



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates

FOR CHILDREN

**THE NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED
SPECIAL ADVOCATE ASSOCIATION**

CASA/GAL Pre-Service Volunteer Training Curriculum

Volunteer Manual

CHAPTER FIVE

HEARST *foundations*



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CHAPTER 5:

Substance Abuse and Cultural Competence

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Pre-Work Recap

Chapter 5: Pre-Work Recap



- ✓ Read the information on substance abuse
- ✓ Read the information about “Commonly Used Drugs by National Institute on Drug Abuse”
- ✓ Read about diversity, National CASA Vision and Guiding Principles
- ✓ Read the “Cultural Competence Glossary”
- ✓ Read the information on Disproportionality and Disproportionality Statistics
- ✓ Read the “Local Disproportionality Statistics”

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

- Information on substance abuse
- Information about commonly used drugs by National Institute on Drug Abuse
- Information about diversity, National CASA Vision and Guiding Principles
- Cultural competency glossary terms
- Disproportionality statistics
- Local disproportionality statistics
- Initial case notes for the Lavender case
- Sample court reports
- Examples of good and bad court reports

Chapter Overview and Competencies

This chapter explores the importance of cultural competence in the CASA/GAL volunteer role. You'll also learn about how substance abuse can affect parenting and you'll continue to apply your new knowledge and skills in a case simulation.

Competency Building in Chapter 5

Competency Category	Knowledge, Skills, & Attributes Development in Chapter 5
CASA/GAL Role	
Foundation of Knowledge	Understands the ways substance abuse can affect children and families Knows the importance of being aware of resources in the community that assist with substance abuse
Cultural Competency	Knows strategies and steps to take to increase cultural competency skills and demonstrates culturally competent child advocacy Understands the root causes of disproportionate representation of children of color in the child welfare system and the disparate outcomes children of color experience
Communication	Understands the importance of speaking and writing clearly and concisely

Substance Abuse

Understanding Substance Abuse: Activity 5A

Part 1: Think of friends, family members or colleagues who are currently abusing one or more substances, or who have done so in the past. As you think of these people, make two lists:

- What are their strengths?
- How does/did their substance abuse impact their lives?

Strengths...	How substance abuse impacts this person's life...

Part 2: Recall the information about substance abuse that appears in the Pre-Work Handouts and discuss any questions that you may have. Then listen as the facilitator provides information about commonly abused substances in your local community.

Substance Abuse and Parenting: Activity 5B

In the large group, brainstorm possible effects of substance abuse on parenting. The facilitator will list all responses on a flipchart page. Then compare your answers to the list below.

The Effects of Substance Abuse on Parenting



It is important to remember that when a parent is involved with drugs or alcohol to a degree that interferes with the ability to parent effectively, a child may suffer in many ways:

- A parent may be emotionally and physically unavailable to the child.
- A parent's mental functioning, judgment, inhibitions and/or protective capacity may be seriously impaired by alcohol or drug use, placing the child at increased risk of all forms of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse.
- A substance-abusing parent may "disappear" for hours or days, leaving the child alone or with someone unable to meet the child's basic needs.
- A parent may also spend the family's income on alcohol and/or other drugs, depriving the child of adequate food, clothing, housing and healthcare.
- The resulting lack of resources often leads to unstable housing, which results in frequent school changes, loss of friends and belongings and an inability to maintain important support systems (religious communities, sports teams, neighbors).
- A child's health and safety may be seriously jeopardized by criminal activity associated with the use, manufacture and distribution of illicit drugs in the home.
- Eventually, a parent's substance abuse may lead to criminal behavior and periods of incarceration, depriving the child of parental care.

The Effects of Substance Abuse on Parenting, Cont'd.

- Exposure to parental abuse of alcohol and other drugs, along with a lack of stability and appropriate role models, may contribute to the child's future substance abuse.
- Prenatal exposure to alcohol or other drugs may impact a child's development.

Experiences: Saving Kids ... Children of Addicts: Activity 5C

As you watch the clip of the news story “What the Child Experiences,” think about advocating for a similar family. After watching the clip, share the challenges of advocating for a family with parental substance abuse.

Be prepared to share your responses with the large group.

Working with Families: Activity 5D

Finding a Balance

Part 1: Read “Shannon’s Story” in the Volunteer Manual (pages 8 through 10), and then listen as the facilitator presents key points to consider when deciding whether to recommend that a child return home.

Part 2: The facilitator will divide you into two groups: One group will make an argument for terminating Caterina’s parental rights so Shannon can be adopted; the other will make an argument for giving Caterina more time to show she can parent Shannon. You will have 5 minutes to work as a group to prepare your argument and then 2 minutes to make your argument in the large group. After both sides have shared their reasons for terminating or not terminating parental rights, the facilitator will present information about what you, as a CASA/GAL volunteer, can do to provide the best possible advocacy for a child.

