# Report Writing

PREPARING TO WRITE THE CASA/GAL VOLUNTEER REPORT TO THE COURT

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#### \*This session is being recorded.

#### June 16, 2021



Court Appointed Special Advocates Guardians ad Litem FOR CHILDREN



#### AGENDA

- CASA/GAL VOLUNTEER ROLE
- FACT, OBSERVATION OR OPINION
- EVALUATING WRITING FOR FACT & OPINION
- CASA/GAL VOLUNTEER
  PREPARATION WORKSHEET
- COMMON COURT REPORT COMPONENTS

# CASA/GAL Volunteer Role



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### CASA/GAL Tasks

- CASA/GAL Volunteers Gather Information.
- **CASA/GAL Volunteers Relay Facts**. The CASA/GAL Volunteer tells the court what they saw, did, and heard. This is why it is so important that the CASA/GAL Volunteer hears and sees things, such as visits between parents and children (observation).
- **CASA/GAL Volunteers Make Recommendations**. The CASA/GAL Volunteer makes recommendations to the court regarding what is in the best interest of the child (including those that can assist/support his/her family). Based on facts and observations.





### National CASA/GAL Standards – Volunteer Role

#### Standard 8

- Identifies and advocates for the best interests of the child.
- Obtains first-hand a clear understanding of the needs and situation of the child by conducting an ongoing review of all relevant documents and records and interviewing the child, parents, social workers, teachers and other relevant persons to gather information about the child's situation.



### National CASA/GAL Standards – Volunteer Role

#### Standard 8

- At every hearing where permitted, provides a report for the court which includes information and recommendations about the child's needs and best interests.
- Discusses all recommendations concerning the case with the program supervisor prior to submitting recommendations to the court.

# Evaluate This Writing Fact or Opinion?



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#### FACT

- A fact is a statement that can be tested by experimentation, observation, or research and shown to be true or untrue.
- In 1988, a scientist found two identical snow crystals. They came from a storm in Wisconsin.
- The largest snowball fight on record took place in Seattle.

#### **OPINION**

- An opinion is a person's belief, feeling, or judgment about something. It is a subjective or value judgment, and it cannot be proven.
- It's never too early to teach children how to behave.
- Winter is cold in Wisconsin.



#### Look for words like:

- perhaps
- sometimes
- probably

OPINION

- often
- I feel
- I think
- I believe



### Observation

The house is so dirty that no child could possibly live in it.

The father did not care about the children – he is a terrible man that barely even talks to the kids.

The mother is not a good mom. The kids are better off living with the Aunt because she cares about the children more than the mother. The house was filled with trash, open food containers and dog feces

When the children visited father on 4/1/2021, he did not talk to the children. The father talked on his cellphone during the entire visitation time.

The mother has failed to attend the last 5 family counseling sessions. Aunt has transported the children to every session and has ensured they are able to go to all of the appointments they have.



### Fact or Opinion

- The kids were playing in the street.
- The mean kids were playing in the street.
- The parents attended all their visits.
- The parents, even though they had a lot of tattoos and piercings and sometimes were dressed in ratty clothes, attended all the visits.
- The foster parents live in a 6,000 square foot mansion with a pool. It is so pretty. The mother and father are working toward reunification, but they will never have a pool. The children love the pool.



### Fact Or Opinion Activity

There is no way the situation is going to improve. The mother doesn't really care what happens to the children and the father is a grumpy cantankerous man. I have seen the father and his grumpy ways. The mother never bothers to call the children or attend supervised visits. It makes the children sad I bet.

The father regularly attends family counseling sessions. The daughter Maggie smiles and runs to her father when she sees him during visitation. Maggie has shown me the cards he has sent to Maggie while she has been in the care of her foster parents. Maggie would like to be reunified with the father.



# Fact Or Opinion Activity

Wrap around services will never be enough for this family to be successfully reunified. The foster parents are better parents and the children will have a better life with the foster parents. The foster parents live in a large house, the foster mom stays at home and they have lots of family to support them.

The mother and father have regularly attended visits and call the kids every day. The children want to go home. The parents are on long term methadone treatment and therefore will never be able to take care of their children. It's a very sad situation but these hurdles are too big to overcome. The children deserve the great care of the foster parents. They will be better off in the care of their foster parents.

