

Helpful Tips for the CASA

Below you will find information and advice to help guide your conversation with a child.

Who are you? What is a CASA?

Let the child know that a CASA is appointed by the court. They help the judge to know how they (the child) are doing, what their wishes are and what is in their best interests.

Who will be on my team to help me?

Depending on the age of the child, they may be able to understand the concept of a team. Help them name some people in their corner and how they can help.

What is a case manager?

Explain why the DCS Case Manager is important to keeping the child safe. This is a good time to encourage them to be open and honest with the DCS Case Manager when it comes to their wishes and needs.

Do I have to go to court?

Children under the age of 14 do not often attend court, but may in certain circumstances. Let the child know that you and/or the CASA Supervisor will attend court and advocate for their best interests.

What will court look like?

Court is not only intimidating to adults, it is also intimidating to children. Help them understand the role of the judge and other people they will see in court: attorneys, case managers, family members and their CASA/GAL.

What will the judge want to know about me?

Help the child think through what the judge would want to know about them. Praise them for being honest.

What will my parents be doing while we are involved with the court?

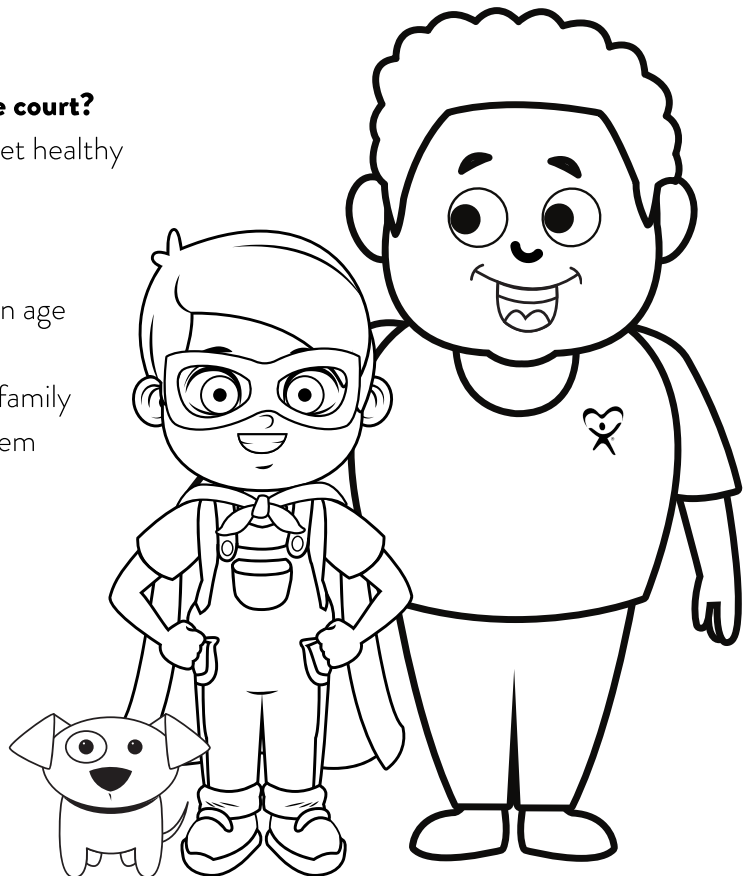
Help the child understand that their parent has a "job" to do; get healthy and create a safe home.

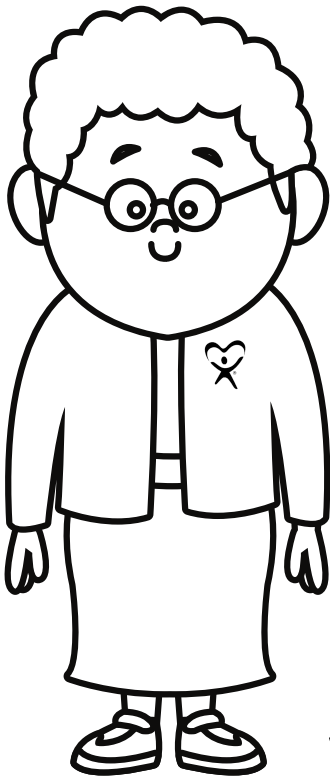
What about my parents? Will I see them again?