Shannon's Story



Shannon is the fourth child born to Caterina. Shannon's oldest half-siblings, two sisters, who are each more than ten years older than Shannon, are in the custody of their father in another state. Caterina has not seen them in several years. The remaining half-sibling, a boy, lives locally with his father and spends weekends with Caterina.

Shannon was removed from Caterina's custody when she was approximately one year old because Caterina was arrested for driving while intoxicated with Shannon in the car. Shannon was placed in foster care with Nathan and Marie, a couple with no other children.

Shannon remained in foster care with Nathan and Marie for sixteen months while Caterina engaged in treatment for her addiction to alcohol. During this time Caterina, who initially fought treatment and was unable to complete her first stint in residential treatment, successfully completed treatment at a second facility and at a halfway house. Upon leaving the halfway house, she secured a centrally located three-bedroom apartment and reported consistent attendance at 12-step meetings. She engaged in therapy, secured a mentor through a women's mentoring program run by the United Way and attended training in medical records management, though she struggled to find a job.

Communication with Nathan and Marie was frequent and supportive. Nathan and Marie rallied their church to help furnish Caterina's apartment and, with the permission of Shannon's caseworker, often picked Caterina up on Sundays so that she could attend church with them and Shannon. Visits with Shannon, at first brief and supervised, increased to unsupervised overnight and weekend visits. When she was twenty-eight months old, Shannon was returned to Caterina's custody.

In the months that followed, Caterina enrolled Shannon in preschool, continued her job-related training and continued to report regular attendance at 12-step meetings. Caterina maintained a relationship with Nathan and Marie. Shannon often spent Sundays with them and even joined them on an out-of-state vacation to visit Marie's family.

After a little more than a year, Caterina relapsed in an episode for which Shannon was present, and Caterina was transported to the emergency room. Caterina called Nathan and Marie from the hospital. They picked up Shannon.

Shannon's Story, Cont'd.

Her placement with (return to) Nathan and Marie's home was formalized the next day.

In the fifteen months that followed, Caterina successfully completed day treatment for her addiction. She secured and retained employment. She continues to live in the same apartment. Visits with Shannon started almost immediately after her return to Nathan and Marie's home and have continued, though they continue to be supervised and more limited than during Shannon's previous time in foster care. Communication between Caterina and Nathan and Marie is more limited and guarded.

Shannon is now four and a half years old. Nathan and Marie have recently hired an attorney to represent their interests in court. They are willing to adopt. The goal for Caterina remains return to parent, but all involved are unsure as to how to proceed and what is in Shannon's best interest. Should she return to Caterina or should Caterina's parental rights be terminated so that Nathan and Marie can adopt? What do you think?

Can the Child Return Home? Key Points to Consider

In deciding whether a child can return home to a family where substance abuse occurs, many factors should be weighed. These include:

- The parent's ability to function in a caregiving role
- The child's health, development and age
- Parental history of alcohol or other drug abuse and substance abuse treatment
- Safety of the home
- Family supports
- Available treatment resources
- Treatment prognosis and/or length of sobriety

A dilemma that often arises is the conflict between the legal mandate (and the child's need) for permanency (ASFA) and the long-term treatment (including inpatient treatment) that substance-abusing parents may need. If a parent is in treatment, consideration should be given to placing the child with the parent

Shannon's Story, Cont'd.

rather than in foster care. Although foster care is often the only available option, the child may feel punished when placed away from the parent. The focus should be to support successful treatment, while simultaneously working at keeping the child with the parent.

What a CASA/GAL Volunteer Can Do

Educate yourself about the power of addiction and about resources such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Rational Recovery, Al-Anon, Alateen and Nar-Anon. Support those family members who are willing to deal with the substance abuse problem, even if the person with the substance dependence is not.

Services for which you might advocate include:

- Thorough assessment with recommendations for treatment
- Substance abuse treatment services (especially programs where the child can be with the parent, if appropriate)
- Home-based services to build family skills
- Relocation out of an environment where drug or alcohol use is pervasive
- Financial assistance and childcare while parents are in treatment
- Support services such as SSI (Supplemental Security Income), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), food stamps, job training and child support
- When a child is in foster care, frequent visitation in a homelike atmosphere or an informal setting such as a park
- Assistance for a substance-abusing parent seeking to flee a domestic violence perpetrator, such as obtaining a protective order, finding alternative housing and performing other necessary steps (domestic violence victims are more likely to remain sober away from the abuser)

Skill Building: Cultural Competence

Understanding the Culture: Activity 5E



Part 1: Listen as the facilitator defines culture and describes its components. In pairs, choose one component found below the waterline of the culture iceberg, and explain an unseen rule of your culture. Although you and your partner may be of the same race or ethnicity, chances are you'll find slight variations in your culture's rules, expectations or customs.