The mother is incarcerated and so there can be no visitation or contact between the child and the mother. There is no bond between the mother and the child. The foster mom said she doesn't want to pay for collect calls from the jail. I don't blame her – she doesn't need that kind of drama in her life. When mother broke the law - she also suffers the consequence of losing her child too. This child has a happy and fun foster mother who paints with her and is teaching her to play the piano.

# Volunteer Preparation Worksheet

8



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Worksheet						FOR CHILDREN CASA/GAL ASSOCIATION		
THIS WORKSHEET IS INTENDED	TO BE USED AS	S A TOOL FOR CA	ASA/GAL VOLUNTEERS					MEDICAL HEALTH
							Does the child have any medical needs and are they being met? Is the child cur effects) What is the monitoring plan for the child's medication? (include date of Regular well child visits? Any specialized medical care? Are there any medically	rently taking any medications? What effects has the medication had on the child? (note both behav sat evaluation/next medication management date) Does the child currently receive any type of socia appropriate reproductive health concerns? Has the child received dental care?
CASA/GAL VOLUNTEER NAME			HEARING DATE				FACTS & OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
CASA/GAL PROGRAM NAME			TYPE OF HEARING					
DATE			SHELTER DATE					
			IENT & PERMANENCY GOAL					
Child's Name	Date of	Placement	Contact Information	Permanency Goal	Number of	Goal Change this	POTENTIAL BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS
	Birth				Placements	Hearing?		
CNI# 1								
Child 3								MENTAL HEALTH
Child 4							Does the child have a mental health diagnosis and if so, what is it? Is the child p	articipating in therapy or any other services related to this mental health diagnosis? Is the child cur
CN8d S							psychotropic medications? What effects has the psychotropic medication had on medication (include date of last evaluation/next medication management date)? receive any type of social security benefit?	the child (note both behavioral effects and side effects)? What is the monitoring plan for the child's Does the child have any medical needs as a result of medications and are they being met? Does the child have any medical needs.
Child 6							FACTS & OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
	15	SSUES THAT MIGHT R	EQUIRE FURTHER ATTENTIO	N				RECOMMENDATIONS
Does ICWA apply in this case? Yes No Have	e steps been taken to	o ensure adherence?	Yes No					
s the child from a military family? Yes No								
Does this case involve ICPC? Yes No Ha	we steps been taken t	to ensure adherence?	Yes No				POTENTIAL BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS
	ORKSHEET					1		





- The worksheet is intended to provide structure to the various topical areas important to best interest advocacy of children.
- The worksheet is only a tool that may be utilized by CASA/GAL volunteers and programs as they deem appropriate.

The CASA/GAL Volunteer Preparation Worksheet is not a required document and is only intended to support CASA/GAL volunteers in developing recommendations regarding the children they serve. Be sure to adhere to the CASA/GAL Volunteer Report format used by your court or program



#### **Includes General Information / Contact Information**

- Child, Birth Date, Placement & Permanency Goal
- Original Reason Child Brought Into Care
- Important Events Since Last Hearing
- Child's Wishes
- Contacts
- Court Orders
- Contacts Made Since Last Hearing







#### **Issue Specific Information**

- Permanency Goal
- Medical Health
- Mental Health
- Education
- Placement
- Services for the Child





#### **Issue Specific Information**

- Services for the Parents
- Visitation
- Normalcy
- Transition Planning and Independent Living
- Youth Self Identity
- Other





- Questions
- Facts & Observations
- Recommendations
- Potential Barriers
- Solutions





	MENTAL	LHEALTH			
Does the child have a mental health diagnosis and if so, what is it? Is the child participating in therapy or any other services related to this mental health diagnosis? Is the child currently on any psychotropic medications? What effects has the psychotropic medication had on the child (note both behavioral effects and side effects)? What is the monitoring plan for the child's psychotropic medication (include date of last evaluation/next medication management date)? Does the child have any medical needs as a result of medications and are they being met? Does the child currently receive any type of social security benefit?					
FACTS & OBSERVATIONS		RECOMMENDATIONS			
POTENTIAL BARRIERS		SOLUTIONS			

#### Be sure to list contacts providing this information.



CASA/GAL VOLUNTEER NAME	HEARING DATE
CASA/GAL PROGRAM NAME	TYPE OF HEARING

DATE

	СН	ILDREN, PLACEMEN	T & PERMANENCY G	OAL			
Child's Name	Date of Birth	Placement	Contact Information	Permanency Goal	Number of Placements	Goal Change this Hearing?	
Child 1							
Child 2							
Child 3							
Child 4							
Child 5							
Child 6							
	ISSUE	S THAT MIGHT REQ	UIRE FURTHER ATT				
Does ICWA apply in this case? Yes No Have steps been taken to ensure adherence? Yes No							
Is the child from a military family? Yes No							
Does this case involve ICPC? Yes No Have steps been taken to ensure adherence? Yes No							



ORIGINAL REASON CHILD(REN) BROUGHT INTO CARE

IMPORTANT EVENTS SINCE LAST HEARING



#### **CHILD'S WISHES**

What does the child want to tell the court? In the child's opinion, what would make things easier for them? Where do they see themselves in 1 months? 3 months? Permanent placement? How do they feel about services they are receiving? Any additional resources they need or want?

