



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

Volunteer Handbook

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT CASA OF THE SOUTH PLAINS	4
CASA Mission Statement	4
CASA Offices	4
CASA OF THE SOUTH PLAINS, INC.	5
2009 Organizational Chart.....	5
VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION / STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT.....	6
Purpose of the Position	6
Responsibilities of the Position	6
Requirements of the Position	7
Qualifications of the Position.....	7
CASA of the South Plains, Inc. commits to:.....	7
CASA POLICIES.....	8
CASA Volunteer Safety Guidelines.....	8
CASA Volunteer Transportation Guidelines	8
CASA Volunteer In-Service Guidelines.....	8
CASA Volunteer Dress Code.....	9
CASA Volunteer Confidentiality	9
CASA Cultural Diversity Statement.....	9
CASA Volunteer Grievance Policies	9
CASA Conflict of Interest Policy.....	9
CASA Corrective Action & Dismissal Policy.....	10
FOSTER CARE LEGAL PROCESS.....	10
The Process (TFC § 261, 262, 263) (2005).....	10
Time Frame (263.401)	11
TMC vs. PMC vs. PC	11
Service of Parents.....	11
Paternity (160.001 et seq.).....	11
The Court of Continuing Jurisdiction.....	12
Child Protective Services Overview	12
Overview of 12-Month Court Process for Child Abuse and Neglect Cases ¹	13
Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).....	13
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)	14
Monitored Placement	14
Mediation.....	14
Americans with Disability Act - ADA	14
Permanency Goals.....	14
Case Participants	15
CASE MANAGEMENT.....	15
“Best Interest of the Child”	15
Case Advocacy	15
Note-Taking.....	16
Observing Family Visits.....	16
Attending Permanency Planning Meetings	17
Monthly Reporting	17
Preparing Court Reports	18
Attending Foster Court Hearings	19
Monitoring your Case.....	19
APPENDIX	2

About CASA of the South Plains

In 1993, a Lubbock County Judge first appointed a CASA Volunteer to serve as an abused child's advocate. By December of 2000, CASA of Lubbock began expansion efforts into the newly created "South Plains Cluster Court", thus calling for the name change, CASA of the South Plains, Inc. With the assistance of Senator Robert Duncan, The Honorable Kelly Moore, and Texas CASA, we were able to secure funding through the Governor's Office to expand into the new court. Gradually our expansion has grown to our current standings of recruiting volunteers in Lubbock, Hale, Terry, Yoakum, Hockley, and Cochran Counties.

Since 1995, our program has grown from two employee's to 12 full-time and 1 part-time staff members. Additionally, over 2600 children have been assisted by over 500 advocates. We are governed by a board of directors who reflect the diverse population of the South Plains, and represent the six counties in the area.

CASA Mission Statement

The **mission** of CASA is to provide volunteers to serve as independent voices in court for abused and neglected children in the South Plains area. CASA volunteers are trained and court appointed to investigate, monitor, report, and serve as advocates for the best interests of children in the court system primarily as a result of abuse and neglect. The CASA volunteer is there to help secure a permanent placement for the child in a safe and caring environment.

CASA Office Hours

Mon-Thur: 8:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M., Fri. 8:00 A.M. – 12 Noon

CASA of the South Plains

Lubbock Office
#24 Briercroft Office Park
Lubbock, TX 79401
Phone (806) 763-2272
www.lubbockcasa.org

Hale County

CASA Office
705 W. 6th, Ste. 2W
Plainview, TX 79072-6215
Phone (806) 293-1970
Fax: Call phone first

Cochran, Hockley, Terry & Yoakum Counties

CASA Office
802 Houston, Ste. 107
Levelland, TX 79336
Phone (806) 894-4772
Fax: Call phone first

Board of Directors

Tara Lennon – President
Todd Reno – Vice President
Brandon Mullins – Secretary
Bob Swyers – Treasurer
Chris Boutwell – Past President

Members

George Allen	Julie Lawson	Matt Stephens
Noel Garcia	Shelly Lyon	Tommy Turner
Greg Gilmore	Wanda Merritt	Greg Varoff
Susan Horkey	Greg Parrott	Carmen Vige
Nancy Isom	Tatum Shilling	Truitt Whitehead
Jeff Klotzman	Debbie Staudt	Ray Wilkerson

**CASA OF THE SOUTH PLAINS
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
2009**

AMY PAIVA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
amyp@lubbockcasa.org
Direct number: (806) 763-1310
Cell: (806) 787-0541

PEGGY ESPINOZA-HORN
Recruitment & Training Dir.
peggye@lubbockcasa.org
(806) 763-2272

ROSE CARKEET
Development Director
rosec@lubbockcasa.org
Cell: (806) 773-6068

MARCIA HOGLE
Program Director
marciah@lubbockcasa.org
Direct Line: (806) 763-7531

MELINDA BUTLER
Office Manager
melindab@lubbockcasa.org
(806) 763-2272

DONNA RILEY
CASA Supervisor
donnar@lubbockcasa.org
(806) 763-2272

BRIDGET LEMONS
CASA Supervisor
bridgetl@lubbockcasa.org
(806) 763-2272

AMANDA MCCURRY
CASA Supervisor
amandam@lubbockcasa.org
(806) 763-2272

MELISSA HURST
CASA Supervisor
melissah@lubbockcasa.org
(806) 763-2272

LAUREN SHERLEY
CASA Supervisor
laurens@lubbockcasa.org
(806) 763-2272

LATOSHA WALL
CASA Supervisor
Hale County
latosha@lubbockcasa.org
(806) 293-1970
Cell: (806) 773-3167

BETH PARSLEY
CASA Supervisor
Hockley, Terry, Yoakum,
Cochran Counties
bethp@lubbockcasa.org
(806) 894-4772
Cell: (806) 470-8664



VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION / STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Purpose of the Position

- To offer fact-based recommendations to the court in the best interest of a child(ren) in Child Protective Services' placement.
- To work for and achieve the goal of CASA – every child has the right to a safe and permanent home as soon as possible.

Responsibilities of the Position

- Serve at least one child/sibling group, from the time of the case assignment through the implementation of a permanent plan for the child/children, or a minimum period of 18 months.
- The CASA volunteer must provide time necessary to make an informed placement decision for the child/children. Time will include interviewing all parties who have knowledge of the welfare of the child/children (e.g., parents, foster parents, teachers, professionals, caseworkers and anyone else with relevant information), making home and/or family visits, telephoning, writing reports, attending court, participating in on-going training, and communicating with his/her CASA Supervisor.
- Visit the child(ren) preferably twice a month (consistency is essential). These regular monthly visits with the child/children may be made during family visits at the offices of CPS. At least once every other month visits should be made in the foster home or other out of home placement. The placement should be contacted at least once a month.
- If the child is placed out of county of continuing jurisdiction and is within two hours of the county of continuing jurisdiction, quarterly visits should be made. Responsibilities for children that have been moved out of area also include at least monthly phone calls to the children, caregivers, school, therapist, and anyone else providing services to the children.
- In the event children are returned home to their parents or placed with a relative, the CASA volunteer will visit at least twice a month in the home including unannounced visits until it can be determined that the children's physical, emotional, medical, educational, and psychological needs are being met appropriately by their caregivers.
- Maintain legible, current records of all findings, including logs of time spent on the case.
- Confer with your Supervisor on a regular basis at a minimum of once a month and prior to any final recommendations or decisions. Any matters relating to the child/children's safety should be reported immediately to the CASA staff and CPS.
- Attend all CPS staffings regarding the child. When unable to attend, volunteer should confer with his/her Supervisor prior to staffing regarding any issues or recommendations. Notice should be given to the CASA staff as soon as possible prior to the staffing.
- Submit information for court reports including contacts, summaries, and recommendations to the Supervisor one month prior to the hearing date. The CASA volunteer will be provided with the format to do so. The court report will be finalized for your signature and submitted to the court and other parties' five days prior to the hearing. Any new developments or significant changes should be communicated to the CASA staff prior to the hearing.
- Appear in court to represent the child's best interest. If the volunteer is unable to attend, the volunteer is to notify his/her Supervisor as soon as possible along with any issues or recommendations. Notice should be given to the Supervisor as soon as possible prior to the hearing.
- Monitor the case to ensure that the CPS service plan and court orders are being followed. CPS caseworker should be contacted at least once a month.
- Expedite permanency for the child whether that permanency is for reunification with the family, adoption by a new family, permanent managing conservatorship by CPS or relative placement.
- Work to reduce the trauma of victimization of the child/children and other family members suffering primary or secondary effects of any crime committed against them.
- Assist any eligible victim of crime with applying for Crime Victim's Compensation and follow-up to ensure that the victim is afforded all rights of crime victims in the state of Texas.
- Notify Supervisor immediately if the volunteer cannot perform any of the above commitments or cannot continue working on the child/children's case.
- A CASA volunteer shall not be related to any parties or litigants involved in the case, or be employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest.
- CASA volunteers shall not be assigned to more than two or three cases simultaneously unless approved by the Program Director. Exceptions may be granted as long as it doesn't jeopardize the quality of the casework.
- A CASA program shall not use volunteers or retain volunteers who have abused or not fulfilled their position of trust, or otherwise created a negative image for CASA.
- The CASA program requires volunteers to turn in their case records, including all notes, when the case is closed and/or if the volunteer is unable to continue with their case assignment. An exit interview will also be conducted.

