



**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

# Volunteer Manual

**CHAPTER ONE**



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## **CHAPTER 1:**

# Introducing the CASA/GAL Volunteer Role

### **CONTENTS**

» Pre-Work Recap .....	1
» Chapter Overview and Competencies .....	2
» The Volunteer Role .....	3
» The Child Welfare System .....	25
» Working a Case .....	36
» Chapter Wrap-Up .....	39
» Chapter 2 Pre-Work .....	39



# Pre-Work Recap

**Chapter 1:**  
**Pre-Work**



- ✓ Read the “CASA/GAL Volunteer Job Description” provided by the facilitator.
- ✓ Read “Developing Competencies for CASA/GAL Volunteer Work” checklist, and mark the areas that are your strengths and the areas that you want to work on.
- ✓ Read the “Child Welfare History” handout and write down any questions you have.
- ✓ Read the “Alphabet Soup” list of acronyms used by your local CASA/GAL program and court system.
- ✓ Read the “Bleux Case File” and write a one-to-two-paragraph case history and a few questions.

3

Prior to this training session, you should have completed the following:

- Read the CASA/GAL volunteer job description provided by the facilitator.
- Read the Developing Competencies for CASA/GAL Volunteer Work checklist, and mark the areas that are your strengths and the areas that you want to work on.
- Read the Child Welfare History handout, and write down any questions you have about the material.
- Read the “Alphabet Soup” list of acronyms used by your local CASA/GAL program and court system.
- Read the Bleux Case File. Write a one- or two-paragraph case history, as well as a few questions you have about the case.

# Chapter Overview and Competencies

This chapter introduces you to your fellow training participants and provides an overview of information about the CASA/GAL volunteer role and the child welfare system.

<b>Competency Building in Chapter 1</b>	
<b>Competency Category</b>	<b>Knowledge, Skills, &amp; Attributes Development in Chapter 1</b>
CASA/GAL Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Knows how to define the CASA/GAL volunteer role</li><li>Understands the function of a CASA/GAL report to the court</li><li>Understands the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary to succeed as a CASA/ GAL volunteer</li></ul>
Foundation of Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understands the nature and scope of the roles of others (e.g., caseworkers, attorneys, therapists, etc.)</li><li>Understands the nature and scope of the child welfare system</li><li>Knows the importance of the federal laws that impact his/her advocacy</li><li>Understands a child's journey through the child welfare system</li></ul>

# The Volunteer Role

## Introductions and Expectations: Activity 1A

**Part 1:** In pairs, introduce yourself to your partner. Share the following with each other:

- One reason you want to become a CASA/GAL volunteer
- One thing you're most excited about as you begin training
- One concern you have about volunteering

**Part 2:** In the large group, introduce your partner to your fellow participants by briefly sharing their name and one word that describes their reason for volunteering.

**Part 3:** Share one or two expectations you have as you begin CASA/GAL volunteer training. The facilitator will record your expectations on a flipchart.

**Part 4:** Create a list of group agreements that set the tone for how you will work together during training. Listen as the facilitator describes what will be expected of you during training and what you can expect of the facilitator.

## What to Expect During Training

As a participant, you are expected to:

- Complete Pre-Work between the training sessions
- Attend all training sessions
- Participate in the activities
- Ask questions
- Take responsibility for your own learning

You can expect the facilitator to:

- Establish an environment conducive to learning
- Keep things moving
- Adjust the activities or timing to better meet the needs of the group
- Be a resource for participants

# Exploring the Impact of CASA/GAL Volunteers: Activity 1B

**Part 1:** Listen as the facilitator talks about the mission of the CASA/GAL volunteer movement.

*The mission of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, together with its state and local member programs, supports and promotes court-appointed volunteer advocacy so every abused or neglected child in the United States can be safe, have a permanent home and the opportunity to thrive.*

**Part 2:** Watch “Make a Lifelong Difference,” a video that gives a broad overview of the difference that a CASA/GAL volunteer can make in a child’s life. As you watch the video, take note of some specific ways the CASA/GAL volunteers made a difference in the lives of the people featured.

**Part 3:** In the large group, share some of your thoughts on how having a CASA/GAL volunteer made a difference in the lives of the individuals in the video. Then listen as the facilitator presents evidence of the effectiveness of CASA/GAL volunteers.

