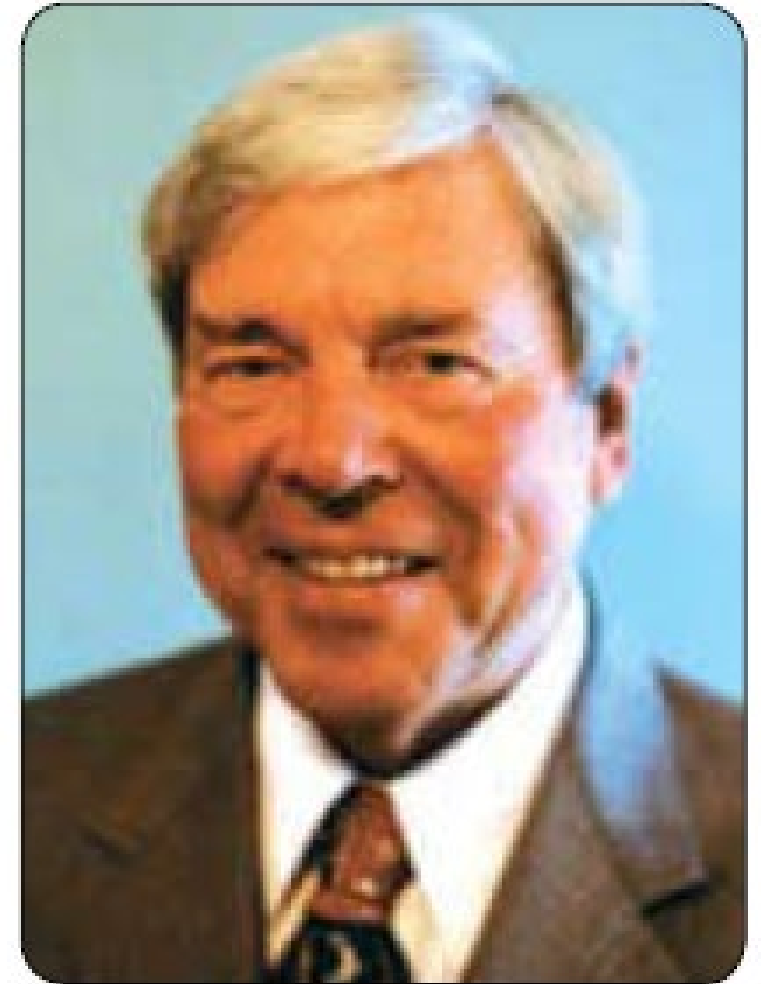




WRITING AN EFFECTIVE CASA REPORT

CASA Report is Critical

- Judge can only base decision on properly admitted evidence
- Provide unique info and strong recommendations → value CASA advocacy
- “CASA can spend numerous hours of intense work on any given case, but if the court reports doesn’t succinctly and effectively express what the CASA observes to be in the child’s best interest, then the judge cannot make the best decision.”

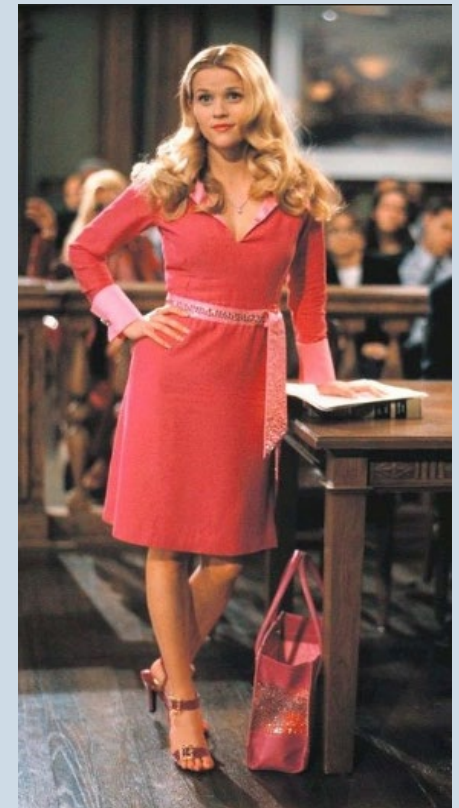


Report as Evidence

- A GAL's report is generally not admissible prior to the disposition hearing
 - *At dispositional type hearings, court may consider any evidence, including hearsay, that is relevant, reliable, and necessary to determine the needs of a dependent child*
 - *Hearsay evidence is not admissible over objection at adjudication and TPR*
- Prior to disposition hearing and upon request, parties and their attorneys have the opportunity to examine any written reports
- Parties have ability to challenge recommendations made by GAL or the factual basis for the recommendations
 - *A GAL, who is not the attorney for the child, may be called as a witness for cross examination regarding the report even if not identified as a witness*
- Report must be properly tendered

Offering Recommendations in Court

- Be ready to highlight most significant concerns and/or recommendations quickly
- Listen to witnesses' testimony
- Be prepared to support recommendations
- Tie remarks back to the best interest of the child
- Add unique information
 - *Try not to just reiterate what another party said*
 - *Raise points that have not yet been addressed*
 - *Raise issues that are important to child*



PREPARING REPORTS



What makes a
report/recommendation “effective”?

What Makes Report/Recommendations “Effective”?

