



**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 THREE**

**HEARST** *foundations*



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## **CHAPTER 3:**

# Trauma, Resilience and Communication Skills

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# Pre-Work Recap

## Chapter 3: Pre-Work



- ✓ Watch the [Shane's Story](#) video and prepare a list of traumatic experiences for a child.
- ✓ Read information on understanding child trauma.
- ✓ Read information on basic elements of communication – communication and CASA/GAL volunteer work.
- ✓ Read the information on open-ended and closed ended questions in the Chapter 3 Pre-Work packet. (This information is for Activity 3G.)
- ✓ Read the information on CASA/GAL Interview in the Chapter 3 Pre-Work packet. (This information is for Activity 3H.)

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Prior to this training session, you should have completed the following Pre-Work assignments:

- Watch the video “Shane’s Story” and prepare a list of traumatic experiences for a child.
- Read information on understanding child trauma.
- Read information on basic elements of communication – communication and CASA/GAL volunteer work.
- Read the information on open-ended and closed-ended questions in the Chapter 3 Pre-Work packet.
- Read the information on CASA/GAL Interview in the Chapter 3 Pre-Work packet.
- Read the initial case notes for the Black-Smith case.
- Watch Part 1 of the video showing a CASA/GAL volunteer interviewing a 4-year-old child. Then design a brief interview with a child.
- Watch the video “First Impressions: Exposure to Violence and a Child’s Developing Brain.”

# Chapter Overview and Competencies

This chapter focuses on trauma and resilience as it relates to the children you'll work with as a CASA/GAL volunteer. This chapter also offers an overview of communication and interviewing skills and practice writing effective recommendations to the court.

Below are the competencies that will be developed in Chapter 3.

| <b>Competency Building in Chapter 3</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Competency Category</b>              | <b>Knowledge, Skills &amp; Attributes Development in Chapter 3</b>   |
| CASA/GAL Role                           |  |
| Foundation of Knowledge                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understands the nature and scope of trauma and how it affects children</li><li>Understands possible reactions of children to separation and loss</li><li>Understands the importance of resilience in overcoming trauma in children</li></ul> |
| Sound Judgment                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understands how to make appropriate fact-based recommendations to the court</li></ul>  |
| Communication                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Knows how to utilize basic communication and interviewing skills</li><li>Knows strategies for interviewing children</li></ul>  |

## Preparing to Talk About Trauma: Activity 3A

**Part 1:** Listen as a volunteer reads the quote by Walt Whitman. Think about what these words mean to you. The facilitator will ask a few participants to share responses.

There was a child went forth every day;  
And the first object he look'd upon, the object he became;  
And that object became part of him for the day, or a certain part of the day, or  
for many years, or stretching cycles of years.

