

Session 5



TEXASCASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN



OVERVIEW

This is a 3½-hour session. Although times may vary based on the number of participants, we have created a sample timeline based on an evening class beginning at 6:00 p.m. and ending at 9:30 p.m. Please adjust the timeline as needed to fit your training and class size.

This session addresses substance abuse and how it can affect a parent's ability to care for a child. Make connections between the information and CASA/GAL volunteer work. Why do participants need to know about this subject? Why do they need to be aware of their personal values about substance use and abuse? Look for ways to help volunteers set aside their own values in order to consider what's best for a child.

This session introduces the concepts of working effectively with people from varying background and life experiences. Session 6 will delve further into these issues, addressing assumptions and generalizations about people we serve, and allowing participants the opportunity to create an individual action plan to better advocate for all children and families.

In this training session, create a safe environment where volunteers can explore these often emotionally laden issues in a productive, respectful and child-focused way. Responding to differences with sensitivity and an open mind can be difficult but can also greatly enrich our lives. Your goal as the facilitator is to engage the participants in a process of change to better serve children and families. It may be helpful to review your group agreements at the beginning of this session.

SUPPLIES AND CHECKLIST

Supplies:

- Name tents from previous class

Flip charts:

- Your “parking lot”
- Your expectations
- Your group agreements
- A flip chart for each group to use during the Bass case study exercise

Handouts:

- Different Ways of Relating to the World handout
- Make enough copies of the Socialization Puzzle handout for each pair in the class to have one. You will need to cut the puzzle pieces apart along the dotted lines in preparation for this activity.
- Copies of the Bass case study materials
- Copies of the Session 5 Evaluation

Videos:

- News clip video, “Saving Kids: Children of Addicts”

Additional information:

- Prior to facilitating this session, find out which drugs are commonly abused in your community by researching the topic online or talking to caseworkers about the drugs they see most often in their work with families. Be ready to share this information in class by creating a handout about locally abused drugs or adding the information to the Chapter 5 PowerPoint presentation. If your program doesn't already have a list of substance abuse treatment resources in your community, consider preparing a handout with organizations' names, contact information and details about the services they provide.

Slide 1



- Greet participants with enthusiasm as they arrive and invite them to grab their name tents.
- Once participants have found a seat, fade your background music out and welcome your class back for session 5!
- Lead everyone in an opener exercise.

INTRODUCE TRAINING GOALS

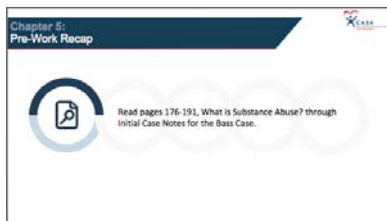
Advance to slide 2



- Briefly go over the training topics for this session to help learners feel oriented to the day's agenda, including when they can anticipate a break.

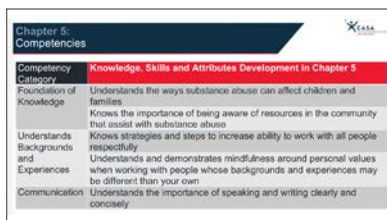
PREWORK RECAP

Advance to slide 3



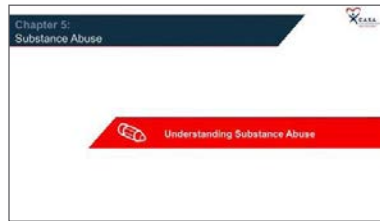
- Celebrate and thank your trainees for the time they invested in completing their Pre-Work. Invite any questions learners have in response to their Pre-Work, and capture any questions that will be covered later on the parking lot.

Advance to slide 4



- Review this slide showing which topics from the Competencies Checklist they'll be tackling together today.

Advance to slides 5 and 6



- During this activity, keep in mind that some participants may have personal experience with individuals who have struggled with substance abuse. Be sensitive to this possibility and support volunteers in assessing their readiness to practice non-judgment and compassion on their case.
- Ask participants to take three minutes to think of people they know who have experienced substance abuse and create two lists:
 - What are their strengths?
 - How does/did their substance abuse impact their lives?
- Ask participants to recall the information about substance abuse they reviewed in their Pre-Work, and discuss any questions they may have. Share the information you gathered about commonly abused substances in your local community, as well as treatment resources in your area (e.g. inpatient, outpatient, sober living, 12-step programs and therapy). Help participants understand the difference between types of testing for substance use in your area (for example, urinalysis, hair strand and nail scrape).