## Evidence of Effectiveness



A child with a CASA/GAL volunteer is more likely to find a safe, permanent home:

- More likely to be adopted
- Half as likely to re-enter foster care
- Substantially less likely to spend time in long-term foster care
- More likely to have a plan for permanency, especially children of color

Children with CASA/GAL volunteers get more help while in the system . . .

- More services ordered for the children

...and are more likely to have a consistent, responsible adult presence:

- Volunteers spend significantly more time with the child than a paid guardian ad litem.

## Evidence of Effectiveness, Cont'd.

Children with CASA/GAL volunteers spend less time in foster care and are less likely to be bounced from home to home. CASA/GAL volunteers...

- Improve representation of children
- Reduce the time needed by lawyers
- Are more likely than paid lawyers to file written reports
- Are highly effective in having their recommendations adopted by the court

Children with CASA/GAL volunteers do better in school...

- More likely to pass all courses
- More likely to receive quality educational services
- Less likely to have poor conduct in school
- Less likely to be expelled

...and score better on nine protective factors:

- Neighborhood resources
- Interested adults
- Sense of acceptance
- Controls against deviant behavior
- Models of conventional behavior
- Positive attitude towards the future
- Valuing achievement
- Ability to work with others
- Ability to work out conflicts

*From [www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtJSJ7MPIsE/b.5332511/k.7D2A/Evidence\\_of\\_Effectiveness.htm](http://www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtJSJ7MPIsE/b.5332511/k.7D2A/Evidence_of_Effectiveness.htm).*

# The CASA/GAL Volunteer Role in Action:

## Activity 1C

**Part 1:** Listen as the facilitator describes the four key components of the CASA /GAL volunteer role.

**Part 2:** With the Bleux case in mind, how might a volunteer apply these tasks to gather information, facilitate, advocate and monitor on behalf of the Bleux family?

## Key Components of the CASA/GAL Volunteer Role



### **Information Gathering**

Carry out an objective examination of the situation including relevant history, environment, relationships and needs of the child.

### **Facilitation**

Based on the information gathering process, identify appropriate resources and services for the child and family. In collaboration with your CASA supervisor, follow the referral procedure to initiate services. Coordinate with the services organization to expedite service delivery and move the case forward.

### **Advocacy**

Speak up for the child by making fact-based recommendations regarding the child's best interest in a written court report.

### **Monitoring**

Track the orders of the court and plans of the child protective agency regarding fulfillment of treatment and services plans for all parties. If parties fail to carry out plans, inform the court in collaboration with the child protective services agency.

## **CASA/GAL Volunteer Tasks**

**CASA/GAL volunteers are expected to perform the tasks listed below. These tasks constitute what is required to effectively fulfill the role as an advocate for a child in the child welfare system:**

- Review/research case information.
- Participate in case staffings, family team meetings, court hearings, school-related meetings, etc.
- Establish rapport and relationships with the child and all other parties in the case.
- Meet with the child regularly (at least once per month, or per your program's requirements) and monitor his/her placement.
- Assess the child's physical, mental, behavioral and educational needs.
- Observe parent-child interactions.
- Monitor adherence to court orders to ensure compliance.
- Identify needs and advocate for services (make referrals as needed).
- Stay abreast of the most up-to-date case information.
- Check for accountability in service planning and delivery to ensure for quality.
- Document all activities, accurately taking note of any concerns, progress or lack thereof.
- Identify resources within the child's family and help build/maintain connections.
- Facilitate communication among parties while maintaining confidentiality.
- Submit required reports and case updates on or before the specified due date.
- Monitor compliance with court timelines to expedite permanency.
- Maintain consistent contact with the CASA/GAL supervisor (at least monthly).
- Complete a minimum of 12 hours of in-service training each year.

## **CASA/GAL Volunteer Tasks, Cont'd.**

- Comply with CASA/GAL policies, procedures and ethical guidelines that promote and protect the CASA/GAL program.
- Remain appointed until the case is closed.
- Maintain monthly contact with caregiver.
- Maintain monthly contact with service providers.
- Maintain documentation required by local CASA/GAL staff.

