

# CHAPTER 7

## Communicating as a CASA/GAL Volunteer



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# CHAPTER 7

## Communicating as a CASA/GAL Volunteer



### Goal

In this chapter, I will practice communication skills for interviewing children, working collaboratively with others on the case, and dealing with conflict. I will increase my understanding of confidentiality issues for CASA/GAL volunteers.



### Objectives

***By the end of this chapter, I will be able to...***

- ✓ Name the elements of basic communication.
- ✓ Describe how to establish rapport and trust with children.
- ✓ Identify different styles of dealing with conflict.
- ✓ Practice a collaborative approach to dealing with conflict.
- ✓ Apply the rules of confidentiality to CASA/GAL volunteer work.



### Reporting In

In this chapter you will find one or more assignments identified by the “Reporting In” heading (as seen above). You will need to complete, copy, and submit these assignments as prearranged to CASA/GAL program staff for review at the debriefing session for this chapter.



### Parking Lot

At the end of this chapter you will find a page designated as the “Parking Lot.” Find and bookmark this page now, and use it throughout the chapter to note any questions, ideas, or concerns that you wish to discuss with CASA/GAL program staff.



## UNIT 1: Basic Communication



### Random House Dictionary defines...

#### RESPECT as...

- Esteem, admiration
- Proper courtesy
- The condition of being esteemed

#### CREDIBILITY as...

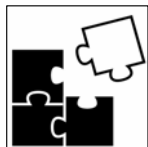
- Being believable
- Effective or reliable

There are many people with whom you will come into contact during your investigation and monitoring of a child's case. A relationship characterized by respect and credibility will assist you in doing your job. Respect is earned as others on the case see your commitment to the child and to your role as a CASA/GAL volunteer. Credibility is established when you do what you say you will do in a timely manner, when you make recommendations built on well-researched and independently verified information, and when you maintain your proper role as the child's advocate.

Effective communication is critical to the CASA/GAL volunteer's ability to advocate for children. Good communication skills require:

- ✓ **Self-awareness, and**
- ✓ **Sensitivity to the attitudes and behaviors that others bring to the interaction.**

Understanding the basic elements of communication can increase your skills in gathering the information you need to successfully advocate for a child.



### Activity 7A: Ways People Communicate

Read "The Basics of Communication," which presents information about ways people communicate. Think about what you would add to the list of ways people communicate, and write your responses in the space provided.

## The Basics of Communication

Communication is the human connection. It is the tie that binds us together. Below is a list of ways people communicate. Write your examples of additional methods in the space provided. (*Note: Touch and song are two examples that are frequently given.*)

- **Spoken words** • \_\_\_\_\_
- **Written words** • \_\_\_\_\_
- **Listening** • \_\_\_\_\_
- **Eye contact** • \_\_\_\_\_
- **Body language (posture and space)** • \_\_\_\_\_
- **Tone of voice** • \_\_\_\_\_
- **Silence** • \_\_\_\_\_

Communication is a two-way street. It is defined as an interchange or an exchange of thoughts and ideas. Often the message a person intends to send is not the message that is received. How and what is said can be interpreted differently depending on the nonverbal cues that accompany the words. Communication experts suggest that words and their dictionary meanings are only one-third of any speaker's message.

One way to look at communication, both sending and receiving, is to think of it as occurring through several channels:

1. **Verbal:** One channel is the actual words spoken, the elements we traditionally think of as language and refer to as "communication."
2. **Nonverbal:** A second is the nonverbal channel. The meaning of a message is in the nonverbal packaging as well as in the words. The nonverbal code can be easily misread.
3. **Feelings:** The third channel is made up of the feelings that are experienced in the course of an interaction. The verbal and nonverbal channels can be directly observed. The "feelings" channel is not easy to observe.

Ideally, the three channels match—there is no conflict between what someone says, what is conveyed by his/her body language, and what he/she feels. This is called congruence. When a person who feels distrust for you speaks to you of that distrust and uses body language that matches both speech and feelings, that person's communication is congruent.

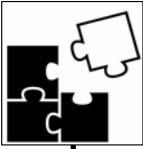
When someone's words and behavior are not congruent, there is a discrepancy between the verbal, nonverbal, and feelings parts of his/her message. This is called a double-level message. For example, a person communicates a double-level message when she says, "I love you" in a sarcastic tone of voice. Her words are saying one thing but her tone is saying the very opposite. Sometimes such miscommunication stems from cultural differences in language and expression.

