



JJ COURT REPORT GUIDELINES

WHEN TO SUBMIT

Youth typically have juvenile justice hearings every 4-6 months. However, some youth may have hearings as often as every other month. Based on the frequency of the youth's scheduled hearings, a CASA can submit a Written Court Report to the juvenile justice court:

- Every 6 months
- As new and important information arises
- At the request of the defense attorney

BENEFITS

A CASA court report can be largely beneficial in many ways. First and foremost, it allows a young person to feel supported. Secondly, a CASA court report may:

- Provide more up-to-date information to the Defense Attorney
- Allow the courts to see the humanity and potential of persons who have a support system
- Provide an opportunity to give accurate information to the juvenile justice court if any reporting part misstates information
- Speak to the youth's character and growth
- Provide an opportunity to positively reframe the narrative

CONTENT

As a basic rule, CASA court reports should document how youth have been cooperative to services and focus on the youth's well-being. Additionally, the written court report should strive to be strengths-based and give the Juvenile Justice Court a better picture of the youth's character, strengths, and resiliency.

WHAT'S NOT ALLOWED

CASAs must be mindful that their written and spoken words can carry a lot of weight in the perception of the youth by the court and may end up in their juvenile case file, which is accessible by law enforcement, Probation, and the District Attorney. At times, CASAs may want to present the information they believe to be helpful to their youth's case. However, this information could potentially incriminate the youth. Therefore, the CASA court report should NOT include the following information:

- Discussion of the youth's pending petition or circumstances surrounding the charge.
- report of behaviors that may be construed as "gateway" behaviors (fights at school, substance use, etc.)
- Mental health diagnoses
 - This is dependent on each case- please consult with your Advocate Supervisor about this information.

EDITS AND FEEDBACK

CASA volunteers must submit their written advocacy statements to their Advocate Supervisor for review. Advocate Supervisors must review the information being presented to ensure the advocacy statement is written in concordance with CASA's advocacy mission and to ensure that the advocacy statement does not inadvertently advocate against the youth or incriminate them.

Once the report has been a by the Advocate Supervisor, the letter must then be submitted to them.

SUBMISSION OF COURT REPORT

- To allow enough time for edits, court reports are due to your supervisor no later than three weeks before a scheduled hearing. This allows your supervisor to review your report and make suggestions/recommendations for additions or changes to your report, before the final submission.
- All reports are now electronically submitted to the court and all parties to the case. Please adhere to the draft submission timeframe to ensure all parties receive your report prior to the hearing date. Court reports are distributed to the Probation Officer, minor's attorney, and the Juvenile Justice Judge for Monterey.

Court Report Template Information

I. PERSONS CONTACTED

- List individuals that you've contacted to gather information for your report. Always include the youth.

II. RECORDS REVIEWED

- Files from: Probation Officer, CASA, Juvenile Justice Court, Updates/assessments from school, therapist, CFT notes, etc.

III. CURRENT PLACEMENT STATUS / EDUCATIONAL UPDATE (paragraph form)

- State the youth's name, what they prefer to be called if different from their given name, age, and when they became wards of the court.
- State where the youth is living now and where they have been living since you were assigned to the case.
- The number of placements the youth has been in.
- Changes in placement and/or school since the last court hearing.
- Note what school and grade youth is in and if there has been a school change since the last report.
- Note how the youth is doing in school and their grades from the last reporting period.
- If the youth is in high school/college, note how many credits they have and how many they need to graduate.
- Youth's strong academic record or noted improvements
- If youth is in junior high school, note if they are on track to matriculate to the next grade level
- Include comments from teachers on youth's academic performance/social interactions
- Indicate who holds the youth's educational rights

IV. Observations (paragraph form)

Do not analyze, attempt to explain, or interpret any behavior

Include:

- Observations about the youth's development, attitude, conduct, and reactions to current circumstances
- Mental health
 - Note whether the youth is participating in therapy and how often
- Are they participating in other services (WRAP, TBS, etc.)
- What probation conditions has the youth completed.

- I.e.:
 - Is engaged in CALA (Collaborative Action Linking Adolescents)
 - Is abiding by curfew
 - Has completed 10 hours of community service
- Independent living skills
 - I.e.:
 - Working part-time
 - Has a bank account
 - In the process of obtaining their Driver's License
- If they are not residing in their home, are they having visits with parents/siblings/ other relatives?

V. DESCRIPTION OF THE NEEDS AND WISHES OF THE CHILD (paragraph form)

- List desires or stated needs from the youth regardless of whether or not you agree with their wishes. Include (whenever possible) any quotes from the youth.
- Be sure to obtain permission from the youth before quoting them in this report.
- List any needs you feel should be voiced based on your observations. These needs should be substantiated by facts.

VI. PEER RELATIONSHIPS / EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (paragraph form)

- Youth's interactions with peers and friendships
- Extra-curricular activities or expressed interests
- Barriers to participating in extra-curricular activities
- Suggestions of extra-curricular activities you feel may benefit the youth

VII. PERMANENT CONNECTIONS (paragraph form)

- Has the youth identified any responsible adult(s), e.g., relative, counselor, teacher, coach, near kin, who can be a permanent connection?
- Statements made by the child they feel connected to (who they love, miss, and would like to be part of their life...)

VIII. PERSONAL ASSESSMENT (paragraph form)

- Provide your personal, unbiased assessment of how the youth is doing.
- The purpose of this area is to present, as the youth's advocate, what you feel is in the best interest of the youth. When providing your opinions regarding

this case, describe how the facts & observations presented in this report bring you to your conclusions.

- Leave your personal biases at the door.