Requirements of the Position:

- Must be at least 21 years of age.
- A CASA volunteer must provide current valid automobile liability insurance and current valid driver's license to the CASA office.
- If working, secure permission in advance of basic training for time off from work to attend periodic trainings.
- Complete application, releases of information for criminal and CPS background checks and references for position.
- Make appointment and come to office for pre-service interview prior to attendance of initial training.
- Complete initial training course.
- Appear before judge to be sworn in as a Court Appointed Special Advocate.
- Participate in yearly review.
- Subsequent to the one-year anniversary, attend a minimum of 12 hours of ongoing in-service training annually.
- Sign Job Description/Statement of Commitment to serve a minimum of one year.
- Sign Oath of Confidentiality.
- Sign Safety Guidelines.
- Sign CASA Volunteer Agreement.
- Dress in appropriate, professional manner when representing CASA.

Qualifications of the Position

- Willing to work within the guidelines, policies and standards of CASA;
- Good human relation skills and the ability to be objective;
- Must have conviction of the importance of providing for best interests of children at risk;
- Must have time, interest, and energy to do the job;
- Must have access to transportation;
- Must have ability to stand up for convictions;
- Must have the willingness to receive guidance and direction, and work as part of a team;
- Must be sensitive to cultural/ethnic differences.

CASA Volunteer Agreement

- A CASA Volunteer will report any incident of child abuse or neglect, or any situation in which the CASA volunteer has any reason to believe that a child is in imminent danger to the CASA supervisor and appropriate authorities, following state legal requirements as mandated in the Texas Family Code.
- A CASA Volunteer will not take a child to the volunteer's home or any home other than the child's.
- A CASA Volunteer will not make placement arrangements for the child.
- A CASA Volunteer will not take a child on an overnight outing.
- A CASA Volunteer will not engage in activities which are likely to result in conflict of interest or expose the program or volunteer to criminal or civil liability.
- A CASA Volunteer does not give legal advice or therapeutic counseling.
- A CASA Volunteer does not give money or expensive gifts to the child, child's family or caregiver.
- Uphold CASA of the South Plains, Inc.'s transportation policy: It is the policy of CASA of the South Plains, Inc. the Volunteer must first have approval from the CASA case supervisor and a Transportation Release form must be signed by the volunteer, the CASA Program Director and the CPS Supervisor. The CASA Volunteer may not invite and/or receive clients into his/her home.
- A CASA Volunteer must maintain the volunteer's current automobile liability insurance and current driver's license with the CASA office.
- No guns or weapons of any kind will be carried or transported by CASA Volunteers while involved in any CASA of the South Plains, Inc. related activity. This prohibition includes those weapons carried under license issued by the State of Texas. Violations of this policy may result in removal from volunteer service. The exception to this would be for law enforcement agents, as they are required to carry guns.
- A CASA Volunteer does not become inappropriately involved in a case by providing direct service delivery to any parties that could (a) lead to conflict of interest or liability problems or (b) engage in activities which are likely to result in conflict of interest or expose the program or volunteer to criminal or civil liability or (c) cause a child or family to become dependent on the CASA Volunteer for services that shall be provided by other agencies or organizations. Such activities may jeopardize the safety of the child, the integrity of the program or the objectivity of the volunteer.
- A CASA Volunteer shall keep all information that would identify parties involved in CASA cases confidential.
- A CASA Volunteer will not contact the judge directly but will first bring any concerns or problems to the attention of the CASA staff.
- A CASA Volunteer must inform the CASA staff of any existence of child abuse/neglect allegations against the volunteer.

CASA of the South Plains, Inc. Commits to:

- Provide on-going training, supervision, and help in evaluating volunteer's work.
- Provide the professional consultation and necessary support in order to promote appropriate intervention into the child/children's situation and to facilitate appropriate recommendations about his/her placement.

CASA POLICIES

CASA Volunteer Safety Guidelines

The following suggestions need to be considered when working your case:

- Do your pre-investigative work (CPS will do the criminal and child abuse registry checks on all parents and any individual being considered as a placement option for children). If any individual is suspected or known to be potentially violent, seek advice from your CASA Supervisor and/or the CPS caseworker.
- Make sure addresses you have are current before attempting to make a visit.
- Check beforehand with someone who is familiar with the neighborhood. Some neighborhoods are okay at certain times of the day but off-limits at other times.
- Let someone else know where you are going and when you expect to return. Carry your identification with you.
- Use the “buddy system.” Get another CASA volunteer to accompany you if you are concerned about your safety.
- Do not do anything to make you conspicuous such as wearing expensive clothing and showy jewelry.
- Place your purse or valuables in a safe place and out of sight prior to stopping for the visit.
- Have the person you plan to talk with meet you at a neutral location (attorney’s office, park, or restaurant). If the plan is for family reunification, a home visit is a must. However, the first visits can be conducted outside the home. This will give you an opportunity to assess the situation and make plans for a home visit later.
- Decrease vulnerability by staying alert. If you feel uncomfortable with a situation after entering a home, sit close to an outside door and make the visit as short as possible.
- Conduct your interview by phone.

Trust your instincts. Don’t do something that “doesn’t feel safe.” If a neighborhood or situation causes you concern, keep driving and make alternative plans.

CASA Volunteer Transportation Guidelines

Volunteers who transport children must meet the following criteria:

- The CASA volunteer must be an active volunteer with CASA of the South Plains for a minimum of 90 days. Additionally, the child/children the volunteer is requesting permission to transport must also have been assigned to the CASA program for a minimum of 90 days.
- The volunteer will be required to carry the minimum legal liability auto insurance coverage. (The volunteer must provide updated auto insurance & and driver’s license to the CASA office).
- The child the volunteer is requesting to transport cannot be under two years of age unless exception has been granted by the board of directors for CASA of the South Plains. If the child is part of a sibling group, CASA of the South Plains Inc, will consider each child separately. Volunteers may only transport children within a 150 mile radius of Lubbock and only within the state of Texas without special permission from CASA of the South Plains’ Program Director or Executive Director.
- Prior to initially transporting the child:
- A Transportation Release form must be signed by the volunteer, the CASA Program Director and the CPS Supervisor. (A release must be signed for EACH child the volunteer would like to transport and is in effect until the case is closed by CASA of the South Plains or the release is rescinded by the CASA program, CASA volunteer or CPS.)
- A driving record report must be completed on the volunteer and the motor vehicle acceptability criteria met. The MVR acceptability criteria are outlined in the Transportation Agreement.
- The CASA volunteer will be required to agree to and sign a Transportation Agreement.

All three of the below items must be signed and on file for volunteers transporting.

1. Transportation policy (revised 6/09)
2. Transportation release (revised 6/09)
3. Transportation Agreement (new 6/09)

It is up to the discretion of CASA of the South Plains, Inc. whether a volunteer can transport or not. If the volunteer’s transportation request is denied, the volunteer may appeal the decision using the volunteer grievance procedure.

CASA Volunteer In-Service Guidelines

Volunteers are expected to obtain a minimum of 12 hours of ongoing training annually. The 12 hours can be acquired from a variety of sources: CASA-sponsored in-services, books, DVDs, workshops, seminars. A list of training resources is available on the CASA website at: www.lubbockcasa.org. Select the "Training" link, then click on "Volunteer In-Service Training." All training hours are to be documented on a separate Time Log (see Appendix A-16) and submitted by the 10th of the following month.

CASA Volunteer Dress Code

Dress in an appropriate, professional manner at all court hearings, Permanency Placement Team meetings, and any other event in which you are representing CASA.

CASA Volunteer Confidentiality

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you must regard as confidential any information that the source deems confidential. If any source from which you obtain information requires you to show the court order of appointment or inquires about why you are entitled to get such information, you should respectfully produce your court order and photo identification. Your appointment order gives you the authority to obtain a great deal of information that are, in fact, confidential. Child Protective Services records are confidential and are not available for public inspection. It is especially important that the name of any person who has made a report of suspected child abuse and neglect not be revealed. School records are also confidential. There are legal privileges that protect attorney/client, doctor/patient, priest/parishioner, psychologist/patient, and caseworker/client communications. Such communication, whether verbal or written, is all confidential and must remain so unless a court order specifically states otherwise. You are not allowed to share information you have obtained with anyone other than the child, CASA/GAL program staff and attorney(s), the caseworker, and the court unless a local or state order allows for a broader sharing of information. If it is not your information to share seek advice from supervisors.

You need not treat as legally confidential conversations with neighbors and friends who voluntarily give information. Also, if you speak with a teacher who is not providing confidential school records, but rather sharing impressions, these impressions would not be confidential unless the teacher requested that they be kept as such. This information, although not legally confidential, is still private and should not be shared except on a "need to know" basis, and then only with those people who need the information to better serve the child. An example would be sharing a previous teacher's positive impressions of the child with a new teacher in order to increase the teacher's sensitivity toward the child during a difficult time.