## CASA/GAL Volunteer Tasks: Activity 1D

### Developing Competencies for CASA/GAL Volunteer Work

Much of the information explored up to this point has focused on your role or duties as a CASA/GAL volunteer. Fulfilling duties is an important part of being a successful CASA/GAL volunteer, but it is only one part. Your knowledge, skills and personal attributes are also very important.

As part of your Pre-Work, you completed the Competency Checklist. In a small group, share one area of strength and one area you want to develop. Review your group's areas of strengths and areas that need development, and be ready to report back the common areas to the larger group. You will revisit the competencies checklist during the final chapter to evaluate areas you've strengthened through training and areas you still want to work on. The facilitator will partner with you throughout the training process to evaluate your readiness and address any areas of concern.

# Developing Competencies for CASA/GAL Volunteer Work Handout

Please review the following competency checklist. As you review each area, note whether it is a current strength or if it is an area that needs further development.

**Volunteer Name:**

**Date:**

Competency Category	Knowledge, Skills and Attributes	Current Strength	Competency to Develop
CASA/GAL Role	Knows how to define the CASA/GAL role		
	Understands the function of a CASA/GAL report to the court		
	Understands the competencies necessary to succeed as a CASA/GAL volunteer		
	Knows how to act within the CASA/GAL volunteer role and can differentiate his/her role from that of others involved in the case		
	Knows how to find support and resources to assist his/her advocacy		
	Understands how to obtain relevant confidential information		
	Understands the importance of partnering with his/her supervisor to develop goals and to discuss issues and assess progress		
	Understands the importance of participating in ongoing professional development to strengthen advocacy skills		

Competency Category	Knowledge, Skills and Attributes	Current Strength	Competency to Develop
Communication	Knows how to effectively articulate a point of view while advocating for the needs of the child		
	Understands the importance of establishing trust and rapport with all parties		
	Understands the importance of speaking and writing clearly and concisely		
	Knows how to work collaboratively and manage conflict effectively		
	Recognizes the importance of treating others with dignity and respect		
	Knows how to be an active listener		
	Understands and respects the perspectives, values and input from others		
	Knows the importance of being forthright, thorough and detail oriented		
	Knows how to utilize basic communication and interviewing skills		
	Knows strategies for interviewing children		
	Understands the elements of a court report		

Competency Category	Knowledge, Skills and Attributes	Current Strength	Competency to Develop
Cultural Competence	Understands the extent to which cultural institutions and values may oppress, marginalize or alienate some individuals or groups and create or enhance privilege and power of others		
	Understands and demonstrates self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values when working with diverse groups		
	Knows strategies and steps to take to increase cultural competency skills and demonstrate culturally competent child advocacy		
	Understands how to recognize and challenge own biases		
	Understands the root causes of disproportionate representation of children of color in the child welfare system and the disparate outcomes children of color experience		
	Knows how to be sensitive and responsive to different cultural differences		

Competency Category	Knowledge, Skills and Attributes	Current Strength	Competency to Develop
Sound Judgment	Knows how to set healthy boundaries and respects the boundaries of others		
	Knows how to adhere to all policies, ethical guidelines and procedures		
	Recognizes the importance of flexibility in handling case-related changes		
	Understands managing challenges by collaborating based on the best interest of the child		
	Knows how to maintain objectivity and avoid making assumptions		
	Understands the importance of anticipating and recognizing potential problems		
	Understands making appropriate fact based recommendations to the court		
	Understands basing decisions on thorough review of the information		
	Understands evaluating alternative decisions		
	Understands the confidentiality requirements of being a CASA/GAL volunteer		
	Understands that your personal values and biases about mental illness, domestic violence and substance abuse can affect your objectivity		
	Knows how to evaluate what is in a child's best interest		

Competency Category	Knowledge, Skills and Attributes	Current Strength	Competency to Develop
Initiative	Knows how to be self-motivated and work independently		
	Understands the importance of being resourceful and identifying needs as well as services to meet the needs		
	Recognizes the importance of ensuring all parties are moving expeditiously toward permanency		
	Knows the importance of persistence in pursuit of information		
	Understands the need to advocate for access to quality, individualized services		
	Understands the need to respectfully challenge the status quo		
	Recognizes the importance of creating innovative strategies to resolve issues		
Foundations of Knowledge			
	Understands the importance of using a strength-based approach		
	Understands concurrent planning		
	Understands advocacy differs dependent on the age of the child		
	Understands the options for permanence for a child		
	Understands how to identify a child's basic needs		
	Understands the cycle of attachment		

