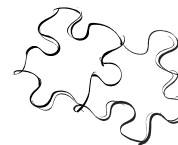


CHAPTER 3

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT



Introduction

Balance. The varied and ever-increasing demands of a CASA program require highly skilled, talented and dedicated staff able to balance recruitment, screening, training, support and supervision of a team of volunteers along with fundraising, grant writing, human resources management, public relations, systemic community relations and community leadership as well as anything else that needs to be done. Directing a CASA program has often been compared to the game of “whack-a-mole.” A CASA director must be ready, willing and able to address anything that pops up, from heartbreaking stories of children’s unmet needs to grant writing to office maintenance to television appearances and media inquiries to court appearances to emotionally drained and frustrated volunteers. Not to mention those bittersweet moments when permanency has been achieved; yet knowing that in order for us to achieve that success, a child has suffered.

Balance of these many demands as well as the uncertainties that face nonprofit organizations in this time requires a strong team of staff, board or advisory committee members, volunteers and a supportive network. Foresight on the part of the director and board/advisory committee is essential to achieve best practice, maintain quality advocacy and progress toward serving more children. At the core of each decision must be the best interests of the abused and neglected children we serve.

Best Practice is a philosophical approach based on continuous learning, development and improvement. It offers a dynamic process based on a personal and organizational willingness to learn and improve so that the optimum outcome can be delivered with the fewest problems and unforeseen complications. Best practice can be defined as the most efficient and effective way of achieving quality performance, while recognizing that our network is one of diverse needs and practices with core competencies in common. Best practice concepts include respect, integrity, creativity, innovation, ethics, resource (both human and financial) management, outcome measurement and crisis management.

Through processes of identifying strengths and weaknesses in policy and procedure, we are able to proactively ensure that services are delivered at a consistent quality standard. Best practice also allows us to regularly re-examine our practice and procedures that allow for an objective marker of CASA’s provision of high quality advocacy.

In order to use the name “CASA,” programs must be members of the National CASA Association and affiliated with CASANYS. To be members in good standing of National CASA, local programs must be in compliance with National CASA Standards and State Standards (see Chapter 2, *Guiding Documents*). UCS Court Rules also require adherence to these standards. Programs are required by National CASA to conduct regular self-assessments regarding the

standards; the Self-Assessment Instrument can be found on National CASA’s technical assistance website, www.casenet.org.

The Court Rules set forth the conditions under which local Family Court judges may appoint CASA to a case. According to those rules, local CASA programs must comply with the Court Rules and Regulations promulgated by the Chief Administrator of the Courts (Part 117), in order to be eligible for appointment.

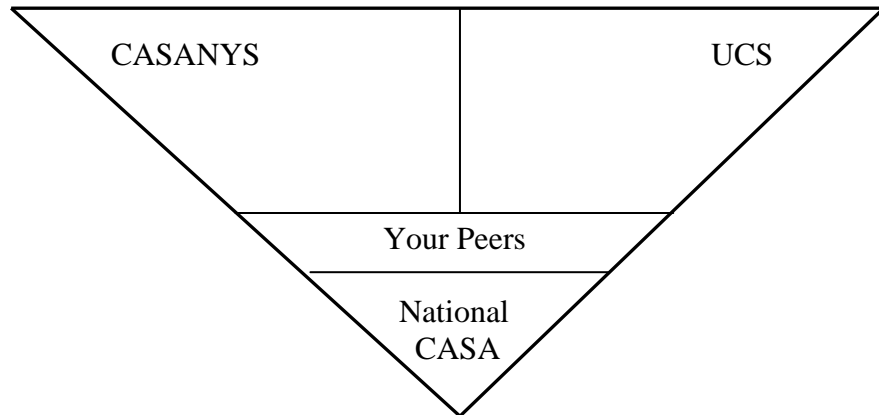
CASA programs may only accept case assignments from a judge within their local jurisdiction.

As a volunteer based program, the effectiveness and integrity of CASA depend upon close training and supervision of the volunteer panel. To this end, it is important that all Program Directors keep abreast of changes in social service practice, family law, legislative and policy changes, and best practice. At each Program Directors Meeting, directors are provided with a survey regarding training needs. UCS and CASANYS welcome suggestions for training needs at any time and will do our best to meet those needs in a way that is most effective for the network.

