

# Court Report Training

- ## General Guidelines
- Always obtain firsthand information
  - Always speak in third person
    - This CASA
  - All information beyond the Case History should change with every court report
    - If there is no change, report that – do not leave it the same
  - The better your Optima notes, the easier this will be
  - Refer to Advocate Case Plan Outline for assistance
  - This is your chance to share all you can with the judge – do it

## CR Due Dates

- Court Reports are due to your supervisor no later than 15 business days before the hearing

APRIL 2018						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	CR due 5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	court 26	27	28
29	30					

## Formatting

- Arial, size 12
- Ensure all information is correct
  - Cause number
  - Name

## Intro to CR

- The type of hearing and date of hearing can be found on Order Setting Hearing
  - This will change for each court report
- The date of CASA assignment is in Order Setting Hearing (date signed), or view in Optima – child > Assigned to program
  - See Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 3 (a)(iii) Order Setting Hearing-(iv) Order Appointing CASA
- The date of advocate assignment is in Optima > Case Assignments OR >Documents > Notice of Advocate Appointment
  - See Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 3 (a)(v) Notice of Advocate Appointment

- ## I. Case History
- **This part does not change... ever\***
    - \*If parental rights are terminated, state that here – this is the only time you will make any amendments to this section of the CR
  - Briefly describe the events that led to CPS involvement
    - Understanding why we are here – why is this case here? Allows us to provide better advocacy
    - On January 1, 2018 the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) sought custody of Suzy due to ...
      - This information is found in the Affidavit, section 6 – Allegations and Conclusion (Removal date is the date the Order was signed)
        - See Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 3 (a)(ii) Affidavit
      - This should be a brief account of the Affidavit's Allegations and Conclusion; use complete sentences
      - Optima Case Information > notes – your supervisor may have already completed this

## Note

- From this point on, all information needs to be **CURRENT** to the hearing
  - No information from previous CR unless it is still the current information – we are **UPDATING** the court; not summarizing the whole case!
    - CR due tomorrow, next CR due in 3 months, but next dentist appointment is scheduled for 4 months from now and no dental issues occur within those 3 months
    - Parent has completed an item on service plan
- Spell out acronyms the first time you mention them
  - Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS)
- Always spell out dates
  - Correct: February 2, 2018
  - Incorrect: 2-2-2018, Feb 2, February 2018
- Adults are referred to as “First Name Last Name”, then “Mr./Mrs./Ms. Last Name” for the rest of the CR

## II. Child(ren)

- List children in order from oldest to youngest
  - Names of children and birthdates are listed on the Petition and Affidavit
  - Always speak in third person – “this CASA”

### Suzy Baker:

- Suzy Baker was born on January 20, 2013 and is currently 5 years old. This CASA observes Suzy to be a generally happy child who enjoys...
- In a short paragraph, describe interactions with the child, their likes/dislikes, demeanor, extracurricular activities, interests – bring the child to life!
  - Include all visits between present and previous hearing – see Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 7 Visit the Child/Children
  - If child is 16+, include whether child has social security card, birth certificate, and ID/Driver’s License; if not, include date requested from CPS and status
- This should be changed as the case progresses – **each CR should have new observations, do not build on past CR**

## II. Child(ren) – Placement

- Information about current placement
  - Where placed (foster home, facility), date placed (longevity of placement)
    - Do not include full placement history, just placements since last court hearing
  - Who they are placed with (if applicable) and interactions/relationship with caregivers
    - If placed with a foster placement, do not include identifying information (Mrs. Smith = Mrs. S.)
  - Describe the child’s space
    - Adequacy, bed sharing, size of home, etc.
- See Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 8 Interview Foster Parents, Caregiver, Case Manager

## II. Child(ren) – Education

- Education must be included if child is of school age
- School, grade, teacher, attendance summary, grade summary
  - Include any speech/language, special education services, IEPs, 504 Accommodations, and behavior reports
    - Include name of person who signs IEP
    - Note that you have contacted person responsible for IEP to ensure they believe child is receiving all services based on plan
- Source of information and when it was obtained (Use Optima notes!!!)
  - This CASA spoke by phone to Brenda Jones, attendance clerk at City Elementary, on January 30, 2018. Ms. Jones stated that Suzy has been absent 5 days since January 1, 2018 and tardy 3 times...
- See Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 9 Contact Schools

## II. Child(ren) – Medical

- Includes medical, vision, specialists
  - If a child has multiple medical providers there should be a paragraph of information for each
  - Who they saw, where they saw them, date, what happened, any follow-up needed, next appointment, immunizations, medications prescribed (not for mental health)
  - Do not need too much detail beyond this information for routine appointments, unless there are concerns
- Source of information and when it was obtained
  - This CASA spoke with nurse Bruce Walker at UTMB on February 2, 2018. Mr. Walker stated that Suzy did attend her February 1, 2018 appointment and noted no concerns. He confirmed that all immunizations are up to date. Suzy is scheduled to return June 8, 2018.
- **ALWAYS obtain first-hand information**
  - If you requested records, include date requested and method (fax, email, mail, etc)
- See Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 10 Contact Physicians

## II. Child(ren) – Dental

- Include information about Dentist seen, where they saw them, date, what happened, any follow-up needed, next appointment
- Include who you spoke to and date
- **ALWAYS obtain first-hand information**
  - If you requested records, include date requested and method (fax, email, mail, etc)