Whenever there is this kind of discrepancy between the verbal, the nonverbal, and the feelings components of a message, the receiver of the message will tend to believe the nonverbal. Given all the variables involved, it is easy to see why misunderstandings occur between people.

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you will practice the art of watching for wordless messages to see if the verbal and nonverbal messages match or are congruent. It is important to “hear” the silent messages. There are few, if any, nonverbal signals that consistently have the same meaning. Nonverbal communication incorporates cultural norms and actual body language. For example, the use of eye contact can convey different messages depending on a person’s culture. In some cultures, a person who makes direct and sustained eye contact is perceived as honest and forthright, while in other cultures this same behavior would be perceived as rude and disrespectful.

Listening for meaning requires three sets of ears—one set for hearing facts, one for hearing feelings, and a third for “seeing” what you hear.

Adapted from “Learning to Listen to Trainees,” Ron Zemke, and “Learn to Read Nonverbal Trainee Messages,” Charles R. McConnell.



## Activity 7B: The Basics of Communication

In order to explore these communication concepts further, consider some popular advertising campaigns in which the verbal message advertises a product while the ad’s visual message suggests that if you use this product, all kinds of wonderful things will happen. Take a few minutes to recall some examples of such a double-level message in an advertising campaign for a product, a political candidate, a travel destination, or other subjects of popular advertising. Turn on your TV if you are having trouble thinking of examples. List one or two examples:

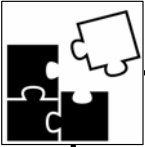
1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Considering the CASA/GAL volunteer role, name some of the advantages of congruent communication for the work that you will do:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Communicating with Children

Knowledge about communication is important to the specific ways you will gather information from children. Older children can talk about their situations and their wishes, but the younger children CASA/GAL volunteers represent do not have verbal and developmental skills sufficient to express their needs and wishes. Regardless of the verbal skills of the child, CASA/GAL volunteers include observations about the child as a vital part of their investigations.



## Activity 7C: Your Observations About Children

**Part 1:** Think of a time when you knew what a child's mood was just by observing the child as he/she entered a room where you were. Describe three of the behaviors that indicated how the child was feeling.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2:** Read "Considerations for Observations," which follows, and then answer the questions below.

**In addition to the things you listed above, how else can you learn about what children are feeling?**

**How do these ways differ from the ways you learn about what adults are thinking and feeling?**

**Have you ever been wrong in your assumptions about how a child is feeling?**

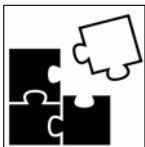
## Considerations for Observations

Because it is impossible to observe everything a child does, it is important to think about what specific information you want to know about the child while trying to keep your mind open to unexpected information. Following are some general questions to keep in mind when observing young children. Reading over these questions several times before you begin your observation will help you remember what to look for.

- 1. What is the specific situation in which the child is operating?**  
What other activities are going on? What are the general expectations of the group at the moment and what is the general atmosphere of the room—calm, noisy, boisterous, quiet?
- 2. What is the child's approach to materials and activities?**  
Is the child slow in getting started or does he/she plunge right in? Does the child use materials in the usual way or does he/she use them in different ways, exploring them for the possibilities they offer?

- 3. How interested is the child in what he/she is doing?**  
Does the child seem intent on what he/she is doing or does the child seem more interested in what others are doing? How long is his/her concentration span? How often does he/she shift activities?
- 4. How much energy does the child use?**  
Does the child work at a fairly even pace or does he/she work in “spurts” of activity? Does the child use a great deal of energy in manipulating the materials, in body movements, or in talking?
- 5. What are the child’s body movements like?**  
Does the child’s body seem tense or relaxed? Are movements jerky, uncertain, or poorly coordinated?
- 6. What does the child say?**  
Does the child talk, sing, hum, or use nonsense words while he/she works? Does the child use sentences or single words? Does the child communicate with others using words or gestures?
- 7. What is the child’s affect (visual emotions)?**  
What are the child’s facial expressions like? Does he/she appear frustrated? Happy?
- 8. How does the child get along with other children?**  
Does the child play alone, with only certain children, or with a variety of children? Is the child willing or unwilling to share toys? Does the child always initiate or always follow along with group ideas?
- 9. What kinds of changes are there between the beginning and the end of an activity?**  
Does the child’s mood change during that period?
- 10. What is the child’s relationship with you?**
- 11. What is the child’s relationship with others: parents, caseworker, attorney, foster parents, etc.?**
- 12. What seems “different” or “troubling” about this child as compared with other children of the same age?**
- 13. Are there issues that you think should be checked out by a professional (vision, hearing, cognitive development, physical development, dental health, etc.)?**

