



**CASA**

Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

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**THE NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED  
SPECIAL ADVOCATE ASSOCIATION**

Flex-Learning Edition

2018 Version 2

# Volunteer Manual

**SESSION 3: CULTURAL COMPETENCE &  
DISPROPORTIONALITY—  
THE LAVENDER CASE**

## SESSION 3:

# Cultural Competence & Disproportionality— The Lavender Case

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# In-Person Training

## Welcome

### Activity 3.7: Welcome

As you enter the room, write on the flipchart one thing you learned from the Session 3 online portion that you think you will use in your work as a CASA/GAL volunteer.



One thing I learned from  
Session 3 Online

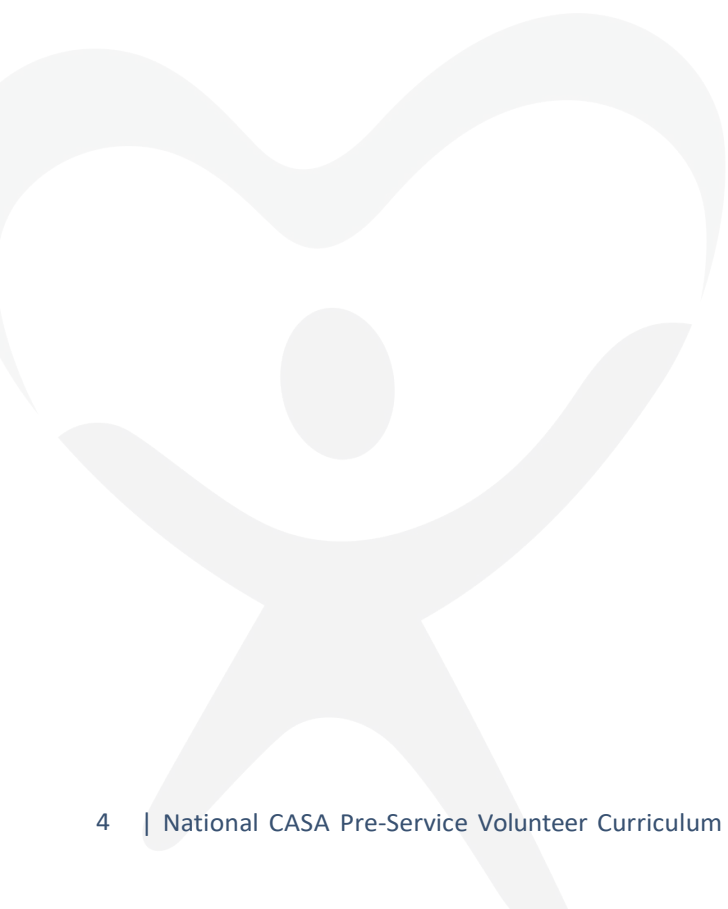
# In-Person Training

## Activity 3.8: Preparing to Talk About Trauma

**Step 1:** Read the information below.

**Step 2:** Discuss in a large group the issues you may confront as a CASA/GAL volunteer and how they are reflected for you on the Feelings Thermometer.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) has developed the concept of a “feelings thermometer” to gauge your “emotional temperature” or response to what you’re learning.



# In-Person Training

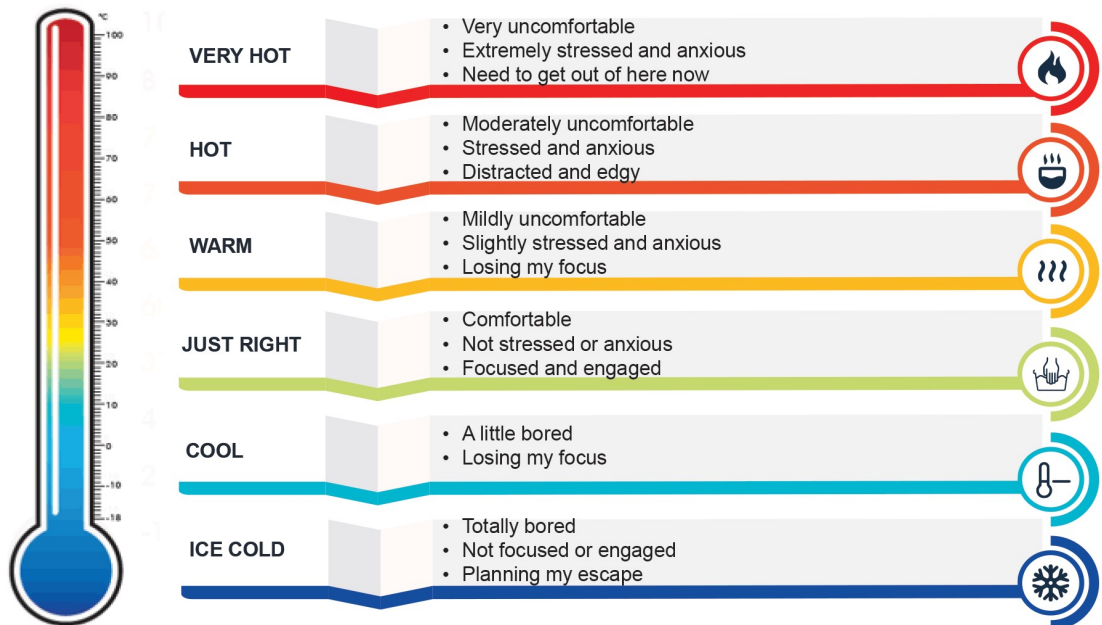
## Activity 3.8: Preparing to Talk About Trauma (cont.)

