



CHAPTER 9

Practicing the CASA/GAL Volunteer Role— Reporting & Monitoring

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CHAPTER 9

Practicing the CASA/GAL Volunteer Role —Reporting & Monitoring



HOMEWORK RECAP

THE KAYLEE MOORE CASE

It will be helpful to review the material in Chapter 8 about the Kaylee Moore case right before this training session. Many of the activities in this chapter rely on knowledge about the case.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Each of you has been doing some research on one community agency and its services. During this training session, you will be asked to share the materials and information you gathered.



GOAL

In this chapter, I will practice the skills necessary to write an effective court report, appear in court, and monitor a case.



OBJECTIVES

By the end of this chapter, I will be able to . . .

- ✓ Identify community resources to address the needs of children and families
- ✓ Develop appropriate recommendations
- ✓ Explain the basic elements of a CASA/GAL volunteer court report
- ✓ Present my carefully prepared recommendations in court
- ✓ Monitor a case and advocate for a child until he/she is in a safe, permanent home
- ✓ Apply the principles of the Indian Child Welfare Act to my CASA/GAL volunteer work

Community Resources

Activity 9A: Community Resources

Earlier in training, you were assigned a community resource and asked to gather information about that agency. Divide into trios and share with each other what you learned about your resource. As you listen, keep the Kaylee Moore case in mind. Consider which resources might be useful to her or to her family.

With the other members of your trio, list on a flipchart your three resources, followed by the name of the person who researched each resource and the most important thing for CASA/GAL volunteers to know about each resource. Post the flipchart page at the front of the room. At the end of the activity, hand in your copy of the Community Resources Worksheet. The facilitator will compile these worksheets into a packet to distribute during the final session of training.

Activity 9B: Resources for Kaylee

In small groups, identify Kaylee's needs based on the case materials that you have read so far. Then name resources for Kaylee and her family that may help meet Kaylee's needs. Fill in your ideas below.

The Needs of the Child

Resources for the Child

Resources for the Family

Writing Court Reports & Making Effective Recommendations

The CASA/GAL volunteer court report is the most essential aspect of your work as a CASA/GAL volunteer. It is the vehicle through which you present the information you have gathered about a child's situation and your recommendations about what services will meet the child's needs. Judges rely on the information in CASA/GAL volunteer court reports as they make their decisions. The court report becomes part of the official court record and may be introduced and considered as evidence.

You will submit child-focused and fact-based written reports to the court for most hearings. (The facilitator will let you know if there are hearings in your jurisdiction that do not require a written report.) CASA/GAL volunteer court reports are shared with all parties to a case and any other individuals who are authorized by law to receive them. In this unit, you will have the opportunity to practice organizing the information you have gained during your investigation and writing a court report.

Activity 9C: The CASA/GAL Volunteer Court Report

Part 1: The facilitator will hand out examples of CASA/GAL volunteer court reports from your local program. As you read these reports, keep your attention on the elements of the report, not on the details of the cases presented. You will see that a court report is a personal product of the individual CASA/GAL volunteer and will reflect his/her style. There is no one right court report.

Part 2: In pairs, look at "Keys to a Successful Report" below, and answer the following questions:

- Did the volunteers successfully convey their recommendations in their reports?
- What worked well in the reports?
- How would you improve the reports?

Share your responses in the large group.

Keys to a Successful Report

- Be thorough and specific.
- Get your information firsthand.
- Report the facts.
- Make specific recommendations that flow from the facts.
- Follow local guidelines.
- Submit your report on time so CASA/GAL program staff can review and comment on your report.

Activity 9D: The Elements of a Court Report

Part 1: Listen as the facilitator reviews the standard elements of a CASA/GAL volunteer court report in your jurisdiction. The outline that begins below lists some basic elements that should be considered for inclusion. If the facilitator hands out copies of an annotated court report outline for your jurisdiction, use it instead of the outline in your manual. If not, the facilitator will share specific instructions about the preferred format for court reports in your area. Note any differences in your manual.

Part 2: In small groups, fill in the outline based on the information you currently have about the Kaylee Moore case. For the purposes of this outline, your notes do not need to be in full sentences. Just jot down the key pieces of information that should be presented in each section.

Using this outline will help you:

- Sort important from superfluous information, and sort for themes and consistent patterns
- Distinguish subjective information (interpretation and judgment) from objective information (fact), and include appropriate information in your reports

The facilitator will circulate around the room to answer questions as you work in small groups.

CASA/GAL Volunteer Court Report Outline

INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

The following information should be contained on your court report cover or at the beginning of your report, depending on local program guidelines. All reports should include:

- Names of the parties
- Name(s) of the child(ren)
- Whether child(ren) is (are) of Native American descent
- Petition date and nature of allegations in the petition (abuse and/or neglect)
- Months in placement
- Number of placements or placement history
- Current placement of the child(ren)
- Other _____

HISTORY

A brief factual history of the prior court involvement

UNIT
1

UNIT
2

UNIT
3

Summary of the matter(s) before the court (case status and current court-ordered services)

UNIT
4

Other

(The history may or may not be included in reports after the disposition depending on local guidelines. Reports following the disposition tend to be shorter in length because the judge can refer to previous reports for background information. The facilitator will tell you what is standard in your area.)

