

Writing Your Court Report



“The most essential aspect of your work as a CASA volunteer”



ICE BREAKER IDEAS



**Describe your personal fashion
in high school.**

**What movie makes you laugh
until you cry?**

**What band are you afraid to
admit that you love?**

In this Continuing Education



Agenda:

- What you need to know about Court Hearings
- Objectives of your Court Report
- Your CASA Role
- Timeline
- Template
- Format & Edits
- Findings & Recommendations
- Q & A

Covid-19 Update on Court Hearings

In person:

- Attorneys & County Counsel
- Social Workers
- CASA Court Liaison

If they wish to:

- Youth, NMD, Parents, Guardians, Resource Parents, and or Caregivers

Virtual only:

- CASAs
- CASA Supervisors
- Therapists
- School Representatives
- Other Support Team

Court Hearings



- Are held every 3 – 6 Months.
- Court Reports will need to be written usually for every 6-month hearing.
- Court Reports do not need to be written for "Oral Review Hearings"
- Court Reports do not need to be written for "Contested Hearings"

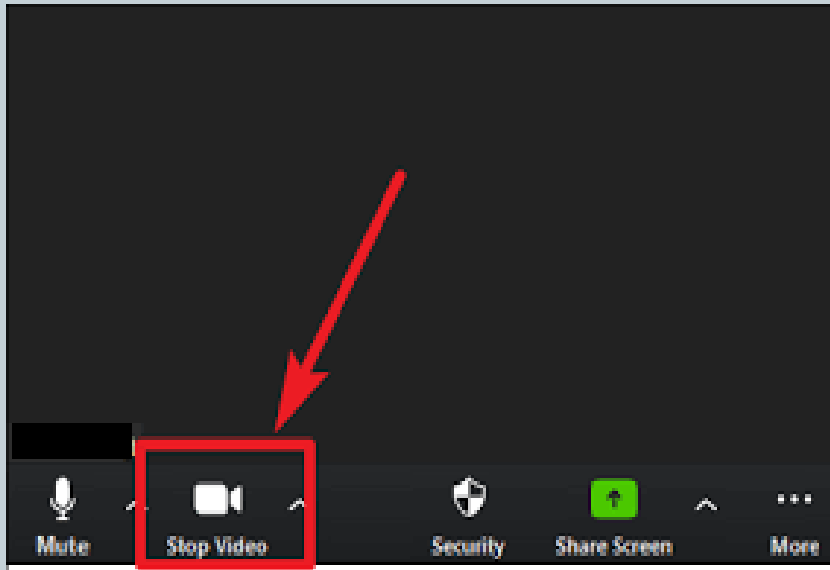
Zoom Court Hearing Etiquette



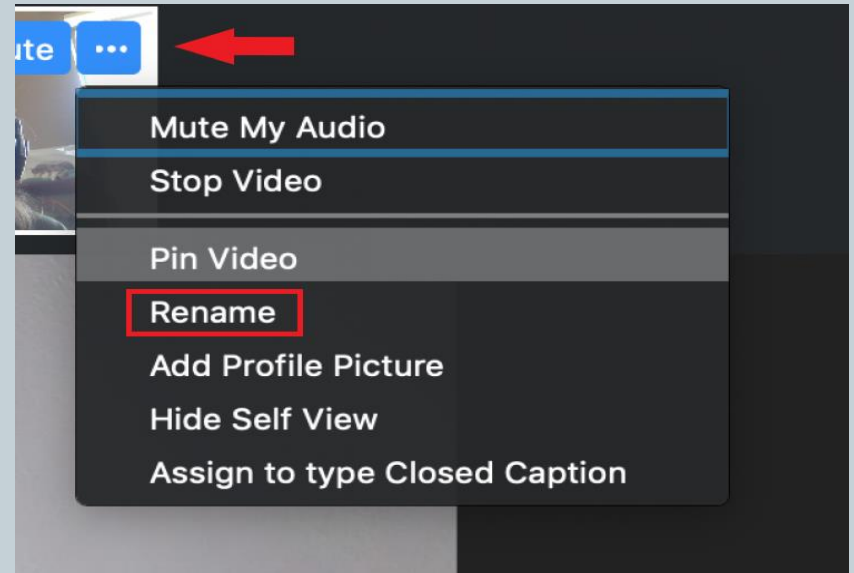
- Log in 10 minutes early (it is better for you to be early than late)
- Leave your camera video off and your sound on mute.
- Rename yourself: CASA-Jane Doe
- Have your cell phones near you to communicate via text with your Supervisor.

