Monitoring Your CASA Case – What Does That Really Mean

We all remember that the four roles of a CASA Volunteer are Information Gathering, Facilitation, Advocacy, and Monitoring. While Monitoring is one of the last roles listed, it is one of the most important. We often consider our monthly visits as fulfilling that aspect of our job description. While monthly visits are required and needed, please remember that in order to provide quality advocacy we have to monitor aspects other than how the child is doing in their current placement. Below are some tips to remember to help you effectively monitor your case:

- Visit your child frequently and in different settings. National and Local CASA Standards mandate that you visit at least once a month, but to really know how your child is doing it is sometimes necessary to visit more than once. You should see your child frequently in their foster home, but you should also make efforts to see how they are doing in the school setting, on parent visits, etc.
- If the case plan goal is Reunification, monitor the parents' progress on their case plans by checking with DCFS and service providers. Remember to verify any information before stating it as fact in your court report.
- You will need to meet with the parents if the case plan goal is Reunification. A great time to do this is if they are visiting with their child. While we wouldn't want to interfere with their time visiting with the child, you can schedule the meeting before or after the visit.
- It is very important to observe the parents interacting with their children. We can't make recommendations for permanency unless we believe that there is positive interaction between the parents and that the parent is able to provide appropriate care and supervision to their child.
- Evaluate the placement frequently to determine if it is a permanent option for the child if the parents are unable to work their case plan for Reunification. Find out if the home is certified through DCFS' Home Development Unit and if the caretakers are willing to adopt. If the home is not certified, find out what the barriers are to certification.
- If your CASA child is in counseling or any type of mental health treatment, speak to those providers. While they may not give you detailed information regarding treatment, you can ask about the child's progress, diagnosis, and prognosis. Ask the mental health professionals if they have any concerns regarding reunification or with the child's current placement.
- Know how your CASA child is doing in school. It is important to determine if school performance has accelerated or decreased since the child entered care. We also need to monitor and assess if our kids need any special services and accommodations. If your CASA child has an IEP, it is within the scope of your role as a CASA to monitor the school's compliance in following that plan.

- Make sure you have read the case plan and know what services are a part of the case plan. Monitor the child and parent's compliance with the DCFS Case Plan.
- Know what previous orders were issued by the Court and monitor compliance.
- Have frequent interaction with your CASA Supervisor regarding the information you have learned in monitoring the case.
- Remember to enter **ALL** of your contacts into Optima, along with the facts that you learned during the month, the day of or soon after the contact. This will give your Advocate Supervisor timely information to provide feedback on what other areas of advocacy might be needed.

Please make sure that you have covered all of these aspects and any other case/child specific monitoring roles that your supervisor has discussed with you each month. The kids we are assigned to are counting on us to be their voice. The judge making decisions about the children is counting on us to do a thorough job in monitoring so we can make recommendations in our court reports that reflect the best interest of the child.

Your Advocate Supervisor is always available for guidance on how to best accomplish case specific monitoring responsibilities.