

## **Advocate Refresher**

### **Maintaining Meaningful Connections for CASA Children**

The COVID-19 Pandemic made us realize how important family and community connections are. Society realized how we took for granted attending church, going to the gym, having dinner with friends, having in-person visits with our families, etc. Here we are two years in and still dealing with the after effects of the pandemic. Sibling and parent visits continue to be disrupted due to the Covid Virus. CASA Volunteers have also had to reschedule visits due to quarantining. Family and community connections build resiliency. One of the roles of CASA Volunteers is to assure that their CASA children have meaningful connections.

Below are a few things that CASA Volunteers can do to make sure that this happens:

- Maintain a connection with your CASA child. Speak to them as often as possible by phone or video chat and visit regularly.
- Ask your CASA child what people and activities are important to them. The child may feel more comfortable discussing this with you privately.
- Don't rely on the foster parent or caretaker to find out who the child is missing. Foster parents and caretakers sometimes misinterpret a child not asking to see siblings or parents as an indicator that the child does not miss their family. There are many reasons for a child not to ask a caretaker about visiting with biological family members.
- Understand that infants and young children may have some adjustments when seeing a parent that they have not seen regularly. Crying or appearing upset is not necessarily an indicator that the child does not have an attachment to a biological relative.
- Facilitate collaboration between biological parents and foster parents to help the children feel comfortable when visiting.
- Remember that maintaining those connections are based on the child's needs. Foster parents or caretakers being inconvenienced or fearful that contact with the parents, siblings, or other relatives may cause disruption for the children should not prevent children from seeing their biological family members.
- Collaborate with your supervisor and DCFS to review the visitation plan for children and their biological family.
- Communicate any safety concerns regarding family visits to your supervisor and DCFS.
- Be available to talk to your CASA child about their feelings before or after family visits.
- Provide resources on safe practices to foster parents, children, and parents.

Thank you all for being consistent in creating meaningful connections for your CASA child!