- Persuasive
- Specific
- Objective
- Positive tone
- Further case progression
- Address safety, permanency, and well-being needs
- Promote the best interest of the child and familial connections
- Is supported by information obtained during the assessment
- Succinct
- Timely
- Followed by the Court/becomes part of the court order

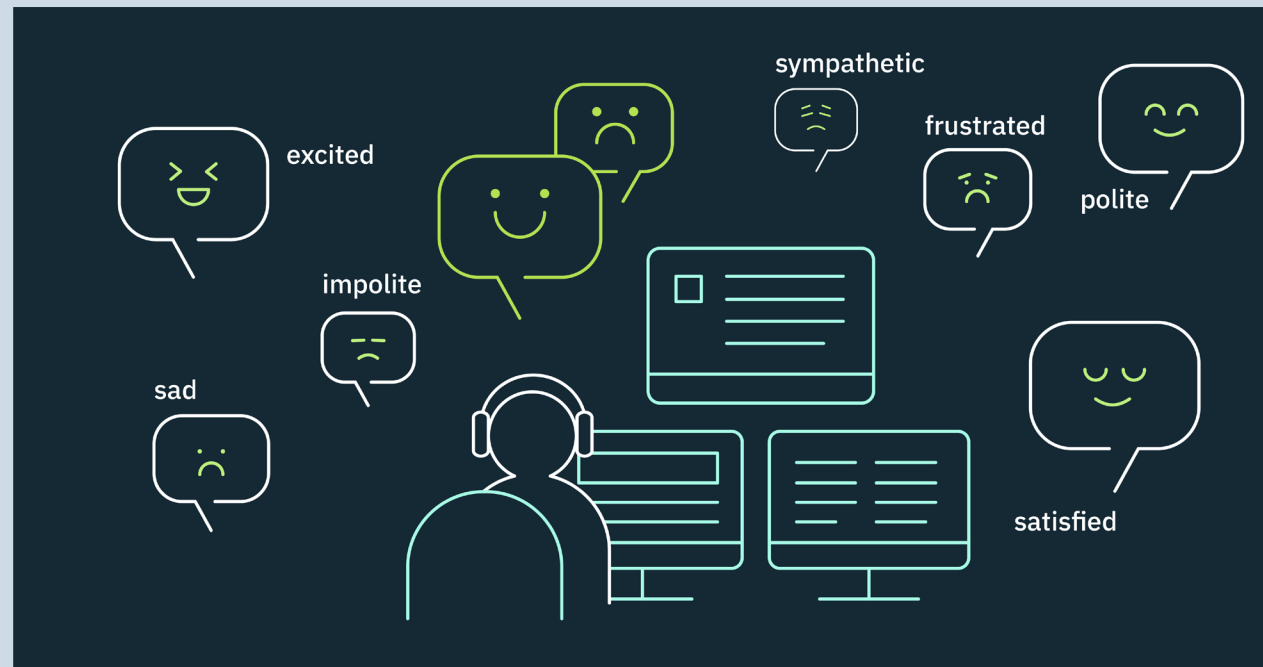
ANGELA & LORI'S TOP 10 REPORT-WRITING TIPS

