

It Really Is More than “Just Your Monthly Visit”!

Advocate Refresher

Visiting with your CASA child at least once per month is a National CASA Standard and Child Advocacy Services CASA maintains compliance with that standard. Most of the time our advocates have no difficulty complying with that standard as it applies to their specific case. Sometimes our advocates struggle a little with this and wonder why we have to visit every single month. Advocate Supervisors hear statements such as “Everything was fine when I saw them last month and I’ve got a lot going on this month, I really need to skip my visit this month” quite frequently. We have even been asked why advocates need to visit “every single month”. The answer to both of those questions directly relates to our role as CASA Volunteers in working to have every child we serve have a safe and permanent home as quickly as possible. We have to remember that if DCFS, CASA, and the court are involved in a family’s life, there was an issue and our kids don’t have permanency until the court deems it is in their best interest to close the case. Additionally, our “visits” are really more than “just a visit”. Below are some things to remember when you are struggling to find the time and/or motivation to spend time with your CASA child:

- The only way to truly know that our children are in a safe environment is to see them in that home and spend enough quality time with the child to know if something is off or has become unsafe. Just as our own family dynamics change, the dynamics of foster parents or relative caregivers can change. New babies, aging parents, changes in employment, or a death in the family can quickly throw a stable placement completely off. The only way to know if any of thing is different is to spend time with the family.
- Your CASA child is counting on you! Our CASA kids tell their DCFS Workers, teachers, judges, etc. how much they like spending time with you guys. You guys make them feel special and are often the only constant person during their foster care journey. Case workers, attorneys, teachers, and counselors change frequently and often times children move multiple times. When you feel like it is “just a visit” remember that your CASA child is looking forward to seeing you.
- The court is counting on you. DCFS workers are dealing with multiple cases; often having more cases assigned to them than they can effectively manage. CASA Volunteers provide the judges with valuable information about the placement, parents’ progress, how the children are doing in school, and what services the children may need. You can’t provide the information if you don’t spend time with everyone in the case. The child is always the most important person in the case so you’ll definitely want to invest in some quality time getting to know them.
- Children change constantly; babies meet milestones and older kids learn how to do things like ride a bike or skate. They are often doing those things without their parents’ involvement. While we hope that their foster parents are noticing those things and encouraging our children to grow and develop, but that is not always the case. Be their encourager and let them know that their accomplishments matter!

We realize that there are some months that you just simply can’t visit. Please make sure that you communicate those issues during supervision so that we can make an alternate plan. We don’t ever want to “just not go” for a month. There are times when phone contact is an appropriate alternate plan but there are times that we need to have a supervisor visit. Please be open and honest with your supervisor when challenges arise. Remember, it truly isn’t “just a visit”.