Competency Category	Knowledge, Skills and Attributes	Current Strength	Competency to Develop
Foundations of Knowledge (cont'd)	Understands possible reactions to separation & loss		
	Understands age appropriate behavior and development for children of all ages		
	Understands how mental illness impacts families		
	Understands the factors that contribute to a child's resilience		
	Understands how poverty can impact families and children		
	Understands strategies to advocate for children and adolescents with mental health disorders		
	Understands the ways that substance abuse can affect children & families		
	Knows the importance of being aware of resources in the community that assist with substance abuse		
	Understands how domestic violence affects children & families		
	Understands the nature and scope of trauma and how it affects children		
	Understands the importance of resilience in overcoming trauma in children		
	Knows strategies to address educational challenges		
	Understands the issues faced by LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system		
	Understands the risk factors for child abuse and neglect		

Competency Category	Knowledge, Skills and Attributes	Current Strength	Competency to Develop
Foundations of Knowledge (cont'd)	Understands the factors that contribute to child resilience		
	Recognizes the importance of understanding a child's journey through the child welfare system		
	Understands MSL and its importance when advocating for a child's best interest		
	Understands the nature and scope of the roles of others (e.g., caseworkers, attorneys, therapists, etc.)		
	Knows the importance of the federal laws that impact his/her advocacy		
	Understands what constitutes abuse and neglect		
Self Care			
	Understands the importance of healthy coping strategies to prevent burn out		
	Understands the importance of being aware of personal limitations		
	Understands the importance of setting clear, healthy boundaries and can identify indicators of stress		
	Understands the importance of maintaining a healthy life style		
	Understands the importance of knowing when to ask for and accept help		
Understands the importance of maintaining a sense of hope and optimism			

# Parameters for CASA/GAL Volunteer Relationships: Activity 1E



Using the Volunteer-Child Relationship Dilemma Worksheet, read each situation and identify the crux of the dilemma as well as the potential consequences to the child, the family, the CASA/GAL volunteer or the CASA/GAL program. Write down one possible solution for each dilemma. Be prepared to share your ideas with the large group.

## Volunteer-Child Relationship Dilemmas Worksheet Handout

### Dilemma 1

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As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you are on your way to your very first visit with a 9-year-old girl named Susan. Right before you leave, you call the paternal grandfather, who is caring for Susan, and find out that she just had some teeth pulled and some other dental work done. He mentioned the dentist prescribed some mild painkillers and antibiotics. He already phoned them in to the pharmacy, but he doesn't have a car to go get them. Since you pass the pharmacy on the way, he was wondering if you could swing by and pick them up. You think back to training and what you learned about providing transportation. The prescriptions are already paid for. Why not pick up a milkshake too? Susan's mouth is going to be sore from all the dental work, and this would be a great way to start out your relationship as her volunteer advocate. You know the milkshake may be too much, but . . . What do you do?

Crux of the dilemma

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Potential consequences

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## Dilemma 1, Cont'd.

### One possible solution

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## Dilemma 2

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About eight months into a case, you are unable to reach Ms. Jones, the birth mother of the child for whom you're advocating. Johnny has been back in Ms. Jones's care for about three weeks. Ms. Jones successfully moved into her own apartment, so she had a separate residence from her on-again, off-again boyfriend. One of the parameters set forth in court was that the boyfriend was never to be at her apartment when Johnny was there, because he had not finished his court-ordered services. You've had a great relationship with Ms. Jones, and one day you spot her at a grocery store. You stop to make small talk and then leave the store. As you drive out of the parking lot, you see Ms. Jones getting in a car with her boyfriend. You know that the boyfriend is not supposed to have contact with Johnny, and you're worried that Ms. Jones has violated the court order. You also know that Ms. Jones usually gets home around 3:30, after getting Johnny from the bus stop. You really want to see her once more before your case goes back to court, and seeing Johnny again would really help you know how he is doing. You think, why not swing by today to see if you can grab a few moments with both of them to check in? That would allow you to provide the most up-to-date information in your report. You know you should call first, but often she hasn't returned your calls. What do you do?

