

WRITING IT RIGHT!



HOW TO STRUCTURE AND WRITE
AN EFFECTIVE CASA REPORT

COVID-19 UPDATED ON COURT HEARINGS

- Court is on limited operations through June 22nd. They are only hearing emergency matters.
- Almost 36,000 hearings have been continued. Depending on the case, it may be several months before your case has a hearing.
- What to do in the meantime?

ROLE OF A CASA



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

IMPORTANT ADVOCACY TOOL

1 **See Wain, COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE**
 2 **CASA OF LOS ANGELES**
 3 201 Centre Plaza Drive, Room 1100
 4 Monterey Park, CA 91754-2158
 5 323-859-2888

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 7 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**
 8 **FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**
 9 **COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE REPORT**

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 11 In the Matter of: Case No. ABC123456
 12 Ariad Trinos Date of Hearing: 12/03/2016
 13 A Child Department: CC-415
 14 Type of Hearing: PDS

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 16 **CASE HISTORY:**
 17 Ariad Trinos, thirteen years old (DOB 9/30/2003), initially came to the Court's attention
 18 in October 2003. A petition was sustained December 2003 Pursuant to WIC 309 (a) and (b).
 19 Family reunification was maintained for mother, Mary Trinos on July 2005 and father, Joe
 20 Trinos, passed away in May 2006.
 21 ICWA does not apply.
 22 CASA was appointed on 4/16/14.







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 24 **CURRENT STATUS:**
 25 Current Placement: Ariad is currently placed with an ITA Agency Childcare's Business
 26 resource family Andrew and Teresa Holt. The Holt's want to adopt Ariad.
 27 Family: The last known whereabouts of Ariad's biological mother, Mary Trinos, is the
 28 Century Regional Detention Facility in Lynwood, CA. Ariad has not had contact with her for
 29 more than two and half years.
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CASA Report - 1

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.

WHO READS THE CASA REPORT?

 <p>Judge</p>	 <p>Child Over the age of 12</p>	 <p>Attorneys</p>
 <p>CSW</p>	 <p>Parents</p>	 <p>Other case parties</p>

GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR REPORT

#1: Check-in with your advocate supervisor!

Keep these things in mind:

- 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!

KEYS TO GOOD REPORT WRITING

#1: Communicate with your advocate supervisor!!!

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

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

#1: Use the Court Report Handbook!



- Follow the formatting 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!

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



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

- **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

FINALLY!

SAMPLE SUMMARY & CASA POSITION

CASA finds that Sam is a bright, independent young man who is struggling with living in an STRTP. While Sam is receiving mental health services at the STRTP, his therapist and STRTP case manager report that he is leaving placement without permission and not following the rules of school and placement. CASA and the team have frequently addressed this with Sam, but he feels his restrictions on his visits with his sister and his lack of activities at the STRTP are unfair and he has to take matters into his own hands. CASA also feels like these restrictions have been the main reason for Sam leaving placement and has observed that Sam does better when he has consistent things to look forward to.

CASA is recommending that Sam be provided with an opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities outside the STRTP. Sam has specifically expressed in boxing classes. Additionally, CASA is advocating for visits with Sam's older sister, Kimberly, to be scheduled more consistently and for phone calls to occur between visits. CASA feels like having these outlets will help Sam reduce the desire to leave placement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

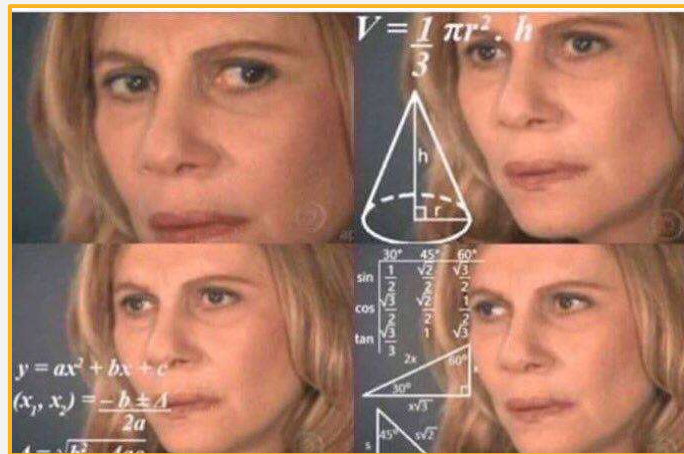
- Should be backed up by the contents of your report.
- Should be appropriate for the hearing type.
- Always discuss your recommendations with your supervisor.
 - This is especially important when you are making a recommendation about continuing or terminating family reunification services.
- **It's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

RECOMMENDATION

Which one of these is NOT an appropriate recommendation?

- a) Sam to remain suitably placed at the STRTP home.
- b) DCFS to ensure Sam has weekly visits with his sister Kimberly.
- c) DCFS to make best efforts to enroll Sam in boxing classes.
- d) The STRTP is to transport Sam to his boxing classes.

POLL-APALOOZA!



THANK YOU!!

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