Part 2: The facilitator will distribute a four-piece puzzle to each pair. Working with your partner, construct a square using all four pieces without overlapping any sections. When everyone has finished, the facilitator will distribute an additional piece labeled "culture." Make a new square using all five pieces. Again, no pieces can overlap.

In the large group, answer the following questions:

- Describe your experience of having to make a new puzzle after receiving the new piece.
- How is this activity similar to advocating for a child from another culture?

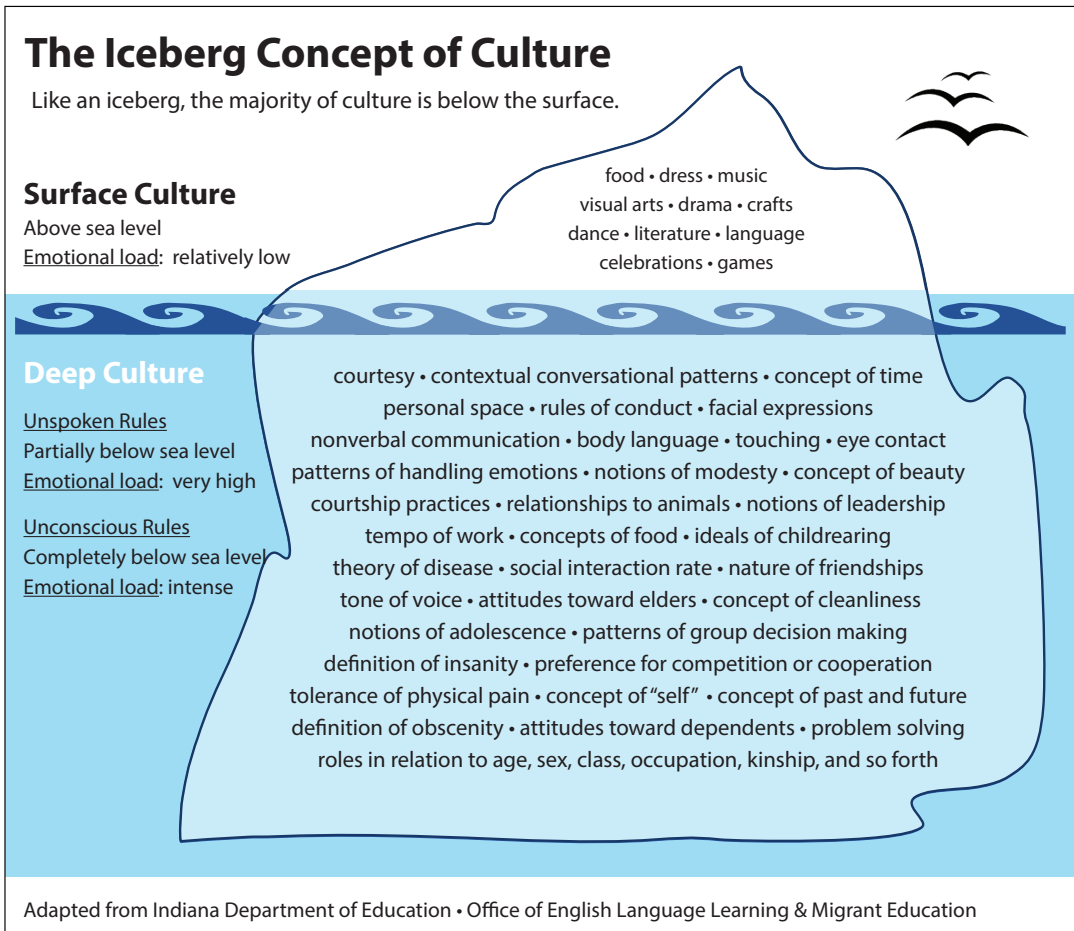
What Is Culture?



Culture is a learned pattern of customs, beliefs and behaviors, socially acquired and socially transmitted through symbols and widely shared meanings. Culture can be defined as an organized group of learned responses and ready-made solutions to problems people face and how to live day-to-day.

Culture is not only bound by race and ethnicity. Groups of people who work in certain fields may develop a unique culture. They have a unique language, practice model, etc. Culture defines how we do things, think about things and talk about things.