Professional development, conferences, trainings, coaching, peer learning and leadership learning all contribute to cultivating our service to the children. Investment in excellence is imperative to serving our most vulnerable children. To that end, this chapter will provide you with a wealth of resources with which to address those demands, as well as directions to turn when additional support is required or might just be helpful. Topics include:

1. Who Ya Gonna Call?	Page 3
2. General Program Management	Page 4
3. Recruiting, Screening, Training and Supervision	Page 6
4. Resource Development	Page 10
5. Communications	Page 11
6. Confidentiality	Page 12
7. Interstate Compact on Placement of Children (ICPC) Courtesy Home Visits	Page 13

1. WHO YA GONNA CALL?



UCS CASA Assistance Program Manager:

Darlene Ward

(518) 238-4360 or daward@courts.state.ny.us

Website: www.nycourts.gov/ip/casa

CASA: Advocates for Children of New York State's Executive Director:

Robin Robinson

(518) 426-5354 or robinson@casanys.org

Website: www.casanys.org

National CASA Association Program Specialist for the Northeast Region:

Susan Grant

(800) 628-3233 x 272 or susan@nationalcasa.org

Website: www.casanet.org, a resource website for CASA programs which includes a Private Program section. Upon achieving Good Standing status with National CASA, your program is provided a program number and password with which to log in. Access is provided to download the *Comet* case management software, order a free custom logo, fill out the quarterly OJJDP survey, view the print version of the Directory of Programs and more.

Your network: see www.casanys.org for a list of New York State CASA programs and contact information; or email casatalk@casanys.org, the list serv, for information or discussion. Your peers will always be one of your most valuable resources.

Questions regarding technical support or other needs may be directed either to CASANYS or UCS. If the information would more appropriately come from the other office, you will be redirected. Simultaneously, both offices regularly apprise each other of programmatic issues directed to the other.

2. GENERAL PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Links to the following sample documents may be found at www.casanys.org:

Please note that as of publication date, only some of the sample documents identified are available as listed; best practice forms are to be posted by March 30, 2008. Documents will be identified as either “sample” or “best practice.” Please check www.casanys.org for frequent updates.

Also note that these are only samples which may require customization for your local needs. None are promulgated by UCS or CASANYS.

Public Relations

- a. Brochure
- b. Advantages Of CASA
- c. Why Volunteers
- d. Success Stories From Around NYS

Technical Management

- e. Case Report Form (IOLA etc.)
- f. Program Budget
- g. Newsletter
- h. Diversity Policy
- i. Crisis Communications Policy
- j. Data Collection Guidelines
- k. Volunteer Termination Letter
- l. Notice Of Backlog To Court

Human Resources

- m. Staff Job Descriptions
- n. Staff Evaluation Forms
- o. Personnel Policies
- p. Conflict Of Interest Policy

Board Or Advisory Committee

- q. Application
- r. Orientation Checklist
- s. Skills Evaluation Matrix
- t. By Laws / Guidelines
- u. Conflict Of Interest Policy
- v. Resource Development Plan

Your program logo:

National CASA will customize their trademark logo to include your program name. That is the logo your program must use in compliance with National Standards. See www.casanet.org.

Manuals:

National CASA has published a number of manuals to provide guidance to local programs. Most are available on www.casanet.org or at www.shopcasa.org or directly from:

National CASA Association

100 West Harrison, North Tower, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98119

800-628-3233 or staff@nationalcasa.org

Operational Manuals include:

- a. Guide to Program Development Developing a CASA program is a significant undertaking that requires research, planning and plain hard work. This manual is designed to help program directors and staff through the initial steps.
- b. Achieving Our Mission: A Management Guide for CASA/GAL Programs Includes many sample documents and guidance from initial program formation to management. Invaluable! Don't miss this one.
- c. NCASAA Standards for Member Programs
- d. Standards Self-Assessment Tool for program use in the once every four year cycle of Quality Assurance reporting.
- e. Strategic Volunteer Retention Manual
- f. Employment Practices Handbook A Management Guide to Effective Employment Practices for CASA/GAL Programs
- g. Program Resource Guide Program Resources & Training; Government Relations; Awareness & Public Relations; Resource Development & Program Sustainability; Grants & Finance; Technology Resources
- h. NCASAA Umbrella Guide for CASA Programs Designed to increase awareness for those agencies involved in or thinking of being involved in a joint venture with another organization.
- i. A World of Difference video and print guide to increase cultural competency in your program.
- j. Annotated Bibliography: Resources for Working With Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth and Families in the Foster Care System
- k. Prospective Federal and State Resources for CASA Programs
- l. Measuring Child Outcomes: A Guide to Determining CASA Effectiveness.
Pat Litzelfelner, MSW, Tom McDonald, Ph.D., John Poertner, DSW
- m. CASA Programs Serving Multiple Counties or Jurisdictions. A Technical Assistance Brief.