1. Consider each case uniquely.



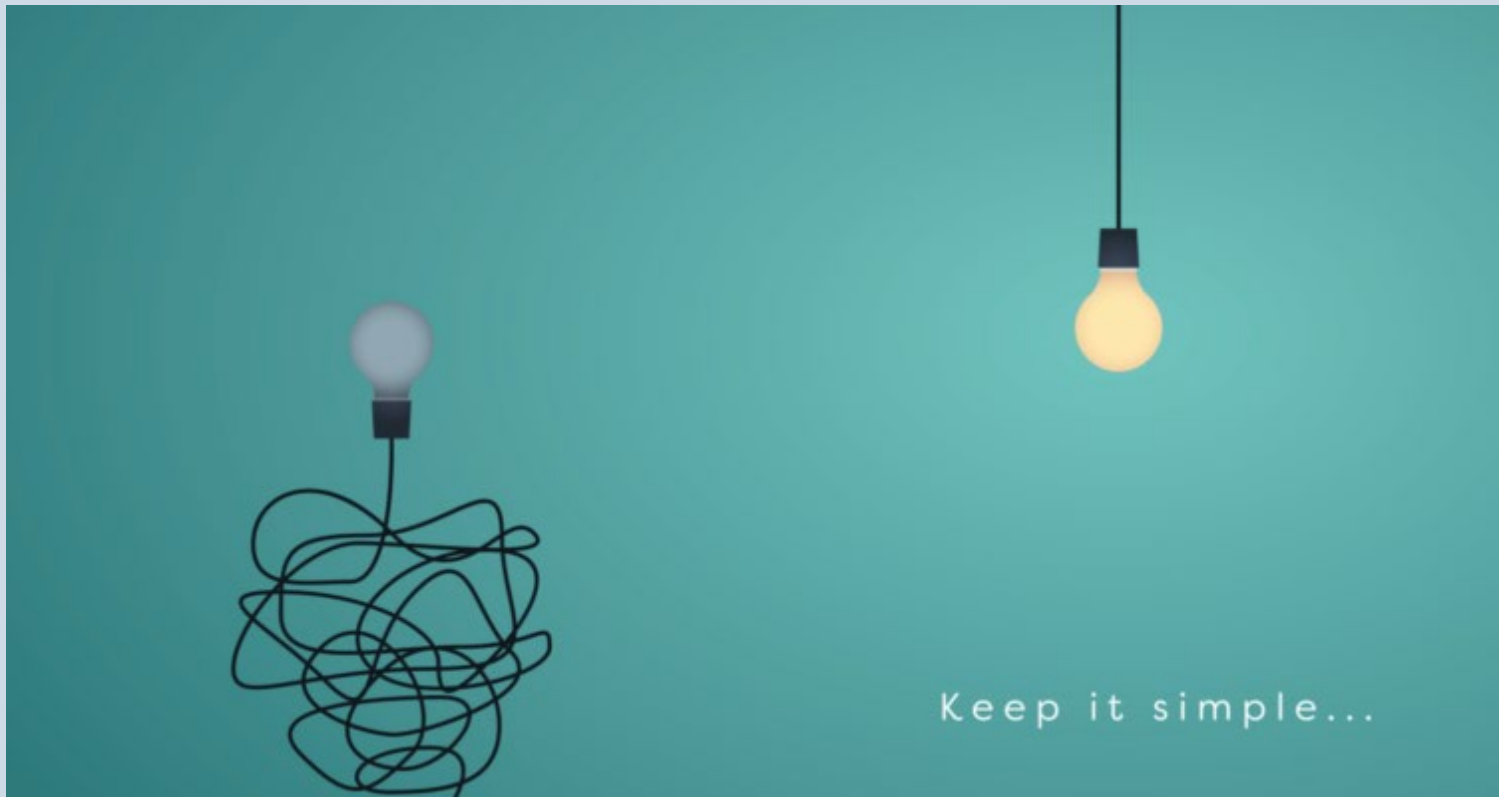
2. Tact, Tone, and Timing

- Check for negative emotion; use a resource lens
- Use clear, non-judgmental, diplomatic language
- Avoid adjectives and adverbs
- Eliminate opinions and add facts
- Remove personal pronouns, use third person
- Scrutinize report as opposing parties will; respectfully disagree



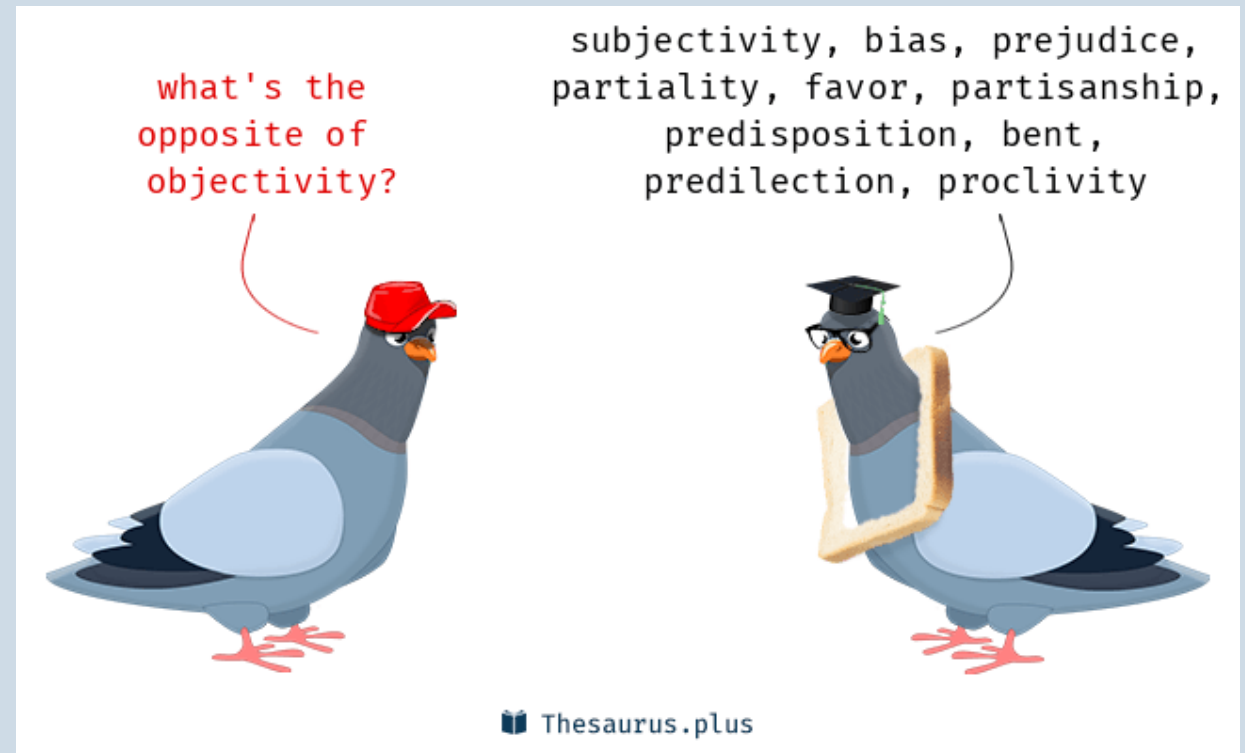
3. Ensure the appropriate length

- Eliminate redundancy
- Don't transcribe notes



4. Make fact-based, child-focused recommendations that are objective and persuasive

- Thorough, specific, and concise
- Must be able to tell CASA has a relationship with child, has visited, etc.
- Increase specificity and increase credibility
- Cite sources
- Address judge hot button issues