FACTS

Persons contacted

(including name, date, and location)

Relationship to child(ren)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Reports or records reviewed, requested, or read

Compliance or noncompliance with previous court orders

Compliance or noncompliance with visitation plan

Changes in circumstances of child(ren) or family

Other

NEEDS & WISHES OF THE CHILD(REN)

Include all needs of the child that must be met in order to achieve a safe, permanent home and eliminate the need for continued court involvement. Based on interviews, records, and visits with the child, list the unique needs of the child. Include the wishes of the child if he/she is able to articulate them. *(In some jurisdictions, children have their own counsel to advocate for their wishes. The facilitator will tell you if this is the case in your area.)*

Placement

Educational

Psychological, emotional, health, or care needs

Contact with family or friends (the visitation plan)

Safety/protection

Financial/material needs

UNIT
1

Wishes of the child(ren) (if able to articulate)

UNIT
2

Other (child support, contact with the tribe, etc.)

UNIT
3

**AVAILABLE RESOURCES WITHIN THE FAMILY
TO MEET THESE NEEDS**

Identify family members who are able and willing to meet or help meet each need identified in the previous section.

UNIT
4

**AVAILABLE RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY/TRIBE
TO MEET THESE NEEDS**

Name the community/tribal resources to meet the needs of the child that the family is unable to meet.

ISSUES FOR THE COURT’S ATTENTION

Identify any gaps between the needs of the child and services available to meet those needs. Identify if CPS has made reasonable/active efforts to promote family reunification.

OTHER

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROTECT & PROMOTE
THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD(REN)**

Custody

Visitation, contact

Treatment recommendations (for child, parents, siblings, other caretakers), **other referrals**

Protection, safety

Other recommendations (regarding, for example, reasonable efforts, case closure, termination of parental rights, etc.)

NEXT COURT DATE

Request that the court set a specific date or specific time frame for the next hearing in accordance with the best interest of the child and statutory requirements.

SIGNATURE OF CASA/GAL VOLUNTEER & DATE

Your signature is an affirmation that the recommendations and information contained in the written court report are the products of your work.

SIGNATURE OF CASA/GAL PROGRAM STAFF (OPTIONAL)

The signature of the program staff signifies that the staff member has reviewed your court report and finds the contents and recommendations in accordance with law, CASA/GAL volunteer standards, and the philosophy of the CASA/GAL program.

All CASA/GAL programs require that court reports be submitted to the CASA/GAL program office prior to court. Staff will review all CASA/GAL volunteer court reports to ensure the recommendations are supported by facts and all relevant information and documentation has been included. Staff may make suggestions about wording to make your report clearer. However, CASA/GAL program staff or attorneys may not change your report and/or recommendations without your consent unless the report is contrary to the law (local, state, or federal statute), contradicts CASA/GAL program standards, or endangers the child—and then only after consulting with you.

Outline created by Cy Gurney,
North Carolina Guardian ad Litem east regional administrator.

Appearing in Court

Activity 9E: Perceptions of Court

Think about a time when you or someone you know went to court, or think back to a movie you saw that dealt with a courtroom experience. In pairs, relate this experience or story.

- Describe the situation.
- What were your impressions of the courtroom players?
- If you have a personal experience of court, how does it differ from what you have observed on television or in the movies?
- Based on what you know about court, how would you prepare to attend court?

The facilitator will ask for a few volunteers to share their stories.

Created by John Lewis, district administrator for District 24,
North Carolina GAL Program.

Activity 9F: Oral Recommendations

You need to be prepared to respond when the judge asks, “Does the CASA/GAL volunteer have a recommendation in this matter?”

Part 1: Read the update below on the Kaylee Moore case. Then in the space provided, prepare a summary of your recommendations for the next case hearing. Be ready to explain, without using your notes, the reasons, data, or justification behind your conclusions or recommendations.

KAYLEE MOORE CASE UPDATE

Since the adjudication/disposition hearing, you have learned the following:

- Wilma Bailey has reported that the Big River Nation has agreed to provide medical and dental services for Kaylee and to enroll her as a member.
- Lucille Hansen’s home study was positive and Kaylee has been moved to her home. Kaylee has begun occupational therapy.
- Jimmy Hansen has begun parenting classes offered by the Big River Nation. After showing up for the intake appointment for substance abuse treatment, he has attended only sporadically. He has not taken any steps toward finding employment. CPS has contacted him repeatedly to set up appointments and has provided bus tickets and/or cab services as appropriate, but he has not followed through on these arrangements. He has had weekly visits with Kaylee, supervised by Lucille Hansen. He gets along well with Kaylee, but does not show any ability to set boundaries or provide appropriate discipline. He has registered at the child support enforcement agency, but has not paid child support since he has no income.

