

Session 3

3



TEXASCASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN



OVERVIEW

This is a 3½-hour session. Although times may vary widely 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.

Be aware of participants who may be struggling with personal experiences of trauma, especially as you introduce the Adverse Childhood Experiences calculator. Be sensitive to their experiences, and work to compassionately support these participants in learning to self-assess how past experiences might affect their advocacy.

This session introduces the importance of effective communication in CASA volunteer work. Allow opportunities for participants to practice the skills they're learning in order to build confidence and prepare them for their role.

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 Black-Smith case study exercise

Handouts:

- Copies of the Black-Smith case study materials
- Copies of Session 3 Evaluation

Videos:

- “Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study” video

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 3!

- Lead everyone in an opener exercise.

INTRODUCE TRAINING GOALS

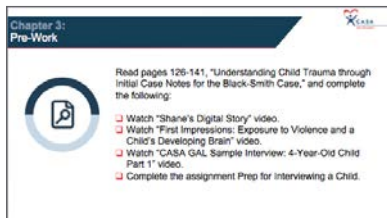
Advance to slide 2



- 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



- This slide shows which topics from the Competencies Checklist you will be tackling together today.

Advance to slide 5



- The goal of this discussion is to anchor the topic of trauma in participants’ own knowledge and help them be aware of how their life histories may affect their advocacy.

Advance to slide 6



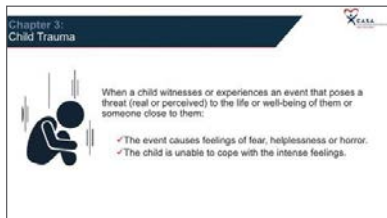
- Show the slide with the Walt Whitman quote, and ask for a volunteer to read it aloud. Invite a few participants to share their thoughts on the meaning of the quote. Point out that both negative and positive experiences have an effect on children.

Advance to slide 7



- Show the PowerPoint slide about the Feelings Thermometer and briefly introduce this concept. Emphasize that it is important for participants to be aware of their reaction to trauma and to any personal experience with trauma. Encourage participants to talk to program staff if they feel their advocacy role may be affected by experiences with trauma.

Advance to slide 8



- Recall the information on Understanding Childhood Trauma that the participants read as part of Pre-Work.

Advance to slide 9



- Remind volunteers that very often children in the system have been exposed to multiple traumatic events or trauma over long periods of time. Because of this, it's important that volunteers have an understanding of what trauma is and how children are affected by it. It's

important to note that everyone involved in the system will often have their own trauma histories as well.

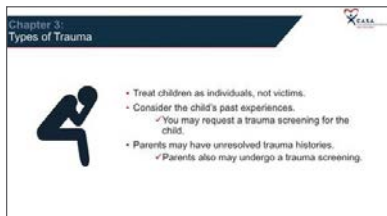
Advance to slide 10



- Ask participants to think back on the "Shane's Story" video that they watched. Ask participants to recall the various types of trauma that Shane experienced before and after entering the child protective services system, and invite a volunteer to capture the group's ideas on a flip chart.

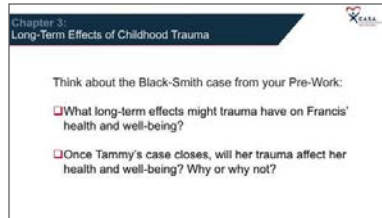
Shane's experiences included domestic violence (wrestling matches between his mom and dad), physical abuse from his dad, substance abuse in the home, his dad's death from alcohol, his mom's depression and his removal from his parents.

Advance to slide 11



- Remind participants to always treat the children we work with as individuals, and not as victims. Emphasize the importance of advocating for trauma-informed therapeutic providers whenever possible to support children healing from trauma.
- Point out that many of the parents we work with also have traumatic histories of their own. The mother in the Black-Smith case is one example, which you will be discussing next.

Advance to slides 12 and 13



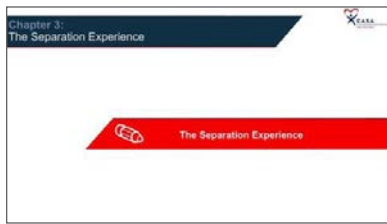
- Play the video about the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study.
- Ask volunteers to turn to page 145 in their manual and review the Adverse Childhood Experiences score sheet. Ask them to check YES for questions two, four, five, seven, eight and nine. Let them know that this is the ACE score for Frances Smith (the mother from the Black-Smith case).
- Have volunteers discuss the following questions in their small groups:
 - What long-term effects might unresolved trauma have on Frances' health and well-being?
 - Once Tammy leaves foster care, will her traumatic experiences affect her health and well-being?
 - Discuss participants' responses in the large group. Note: When participants consider Frances' ACE score, they may start considering their own score. Don't ask participants to share their personal scores, but let them know that it's natural to think about their own experiences and where their ACE score falls on the chart. Be aware of participants who may be struggling with trauma issues that could affect their work as a CASA volunteer. This is a great moment to highlight the importance of intentional self-care practices that help us strengthen our own resilience in this work. Ask the class for a few volunteers to share one thing they plan to do to take care of their well-being this week.

