



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates

FOR CHILDREN

**THE NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED
SPECIAL ADVOCATE ASSOCIATION**

CASA/GAL Pre-Service Volunteer Training Curriculum

Volunteer Manual

CHAPTER SEVEN

HEARST *foundations*



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CHAPTER 7:



Educational Advocacy, Older Youth and LGBTQ Youth

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Pre-Work Recap

Chapter 7:
Pre-Work Recap



- ✓ Watch the video “How Resilience Is Built” and think about relationships you had as a youth that helped you build resilience.
- ✓ Listen to the audio clip “[Childhood Reflections](#)”.
- ✓ Read the Statistics on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care, which appears in the Chapter 7 Online Resources.
- ✓ Read the Initial Case Notes for the Brown Case.
- ✓ Go through the Ecological Model of Factors Affecting Resilience.

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

- Watch the video “How Resilience Is Built” and think about relationships you had as a youth that helped you build resilience.
- Listen to the audio clip “Childhood Reflections.”
- Read the Statistics on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care, which appears in the Chapter 7 Online Resources.
- Read the Initial Case Notes for the Brown Case.
- Go through the Ecological Model of Factors Affecting Resilience diagram.
- Read the article on Concurrent Planning and prepare to answer the lists of questions that follow.
- Re-read the Greene Case and the Amarillo case.
- Read the article on Educational Challenges for Children in the Child Welfare System.
- Prepare answers to questions that follow based on your K-12 experiences.

Chapter Overview and Competencies

This chapter addresses issues related to resilience and permanence, children’s educational needs, advocating for older youth and the challenges faced by LGBTQ youth in the system. You’ll also continue to explore cultural competence and child welfare law.

Competency Building in Chapter 7

Competency Category	Knowledge, Skills, Attributes, Behavior Development in Chapter 7
Foundation of Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Understands the factors that contribute to a child’s resilienceUnderstands the importance of resilience in overcoming trauma in childrenUnderstands concurrent planningUnderstands options for permanence for the childUnderstands how CASA/GAL advocacy differs for young children and older youthKnows strategies to address educational challengesUnderstands the issues faced by LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system

Permanence

Revisiting Resilience: Activity 7A

Part 1: Recall the “Childhood Reflections” audio clip that you listened to as part of the Pre-Work, where adults who spent time in the child welfare system speak about their childhoods as well as the video “How Resilience is Built” that you also were assigned to watch. In the large group, share your ideas on some of the ways resilience was exhibited. Recall the concept of ecological model of resilience that you went through as part of Pre-Work.

Part 2: The facilitator will divide you into groups and assign each group to reflect back on either the Greene case or the Amarillo case. Find three factors on the diagram that are present in Marky’s or Maria’s case—factors related to Marky’s and Maria’s thoughts, behaviors and skills; their families; their schools and local communities; and the wider society. In your group, discuss the following questions:

- What impact did these factors have on the case?
- As a CASA/GAL volunteer, how could you help nurture resilience in Marky or Maria?

Share your responses in the large group.

Baily's Story and the Importance of Permanence: Activity 7B

Part 1: Watch “Baily’s Story” from *Stories of Aging Out*. After the video, listen as the facilitator presents the information below about permanence.

Part 2: Working in pairs, answer the following questions:

- In what ways did Baily find permanence? In what ways didn’t she?
- How could a CASA/GAL volunteer have made a difference in Baily’s case?

Share your ideas in the large group.

Permanence



Children are born unable to survive on their own. They need someone to provide life's basic necessities: food, shelter, protection from harm. To get beyond survival and reach normal growth and developmental milestones, children require a "primary attachment figure:" an adult who "is there for them," whom they can count on, who consistently meets their emotional and physical needs. For most children, this role is filled by a biological parent or parents. However, one or more other caring adults, who are willing to commit unconditionally to the child, can also meet the child's need for permanence.

When a child enters the child welfare system, the belief that a parent "will always be there" is shattered.

One of your primary goals as a CASA/GAL volunteer is to advocate for a safe, permanent home as soon as possible, honoring the child's culture and sense of time. While there is never a guarantee of permanence, having such intentions can ensure that you are working toward a plan that supports permanence.