## II. Child(ren) – Psychological Health

- Include any therapy/counseling information
  - Therapist/counselor’s name, name of practice, frequency of therapy, date spoken, dates seen
  - Discuss whether you have reviewed goals of therapy and whether or not counselor has included/informed you about progress child has made
- Include whether psychological evaluation has been completed
- Psychotropic Medications
  - List any medications related to mental health the child is on, dosage, and any information about who prescribed them, where, when, why
  - Next medication review (should be every 90 days)
- See Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 11 Contact Therapist

## II. Child(ren) – CANS Assessment

- Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment
  - Children over age 3
  - Include date completed, name of practitioner, and any recommendations from assessment

## II. Child(ren)

- Complete the same sections for each additional child
- Start with the oldest child and end with the youngest child

STATUS HEARING

## STATUS HEARING

Note: Status Hearing Court Reports and Permanency Hearing Court Reports will differ primarily in the Parent section

STATUS HEARING

STATUS HEARING

## III. Parent(s)

- If parental rights have been terminated, this section is eliminated
- Martha Baker, Mother**
  - Martha Baker will be referred to as “Ms. Baker” or “Mrs. Baker” for the rest of the report
  - Include whether parent has been served, or not
  - Include whether the service plan was agreed to at mediation
    - Detail the services included in the service plan
  - Statement about whether parent has signed release of information for CASA
- See Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 12 Contact Parents

STATUS HEARING

STATUS HEARING

## III. Parent(s)

- Complete same information for father(s)

STATUS HEARING

PERMANENCY HEARING

## PERMANENCY HEARING

Note: Status Hearing Court Reports and Permanency Hearing Court Reports will differ primarily in the Parent section

PERMANENCY HEARING

PERMANENCY HEARING

### III. Parent(s)

- If parental rights have been terminated, this section is eliminated

**Martha Baker, Mother**

- Martha Baker will be referred to as “Ms. Baker” or “Mrs. Baker” for the rest of the report
- Include whether parent has been served, or not
- State that Service Plan was ordered at the Status Hearing
- Statement about whether parent has signed release of information for CASA

- See Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 12 Contact Parents
  - Succinct statement about whether parent has been completing services/improving
  - See Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 14 Contact Parent Service Providers

PERMANENCY HEARING

PERMANENCY HEARING

### III. Parent(s)

- Succinct statement about whether parent has been completing services/improving
  - See Advocate Case Plan Outline, Step 14 Contact Parent Service Providers
- **Each subheading of CR will correspond with a requirement of the service plan** – subheadings may vary greatly from case to case depending on services ordered
  - The first few sections will indicate service plan compliance
  - If parenting classes have not been ordered, DO NOT include that as a subheading

PERMANENCY HEARING

PERMANENCY HEARING

### III. Parent(s)

- **Psychological**
  - Compliance with services such as: psychological evaluation, psychosocial evaluation, individual counseling, family counseling, anger management, domestic violence
  - Detail how and when you have verified this information
    - Observed documentation
    - Spoken with provider
- **Substance Abuse**
  - Compliance with random drug testing, attendance at NA/AA meetings, completion/attendance in substance abuse treatment programs
  - Detail how and when you have verified this information
    - Observed documentation
    - Spoken with provider

PERMANENCY HEARING

PERMANENCY HEARING

### III. Parent(s)

- **Parenting Classes**
  - Compliance with attendance in parenting classes
  - Detail how and when you have verified this information
    - Observed documentation
    - Spoken with provider
- **Employment**
  - Report current employment and duration
  - Detail how and when you have verified this information
    - Observed pay stubs
    - Spoken to employer

PERMANENCY HEARING

PERMANENCY HEARING

### III. Parent(s)

- **Housing**
  - Report current living arrangement and duration, whether rent is current, conditions/observations of home
  - Detail how and when you have verified this information
    - Especially duration of housing
- **Child Support**
  - Report amount of child support ordered at Status Hearing (if none, eliminate this section)
    - Whether they are paying ordered Child Support
  - Detail how and when you have verified this information

PERMANENCY HEARING

PERMANENCY HEARING

### III. Parent(s)

- Complete same information for father(s)
  - If service plan differs, headings may differ!

PERMANENCY HEARING

### IV. Parent-Child Visits

- Describe the visitation plan and state whether you have observed any visits to date
  - Include observations of visit since last CR
    - Location
    - Time
    - Parties present
    - Nature of interactions

### V. Concerns

- Describe any concerns for the child(ren)
  - Begin with the oldest child and end with youngest, then listing any concerns pertaining to parents, then any other concerns not related to child or parent
- Fact-based
- First-hand knowledge
  - This CASA is concerned that Suzy is not speaking much and has not been evaluated for Speech Therapy.
  - This CASA is concerned that Ms. Baker and Suzy have not participated in family therapy.
- No new information should be disclosed in concerns; all concerns should relate back to some fact or statement in the body of the court report

### VI. Recommendations

- The culmination of your court report
  - This CASA respectfully recommends:
    - Begin with any recommendations for the children first – starting with placement, then most critical concerns
      - Suzy remain in her current placement
      - Suzy participate in a speech evaluation
    - Follow with any recommendations for parents
      - Ms. Baker completes her parenting classes
  - End with any other recommendations not related to child or parent
    - A home study be completed on Ms. Baker's sister

### Signatures

- Your name
- Your supervisor's name

### Contacts

- Always begin with the child!
  - Suzy Baker, child
  - Martha Baker, mother
  - Brenda Jones, attendance clerk, City Elementary
  - Bruce Walker, nurse, UTMB
  - Chris Smith, caseworker