

Good Reads for In-Service Hours

Remember to log in-service hours in Optima

Optima > Training Logs > Add

Log 1 hour for each 100 pages read (ex: if a book is 350 pages, you will log 3.5 hours)

Answer these questions in the notes section:

1. Who was your favorite character? Why?
2. Who was your least favorite character? Why?
3. Did you like the ending? Why/why not?
4. How does this relate to your work as a CASA advocate?
5. What is one thing from this book or movie that you can take with you into your role as an advocate?

A CHANCE IN THE WORLD by Steve Pemberton

From the day he is five-years-old and dropped off at his foster home of the next eleven years, Stephen is mentally and physically tortured. No one in the system can help him. No one can tell him if he has a family. Along the way, a single faint light comes only from a neighbor's small acts of kindness and caring—and a box of books. From one of those books he learns that he must fight in any way he can—for victory is in the battle. His victory is to excel in school. Against all odds, the author succeeded.

A CHILD CALLED "IT" by Dave Pelzer

A controversial memoir describing horrific abuse sustained by the author as a child before he was finally rescued by an astute teacher.

A CHILD'S JOURNEY THROUGH PLACEMENT by Vera Fahlberg

Fahlberg has provided the comprehensive guide for all who care about advocating children with all kinds of behavior and disorder issues.

A MAN NAMED DAVE by Dave Pelzer

"All those years you tried your best to break me, and I'm still here. One day you'll see, I'm going to make something of myself." These words were Dave Pelzer's declaration of independence to his mother, and they represented the ultimate act of self-reliance. Dave's father never intervened as his mother abused him with shocking brutality, denying him food and clothing, torturing him in any way she could imagine. This was the woman who told her son she could kill him any time she wanted to—and nearly did. The more than two million readers of Pelzer's New York Times and international bestselling memoirs know that he lived to tell his courageous story. With stunning generosity of spirit, Dave Pelzer invites readers on his journey to discover how he turned shame into pride and rejection into acceptance.

A PRIVATE FAMILY MATTER by Victor Rivas Rivers

In *A Private Family Matter*, Victor recalls his days as an angry youth living under the rule and wrath of his father. A Cuban immigrant, Victor's dad was nicknamed El Ciclón for his tempestuous temperament, which led him not only to beat his wife but to abuse - and eventually kidnap - his own children. How Victor managed to seek help for his family and criminal punishment for his father, overcome his demons and learn to love himself, and share his experience with other victims and survivors of domestic abuse is at the heart of this profound and affecting memoir.

A QUESTION OF BALANCE: DECISION MAKING FOR CASAs by Janet Ward

Easy to read narrative and sample interview questions that pull together the "how" and "why" of the 30+ hour National CASA/GAL pre-service training for volunteers.

ALPHABET KIDS by Robbie Woliver

A guide for people working with children who exhibit symptoms of a possible disorder that may impede their physical, psychological, intellectual, or emotional development.

ALMOST HOME: HELPING KIDS MOVE FROM HOMELESSNESS TO HOPE

This book tells the stories of six remarkable young people from across the United States and Canada as they confront life alone on the streets. Each eventually finds his or her way to Covenant House, the largest charity serving homeless and runaway youth in North America.

BEFORE WE WERE YOURS by Lisa Wingate

Based on one of America's most notorious real-life scandals—in which Georgia Tann, director of a Memphis-based adoption organization, kidnapped and sold poor children to wealthy families all over the country—Lisa Wingate's riveting, wrenching, and ultimately uplifting tale reminds us how, even though the paths we take can lead to many places, the heart never forgets where we belong.

BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME by Ta-Nehisi Coates

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for HIS son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race," a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden? *Between the World and Me* is Ta-Nehisi Coates's attempt to answer these questions in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son—and readers—the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences

BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY by Ruby Payne

Bridges Out of Poverty takes the concepts of hidden rules of economic class and uses them to educate social workers, employers and community organizations about the unique and sometimes hidden obstacles that individuals from poverty face. Strategies help improve services for clients, raise retention rates for new hires from poverty, and increase understanding of the differences in economic cultures and how those differences affect opportunities for success.