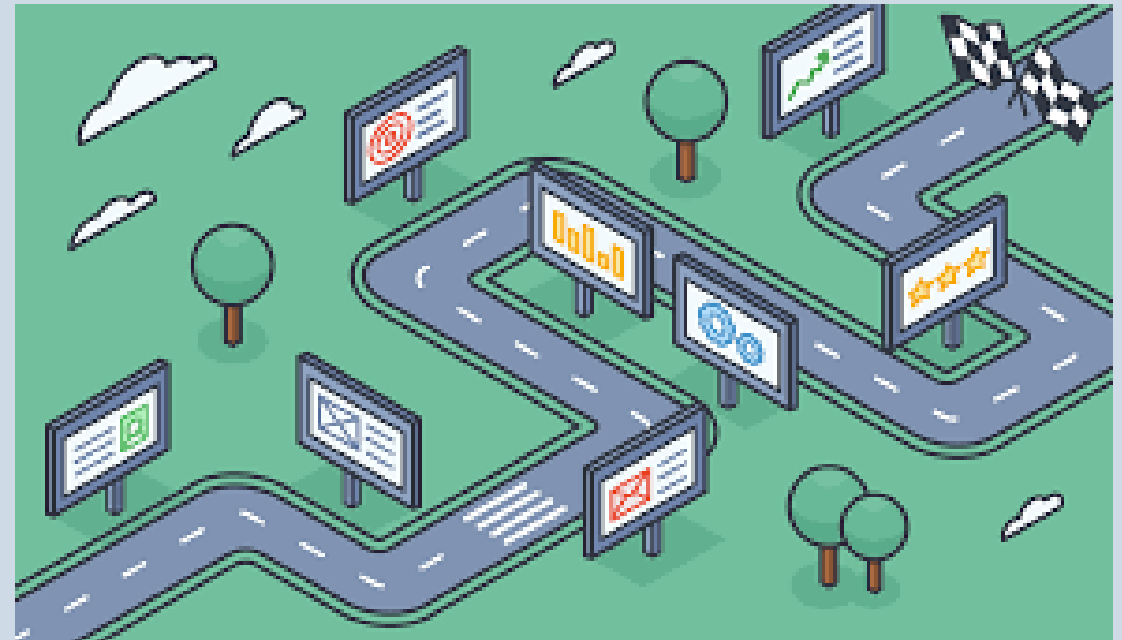
5. Get information firsthand—avoid making recommendations based on another entity's observations

- Cite your source
- Consider where else you could get additional information



6. Ensure recommendations have considered case plan and any court-ordered services/actions

- Recommend what is appropriate, even if not readily available
- Help make sure case plan makes reasonable accommodations if necessary
- Use consistent names and terminology
- Careful not to move the finish line



7. Support Recommendations with the best interest of the child factors

- “. . . Above all, this chapter shall be liberally construed to reflect that the paramount child welfare policy of this state is to determine and ensure the best interests of its children.” 15-11-1
- “To ensure that the health, safety, and bests interests of a child be the paramount concerns in all dependency proceedings.” 15-11-100
- “Whenever a best interests determination is required, the court shall consider and evaluate all the factors (20) affecting the best interests of the child in the context of such child’s age and developmental needs.” 15-11-26
- Safety and stability
 - *Bonding and attachment between child and parent (ex. Visitation)*
 - *Permanency and connections between siblings, relatives, & others*
 - *Well-being and community connections (ex. ILP services/activities → normalcy, productive adulthood)*
 - *Parties’ uniqueness and wishes*
- Every recommendation should be supported by applicable factors!

8. Use the Quick-Reference Guides


- Best Interest of the Child
- Role of the GAL
- Cultural Humility
- Access to Case Information
- Preliminary Protective Hearing
- Adjudication
- Locating Kin Caregivers
- Case Planning 1 & 2
- Supporting Kin Caregivers
- Disposition
- Placement Stability 1 & 2
- Review Hearing

Best Interests of the Child

In determining a child's best interests, a guardian ad litem shall consider and evaluate all of the factors affecting the best interests of a child in the context of a child's age and developmental needs.

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 shall include:

<p>The physical safety and welfare of such child, including food, shelter, health, and clothing;</p> <p>The love, affection, bonding, and emotional ties existing between such child and each parent or person available to care for such child;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>Such child's need for permanence, including such child's need for stability and continuity of relationships with his or her parent, siblings, other relatives, and any other person who has provided significant care to such child;</p> <p>Such child's sense of attachments, including his or her sense of security and familiarity, and continuity of affection for such child;</p> <p>The capacity and disposition of each parent or person available to care for such child to give him or her love, affection, and guidance and to continue the education and rearing of such child;</p> <p>The home environment of each parent or person available to care for such child considering the promotion of such child's nurturance and safety rather than superficial or material factors;</p> <p>The stability of the family unit and the presence or absence of support systems within the community to benefit such child;</p>	<p>The mental and physical health of all individuals involved;</p> <p>The home, school, and community record and history of such child, as well as any health or educational special needs of such child;</p> <p>Such child's community ties, including church, school, and friends;</p> <p>Such child's background and ties, including familial, cultural, and religious;</p> <p>The least disruptive placement alternative for such child;</p> <p>The uniqueness of every family and child;</p> <p>The risks attendant to entering and being in substitute care;</p> <p>Such child's wishes and long-term goals;</p> <p>The preferences of the persons available to care for such child;</p> <p>Any evidence of family violence, substance abuse, criminal history, or sexual, mental, or physical child abuse in any current, past, or considered home for such child;</p> <p>Any recommendation by a court appointed custody evaluator or guardian ad litem; and</p> <p>Any other factors considered by the court to be relevant and proper to its determination</p>
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CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN
GEORGIA