Adapted from “Assessing a Child’s Welfare,” Eunice Snyder, ACSW, and Keetjii Ramo, ACSW, School of Social Work, Eastern Washington University, 1984.



## Activity 7D: Reflection/Clarification Phrases

Read the list of reflection and clarification phrases that follows. Circle the phrases that you think will be most helpful to you in soliciting information from a child.

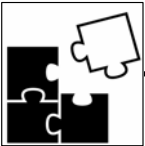
**FOR REFLECTING WHAT YOU UNDERSTAND**

- It sounds like you feel...
- So you're feeling...
- And that made you feel...
- I hear you saying...
- You seem to be feeling...
- I get the feeling that you...
- If I understand you right, you...
- Let me see if I'm with you so far, you...
- So what you're saying...
- Is that what you're saying?
- My impression is... Does that fit?
- Would it be accurate to say that...?
- I'm sensing that you...
- Sounds like there's a wish in there...
- The part I understand is...

**FOR EXPLORING WHAT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND**

- The part that isn't clear to me is...
- I wonder if you're feeling...
- Could you tell me...?
- Can you say more about...?
- What does that mean to you?
- I can't tell if you feel...or if you feel...
- What (How) is that for you?
- I don't quite get what you mean, is it...?
- What does... mean (to you)?
- How do you view that?
- For example...?
- Do you have a specific example in mind?
- When do you feel that way?
- Are you feeling that now?
- Can you expand on that idea?
- How do you mean that?
- I'm not clear on what you mean by...

"Feeling Phrases" by Michigan CASA.



**Activity 7E: Introducing Yourself as a CASA/GAL Volunteer**

**Part 1:** Review the following material regarding introducing yourself as a CASA/GAL volunteer. Think about the many different people and situations you will encounter in your role as a volunteer and consider how you might change the way you introduce yourself depending on the circumstances.

**Introducing Yourself as a CASA/GAL Volunteer**

One of the first tests of your communication skills as a CASA/GAL volunteer will occur when you introduce yourself and describe your role. The following is a sample of how you might introduce yourself to a family, either in written or verbal form:

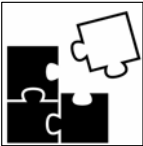
## **A CASA/GAL Volunteer—Who Is That?**

I am your child's CASA/GAL volunteer. I am an unpaid volunteer. *The term guardian ad litem is Latin for "guardian at law" or "guardian while under litigation," which is a legal description of my job—to provide a voice for your child in court.\** I do this work because I care about children and families, and I want to help.

I am not a CPS caseworker and the CASA/GAL program is not part of CPS. However, I will talk to your caseworker to get background information about your child's situation. I will also talk to you, other family members, teachers, and anyone else who is important to your child. After I have gathered information, I will write a report for the judge, recommending what I believe is in your child's best interest. Nothing in my report will be kept secret from you. You (or your attorney) will receive a copy of my report.

Please be open with me about anything important in your child's life. You may be the best source of information I will have to help me understand what is best for your child. If you wish to contact me, feel free to leave me a message at the CASA/GAL program office.

\* If you are not a guardian ad litem, the phrase in italics does not apply.



### **Activity 7E: Introducing Yourself as a CASA/GAL Volunteer**

**Part 2:** Complete the Introducing Yourself Reporting In form that follows. Make a copy of your work and submit it to CASA/GAL program staff at the debriefing session for this chapter.





# REPORTING IN

**Introducing Yourself...**

**Directions:** Using the concepts you just reviewed, write what you would say to introduce yourself to the following people:

**A nineteen-year-old mother of an infant alleged to be abused.**

**A nine-year-old child.**

**Your next-door neighbor.**

During the next week, make an opportunity to explain your role to two people who do not know much about the CASA/GAL program. In the space provided list the two people you introduced yourself to and describe what their responses were.