Walt Whitman

**Part 2:** Listen as the facilitator introduces the concept of the “feelings thermometer,” which is described below.

### The Feelings Thermometer



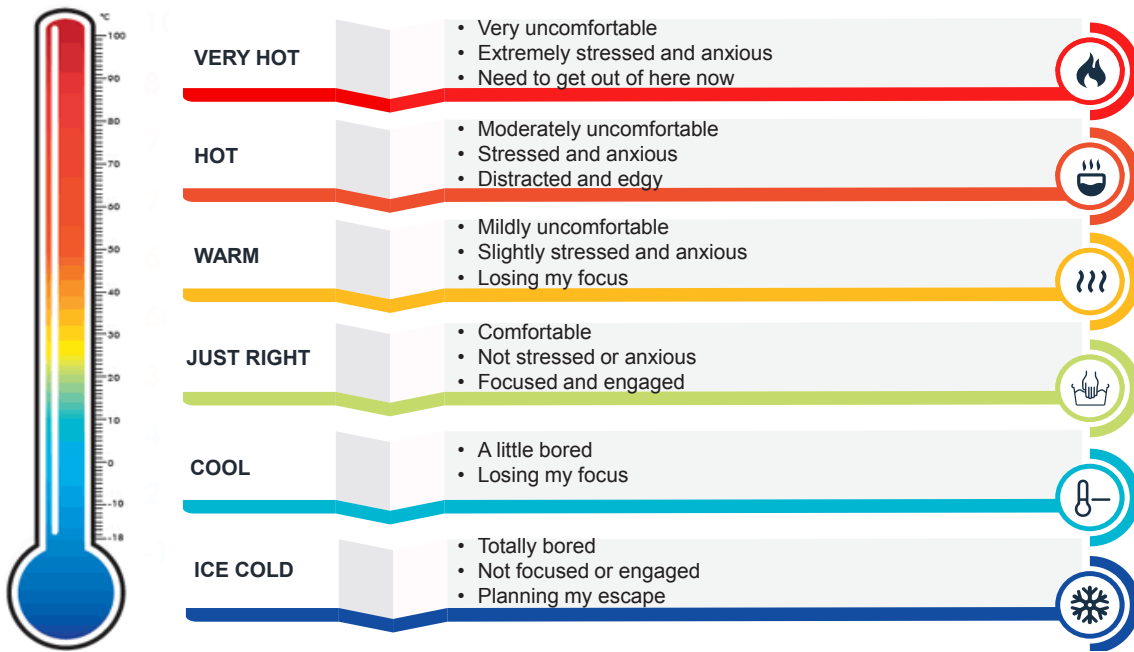
The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) has developed the concept of a “feelings thermometer” to gauge your “emotional temperature” or response to what you’re learning about. In their training for parents caring for children who have experienced trauma, NCTSN writes:

The Feelings Thermometer . . . [can] make you more aware of the topics or situations that push your buttons, and how you react when your buttons are pushed. With this awareness, you may be able to anticipate situations that are going to raise your emotional temperature, and come up with a game plan for coping with them. When your Feelings Thermometer goes way up, that means you’re feeling stressed, anxious, and feel the need to escape. You also may find that when you become very uncomfortable, you “space out” and withdraw from the discussion. . . .[S]pacing out or withdrawing is something that traumatized kids do sometimes as well. What looks like boredom, or just not caring, or withdrawal can sometimes be a reaction to trauma.

*NCTSN, Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma, February 2010.*

## The Feelings Thermometer, Cont'd.

As you begin to explore the topic of trauma, be aware that your feelings about any personal trauma you or someone you are close to has experienced, may be heightened. If you find that your “feelings thermometer” is running high and it may be affecting your role as an advocate, please address your concerns with CASA/GAL program staff.





## What is Child Trauma? Activity 3B

**Part 1:** Listen as the facilitator gives an overview of the information that you read about childhood trauma as Pre-Work. Share one traumatic experience from the list of traumatic experiences for a child that you came prepared with.

**Part 2:** Recall the video “Shane’s Story” from Facing Foster Care in Alaska. Consider the kinds of trauma Shane experienced that led to his involvement with the child protection services system. In the large group, discuss the following questions:

- What trauma did Shane experience before entering the system? After?

# The Long-Term Effects of Childhood Trauma: Activity 3C



Watch the video about the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. Then read the ACEs Infographic and the ACE Calculator handout filled out for Francis, the mother in the Black-Smith case. In small groups, discuss the following question:

- What long-term effects might the unresolved trauma have on Francis' health and well-being?

In pairs, use the blank ACE Calculator on the next page to score Tammy, the older daughter in the Black-Smith case, based on what you currently know about her.

- What ACE score does Tammy, the older daughter in the Black-Smith case have?
- What ACE score do you think Tammy might have by the time she is out of the child protection system?
- What implications might this have on her health and well-being?

Share your responses in the large group.