The Judges' Page: www.nationalcasa.org/judgespage This page is designed as a resource and information center to provide judges the tools they need to work effectively with the local CASA program. Listings include resources for establishing or expanding a CASA program and news of program and financial development innovations.

In addition,

CASA: Advocates for Children of New York State *Standards for Local Programs* may be obtained at www.casanys.org or referenced in Chapter Two, *Guiding Documents*.

And

The *Court Rules Regarding CASA* of the New York State Unified Court System may be obtained at www.nycourts.gov/ip/casa or referenced in Chapter Two, *Guiding Documents*.

3. RECRUITMENT, SCREENING, TRAINING AND SUPERVISION RESOURCES

Please note that as of publication date, only some of the sample documents identified in Section 3 "Recruitment, Screening, Training and Supervision" are available as listed; best practice forms are to be posted by March 30, 2008. Documents will be identified as either "sample" or "best practice." Please check www.casanys.org for frequent updates.

Also note that these are only samples which may require customization for your local needs. None are promulgated by UCS or CASANYS.

A. Recruitment

www.volunteermatch.org a web based free volunteer recruitment tool

www.casanet.org/communications offers template print ads and PSAs for recruitment

B. Screening

Each local program will need to certify annually (using a form provided by CASANYS each January) that CHRS and CRS procedures have been conducted and appropriate action taken for each staff member or volunteer.

These screens add to, but in no way replace, the other strategies used by a CASA programs (through interviews, monitoring during training, and close supervision) to ascertain a candidate's qualifications and integrity. Program directors have the right to deny the application of a volunteer or employee for a variety of reasons even if there is no record of conviction or history of indicated reports.

It is the strong recommendation of CASA: Advocates for Children of NYS and the NYS UCS CASA Assistance Program that CASA staff and volunteers NOT spend time alone with

children in places outside of public view. This policy is intended to safeguard children, staff, and volunteers. This pertains to all volunteers and staff.

1) CHRS: Criminal History Record Search procedures through UCS:

Through the NYS Unified Court System, local CASA programs are able to conduct statewide criminal background checks on potential staff and volunteers at no charge. Once a program receives approval to submit names, they will receive an identification number and password and can then directly submit searches online. To qualify, contact the CASA Assistance Program at UCS. The background checks are state-specific, covering Town, Village, City, and Supreme (County) Criminal Courts.

2) SCR: State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment through CASANYS:

Local CASA programs are able to conduct State Central Register checks on potential staff and volunteers at no charge by submitting completed SCR forms to CASANYS. The necessary *Authorization For Request For Information* form, to be filled out by each individual, may be found at www.casanys.org. CASANYS will submit all CASA-affiliated staff and volunteer forms to the SCR which is located within the NYS Office of Children and Family Services. For additional details contact CASANYS.

3) Three written references from other than relatives are required. Sample reference forms may be found at www.casanys.org.

4) Department of Motor Vehicle Record Reviews

It is the recommendation of the NYS UCS CASA Assistance Program and CASA: Advocates for Children of NYS that CASA staff and volunteers NOT transport clients (children or adults) in personal or agency vehicles. If a local CASA program chooses to allow this practice, a Department of Motor Vehicles records search should be conducted for any staff member who would be providing transportation. For staff/volunteers who have lived in other states within the past five years, DMV searches should be conducted in each state of residence.

If staff will be transporting clients, they should provide documentation indicating that their auto insurance policy is current and provides adequate liability coverage.

5) Candidates who have recently moved to New York State or who live in another state

If a candidate has lived outside of New York during the past five years, a comparable background check must also be conducted in each state of residence (as well as in New York).

This can be done through VolunteerSelect (a service of ChoicePoint) or a comparable national records search service. These services include search options such as sexual offender search, national criminal file, social security screen, county criminal search, and motor vehicle records.