Advance to slide 14



- Explain that children in the child protection system may experience trauma from being removed from the home. Each new placement increases the likelihood of irreversible damage to their emotional and psychological health. However, because a child's safety has to be the primary consideration, sometimes they must be moved for protection.

Advance to slide 15



- Ask participants to sit with their eyes closed as you read the following separation scenario, and imagine the experience of being a child who is removed from their home. Warn participants that sometimes this exercise makes people feel sad or uncomfortable as

they think about personal experiences of themselves or someone they know. Give participants permission to open their eyes or leave the room at any point if needed.

Sit comfortably and close your eyes as you visualize yourself as a 4-year-old child at home one evening with your mom and dad. A lady came to the day care center today and asked you lots of questions about what your mom and dad do when you are bad, whether you have enough food at home, how much your daddy drinks and how often he hits your mommy. You are pretty sure you are going to be in a lot of trouble because the lady said she had to tell your parents that she talked to you. You can barely eat your dinner, and your mom is already mad about that. Your dad is drinking another beer, which usually is a bad sign.

There is a knock on the door and that same lady is standing there with a police officer. Now you know you are really in big trouble. She tells your mom and dad that she is taking you away with her. Will they put you in jail? She sits near you at the table and tells you not to worry. She asks your mom or dad to get some clothes together. She asks if there is any special toy or blanket that might help you sleep better. You just can't imagine what it will be like to sleep in jail with all of those mean people that were there with your dad the last time he went.

But the lady doesn't take you to jail. The police officer and the lady take you to a big house in another part of town. They are chatting and laughing on the way. You can tell they are trying to be nice, but you are really scared. The lady walks you to the door, and another lady opens it up. She has a big smile on her face, takes your bag of stuff and says, "Come right in." Behind her is a man. He is smiling too. There are a bunch of other kids who are all looking at you. The new lady says, "Welcome. This is your new home. We are so glad to have you." She keeps smiling and seems really nice, but there must be some mistake. You didn't ask for a new home . . . You already have a mom and dad . . . You don't have brothers and sisters . . . This isn't your room . . . And what is this food that they are giving you? You realize that this is all your fault and that your mom and dad must be really mad now. You wonder if you'll ever see them again.

- After you read the story, allow participants a moment to reflect. Then ask them to discuss the following questions in a large group:
 - What feelings did you experience as you imagined being removed from your home and your parents?
 - What might you do as a CASA/GAL volunteer to mitigate the negative effects of removal for Tammy, the older child in the Black-Smith case? (Answers to this question might include recommending regular visitation with her mother; advocating for placement with her younger sister, Grace; advocating that Tammy not experience multiple placements once in the foster care system; and explaining in an age-appropriate way what’s happening and why.)

ACTIVITY 3E: TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE

7:10 – 7:20

Advance to slide 16



- Ask participants to think of a difficult time in their life and what helped them get through it.
- Ask volunteers to read aloud the two paragraphs about resilience that appear on page 147 in the Volunteer Manual.

Advance to slide 17



- Afterward, briefly emphasize these points: Resilience is very individual. Though some children are naturally more resilient than others, resilience can be built and enhanced through practice.

Advance to slide 18

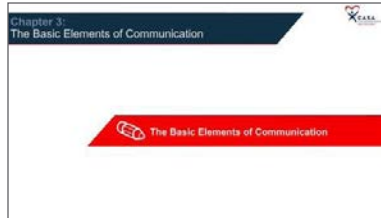


- In pairs, have participants choose one of the “seven Cs” and answer the following question:
- How can you help to build or reinforce this characteristic in a child you work with as a CASA/GAL volunteer?
 - 🌱 Share a story of how a CASA volunteer empowered a child to build resilience.

ACTIVITY 3F: THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

7:20 – 7:25

Advance to slides 19 and 20



- Have participants think of a time when they had a miscommunication with a friend, colleague or family member. Give them a minute to write down one thing that contributed to the problem. Then ask for a few volunteers to share in the large group.

