

## **Well-being Assessments for CASA Kids**

CASA Volunteers and CASA Supervisors are charged with the duty of advocating for the well-being of the children that we serve. We have all heard this multiple times; volunteers hear this from our recruiters during the pre-screening interview, from the trainer during pre-service training, from the advocate supervisor during supervision, and from the court. Do you ever wonder what exactly “well-being” means? Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines well-being as the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous (Merriam-Webster 2020). The antonym of well-being is ill-being; which is defined as a condition of being deficient in health, happiness, or prosperity. Our goal is to make sure that our CASA children have every resource needed to be happy, healthy, and prosperous and not be in a state of ill-being.

Both terms can be ambiguous; However, as advocates we are called upon to gather information needed to make best interest recommendations for children in foster care. CASA Supervisors are often asked where does one start in this process. We are happy to announce that CASA Programs across the state will be utilizing an objective assessment tool to guide us in identifying strengths and deficits, and utilizing the information to make recommendations that support our children!

Many of you have already completed the initial assessment with your supervisor or have an appointment to do so in the next two weeks. CASA Supervisors will conduct in-services over the next few months to guide you on how to gather the information for the follow up assessment and on how to utilize the information. We are excited about these assessments driving our advocacy!

Overall, the purpose of this tool is for CASA advocates, staff, individual programs, and the statewide network to understand, impact, and improve the outcomes for the children that we serve (Well-Being Guide 2020). The Well-Being Guide reminds us that:

- Assessments allow CASA to better understand how children’s developmental, educational, and mental health assessments are being addressed.
- Assessments allow us to understand how CASA impacts and improves the outcomes for the children and families we serve.
- Assessment responses and trends can direct the conversations between supervisors and volunteers to gain a better understanding of the course of advocacy, the relationships being built, and the impact that CASA Volunteers have on the outcomes of children.

Below are some of the questions you will be answering with your supervisor:

- Have the parents’ and child’s needs and strengths been assessed?
- Did the parents have the opportunity to participate in reunification planning?
- Are the child’s educational records current and in the case record, including the IEP and/or IAP and/or the Jump Start/TOPs?
- Has the assessment of Family Functioning been completed by DCFS?

- Is the child placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting, appropriate to his/her needs?
- Does the child have the opportunity for quality monthly visits with his/her siblings?
- Does the child have the opportunity for quality monthly visits with his/her parents?
- Does the current placement have the information needed to help preserve connections?

You will already know many of the answers but some will be unknown. You and your supervisor will develop an action plan to gather answers for unknown answers. The assessment tool will compute our answers and give us a percentage of how the child is doing on the well-being scale.

A follow up assessment will be completed at least every 6 months. These answers will give us an objective measure of how children are doing and specific areas where increased advocacy is needed. This data will help our program identify trends in strengths and deficits as it relates to services for the children and families in our areas.

We are looking forward to working with all of you regarding these assessments!

#### References:

Merriam-Webster Dictionary Website, 2020. Retrieved from: Retrieved from: merriam-webster.com

Well-Being Guide – Louisiana State Childhood Outcome Scale, June 2020 Publication