Programs should have a valid reason for conducting any search that exceeds the scope of the searches performed for New York residents.

Links to the following sample documents may be found at www.casanys.org:

- a. Inquiry Record
- b. Application
- c. Interview
- d. Reference Questionnaire
- e. Authorization for Release of Information

C. Training

Links to the following sample documents may be found at www.casanys.org:

- a. Job Description
- b. Volunteer Policies and Procedures
- c. Oath
- d. Certificate
- e. Termination Letter and Notice to Court

Links to (or purchase instructions for) the following manuals may be found in the Private section of www.casenet.org:

- a. NCASAA Volunteer Training Curriculum: for use in new volunteer training courses
- b. NCASAA Facilitator Manual and Toolkit: Facilitator's Guide to implementing the volunteer training curriculum and supplemental materials
- c. Independent Study Edition of the Volunteer Training Curriculum: may be used in place of classroom edition when necessary and appropriate
- d. A Question of Balance: provides guidelines on case decision making for volunteer advocates.

D. Supervision

Links to the following sample documents may be found at www.casanys.org:

- a. Letter Of Assignment To Providers
- b. Parental Release
- c. HIPPA Release
- d. Mental Health Release
- e. Substance Abuse Release
- f. Court Report
- g. Report Writing Guidelines
- h. Volunteer Evaluation Of Program
- i. Volunteer Evaluation By Program
- j. Re-Commitment Form
- k. Termination Letter
- l. Elements of A Court Order Appointing CASA (*Please note there is currently no standard court order promulgated by UCS or CASANYYS.*)

The following links may provide additional support (*Please note neither UCS nor CASANYYS control or endorse the content*):

<https://iapps.courts.state.ny.us/fcasfamily/main> to look up pending court appearances by docket or family file number

<http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us> official website of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

<http://www.docs.state.ny.us/> to lookup incarceration information on current or former inmates of the New York State Correctional System (state prisons only, not county jails)

<http://www.idealists.org/en/vmrc/index.html> The Volunteer Management Resource Center, a free, comprehensive online source for new tools and existing resources to support volunteer management professionals in nonprofit, for-profit, and government organizations. Includes geographic or service-specific networks and professional development opportunities as well as access to best practices and resources

www.childadvocacy.com Best Interests is dedicated to providing news and resources to professional and volunteer children's advocates, including Court Appointed Special Advocates, attorneys, social workers, judges, police officers, foster care parents, child therapists, and many others who speak up for the best interests of abused and neglected children.

www.childrensdefense.org The Children's Defense Fund's Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. CDF provides a strong, effective voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves.

www.stand.org Stand for Children exists because children in communities across America have no power to influence our democratic system to meet their fundamental needs. Our mission is to teach everyday people how to join together in an effective grassroots voice in order to win concrete, long-lasting improvements for children, at both state and local levels.

www.google.com/alerts Register for regular listings of references to "Court Appointed Special Advocates" in print media and on the web

<http://grammar.qdnw.com/> "quick and dirty" tips for better writing in a fun and friendly site. Grammar Girl covers everything from punctuation and grammar to style and voice.

Print Resource:

The Myth of Best Interest: Jane Malpass and Jane Thompson. An invaluable reference book for guiding advocates toward children's best interests.

4. RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The following websites offer information or email newsletters that may assist with your resource development efforts (*Please note neither UCS nor CASANYS control or endorse the content*):

www.casenet.org National CASA offers resource development tips and, in the Private section, funding opportunities.

www.techsoup.org TechSoup Stock connects nonprofits and public libraries with donated and discounted technology products. Choose from over 240 products from companies such as Microsoft, Adobe, and Symantec

www.igive.com Igive offers donations in the form of a percentage of sales from hundreds of online stores to any non-profit organization that registers. Get back a percentage of your CASA office supplies and invite all your constituents to designate your program as beneficiary of all their online shopping.

www.compasspoint.org CompassPoint Nonprofit Services is a consulting, research, and training organization providing nonprofits with management tools, strategies, and resources to lead change in their communities. With offices in San Francisco and Silicon Valley, it works with community-based nonprofits in executive transition, planning, boards of directors, finance systems and business planning, fundraising, and technology.

www.boardsource.org BoardSource increases the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations by strengthening boards of directors through its highly acclaimed consulting practice, publications, tools, and membership program

www.nynp.biz New York Non Profit News provides information on budgetary trends, program developments, regulatory activity, personnel changes, contracts, grant awards and opportunities, governmental actions, policy initiatives. Primarily related to New York City.