#### PERMANENCY GOAL

What is the current goal – Reunification, Adoption, Permanent Guardianship, Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative, APPLA/OPPLA (for children over 16 years)? Is concurrent planning being implemented, if appropriate? Do you agree with the goal? Why should it change? Why should it remain the same?

FACTS & OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
POTENTIAL BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS



#### MEDICAL HEALTH

Does the child have any medical needs and are they being met? Is the child currently taking any medications? What effects has the medication had on the child? (note both behavioral effects and side effects) What is the monitoring plan for the child's medication? (include date of last evaluation/next medication management date) Does the child currently receive any type of social security benefit? Regular well child visits? Any specialized medical care? Are there any medically appropriate reproductive health concerns? Has the child received dental care?

FACTS & OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS		
POTENTIAL BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS		
MENTA	L HEALTH		
Does the child have a mental health diagnosis and if so, what is it? Is the child participating in therapy or any other services related to this mental health diagnosis? Is the child currently on any psychotropic medications? What effects has the psychotropic medication had on the child (note both behavioral effects and side effects)? What is the monitoring plan for the child's psychotropic medication (include date of last evaluation/next medication management date)? Does the child have any medical needs as a result of medications and are they being met? Does the child currently receive any type of social security benefit?			
FACTS & OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS		
POTENTIAL BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS		



#### EDUCATION

How is the child doing in school and or daycare/preschool? Is the child performing at grade level (grades and any change in grades)? Are the child's educational needs being met? Are there any additional services needed? Tutoring? Has there been an Independent Educational Plan (IEP), 504 Plan? Attendance? Are there any additional evaluations needed? If the child has transferred schools are there any issues that need to be addressed regarding: child's records; transportation; registration for school; transfer of services from previous school to new school (i.e. IEP / 504 Plan)? What are the child's college or other higher education plans? Standardized testing / tutoring?

FACTS & OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS	
POTENTIAL BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS	
PLAC	EMENT	
Child interaction/bonding with caregiver. Does it appear that the child is thriving in this placement and does it appear to meet all the child's needs? Implemen of a safety plan? Are conditions being met? How long has child been in current placement? How is the child adjusting to his/her current placement? Has the had multiple placements and if so, is there a common reason for the breakdown of these placements? What services would help remedy the reason for place breakdown? Have siblings been placed together? If not, why?		
FACTS & OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS	
POTENTIAL BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS	



#### SERVICES FOR THE CHILD

Has the child progressed since the first observation? If not, what services would he child's behavior with caregiver? Progress in school, report card performance? Any	
PROGRESS	RECOMMENDATIONS
POTENTIAL BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS
SERVICES FOI	R THE PARENTS
Have the parents/caregivers progressed in the services that have been ordered by ordered for the parents/caregivers? Have there been any changes to warrant more an institutional/residential setting), does the facility have services required in famile	e services? Any evaluations needed? If the parent is incarcerated/detained (or in
PROGRESS	RECOMMENDATIONS
POTENTIAL BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS
	SOLUTIONS



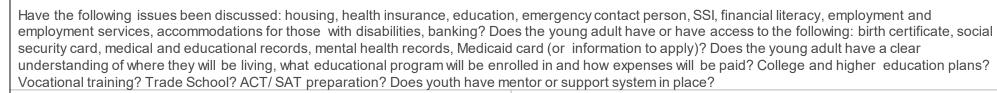
#### VISITATION

What is the current visitation schedule with parents? Do visits need to occur separately? With siblings? Grandparents? How are those visits progressing? Any concerning behavior? Any changes that would warrant more or less visitation? Has something happened that would require supervised visits with parents? Are there visits with mentors? If a parent is incarcerated/detained (or in an institutional/residential setting) is there a visitation schedule? Regular phone calls (payment)? Is skype an option?