CASA Cultural Diversity Statement

Building on our legacy of quality advocacy, we acknowledge the need to understand, respect, and celebrate diversity including race, gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and the presence of a sensory, mental, or physical disability. We also value diversity of viewpoints, life experiences, talents, and ideas.

A diverse CASA/GAL network helps us to better understand and promote the well-being of the children we serve. Embracing diversity makes us better advocates by providing fresh ideas and perspectives for problem solving in our multicultural world, enabling us to respond to each child's unique needs.

CASA Volunteer Grievance Policies

A Volunteer adversely affected by a policy or practice may appeal such application or interpretation. The appeals process must be initiated by the Volunteer within seven days of the event, which serves as the basis of the appeal.

- The Grievance process is initiated by the Volunteer requesting, in writing, a meeting to discuss the matter with the Volunteer's Supervisor.
- If the problem has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the Volunteer, the Volunteer may appeal to the Executive Director.
- If the problem remains unresolved following the conference with the ED, the Volunteer may appeal to the Human Resources Committee of the Board of Directors.
- The Human Resources Committee may rule on the appeal. The ruling of the Human Resources Committee may be appealed to the Board of Directors.
- The Volunteer may withdraw the grievance at any time.
- At each stage of the grievance procedure, the written summary of the proceedings shall be prepared and the Volunteer shall be given a copy for review and comments. The written summary and Volunteer comments will be placed in the Volunteer's permanent Human Resources file.

Conflict of Interest Policy

Policy guidelines for conflicts of interest involving governing body, staff, volunteers or paid consultants:

No trustee, staff member, volunteer or paid consultant may participate in any decision-making process when said person or members of her or his immediate family, or any party, group or organization to which said person has allegiance, may have an interest that may be seen as competing with the interests or concerns of CASA of the South Plains. Furthermore, no trustee, staff member, volunteer or paid consultant may have direct or indirect financial interest in the assets, leases, business transactions or professional services of CASA of the South Plains, Inc.

Volunteer Corrective Action and Dismissal Policy

Corrective Action

Corrective action may be taken if the volunteer's work is unsatisfactory. Corrective action is within the discretion of the Volunteer Supervisor or the Program Director (after review with the Executive Director) and may include:

1. Additional supervision
2. Reassignment
3. Retraining with possible suspension
4. Referral to another volunteer position
5. Dismissal for the CASA program

Volunteer Dismissal

Volunteer who do not adhere to the policies and procedures of the program or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment are subject to dismissal. Dismissal is within the discretion of the Program Director and Executive Director.

Grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Violation of program policies and procedures, court rules or law
- Gross misconduct or insubordination
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing volunteer duties
- Theft of property or misuse of program equipment or materials
- Mistreatment or inappropriate conduct toward clients, families, co-workers or cooperating agency personnel
- Taking action without program or court approval that endangers the child or is outside the role or powers of the program
- Failure to complete required initial or ongoing training
- Unwillingness to accept assignments over a period of twelve months
- Breach of confidentiality
- Conflict of interest which cannot be resolved
- Falsification of application materials or misrepresentation of facts during the screening process
- Failure to report significant case information to the court
- Criminal activities
- Existence of child abuse or neglect allegations
- Initiation of ex-parte communication with the court

The CASA volunteer shall be provided with a confidential memo identifying the reason(s) for the dismissal.

At the time of a volunteer dismissal, all case materials and notes must be turned into the CASA office immediately.

If the case has not been terminated, the Program Director shall appoint a new CASA volunteer as soon as possible, and all parties to the case and their representatives will be notified in writing or by phone.

FOSTER CARE LEGAL PROCESS

Child Protective Services' (CPS) mission is to serve and protect abused and neglected children. The parent agency is the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. CPS is mandated by state law to offer services to improve and assist at-risk families. If reunification cannot be achieved, CPS must move for permanent placement or termination of parental rights. The persons from CPS that a CASA is likely to deal with are the Investigator, Caseworker, Supervisor, and the Attorney for the Department.

The Process (TFC § 261, 262, 263) (2005)

CPS generally is made aware of a case of child abuse or neglect by a phone call to the Child Abuse Hotline. This phone call triggers an Intake and Investigation. If the investigation finds evidence of child neglect or abuse, one of the following will take place:

- Emergency removal of the child;
- Removal of the child after notice and hearing;
- Family-Based Plan of Service.

If the child is removed (as in first or second item above), a CPS legal proceeding begins. The court has one year from the date that CPS is named Temporary Managing Conservator (TMC) of the child to determine a permanency plan. Throughout the one-year time span of a foster care case, several court hearings will be held.

- 1) **Emergency Hearing** - This hearing occurs only when a child is removed without prior notice or hearing (262.107). This hearing is held "ex parte" - with only CPS, their lawyer, and the judge present. The emergency hearing must occur on the next business day following removal. The judge returns the child, or issues a temporary restraining order to remove the child from the home, or remove a particular individual from the home.
- 2) **Adversary Hearing** (262.201) – This is a full hearing in which witnesses, arguments, evidence, etc., are presented. It must be held within 14 days of removal. The court grants TMC of the child to CPS, or returns the child to the parents.
- 3) **Status Hearing** (262.201-263.202) – This hearing must be held within 60 days of the adversary hearing. The main focus is the Plan of Service for family reunification. Other factors include due diligence on behalf of CPS, information from parents.
- 4) **Initial Permanency Hearing** (263.304) – This hearing must be held within 180 days of CPS being named TMC. The purpose is to review status of the child and permanency plan.
- 5) **Permanency Hearing** (263.305) – This hearing must be held within 120 days of the last permanency hearing, and for the purpose of 1) reviewing CPS's efforts to perform their duties; 2) reviewing the parents efforts toward working their service plan to achieve reunification; and 3) reviewing services to the child(ren) and parents.
- 6) **Final Hearing** – This hearing is for the purpose of 1) returning the child to parents; 2) granting Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) to CPS or party other than parent; 3) terminating parental rights TFC 161.001(1)(A-T); and 4) can be jury or non-jury.
- 7) **Placement Review Hearing** (263.503) – This hearing is 1) held at least every six months if CPS has PMC of child, and 2) to review the child's status and Department's plans/actions.

Time Frame (263.401)

CPS is mandated by law (Texas Family Code) to resolve the permanency status of the child within one year from the date the Department is named Temporary Managing Conservator (TMC). The TMC can have an optional six month extension, and another optional six month monitored extension. Two years is the absolute limit. At the end of one of the previous time periods, either the child is returned home, or the Department or someone else has Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC), with or without termination of parental rights.

TMC vs. PMC vs. PC

- 1) TMC – Temporary Managing Conservatorship – Department has superior decision making and right of possession during pendency of the suit
- 2) PMC – Permanent Managing Conservatorship – Department has superior decision making and right of possession until further court order
- 3) PC – Possessory Conservator – Limited rights and responsibilities to child (153.073)

Service of Parents

Parents have a right to know that there is a proceeding involving their children. There is a burden on CPS to diligently attempt to locate missing parents. Notice is required under the law. Without notice to a parent, (except for emergency removals), final proceedings cannot be initiated against them.

There are three common ways to accomplish service:

- 1) Personal Service
- 2) Citation by Publication
- 3) Parent appears and requests some sort of relief

Paternity (160.001 et seq.)

Paternity status can be established in one of the following ways:

- 1) Presumed (160.204)
 - a. Married to mother when child was born or within 301 days after marriage terminated; or

- b. Filed with the paternity index; or
 - c. Voluntarily named on birth certificate.
- 2) Alleged
- a. Man who mother has named as father through “affidavit of status” – document which mother names who she thinks the father is, used when no presumed father
- 3) Unknown
- a. Don’t know who father is
- 4) Adjudicated
- a. Man who has been adjudicated by a court to be the father of the child – Attorney General, Family Court, CPS Court

The Court of Continuing Jurisdiction

The court of continuing jurisdiction is the court that retains continuing and exclusive jurisdiction to hear all matters arising with respect to a particular child. If a court hears a case about a particular child, it should hear any future matters regarding the particular child. This promotes continuity and helps prevent the entry of multiple orders regarding a particular child.

Child Protective Services Overview

Investigation

- Possible FBSS - a family meeting model used by CPS agencies to optimize family strengths in the planning process. This model brings the family, extended family, and others important in the family's life (e.g., friends, clergy, neighbors) together to make decisions regarding how best to ensure safety of the family members.
- Possible Close
 - Unable to determine
 - Reason to Believe
- Removal of Children

CVS

- Possibility of returning home
- Adoption
- Long Term Care

Main Goal – Reunify Families

- Offer Services to Parents
 - Plan of Service
- Provide Care of Child
- School
- Placement
- Medical

Overview of 12-Month Court Process for Child Abuse and Neglect Cases¹



¹ Applies to all new cases filed on or after January 1, 1998. For cases filed prior to January 1, 1998, at the first hearing held after January 1, 1998, the court must set a dismissal date for no later than two years from that hearing date.