Created September 2014

- Non-reunification Hearing
- Permanency Options 1 & 2
- Permanency Plan Hearing
- Termination of Parental Rights Hearing
- Post-TPR Review Hearing
- Reinstatement of Parental Rights Hearing
- Trauma and Well-being 1 & 2
- Advocating for 0-5 1 & 2
- Education Advocacy
- Special-Education Advocacy
- Older Youth in Foster Care

9. Consider application of federal/state law & policy



10. Adhere to hearing timeframes and consider findings court is required to make at each hearing

Review Hearing

Held within 75 days of removal and 4 months after initial removal. Court has the discretion to schedule any subsequent review hearings as necessary.

To monitor progress on case plan goals and promote accountability of all parties and to determine if goals, services, and permanent plan are still appropriate.

At the initial review, the court shall approve the completion of the relative search, schedule the 4-month review, and determine:

Whether a child adjudicated as dependent continues to be dependent

Whether the existing case plan is still the best for the child and his or her family and whether any changes need to be made to the case plan

The extent of compliance with the case plan by all participants

The appropriateness of any recommended changes to such child's placement

Whether appropriate progress is being made on the permanency plan

Whether all legally required services are being provided to the dependent child, his or her foster parents, and his or her parent, guardian, or legal custodian

Whether visitation is appropriate and, if so, establish a reasonable visitation schedule

For a dependent child 14 years of age or older, whether services needed to transition from foster care to independent living are being provided

Whether reasonable efforts continue to be made to prevent or eliminate the necessity of removal and to reunify the family after removal

If at any review subsequent to the initial one, the court finds there is lack of substantial progress towards completion of the case plan, the court must order DFCS to develop non-reunification or concurrent case plan.

Created September 2014

At the periodic review, the court shall order one disposition:

Return a child to his parent, with or without conditions.

Allow the child to remain in current placement because it is appropriate for the child's needs.

Allow the child to continue in placement even though it is no longer appropriate and direct DFCS to submit a new plan in 10 days.

Make additional orders regarding case plan or placement to protect the child's best interest if DFCS failed in implementing plan or abused discretion.

CASA responsibilities prior to and during the hearing:

Continue to monitor the current placement, service delivery, and progress on the case plan and court order.

Consult with attorney and keep him or her updated regarding any important changes in circumstances.

Advocate for permanent placement of the child and inform court of parties' progress on case plan.

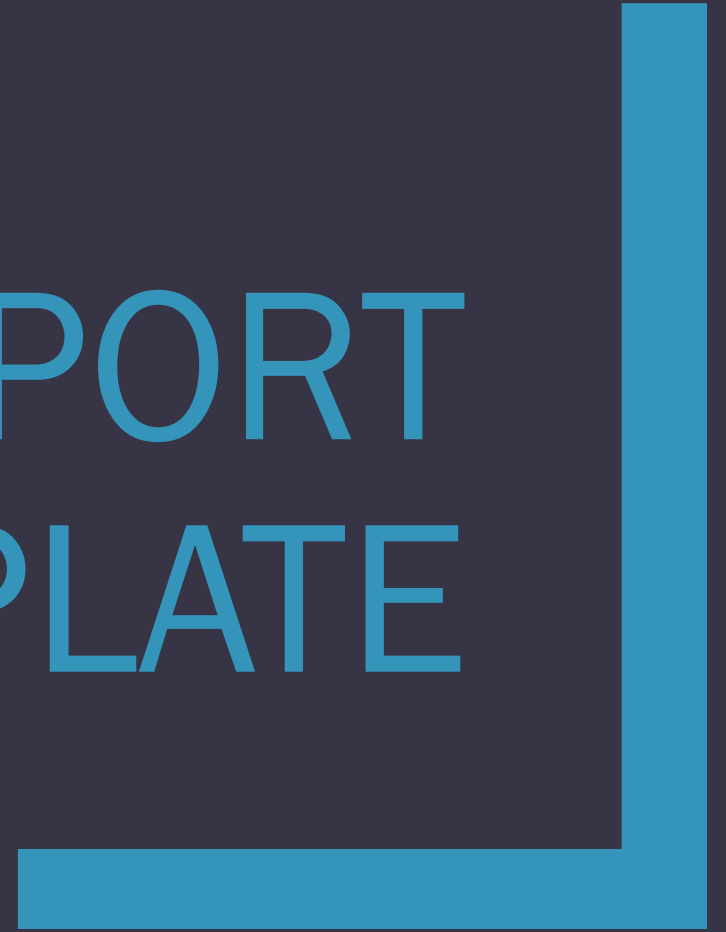
Identify and review other assessments or evaluations as needed.

Prepare report and be prepared to testify or make recommendations in court.

Consider all of the factors affecting the best interests of a child in the context of a child's age and developmental needs.