At a very basic level, permanence is most probable when the legal parent is also the emotional parent as well as the *parenting figure present in the child's life*.

There are a limited number of possible "permanent" options:

1. Return to parent
2. Adoption (by a relative or nonrelative)
3. Kinship Guardianship

The third option, placement and custody or guardianship with relatives or fictive kin, while not truly "permanent," is sometimes considered an appropriate choice when the first two options are not practical.

What Is Kinship Guardianship?

Kinship guardianship is a subsidized alternative to adoption for children or youth who have been placed with relatives (or, in some cases, fictive kin) who are certified foster parents and who have been placed with that relative for six months or more. Unlike adoption of a child in foster care, kinship guardianship does not require the surrendering or termination of parental rights.

Permanence, Cont'd.

Like adoption of a child in foster care, kinship guardianship is subsidized, meaning that the guardianship will receive a monthly subsidy to provide for the care of the child. In theory, kinship guardianship is a less permanent option because parents can petition the court to regain custody, provided that there have been substantial changes in their circumstances. Parents may also petition the court for visitation.

What Is Fictive Kin?

A more recent development in the consideration of permanency options for children is the introduction of fictive kin. Fictive kin are individuals who, while they may not be related to a child by blood, adoption or marriage, play an important role in a child's life. In short, they act as family even though they may not be family in the strict legal meaning of the word. Increasingly, courts are allowing for fictive kin to be considered in cases of kinship guardianship or to petition the court for custody or guardianship in the same way a relative might.

Long-Term Foster Care: An Impermanent Option

Despite the advocacy efforts of CASA/GAL volunteers and the hard work by caseworkers, many children remain in foster care. These children live in foster homes or group homes—or move from placement to placement during their time in care.

Long-term foster care becomes the plan for older children or children labeled as difficult* for whom there is no identified family. Sometimes these children are actually placed in a family setting but their caregivers do not want to adopt them. In any case when the plan is permanent foster care, what the child protective services system is actually doing is planning for these children to belong to no one. Clearly this is unacceptable. When faced with this as the “only” alternative, it is our obligation to insist that this not be the end of the planning process, but rather the beginning of a new dialogue around how to make permanence a reality, even for the most “difficult” child.

*At times children diagnosed with ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), autism, PTSD and other disorders are labeled as difficult or challenging.

Permanence, Cont'd.

Cultural Considerations

It is important to know that some Native Americans have a strong bias against adoption and certain tribes do not approve of adoption. This requires special consideration when weighing the permanency options for an Indian child who is an identified member of a tribe. In some cases, placement with a Native American custodian can truly be considered permanent.

Concurrent Planning: Activity 7C

Recall the article you read on Concurrent Planning and the lists of questions that follow as part of Pre-Work. Choose the case of either Marky Greene or Maria Amarillo. As you read through the questions to consider, reflect on the case you have chosen and formulate answers to the questions while thinking about options for permanence.

Educational Advocacy

Educational Challenges for Children in Care: Activity 7D

Recall the information that you read about educational challenges for children in the child welfare system as part of Pre-Work. After the facilitator divides the class into two groups, fill out the Educational Advocacy Quick Assessment Form as if you were the CASA/GAL volunteer for either Marky Greene or Maria Amarillo. Once you've finished, the facilitator will pass out the notes of an expert who has reviewed the Greene and Amarillo cases, and give you a moment to compare them to your group's notes.

In the large group, discuss the following questions:

- How might a tool like this be helpful in a case with an older youth?
- How might it be helpful in a case with a younger or even preschool-aged child?
- How might it be helpful in preventing problems and intervening early so that students can be successful?

Educational Advocacy Quick Assessment Form

1. Student's name	
2. School name	
3. Grade	
4. Special needs/IEP requirements	
5. Evidence of behavioral problems/ excessive absence	
6. Grade Point Average	
7. Seeing school social worker or any other support personnel?	
8. Extracurricular activities	
9. Need for tutoring?	
10. On track to graduate?	
11. Received resources for post-HS education or vocational program?	
12. Other pertinent information	

Advocating for Older Youth

Comparing Advocacy Across Age Ranges: Activity 7E

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you will fulfill your basic role regardless of the age of the child: information gathering, facilitating, advocating and monitoring a case. However, as the age of the youth changes so will your role. You should expect the focus of your advocacy to evolve as the older youth nears the age of emancipation from the foster care system.