Note: If a participant raises a question about the current research into alternatives to the abstinence model of treatment, acknowledge that while these models are being tried in some places, most court systems will not allow anything other than abstinence for parents with substance abuse issues.

ACTIVITY 5B: SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND PARENTING

6:35 – 6:45

Advance to slide 7



- Using a flip chart or whiteboard ask class to brainstorm how substance abuse affects parenting. Once the class has created a list, ask them to briefly look over the list on page 192 of their manual to see more ideas.

Advance to slide 8



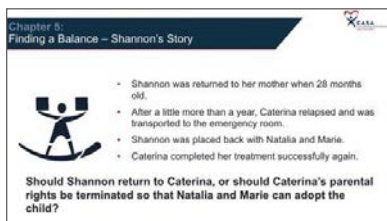
- Show the clip of the news story, “Saving Kids: Children of Addicts.” As they watch the video, ask participants to think about advocating for a similar family as a CASA/GAL volunteer. After the clip, ask the participants to share the challenges of advocating for a family with parental substance abuse, as well as their reactions to this family’s story.

Advance to slide 9



- Go over key points to consider when deciding whether to recommend a child return home. Emphasize that they are looking for the parent to make progress towards demonstrating an ability to meet the MSL for their child. Relapse is often part of a successful recovery process, and a relapse does not mean that the parent has failed in their recovery efforts.
- This is a great opportunity to emphasize that volunteers may never use or be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while doing their CASA work, and to highlight any other policies your program has around substance use.

Advance to slides 10 and 11



- Have class read the short “Shannon’s Story” section in their manual, starting on page 193. Use slides 10 and 11 to provide a quick summary.
- Divide participants into two groups: one to argue for termination of parental rights so that Shannon can be adopted by Natalia and Marie; the other to argue for additional time for the mother to show she can safely parent. Emphasize to participants that they need to use information from this unit to support their position each time they argue

for a specific recommendation. Highlight how important it is for CASA/GAL volunteers to think about both the short-term and the long-term consequences of their recommendations and to consider the individual needs of each child.

- Be ready to address the issue of discrimination against same-sex couples if it arises in the discussions. If a participant expresses concern about recommending a child be adopted by a same sex couple, be very clear that CASA does not discriminate and this is not a reason to use in an evaluation.
- Allot five minutes for the groups to prepare their arguments, using a flip chart to outline their position. Bring the groups back together and ask each group to present its arguments. Each group will have two minutes to present. When they are finished, note that there were valid points made on both sides. Then, briefly highlight the information in the section “What a CASA/GAL Volunteer Can Do.”

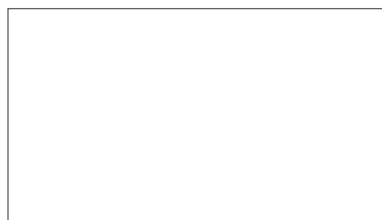
ACTIVITY 5E: UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT WAYS OF RELATING TO THE WORLD 7:25 – 7:45

Advance to slide 12



- Give an overview of the material about socialization that appears in the Volunteer Manual.

Advance through slides 13.