**I explained my role to...**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Their responses were...**

**Submit a completed copy of this form to CASA/GAL program staff.**

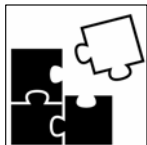
This activity was contributed by Norma Laughton, NC GAL District Administrator.



## UNIT 2: Establishing Rapport & Trust with Children

In order to be an effective advocate, a CASA/GAL volunteer must perform a thorough independent investigation of a child's situation. In the course of that investigation, you will meet and talk with the child, the child's family, the child's extended family and neighbors, and the professionals who are working with the child and his/her family.

Developing rapport and trust with the child is one of your most important responsibilities. It is the foundation of your relationship with the child. You can only fulfill the responsibility of assessing what the child needs *and* what the child wants if you have established a relationship that allows the child to honestly share his/her feelings.



### Activity 7F: Establishing Relationships

Think about a child in your life who really trusts you. If there isn't one currently, think about a past relationship with a child. What are three ways you think this trust evolved? Write your answers below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



### Random House Dictionary defines...

#### **RAPPORT** as...

- A relationship, especially a harmonious or sympathetic one.

#### **TRUST** as...

- Reliance on the integrity, ability, etc., of a person or thing.
- Confident expectation, hope.
- The responsibility imposed on a person in whom confidence is placed.



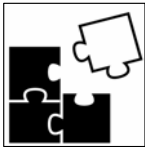
*“CASA/GAL volunteers should know that the children have been hurt. So even if you get a cold shoulder, just understand that they don’t know who to trust. Don’t think they are bad, it is just a security wall.”*

Words spoken by a sixteen-year-old about the CASA/GAL volunteer relationship with a child.

The children for whom CASA/GAL volunteers advocate have been traumatized by the abuse or neglect that brought them to the attention of Child Protective Services and by all of the life changes that have occurred as a result of agency intervention. The CASA/GAL volunteer is likely to be one more new person in a long line of new people in the child’s life.

### **A relationship characterized by rapport and trust...**

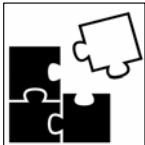
- ✓ Should be built on a sincere interest in the child as a person as well as the child’s well-being;
- ✓ Takes time and energy and actively listening to the child’s words and observing his/her nonverbal cues;
- ✓ Needs regular nurturing;
- ✓ Requires honesty in all communication with the child; and
- ✓ Is developed for the benefit of the child, not the adult.



## Activity 7G: Establishing Relationships with Children of Different Ages

Review the allegations from the two petitions in the Parker-Solano training case (these appear in the Resource Materials section of Chapter 1). List what you would do to establish rapport and trust with Damien and Ben in the space provided. What differences do you see?

Young Child (Damien)	Older Child (Ben)



## Activity 7H: Establishing Rapport & Trust—A Case Example

Read the “Dear Abby” column that follows, and then answer these questions:

<b>How might the child feel talking to you, especially at the first meeting?</b>
<b>What can you do to help the child feel comfortable?</b>
<b>What additional strategies can you use to gather information from the child?</b>
<b>Is it more important for you to get information from this child or to support this child?</b>

## Promises, Promises —A Child’s View of Incest: Young Victim’s Private Ordeal Becomes a Public Nightmare

By Abigail Van Buren,  
Universal Press Syndicate,  
1987

**DEAR ABBY:** Recently my husband and I heard Norman Early, the district attorney from Denver, speak on the criminal justice system—from the victim’s point of view.

He read the enclosed account of a victim of incest. Her name is “Cindy” and she is 12. I thought it worthy of inclusion in your column. I hope you agree.

*Mary Dean Armstrong*

**DEAR MARY:** I do. And here it is:

### Promises, Promises—A Child’s View of Incest

I asked you for help and you told me you would if I told you the things my dad did to me. It was really hard for me to say all those things, but you told me to trust you—then you made me repeat them to 14 different strangers.

I asked you for privacy and you sent two policemen to my school in front of everyone, to “go downtown” for a talk in their black and white car—like I was the one being busted.

I asked for you to believe me, and you said that you did, then you connected me to a lie detector, and took me to court where lawyers put me on trial like I was a liar. I can’t help it if I can’t remember times or dates or explain why I couldn’t tell my mom. Your questions got me confused—my confusion got you suspicious. I asked you for help and you gave me a doctor with cold metal gadgets and cold hands... just like my father, who said it wouldn’t hurt, just like my father, who said not to cry. He said I look fine—good news for you. You said, bad news for my “case.”