REPORT TEMPLATE



A New Template

- Statewide template in circulation since 2009
 - *CPRS*
- Report categorized by topic
- Template is shorter
 - *Streamlined by removing duplicative content*
 - *Recommendations w/ each topic, not separate*
- Seeks to build consistency with advocacy
 - *Utilizes pop-up instructional boxes*
 - *Uses headers/prompts that elicit unique information that CASA often acquires and shares*
- Focuses on the best interest of the child
- Embraces advocacy principles

CASA's Advocacy Principles

- Advocate from a trauma-informed perspective
- Promote kin-first philosophy
- Respect family integrity
- Remain culturally humble
- Seek to improve a child's experience in foster care

Minimum Statutory Requirements

- Provide written reports to the court and the parties on the child's best interests, including, but not limited to:
 - *recommendations regarding placement of such child,*
 - *updates on such child's adjustment to placement,*
 - *DFCS's and respondent's compliance with prior court orders and treatment plans,*
 - *such child's degree of participation during visitations,*
 - *and any other recommendations based on the best interests of the child;*

Assessment and Analysis

Provide recommendations for placement and permanency; highlight situations requiring urgency; description of parental progress; issues for court's attention; focus assessment to hearing purpose; use QRGs and BIC factors

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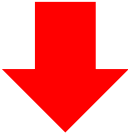
CASA Report V2: Assessment and Analysis

Assessment and Analysis

Provide recommendations for placement & permanency, highlight aspects of child's situation requiring urgency, description of parental progress, & issues for Court's consideration. Focus assessment to hearing purpose. (Use relevant QRGs and BIC factors.)

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You have characters left.

*** required fields**



Provide recommendations for placement & permanency, highlight aspects of child's situation requiring urgency, description of parental progress, & issues for Court's consideration. Focus assessment to hearing purpose. (Use relevant QRGs and BIC factors.)

Child's Wishes

Report Content

Provide the following:
child's wishes for
placement,
permanency,
visitation, education,
normalcy, and
anything else
relevant. This does
not include any CASA
recommendations
related to the child's
wishes. (BIC Factor(s):
14, 16)

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CASA Report V2: Child's Wishes

QRGs Best Interests of the Child (BIC) BIC Factors

Child's Wishes

Provide the following:
- child's wishes for placement, permanency, visitation,
education, normalcy, and anything else relevant.
This does not include any CASA recommendations related to the
child's wishes.
(BIC Factor(s): 14, 16)

(Maximum characters: 4000)
You have 4000 characters left.


Save Screen

Cancel

Previous

Next

* required fields



Provide the following:
- child's wishes for placement, permanency,
visitation, education, normalcy, and anything
else relevant.
This does not include any CASA
recommendations related to the child's wishes.
(BIC Factor(s): 14, 16)

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QRGs

Best Interests of the Child (BIC)

Best Interests of the Child (BIC)

Child's Wishes

Provisional Child's Wishes (BIC)

BIC Factors

visitation, ant. ons related to the

Role of the GAL

Cultural Humility

Access to Case Information

Preliminary Protective Hearing

Adjudication Hearing

Locating Kin Caregivers

Supporting Kin Caregivers

Case Planning, Part 1

Case Planning, Part 2

Disposition Hearing

Placement Stability, Part 1

Placement Stability, Part 2

Review Hearing

Non-Reunification Hearing

Permanency Options, Part 1

Permanency Options, Part 2

Permanency Plan Hearing

Termination of Parental Rights Hearing

Post-TPR Review Hearing

(Maximum characters: 4000)

You have characters left.

Save Screen

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Previous

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* required fields

QRG Screenshot

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QRGs	Best Interests of the Child (BIC)
------	-----------------------------------

BIC Factors

(BIC Factor(s): 14, 16)

You have 4000 characters left.

Ne

- 1) The physical safety and welfare of such child, including food, shelter, health, and clothing
- 2) The love, affection, bonding, and emotional ties existing between such child and each parent or person available to care for such child
- 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
- 4) Such child's need for permanence, including such child's need for stability and continuity of relationships with his or her parent, siblings, other relatives, and any other person who has provided significant care to such child
- 5) Such child's sense of attachments, including his or her sense of security and familiarity, and continuity of affection for such child
- 6) The capacity and disposition of each parent or person available to care for such child to give him or her love, affection, and guidance and to continue the education and rearing of such child
- 7) The home environment of each parent or person available to care for such child considering the promotion of such child's nurturance and safety rather than superficial or material factors
- 8) The stability of the family unit and the presence or absence of support systems within the community to benefit such child
- 9) The mental and physical health of all individuals involved
- 10) The home, school, and community record and history of such child, as well as any health or educational special needs of such child
- 11) Such child's community ties, including church, school, and friends
- 12) Such child's background and ties, including familial, cultural, and religious
- 13) The least disruptive placement alternative for such child
- 14) The uniqueness of every family and child
- 15) The risks attendant to entering and being in substitute care
- 16) Such child's wishes and long-term goals

Nature of Removal/Findings of Dependency

Provide date of removal and allegations for dependency as listed in removal order, petition, and/or Order of Adjudication.

Provide facts related to any prior DFCS/Court involvement, current situation that led to the removal, and services offered.

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CASA Report V2: Nature of Removal/Findings of Dependency


Nature of Removal/Findings of Dependency

Provide date of removal and allegations for dependency as listed in removal order, petition, and/or Order of Adjudication. Provide facts related to any prior DFCS/Court involvement, current situation that led to the removal, and services offered.