# ACE Calculator (Blank Form)

## Finding Your Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Score

Name: *Tammy Black*

While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often** swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you **or** act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often** push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?  
Or **ever** hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Did an adult person at least 5 years older than you **ever** touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?  
Or Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Did you **often or very often** feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special **or** your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did you **often or very often** feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you **or** your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
6. Were your parents **ever** separated or divorced?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
7. Was your mother or stepmother **often or very often** pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?  
Or **sometimes, often, or very often** kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?  
Or **ever** repeatedly hit at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
10. Did a household member go to prison?  
Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**Now add up your "Yes" answers: \_\_\_\_\_ This is your ACE Score.**

## The Separation Experience: Activity 3D

Children in the child protection system may experience trauma from being removed from the home. Each new placement increases the likelihood of irreversible damage to their emotional and psychological health. However, because children's safety has to be the primary consideration, sometimes they must be moved for protection.

When children are removed from their homes, they feel isolated and detached. Not only do they worry about not seeing their parents, but they also fear losing their peer groups and siblings, changing schools or missing something as simple as their bed or toys.

**Listen as the facilitator reads the scenario that follows. Afterward, take a moment to reflect on what you heard. In the large group, discuss the following questions:**

- What feelings did you experience as you imagined being removed from your home and your parents?
- What might you do as a CASA/GAL volunteer to mitigate the negative effects of removal for Tammy, the older child in the Black-Smith case?

Listen to the example that the facilitator shares on the positive impact that a CASA/GAL volunteer had.

## Separation Experience Scenario



*Sit comfortably and close your eyes as you visualize yourself as a 4-year-old boy or girl at home one evening with your mom and dad. A lady came to the daycare center today and asked you lots of questions about what your mom and dad do when you are bad, whether you have enough food at home, how much your daddy drinks, and how often he hits your mommy. You are pretty sure you are going to be in a lot of trouble because the lady said she had to tell your parents that she talked to you. You can barely eat your dinner and your mom is already mad about that. Your dad is drinking another beer, which usually is a bad sign.*

*There is a knock on the door and that same lady is standing there with a policeman. Now you know you are really in big trouble. She tells your mom and dad that she is taking you away with her. Will they put you in jail? She sits near you at the table and tells you not to worry. She asks your mom or dad to get some clothes together. She asks if there is any special toy or blanket that might help you sleep better. You just can't imagine what it will be like to sleep in jail with all of those mean people that were there with your dad the last time he went.*

*But the lady doesn't take you to jail. The policeman and the lady take you to a big house in another part of the town. They are chatting and laughing on the way. You can tell they are trying to be nice, but you are really scared. The lady walks you to the door and another lady opens it up. She has a big smile on her face and takes your bag of stuff and says, "Come right in." Behind her is a man. He is smiling too. There are a bunch of other kids who are all looking at you. The new lady says, "Welcome. This is your new home. We are so glad to have you." She keeps smiling and seems really nice, but there must be some mistake. You didn't ask for a new home . . . You already have a mom and dad . . . You don't have brothers and sisters . . . This isn't your room . . . And what is this food that they are giving you? You realize that this is all your fault and that your mom and dad must be really mad now. You wonder if you'll ever see them again.*

# Trauma and Resilience

## Resilience: Activity 3E

**Part 1:** Think of a time of adversity in your life. What helped you get through the difficult time? Do you remember a particular person who was especially helpful?

Listen to the example of each of the “Seven Cs” that the facilitator shares.

**Part 2:** Listen as a volunteer reads the paragraph below about resilience. Then listen as the facilitator provides examples of the “Seven Cs of Resilience” found on page 11). In pairs, choose one of the “Seven Cs” of resilience and answer the following question:

- How can you help to build or reinforce this characteristic in a child you work with as a CASA/GAL volunteer?

## Resilience



Considerable research has shown that child abuse and neglect increase the likelihood of developing problems later, but not all children subjected to lives of severe adversity go on to become dysfunctional adults. Some don't experience problems or do so to only a minor degree. This is resilience: the ability to become strong, healthy or successful again after something bad happens. Resilient people overcome the ravages of poverty, abuse, unhappy homes, parental loss, disability or any of the other risk factors known to set people on a difficult course in life. Resilient children achieve normal development despite their experience of past or present adversity. Studies of resilient people have repeatedly identified the presence of certain protective factors: personal qualities, family, relationships, outlooks and skills that assist them in overcoming hardships and finding success. Helping children and youth, in the child welfare system, discover and/or develop some of these characteristics can significantly improve their chances for positive life outcomes.

