

# Developing and Maintaining Effective Strategies for Collaborative Relationships with your Juvenile Court and County DFCS

PRESENTERS:

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# Disclaimer

- ▶ All information provided by the presenters is based upon their own opinions and does not represent any agency, or governmental organization. For specific questions regarding any information contained within this presentation, please consult with an attorney.

# Session Agenda

- ▶ Understanding Various Elements of Effective Collaboration
- ▶ Strategies for Collaboration Outside of Hearings
- ▶ Methods for Collaboration in Relation to Child-Welfare Proceedings
- ▶ Ensuring all Partners are Talking the Same Language
- ▶ CASA and the Court: Sharing One Mutual Goal, Exploring the Judge's Role
- ▶ Judicial Collaboration
- ▶ Questions and Closing

# Use of Interactive Polling - Poll Everywhere

- ▶ Text Recipient: 22333
- ▶ Message Contents: CHRISTOPHERH591

# How effective is your local CASA's collaborative relationship with your juvenile court?

Non-Collaborative **A**

Collaborative **B**

Very Collaborative **C**

# How effective is your local CASA's collaborative relationship with your county DFCS?

Non-Collaborative

Collaborative

Very Collaborative

# What challenges have you experienced that hinder collaborative relationships with your juvenile court or county DFCS?

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# Why is Collaboration Important

- ▶ Embraces diversity of child-welfare agencies
- ▶ Unifies common objectives
- ▶ Improves open and honest communication
- ▶ Prevents overlapping of services
- ▶ Enhances supportive environment for employees and families
- ▶ Assists in the identification of agency strengths



# Building Blocks for Effective Collaboration

- ▶ Trust
- ▶ Shared Interest & Relevance
- ▶ Leadership
- ▶ Collaborative Infrastructure
- ▶ Time & Patience
- ▶ Buy-in at all Levels

# Trust is Paramount

- ▶ “Cultivate relationships because the beginning of collaboration is all about relationships.” System of Care Director
- ▶ Strategies for Developing Trust in Multi-Agency Partnerships – Focus on Relationship Building
  - ▶ One-on-one Relationships
  - ▶ Special Group Events
  - ▶ Cross-System Training
  - ▶ Child-Welfare Committee Attendance
  - ▶ Listening

# Building Collaboration - Before the Call to Order

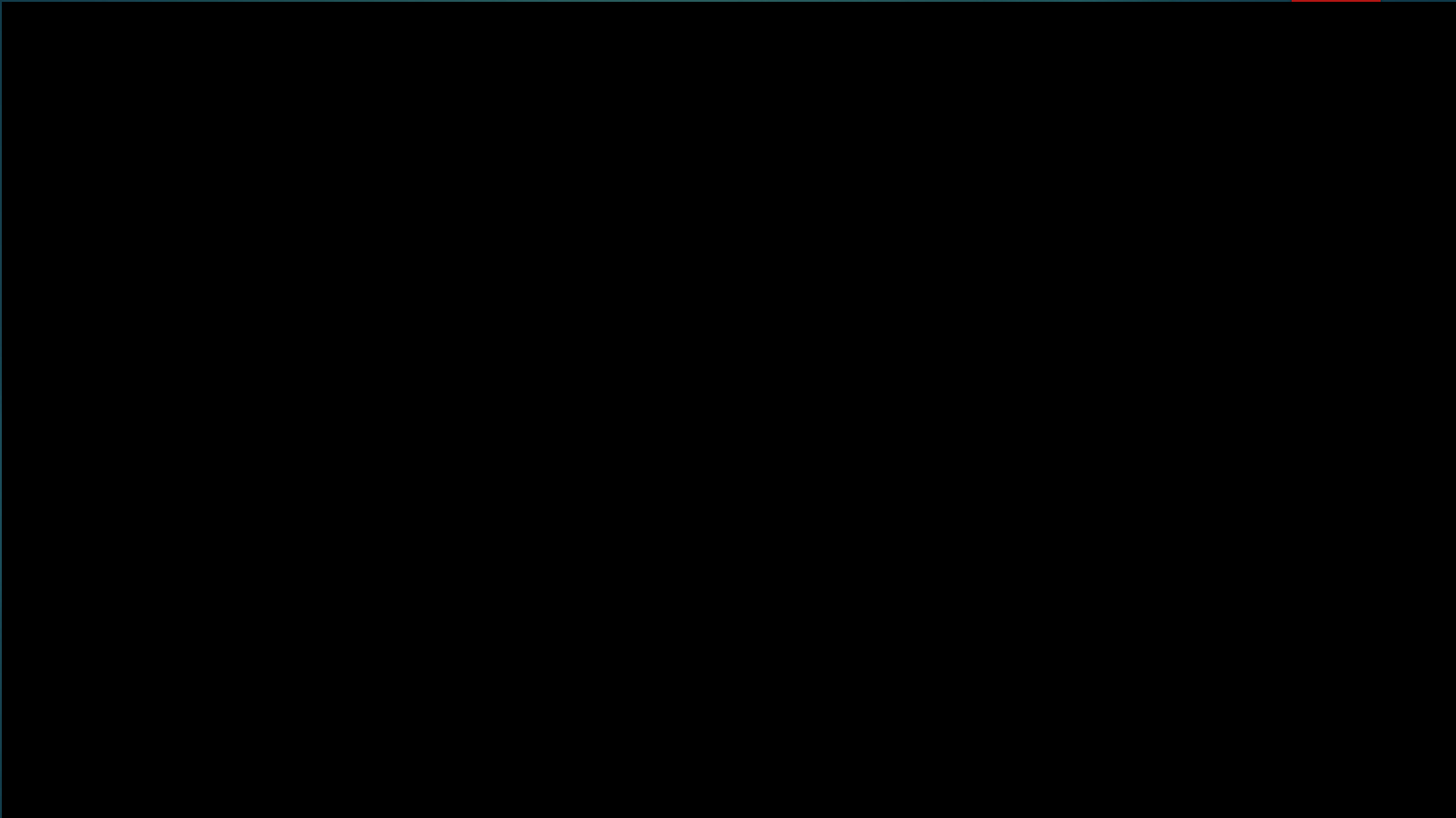
- ▶ Developing Effective Relationships Starts Before Any Hearings Take Place
  - ▶ Stakeholders Meetings
  - ▶ Staffing Attendance
  - ▶ CASA Trainings
  - ▶ Attending Mutual Events
  - ▶ Proactive Communication and Outreach with Case Managers
  - ▶ Public Relations