### Crux of the dilemma

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### Potential consequences

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## Dilemma 2, Cont'd.

One possible solution

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## Dilemma 3

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You have been advocating for a 15-year-old girl named Jessie for more than a year. She has been moved to a residential placement in the central part of the state, about an hour away. Her father passed away when she was 9 years old, and her mother is currently in jail. She is an only child and has no visitors and no family support system. When you go to visit, you learn that her birthday is next week, and all she wants is to go to Olive Garden for dinner. You think about the best interest of the child and decide she would have no other way of celebrating her birthday. You know you shouldn't take her, but . . . What do you do?

Crux of the dilemma

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Potential consequences

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One possible solution

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## Dilemma 4

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You have been advocating for a 16-year-old boy named Kyle for almost a year. You've come to know everyone involved in his life pretty well, including his stepmother, Beth, who Kyle looks up to like his own mother. Beth confides in you that she and Kyle's father have been arguing a lot and sometimes he hits her. She wants to get help, but she doesn't know what to do. You know the local domestic violence shelter would offer services, but Beth states that she doesn't feel comfortable disclosing this information to anyone else. Beth then says that she is worried about Kyle's father and his lack of anger management, because she has witnessed him "losing it" with Kyle during visitation. Beth is worried that if this information is revealed, Kyle's father might not be considered as a placement resource. What do you do?

### Crux of the dilemma

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### Potential consequences

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### One possible solution

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## Dilemma 5

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You have developed a great working relationship with Michele, the birth mother in your case. The case is going well, and there is talk of returning all four of her children home. At this time, the agency's only concern is that Michele's budget is very tight; she will have to maintain employment in order to make ends meet. She has an unsteady employment history and has previously disclosed that she is stressed about the idea of having all four children return home at once. One day you are meeting with Michele when she leans in close and says she has a secret. She asks you to "pinky swear"

## Dilemma 5, Cont'd.

that you won't tell anyone. You really want to find out what the secret is, but you also don't want to break Michele's trust. She leans in to tell you that she is expecting another child and will have to leave her job to prepare for the birth of the new baby. What do you do?

### Crux of the dilemma

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### Potential consequences

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### One possible solution

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## Dilemma 6

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You have been working with a teenage sibling group for almost a year. Yolanda, the youngest of the four siblings, is at a local youth shelter after running away from her former placement to see her sisters, who are all placed in another county. You are at the shelter for a visit and a team meeting with the shelter staff to discuss Yolanda's case. During the meeting, Yolanda becomes so upset that she runs out of the shelter and goes to her sister's foster home nearby. You accompany staff to the foster home in an effort to persuade Yolanda to return voluntarily to the shelter. Yolanda agrees to cooperate with the staff, but upon her return, she confides in you that she is lonely and doesn't have anyone to talk to. She isn't allowed to use the phone after a certain hour, and she'd like to have a cell phone to stay in contact with her sisters. She asks you to purchase one for her. What do you do?

**Dilemma 6, Cont'd.**

Crux of the dilemma

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Potential consequences

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One possible solution

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**Dilemma 7**

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You have recently been appointed to the case of an 8-year-old boy who was recently placed into a group home due to destructive behavior. The social worker advises you that he is in a three-week black-out period, during which he can neither have visitors nor participate in any outside activities. You think this is grossly unfair to the child. You've addressed your concerns with the group-home staff, the caseworker and the child's attorney. You've even included it in your court report, to no avail. You tell the social worker how disappointed you are that they aren't doing their job. The conversation goes nowhere, and you are even more frustrated. You decide to go home to unwind. While searching the Internet, you come across a Facebook page for child advocates. You think to yourself that this would be a great opportunity to voice your frustrations to other like-minded individuals, but you know you can't provide any information that would compromise confidentiality. What do you do?