## The Seven Cs of Resilience

When we encounter stress in our lives, we tend to develop ways to overcome that stress or prevent it in the future. Over time, overcoming stress can be refined, practiced and improved, making us more resilient to adverse situations. Healthy ways of dealing with stress include fostering one of the “seven Cs”:

- Competence: Ability to handle a situation effectively
- Confidence: Believing in personal abilities
- Connection: Having strong ties to family and community, creating a sense of belonging
- Character: Having a solid set of morals and values to help determine right from wrong
- Contribution: Feeling like a valuable member of society able to make a difference
- Coping: Ability to handle stress appropriately
- Control: Knowledge and ability to effect an outcome

Adapted from “The 7 Cs: The Essential Building Blocks of Resilience,”  
**from** Fostering Resilience, <http://www.fosteringresilience.com/7cs.php>.

# Skill Building: Communication and Interviewing

## The Basic Elements of Communication: Activity 3F

### The Basic Elements of Communication

**Part 1:** Think of a time when you and a friend, colleague or family member had a miscommunication. Write down one thing that contributed to the problem:

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**Part 2:** Recall the information on basic elements of communication that you read in Pre-Work. In the large group, share any questions you have about what you read.



## Open-Ended vs. Closed-Ended Questions: Activity 3G

Recall the information on open-ended and closed-ended questions that you read about in Pre-Work. Discuss any questions that you may have.

## The CASA/GAL Volunteer Interview: Activity 3H

**Part 1:** Recall information that you read on the CASA/GAL volunteer interview and share a question.

**Part 2:** For Pre-Work, you watched Part 1 of the National CASA/GAL video showing a CASA/GAL volunteer interviewing a 4-year-old child. Now watch Part 2 of the video, which contains comments on the bottom of the screen regarding the strategies and techniques used by the volunteer in the video. As you watch, think about the interview you designed and conducted for Pre-Work.

**Part 3:** In the large group, discuss the following questions as they relate to the interview you conducted for Pre-Work:

- Which of the strategies from the video did you employ in your interview?
- How many of your questions were open-ended? How many were closed-ended?
- Were some questions more successful than others?
- How much information were you able to gather?
- What did you find easy about the interview? What did you find difficult?
- What will you do differently next time?

**Part 4:** In pairs, share the interview that you prepared as part of the Pre-Work. Provide feedback and suggestions to your partner.

## Working a Case

### The Black-Smith Case: Activity 3I

In a number of your training sessions, you will be applying the knowledge you've learned to a series of true-to-life case study simulations. To get started, the facilitator will divide you into small groups. Within each group, you will need to assign roles to various members (if there are fewer than four people in a group, some people may need to take on more than one role; if there are more than four people, not everyone will have an assigned role). The group roles include:

- **Runner:** The member of the group assigned to retrieve document packets from the facilitator
- **Scribe:** The individual who writes up recommendations to the court
- **Controller:** The person charged with keeping the group on track and monitoring the time remaining for the activity
- **Questioner:** The group member charged with asking certain questions and making sure each document that's read gets discussed by the group before moving to the next one

**Part 1:** Your group will receive a hard copy of the initial file for the Black-Smith case, which you read for Pre-Work. Take several minutes to re-familiarize yourself with the information in this case file. You will also receive a list of questions that your Questioner should remind your group to consider as you review documents and make your recommendations. After you review the initial case file, send your Runner to the facilitator to request an additional document (either an interview transcript from a key player you'd like to speak with or another important document you'd find during a case). You may continue to request additional interviews and documents one at a time over the course of 35 minutes in order to complete your information gathering for the case at this stage. After 35 minutes, your Scribe should legibly write on the flipchart your group's recommendations to the court regarding services for the child, services for the parent and placement decisions.