Advance to slide 15

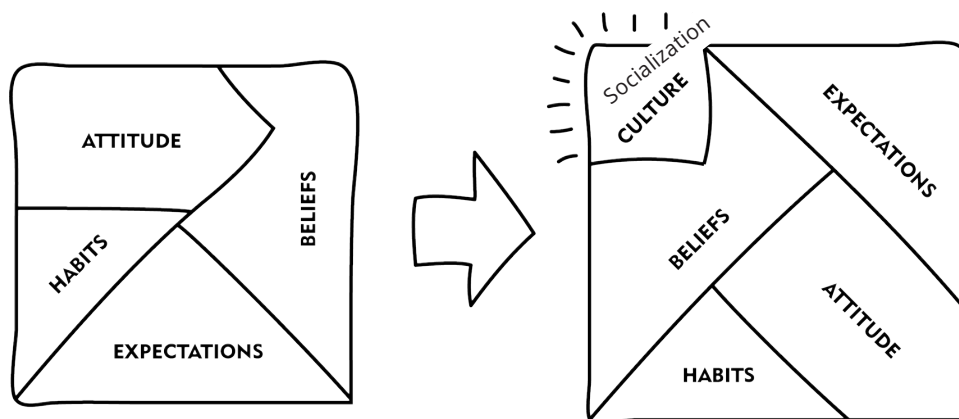


- Distribute the “Different Ways of Relating to the World” Iceberg handout and quickly walk participants through this analogy. There are parts of who we are and how we relate to the world that we can see, and other parts we can’t see but know are there below the surface. The part above the waterline makes up only about ten percent of

an iceberg's entirety.

The visible parts of who we are and how we relate to the world might include dress, music, food and games. Those that we can't see but know are there include unwritten rules guiding patterns of speech, concepts of time and the meanings of body language.

- Ask participants to find a partner, choose one component found below the waterline of the iceberg and take a total of five minutes to each explain an unseen rule of differing ways of relating to the world. Although a pair of participants may share commonalities, chances are they will find slight variations in their personal approach to rules, expectations or customs. The pairs won't need to share with the larger group.
- Part two of the activity challenges participants to consider rethinking the way they approach a task while being conscious of different ways of relating to the world. Distribute pieces one through four of the puzzle, withholding piece five, labeled "socialization." Ask the pairs to use all four pieces to construct a square. This should take about 5 minutes.
- After they finish, distribute piece five to each pair. Tell them they must now construct a new square using all five pieces. This will be more challenging. They will want to revert to what they know from building the first square and may find it difficult to set this knowledge aside. The finished puzzles look like this:



- Take five minutes to discuss the following questions after the pairs have completed the second square:
 - What was it like having to make a new puzzle after receiving an additional piece?
 - How is this activity similar to advocating for a child from another culture?
 - Possible answers to the second question include the following:
 - ◆ What worked the first time didn't necessarily work the same way the

second time.

- ◆ They had to start all over again without any preconceived notions.
- ◆ They had to forget what they did before and think of completing a square in a whole new way.
- This can be what it's like working with children, youth and families with different ways of relating to the world. What worked well with one family might work very differently with another. That one small piece made a drastic change in constructing a new square. Share a case story that illustrates the importance of this and how a CASA volunteer can advocate for a child's unique, individual needs to be met.



Share a case story that illustrates how a CASA volunteer can advocate for a child's needs to be met.

BREAK

7:45 – 8:00

ACTIVITY 5I: THE BASS CASE

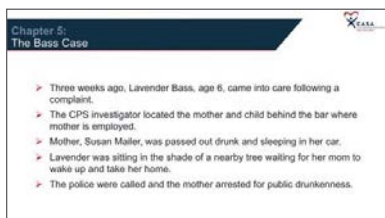
8:00 – 9:05

Advance to slides 20 and 21



- Have the class open their manuals to the initial file for the Bass case, which they read for Pre-Work. *Use slides 22 and 23 to briefly re-familiarize participants with the information in the case file.*

Advance to slides 22 and 23



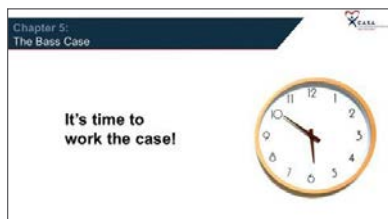
- Quickly recap how case studies work and remind participants about the four roles: Runner, Scribe, Moderator and Questioner. After they review the initial case file, they can send their Runner to the facilitator to request an additional interview transcript from a key player they'd like to speak with. As they collect information they should be synthesizing that info to make recommendations to the court. Give each group a copy of the Questioner's List to help keep them on track as they review documents and determine their recommendations. After 30 minutes, each team's Scribe should legibly write on the flip chart that group's recommendations to the court regarding services for the child, services for the parent and placement decisions.

Interviews available for the Bass case:

(This list is for your use only. Groups must decide on their own who they want to interview.)