Crux of the dilemma

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**Dilemma 7, Cont'd.**

Potential consequence

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One possible solution

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# The Child Welfare System

## Child Welfare Laws: Activity 1F

Share any questions you have on the key child protection laws that guide CASA/GAL volunteer work. Participate in a discussion on the foundational concepts of permanency, reasonable efforts and culturally appropriate advocacy. Share any questions you noted as you read the Child Welfare History handout prior to training.

### Cultural Considerations



The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), passed in 1978, recognizes that Indian children\* have special rights as members of sovereign nations within the United States. The law was written in response to Congressional hearings in the 1970s that revealed a pattern of public and private removal of Indian children from their homes, undermining their families and threatening tribal survival and Native American cultures. Designed to implement the federal government's trust responsibility to the nations by protecting and preserving the bond between Indian children and their tribe and culture, ICWA sets up placement preference schemes for children who have been determined to be Indian children and establishes the right of certain entities to appear as parties, including the tribe and the Indian custodian, if one exists.

\*This curriculum uses the terms "Indian child/ren" and "Indian custodian" in accordance with the legal definitions set out in the Indian Child Welfare Act.

## The Child Welfare System: Activity 1G



**Part 1:** As the facilitator describes the process that a child welfare case takes in your state, record the names of hearings and timeframes on the Child Welfare Chart handout. The facilitator will explain the purpose of each hearing and provide examples of tasks that CASA/GAL volunteers engage in along the way.

**Part 2:** Listen as the facilitator describes the roles of those involved in a court case, which are outlined below. As you listen, note in the margin any differences in your jurisdiction and use the space provided to write in information relevant to your jurisdiction. If you have questions, share them in the large group.

## Who Participates in a Case?



### THE CHILD

*Why is the child's case in court?*

- A petition has been filed alleging abuse or neglect

*What does the child need during court intervention?*

- The child needs the court to order an appropriate intervention and treatment plan so he/she can live in a safe, stable home without ongoing need for intervention from the child protection agency.
- The areas the child needs addressed include: safety/protection, placement if the child is out of the home, family contact, belonging to a family, financial support, a support system, education, mental health and physical health.
- The child needs the court intervention to be focused and timely.
- The child needs services provided that will meet his/her needs.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Who Participates in a Case, Cont'd.

### CASA/GAL VOLUNTEER

In my area this person is called \_\_\_\_\_

*What does the CASA/GAL volunteer do in the case?*

- Independently gathers information about the child's case
- Determines the child's needs
- Explores family and community resources to meet the child's needs
- Makes recommendations to the court
- Advocates for the child
- Monitors the case
- Is the voice for what is in the child's best interest
- Is the voice for the child's expressed wishes
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*What does the CASA/GAL volunteer bring to the case?*

- An interest in improving the life of the child through the court process
- Time, energy and focus
- Longevity (he/she often stays on the case from beginning to end)
- An "outside the system" point of view and an independent perspective
- The community's standard for the care and protection of its children
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*When is the CASA/GAL volunteer involved in the case?*

- In my jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_

## Who Participates in a Case, Cont'd.

### ATTORNEY FOR THE CASA/GAL PROGRAM OR CHILD

In my jurisdiction, this attorney represents [circle one]:

**The child's wishes    The child's best interest    The CASA/GAL program**

*What does the attorney for the program/child do in the case?*

- Translates the CASA/GAL volunteer's research and recommendations into a form that the court can effectively use to address the child's needs (within the law, within the scope of the volunteer role, fact-based, etc.)
- Provides legal consultation to the CASA/GAL volunteer and program staff regarding the case (if the attorney represents the program rather than the child directly)
- Files legal documents relevant to the child's case
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*What does the attorney for the program/child bring to the case?*

- Legal expertise, facilitation and negotiation skills and courtroom experience

*When is the attorney for the program/child involved in the case?*

- From the petition filing through the end of the court case

## Who Participates in a Case, Cont'd.

### PARENTS/CARETAKERS NAMED IN THE PETITION

In my area this person is called \_\_\_\_\_

*Why are the parents/caretakers involved in the case?*

- They have been forced into this court action because the child protection agency asked the court to intervene to protect the child from maltreatment and/or to have his/her basic needs met.
- They need to comply with the child protection agency's intervention plan and correct the conditions that led to the child's removal, thereby effectively protecting their child and/or enabling their child to return home.
- They need to follow the orders of the court or risk having their parental rights terminated.

