary Holzer	555-1337
CPS	Jordan Myers	555-7344

## Case History

July 3 (three years ago): Neighbor called police as a result of “loud shouting” in the home of Jose and Myrian Amarillo. Police found three children on the scene (Maria, age 13; Joanna, age 3; Graciela, age 1) and removed the children from the home based upon evidence at the scene including parents too inebriated to provide a safe home for their children and mother’s bruises and bleeding as a result of a fight between her and her husband. CPS was notified and the children were placed together in emergency foster care.

July 6 (three years ago): Following an emergency shelter care hearing, the Amarillo children were placed in three separate placements. Joanna and Graciela were each placed in separate foster homes, and Maria was placed in a group home for girls. The Amarillo parents and Maria are all undocumented citizens. The youngest siblings were born in the United States and have full citizenship.

September 17 (three years ago): Following a dispositional hearing, parents were ordered to receive drug/alcohol screening, attend a substance abuse treatment program and provide random urine analysis. Mr. Amarillo was ordered to attend a domestic violence program. Mrs. Amarillo was ordered to attend a domestic violence survivors program. Joanna was placed in the same foster home placement as Graciela. Maria remained in group home placement.

November 20 (three years ago): Group home of Maria Amarillo reported Maria ran away on 11/9. Maria has not been in contact with group home or social worker. Parents have reported that they received several calls from Maria but would not disclose her location.

November 27 (three years ago): Maria returned to the group home but was expelled for violating group home policies. Maria was placed in a short-term foster home.

January 8 (two years ago): Following a review hearing, it was ruled that parents have made no progress toward completing court-ordered services. Children will remain in out-of-home placement. A maternal aunt in El Salvador has come forward as a potential placement for the two younger siblings. Maria has been moved from a short-term foster home to a long-term placement.

March 6 (two years ago): Maria called social worker to complain of verbal and physical abuse by foster family. Social worker visited foster home the same evening

## Case History, Cont'd.

and interviewed the foster parents and children in the home. Maria was unavailable to talk (drama practice at school). Social worker found no evidence of physical abuse.

March 13 (two years ago): Foster family of Maria Amarillo reported that she did not return home after school.

March 17 (two years ago): County General Hospital called CPS to report Maria Amarillo had been admitted after a 911 call from the home of a friend. Maria was admitted following a severe asthma attack. Social worker visited hospital and found that Maria had been staying with maternal relatives, Pedro and Anna Valdez. Maria has inquired as to the feasibility of placement with the Valdez family.

March 29 (two years ago): Foster family of Maria Amarillo has asked for her to be removed from their home after a second episode of running away.

April 4 (two years ago): Foster family of Joanna and Graciela Amarillo have asked for a new foster placement because they are expecting a baby of their own.

May 3 (two years ago): Following a review hearing, Joanna and Graciela Amarillo have been placed in a new foster setting. Foster family has acknowledged a willingness to serve as a placement for Maria Amarillo. Maria Amarillo has been transitioned from her previous foster placement into a transitional housing center for teenage girls. Parents were ruled to be out of compliance with court-ordered services. The department has filed a petition to terminate parental rights.

July 17 (two years ago): The department studied the feasibility of placement with kinship relatives, the Valdez family, and it was determined this would not be an appropriate placement due to their immigration status (undocumented), the number of people currently residing in their home and their reported level of income.

August 9 (two years ago): Parental rights were terminated.

September 26 (two years ago): Maria Amarillo was placed in the same foster home as her younger siblings.

Today: CASA volunteer assigned to this case.

## Case History, Cont'd.

Current CASA	You and your team	Date Assigned:
Initial CPS Social Worker	Gerri Grady	7/3 (three years ago)
Previous CPS Social Worker	Danielle Mancuso	9/19 (three years ago)
Current CPS Social Worker:	Alberta Gillis	Last month

## Court-Ordered Services

### **For the Child (Maria):**

Medical health needs reviewed per physician's orders due to issues with asthma

Educational needs to be met as appropriate

### **For the Child (Joanna):**

Educational needs to be met as appropriate

### **For the Child (Graciela):**

Age-appropriate childcare to ensure educational needs are met

### **For the Father:**

Rights have been terminated

### **For the Mother:**

Rights have been terminated

