

Hello February

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**Court Appointed
Special Advocates
of Mendocino &
Lake Counties**



**2016
California
Children's
Report Card**

A survey of kids' well-being & a roadmap for the future

CHILDREN NOW

Recipe for Volunteerism

1 cup of Love

1 cup of Understanding

1 cup of Enthusiasm

1 cup of Dedication

1 Tbsp. Compassion

1 Tbsp. Friendliness

1 Tbsp. Cheerfulness

1 Tbsp. Unselfishness

Gently blend the ingredients with care. Once thoroughly mixed, add a pinch of humor, add loyalty to taste. Season with faith, hope and charity, and, form into a heart. Sprinkle with sugar. Dish out in loving spoonfuls. Serve generously.

THE ADVOCATE
A LEARNING LAB

ACES Too High!

NEWS

ACEs = Adverse Childhood Experiences

10 Key Guidelines to Effective Advocacy

By Rebecca Hartz - American Bar Association, Family Law Quarterly

- 1. CONDUCT AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION:** The first task in the investigation is to review all relevant documents and records including those of the social services department, police, court, physician and school. Direct interviews with the child, parents, social workers, relatives, school personnel and others having knowledge of the facts in the situation are crucial in getting a clear picture of the child's life. The CASA should continue seeking new information throughout the court process and should have regular in-person contact with the child.
- 2. DETERMINE THE INTERESTS OF THE CHILD:** Many factors should be considered in assessing the interests of the individual child, including age and sense of time; level of maturity; culture and ethnicity' and degree of attachment to family members including siblings. Also important to the child's chances for healthy development are continuity, consistency, and a sense of belonging and identity.
- 3. SEEK COOPERATIVE SOLUTIONS:** The CASA functions as a mediator among conflicting parties to facilitate the resolution to problems and to foster positive steps toward achieving permanence of the child.
- 4. PROVIDE WRITTEN REPORTS AT EVERY HEARING**
- 5. APPEAR AT ALL HEARINGS TO REPRESENT THE CHILD'S INTERESTS:** The CASA should ensure that all relevant facts are presented to the court. This means that the CASA should ensure that all necessary witnesses are called and should be prepared to provide testimony.
- 6. EXPLAIN THE COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE ROLE OF THE CASA IN TERMS THE CHILD CAN UNDERSTAND**
- 7. MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC APPROPRIATE SERVICES FOR THE CHILD AND CHILD'S FAMILY**
- 8. MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SERVICE PLANS AND COURT ORDERS:** The follow-up activities in a child's case are critical because this is often where the system fails. The CASA is the watchdog who assures that court-ordered services and tasks are completed in an appropriate and timely manner and that they accomplish the desired outcome. The CASA should also monitor the court process to assure the hearings are held in a timely manner.
- 9. INFORM THE COURT PROMPTLY OF IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS:** The court should be made aware of an agency's failure to provide a court-ordered service or the family's failure to participate in services. The CASA should ensure that appropriate motions are filed on behalf of the child in order that the court can be made aware of changes in the child's circumstances and can take the appropriate action.
- 10. ADVOCATE FOR THE CHILD'S BEST INTEREST IN THE COMMUNITY:** The CASA should interface with mental health, educational and other community systems to assure that the child's needs in all these areas are met.

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