# Tools for Collaboration Associated with Hearings

- ▶ CASAs sitting in front of the bar
- ▶ Family Treatment Court Team Member
- ▶ Distribution of Court Reports
- ▶ Utilization of CASA Visitation Center – Services to Parents and Dept.
- ▶ Guardianship Transfers from Probate Court
- ▶ CASAs Welcome During In-Chambers Meetings

# Effective Communication is a Key to Effective Collaboration

- ▶ Reasons why Communication is important:
  - ▶ Builds and Maintains Relationships
  - ▶ Facilitates Innovation
  - ▶ Builds an Effective Team
  - ▶ Provides for Appropriate Management of Team
  - ▶ Contributes to the Growth of the Team
  - ▶ Ensures Transparency
- ▶ But we've all seen teams have poor communication...



# CASA Court Reports

- ▶ This is the Primary Method CASAs Communicate with Parties in Dependency Cases
  - ▶ State Guidelines for CASA Reports:
    - Background History
    - Placement (adjustment) & Visitation (degree of participation)
    - Sibling and relative connections
    - Parental Info (Housing, job status, mental health, needed services)
    - Compliance with court order and case plan
    - Children's education
    - Children's emotional/physical needs (WELL-BEING)
    - Counseling, medical, ILP, RPP & normalcy, cultural considerations
    - Children's wishes
    - Services children receiving
    - Concerns for the court's attention
    - Recommendations

# Best Interest Statute

## § 15-11-26. *Best interests of child*

Whenever a ***best interests*** determination is required, the court shall consider and evaluate all of the factors affecting the ***best interests*** of the child in the context of such child's age and developmental needs. Such factors include areas of child safety, bonding, familial attachments, stability, education, community ties, etc.


A Specific Example:

**(3)**The love, affection, bonding, and emotional ties existing between such child and his or her siblings, half siblings, and stepsiblings and the residence of such other children;



# CASA And The Court





# Our Mutual Goal : Success, Longevity and Sustainability of the CASA Program

- ▶ Establish a Working Understanding of the Relationship (MOU)
- ▶ Regularly and Meaningfully Communicate with CASA leadership
- ▶ Identify the specific needs in your jurisdiction

# Develop a Memorandum of Understanding Address The Following Issues:

- ▶ The types of cases appropriate for CASA volunteer appointment
- ▶ When a CASA should be appointed (what stage of the case?)
- ▶ Protocol for the referral of appointments by the Court
- ▶ Establishing the CASA volunteer's role
- ▶ The format and distribution of the CASA reports
- ▶ The court's expectation for Screening and Training Volunteers
- ▶ The development of a Conflict of Interest Policy
- ▶ The development of a protocol for addressing problems that arise

# Memorandum of Understanding Continued....

- ▶ The development of a protocol for court input regarding program functions and activities
- ▶ The development of a protocol for volunteer access to court records

# Communication Between CASA Leadership And The Court Is Essential

- ▶ Expectations of volunteers
- ▶ CASA volunteer access to records
- ▶ CASA volunteer access to the child
- ▶ Volunteer courtroom observation
- ▶ Grant applications that require Court support
- ▶ National CASA Standards, State and Local Rules
- ▶ Expansion or Strengthening the program
- ▶ Stakeholder issues



# Embrace and Encourage Volunteer Diversity

Translation Can't Be Lost. Culture Can't Be Misrepresented.

Gender

Race

Ethnicity

Culture

Sexual Identity



# How do you ensure the recruitment efforts address the need for volunteer diversity in your CASA program?

# How can the juvenile court judge assist in these same recruitment efforts?

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# The Judge's Role



# The Judge's Role Protector and Promotor

The Judge can/should:

- ▶ Educate the community about CASA
- ▶ Train new CASA volunteers
- ▶ Swear in advocates
- ▶ Encourage citizens to become advocates
- ▶ Hold stakeholder meetings
- ▶ Evaluate the program
- ▶ Be a Champion/ Promotor of the Program






# Resources

*The Judicial Role in Creating and Supporting CASA/GAL Programs,*  
Judge Leonard Edwards, Judge Ernestine Gray, Judge J. Dean Lewis

“The Juvenile Court and the Role of the Juvenile Judge” by Leonard P. Edwards, published in *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, Vol. 43(2), (1992)

[http://www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtJSJ7MPIsE/b.5332553/k.C946/Judicial\\_Resources.htm](http://www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtJSJ7MPIsE/b.5332553/k.C946/Judicial_Resources.htm)

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- ▶ What initiatives or practices work well in your jurisdictions that promotes collaboration with your juvenile court or local DFCS?

# Questions and Comments