² The court may issue temporary orders returning the child to parents or a relative, with continued TMC to PRS for up to 6 months for monitoring.

³ The court conducts a Placement Review at 6 month intervals from the time PMC is awarded to PRS until the adoption is consummated or the child is emancipated.

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

In cases where the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) applies, the law presumes that it is always in the best interest of an Indian child to have his/her own people determine what is best for his/her future. ICWA is federal law enacted to protect the best interests of Indian children and promote stability and security of Indian tribes and families by establishing minimum standards for removal of Indian children from their families and for placement of Indian children in foster or adoptive homes that reflect the values of Indian culture. To terminate the rights of an Indian child, the Department must show proof beyond a reasonable doubt, including qualified expert testimony, that continued custody by a parent or Indian custodian is likely to result in "serious emotional or physical damage" to the child and active efforts to provide remedial services and rehabilitative services to prevent the breakup of the Indian family were made but were unsuccessful.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)

The ICPC was established to ensure that children placed out-of-state receive the same protections and services that would be provided if they remained in their home state. The ICPC generally applies to all CPS placement out-of-states. The ICPC:

- Requires Texas to obtain permission from the receiving state before placement;
- Permits CPS to obtain an out-of-state home study to evaluate the placement;
- Provides the receiving state with the right to assess a proposed placement and to approve or disapprove the placement;
- Clarifies that the legal and financial responsibility remains with Texas;
- Permits CPS the opportunity to obtain regular supervision and reports on the placement; and requires the receiving state to agree before Texas dismisses jurisdiction.

Monitored Placement

When the court orders monitored placement it orders the Department (CPS) to:

- Return the child(ren) to the child(ren)'s parents;
- Continue to serve as temporary managing conservator of the child(ren);
- Monitor the child (ren)'s placement to ensure that the child is in a safe environment.

The court shall set a new dismissal date, not later than 180 days after the rendition of the temporary order granting the monitored return.

Mediation

Mediation is an informal process used to negotiate an agreement between all parties. There is no agreement unless all parties agree. A full or partial agreement can result from the mediation. Once the agreement has been made, it is binding. All proceedings of mediation are confidential. If an agreement is not reached, none of the information addressed during the mediation can be discussed outside the mediation or in court. Refer to the Mediation Form (See Appendix A-16) for points to consider in preparing for mediation.

Americans with Disability Act - ADA

The ADA (a Federal Law) is seen in cases where the Department is working with parents with mental disability. Special provisions and treatment must be made to protect these individuals' rights. The Department sees many cases involving persons with special needs, and it is important to ensure that these individuals are afforded every opportunity to regain their children.

Permanency Goals

The Department's goal for a child's ultimate status is usually found in the Permanency Plan and Progress Report filed ten days prior to each permanency hearing.

- 1) Reunification – reunite parents with child
- 2) Relative placement – place child with relative or kinship placement for extended period (PMC)
- 3) Adoption – Adoption after termination of parental rights
- 4) Long-term foster care – Extended foster care for child. Usually for children with no extended family or extended family that is incapable or unwilling to care for them, older children, special needs children
- 5) Concurrent planning – This is where the Department has an alternate plan in case the primary plan becomes unworkable. For example, reunification concurrent with relative placement means that the Department will continue to offer services to reunify parents and child, however will begin to take contingency steps to protect child in the event reunification fails – can be vice versa, relative placement concurrent with reunification, etc.

Case Participants

Foster care cases can be quite complicated because of so many interested parties:

- 1) Judge – Neutral fact-finder who makes decisions regarding child in hearing and bench trial or presides over jury trial. (Judge Hart – Judge of the South Plains Foster Care Court – serves Lubbock and most surrounding counties.)
- 2) Attorney ad Litem for child (107.003 and 107.004) – Represents the child’s desires, not necessarily the child’s best interest. Age of child is key factor.
- 3) Attorney ad Litem for parents – Represents the parents. Sometimes one attorney represents both parents. Usually these folks will not be your friend as their concern is their client’s best interest, not the child.
- 4) CPS – Representative workers and Department’s attorney. Most often CASAs work with Neal Burt or Meghan Alexander, Assistant District Attorneys in the DA Civil Division. They represent what the Department perceives as the child’s best interest.
- 5) Intervener – Someone interested in the placement of the child (they want the child with them). Usually relatives or potential adoptive parents.
- 6) CASA/Guardian as Litem – Substitute decision-maker for the child. The CASA/GAL is not a party, so is not afforded the full rights of a party such as questioning witnesses at trial. However the CASA can make statements, file reports, and testify herself. Essentially they advocate best interest of the child (1007.002).

CASE MANAGEMENT

“Best Interest of the Child”

The phrase "best interest of the child" is used frequently. This is not a phrase that is used casually as a generic description. It has a legal foundation with very strict guidelines as set forth by court determination in the Holley V. Adams case. This set forth criteria for determining what the best interest of the child includes:

- 1) The desires of the child;
- 2) The emotional and physical needs of the child now and in the future;
- 3) The emotional and physical danger to the child now and in the future;
- 4) The parental abilities of the individuals seeking custody;
- 5) The programs available to assist these individuals to promote the best interest of the child;
- 6) The plans for the child by the individuals or agency seeking custody;
- 7) The stability of the home or proposed placement;
- 8) The acts or omissions of the parent which may indicate that the existing parent-child relationship is not a proper one;
- 9) Any excuse for the acts or omissions of the parent.

It is important for CASA Volunteers to know what the child says he/she wants because it might have a direct bearing on the direction of the case, but we are not bound to advocating for that. We are bound to advocate for the child to be in a safe, permanent home as quickly as possible.

Importance of CASA

CASAs are important - as court-appointed advocates, the Judge listens to CASAs’ input. Where the child’s Attorney ad Litem rarely even sees their client, the CASA offers a perspective that comes from regular communication and contact with the child. CASAs are neutral with no personal interest or agenda other than the best interest of the child. They can make an independent analysis of the situation and are free to agree or disagree with anyone or everyone.

Case Advocacy

As a CASA, you will be pleading the cause of your child or children before a judicial court. In order to plead on behalf of them in the court system, you have to know all the issues of the case: legal, placement, therapeutic, educational, parental, special needs (if any), and any other issues that don’t fit into the categories above.

When you first receive your CASA case, your supervisor will review it with you, discussing many or all of the issues previously mentioned. Your supervisor and you identify all the issues to address in the case, the goals to which you are working, the tasks that will help achieve those goals, and the time frame in which they should be accomplished. Remember, we are advocating for the children and what is in their best interest. It rarely is in the children’s best interest to allow a case to drag on and on because of a legal technicality that could have been resolved early in the case. The CASA Volunteer can additionally use the Task List (See Appendix A3/A4) to ensure that all unresolved issues have been addressed to prevent any unnecessary extensions in a case.

Note-Taking

It is vital that you keep accurate and thorough notes about the date and content of each case contact, whether it is a planned interview, an impromptu visit to a school, a phone call, or a review of a record.

Important factors to Include in note-taking

Person interviewed;
Date/time;
Place (parent's home, job, jail, etc.);
Observations;
Feelings expressed;
Facts;
Summary of what happened;
Plan of action by the other person;
Plan of action by you; and
Decisions

Ultimately, the information you gather will be used to formulate recommendations about what is in the child's best interest. Helpful forms are available on our website. If unable to download, you may request these forms from your CASA supervisor. The forms are located at www.lubbockcasa.org, click "Forms". Forms are available in three formats: Adobe Document, Rich Text, and Microsoft Word.

Observing Family Visits

One component of your advocacy will be observing family visits. Visits may be monitored or unmonitored; they may take place at the CPS office, in a therapeutic environment such as in a therapist's office, in a family member's home, or in a public place such as McDonalds or a park. Dr. Brenda Wilbanks has provided CASA the following guide to assist volunteers in observing and documenting interactions during a family visit.

•General Interaction

- Addressing Appropriate Topics with the Children
- Greeting of the Children and Parting from Them
 - Are the parents and children emotional?
 - Do they interact affectionately?
- Engaging Them in Age Appropriate Interaction
- Dividing Time Among all of the Children?

•Behavior Management

- Limit Setting by the Parents
- Consistency in Behavior Management
- Assertiveness in Parenting
- Accepting the Parental Role

•Bonding/Attachment

Parents

- Showing affection
- Giving positive feedback and focusing on the child's strengths
- Listening to the child
- Encouraging the child to participate in activities
- Refraining from inappropriate questioning and negative comments
- Demonstrating consideration of the child's needs

Child

- Expressing feelings freely
- Being affectionate with parents and responding to affection
- Making eye contact
- Appearing at ease when parents are near
- Seeking comfort and reassurance

Because both children and parents' behaviors vary considerably from one session to another, observations need to be made over time and over sessions. In observing visits, you may want to record your observations using the Visitation

Notes form (See Appendix A-8.) This form also suggests other information to be obtained from the foster placement and the child(ren).