www.benevon.com Benevon trains and coaches nonprofit organizations to implement a mission-based system for raising sustainable funding from individual donors. This system ends the suffering about fundraising and builds passionate and committed lifelong donors.

www.grantstation.com GrantStation is an interactive website that allows grantseekers to identify potential funding sources for their programs or projects, and mentors you through the grantseeking process.

www.foundationcenter.org The Foundation Center's mission is to strengthen the nonprofit sector by advancing knowledge about U.S. philanthropy, maintaining the most comprehensive database on U.S. grantmakers. It also operates research, education, and training programs designed to advance philanthropy at every level. The Center's web site receives more than 47,000 visits each day, and thousands of people gain access to free resources in its five regional library/learning centers and its national network of more than 340 Cooperating Collections.

www.ccsnys.org The Council of Community Services of New York State, Inc. (CCSNYS) is the resource for New York State's Nonprofits serving over 1,300 nonprofit members with training, technical assistance and group purchasing programs and advocating for the 65,000 nonprofits in our state.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Technical Assistance and Research

Please feel free to request assistance on any question that may arise in your program. Both the UCS CASA Assistance Program and CASA: Advocates for Children of New York State are able to draw on the statewide as well as national networks for information, and share best practices among the network. *It is particularly important that both the CASA Assistance Program and CASA: Advocates for Children of New York State be advised promptly of any public relations issues or court challenges, both positive and negative, or potential lawsuits, legal actions, or other serious challenges to your program.*

B. Program Directors Meetings

Held twice annually as collaborative initiatives of the UCS CASA Assistance Program and CASA: Advocates for Children of New York State, these include educational and networking time as well as required grant administration sessions. It is critical that all programs are active and full participants at these meetings, particularly so that we can assure statewide funders that the entire network indeed needs and benefits from these initiatives. **Attendance by a representative of each CASA program is a requirement of your UCS contracts.**

C. Newsletters

- a. The UCS CASA Assistance Program provides the *Monday Morning Memo* emailed regularly to the network. This missive is appropriate to share with volunteers, staff, board and constituents. Past issues are available on the website, www.nycourts.gov/ip/casa.
- b. CASA: Advocates for Children of New York State provides *Direct From Albany*, issued via email with news of and for programs as well as technical assistance tips.
- c. National CASA issues *Update*, a bimonthly newsletter, by postal mail to provide local programs with timely news regarding National CASA issues, events and deadlines as well as useful tips. Also available at www.casenet.org.
- d. National CASA issues *Connections* by postal mail on a quarterly basis directly to volunteers, programs and their extended membership. To include your volunteers in their mailing list, send an excel spreadsheet exported from COMET. The Connection magazine is designed to keep CASA programs, members and the public abreast of the latest news and developments affecting CASA's work with abused and neglected children. Also available at www.casenet.org.

D. Email

It is often necessary for UCS or CASANYS to gather detailed information as quickly as possible. In addition, important memos regarding ongoing funding streams and reporting, including reporting forms, are distributed via email.

It is important that you check your email daily or designate someone in your office to do so in your absence.

E. CASATALK Listserv

An instant communication and support system that reaches the entire New York State CASA network of program directors and association staff. CASATALK is a private list; a participant may only be added or deleted through CASANYS. Simply address an email to casatalk@casanys.org.

For replies, be aware that if you simply press “reply” your answer will also go only to the person who sent the email; if you wish to reply to the entire network, you must press “reply to all.” The CASATALK listserv provides a powerful opportunity to connect with the network in sharing best practices and brainstorming solutions to the many challenges of our work.

Please note that CASATALK does not include UCS. Should you wish UCS to be aware of any issues or to participate in CASATALK discussions, please be sure to copy the message to daward@courts.state.ny.us.

F. National CASA Communications Manual

Updated annually, provides sample communications documents as well as graphics standards, template print and radio / television advertisements and PSAs. Available at www.casanet.org.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is a core competency in the work of CASA. Defined as ensuring that only those authorized may have access to critical information, it is an ethical concept that is also governed by law. CASA staff and volunteers may not release any information about a child or case except by court order or as provided by law, as in the case of Releases of Information.