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE: THE END OF JUVENILE PRISON by Nell Bernstein

One in three American children will be arrested by the time they are twenty-three, and many will spend time locked inside horrific detention centers that defy everything we know about how to rehabilitate young offenders. In a clear-eyed indictment of the juvenile justice system run amok, award-winning journalist Nell Bernstein shows that there is no right way to lock up a child. The very act of isolation denies delinquent children the thing that is most essential to their growth and rehabilitation: positive relationships with caring adults. Bernstein introduces us to youth across the nation who have suffered violence and psychological torture at the hands of the state. She presents these youths all as fully realized people, not victims. As they describe in their own voices their fight to maintain their humanity and protect their individuality in environments that would deny both, these young people offer a hopeful alternative to the doomed effort to reform a system that should only be dismantled.

CHILD ABUSE. WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW by Evin Daly

A definitive guide to understanding every facet of child abuse—physical, emotional and sexual; and neglect. Providing an in depth look at each. Including the connection between child abuse and domestic violence.

CITIZEN: AN AMERICAN LYRIC by Claudia Rankine

This book recounts mounting racial aggressions in ongoing encounters in 21st century daily life and in the media. The accumulative stresses come to bear on a person's ability to speak, perform, and stay alive. Citizen is a powerful testament to the individual and collective effects of racism in our contemporary, often named "post-race" society.

DOING THE BEST I CAN: FATHERHOOD IN THE INNER CITY by Kathryn Edin

Across the political spectrum, unwed fatherhood is denounced as one of the leading social problems of today. *Doing the Best I Can* is a strikingly rich, paradigm-shifting look at fatherhood among inner-city men often dismissed as "deadbeat dads." Drawing on years of fieldwork, *Doing the Best I Can* shows how mammoth economic and cultural changes have transformed the meaning of fatherhood among the urban poor. Intimate interviews with more than 100 fathers make real the significant obstacles faced by low-income men at every step in the familial process: from the difficulties of romantic relationships, to decision-making dilemmas at conception, to the often-celebratory moment of birth, and finally to the hardships that accompany the early years of the child's life, and beyond.

FINDING FISH by Antwone Fisher

Baby Boy Fisher was raised in institutions from the moment of his birth in prison to a single mother. He ultimately came to live with a foster family, where he endured near-constant verbal and physical abuse. In his mid-teens he escaped and enlisted in the navy, where he became a man of the world, raised by the family he created for himself.

FOSTER PLACEMENTS: WHY THEY SUCCEED AND WHY THEY FAIL by Ian Sinclair

Based on exhaustive research, the authors discuss the primary concerns in foster placement planning, considering the high frequency of placement breakdowns, their impact on the child's behavior and school performance, and the challenges this places on foster families.

GHOSTS FROM THE NURSERY by Robin Karr-Morse

This book incorporates significant advances in neurobiological research over the past decade. The author's groundbreaking conclusions became even more relevant following the wave of school shootings across the nation. Following each media coverage and public debate turned yet again to the usual suspects concerning the causes of violence: widespread availability of guns and lack of mental health services for late-stage treatment. Discussion of the impact of trauma on human life—especially early in life during chemical and structural formation of the brain—is missing from the equation.

THE GLASS CASTLE by Jeanette Walls

In her childhood memoir, *The Glass Castle*, Jeannette Walls offers a blow-by-blow description of growing up with parents whose capacity for loving their children is greater than their ability to care for them

GROWING UP IN THE CARE OF STRANGERS by Waln Brown and John Seita

Products of foster care themselves, 11 college-educated adults share their insights about their experiences and provide recommendations for professionals about what would improve foster care.

HOPE'S BOY by Andrew Bridge

Bridge's memoir of surviving his childhood in a broken child-care system where the state acts as parents for the young certainly illustrates the complexity of such government institutions. After being removed from his mother by the state, Bridge spent a brief stint in a residential program before being put into foster care. His decade-long stay with an emotionally abusive and unsupportive family left its share of marks.

HOW CHILDREN SUCCEED by Paul Tough

Why do some children succeed while others fail? The story we usually tell about childhood and success is the one about intelligence: success comes to those who score highest on tests, from preschool admissions to SATs. But in *How Children Succeed*, Paul Tough argues that the qualities that matter more have to do with character: skills like perseverance, curiosity, optimism, and self-control.

