


Writing it Right!

How to Structure and Write an Effective CASA Report

Role of a CASA

- Gather information about the child;
- Advocate for a child's best interest.



Primary Advocacy Tool

- Your court report
 - Your chance to tell the judge what is going on with this child and family.
 - Documents your visits with the child.
 - Provides a credible basis and frame of reference for your recommendations.

Getting Started with Your Report

- Check-in with your Advocate Supervisor!
- The CASAs Report is a summary of key information since the last report.
- Keep your report **child-focused** and **fact-based**
- Write with your principal reader in mind:
THE JUDGE!

Who reads the CASA report?

- Judge
- Child over the age of 12
- Attorneys
- CSW
- Parents
- Other parties to the case

Keys to Good Report Writing

- Accuracy (to be exact, free from errors and misstatements)
- Brevity (to be concise and complete)
- Clarity (to be easily understood)
- Strengths-based language

Communicate with your AS!

Important Guidelines

- Follow the format provided;
- Use short, clear sentences;
- Narrative is written in third person;
- Be sure all names and titles are correct;
- Use examples of specific behaviors you have observed rather than your feelings;
- State source of info for reported behavior you did not personally see or hear, get specific examples.

Important Guidelines Cont.

- Try not to repeat info contained in attached document;
- Reference attached documents by name, source, and date;
- Do not include interviews with CSW or attorney;
- Do not recount interviews word-for-word;
- Relate your recommendations to the content of the report

Common Court Report Red Flags!

- Including your opinion throughout the report.
- Assumptions vs. facts.
- Disclosing sensitive information without speaking to your advocate supervisor (see page 7 of court report handbook)
- Portraying the child, case parties or family in a negative light.

Editing your Court Report



- Give yourself time – editing is a process!
- Your advocate supervisor will provide feedback on your report.
- Discuss and clarify any edits/questions with your advocate supervisor.
- Your supervisor has final approval over your court report.

Structure of the Report

History

Example:

Jennifer is a 10 year old girl (DOB 06-11-2005) who came to the court's attention on January 15, 2016.

A petition was sustained on March 10, 2016 pursuant to WIC 300(b) and (g). Family reunification services have been ordered for mother.

ICWA does not apply.
CASA was appointed on April 1, 2016.

Current Status

Provides a snapshot of child's current situation.

No opinions/feelings, just information!

Do this:

Brian is in the third grade and currently attends Baldwin Hills Elementary.

Not this:

Brian loves his third grade teacher and looks forward to going to school.

Child's position

- Do not editorialize or add your own interpretation.
- If child is non-verbal CASA can state relevant observations:

Example: Jessica continues to struggle to speak and mostly communicates with sounds, physical gestures, and cries.

CASA Interviews

Don't!

- **Rose Jones, Relative:** On 3/6/17, Ms. Jones stated that Jennifer refused to go to school and she contacted the Wraparound Team. On 3/10/17, she called the CASA and said that Jennifer refused to go to school again and she told the Wraparound Team. The CASA is concerned about Jennifer's repeated refusal to go to school. On 3/15/17, she said that everything was fine and that she has been able to handle Jennifer's behavioral issues. She said that she is having trouble finding a soccer team for Jennifer since she does not have internet access and needs some help. On 3/20/17, during the CFT meeting she said that she is grateful for the support of the Wraparound team.

CASA interviews - continued

DO!

- **Rose Jones, Maternal Grandmother:** Ms. Jones stated that everything was fine and that she has been able to handle Jennifer's behavioral issues with the help of the Wraparound Team and is grateful for their support. She said that Jennifer had two incidences when she refused to go to school. Ms. Jones reported she needs assistance locating a soccer team for Jennifer.

CASA met with Ms. Jones on 3/6/17 and spoke to her by phone on 3/10/17, 3/15/17 and 3/20/17.

Summary and Position

- Summarizes the content of your report.
- Provides an opportunity for CASAs to state their opinion.

Recommendations

- Should be backed up by the contents of your report.
- Always discuss your recommendations with your Supervisor.
 - This is especially important when you are making a recommendation about continuing or terminating family reunification services.
- It's OK for you report to NOT have a recommendation!