The list provided has been kept short so that you can provide an age appropriate response. This page can also help facilitate a conversation on what the child already knows about why their family is involved with the court. This is also a good time to remind them that what happened to them it is not their fault.

What will happen at visits with my family?

Family visits can be exciting, stressful and awkward. Help them plan ahead by talking about different activities they can do on a visit.





The judge said I will live in a different home for a while. What will it be like?

Have a conversation about who may be in their new home. Help them list everyone's name. Do they have a nickname? Do you call them Mom and Dad or Momma or Poppy? Will you call the other kids brothers and sisters? This is a good page to sit down and do with their foster family or caretakers.

Where will I live?

You can help the child understand their place in the home. They may need help feeling comfortable in their new environment. Work with their foster parents or caretakers to determine house rules such as when to ask permission or where to knock before entering.

When I had to leave my house I left with nothing. Can I get some of my stuff?

Children may be worried about belongings left behind. If they are not allowed to have certain items at their new home, offer solutions on how to get those items or hold them for safe keeping.

Where will I sleep?

Being safe while sleeping is a concern of many children who have been abused and/or neglected. Help them pre-plan for what they need to feel safe and secure.

What kind of food will I eat?

Many children who are abused and or neglected have had unreliable access to food. Find out what types of food the child likes to eat. Can you talk with their current placement and discuss food options? Is the child known to hoard or stash food? Work with them on a plan to maintain control of their own food stash.

What if I need help at school?

Children may worry about going to a new school where they do not know anyone. Sometimes school is the one place that is stable in their life. Let the child know that you will be advocating for them by meeting with teachers and school administrators.

Why are my feelings all mixed up?

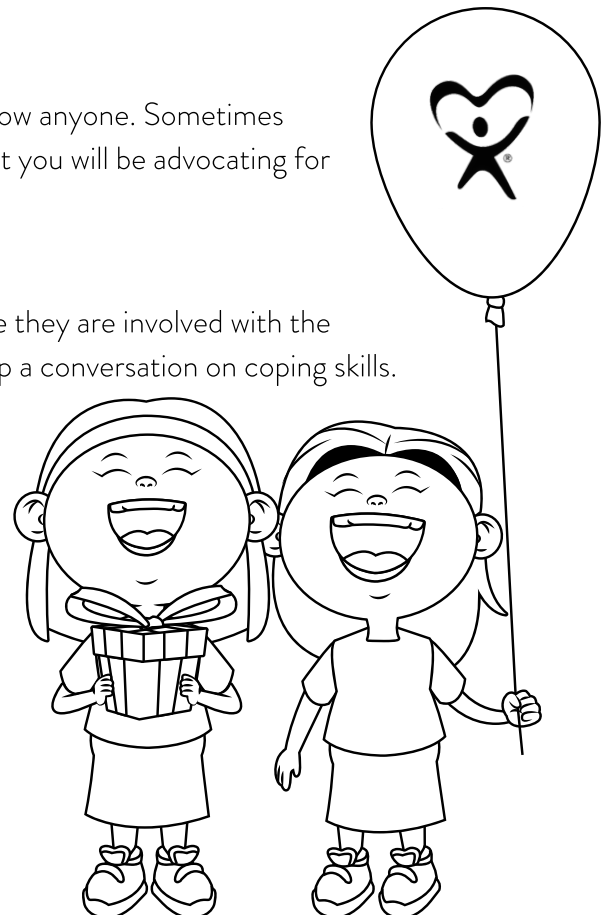
Help the child understand that it is normal to have lots of feelings while they are involved with the court. This chart can help to identify some of their feelings and open up a conversation on coping skills.

What if I have things I am worried about?

Children who have been abused and/or neglected worry about many things. They may tell you things that must be disclosed to the court or DCS. Explain that CASAs are mandated reporters but that they can trust you to be there for them and help keep them safe.

Who can I talk to?

Help them identify adults that they can talk to about their feelings. Let the DCS Case Manager know who has been identified so that appropriate checks can be conducted. Follow up.



To download "Finding My Way, With the Help of My CASA" go to: AllenCountyCASA.org