I SPEAK FOR THIS CHILD: TRUE STORIES OF A CHILD ADVOCATE by Gay Courter

In *I Speak For This Child*, best-selling novelist Gay Courter recounts her experiences as a Guardian ad Litem, a volunteer court-appointed advocate for children involved in Florida's court system. Following her first tentative approach to her local Court Appointed Special Advocates program to her more determined efforts, we get an insider's glimpse on this hidden world and learn what it takes to ensure that America's most vulnerable citizens are treated with care and respect.

INSTANT MOM by Nia Vardalos

Nia Vardalos, writer and star of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, tells her hilarious and poignant road-to-parenting story that eventually leads to her daughter and prompts her to become a major advocate for adoption. Vardalos chronicles her attempts to have a baby, and how she tries everything—from drinking jugs of green mud tea, to acupuncture, to working with two surrogates. Finally, she and her husband, actor Ian Gomez, decide to try adoption and discover a free service: Foster Family Agencies. Then one day, the social workers "match" her with an almost-three-year-old girl, who she knows, instantly, is her daughter. With her signature wit and candor, Nia Vardalos reveals what really came next—the truth of how she and her husband transitioned a preschooler into their home. Vardalos opens up about the bawling tears and belly-laughter that all make up what it means to be...a parent.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY by Kristin A. Bates and Richelle S. Swan

This engaging, student-friendly text takes a critical look at juvenile delinquency today. Authors Kristin Bates and Richelle Swan examine the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency in the context of real communities and social policies, integrating into the text the many social factors that shape juvenile delinquency and its control (including race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality). Offering a thorough mix of traditional and cutting-edge theories, research, and practices, this text helps students develop critical thinking skills and answer many of the difficult questions on juvenile delinquency that they will face in their careers and lives.

LAST CHANCE IN TEXAS: THE REDEMPTION OF CRIMINAL YOUTH by John Hubner

A powerful, bracing and deeply spiritual look at intensely, troubled youth, *Last Chance in Texas* gives a stirring account of the way one remarkable prison rehabilitates its inmates. While reporting on the juvenile court system, journalist John Hubner kept hearing about a facility in Texas that ran the most aggressive—and one of the most successful—treatment programs for violent young offenders in America. How was it possible, he wondered, that a state like Texas, famed for its hardcore attitude toward crime and punishment, could be leading the way in the rehabilitation of violent and troubled youth?

LIKE FAMILY: GROWING UP IN OTHER PEOPLE by Paula McLain

Paula McLain has written a powerful and haunting memoir about the years she and her two sisters spent as foster children. In the early 70s, after being abandoned by both parents, the girls were made wards of the Fresno County, California court and spent the next 14 years in a series of adoptive homes. The dislocations, confusions, and odd pleasures of an unrooted life form the basis of a captivating memoir. McLain's beautiful writing and limber voice capture the intense loneliness, sadness, and determination of a young girl both on her own and responsible, with her siblings, for staying together as a family.

NO MATTER HOW LOUD I SHOUT by Edward Humes

In an age when violence and crime by young people is again on the rise, *No Matter How Loud I Shout* offers a rare look inside the juvenile court system that deals with these children and the impact decisions made in the courts had on the rest of their lives. Granted unprecedented access to the Los Angeles Juvenile Court, including the judges, the probation officers, and the children themselves, Edward Humes creates an unforgettable portrait of a chaotic system that is neither saving our children in danger nor protecting us from adolescent violence. Yet he shows us there is also hope in the handful of courageous individuals working tirelessly to triumph over seemingly insurmountable odds.

ORPHAN TRAIN by Christina Baker Kline

Penobscot Indian Molly Ayer is close to “aging out” out of the foster care system. A community service position helping an elderly woman clean out her home is the only thing keeping Molly out of juvie and worse. As she helps Vivian sort through her possessions and memories, Molly learns that she and Vivian aren’t as different as they seem to be. A young Irish immigrant orphaned in New York City, Vivian was put on a train to the Midwest with hundreds of other children whose destinies would be determined by luck and chance. Molly discovers that she has the power to help Vivian find answers to mysteries that have haunted her for her entire life—answers that will ultimately free them both.