Attending Permanency Planning Meetings

A Permanency Planning Meeting is similar to a court hearing in that the same interested parties may attend, but it is less formal. Other persons may also attend, such as foster parents and relatives. All the cases heard in PPMs are in varying stages of the court process. The convener will call the case, introduce herself, and then ask everyone else to identify themselves. You introduce yourself as CASA or GAL.

CPS is given the opportunity to provide an update (progress report) on the parents, and any issues regarding the children.⁴ The permanency plan is discussed, any concurrent goal(s), and if any changes are needed. All the other parties are given an opportunity to address any issues/concerns they have. Record issues/concerns and meeting notes on the Meeting Notes form (See Appendix A-10.)

Listen for the following:

- Information about the child's progress;
- Information about the parent's progress;
- Unresolved issues;
- Permanency plan, concurrent goal(s).

Other things to listen for:

- Dates: next court hearing, final hearing, mediation, dismissal

It is important to be aware of case issues/concerns going into the PPM meeting. One purpose of attending the CPS PPM meetings is to make sure you have a good grasp on where everyone is positioned and why. It is also an opportunity for the volunteer to voice his/her concerns (remember - with concerns, we must always have our information to support the concerns). Additionally, it would be ideal to have solutions to the concerns. If CASA is not in agreement with the CPS plan and/or goals during the meeting, offer ideas and solutions to resolve the differences, then communicate with your CASA supervisor on any necessary follow-up action.

Monthly Reporting

Timely reporting of the status of your CASA case is very important. CASA has developed a form for reporting the status of your case on a monthly basis - the CASA Monthly Activity Time Log (see Appendix A-17). You will find this form vital in your casework, and you should keep it handy so that you can immediately log all of your interactions and time spent related to your CASA case. Keeping track of all CASA-related activities on your Monthly Activity Log is important for several reasons:

- 1) The Monthly Activity Time Log is one way that you report back to your CASA staff;
- 2) It is a very helpful reference when preparing court reports in which you have to provide information on all the case-related contacts you made since the last court hearing; and
- 3) Much of CASA funding is based on the number of contact hours spent by volunteers doing case-related work. If your volunteer hours are not reported, CASA does not get credit for the hours and our funding is affected.

On the back-side of the CASA Monthly Activity Time Log is the Monthly Case Summary (See Appendix A-16). On this document you will report a summary of events and changes that have happened in the case during the month. This includes the following:

- For the children (placement, school performance, caseworker, behavior, health, therapy, medication, service plan, permanency plan, etc.);
- For the parents (address, phone numbers, employment, attorney, etc.);
- Service Plan Problems;
- Relative information/issues/home studies;
- What needs to be done;
- Recommendations.

Please remember to submit your CASA Monthly Activity Time Log and your Monthly Case Summary by the **10th of the following month** to your supervisor. You can email, mail, fax, or drop by your Activity Time Log. If you are assigned to more than one case, have one CASA Monthly Activity Time Log/Monthly Case Summary PER case. Your Supervisor will communicate with you how they require you to submit your notes to them regularly.

⁴ Children are not generally at these meetings, unless they are 14 years of age or older.

Preparing Court Reports

Each supervisor should notify the volunteer of upcoming hearings as soon as the supervisor is notified, and at least four weeks in advance of the hearing. Just as the Task List and Advocacy Form are your “road maps” for working a case, well prepared time sheets, monthly summaries, and good documentation are your “road maps” for writing about the case in court reports. Meet with your supervisor one month prior to the hearing to determine if there are any holes in the case or unresolved issues. Address those issues immediately, or with the appropriate parties. An example of a court report can be seen in the Appendix, page A-12. A court report template is available from your supervisor or on the CASA website (www.lubbockcasa.org/zVolunteerForms). The volunteer should fill out the court report form as completely as possible then email it to the supervisor who will make any necessary changes or include any additional information. The court report will then be emailed back to the volunteer for approval. If the volunteer is unable to email the preliminary court report to the supervisor, the volunteer is encouraged to write as much as possible, then arrange to meet with the supervisor to prepare the final report for submission to the court one week prior to the court hearing. The supervisor should be available to help the volunteer in any way necessary in writing the court report.

Any contact with the children, their placement, parents, relatives, schools, etc., should be included in the Persons Contacted table on page one of the report. Additional information regarding issues and concerns should be discussed in the summary. Information regarding service plans should be listed in the Service Plan tables. Elaboration of those issues should be included the summary.

The Child/Situation section is basically a summary of the affidavit that stated why the children initially came into foster care. It does not need to be detailed. State the date and reasons why the children were removed.

The Case Summary since Last Hearing section should include (unless not applicable) information about each of the following categories pertaining to each child and the parents since the last court hearing:

Placements

Recent information from placement (should contact minimally once a month, preferably face-to-face) regarding child(ren); Behavior; Medical issues; School issues, performance; Visitation issues; Concerns, problems, incidents; Paperwork needed from placement (obtain from CPS, facility or Foster agency) Incident reports; Therapy reports, Plans of service.

Education

Grade level for each child, including any tutoring, special education, etc.; Grades/performance for each subject; Any areas of problems; The reasons, what is in place, what needs to be in place; Relationship of caregivers with school; Behavior issues; Positives; Concerns.

Medical & Medications

Names of medications and current dosages; why child is on medication, as of what date, and why; Doctor monitoring; Any problems with the medication.

Therapy

Frequency of therapy – need for more or less; Goals, time frame to accomplish them, progress; Working on what issues; Cooperation of patient, caregiver; Other issues not being addressed; Reports from therapist.

Visitations

Describe interaction observed at parent/child visits; Describe parent/child bonding, positives, deficits, areas needed for improvement.

Paternity

Names of all parties who may be the alleged father;

Aging out Issues

Are there any issues or concerns that are delaying the process for Drivers Ed, Enrollment in Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) courses.

Concerns/ Outstanding Issues

Are there any issues/concerns not being addressed; Are there any new issues that need to be addressed; Are there additional needs that need to be addressed; According to the task list, what still needs to be done; Have all paternity, relative, and home study issues been addressed; What is needed to move the case forward for the child’s best interest; What is needed to move the case forward for finality?

Permanency Plan/Recommendations

What is/are the CPS recommendation(s); What is/are the AAL recommendation(s); What is/are the CASA recommendation(s); What is/are the reason(s) for the recommendation(s); Does CASA need help from the AAL; Would a mediation be helpful – what would the mediation issues be?

All court reports **MUST** be submitted to the Judge, District Attorney, and all other attorneys one week prior to the hearing. Do not wait until the last minute to do the report. Even if you think there will be additional information coming in, the report still must be submitted according to schedule. Any additional information can be orally presented at the hearing.

Attending Foster Court Hearings

In foster court, the judge calls the case and asks everyone who is involved to come forward. The judge then asks everyone to identify themselves for the record. You introduce yourself as CASA or GAL. CPS is given the opportunity to provide an update (progress report) on the parents and the children (Children are not generally at these hearings.) All other parties are given an opportunity to express any issues/concerns they have regarding the case.

The following issues generally are addressed:

- 1) How are the children doing in their placements?
- 2) If applicable, how are the parents progressing on their service plans?
- 3) Have the parents been served? (The parents must be served before the case can be settled.)
- 4) Is there continuing jurisdiction? (This refers to cases pending in other jurisdictions.)
- 5) Has paternity been established for the child(ren)?
- 6) Have studies been done on any possible relative placement?
- 7) What is the permanency goal? Any there any concurrent goal(s)?
- 8) When is the next Court Hearing? Final Hearing? Dismissal Date? Has Mediation been scheduled?

When observing court during your hands-on training, consider what a CASA volunteer would be doing on this case? As a volunteer, it is important to be aware of case issues/concerns going in to the hearing so that you can bring unresolved issues forward to the court. You may find the form on page A-12 in the Appendix helpful in preparing for and recording details in a court hearing. The judge does not have a court reporter, but does audio-record the hearings.

Monitoring your Case

As a CASA volunteer, it is important that you monitor the progress of your case. Monitoring includes the following:

- 1) Follow-up to ensure that court orders are being properly followed.
 - Review the court orders;
 - Maintain contact with child(ren), parents, relatives, foster parents, and CPS to ensure court orders are being followed;
 - Verify accuracy of information gathered during follow-up;
 - Discuss options with supervisor if the court orders are not being followed;
 - Prepare court reports on service plan progress and compliance with court orders for each review hearing.
- 2) Report to the court when the needs of the child are not being met; identify facts and changes in situation that may necessitate the case's return to court.
- 3) Protect/promote the best interest of the child until formally relieved of the responsibility by the court.
 - Regularly monitor the child in his/her home setting to evaluate appropriateness of placement, determine whether the child is receiving court-ordered services, and identify any unmet needs;
 - Determine if additional services are needed for the child;
 - Identify facts and changes in the situation that may necessitate the case's return to court.

