

CASA Weekly Happenings

Dear CASA Volunteers:

Thank you to Lee Lewis, Klamath Youth Development

Center. Thank you to Lee Lewis for his presentation on Drug and Alcohol Effect on Children's Brain Development and Behavior. If you missed this training, there is information about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in the January 25 edition of CASA's Weekly Happenings at www.klamathfallscasa.org/volunteer/resources.



CASA Kudos. CASA Kiki Parker-Rose is currently advocating for two teenage children. Her advocacy for these children has made a difference bringing to the court's attention current and accurate information. Due to her strong advocacy and effective court reports, providing the judge with information from all parties including the child's attorney, the therapist, the schools, DD services and the caseworker, the judge looks to Kiki to provide him with the most recent recommendation of the therapist as well as her recommendations in the best interest of the child. Thank you Kiki for your advocacy for these children.

Court Hearings. CASA volunteers fill a very important role in the courts. They ensure the child's voice is heard and that all parties focus on the needs of the child. Our volunteers are doing a great job attending court hearings and CRBs. Your presence at court hearings and CRB's makes a difference.

- **Scheduling.** The monthly CASA calendar contains the most recent information we receive from the courts and CRB which normally includes the first two weeks of hearings. Thank you for calendaring the next court date before you leave the court room. To check a current court docket, you can click on Dockets and Dates and then click on your judge's name at www.klamathfallscasa.org/volunteer/resources.
- **Voice of the Child.** Realistically, the parties do not always have time to review your written court report prior to court. In addition to your report it is powerful to stand up in court and speak on behalf of the child. This ensures the items in your report including concerns and recommendations are addressed by all parties.
- **Effective Court Hearings.** CASA volunteers ensure the courts and all parties fulfill their obligations to the child in a timely manner. Following each court hearing, please note what is agreed to for items to be completed; e.g., is the caseworker supposed to make a referral to counseling, etc.; who is responsible for making a referral or completing an item; and what is the timeframe for completion. This will allow you to follow up on specific items and ensure timely permanence for the child.

CASA and Adoptions. For most children and families who enter our child protection system, the plan is family reunification. Unfortunately, due to a variety of circumstances, family reunification does not always occur. In those cases, we must develop a different permanent plan. After all, every child is entitled to grow up in a healthy, safe, loving and permanent home. To review questions to consider when you are making a recommendation for permanency, please visit www.klamathfallscasa.org/static/content/volunteer/resources/return.pdf.

Over the years, we have seen CASA volunteers impact adoptions in five key ways:

1. Review the File Thoroughly.

One of the first tasks the CASA volunteer must undertake is to review the court file as thoroughly as possible. In reviewing the file, the CASA volunteers located a previous prospective adoptive parent who had been discouraged from adopting because of the child's illness. With support from the CASA team, that relationship was renewed, and the child was adopted.

2. Get to Know Everyone Involved in the Child's Life.

CASA volunteers, in the normal course of their duties, have the opportunity to know everyone who touches the life of a child. When that happens—and when individuals understand the unique role of advocacy in children's lives—it often opens doors. During a visit to a child's school, one of our volunteers was asked to meet with the school principal, who shyly inquired whether the child was available for adoption. It turned out that the principal was interested, and she did adopt the child, who has had a very happy life ever since.

3. Improve a Child's Stability.

How many times have CASA volunteers been asked to step in because the system seems to be failing and a child's emotional state is spiraling downward? And how many children are losing out on placements with families, being considered "unadoptable"? Time after time, we have seen children become more amenable to services such as counseling after CASA volunteers gain their confidence. When that happens, doors begin to open for that child, including doors of potential adoptive homes.

4. Help Obtain Missing Documents.

The adoption process is often a complicated maze of paperwork for those going through it. Too often adoptions are delayed because some necessary document is missing. One of the luxuries that CASA volunteers have is a small caseload, usually one and seldom more than a couple. Our social workers and attorneys never have the luxury of a small caseload, which is one of the reasons there are so many cracks in the system that CASA volunteers help fill.

In one case the child protection department tried unsuccessfully to obtain a birth certificate for a child whose foster family was waiting to adopt. Finally, the court requested CASA involvement. Like a detective, the CASA volunteer pursued a trail through hospitals, including a defunct one, child welfare agencies, the delivering obstetrician and others. Within six weeks, the CASA volunteer had a “delayed registration of birth” in hand, and the adoption was completed without any further delay.

5. Serve as an Extra Set of Eyes.

One of the great benefits of having a CASA volunteer on a case is that it adds an extra set of eyes and ears observing how the child is doing and reporting to the court. In the adoption arena, CASA volunteers continuously provide information on the suitability of placements and children’s adjustment to placements. Further, CASA volunteers often provide information on a child’s relationship with his or her birth family, information which is critical to the court making a decision in the child’s best interest.

National CASA Training Curriculum