

FAMILY FINDING PROTOCOL AND AGREEMENT BETWEEN
CASA AND SOCIAL SERVICES
June 2006

GOAL

The goal of this service is for identification, search, and engagement with family members and/or significant others of dependent children in the foster care system to serve as a means to establish or re-establish communication between them and the child.

Family connections may be explored as a permanency option.

CASA and Children and Family Services are beginning this partnership because both believe in the right of each child to be a part of a family. With this foundational belief the two agencies engage in this process in a spirit of cooperation with the work of both agencies always focused on the outcome for the child. Both agencies also respect the demands of heavy caseloads and busy schedules but understand the urgency of time in the life of a child.

POPULATION TO BE SERVED

CASA will provide services to children who are Orange County Juvenile Court dependents, under the supervision of SSA and placed in out-of-home care. Initially CASA will select children from active CASA cases and the CASA wait list and will also accept suggestions from assigned Social Workers. If the child is not referred by the Social Worker, the first step will be to obtain the agreement of the Social Worker to pursue the family connections process for that particular child.

FAMILY LIAISON

CASA will use trained, experienced CASA volunteers to conduct family search and engagement. All volunteers will complete CASA's full 30-hour training process and

undergo a comprehensive background check. Volunteers who participate will be carefully screened for competence, judgment and understanding of the sensitive nature of this process.

- They will receive training in the family connections model developed by Catholic Services of Western Washington.
- They will receive on-going training as needed.
- They will work closely with and be supervised by CASA staff who are also trained in the model.

SERVICES

- CASA will be allowed access to the youth's service files as an aid in identifying family members, relatives and significant others. Those files will be reviewed at the Social Service offices.
- The identification, search, assessment and engagement process may include, but shall not be limited to telephone calls, internet searches, e-mails, and in-person visits.
- There will be regular contact with the assigned Social Worker throughout the period of search and engagement activities. Such contact content will include:
 - discussion of when the child should be apprised of the process
 - which of the identified family members should be contacted first
 - when and how visits should occur
 - who (Social Worker or CASA) will communicate with the child
 - whether it is prudent to consider placement to protect the child as much as possible from another failed placement

- CASA will develop a geneogram or family tree for each youth based on information gleaned from records reviews, child friendly interviews, interviews with parents, relatives and acquaintances of the family that could assist in the development of a family connection.
- Relatives and significant others who may be the most appropriate to begin communicating with the youth will be identified.
- The CASA volunteer will talk with family members to assess the potential benefit of contact with the youth, interest in the youth, and appropriateness of the contact.
- The CASA volunteer in conjunction with the social worker will explore resources available to the relatives/significant others when considering a visit, extended visit, placement or shared parenting arrangement.

ADDITIONAL CASA RESPONSIBILITIES

- CASA volunteers and/or staff will appear and testify at Juvenile Court hearings as required.
- CASA volunteers and staff will prepare and maintain accurate and complete records on youth served with regard to progress and results.

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES RESPONSIBILITIES

- CFS will provide training/information to Social Workers to increase their knowledge of the process, its impact and importance, and to encourage their participation in and support of the process.
- CFS supervisors will ensure that the assigned Social Worker or their CFS designee will accompany the CASA or Case Supervisor to any meetings scheduled with family members which occur within reasonable driving distance

of Orange County. The advance time to arrange such a meeting shall be one week or less unless prevented by Court Hearings, vacation or illness.

- The assigned Social Worker will respond to phone calls or email messages from the CASA Family Finding volunteer or Case Supervisor in no more than five working days unless the Social Worker is unavailable due to vacation or illness.

OTHER ISSUES

- CASA’s Director of Programs and/or Program Manager will be available during business hours to act as a liaison for programmatic concerns.
- Social Services (agency designee) will be available during business hours to act as a liaison for programmatic concerns.

CASA Executive Director

Social Services Deputy Director

Date: _____
