



Virtual Report Building for CASAs

Building rapport is the process of developing a connection and understanding with someone else. Rapport is a process and can take time, especially when face-to-face visits aren't possible. It's also important to keep in mind that rapport can ebb and flow across relationships and there will be days when you don't feel that connection.

What can CASAs do to build rapport in a virtual environment?

Find Your Communication Style

- Video is always good for making connections, especially in your initial meetings with youth/child. Don't take it personally if a child/youth doesn't turn on their camera - understand that a youth may not have a private place where they feel comfortable chatting on video or feel up for it.
- Be aware of "[Zoom Fatigue](#)"! : Video chatting with your child/youth after a long day of online classes might not be the best time for them to engage in long conversations. Be aware of Zoom Fatigue for yourself too! If you are not fully present, your child/youth will see/hear that.
- Involve the caregiver!: Depending on the age of the youth/ child they may require their caregiver to help log on to video chats, so it's important for a CASA to communicate with caregiver and keep the caregiver's schedule in mind.
- Even though we may seem more available in this virtual world, be aware of schedules. Note typical dinner times, and therapy or school schedules so you don't call during these times.
- [Active listening](#) over the phone or video will require more verbal cues – say their name when you greet them, ask open-ended questions and reflect back the young person's words or feelings.

Keep Communication Open

- If you are planning your first virtual CASA visit, reach out to the child/youth by phone call or text prior to the meeting to do a quick introduction and explain your first virtual meeting. This preps the child/youth for understanding who you are and can take some of that pressure out of the first visit.
- Let your child/youth know you are there for them by reaching out via text or phone in-between your monthly visits – but don't expect that they will always respond!

Keep Communication Personal & Honest

- Spend time getting to know the youth before you jump into what you can do for them. Get to know their interests and their perception of their needs.
- Be patient. It may seem like there is more pressure to "get the info across" or fill space with conversation, but youth are needing more unstructured connection time.
- Show up as a "whole person". This is not an easy time for any of us and it's important to acknowledge the struggles and that this is not normal. Having candid conversation about the youth's feelings and having the adult share similar feelings can help a young person feel like they are not alone. (Note: When sharing personal info, make sure the focus of the conversation stays on the youth and that the conversation does not center on the CASAs feelings/needs).
- Prepare to be tested! Everyone is going through a lot and your youth may not always feel up for connecting and it may take longer to build that rapport. Know that it's not personal and just by being there, you are doing a lot.