CASA of Washington County Indiana Newsletter

CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN
CASA OF WASHINGTON COUNTY INDIANA

Optima™

Love it or hate it, Optima is the way CASA does business in the State of Indiana. This means that Optima is **extremely** important in our day to day work as CASA Advocates. The most important piece of Optima are **Contact Logs**. Contact Logs are the primary place for volunteers to record **efforts made on behalf of the child**. Contact Logs are vital to the Director's supervision of cases because they provide insight into how cases are progressing (or not), any issues the volunteer may need assistance with, and they provide helpful information about potential training opportunities. **Additionally, Contact Log entries *directly* impact data that CASA of Washington County reports to the State CASA Office and National CASA. Information reported to the State and National Organizations *directly impacts our program funding from year to year.*** Think of each Contact Log entry you make as inputting dollars and cents into CASA of Washington County!

ADDING NEW CONTACT LOGS

Generally, volunteers **should** be able to add a single Contact Log entry per day when there is activity to record on a case. Here a few real-world examples to guide you:

- You review some written materials in preparation for a CFTM, attend the CFTM, and receive an email from the DCS Family Case Manager that afternoon following up on some items from the CFTM. **This could all be recorded in one entry; it does not need to be three entries. All time spent on the three activities pertaining to the CFTM should be added together. Multiple, related activities can be reasonably combined.**
- Over the course of a day or two, you communicate with DCS and other members of a child's team via email. Several emails are sent back and forth. The entire email thread should be treated as **one** Contact Log entry. Treating this as multiple entries grossly overstates the number of contacts if everyone on the email is listed on every entry.

CASA of Washington County Indiana Newsletter

- You attend a CFTM in the morning and one of the parents **does not** attend. Later that day the parent who did not attend contacts you by phone and you have a meaningful conversation that covers some issues that **were not** covered in the CFTM. **In this instance you would create two separate contact log entries to clarify what took place during each individual interaction.**

CONTACT WITH CHILDREN

If the child or children in a case were present during an activity, you should **always** select the Activity Type "Contact with Child/ren", **even if another activity type would also apply**, such as "Contact with School", etc. Likewise, if you have face-to-face contact with the child, you should **use the contact type "Face-to-Face" even if multiple activities are being combined into one contact log entry.** This enables the State CASA Office to collect data more accurately on the number of face-to-face child contacts.

NOTES

The Note section of the Contact Log provides some level of detail about the volunteer's activity and should only **rarely** be left completely blank.

- The Note section facilitates communication between you and the Director, allowing the Director to have some sense of what is happening and better manage the case.
- Notes provide input or the basis for court reports and assist in preparation of testimony during court proceedings. This is the **only place in Optima** to record observations, insights, and details that **support recommendations to the court, notes capture details that would otherwise be lost and are *invaluable* if there is a need to change volunteers over the life of a case.**

CASA of Washington County Indiana Newsletter

CHECKING CONTACTS

Despite the "Pertains to" heading, this section records **who was contacted during an activity, not who the activity was about.**

- Check the names of anyone with whom you had meaningful contact during an activity. **Do not check the names of anyone who was not present or part of the interaction.**
- If the child was not present, do not check the child's name.
- Never check your own name.
- It is acceptable to check the name of the CASA Director if they were part of the interaction.
- All CASA volunteers and all CASA Staff who participate in an activity should make their own Contact Log entry to reflect time spent on case-related discussion or activity. **If two volunteers each spend one hour at a CFTM, that is two hours of completed activities and each CASA should make their own contact log entries.**
- For Internal CASA Staffing, only enter time spent specifically on the case in the Contact Log entry. Activity or discussion that is not directly related to the case should be recorded as "non-case activity", which can be recorded in the Volunteer Dashboard of Optima.
- PLEASE MAKE CONTACT LOG ENTRIES AS TIMELY AS POSSIBLE. WAITING UNTIL THE END OF A QUARTER TO MAKE ALL YOUR ENTRIES IS DETRIMENTAL TO THE PROGRAM AND DOES NOT PROVIDE GOOD EVIDENCE OF HOW HARD EACH OF YOU WORK ON YOUR CASES!

SAVE THE DATE
March 7, 2023

Join hundreds of Court Appointed Special Advocate volunteers from across the State of Indiana as we come together to lift up the voices of our most vulnerable children at our State Capitol. If you are interested in attending, please click this link and answer a few questions for planning purposes and an option for t-shirt ordering. If you want to attend and would like a shirt, orders are due by 2/15.

CASA Training Academy

February

Topic: ***"Innocence Lost—The Trafficking of Indiana's Children".***
When: Tuesday February 28, from 1:30-3:00 PM (Eastern Time)
Register here: https://mycourts.wufoo.com/forms/styo8xs0jdyzjn/

March

Topic: CASA Day at the Statehouse Preparation Webinar
When: Friday March 3, from 1:00-2:00 PM (Eastern Time)
Register here: https://mycourts.wufoo.com/forms/s15czivm10dmndw/

Topic: Filling the Void—Understanding Substance Abuse
When: Friday March 17, Time TBA
Registration info coming soon