

## Advocate Refresher: Important CASA Reminders

September 2022

How long has it been since you completed CASA Pre-Service Training? Most of our advocates have been volunteers for two years or longer. In fact, we have many volunteers who have spent ten years or more advocating for children! While we review the CASA roles and responsibilities and the CASA Policy and Procedure Manual during our meetings with you and in continuing education trainings, there is a lot to remember. This refresher covers some of the most important things for you to remember:

- **Monthly Visits:** National CASA Standards require that advocates have at least one in-person visit with their assigned child per month. If the visit cannot occur due to distance, illness, pandemic protocols, etc., please make sure that you and your supervisor have developed an alternate plan to monitor the child. Your work regarding this should be documented in Optima.
- **Optima Contact Logs:** Contact Logs should be completed within 48 hours of the activity. This practice will assure that you do not forget any details and keep your supervisor in the loop of what is going on. **All visits and contact log entries should be done no later than the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month so your supervisor can complete the month end reports and help you develop follow up advocacy plans.**
- **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality applies to every aspect of your work. Please store court orders in a secure and confidential location as well as protecting your Optima log-in and password information. Remember to never discuss any case details with your family or friends. When in doubt, check with your supervisor. Our court orders are not reciprocal; we can only gather information, not share information. **Confidentiality goes beyond simply being a good practice; confidentiality for cases involving children is mandated by law.**
- **Communication:** Please make sure that you keep your supervisor in the loop on any and all information that you know. A quick phone call, text, or email is fine, and will allow your supervisor to assist you in advocacy for children. Please also copy your supervisor on any email or written correspondence that you send or receive as this may expedite responses.
- **Court Room Attire:** Please adhere to professional dress; no shorts (even trouser shorts or capris), no jeans, no t-shirts, no leggings, no revealing clothing, no flip flops, no tennis shoes, etc. are permitted in Court. Professional business attire is always best, but if that is not in your normal wardrobe, khakis or black pants with a button down shirt is always appropriate. This applies to virtual court appearances as well.
- **Court Reports:** Court reports should be submitted to the judge at least 10 days prior to a court date. This means that your first draft should be submitted to your supervisor at least 15 days before the court report is due to the Court.
- **Transporting CASA Clients:** Please remember that under no circumstances are we to transport a child, foster parent, or any member of their family.
- **In-Service Hours:** It is a National CASA Standard that all active volunteers complete a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education. Training hours should be entered in Optima.

- **Court Room Etiquette: At no time should you use a cell phone in Court.** This includes texting, emailing, and posting on social media. In fact, many of our judicial districts have implemented policies that prohibit cell phones being brought into courthouses. Please check with your advocate supervisor regarding any rules in your area. **Talking during court proceedings should not happen and you should only exit and enter the courtroom between cases. Please refrain from making comments about the testimony given from other parties and using negative body language such as eye rolling, crossing arms, or movements. We want to make sure that we convey objectivity and do not create any controversy.**

We cannot thank you enough for being a CASA Volunteer. There is a lot to remember; please do not hesitate to ask your supervisor questions or refer to your CASA Policy and Procedure Manual. If you cannot find your copy, your supervisor will be happy to provide you with another manual.