



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

**THE NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED
SPECIAL ADVOCATE ASSOCIATION**

Flex-Learning Edition

2018 Version 2

Volunteer Manual

**SESSION 2: STRENGTHS & RISKS—
THE GREENE CASE**

SESSION 2:

Strengths & Risks— The Greene Case

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Activity 2.17: Welcome

As you enter the room, write on the flipchart one thing you learned from the Session 2 online portion that you think you will use in your work as a CASA/GAL volunteer.

Child Development

Activity 2.18: Ages and Stages

Consider which of the following age groups you have the most interest in or experience with:

- Birth to 6 months
- 6 to 12 months
- 12 to 18 months
- 18 months to 3 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 6 to 9 years
- 10 to 15 years
- 16 to 21 years

Divide into small groups according to the age group that you select. The facilitator will give each group an envelope that contains cards with behaviors written on them. Several different age groups' behaviors are represented in each envelope. Trade cards with the other groups until you have a set of cards that you think is descriptive of the age group you have chosen. After every group has finished collecting their cards, check your work by referring to the Child Development Chart that the facilitator provides. In the large group, share what you discovered and any questions you have.



How Children Grow and Develop

1. No two children are alike. Each one is different. Each child is a growing, changing person.
2. Children are not small adults. They do not think, feel, or react as grown-up people do.
3. Children cannot be made to grow. On the other hand, they cannot be stopped from growing.
4. Even though children will grow in some way no matter what care is provided for them, they cannot reach their best growth possibilities unless they receive care and attention appropriate for their stage of development from a consistent figure in their life.
5. Most children roughly follow a similar sequence of growth and development. For example, children scribble before they draw. But no two children will grow through the sequence in exactly the same way. Some will grow slowly while others grow much faster. Children will also grow faster or slower in different areas of development. For example, a child may be very advanced in language development but less advanced, or even delayed, in motor coordination.
6. During the formative years, the better children are at mastering the tasks of one stage of growth, the more prepared they will be for managing the tasks of the next stage. For example, the better children are able to control behavior impulses as 2-year-olds, the more skilled they will be at controlling behavior impulses they experience as 3-year-olds.
7. Growth is continuous, but it is not always steady and does not always move smoothly forward. You can expect children to slip back or regress occasionally.
8. Behavior is influenced by needs. For example, active 15-month-old babies touch, feel and put everything into their mouths. That is how they explore and learn; they are not intentionally being a nuisance.
9. Children need to feel that they are loved, that they belong, that they are wanted. They also need the self-confidence that comes from learning new things.
10. Experiences offered to children need to fit their maturity level. If children are pushed ahead too soon, and if too much is expected of them before they are ready, failure may discourage them. On the other hand, children's growth may be impeded if parents or caregivers do not recognize when they are ready for more complex or challenging activities. Providing experiences that tap into skills in which children already feel confident as well as offering some new activities that will challenge them gives them a balance of activities that facilitates healthy growth.

Resources for Child Caring, Inc., Minnesota Child Care Training Project, Minnesota Department of Human Services.

How Children Grow and Develop (Continued)

When observing a child's development, keep in mind these key points:

- There is a wide range of typical behavior. At any particular age 25% of children will not exhibit the behavior or skill, 50% will show it, and 25% will already have mastered it.
- Some behaviors may be typical—in the sense of predictable— responses to trauma, including the trauma of separation as well as abuse and neglect.
- Prenatal and postnatal influences may alter development
- Other factors, including culture, current trends and values, also influence what is defined as typical.
- As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you need to become aware of your values, attitudes and perceptions about what is typical in order to be more objective and culturally sensitive when assessing a child's needs.

Resources for Child Caring, Inc., Minnesota Child Care Training Project,
Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Activity 2.19: Children's Needs

Think back to the Bleux case and to the child development information, and write a list of Deshawn Bleux's needs for their assigned category on your handout. Once you have completed the list, discuss and write the list on the flipchart at the front of the room.

Analyze Deshawn Bleux's needs listed on the flipchart. Discuss the following questions:

- Which of the needs listed would you identify as concerns for child protection?
- How might the needs of two infant children be both the same and different?