ROOM by Emma Donoghue

To five-year-old-Jack, Room is the world.... It's where he was born, it's where he and his Ma eat and sleep and play and learn. At night, his Ma shuts him safely in the wardrobe, where he is meant to be asleep when Old Nick visits. Room is home to Jack, but to Ma it's the prison where she has been held for seven years. Through her fierce love for her son, she has created a life for him in this eleven-by-eleven-foot space. But with Jack's curiosity building alongside her own desperation, she knows that Room cannot contain either much longer. *Room* is a tale at once shocking, riveting, exhilarating—a story of unconquerable love in harrowing circumstances, and of the diamond-hard bond between a mother and her child.

THE BOY WHO WAS RAISED AS A DOG by Bruce Perry

Traumatized children can teach us about loss, love and healing. A psychiatrist carefully examines and explains attachment disorders including RAD.

THE BUTTERFLY GARDEN by Chip St. Clair

Fear rocked Chip St. Clair's world. As a boy, he never knew what would set his father off—maybe the ice cubes had melted in his glass of Tab, maybe dinner was overcooked or undercooked or the gravy was too runny. Regardless, the beatings always came. As did the twisted games of cat and mouse—being thrown from a rowboat into frigid Lake Michigan, the middle-of-the-night moves to different states or being left to dangle over a ten-story balcony while his father watched from inside. But one fateful night when the police answered the call, the truth came to light from the shadows, sparking national headlines: Chip St. Clair's entire life—his name, even his date of birth—had been a lie, and the man he called 'Dad' was an impostor, an escaped child killer who had been on the run for over two decades. The stunning revelation would send one of America's Most Wanted to justice and another on a quest for his true identity.

THE COLOR OF WATER by James McBride

Interspersed throughout his mother's compelling narrative, McBride shares candid recollections of his own experiences as a mixed-race child of poverty, his flirtations with drugs and violence, and his eventual self- realization and professional success.

THE CONNECTED CHILD by Karyn Purvis

The adoption of a child is always a joyous moment in the life of a family. Some adoptions, though, present unique challenges. Welcoming these children into your family—and addressing their special needs—requires care, consideration, and compassion. Written by two research psychologists specializing in adoption and attachment, *The Connected Child* will help you build bonds of affection and trust with your adopted child, effectively deal with any learning or behavioral disorders, discipline your child with love without making him or her feel threatened. "A must-read not only for adoptive parents, but for all families striving to correct and connect with their children."

THE LOST BOY by Dave Pelzer

This is Dave Pelzer's long-awaited sequel to *A Child Called "It"*. In *The Lost Boy*, he answers questions and reveals new adventures through the compelling story of his life as an adolescent. Now considered an F-Child (Foster Child), Dave is moved in and out of five different homes. He suffers shame and experiences resentment from those who feel that all foster kids are trouble and unworthy of being loved just because they are not part of a "real" family.

THE LIMITS OF HOPE: AN ADOPTIVE MOTHER'S STORY by Ann Kimble Loux

Loux tells the story of her family's decision to adopt two sisters removed from their alcoholic biological mother. This personal account tells of Loux's attempt to raise these girls along with her three biological children. In the conclusion, Loux suggests alternatives to traditional adoption for the care of troubled older children.

THE OTHER WES MOORE by Wes Moore

Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? Wes Moore, the author of this fascinating book, sets out to answer this profound question. In alternating narratives that take readers from heart-wrenching losses to moments of surprising redemption, *The Other Wes Moore* tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a hostile world. "The chilling truth is that his story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his."

THE OUT OF SYNC CHILD by Carol Kranowitz

The Out-of-Sync Child broke new ground by identifying Sensory Processing Disorder, a common but frequently misdiagnosed problem in which the central nervous system misinterprets messages from the senses. This newly revised edition features additional information from recent research on vision and hearing deficits, motor skill problems, nutrition and picky eaters, ADHA, autism, and other related disorders.