APPENDIX

1. Advocacy Form.....	A- 3
2. TMC Task List	A- 4
3. PMC Task List	A- 5
4. Possible Questions to Ask	A- 6
5. CASA Court Report.....	A- 9
6. In-Service Training Sheet	A- 12
7. CASA Activity Time Log	A- 13
8. Monthly Case Summary	A- 14
9. CASA Resource Directory	A- 15
10. CASA Acronyms, Abbreviations, & Keywords	A- 16

The forms (see below) are located on our website at www.lubbockcasa.org , click "Forms". Forms are available in 3 formats: Adobe Document, Rich Text, & Microsoft Word.

- Adoption form
- Advocacy form
- ARD (Admissions, Review, Dismissal)
- CASA activity time log & summary
- Court hearing form
- Court report template
- Court report criteria
- How well do you know the child?
- In-service form
- Mediation form
- PMC task list
- ppt1 & ppt2 form
- Relative home assessment
- School behavior form
- TMC task list
- Visit observation form
- Visitation notes form



ADVOCACY FORM

Case Name The Child Volunteer Ann Smith Date 2009

Next Hearing _____ Type of Hearing _____ Report Required _____ Submitted by _____

Dismissal Date _____ Permanency Plan _____

Action Items:

Legal Issues:

Issues	Goals	Tasks	Time Frames
Any courts of con't	Identify & transfer as needed	Verify, contact DA, atty's	Assess
Jurisdiction			

Placement Issues:

Monitor placements-approp?	Identify any needs, concerns	Contact approp. Person to correct, address;	Short term
Do siblings need to be together?	assess	Contact approp. Person - other options available	Assess

Therapeutic Issues:

Meeting needs?	What are problems/issues of each	Contact therapist, schools,	As needed
Frequent enough?	Child, add'l needs?	Placements, child for input	

Educational Issues:

Proper placement	Know needs of child, what program they are in.	Read past/current records, Testing, spec. needs, psychs, talk to school staff	As needed

Parent Issues:

Appropriate services	Assess needs, make sure they Understand	Any spec. needs, make sure Parents fully understand Plan & what is expected Monitor progress w/providers	Ongoing

Special Needs Issues:

Address + have services In place	Identify any so they are addressed	Assessments, reports, service Providers reports, therapists, School, CPS record	Ongoing

Other Issues:

Last periods measures of effectiveness met? If not, why? _____

Measure of CASA's effectiveness between now and next hearing: _____

TMC TASK LIST

TMC CASES					
DOCUMENTS	DATE	INITIAL TASKS	DATE	MO/QTRLY TASKS/COPIES	COMMENTS
Petition		ADA/MHMR		Copies/confer w/CPS CW	
CASA App't.		Parent advised/attorney		Visit children	
Emerg.Order		Meet cw/review file		Confer w/CASA supervisor	
Adversary Order		Meet children		School updates/report cards	
Orders for Actions		Meet parents		Therapy reports/confer	
Service Plans		Service on parents		Observe visits	
Status Order		Diligent Search		Monitor parents	
Placement Agrmt.		Inform/Advocacy form		Confer/rpts from providers	
1st Rev.CPS Rpt.		Ltr to Incarc.Parent		Updated medical/dental	
1st CASA report		Ltr to Unavail.Parent		Confer w/other parties	
1st Rev.Hear.Order		List of relatives, meet		Updated service plans	
Inclusion of Term		Relative Home Assess		Updated treatment plans	
2nd Rev.CPS Rpt.		ECI involvement		Placement reports	
CASA Rpt.		Indian Welfare apply?			
2nd Rev.Hear.Order		Notification to Parties			
Con't/Extension		Certif.of Acceptance			
Final CPS report		Crt.con't. jurisdiction			
Final CASA report		All services initiated		PERIODIC TASKS	
Final order		Paternity resolved		PPT/FGC	
Relinquishment		Review SP w/parents		Mediations	
Termination Order		Fax order to school		Hearings	
3rd Rev. CPS rpt				ARDS	
3rd Rev.CASA rpt				Check CPS plan	
3rd Rev.Hear.Order				Outstanding tasks 2 be done	
Service Plans					
School Records				CLOSING TASKS	
Birth Certificates				Dismissal/file	
SS Cards				Case Closure form	
Home Studies				Close out Comet	
Affid. Of Status				Case Evaluation	
Medical Records				PMC or Adopt form	
Dental Records					

PMC TASK LIST

PMC CASE	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
EDUCATION												
Rpt.Card												
ARD/Sp.Ed.												
Conference												
GED												
Credits												
Testing												
Other												
MEDICAL												
Checkup												
Dental												
Ck.Meds												
PLACEMENT												
Visit child												
Staff/fp conf												
Record copy												
Serv.plan												
CPS CW												
Conference												
Copies												
Serv.plan												
THERAPY												
Reports												
Psych.Eval.												
Conference												
FAMILY												
Contact												
Involvement												
PPTS												
HEAR/RPTS												
OTHER												
PAL												
Caseworker												
Referred												
Started												
Completed												
Drivers' Ed.												
Birth Cert.												
SS card												
Trans.Plan												
COS												
Refer												
Completed												



POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO ASK...
NOTE: NOT EVERY QUESTION WILL APPLY TO ALL CASES

I. CPS caseworker- TDFPS

A. General Information

1. Make an appointment to meet the caseworker and read the case file.
2. Ask caseworker to notify you of PPM staffings and any other special staffings/conferences on the case.

B. Questions to ask (be specific)

1. What is the current status of the case?
2. What is the agency's current plan to achieve permanency?
3. How many placements has the child had? (If more than one, why?)
4. Length of stay in each placement. (If disruptive, why?)
5. Has the child been in the placement before?
6. What are the alternative treatment and placement plan?
7. What is the potential success of each of the above?
8. How many agency workers are involved with this family? Have you spoke with the others? Are they in agreement?
9. Obtain names, addresses, phone numbers of service providers (teachers, therapists, physicians).
10. Does child(ren) continue to see parents/siblings/other relatives/family/friends while in placement?
11. Are there any potential relative placements? What is the status on completion of the home study? Who is doing the home study?
12. Are their medical records available?
13. Are there any psychological evaluations?
14. If applicable, what precipitated need for psychiatric evaluation?
15. Are the parents involved in any services, such as counseling, parenting classes, etc?
16. Have the parents been able to fulfill the agreed requirements in the service plan?
17. Have you observed interaction of the siblings?
18. Have you observed the child during visitation with the parents (s)?
19. How does the child feel about foster parents or current placement?
20. What is the behavior of the child prior and subsequent to the visit?
21. Does the child have developmental, behavioral or emotional problems?
22. Is there anything unusual or outstanding about the child?
23. Has the child expressed any desire to be at the home with the parent (s)?
24. What is the child's level of care? Who is responsible for sending information regarding the child(ren) to Youth for Tomorrow? What information is being sent? (should be asked to the responsible agency sending information).

Request copies of social case histories, any relevant reports contained in the psychological, previous staffings or anything you might find helpful.

II. Parents

A. General Information

1. Arrange a personal meeting as soon as possible.
2. Visit their home if possible, or meet at a neutral place (restaurant, CASA office, etc.)
3. Conduct the interview in private
 - a. Be direct, honest and professional.
 - b. Be understanding. Be attentive.
 - c. Be certain they understand you are not a CPS caseworker, but that you are a CASA volunteer (and that you are not paid).
4. Questions to be asked (be specific)
 - a. Ask them to express their version of the events stated on the petition. How many agency workers are involved with the family?
 - b. Are either members of Indian Tribe?
 - c. Is there anything unusual or outstanding about the child(ren)?

- d. What are the child(ren)'s perceptions about him/herself?
- e. Does the child have friends?
- f. Is the child a loner?
- g. What are the child(ren)'s emotional characteristics? Is the child easily frightened, anxious, angry, easily frustrated, moody, cries a lot, etc.?
- h. What efforts have the parents made to have the child(ren) for weekend visits or afternoon visits?
- i. How do the parents feel about the child?
- j. What supports (meaning friends, neighbors, relatives, etc.) are available for this family?
- k. Are there any relatives they might see as potential relative placements for the child(ren) at least in the meantime while child(ren) in foster care?
- l. What are the financial means of support for this family?
- m. Are the parents involved in any services, such as counseling, parenting classes, WIC, etc.?
- n. Does the housing appear to be adequate?
- o. Have the parents been able to fulfill the agreed requirements of the service plan? If not, why?
- p. How do they feel about the services they are receiving?
- q. How do they work with the CPS caseworker?

III. The Child(ren)

A. General Information

1. Explain your role. Establish rapport.
2. Listen and Observe.
 - a. Conduct the interview in private.
 - Sit next to the child(ren), not across a table or desk.
 - Tell the child(ren) that the interview is confidential.
 - Conduct the interview in language the child(ren) understands.
 - Ask the child(ren) to clarify words, terms which are not understood.
 - b. **Do Not:**
 - Allow the child(ren) to feel "in trouble" or "at fault."
 - Disparage or criticize the child(ren)'s choice of words or language.
 - Suggest answers to the child(ren).
 - Probe or press for answers the child(ren) is unwilling to give.
 - Display horror, shock, or disapproval of parents, child(ren) or the situation.