- CPS Caseworker: Lisa Kelly
- Attorney for the Program and Volunteer Supervisor
- Lavender Bass and Foster Mother: Bonnie Matthews
- Father: John Bass
- Maternal Aunt and Grandmother: Leah Mailer and Rebecca Mailer (First Contact)
- Maternal Aunt and Grandmother: Leah Mailer and Rebecca Mailer (Second Contact)
- Mother: Susan Mailer

Advance to slide 24

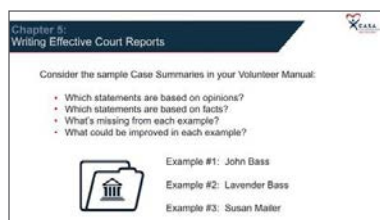


- Start the activity and give each group about 30 minutes for interviews and an extra five minutes to discuss recommendations, and ensure that each group has a flip chart to capture its recommendations.
- After 35 minutes, invite the groups to stand, stretch and read the recommendations of the other groups around the room.
- In the large group, discuss the debrief questions and any others that arose during the activity.

ACTIVITY 5J: WRITING EFFECTIVE COURT REPORTS

9:05 – 9:20

Advance to slides 26 and 27



- This activity focuses on developing clear written communication skills. Ask the participants to recall the sample court report summaries that they read on page 145 of their Pre-Work. Discuss the following questions:
 - Which statements are based on opinions?
 - Which statements are based on facts?
 - What's missing from each example?
 - What could be improved in each example?
- Review the examples with participants, and point out how they can be improved using the information below and any other insights you can offer based on your program's expectations for writing effective reports.

Example 1: John Bass

- *"He was busted for pot..."* Avoid use of slang.
- *"Mr. Bass has never been a father to Lavender..."*: State objectively.
- *"He admits to a history of using inhalants..."* Be more specific to avoid implying continued or current use of inhalants.
- *"Mr. Bass claims..."* Use of specific words can imply alternative meaning. Use "states" instead of "claims."

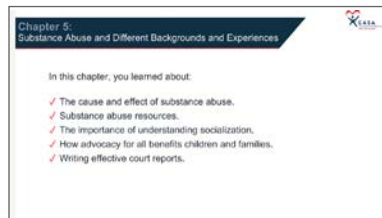
Example 2: Lavender Bass

- *"Lavender spends a lot of time in the yard and is not very engaged..."* Provide more specificity about significant child behaviors. Engaged with others? With only foster parents? When engaged in developmentally appropriate activities?
- *"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..."* The first sentence is an individual interpretation of the situation. The second sentence provides more specifics.
- *"This is not the best foster placement for Lavender..."* Avoid statements without any explanation of what led to a conclusion.

Example 3: Susan Mailer

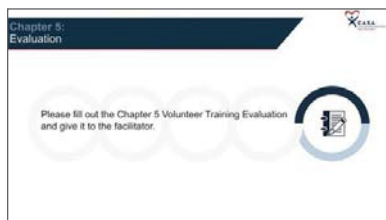
- *"A criminal records check confirmed Ms. Mailer has a tendency toward violent behavior..."* Include specifics on history if relevant to the parental ability and child's protection.
- *"CASA/GAL volunteer feels like drugs are being done at the home of the maternal aunt and grandmother. The children are also fearful of them..."* Statements should be fact based without assumptions, which might represent misinterpretations of different family backgrounds and experiences.

Advance to slides 27 and 28



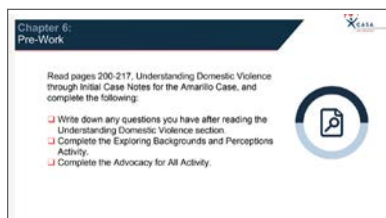
- In summary, briefly review the objectives found at the beginning of the chapter to check in about volunteers' comfort level with the content. Answer any remaining questions.

Advance to slide 29



- Hand out copies of the Session 5 Evaluation and collect them before participants leave.

Advance to slide 30



- Go over assigned Pre-Work for session 6 and ensure everyone has a clear understanding about what to tackle before the next session. Clarify that the Amarillo case is pronounced "Am-uh-ree-yo."
- Lead everyone in a closing activity.