Advance to slide 21



- Encourage volunteers to keep in mind that strong self-awareness, sensitivity and skill are keys to effective CASA work. It's important they "take their temperature" and be aware of their own feelings as they communicate with others on their case; if their emotional temperature is high, it might come across in their communication. Ask the class for a few ideas of how people self-regulate themselves in moments when they're feeling charged.

Advance to slide 22

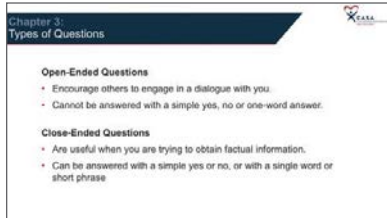


- Remind participants that communication includes much more than just the words we use. It's important to be aware of our body language and the feelings we're conveying, as well. Be sensitive to what the other person might be feeling, and always approach conversations with an open mind rather than an attitude of judgement.

ACTIVITY 3G: OPEN-ENDED VS. CLOSED-ENDED QUESTIONS

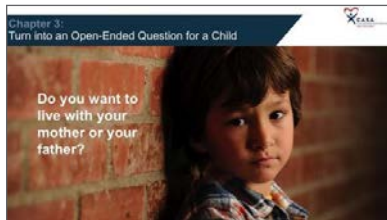
7:25 – 7:30

Advance to slide 23



- Recall the information on open-ended and closed-ended questions that the participants read through in Pre-Work. Discuss any questions that the participants may have.
- Briefly discuss leading questions and why they are never a good idea in our advocacy work. Ask the class, “What’s the problem with asking a child, ‘You’re afraid of your mom, right?’”

Advance to slide 24 through 26



- Ask the class to identify what type of question they see on the screen.

ACTIVITY 3H: CASA VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW

7:30 – 7:50

Advance to slide 27

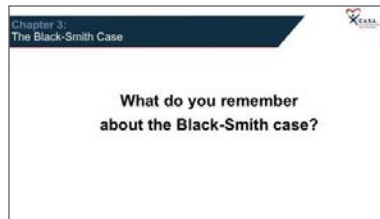


- Before playing the video of a CASA/GAL volunteer interviewing a four-year-old child, first ask half of the class to focus on what the volunteer did well, and ask the other half to focus on identifying areas for growth.
- Play the video. Then discuss in the large group what the volunteer did well and what they need to improve.
- Ask for any questions from the Pre-Work on interview techniques. Have them think about the child interview they prepared during their Pre-Work. In the large group, ask them to share answers to the following questions:
 - Which of the strategies from the video did you employ in your interview?
 - How many of your questions were open-ended? Closed?
 - What would you change if you were to rewrite your interview questions now?
 - If time allows, have participants share in pairs the interview they designed as part of their Pre-Work.

ACTIVITY 3I: THE BLACK-SMITH CASE

8:00 – 8:50

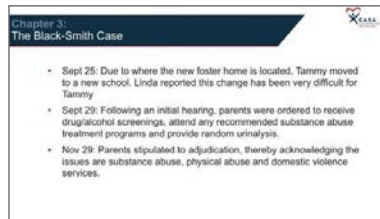
Advance to slides 28 and 29



- Explain to the class the basic format of the case study activities. It's helpful to highlight the following key points as you walk your participants through how this activity will work:
 - The case study activities will help participants apply the information they've learned so far to simulations that will prepare them for their CASA/GAL volunteer work.
 - Volunteers will review these case studies in small groups, with a large group debrief at the end.
 - Within each small group, there are four different roles to play: Runner, Scribe, Moderator and Questioner.
 - ◆ The Runner approaches the facilitator asking for interviews.
 - ◆ The Scribe writes down information and recommendations.
 - ◆ The Moderator keeps the group on task and tracks the amount of time left for the activity.
 - ◆ The Questioner asks questions from the Questioner's List.
 - Each group receives the same first set of documents: the initial case file and the Questioner's List.
 - Once each group digests the information in the case file, the group will decide who they would like to interview next. The designated Runner can then ask the facilitator whether an interview transcript is available for the person they have identified. Groups do not have a list of interviews or documents available; they must make educated guesses about who would be helpful to interview based on information in the case file. They can request one interview transcript at a time. This process will continue for approximately 35 minutes. Throughout this time, the Questioner should help the group stay on track by asking case-related questions and referring periodically to the Questioner's List.

- As small groups get more information about the case, they should prepare to make recommendations to the court about services for the parents, services for the child and placement. After about 35 minutes, the groups should take 5 minutes to finalize their recommendations and write them on the flip chart in large, legible handwriting.
- A large group debrief follows to discuss findings, recommendations and outstanding questions.