Court Rules Part 117.2.(d) state “**Confidentiality of Records.** Each CASA program shall safeguard the confidentiality of all information and material in accordance with applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations, including, but not limited to, court records and social services, health, educational, drug treatment and other records obtained from other agencies. Each CASA program shall ensure that all of its board members, officers, employees and volunteers are trained in, and comply with, these confidentiality requirements.”

Links to the following sample documents may be found at www.casanys.org:

Please note that as of publication date, only some of the sample documents identified are available as listed; best practice forms are to be posted by March 30, 2008. Documents will be identified as either “sample” or “best practice.” Please check www.casanys.org for frequent updates.

Also note that these are only samples which may require customization for your local needs. None are promulgated by UCS or CASANYS.

- a. Parental Release
- b. HIPPA Release
- c. Mental Health Release
- d. Substance abuse release

7. Courtesy Home Visits and the Interstate Compact

The current Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) was drafted in 1960 and has been enacted by all states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It is the only public law in existence to ensure that children placed across state lines for foster care or adoption are placed with persons who are safe, suitable, and able to provide proper care. It also fixes legal and financial responsibility and responsibility for supervision and the provision of services for the child.

Additional information may be found at:

www.icpc.aphsa.org/states.asp or www.ocfs.states.ny.us

National CASA, CASANYS and UCS all clearly recommend that CASA programs do not conduct courtesy visits for out of state placement entities. A number of states have adopted a No Visit policy, Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Maryland, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island among them. In NYS, at least one county, Jefferson, also has such a policy.

If you are asked by another state to do a home visit, or plan to ask another state’s CASA for information, find out the status of their social services’ compliance with the Interstate Compact on that case. If there are obstacles, our role is to facilitate compliance with the compact. We are under the same requirements as anyone else to follow the federal regulations regarding interstate placement of children. We can provide information and work to facilitate the process.

The easiest scenario when you are asked for a local site visit is to keep a list of licensed social workers who conduct home visits and give that information to your out of state caller. This complies with the compact, saves your organization any potential liability, and facilitates the professional’s involvement in the case: solidly within CASA’s mission.

If your local governing board has created a policy allowing your program to provide this type of assistance to other programs, we still recommend that you prioritize the needs of your own program, particularly if you have a volunteer shortage. However, if your board has such a policy and you have available volunteers, the safest scenario if you are asked for appropriate

CASA information on a case from out of state is to request that they contact your judge, and you get a court order from your own county to cover whatever work you may do on a case.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR ACCEPTING A REQUEST

1. The out of state court must request of your administrative judge an order appointing CASA in your county.
2. The requesting state must submit the request in writing (if the request is initiated by telephone, it should be followed up in writing.) The written request should detail the nature of the case; exactly what is being asked of CASA; the time frame expected; and documentation that the Interstate Compact Procedures have been initiated.
3. The CASA director should require that complete case information be transmitted to the receiving program including:
 - a. All relevant court, social services and CASA documents including any previous CASA reports
 - b. Summary of case history which includes reasons the case is before the court
 - c. Child's history that includes information about behavior, health, education, and special needs in any of these areas.
 - d. Copy of the service agreement and the permanent plan for the child
 - e. Information about the placement resource and the nature of their relationship to the child
4. The CASA report should not contain recommendations or concerns. It should report factual information and observations.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR INITIATING A REQUEST

1. If a request is initiated by telephone, it must be followed by written request that details the nature of the case; the time frame expected; and documentation that the Interstate Compact procedures have been initiated.
2. At the same time (preferably before) that the request to CASA is initiated, the court should contact the receiving court to request that an order of appointment for CASA be issued.
3. All requests should be initiated as soon as the decision to request placement is made. In all cases, CASA should be given as much time as feasible to complete the action. In no case will a CASA program director be pressured or treated rudely if they refuse to accept a case.
4. All information that is known about a case will be transmitted to the receiving CASA program including:
 - a. All relevant court, social services and CASA documents including any previous CASA reports
 - b. Summary of case history which includes reasons the case is before the court
 - c. Child's history that includes information about behavior, health, education, and special needs in any of these areas.
 - d. Copy of the service agreement and the permanent plan for the child
 - e. Information about the placement resource and the nature of their relationship to the child.

However, please remember that National CASA, CASANYS and UCS all clearly recommend that CASA programs do not conduct courtesy visits for out of state placement entities.