Activity 2.20: Introducing the Case Study Process

In today's session and in Sessions 3 and 4, you will be applying the knowledge you've learned during the online components to a series of true-to-life case study simulations. To get started, the facilitator will divide you into small groups. Within each group, you will need to assign roles to various members (if there are fewer than four people in a group, some people may need to take on more than one role; if there are more than four people, not everyone will have an assigned role). The group roles include:

Runner: the member of the group assigned to retrieve document packets from the facilitator

Scribe: the individual who writes up recommendations to the court

Controller: the person charged with keeping the group on track and monitoring the time remaining for the activity

Questioner: the group member charged with asking certain questions and making sure each document that's read gets discussed by the group before moving to the next one



Activity 2.21: The Greene Case

Step 1: Your group will receive a hard copy of the initial case file for the Greene case. Take several minutes to begin digesting the information in the case file. Then send your Runner to the facilitator to request an additional document (either an interview transcript from a key player you'd like to speak with or another important document you'd find during a case). You may continue to request additional interviews and documents one at a time over the course of 35 minutes in order to complete your investigation of the case at this stage. After 35 minutes, your Scribe should legibly write on the flipchart your group's recommendations regarding services for the child, services for the parent and placement decisions. A large group debrief will follow.

Step 2: Take a few minutes to view other groups' recommendations, and then briefly discuss the debrief questions that the facilitator distributes. In the large group, discuss these questions and any others that arose during the activity.



Communication Skills

Activity 2.22: Seeing the Strengths in the Greene Family

With a partner, read through the entries on the Strengths in Families Worksheet, which the facilitator will provide. As you read, consider the strengths of the Greene family.

In the large group, discuss the following questions:

- Which of the strengths listed are present in the Greene family?
- If you don't know whether or not a particular strength exists in this family, how might you gather information to find out?
- How would looking only at strengths or only at deficits affect your recommendations for this family?



Communication Skills

Activity 2.23 Introducing Yourself as CASA/GAL Volunteer

Step 1: One of the first tests of your communication skills as a CASA/GAL volunteer will occur when you introduce yourself and describe your role to a family, a child, a parent.

Here is one example of what you might say to introduce yourself to a family:

Hello, I'm a Court Appointed Special Advocate (or guardian ad litem). I'm a volunteer appointed by a judge to gather information by interviewing the child and surrounding adults. I will provide objective written reports to the court about the child's best interests.

Write what you would say to introduce yourself to the following people:

Marky Greene
Roy Greene
Marky's Teacher

Step 2: Divide into trios, and using what you wrote, take turns introducing yourself as a CASA/GAL volunteer. One member of the trio acts as the CASA/GAL volunteer; another member plays the role of Roy Greene, Marky Greene or Marky's teacher; the third member is the observer. Rotate roles until each member of your group has a chance to perform an introduction.

As the speaker, think about what you would like to convey and how best to convey it. Consider tone of voice, posture, language, etc. As the listener, try to reflect back what you hear. If necessary, ask the speaker to clarify his/her point.

After each turn, take a minute to share feedback. Those in the role of the CASA/GAL volunteer should go first, sharing what they liked about the introduction, then what they would change the next time. The other two members of the trio should then share what went well and offer suggestions for improvement. Pay attention to nonverbal communication! In the large group, share any questions you have.

Adapted from an activity contributed by Norma Laughton, NC GAL District Administrator.

Activity 2.24: Open-Ended vs. Closed Ended Questions

Recall the CASA interview of 4 year old video and the information on open-ended and closed-ended questions that you read online session (Activity 2.15).

Discuss any notes or questions they may have as watching the video.

Step 1: Now watch Part 2 of the CASA/GAL volunteer interviewing a 4-year-old child video.

Step 2: In the large group, discuss the following questions:

- Which of the strategies from the video do you think it would be helpful to employ when you are working with children?
- What are the benefits of the open-ended questions that were used? Were any of them closed-ended?
- Were some questions more successful than others?
- How much information was the volunteer in the video able to gather?
- What do you think will be easy and what will be difficult when you interview children in your role as a CASA/GAL volunteer?

Activity 2.25: Your Local CASA/GAL Volunteer Court Report

Step 1: The facilitator will hand out copies of your local court report template or format. Listen as the facilitator reviews each section of the report.

Step 2: In small groups, discuss how to organize the information you gathered during the Greene case study. What information would you include in the following elements?

- Brief Family Background/Reason for Removal
- Status of the Child
- Issues or Concerns

Where would these elements appear in your local court report?

Wrap Up

The Wrap-up session is an opportunity for you to reinforce any key learning that emerged during the session, as you interacted with one another in the activities. This exchange of ideas is some of the richest learning that takes place. You can use this time to ask questions and assess your level of commitment, curiosity and confidence.

Answer the following questions:

- What do you want to remember from what you've learned so far?
- What learning will you apply, as you move ahead in your role?
- If you are not going to use what you've learned, what might be holding you back?
- Are there any resource gaps that we can fill to better prepare you?