In their training for parents caring for children who have experienced trauma, NCTSN writes:

The Feelings Thermometer . . . [can] make you more aware of the topics or situations that push your buttons, and how you react when your buttons are pushed. With this awareness, you may be able to anticipate situations that are going to raise your emotional temperature, and come up with a game plan for coping with them. When your Feelings Thermometer goes way up that means you're feeling stressed, anxious and feel the need to escape. You also may find that when you become very uncomfortable, you "space out" and withdraw from the discussion. Spacing out or withdrawing is something that traumatized kids do sometimes as well. What looks like boredom, or just not caring, or withdrawal can sometimes be a reaction to trauma.

NCTSN, Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma, February 2010.

As you begin to explore the topic of trauma, be aware that your feelings about any personal trauma you or someone you are close to has experienced may be heightened. If you find that your "feelings thermometer" is running high and it may be affecting your role as an advocate, please address your concerns with CASA/GAL program staff.



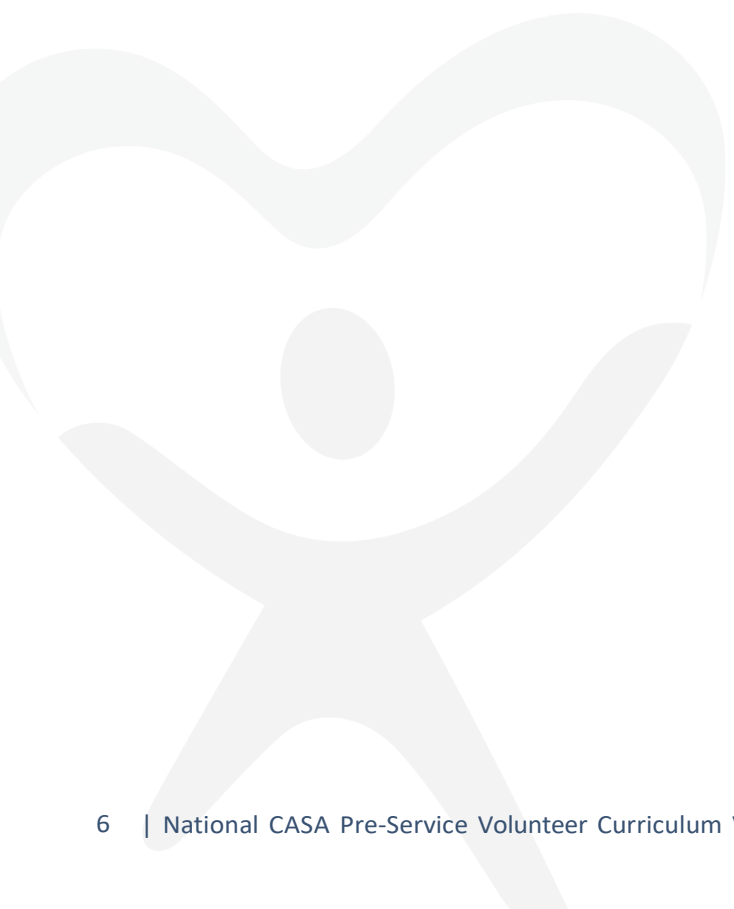
# In-Person Training

## Activity 3.9: Child Trauma

**Step 1:** Listen as the facilitator gives an overview of the information that you read about childhood trauma. Share one traumatic experience, from the list of traumatic experiences for a child, that you came prepared with.

**Step 2:** Recall the video “Shane’s Story” from Facing Foster Care in Alaska. Consider the kinds of trauma Shane experienced that led to his involvement with the child protection services system. In the large group, discuss the following question:

- What trauma did Shane experience before entering the system? After?



# In-Person Training

## Activity 3.10 - The Long-Term Effects of Childhood Trauma

Watch the video about the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. Then read the ACEs infographic. In pairs, fill out the ACEs calculator for Susan Mailer, the mother in the Lavender case. In small groups, discuss the following question:

- What long-term effects might the unresolved trauma have on Susan Mailer's health and well-being?

Ask participants (in pairs) to use the blank ACE Calculator that you will hand out in class, to score to score Susan Mailer, the mother of Lavender Bass, based on what they currently know about her. Questions for discussion include:

- What ACE score do you think Susan Mailer might have, given her early childhood experiences?
- What implications might this have on her health and her ability to parent Lavender?

Share your responses in the large group.

# In-Person Training

## Activity 3.11: Trauma and Resilience

**Step 1:** Think of a time of adversity in your life. What helped you get through the difficult time? Do you remember a particular person who was especially helpful? Listen to the example of each of the “Seven Cs” that the facilitator shares.