B. Questions to be asked (be specific)

1. Discuss wishes and desires for future.
2. How does the child feel about his/her birth parents?
3. Discuss visits with parents, siblings, and other family.
4. How does the child feel about foster parents? Placement?
5. Has the child expressed any desire to be at home with parents?
6. With whom does the child have positive relationships?
7. With whom does the child have negative relationships?
8. What are the child's perceptions about him/herself?
9. Do you like school? What kind of grades do you have? What school did you used to go to?
10. Does the child have friends?
11. What are the child's interests?
12. What does the child enjoy doing?

IV. Professionals - Teachers, social service providers, hospitals, clinics, foster parents, relatives

A. General Information

1. Give (fax by CASA office) copy of court appointment and certificate of acceptance, if appropriate.
2. Learn involvement, impressions, and results of evaluation or services.
3. Request records or reports on child(ren) (referrals, school records, ARD reports, report cards (every 6 months), etc.) parent (s).

B. Questions to be asked (be specific)

1. What is the child(ren)'s physical condition?
2. What are his/her personality characteristics?
3. What is the child(ren)'s ability and method of handling anger of self or others?

4. How does the child feel about his/her parents?
5. Has child(ren) expressed any desire to be at home with parents?
6. Does child continue to see relatives or family friends while in placement?
7. How does child feel about foster parents? About placement?
8. What is the behavior of child prior and subsequent to visits?
9. How do foster parents speak about biological parents?
10. How do foster parents feel about child(ren)?
11. Do foster parents feel CPS caseworker is listening to them?
12. If child(ren) were free for adoption, do you feel foster parents would adopt?
13. What is the relationship of foster parents' children to foster child(ren)?
14. What is his/her relationship with peers?
15. What are the characteristics of his/her relationships with peers (age, personality of peers, contacts, kinds of relationships, etc.)?
16. What are his/her aggressive/withdrawal tendencies?
17. With whom does he/she have positive relationships?
18. With whom does he/she have negative relationships?
19. What is his/her self-perception within the family and within the school?
20. What are the characteristics of his/her social interactions?
21. Is he/she a loner? Does he/she have friends?
22. Does he/she get into fights, argue, get picked on, and pick on others? Is he/she cooperative, competitive, passive or aggressive?
23. What are his/her perceptions of strengths/weaknesses?



CASA OF THE SOUTH PLAINS, INC.

**916 Main, Suite 425
LUBBOCK, TEXAS 79401
(806)763-2272**

**COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES
REPORT TO COURT**

Cause No. 000,000,000

IN THE INTEREST OF § IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF
The child LUBBOCK COUNTY, TEXAS
Child § 99TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
§

PLACEMENT HEARING: April 7, 2008

Child Information:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Level of Care</u>	<u>Plcmt Date</u>	<u>#of Plcmts</u>
The Child	5	Basic	10/25/07	3

Parent Information:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Served</u>	<u>Attorney</u>
The Mom	Mother	Lubbock, TX	Yes	Shackles
The Father	Alleged Father	Lubbock, TX	Unknown	Brooks

Relative/Kinship Information:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Status</u>
The Uncle	Maternal Uncle	Shallowater, TX	ICPC Homestudy Requested
The Aunt	Paternal Aunt	Lubbock, TX	Served as relative placement 9/27/07 – 10/25/07

Permanency Plan:

Family reunification/ Relative placement

Dismissal Date:

09/08/2008

Persons Contacted:

<u>Person</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Last Contact</u>
---------------	---------------------	------------------	---------------------

Reasons for Removal:

The child came into foster care in late 2008 due to allegations of sexual abuse of the child by a relative.

Service Plans: The Mother

Tasks

Parenting	Has not set up
Psychological Evaluation	Set up twice, no show both times
Family Therapy	Has not set up
Individual Therapy	Has not set up
Non-offender Sexual Abuse Class	Has not set up

Problems/Issues with Service Plan:

She has been very resistant to engage in any therapeutic services. She has stated that she does not believe the outcry. She has not been cooperative in following any requests regarding services that have been recommended. CPS has offered to set appointments after work hours as much as possible.

Case Summary Since Last Court Hearing:

Placements:

Currently placed in a therapeutic foster home. The child has difficulty following rules and needs frequent redirection. The foster parents feel all necessary services are in place. They are committed to keeping her long term if necessary.

Education:

Child A: Third grade. Her last grades consisted of, Math 60, Language Arts 70, History 76, Science 53. She requires one on one instruction. Her last ARD was 12/01/2008. She requires frequent redirection and does not focus well in class.

Medical and Medications:

Child A: Her last physical was 03/25/08 and dental was 04/5/2008. No problems were noted in either exam. She is on the following medications: Abilify, 100 mg, for manic & mixed episodes of Bipolar II Disorder.

Therapy:

Child A: Family therapy w/Dr., 1/week. Goals: To continue with Play therapy sessions.

Relative: Individual and family therapy have been recommended but not set up or attended by the relative.

Relatives:

A home study is to be done on an uncle who has close contact with the family. The home study was ordered and has not been requested yet.

A home study is to be done on an aunt who does not have close contact with the rest of the family but is familiar to the children. The home study was ordered and has not been requested yet.

Visits:

Relative has missed several visits by canceling at the last minute. She does have transportation. She has cited her work as the reason. Visits have been set up after work hours and during her lunch hour but still have not attended. She does have some phone contact and calls regularly.

Paternity:

The dad took a paternity test on 10/1 and was ruled out as the father.

Aging Out Issues: The child is old enough to be involved in aging out services.

Concerns:

This case is nearly at the one-year mark. The aunt and other relative are unable and/or unwilling to be responsible for the child. This relative is the only one who has had any involvement in the case and she has made very little progress addressing the critical issues and has not demonstrated a desire to do so. The child is exhibiting stress related to not knowing what is going to happen.

Outstanding Issues:

1. The mother has not been found and served
2. There is a court of continuing jurisdiction.
3. A petition to terminate has not been filed.
4. The CPS plan needs to be changed to Adoption.
5. The home study has not been initiated.

Recommendations:

CASA respectfully recommends the following:

1. An attorney be appointed for the unknown father
2. Service be completed regarding the mother
3. The issue of the court of continuing jurisdiction be immediately remedied.
4. CPS change the plan to Adoption.
5. A petition to terminate parental rights be filed.
6. A final hearing be set to terminate parental right.
7. The home study be initiated immediately and completed in a timely manner.

CASA/GAL

Marcia Hogle
CASA Program Director



In-Service Training Sheet

Name: Ann Smith

Date: 01/15/09

Date	Training (book, movie, class, seminar, internet, etc.)	Time spent
01/15/09	CAC Workshop	2.00 hrs
01/16/09	Read book "A Boy Called It"	8.00 hrs
01/18/09	Watched video "Love & Diane"	2.00 hrs



CASA ACTIVITY TIME LOG

Child's Name The Child

Volunteer's Signature

CASA Volunteer

Cause Number 000,000,000

Supervisor's Signature

Marcia Hogle

Month January 2009

Please remember to fill out your Monthly Summary on the back!

Please put only one case on a sheet and only one month on a sheet.

Contacts

Date	Person Contacted Or Event	Relationship To Child	Contact Type	Hrs	Min
1/2/09	The Foster Mother	Foster mother for the child	Face Phone Written <input checked="" type="radio"/> Email		10
1/3/09	Middle School	The Childs School	F <input checked="" type="radio"/> P W <input type="radio"/> E	3	00
1/7/09	Marcia Hogle	CASA supervisor	F <input type="radio"/> P W <input checked="" type="radio"/> E		10
1/7/09	CPS	CPS Caseworker	F <input type="radio"/> P W <input checked="" type="radio"/> E		10
1/26/09	The Foster Mother	Foster dad for the child	F <input checked="" type="radio"/> P W <input type="radio"/> E		15
1/30/09	CPS	CPS Adoption unit caseworker	F <input type="radio"/> P W <input checked="" type="radio"/> E		15

Due by the 10th of the month
Please put training hours on a separate sheet

Monthly Case Summary

(Please note any important changes such as addresses, phone numbers, placements, case worker, therapist, school, etc.) Give a summary of the progress, continuing problems/issues.

For each child:

The Child is in the Adoption Unit at CPS.

The Child is seven years old and attends Elementary School; placement is in group homes. She continues to do well in her school, and has adapted well to the group home. She is not on medication.

For each parent:

The Father– biological father

The Mother- biological mother.

Parental rights have been terminated by the court.

Service Plan problems:

N/A

Relative information/issues/home studies:

No family members were acceptable to DFPS.

What needs to be done?

The Child is having so many problems; any prospective adoptive family must be able to handle such issues.

Recommendations:

-Immediate adoption

-Mr & Mrs. ...of Plainview are willing and able to adopt The child through CHoL.

-Mr. & Mrs. ... have been approached to adopt. This CASA would not be opposed to that.