THE SPIRIT CATCHES YOU AND YOU FALL DOWN by Anne Fadiman

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down explores the clash between a small county hospital in California and a refugee family from Laos over the care of Lia Lee, a Hmong child diagnosed with severe epilepsy. Lia's parents and her doctors both wanted what was best for Lia, but the lack of understanding between them led to tragedy.

THREE LITTLE WORDS by Ashley Rhodes-Courter

The author's ability to form intelligent, open-minded conclusions about her traumatic childhood demonstrates her remarkable control and insight, and although there are plenty of wrenching moments, she succeeds not in attracting pity but in her stated intention, of drawing attention to the children who currently share the plight that she herself overcame.

THREE MORE WORDS by Ashley Rhodes-Courter

Ashley Rhodes-Courter spent a harrowing nine years of her life in fourteen different foster homes. Her memoir, *Three Little Words*, captivated audiences everywhere and went on to become a New York Times bestseller. Now Ashley reveals the nuances of life after foster care: College and its assorted hijinks, including meeting "the one." Marriage, which began with a beautiful wedding on a boat that was almost hijacked (literally) by some biological family members. Having kids— from fostering children and the heartbreak of watching them return to destructive environments, to the miraculous joy of blending biological and adopted offspring.

TO THE END OF JUNE: THE INTIMATE LIFE OF AMERICAN FOSTER CARE by Cris Beam

Who are the children of foster care? What, as a country, do we owe them? Cris Beam, a foster mother herself, spent five years immersed in the world of foster care looking into these questions and tracing firsthand stories. The result is *To the End of June*, an unforgettable portrait that takes us deep inside the lives of foster children in their search for a stable, loving family.

TOO CLOSE TO ME by Dave Pelzer

To many, Pelzer seemed to have found his happy ending. But for a child abuse survivor, living a normal adult life carries challenges and complications above and beyond those faced by most people. This book, the fifth in Pelzer's nonfiction series, provides an honest and courageous look at the difficulties inherent in marriage, parenthood, work, and life from the perspective of someone who survived horrific physical and emotional terrors as a child—and who seeks to meet the responsibilities and complications of adult life with love, strength, and an open heart.

TRAUMA STEWARDSHIP by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky

A longtime trauma worker, Laura van Dernoot Lipsky offers a deep and empathetic survey of the often-unrecognized toll on those working to make the world a better place. We may feel tired, cynical, numb, or like we can never do enough. These, and other symptoms, affect us individually and collectively, sapping the energy and effectiveness we so desperately need if we are to benefit humankind, other animals, and the planet itself. Through *Trauma Stewardship*, we are called to meet these challenges in an intentional way—not by becoming overwhelmed but by developing a quality of mindful presence. Joining the wisdom of ancient cultural traditions with modern psychological research, Lipsky offers a variety of simple and profound practices that will allow us to remake ourselves—and ultimately the world.

WEEPING IN THE PLAYTIME OF OTHERS: AMERICA'S INCARCERATED CHILDREN by Kenneth Wooden

From the summer of 1972 through 1975, Kenneth Wooden visited correctional facilities in thirty states where juveniles between the ages of five and sixteen were being held. During his research he uncovered an astoundingly high incidence of emotional and physical abuse, torture, and commercial exploitation of the children by their keepers, individuals who received public funds to care for them. After observing the brutal treatment of these youths, a significant number of whom were not criminals but runaways or mentally disabled, Wooden described the conditions in which these children lived in *Weeping in the Playtime of Others*

WHY DOES HE DO THAT? INSIDE THE MINDS OF ANGRY AND CONTROLLING MEN by Lundy Bancroft

"He doesn't mean to hurt me—he just loses control." "He can be sweet and gentle." "He's scared me a few times, but he never hurts the children—he's a great father." "He's had a really hard life..." Women in abusive relationships tell themselves these things every day. Now they can see inside the minds of angry and controlling men—and change their own lives. In this groundbreaking book, a counselor shows how to improve, survive, or leave an abusive relationship, with: The early warning signs- Nine abusive personality types- How to tell if an abuser can change, is changing, or ever will- The role of drugs and alcohol- What can be fixed, and what can't- How to leave a relationship safely.