**Part 2:** Take a few minutes to view other groups' recommendations, and then briefly discuss the debrief questions that the facilitator distributes. In the large group, discuss these questions and any others that arose during the activity.

## Writing Effective Recommendations: Activity 3J

**Part 1:** Listen as the facilitator gives an overview of the information below about writing effective recommendations to the court.

**Part 2:** Working in your small groups from the previous activity, evaluate the effectiveness of the recommendations your group wrote for the Black-Smith case.

- What recommendations would you add?
- How would you rewrite your recommendations to include outcome measures?

In the large group, discuss what changes you would make to your group's recommendations.

## Writing Effective Recommendations in a CASA/GAL Volunteer Court Report



Your recommendations to the court in the child's best interest are the result of your work on a case up to that point and the culmination of your volunteer court report. When you make a written recommendation, you are asking the court to make an order. The judge will decide whether or not to order the recommendations listed in your court report. As with everything in the court report, your recommendations should be written clearly and concisely.

### Consider the following areas of concern when you write your recommendations:

- Custody of child and child's physical placement (always the first recommendation in your listing)
- Counseling (individual or family)
- Parental visitation (supervised or unsupervised)
- Sibling visitations (if siblings are in a different placement)
- Random drug screening for parents at the request of the caseworker or CASA/GAL volunteer
- Substance abuse assessments for parents
- Diagnostic assessment (including following all recommendations thereof)
- Parenting classes, domestic violence classes or anger management classes
- Testing to determine if a child has a learning disability and needs an IEP (individualized education plan)
- Community youth programs such as Big Brother, Big Sister

### Recommendations Should Cover All the Child's Needs

Perhaps it seems obvious to say that the recommendations should cover the child's needs, but consider the following questions:

- What if the child has a need that has not been met over multiple hearings? Do you still ask for it?
- What if the child has a need that the county doesn't provide services for? Do you still ask for it?

## Writing Effective Recommendations in a CASA/GAL Volunteer Court Report, Cont'd.

- If the child's needs are great in one area, for instance mental health, should the child's educational needs still be listed, even though the mental health needs must be addressed before the educational needs can be attended to?
- If the child is placed with extended family members who can't meet some of his or her needs, do you still press for all needs to be met even though it may cause the child to be moved?
- For these or other challenges in getting a child's needs covered, consult with CASA/GAL staff to strategize the best solution.

### Recommendations Should Not Set Parents Up for Failure

One of the central dilemmas for CASA/GAL volunteers is the fact that children do best when they live with their parents or other family members who can provide a minimum sufficient level of care, and yet the parenting abilities of these adults may seem marginal to them. Parents and caregivers in our cases are usually struggling or limited in significant ways. CASA/GAL volunteers must advocate for the child's safety and at the same time, keep in mind that the only standard a family should have to meet is the minimum sufficient level of care.

Poverty in and of itself should not be a factor when deciding if a family will be allowed to raise its own children. It is easy to set parents or guardians up for failure if we make recommendations they cannot afford to meet. Additionally, a long laundry list of court orders can be so discouraging, that a parent who could in fact succeed, may give up. If that occurs, have we served the child's best interests?

### Consider these questions:

- What other ways might we set a parent up for failure?
- How have we fallen short in our advocacy for the child's best interest if we do set the parents up for failure? (Who else is failing here?)

## **Writing Effective Recommendations in a CASA/GAL Volunteer Court Report, Cont'd.**

### **All Recommendations Should Be Supported in the Body of Report**

Imagine you are the judge reading a CASA/GAL volunteer court report and you come across recommendations concerning issues that were not mentioned in the body of the report. What would you think?

- Why is it important to support each recommendation in the report body?
- How does writing a recommendation to address an issue not discussed in the report put that recommendation at risk?
- If the case is appealed and all reports in the file are read again, what are the implications for court reports that don't support their own recommendations?