Visitation Schedule (Supervised/Unsupervised) with Parents/Siblings/Others:

RECOMMENDATIONS
SOLUTIONS
NORMALCY
currently unable to do? Extra-curricular activities? Other planned activities? Cultural ies? Are there summer activities available? Driver's education? Driver's license?
RECOMMENDATIONS
SOLUTIONS

#### TRANSITION PLANNING & INDEPENDENT LIVING



FACTS & OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS					
POTENTIAL BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS					
YOUTH SELF-IDENTITY						
Best interest advocacy includes respecting, supporting, and nurturing the healthy development of every child's self- identity, including the child's racial, ethnic, anguage, religious, cultural, sexual orientation and gender identity. It is essential to ensure children have ample and quality opportunities for exploring and defining these important aspects of who they are. Have the following issues been considered – is the placement or circumstance supportive of child's self- identity? If not, should an alternative placement be recommended? Are there trainings or interventions to educate the persons involved including the child,						

the parents, the placement, foster parents?

FACTS & OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
POTENTIAL BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS



	10	HER			
For example, immigration issues and pro support required; removal of disability of	ogress (necessary documentation); gu non-age (if applicable) for banking, le	ardianships for youth ases etc.; credit prot	n with disabilities; clothing allowance or other financial tection for children in foster care		
FACTS & OBSERVATIONS		RECOMMENDATIONS			
POTENTIAL BARRIERS		SOLUTIONS			
	CON	TACTS			
Role	Name		Phone/Email		
Child's Caseworker					
Child's Attorney					
Child's Custodian (Placement)					
School or Daycare					
CASA/GAL Volunteer Supervisor					
Service Provider - Therapist					
Service Provider -					

#### 



COURT ORDERS									
Date	Service Ordered	Service Provider	Provider Contact	Date Referral Made	Expected Completion Date	Completed			
						Yes	No Date		
						Yes	No Date		
						Yes	No Date		
						Yes	No Date		
						Yes	No Date		
						Yes	No Date		
						Yes	No Date		
		C	ONTACTS MADE SIN	ICE LAST HEA	RING				
Date	Service Provider	Provider Contact	Notes:						

The CASA/GAL Volunteer Preparation Worksheet is not a required document and is only intended to support CASA/GAL volunteers in developing recommendations regarding the children they serve. **Be sure to adhere to the CASA/GAL Volunteer Report format used by your court.** 

# Court Report Common Components



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#### Standard 8

The program supervisor does not alter the volunteer's reports or recommendations without the knowledge and documented agreement of the CASA/GAL volunteer.

The program has a written policy to resolve conflicts between a volunteer and the program supervisor regarding the handling of a case, reporting of information, or the recommendations to be included in a report to the court.



### CASA/GAL Volunteer Court Reports

May include:

- CASA/GAL Volunteer Name / Date Submitted / Docket Number
- Children and Date of Birth
- Short Case Summary
- Summary of Contacts Made by the CASA/GAL Volunteer
- Records Reviewed (date, title and source)





# CASA/GAL Volunteer Court Reports

#### May include:

- Case Summary Since Last Hearing or Review
- Areas of Concern/Assessment (organized by child) include permanency goal
- Recommendations to the Court (simple numbered list)
- CASA/GAL Volunteer Name and Signature
- CASA/GAL Program Contact Information

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# CASA/GAL Volunteer Court Reports

Ensure recommendations:

- Are clear and concise
- Are detailed and specific
- Are something the court can order
- Include the needs of the child
- Report court orders that have not been completed
- Include possible solutions when barriers are identified
- Include sources of information





### Upcoming Webinars

Local Program Standards Series:

- July 7, 2021
  - How to Create a MOU
- July 21, 2021
  - How to Develop and Implement a Conflict of Interest Policy
- Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Series:
- June 29, 2021
  - Drug Identification and Trends
- July 27, 2021
  - Intersection of DEC and Human Trafficking
- August 31, 2021
  - Intersection of Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence

#### ICWA series:

- July 1, 2021
  - Culture, Identity and Connection for Indigenous Families in non-Indigenous Systems
- August 3, 2021
  - Understanding the Indian Child Welfare Act: Family, Community and Culture
- August 26, 2021
  - Children and Families of Tribal Nations Effective Engagement with Tribes to Secure Best Outcomes

Visit the Member Portal <u>Events</u> <u>Calendar</u> latest schedule <u>Webinars</u> past session materials and

recordings

# Thank You

8



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