There are many analogies that help us understand culture. One is that culture is like an iceberg: There are parts we can see and parts we can't see but know are there. The part above the waterline makes up only about 10 percent of an iceberg's entirety. The visible parts of culture might include dress, music, food and games. Those that we can't see but know are there include unwritten rules guiding patterns of speech, concepts of time and the meanings of body language.



The Value of Diversity: Activity 5F



Recall the information you read about diversity, the National CASA Vision Statement and guiding principles found in Chapter 5 Pre-Work Handouts and discuss any questions that you may have. Then read the signs posted around the room, which list the principles that guide National CASA's efforts and goals related to achieving diversity within the CASA/GAL network.

In the large group, briefly share which principle you think is most important and why. Ask any questions you have about the vision statement or the principles.

Disproportionality and Disparate Outcomes: Activity 5G

Recall the Chapter 5 Pre-Work information about disproportionality and disproportionality statistics, including those in your state and local area. In the large group, discuss the following questions:

- Why do you think disproportionality exists in the child welfare system? What factors might contribute to it?
- What are some other systems that impact the lives of the children and families you will work with as a CASA/GAL volunteer? What are some examples of disproportionality in those systems?
- What is one thing you can do to become aware of unconscious racial bias in your role as a CASA/GAL volunteer?

Working a Case

The Lavender Case: Activity 5H



Part 1: Your group will receive a hard copy of the initial file for the Lavender 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 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 with your group the debrief questions that the facilitator distributes. In the large group, discuss these questions and any others that arose during the activity.

Writing Effective Court Reports: Activity 5I

Part 1: Recall the three sample court reports that you read in Chapter 5 Pre-Work Handouts. In pairs, discuss these reports. Then answer the following questions:

- Which statements are opinion-based?
- Which statements are fact-based?
- What's missing from each example?
- What could be improved in each example?

Part 2: In the large group, discuss how to improve these sample sections. Recall the good and bad court reports that you read in Chapter 5 Local/Program Pre-Work Handouts. The facilitator may discuss these as examples of effective court reports and court reports that need improving.

Chapter Wrap-up and Review

Review

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

Evaluation

Fill out the Chapter 5 Training Evaluation and give it to the facilitator before you leave.

Chapter 6 Pre-Work

Prior to the Chapter 6 training session, complete the following assignments:

- **Domestic Violence**

Read the information about Understanding Domestic Violence and the statistics about domestic violence found in the Chapter 6 Pre-Work Handouts. Write down any questions you have, and the facilitator will address them during the next chapter.

- **Sorting People**

In the Chapter 6 Online Resources, click the link to an 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 Bass cases? If so, how did it affect the families?

- **Exploring Culture and Perceptions Activity**

For the specified categories, ask participants to think about their culture and life experiences, as well as how they would describe themselves, their family of origin or their current family situation to someone they know pretty well. Ask them to answer the questions listed in the Chapter 6 Pre-Work Handouts.

Chapter 6 Pre-Work, Cont'd.

Ask the participants to imagine how Susan Mailer, the mother in the Lavender case, would describe herself to someone who has power over her life—for instance, the caseworker, the judge or an attorney. Ask them to take the perspective of Susan and answer the questions listed in the Chapter 6 Pre-Work Handouts.

- **Stereotyping vs. Cultural Competence**

Ask the participants to read the article on Stereotyping vs. Cultural Competence.

- **10 Benefits of Practicing Culturally Competent Child Advocacy**

Ask the participants to read the article “10 Benefits of Practicing Culturally Competent Child Advocacy.”

- **Institutional Bias Checklist for Volunteers**

Ask the participants to refer to the Institutional Bias Checklist for Volunteers.

- **Culturally Competent Child Advocacy Activity**

Ask participants to think about their culture and life experiences and how they would describe themselves, their family of origin or their current family situation to someone they know pretty well. Have them answer the questions listed in Chapter 6 Pre-Work Handouts.

Have participants also imagine how Susan Mailer, the mother in the Lavender case, would describe herself to someone who has power over her life—for instance, the caseworker, the judge, or an attorney. Ask them to take the perspective of Susan and answer the questions listed in Chapter 6 Pre-Work Handouts.

- **Tips on How to Become More Culturally Competent**

Ask the participants to read the article Tips on How to Become More Culturally Competent.

Chapter 6 Pre-Work, Cont'd.

- **Individual Action Plan for Increasing Cultural Competence Activity**

Ask the participants to refer to the Individual Action Plan for Increasing Cultural Competence and create a plan to become more culturally competent.

- **The Amarillo Case**

Read the Initial Case Notes for the Amarillo Case. You will be applying what you know about this case during various activities in Chapter 6.