The Bailiff might put you in a Zoom Waiting Room and will let you in once your case is called. If the Bailiff does not put you in a waiting room, then please **remember to keep your camera off until your case is called.**

Zoom Court Hearing Etiquette



Bottom left corner



3 dots on top right
corner of your
image box

Poll Question #1



The Objective of the Court Report



CASA court reports are uniquely centered on the child.

- Report what you have observed and learned while acting as the judge's eyes and ears in the field.
- Represent and advocate for the best interest of the child/youth.



**Child-Centered
Court Report**
You tell the story.
The child is the star!

Court Report Objective #1



The Judge considers the information you report.

- When preparing for hearings
- When ordering services and actions that affect your CASA child
- When making decisions that impact your child's safety, welfare, placement and permanent home

Court Report Objective #2

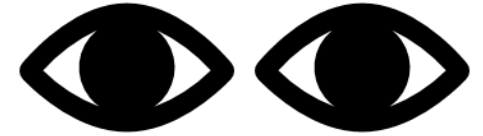


Your report becomes part of the official court record.

When quoting someone, make sure you receive approval to include it in the report.

Ms. Jones said, “when the child returns from visiting her sister, she is elated and in good spirits.”

Court Report Objective #3



Your report helps to build CASA's reputation as an objective, thoughtful and trustworthy source.

- CASA volunteers are the eyes and ears of the court.
- Your advocate supervisor works with you to make your report as effective as possible in court.

Role of a CASA



The Advocate:

- visits and spends time with the child.
- learns about the child's home, school and surroundings.
- talks directly with key people who impact the child's life.
- advocates for a child's best interest.

Who can Advocates reach out to?



Social Worker

Attorney

Caregivers

Therapist

Resource Family

CASA Supervisor

**Youth's
Team**

Parents

Other Resources

Group Home Staff

Wrap Around Case Workers

Medical Team

School Principal, Counselor and Teachers

Who Sees Your Court Report



Your advocate supervisor files and submits
your report to:

- The Judge
- County Council
- The Social Worker
- Other attorneys involved in the case

**Others, including parents, and
youth may see your report.**

Polling Question #2



Court Report Timeline



Prepare well in advance and submit your report on time.



Example Court Timeline



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Th	Fri	Sat
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Collect & Update Information						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Prepare Draft Court Report						
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
		★ Submit Report to Supervisor				
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Report Reviewed, Signed and Submitted to the Court						
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
			Judge Reads the Report			
29	30	31				
		★ Court Date				

Court Report Template




www.casaofmonterey.org

Advocate Center

CASA Court Report Template

- Standard for all CASA of Monterey court reports.
- Organizes key information in a way the judge expects to find it.
- Helps ensure that CASA's contribution is respected and taken seriously.

 **CASA COURT REPORT**

Court Hearing Date: _____

Child's Name:	_____	Child's DOB:	_____
J#:	_____	CASA Appr. Date:	_____
CASA Advocate:	_____	Date of This Report:	_____
Social Worker:	_____	Date of Last Report:	_____
Hearing Type:	_____	Total Case Hours:	_____

Persons Contacted:

Name	Title

Updated: 11/18/2021 CASA COURT REPORT Page 1

RECORDS REVIEWED:
CURRENT STATUS/EDUCATIONAL UPDATE:
OBSERVATIONS:
DESCRIPTIONS OF THE NEEDS AND WISHES OF THE CHILD:
PEER RELATIONSHIPS/EXTRA-CURRICULAR:
PERMANENT CONNECTIONS:
PERSONAL ASSESSMENT:
RECOMMENDATIONS
It is respectfully requested that the court take into consideration these recommendations:
•
•
•
•

Respectfully Submitted: _____
CASA Advocate

Program Director: _____
Maria Perez-Zamora

Updated: 11/18/2021 CASA COURT REPORT Page 2

Court Report Template



CASA COURT REPORT

Court Hearing Date:

Child's Name:		Child's DOB:	
J#:		CASA Appt. Date:	
CASA Advocate:		Date of This Report:	
Social Worker:		Date of Last Report:	
Hearing Type:		Total Case Hours:	

Persons Contacted:

Name	Title

Identifying information about the child.

List individuals that you've contacted to gather info. Always include the child/youth.

Court Report Template



Findings: What you have observed and learned since the previous hearing; child center information that supports your Recommendations.

Signatures: You and CASAs program director sign the report before it is submitted to the court.

RECORDS REVIEWED:

CURRENT STATUS/EDUCATIONAL UPDATE:

OBSERVATIONS:

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE NEEDS AND WISHES OF THE CHILD:

PEER RELATIONSHIPS/EXTRA-CURRICULAR:

PERMANENT CONNECTIONS:

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT:

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is respectfully requested that the court take into consideration these recommendations:

-
-
-
-

Respectfully Submitted: _____
CASA Advocate

Program Director: _____
Maria Perez-Zamora

Updated: 11/18/2021 CASA COURT REPORT Page 2

Recommendations:
Simple bulleted statements that say what you want the judge to do or what you want to happen for your CASA child... tied clearly and directly to your findings.