*What do the parents/caretakers bring to the case?*

- Love for the child, family ties, history of parenting, abilities, resources and skills as parents, interactions with the child and each other, mental, emotional and physical health or illness, support system, housing and income and their own issues/problems

## Who Participates in a Case, Cont'd.

### ATTORNEY FOR THE PARENT/CARETAKER

*What does the attorney for the parent/caretaker do in the case?*

- Represents the wishes of the parent/caretaker he/she represents
- Protects the legal rights of the parent/caretaker in court
- Advises the parent/caretaker on legal matters
- Files legal documents relevant to the case
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*What does the attorney for the parent/caretaker bring to the case?*

- Legal expertise, facilitation and negotiation skills and courtroom experience

*When is the attorney for the parent/caretaker involved in the case?*

- From the petition filing through the end of the court case

## Who Participates in a Case, Cont'd.

### CHILD PROTECTION AGENCY CASEWORKER

In my area this person is called \_\_\_\_\_

*What is the role of the child protection agency caseworker in the case?*

- The caseworker has completed a risk assessment process and, based on risk and/or substantiated allegations of abuse and/or neglect, has determined the need for court intervention. The caseworker petitioned the court to intervene on the child's behalf because:
  - He/she has developed an intervention plan with the family, which has not resulted in eliminating the risk that child maltreatment will recur, or
  - Due to risk of imminent danger, he/she has removed the child from his/her home to ensure the child's safety.
- The caseworker needs the court to order that the agency's intervention and treatment plan be followed by the parents/caretakers and other service providers so that the need for continuous agency intervention is not required to ensure the child receives proper care and protection.
- The caseworker is responsible for managing the case and arranging for court-ordered services to be provided to the child and the child's family.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*What does the child protection agency caseworker bring to the case?*

- Training in analyzing risk, assessing service needs and providing guidance, and directing services for families to provide them with the knowledge, skills and resources necessary for change
- Links to other service providers so that the family can access resources outside the child protective services system

*When is the child protection agency caseworker involved in the case?*

- From the initial contact with the family and/or child until the agency's services are no longer needed

## Who Participates in a Case, Cont'd.

### ATTORNEY FOR THE CHILD PROTECTION AGENCY OR THE COUNTY OR THE STATE

In my area this person is called \_\_\_\_\_

In my jurisdiction this attorney represents [circle one]:

The child protection agency

The county

The state

*What does this attorney do in the case?*

- Represents the position of the agency/county/state in court
- Protects the agency/county/state from liability
- Advises the agency/county/state regarding its responsibilities as outlined in the law
- Files legal documents relevant to the case
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*What does this attorney bring to the case?*

- Legal expertise, facilitation and negotiation skills and courtroom experience

*When is this attorney involved in the case?*

- From the petition filing through the end of the case

## Who Participates in a Case, Cont'd.

### INDIAN CHILD'S TRIBE

*What does the Indian child's tribe do in the case?*

- Ensures that the parents, the child and the tribe have all the rights they are afforded pursuant to ICWA
- Brings to the attention of the court culturally relevant service options and dispositional recommendations
- Protects the tribe's interest in the child and ensures the preservation of the child's ties to the tribe and its resources
- Where appropriate, offers or requires that the tribe take jurisdiction of the matter
- Files legal documents when it is necessary
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*What does the tribe bring to the case?*

- A very special perspective on preservation of the child's ties to the tribe
- Knowledge of relevant cultural practices and culturally relevant services that can be considered as potential resources for the child

## Who Participates in a Case, Cont'd.

### JUDGE

*What does the judge do in the case?*

- Determines if there is a continued safety issue for the child that necessitates continued out-of-home placement if the child has been removed from the home
- Represents the child's best interest and/or wishes and protects the child's legal rights in court
- Represents the "best interest of the child" as defined by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) to the court
- Decides if the child is abused or neglected, and if so, orders services that will address the needs of the child
- Orders appropriate reviews
- Hears testimony, motions, etc., regarding the case
- Approves the permanent plan for the child
- Orders termination of parental rights when appropriate
- Settles disputed adoption cases
- Closes the court case when there is no longer a need for court intervention or the permanent plan has been achieved
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*When is the judge involved in the case?*

- From the request for emergency custody at the petition filing until the court case is closed (or, if the child is not removed from home, from the arraignment or adjudication hearing, depending on jurisdiction, until the court case is closed)

## Working a Case

### Introduction to the Court Report: Activity 1H

Listen as the facilitator describes the CASA/GAL court report and offers tips for writing an effective report.