Advance to slides 30 and 31



- Ask the class to briefly summarize what they remember about the Black-Smith case they read in their Pre-Work.

Advance to slide 32

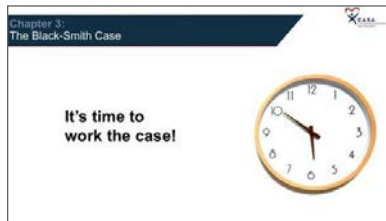


- Divide the class into groups of four and ask them to assign roles (Runner, Scribe, Moderator, Questioner) within their group. If you have an uneven number of volunteers, participants can share roles. Hand out copies of the Questioner's List to each group.

Introduce the activity:

Take several minutes to re-familiarize yourself with the information in this case file. You will also receive a list of questions that your Questioner should remind your group to consider as you review documents and make your recommendations. After you review the initial case file, determine whom your group would like to interview next. Send your Runner to the facilitator to request an interview transcript from a person with whom you'd like to speak. You may continue to request additional interviews and documents, one at a time, over the course of 35 minutes, in order to complete your information gathering for the case. After 35 minutes, your Scribe should write your group's recommendations to the court regarding a) services for the child, b) services for the parent and c) placement decisions, on the flip chart.

Advance to slide 33



- Once participants have begun working in small groups, monitor each group to be sure they understand the activity, but be careful not to micromanage the groups. Be sure to allow participants enough space to learn and make mistakes, which can be discussed during the debrief.

Interviews available for the Black-Smith case:

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

- CASA/GAL Supervisor: Jessica Clarkson
- CPS Caseworker: Becky Howard
- Child: Tammy Black
- Tammy's first grade teacher: Mrs. Gallego
- Foster parents: Linda and Dave Gilbert
- Maternal aunt: Anne Black

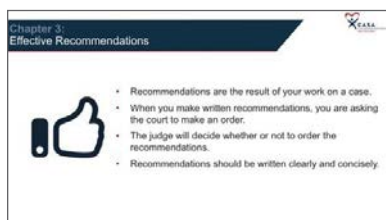
- Invite groups to move around, stretch and take a few minutes to read other groups' recommendations on flip charts around the room.
- Hand out the debrief questions, and ask the small groups to discuss them for several minutes. Afterward, go through these questions in the large group, and address any other questions participants may have about the case. Focus the conversation around the session 3 topics: trauma, ACE, resilience, open-ended/closed-ended questions and the CASA/GAL interview. If issues arise that you know will be covered in more depth in later sessions, put these topics on the parking lot flip chart, and circle back to them during that session.

ACTIVITY 3J: WRITING EFFECTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

8:50 – 9:15

- Ask participants to take out your program's guidance for writing court reports, which you distributed in session 1.

Advance to slides 34 through 36

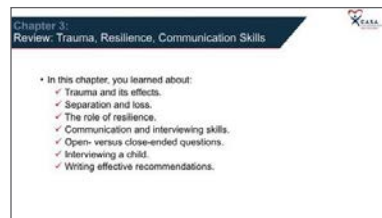


- Give an overview of your program’s philosophy on writing effective recommendations.
- Have participants work in their small groups from the previous activity. Ask them to evaluate the effectiveness of the recommendations they wrote for the Black-Smith case. They should discuss the following questions:
 - What recommendations would you add?
 - How would you rewrite your recommendations to include outcome measures?
- In the large group, ask each group to share what changes they would make to their recommendations.

REVIEW, EVALUATION AND PRE-WORK ASSIGNMENT

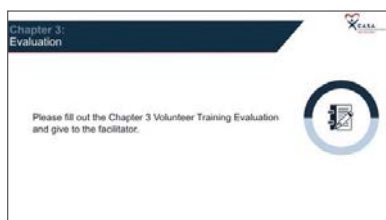
9:15 – 9:30

Advance to slides 37 and 38



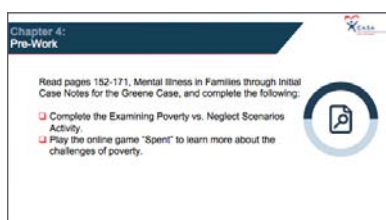
- In summary, briefly review the objectives found at the beginning of the chapter to check in about volunteers’ comfort level with the content. Answer any remaining questions.

Advance to slide 39



- Hand out copies of the Session 3 Evaluation and collect them before participants leave.

Advance to slide 40



- Go over assigned Pre-Work for session 4 and ensure everyone has a clear understanding about what to tackle before the next session.
- Lead everyone in a closing activity.