### **Effective Recommendations Include Outcome Measures**

Outcome measures add specific parameters that define a successful execution of the recommendation. They clarify the expected outcome and set observable goals.

### **As you look at the chart that follows, consider these questions:**

- How will you know if the court-ordered recommendations in the “no outcome measures” column have been met?
- In which case are you more assured that the children's needs will be met?

| Recommendations without Outcome Measures   | Recommendations with Outcome Measures   |
|--|---|
| <p>Mother must have substance abuse evaluation and follow recommendations from same.</p> | <p>Mother must have substance abuse evaluation and follow recommendations from same, and <b>remain drug-free for 6 months before court considers reunification.</b></p>   |
| <p>Parents must attend parenting classes.</p>  | <p>Parents must attend parenting classes and <b>demonstrate the following parenting skills:</b> establishing meal schedule, bringing children to school on time, bringing children to clinic for medical treatment as advised by physician.</p> |
| <p>Child should have visitation with siblings.</p>                                       | <p>Child should have visitation with siblings set <b>up monthly and supervised by caseworker.</b></p>   |



## Chapter Wrap-Up

### Review

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

### Evaluation

Fill out the Chapter 3 Volunteer Training Evaluation and give it to the facilitator before you leave.

## Chapter 4 Pre-Work

Prior to the Chapter 4 training session, complete the following assignments:

### *Mental Illness in Families*

Read the article “Mental Illness in Families” in the Chapter 4 Pre-Work packet.

### *California Moves To Stop Misuse of Psychiatric Meds in Foster Care*

Read the article “California Moves To Stop Misuse of Psychiatric Meds in Foster Care” in Chapter 4 Pre-Work packet. You’ll be discussing this article during an activity in Chapter 4.

### *A Multimodal Approach to Managing Mental Health Disorders in Children*

Read the article on medicating children in foster care and a multimodal approach to managing mental health disorders in children.

- Be prepared to discuss the points brought up by the author.
- Be prepared to discuss the questions that advocates should ask.

## Chapter 4 Pre-Work, Cont'd.

### Questions Advocates Should Ask

Read through the list of questions that advocates should ask children and teens when determining which types of medical treatments are in their best interest.

### Poverty in Your Community Research Activity

Use either the Internet or in-person methods to answer the following questions about poverty and public assistance in your state:

- What is the minimum wage in your state?
- What are the current poverty guidelines for a family of four in your state?
- What percent of people of color in your state fall within the poverty guidelines? What percent of the white population in your state fall within the poverty guidelines?

### Higher Rates of Poor Children in the System

Read about why poor children are more likely to be in the system in the Chapter 4 Pre-Work packet.

### Examining Poverty vs. Neglect Scenarios Activity

Read through and complete the activity on examining poverty vs. neglect scenarios.

### Obtaining Confidential Case-Related Records

Read the article on how to obtain confidential case-related records in the Chapter 4 Pre-Work packet.

### Confidentiality and the CASA/GAL Volunteer

Read the article “Confidentiality and the CASA/GAL Volunteer” in the Chapter 4 Pre-Work packet.

### The Necessity of Timely, Effective Communication

Read the article “Necessity of Timely, Effective Communication” in the Chapter 4 Pre-Work packet.

## Chapter 4 Pre-Work, Cont'd.

### *The Fine Art of Team Work (Child Protection Is Not an Individual Sport)*

Read the article “Fine Art of Team Work (Child Protection Is Not an Individual Sport)” found in the Chapter 4 Pre-Work packet.

### *Initial Case Notes from the Greene Case*

Read the initial case notes for the Greene case, which the facilitator will distribute. You will be applying what you know about the Greene case during various activities in the Chapter 4 training session.

### *Optional: Visiting an Agency by Taking Public Transportation*

If you are to complete this Pre-Work assignment, the facilitator will hand out instructions for visiting an agency by taking public transportation. Listen as the facilitator gives an overview of the assignment, and ask any questions. You will have until \_\_\_\_\_ to complete the assignment.