## An Introduction to the CASA/GAL Volunteer Court Report



The CASA/GAL volunteer court report is the most essential aspect of your work as a CASA/GAL volunteer. The report outlines, in a standard format, what the CASA/GAL volunteer has discovered, the volunteer's assessment of the child's situation and what the court needs to do to help the child achieve a safe, permanent home. It is your primary tool in effectively communicating the child's perspective. The report also ensures professionalism, consistency and objectivity.

The court report is the vehicle through which you present the information you have gathered about a child's situation and your recommendations about what services will meet the child's needs. The facts stated throughout the report are the foundation of your recommendations and should be clear, concise, and easily distinguished from opinions and assumption. When writing the document, it is imperative to respect all of the individuals involved in the case. A report written from an honest and objective view can eliminate defensive attitudes and ease implementation of the recommendations. You will have greater success defending your written documentation and representing the best interests of the child if the report is free from bias.

Court reports provide visible documentation of your involvement in the case. Court reports that provide visible documentation of your involvement and that are presented in a consistent format increase your ability to give children a voice in the decision-making process.

Judges rely on the information in CASA/GAL volunteer court reports as they make their decisions. You will submit reports for most hearings. The CASA/GAL volunteer court report provides a way to systematically organize pertinent information and give the court a clear mental image of the child's situation. Most of the information the court receives is derived from your written documentation, which is made record at each court hearing. CASA/GAL volunteer court reports are shared with all parties to a case and any other individuals who are authorized by law to receive them.

All CASA/GAL programs require that court reports be submitted to the CASA/GAL program office prior to court. Staff will review all CASA/GAL volunteer court reports to ensure the recommendations are supported by facts and all relevant information and documentation has been included. Staff may make suggestions about wording to make your report clearer.

## **An Introduction to the CASA/GAL Volunteer Court Report, Cont'd.**

### **Keys to a Successful Report**

- Be thorough and specific.
- Get your information firsthand.
- Report the facts.
- Make specific recommendations that flow from the facts.
- Use the court report format provided by your program (which you will learn about in the next chapter).
- Submit your report on time so CASA/GAL program staff can review and comment on your report.

# Chapter Wrap-Up

## Review

Share any remaining questions you have about the material covered in this chapter.

## Evaluation

Fill out the Chapter 1 Volunteer Training Evaluation and give it to the facilitator before you leave.

# Chapter 2 Pre-Work

Prior to the Chapter 2 training session, complete the following assignments:

### *How Children Grow and Develop*

Read information on how children grow and develop, located in the Chapter 2 Pre-Work Handouts packet.

### *Children's Needs*

Read information on children's needs, located in the Chapter 2 Pre-Work Handouts packet.

### *Attachment and Examples*

Read through the information about the importance of attachment in child development and the risks for children who lose the ability to attach to a parent or caretaker in the Chapter 2 Pre-Work Handouts packet. Review the examples of specific children who never had a healthy attachment to their caretaker.

### *Child Abuse and Neglect Chart and Laws*

Read the information about child abuse and neglect, including the chart, which describes different kinds of abuse and lists indicators in the Chapter 2 Pre-Work Handouts packet.

Also read about state's legal definition of abuse, mandatory reporting laws and your program's policies regarding reporting suspected cases of abuse and neglect.

## Chapter 2 Pre-Work, Cont'd.

### Risk Factors for Child Abuse and Neglect

Read about the multiple risk factors for child abuse and neglect in the Chapter 2 Pre-Work Handouts packet.

### Court Report Template

Go through the court report template in the Chapter 2 Pre-Work packet.

### Court Report for the Bleux Case

Read the sample court report for the Bleux case in the Chapter 2 Pre-Work Handouts packet. You will be applying what you know about the Bleux case during various activities in the next chapter.