(Maximum characters: 4000)
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* required fields

Provide date of removal and allegations for dependency as listed in removal order, petition, and/or Order of Adjudication. Provide facts related to any prior DFCS/Court involvement, current situation that led to the removal, and services offered.



Child's Placement

Report Content

Current residence type, time
in placement, # of previous
placements

Adjustment to placement

Placement Stability

Normalcy

Recommendations for
immediate placement after
hearing and consider how
any placement changes
align w/ permanency plan

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CASA Report V2: Child's Placement

Child' Name	Current Placement Type	Time in Placement	Number of Previous Placements
Denny Hanky	<input type="text" value="Enter the following as applicable: Foster"/>	10 yrs, 2 mon, 1d	<input type="text" value="Enter the number"/>
Janie Hanky	<input type="text" value="Enter the following as applicable: Foster"/>	12 yrs, 9 mon, 2d	<input type="text" value="Enter the number"/>
Micah Poll	<input type="text" value="Enter the following as applicable: Foster"/>	12 yrs, 2 mon, 2d	<input type="text" value="Enter the number"/>

Are all siblings placed together? ☐

Child's Adjustment to Placement

Describe your direct observations of the child's comfort level and engagement. Include statements by caregivers about the child's behaviors and statements of adjustment from the child themselves.

(Maximum characters: 4000)
You have characters left.

Describe your direct observations of the child's comfort level and engagement. Include statements by caregivers about the child's behaviors and statements of adjustment from the child themselves.

Placement Stability

Describe any placement changes that have occurred or are pending, and provide reasons for the change and the duration of each placement.

Relative or Fictive Kin Placements & Connections

Listing of identified potential relative/fictive kin placements/connection

Description of established relationships and opportunities for connection visitation

Recommendations relevant to current/potential relative/fictive kin caregivers, visitations, and services needed for caregiver

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CASA Report V2: Relative or Fictive Kin Placements & Connections

Potential Kin Placements	
<p>List identified possible relative/fictive kin placements and relationship. Are they able to provide permanency for the child? Home evaluation been completed for placement? If not for placement, are they an appropriate visiting resource? See QRG: 7</p> <p>(Maximum characters: 4000) You have <input type="text" value="4000"/> characters left.</p>	
Relative or Fictive Kin Connections	
<p>Describe relative/fictive kin connection and ongoing interaction with the child. Are there opportunities for family time/visitations between these individuals and the children?</p> <p>(Maximum characters: 4000)</p>	

List identified possible relative/fictive kin placements and relationship. Are they able to provide permanency for the child? Home evaluation been completed for placement? If not for placement, are they an appropriate visiting resource? See QRG: 7

Sibling Connections (if applicable)

Placement of siblings
and reason for
separation

Sibling Connections

Recommendations for
strengthening sibling
connections

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CASA Report V2: Sibling Connections (if applicable)

Placement of Siblings and Reason for Separation	
<p>What are the names, ages, and current placements for additional siblings not placed together? Explain the reasoning and rationale for sibling separation, if applicable.</p> <p>(Maximum characters: 4000) You have 4000 characters left.</p>	
What are the names, ages, and current placements for additional siblings not placed together? Explain the reasoning and rationale for sibling separation, if applicable.	

Sibling Connections	
<p>Describe the following: Frequency of sibling visitations, if not placed together? Provide indications of meaningful connection and relationship, if not placed together.</p>	

Family Time Between Child & Parents

Frequency & duration

Degree of participation, interaction, and response

Recommendation for family time

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Assessment/Analysis

CASA Report V2: Family Time (Visitation) Between Child and Parents

Frequency and Duration

Include, if applicable:

- The frequency and duration of parental visitations/family time
- The current level of supervision

(Maximum characters: 4000)

You have 4000 characters left.

Degree of Participation, Interaction and Response

Include, if applicable:

- Degree of participation and interactions
- Factual observations by CASA or reported by visitation supervisor of emotional connection displayed by both the child and parent
- Child's behavioral/emotional response pre/post visitation

Include, if applicable:

- The frequency and duration of parental visitations/family time
- The current level of supervision

Permanency Plan

Current
permanency plan
goal

Permanency plan
suitability

Recommendations
for permanency

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CASA Report V2: Permanency Plan

Current Permanency Plan Goal Reunification ▼

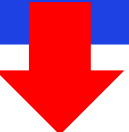
Permanency Plan Suitability

Explain why reunification continues to be the best goal for this child. If reunification efforts to reunify would be detrimental, explain why reunification is no longer appropriate and what the best meets child and family? In assessment.

(Maximum characters: 4000)
You have characters left.

Recommendations for Permanency

Provide permanency recommendation and support with all of the BIC factors in the context of the child's age and developmental needs. See QRGs: 16,17



Court Order and Case Plan Compliance

Parents' current housing
and employment/income

Engagement and
participation w/ court
order case plan

Challenges/Barriers to
case plan completion

Recommendations to
encourage case plan
compliance

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CASA Report V2: Court Order and Case Plan Compliance

Parent(s)' Current Housing

List each parent separately by name and relationship.
Are there other individuals or caregivers residing in the home?
Length of time residing here?

(Maximum characters: 4000)

You have 4000 characters left.

Parent(s)' Current Employment

List each parent separately by name and relationship:
- Length of time of employment?
- Date verified?
- Rate of pay (amount and frequency)?
- Additional sources of income?