The facilitator will show you pairs of guiding principles for advocacy. In the large group, decide which of the principles apply when working with children in infancy to the early teen years and which apply to adolescent youth. The facilitator will share comparisons between the age ranges for each principle.

Afterward, discuss the following question in the large group:

- How else do you think your role as a CASA/GAL volunteer, working with an older youth, may differ from your role working with a child age 13 or younger?

Advocating for Older Youth: Activity 7F

Considering the statistics about youth aging out of the foster care system, which you read for Pre-Work, think about what the outcome for Maria Amarillo might be if she remained in foster care until aging out and did not receive help navigating through the systems indicated below. In the space provided, list what issues Maria might face in the various systems an older youth encounters:

Education

House or Living Situation

Mental Health

Employment

Finances

Share what you wrote in the large group.

LGBTQ Youth

Advocating for LGBTQ Youth: Activity 7G

There is a disproportionate number of LGBTQ youth in foster care. At home, LGBTQ youth are more likely than their non-LGBTQ peers to face disapproval, abuse and neglect. Family conflict often becomes so intense that the youth are forced to leave home. Once in the child welfare system, many LGBTQ youth continue to be misunderstood, facing abuse, harassment and isolation. In foster homes and group care facilities, LGBTQ youth are often mistreated and even harmed by staff, caregivers and other young people.

Part 1: Think back to when you were a child or teenager. Did your peers ever make fun of you for any part of who you were? If so, how did you feel or respond? Did you make fun of anyone else? How did they respond? Write down your responses. You will not be asked to share them.

Part 2: Watch “Randy’s Story” from *Digital Stories from the Field*. Then, in the large group, discuss the following questions:

- How do you think a youth’s sexual orientation affects his or her identity?
- What obstacles might LGBTQ youth encounter in foster care that would hinder their ability to maintain their identity?
- Do you think these obstacles are unique to LGBTQ youth? If so, why? If not, how are these issues transferable to youth in other situations?
- How could a CASA/GAL volunteer have advocated for Randy?

Working a Case

The Brown Case: Activity 7H



Part 1: Your group will receive a hard copy of the initial file for the Brown 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 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.

Working the Resources Section of a Court Report: Activity 71

Based on the Brown case notes and interviews you read in the previous activity, write the family and community resources section of the court report, which describes strengths, skills or previous successful coping instances of the biological family; any resources within the extended family to provide connection, respite or additional help; and community resources that might provide additional support or services.

Once you have written your summary, turn to a partner and compare what you wrote. Were there any differences between the two? What do you think accounts for those differences?

Chapter Wrap-up

Review

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

Evaluation

Fill out the Chapter 7 Volunteer Training Evaluation and give it to the facilitator before you leave.

Additional Resources for Reference

- Beyond Alphabet Soup: Some Key Acronyms in Education Advocacy
- Laws Related to Older Youth in Foster Care
- LGBTQ Glossary
- Statistical Profile of Foster Youth:
<https://www.fosterclub.com/sites/default/files/foster-graphic-horizontal-large-gallery.jpeg>

Chapter 8 Pre-Work

Prior to the Chapter 8 training session, complete the following assignments:

The Redd Case

Read the Initial Case Notes for the Redd Case, which the facilitator will distribute. You will be writing a court report for the Redd Case during Chapter 8, so bring these documents with you to the training session.

Chapter 8 Pre-Work, Cont'd.

The Redd Case Study

Read the Redd Case Study packet with all the interviews and come prepared for Chapter 8 session.

Writing Program Report Activity

Write a court report using the provided Program's Court Report Template. You have one week to complete the report.

Program Court Report Template

Using the Program's Court Report Template provided in the Local/Program Pre-Work Handouts, write a court report. This is an opportunity for you to apply what you have learned from the training and to demonstrate your readiness to work independently on a case. You will get a week to complete the activity.