Focus on Recommendations



Promote and Protect the best interest of the child

CASA recommendations are:

- Appropriate to the legal stage of the case
- Child-centered
- Clearly tied to your findings
- Stated in brief, bulleted sentences

Court Report Template



CASA COURT REPORT

Court Hearing Date:

Child's Name:	
J#:	
CASA Advocate:	
Social Worker:	
Hearing Type:	

Persons Contacted:

Name	Title

RECORDS REVIEWED:

CURRENT STATUS/EDUCATIONAL UPDATE:

OBSERVATIONS:

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE NEEDS AND WISHES OF THE CHILD:

REGULAR:

into consideration these recommendations:

How Long Should My Court Report Be?

Respectfully Submitted: _____
CASA Advocate

Program Director: _____
Maria Perez-Zamora

Format and Edits



Your advocate supervisor supports you at every step

- Your advocate supervisor will help you format your first report using the CASA of Monterey court report template.

Your

will

draft

- ~~You're~~ advocate supervisor ~~might~~ edit your ^ report and talk with you about the rules behind the suggested changes.

reasons

- Your report will be submitted to the court only if you and your advocate supervisor agree on the content.

Polling #3



Break Time!



SAMPLE Court Report



CASA COURT REPORT

Court Hearing Date:

Child's Name:		Child's DOB:	
J#:		CASA Appt. Date:	
CASA Advocate:		Date of This Report:	
Social Worker:		Date of Last Report:	
Hearing Type:		Total Case Hours:	

Persons Contacted:

Name	Title

RECORDS REVIEWED:

CURRENT STATUS/EDUCATIONAL UPDATE:

OBSERVATIONS:

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE NEEDS AND WISHES OF THE CHILD:

PEER RELATIONSHIPS/EXTRA-CURRICULAR:

PERMANENT CONNECTIONS:

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT:

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is respectfully requested that the court take into consideration these recommendations:

-
-
-
-

Respectfully Submitted: _____
CASA Advocate

Program Director: _____
Maria Perez-Zamora

Focus on Recommendations



Promote and Protect the best interest of the child
Child-Centered

Brief Bulleted Sentences

Child/Youth's Interests

Placement

Services

Permanency Goal (For Permanency Hearings)

Recommendation Examples

Johnny remains in his current placement while working towards reunification

Mental health assessment for Johnny

Johnny to return to his father's care if deemed appropriate

Focus on Recommendations



Promote and Protect the best interest of the child
Child-Centered

Not Child-Centered

The mother/father should be able to see the children as long as she isn't left alone with them.

Child-Centered

The children to have supervised visits with mother/father as deemed appropriate.

Findings & Recommendations



CLEARLY TIED TO YOUR FINDINGS

Finding

Angel's school counselor reported that he is passing most of his classes but is struggling with Math and English.

Possible Recommendation

Explore tutoring options for Angel

Your Turn! Focus on Recommendations



Promote and Protect the best interest of the child
Child-Centered

Not Child-Centered

Andrea spends all of her money on shoes. She needs to set a budget.

Child-Centered

Suggestions



- Encourage youth to participate in ILP workshops (budgeting workshop)
- Discuss establishing a bank account
- Encourage youth to discuss with Social Worker Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP)
- Have a conversation about saving money since youth will be aging out soon.

Findings & Recommendations



Finding

Johnny thinks he might have ADHD and that might be why he gets in trouble in school most of the time.

Possible Recommendation

Suggestions



- Further explore Family Mental Health Assessment
- Continue recommending therapy while obtaining ADHD diagnosis.

Reframing



Don't Say:	Say:
Child/youth needs to lose weight	Encourage youth to maintain a healthier lifestyle
Child/youth needs to get better grades	Include grades and keep it fact-based
Youth is sexually active	Don't, personal
They are a Delinquent	They are involved in the Juvenile Justice System
Parents are drug-addicts	Parents struggle with substance abuse
Child went AWOL	Child left home without permission



Keys to Good Report Writing



- Communicate with your advocate supervisor
- Accuracy (to be exact, free from errors and misstatements)
- Brevity (to be concise and complete)
- Clarity (to be easily understood)
- Strengths-based language

Tips



#1: Check-in with your advocate supervisor!

Keep these things in mind:

- The CASAs report is a summary of key information since the last report.
- Keep your report **child-focused** and **fact-based**
- Write with your principal reader in mind:
THE JUDGE!

Q & A