LEARN MORE!



As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you may be asked to appear in court as part of your work on a case. Ask the facilitator what the procedure is in your area and what support you will receive to prepare to appear in court. “Appearing in Court,” an article in the Chapter 9 Resource Materials, provides a brief overview of what you might expect of a courtroom experience. Rules and procedures vary by jurisdiction.

- Trisha Moore has not been able to begin substance abuse treatment, as there are no slots. She has had weekly contact with Kaylee. She remains in jail. She has had phone contact with her boyfriend's family.
- Kaylee has not been enrolled in prekindergarten.

CASA/GAL VOLUNTEER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Part 2: In pairs, take turns presenting your recommendations and giving feedback. You will have two minutes to make your presentation, so keep your comments clear and concise. Start your feedback with the presenters sharing what they liked about what they did, then what they would change. Following this, listeners should share what went well and then offer suggestions for improvement.

Monitoring a Case

Activity 9G: The Importance of Monitoring a Case

Listen as the facilitator presents information on the CASA/GAL volunteer's responsibility to monitor a case until it is closed.

In the large group, share your responses to the following question:

- In each of the three monitoring categories, what are two things you want to check on as the CASA/GAL volunteer for the Kaylee Moore case?

Monitoring Responsibilities

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, it's important that you remain actively involved in a case until the case closes with the child in a safe, permanent home. One of your most important duties is to monitor your case—to check regularly on how things are going. You monitor and check on things every day in your personal life. You can apply the same successful monitoring methods and tools from your daily life to the monitoring of your CASA/GAL volunteer cases.

It is sometimes difficult to maintain the momentum that exists when you are first assigned to a case. Partnering with program staff can help you remain involved and inspired to advocate effectively throughout the life of the case.

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, your monitoring responsibilities include the following:

1. Conduct follow-up investigations to ensure that court orders are being properly executed:
 - Review the court orders.
 - Visit the child regularly and maintain sufficient contact with parents, relatives, foster parents, and agency personnel to determine if court orders are being properly executed.
 - Verify accuracy of information gained during follow-up investigation.
 - Notify staff and the attorney for the child if the orders of the court are not being properly executed.
 - Contact those who are responsible for carrying out court orders to address noncompliance.
 - Prepare for each hearing by writing reports on case plan progress and compliance with court orders.
2. Report to the court when the needs of the child are not being met:
 - Identify facts and changes in situation that may necessitate the case's return to court.
3. Protect and promote the best interest of the child until formally relieved of the responsibility by the court:

- Regularly monitor the child in his/her home setting to evaluate appropriateness of placement, determine whether the child is receiving court-ordered services, and identify any unmet needs.
- Determine if additional services are needed for the child.
- Identify facts and changes in the situation that may necessitate the case's return to court.

Adapted from the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem volunteer training curriculum.

Activity 9H: Permanency for Kaylee Moore

Read the review hearing information about the Kaylee Moore case. In the large group, the facilitator will lead you through the worksheet on the next page, which will help you evaluate the permanent options for a child as you monitor a case. At each question, share your recommendations for Kaylee Moore. Share any questions you have about permanency or about the Kaylee Moore case.

REVIEW HEARING FOR THE KAYLEE MOORE CASE

At the time of the review hearing, Trisha Moore was receiving substance abuse treatment in jail. Jimmy Hansen had dropped out of parenting classes and had completely quit attending substance abuse treatment. He was no longer living with his sister, Jean. Kaylee was doing well in her grandmother's home, and was attending the Big River preschool.

At the hearing, the tribe petitioned for the case to be transferred to tribal court. The parents did not object, and Judge Gonzales ordered the transfer to tribal court. A new CASA/GAL volunteer will be assigned through the tribal CASA/GAL program.

CASA/GAL Volunteer Permanency Worksheet

9

CHAPTER

RE:	DOB:	File #:
1. Is it likely for the child to be returned home immediately or within the next six months, and if not, why is it not in the child's best interest to return home?		
2. Should legal guardianship with a relative or some other suitable person be established, and if so, what rights and responsibilities should remain with the parents?		
3. Should adoption be pursued, and if so, are there any barriers to the child's adoption?		
4. Should the child remain in the current placement or be placed in another permanent living arrangement? Why?		
5. If there has already been one or more permanency planning hearings, has Child Protective Services made reasonable efforts since the last hearing to implement the permanent plan for the child?		
6. Is there any other information the court should have in order to make this decision?		
7. Has the child been in placement outside the home for 15 of the most recent 22 months?		
8. Is there any reason that the filing of a petition for termination of parental rights is not in the best interest of the child?		

UNIT
1

UNIT
2

UNIT
3

UNIT
4

Adapted from a form created by Barbara King, district administrator, North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program.



Homework

The facilitator may assign homework for the Chapter 10 wrap-up activity.

Reminder: Bring your completed training time sheet to the Chapter 10 session, when you will hand it in to the facilitator.