

Summer Time Advocacy

Another school year has come and gone! There are several things that our CASA Volunteers need to remember to do as our children transition into summer. Summer visits are often challenging to schedule. Summer visits are super important! School aged children are out for the summer and foster parents sometimes have dilemmas regarding childcare. We should always know who is caring for our kids! Please schedule your visits early to avoid not being able to assess your CASA child's well-being.

CASA children who are school aged will need some extra special attention over the summer to assure that the previous school year is completed successfully and that they are off to a good start for the upcoming academic year. Below is a timeline with some suggested actions steps:

June

Week One:

- Contact your child's school or caretaker and find out what grade the child will be in next year. A copy of their final report card and attendance would be awesome. Make sure to chat with your supervisor about any special situations such as a need for summer tutoring or summer school. Enter all of the information that you gathered into Optima.
- Schedule a visit with your child by contacting the caretaker. Summer visits are often difficult to schedule due to vacations and summer camps.
- Contact the DCFS Foster Care Worker or the child's caretaker about any summer camps or special activities that may be planned. Document the information gathered into Optima and remember to chat with your CASA child about the visit.

Week Two:

- Visit with your CASA child. Talk to them about any planned summer activities.
- If your CASA child has no activities planned; talk to the caretaker about community camps or see if we can facilitate some summer programs if your CASA child complains of being bored.
- Enter all information into Optima and schedule a supervision meeting with your Advocate Supervisor.

Weeks Three and Four:

- Complete any activities from above that your schedule or your CASA family's schedule did not allow for in Week One or Week Two.

July

Week One:

- Schedule your visit for the month; remember that we have the holiday and that July is a favorite month for many people for summertime travel.
- Ask your child's caretaker what their plan is for purchasing school supplies and uniforms. Speak to your advocate supervisor about local resources for obtaining these items if there are any challenges expressed by the caretaker.

Week Two:

- Visit with your CASA child. This is a great time to start talking to them about the upcoming school year. If they express any anxiety about the school year, obtain resources for them. Books about the first day of school are very helpful. If your CASA child is seeing a therapist, you can speak to them about any anxieties that your CASA child is expressing. A little anxiety about starting a school year is expected but CASA children may have a heightened anxiety. We want to facilitate a smooth start.
- Follow up with the caretakers about supplies and uniforms. School supply lists can often be obtained from local stores. You can also get the information from your child's school. It might be very helpful for you to bring that list to the foster parent. Speak to DCFS and/or your CASA Supervisor about any concerns regarding your CASA child not having what he or she needs to start the school year.
- Log all information gathered into Optima

Weeks Three and Four:

- Schedule a meeting to discuss your case with your Advocate Supervisor.
- Complete any activities from Week One and Week Two that you have not yet completed.

August**Week One:**

- Try to visit your CASA child during the first week of August. Double check with the caretakers to make sure everything is in place for your CASA child to start school. Remember to make entries in Optima.

Week Two:

- This is usually the first week of school. Check in with the caretaker during this week to see how things are going and if there is anything CASA can assist with.

Weeks Three and Four:

- Find out who your CASA child's teachers are and enter the information into Optima.
- Contact your CASA child's school principal or guidance counselor to introduce yourself, send them your court order, and find out what the school's protocols are regarding CASA Volunteers visiting at school and obtaining school reports.
- Visit with your CASA child if you have not done so.
- Make sure that all of the information you gathered is entered into Optima.