CASA RESOURCE DIRECTORY

RESOURCE	ADDRESS/PHONE NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
211 Information & Referral Number	211	A national initiative providing quick, easy to remember telephone number for finding human services and referrals
Buckner Baptist Children's Home	2101 Broadway Street Lubbock, TX 79401 (806) 771-0938	Foster Child Placement Agency
Bair Foundation	4601 W Loop 289 Lubbock, TX 79414 (806) 797-2247	Foster Child Placement Agency
Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-252-5400	Hotline for reporting child neglect and abuse
Children's Advocacy Center (CAC)	720 Texas Ave Lubbock, TX 79401 (806) 740-0251	Provides counseling and support services to victims of physical and sexual abuse
Children's Home of Lubbock	4404 Idalou Road Lubbock, TX 79403 (806) 762-0481	Foster Child Placement Agency
Children's Protective Services (CPS)	5402 S Avenue Q Lubbock, TX 79401 (806) 762-2680	Investigates reports of abuse and neglect of children; responsible for placing children in foster care; providing services to children and families; providing services to youth aging out in foster; and placing children in adoptive homes.
Gateways Counseling	2232 Indiana Ave # 1 Lubbock, TX 79410 (806) 799-1033	Individual, couples, family, and group counseling; psychological evaluations and testing
Gatlin, Richard, M.H.R.	#19 Briercroft Office Park Lubbock, TX 79412 (806) 767-9007	Individual / Family / Group Counseling
Hoke, William E., Ph.D	5502 58th St # 100 Lubbock, TX 79414 (806) 799-3011	Psychological Evaluation
Hope for Tomorrow	4402 85th St Lubbock, TX 79424 (806) 698-8625	Foster Child Placement Agency
Lubbock Regional MHMR Center	1602 10th Street PO Box 2828, Lubbock, TX 79408 (806) 766-0310	Offers services to persons with mental illness, mental retardation, chemical dependency, and HIV
Lutheran Social Services	9812 Vinton Ave Lubbock, TX 79424 (806) 698-0790	Foster Child Placement Agency
Managed Care	2345 50th Street, Suite 100 Lubbock, TX 79412 (806) 780-8300	Inpatient / Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment
Methodist Children's Home	4601 50 th St Lubbock, TX 79414 (806) 792-0138	Foster Child Placement Agency
South Plains Children's Shelter	(806) 747-4933	Short term emergency shelter for victims of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
Wilbanks, Brenda, Ed.D	#19 Briercroft Office Park Lubbock, TX 79412 (806) 767-9007	Individual / Family / Group Counseling
Women's Protective Services (WPS)	(806) 747-6491 or 800-736-6491	Provides counseling and shelter to victims of domestic abuse



CASA ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYM / ABBREVIATION / KEYWORD	TITLE	DESCRIPTION
AAL	Attorney Ad Litem	Attorney appointed by court to represent the child(ren)
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	Federal Legislation passed in 1990 prohibiting discrimination based on disabilities.
AP	Alleged Perpetrator	Individual who has been reported to have committed an act of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child for whom that person has responsibility for care, custody, or welfare.
APS	Adult Protective Services	Division of Tx DFPS that is responsible for investigating abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities.
ARD	Admissions Review Dismissal	Committee that develops an individual education plan for a child with disabilities after assessing the child's needs. The plan must be reviewed and updated annually.
ASFA	Adoption and Safe Families Act	Federal legislation passed in 1997 to ensure the safety and well-being of children and their families.
CAC	Children's Advocacy Center	Agency that interviews and offers support to child abuse victims
CARE		Sexual abuse physical examination.
CPS	Children's Protective Services (agency of DFPS)	Division of Tx DFPS that is responsible for investigating abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children.
CVS	Conservatorship	Court-ordered appointment of a person or agency to have control over another person(s) or entity.
CW	Caseworker	Person within an agency designated to be responsible for following through with a case.
D/A assess	Drug & alcohol assessment	Examination used to determine if a person abuses alcohol and/or drugs.
DA	District Attorney	Primary lawyer employed by the District court.
DADS	Dept. of Aging & Disability Services (agency of TX Health and Human Services)	Established in September 2004 to provide a comprehensive array of aging and disability services, supports and opportunities that are easily accessed in local communities.
DFPS	Dept. of Family and Protective Services (agency of TX Health and Human Services)	Agency created to protect children, the elderly, and people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation by involving clients, families and communities.
DNR	Do Not Resuscitate	A written order from a doctor that resuscitation should not be attempted if a person suffers cardiac or respiratory arrest.
ECI/DEBT	Early childhood intervention/ Development Education before Three	Statewide program for children, birth to three, with disabilities and developmental delays, by supporting families to help their children reach their potential through developmental services.
Fa	Father	Father of child(ren)
FAD	Foster/Adopt	CPS program that recruits, develops, verifies, licenses, and monitors Foster/Adoptive homes.
FAME	Family Advocate Model for Empowerment	A model that assists families in recognizing their strengths and challenges, and then use that to help them resolve problems.
FBSS	Family Based Safety Services (provided through CPS)	Protective services provided to any family that needs assistance to reduce the likelihood that a child in the family will be abused or neglected in the foreseeable future.
FGC	Family Group Conference	Conference held with parents, family members, and CPS to develop the service plan for parent(s) to work to achieve family reunification.
Fm/Fd	Foster mom/Foster dad	
Fp	Foster parents	
GAL	Guardian Ad Litem	Advocate appointed to represent the best interest of the child(ren).

GED	General Education Diploma	A battery of five tests which, when passed, certify that the taker has the equivalent of an American high school diploma.
Hp	House parent	
HSEGH	Health, Social Education & Genetic History	Twelve months after a child's initial placement into substitute care, or within 30 days of a referral being sent to the adoption unit to seek an adoptive placement, the child's worker prepares an in-depth report on the child's health, social, educational, and genetic history (HSEGH).
HV	Home visit	
ICPC	Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children	The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) is a uniform law enacted by all fifty states to ensure that children placed <i>out of their home state</i> receive the same protections and services that would be provided, if they remained in their home state.
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act	Federal legislation that gives tribal governments a strong voice concerning Native American child custody proceedings by allocating tribes sole jurisdiction over states.
Intake	Report from CPS hotline call	Initial report sent from the CPS hotline to the field
INV	Investigation	The process of gathering information by a trained investigator of APS regarding an alleged incident(s) of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
ISP	Individualized Service Plan	Service plan developed based on the individual needs of the child.
JMC	Joint Managing Conservatorship	Sharing of the rights, privileges, duties and powers relating to their child by two parties, even if the exclusive power to make certain decisions may be awarded to one party.
LOC	Level of Care (1-Primary, 2-Specialized, 3-Intermediate, 4-Therapeutic, 5-Intensive, 6-In-Patient)	Refers to level of care provided by various substitute care facilities.
Ma/Mu	Maternal aunt/Maternal uncle	
MDNG	Medical neglect	Failure to provide medical care to a child resulting in illness, poor health, or medical condition.
Mgp	Maternal grandparents	
MHMR	Mental Health Mental Retardation	Public system serving Texans with mental illness, mental retardation, and chemical dependency.
Mo	Mother	
NSUP	Neglectful Supervision	Placing a child in or failing to remove a child from a situation that results in bodily injury or a substantial risk of immediate harm to the child or a substantial risk of sexual conduct harmful to the child.
OV	Oldest Victim	
P1	Priority One – investigation	Highest priority case – must respond within 24 hours.
P2	Priority Two - investigation	Second highest priority – must respond within 72 hours.
Pa/Pu	Paternal aunt/ Paternal uncle	
PAL	Preparation for Adult Living	Program implemented to ensure that older youth in substitute care are prepared for their departure from the CPS care and support.
PD	Program Director	
Pgp	Paternal grandparents	
PHAB	Physical Abuse	Physical injuries resulting from abuse.

PHNG	Physical Neglect	Failure to provide the child with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services had been offered and refused.
PMC	Permanent Managing Conservatorship	CPS is made permanently responsible for a child as the result of a district court order .
PPM	Permanent Planning Team	Permanency Planning meeting is the umbrella term used in substitute care to describe the service planning model CPS uses to address permanency issues for the child.
RAPR	Refusal of Parental Rights	One of the dispositions to allegations in an investigation.
RTB	Reason to believe	One of the dispositions to allegations in an investigation.
Ruled Out	Investigation ruled out	One of the dispositions to allegations in an investigation.
SPC	South Plains Children's Shelter	A short-term emergency care shelter for abused children located in Lubbock.
SXAB	Sexual Abuse	
TARE	Texas Adoption Resource Exchange	TX state database of children eligible for adoption.
TDPRS	TX Dept. of Protective & Regulatory Services	The agency of the Texas Health and Human Services System that is responsible for managing community-based programs that prevent delinquency, abuse, neglect and exploitation of Texas children, elderly and disabled adults.
TFC	Texas Family Code	
TMC	Temporary Managing Conservatorship	CPS is made temporarily responsible for a child as the result of a district court order .
UTD	Unable to Determine	One of the dispositions to allegations in an investigation.
WPS	Women's Protective Services	Local domestic violence shelter for women and children. Also offers domestic violence counseling.
YFT	Youth for Tomorrow	Residential shelter for at-risk youth ages 11-17 who have been abandoned, abused, or otherwise alienated from family and community.