**Step 2:** Listen as a volunteer reads the paragraph below about resilience. Then listen as the facilitator provides examples of the “Seven Cs of Resilience” found on page 11). In pairs, choose one of the “Seven Cs” of resilience and answer the following question:

- How can you help to build or reinforce this characteristic in a child you work with as a CASA/GAL volunteer?

## Resilience

Considerable research has shown that children who experience adversity may carry their trauma into adulthood. But there are variabilities. Some don't experience problems, or do so to only a minor degree. This is resilience: the ability to become strong, healthy or successful despite adverse experiences. Resilient people overcome their adverse experiences and achieve developmental milestones and personal success goals. Trauma informed support services help build resilience in individuals.



# In-Person Training

## The Seven C's of Resilience

When we encounter stress in our lives, we tend to develop ways to overcome that stress or prevent it in the future. Over time, overcoming stress can be refined, practiced and improved, making us more resilient to adverse situations. Healthy ways of dealing with stress include fostering one of the “seven Cs”:

- Competence: Ability to handle a situation effectively
- Confidence: Believing in personal abilities
- Connection: Having strong ties to family and community, creating a sense of belonging
- Character: Having a solid set of morals and values to help determine right from wrong
- Contribution: Feeling like a valuable member of society able to make a difference
- Coping: Ability to handle stress appropriately
- Control: Knowledge and ability to effect an outcome

*Adapted from “The 7 Cs: The Essential Building Blocks of Resilience,” from Fostering Resilience, <http://www.fosteringresilience.com/7cs.php>.*



# In-Person Training

## Activity 3.12: The Lavender Case

**Step 1:** Your group will receive a hard copy of the initial case file for the Lavender case. Take several minutes to begin digesting the information in this 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 to the court 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.

**Step 3:** After your group completes the work on this case, finish by completing the ACE Calculator for Susan Mailer.

## Activity 3.13: Writing Effective Court Reports

The Lavender Case

Goal: To help participants learn to write clear, fact-based court reports.

Advance Prep-Optional: If your program has examples of "good" and "bad" court reports, bring copies to this training session.

If there's time, review the court report writing skills participants have practiced so far: asking the right questions and organizing the information they gather. This activity focuses on developing clear written communication skills.

Step 1: Review the examples with participants and point out how they can be improved using the information below and any other insights you can offer. Also, if your program has examples of "good" and "bad" court reports, feel free to share them now.

# In-Person Training

## Example 1

John Bass (alleged father) is in the county jail approximately 100 miles from the foster placement. He was busted for pot. Admittedly, he has a history of using inhalants. According to Mr. Bass, he was not with Ms. Mailer very long but claims Lavender is his child. He has never been a father to Lavender. Mr. Bass claims that he is Native American, and Lavender is too. He claims he is of a mixed background and the Mailers are not from his tribe. He has had limited contact with Lavender throughout her life, stating Ms. Mailer would not give him “the time of day.”

## Example 2

Lavender Bass (child): 10-year-old Lavender Bass has been in foster care for about three weeks and is not adjusting well. Lavender spends a lot of time in the yard and seems to not be very engaged. Lavender sometimes ignores the foster mother and doesn't listen to her when she is talking. The foster mother states she has to call her time after time to get her attention. This is not the best foster placement for Lavender. According to the foster mother, she had never attended school and this is her first time in a “real school.” Lavender seems on target developmentally. She is washing and dressing herself and keeping up with her school work. The child could be Native American and this will need to be investigated.

## Example 3

Susan Mailer (biological mother) has a history of drug abuse and violent behavior. Three weeks ago CPS found her passed out in the car from alcohol. A criminal records check confirmed Ms. Mailer has a tendency toward violent behavior. Ms. Mailer did not show up for court during the preliminary hearing and the CPS worker continues to leave messages via the telephone. CASA is able to reach mother via telephone. Ms. Mailer acknowledges that she works at a bar and sometimes takes Lavender to work with her. She states she likes to party from time to time with alcohol and drugs. She has had no visits with her child since she was taken into foster care. According to Ms. Mailer's sister, Ms. Mailer is working long hours and makes good money. CASA feels like drugs are being done at the home of the maternal aunt and grandmother. The children are also fearful of them.

# In-Person Training

## Activity 3.14: Session Debrief

In the large group, consider the following questions as you discuss your experience working through the Lavender case:

- How might some of the things we've been discussing be transferable to cases that do not involve immigration issues?
- How does your cultural lens impact your view of cases involving other cultures?
- What is the importance of legal connections (adoption) and familial connections to children in care? For example, in Maria's case, if she ages out, she'll have no legal connections to anyone, even though she may continue to have contact with birth family.
- Where could you go to learn more about a child's culture?

# In-Person Training

## Wrap Up

The Wrap-up session is an opportunity for you to reinforce any key learning that emerged during the session, as learners 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 listen to your learner cohort and assess their level of commitment, curiosity and confidence. Use the following framework to guide the discussion.

Use a flip chart to record the following responses to wrap up 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?