(Maximum characters: 4000)

You have 4000 characters left.

Parental Engagement and Participation with Court Order/Case Plan

List each case plan goal or court ordered requirement and briefly describe each parent(s)' level of participation and engagement in services provided utilizing a bulleted format as exemplified on Tab 2 (Sample Report)

(Maximum characters: 4000)

You have 4000 characters left.

Challenges to Case Plan Completion

- Are there are barriers to the parents taking advantage of the services provided?
- Are offered services ADA compliant, if applicable?
- Is DFCS providing appropriate service array?
- Would other services help achieve the current permanency

(Maximum characters: 4000)

You have 4000 characters left.

Recommendations to Encourage Case Plan Compliance

Provide recommendations for addt. services/programs needed that are not already included in the case plan/court orders. These must directly relate to the reason for the child's removal or have direct evidence to justify an additional goal. See ORGs.

List each parent separately by name and relationship.
Are there other individuals or caregivers residing in the home?
Length of time residing here?
Date verified?
Any safety concerns?

Education and Child Care

Type of education setting

of Settings attended since entering custody

Current academic and developmental process

Educational supports and services

Recommendations to ensure educational success

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CASA Report V2: Education and Childcare

Child' Name	Type of Education Setting	Number of Schools Attended Since Entering Custody
Denny Hanky	Early Childhood Education	Enter the numbe
Janie Hanky	Early Childhood Education	Enter the numbe
Micah Poll	Early Childhood Education	Enter the numbe

Current Academic/Developmental Process

Include:
- Current facility name and whether a change in schools occurred
- Current grade level and whether it's appropriate for their age
- Current academic/developmental performance/progress
- Attendance record
- Behavioral concerns, if applicable

(Maximum characters: 4000)
You have 4000 characters left.

Educational Supports and Services

Include efforts to ensure FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) is provided to each child.
- Current IEP or 504 Plan and monitoring progress?
- Is the child's current school/classroom setting appropriate?
- Additional supports/services needed?

(Maximum characters: 4000)
You have 4000 characters left.

Recommendations to Ensure Educational Success

Provide the court with a one sentence statement to include what supports and services are needed, then provide a bulleted list of facts for each recommended support/service. See QRGs: 24,25,26,27,28. (BIC Factor(s): 5,10,11,14,16)

Include:
- Current facility name and whether a change in schools occurred
- Current grade level and whether it's appropriate for their age
- Current academic/developmental performance/progress
- Attendance record
- Behavioral concerns, if applicable

Health

Physical and mental health needs

Recommendations for additional supports, services, treatment

Report Content

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CASA Report V2: Health

Physical and Mental Health Needs

- Current on well-check & dental visit?

- Developmentally on target?

- Specific medical & psychological diagnoses

- List current medications.

- Effects of medications (behavioral and physical)

- List therapies/counseling provided.

- Frequency & progress?

(Maximum characters: 4000)
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Recommendations for Additional Support, Services or Treatments

Provide one sentence statement to include what supports and services are needed & provide a bulleted list of facts for each recommended support/service. See QRGs: 22,23,24,25. (BIC Factor(s): 1,2,5,9,10,14,15,16,18)

- Current on well-check & dental visit?

- Developmentally on target?

- Specific medical & psychological diagnoses

- List current medications.

- Effects of medications (behavioral and physical)

- List therapies/counseling provided.

- Frequency & progress?

Cultural Considerations

Child's Cultural needs

Recommendations for
necessary cultural
considerations

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CASA Report V2: Cultural Considerations

Cultural Needs

- Are there any cultural considerations that impact this child's circumstances (i.e. heritage, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression)?
Are there any unmet cultural needs?
Does ICWA apply?

(Maximum characters: 4000)
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Recommendations for Necessary Cultural Considerations

Provide the court with a one sentence statement to include what supports and services are needed, then provide a bulleted list of facts for each recommended support/service. See QRG: 3 (BIC Factor(s): 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16)

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Provide the court with a one sentence statement to include what supports and services are needed, then provide a bulleted list of facts for each recommended support/service. See QRG: 3 (BIC Factor(s): 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16)

Recommendations for supports and services to transition to adulthood

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CASA Report V2: Older Youth(14+) if applicable

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GA RYSE/ILP Participation

- Youths' Participation in ILP Activities & Individual Development Account (IDA)?
 - Obstacles preventing participation, if applicable?
 - Youths Academic, Independence, and Occupational Goals?
 - WTLIP Individualized?
 - Access to important documents?

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Recommendations for Supports and Services to Transition to Adul

Provide the court with a one sentence statement to include what supports/services are needed, then provide a bulleted list of facts for each recommended support/service. See QRGs: 28, 29.
 (BIC Factor(s): 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16)

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- Youths' Participation in ILP Activities & Individual Development Account (IDA)?
 - Obstacles preventing participation, if applicable?
 - Youths Academic, Independence, and Occupational Goals?
 - WTLIP Individualized?
 - Access to important documents?

Records and Research

Name of individual interviewed/visited; relationship to child; date of contact/visit

Type of report/record; source of record; date of review

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CASA Report V2: Records and Research

Records/Research Information						
Name of Individual Interviewed/Visited (include child)*	Relationship to child	Dates of Contact/Visit	Type of Report/Record	Source Of Report/Record	Dates of Review	Delete
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* required fields



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QUESTIONS?



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