I asked you for confidentiality and you let the newspaper get my story. What does it matter that they left out my name when they put in my father’s and our home address? Even my best friend’s mother won’t let her talk to me anymore.

I asked for protection and you gave me a social worker who patted my head and called me “Honey” (mostly because she could never remember my name). She sent me to live with strangers in another place, with a different school.

Do you know what it’s like to live where there’s a lock on the refrigerator, where you have to ask permission to use the shampoo, and where you can’t use the phone to

call your friends? You get used to hearing, “Hi, I’m your new social worker, this is your new foster sister, dorm mother, group home.” You tiptoe around like a perpetual guest and don’t even get to see your own puppy grow up.

Do you know what it’s like to have more social workers than friends?

Do you know what it feels like to be the one that everyone blames for all the trouble? Even when they were speaking to me, all they talked about was lawyers, shrinks, fees and whether or not they’ll lose the mortgage. Do you know what it’s like when your sisters hate you, and your brother calls you a liar? It’s my word against my own father’s. I’m 12 years old and he’s the manager of a bank. You say you believe me—who cares, if nobody else does?

I asked you for help and you forced my mom to choose between us—she chose him, of course. She was scared and had a lot to lose. I had a lot to lose too—the difference was you never told me how much. I asked you to put an end to the abuse—you put an end to my whole family. You took away my nights of hell and gave me days of hell instead. You exchanged my private nightmare for a very public one.

**Feelings by Cindy,  
age 12; put into words  
by Kee McFarlane**

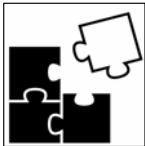
## UNIT 3: Using a Collaborative Approach



*The word “collaboration” comes from the roots “co” (meaning **together**) and “labor” (meaning **work**).*

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you will interact and communicate with many people who hold many different opinions and beliefs about children and families. Often, addressing a difference of opinion or challenging a firmly held belief will be an integral part of your advocacy. The CASA/GAL program encourages volunteers to use a collaborative approach in working with families and with other agencies and organizations in the community. As you work together on a common plan to ensure that the child is in a safe, permanent home, you will see that the collaborative approach brings more creative energy and resources to a situation or problem.

At its best, collaboration means different people or groups working together toward a goal they all agree on, with everyone doing what they do best, within the guidelines set by agency policy. As people from various agencies work together with families, they get to know each other and understand each other’s services and approaches. It is important that you only accept activities that fall within the duties of the CASA/GAL volunteer and that you advocate for others to complete activities that fall within their mandated roles (e.g., CASA/GAL volunteers generally do not provide transportation, supervise visits, or do home studies).



### Activity 7I: Successful Collaboration

When agencies can successfully collaborate, the child and all of the participants in the collaboration win. Using this positive approach greatly increases the chance that the child will find permanence without unnecessary delays.

Read the following information about the keys to successful collaboration. Name two ways this information may help in your work as a CASA/GAL volunteer.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## Keys to Successful Collaboration

### ✓ **Developing a Partnership**

The people or agencies in a collaboration need to develop mutually respectful relationships that allow for the development of trust.

### ✓ **Assessing Reasons for Collaborating**

The next step is to help the collaborators clarify their reasons for working together and identify contributions each can offer to the plan. This is an ongoing process.

### ✓ **Setting Goals & Making a Written Plan**

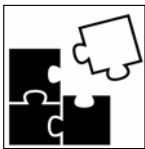
It is valuable to write down the goals and the steps needed to reach these goals, indicating who will be responsible for each activity.

### ✓ **Learning & Practicing Skills**

Group members may need to learn some new skills in order to reach the goals of the group. You can teach each other and invite additional assistance as needed.

### ✓ **Celebrating Accomplishments**

Be sure to take the time to celebrate your joint accomplishments with the families, workers, and others who have supported the collaboration.



## **Activity 7J: Practical Pitfalls of Collaboration— & How to Turn Them into Advantages**

Read the following nine practical pitfalls of collaboration, and answer the question that appears after each pitfall in the space provided. Consider how each might impact your work as a CASA/GAL volunteer.

## **Practical Pitfalls of Collaboration—& How to Turn Them into Advantages**

### **Collaborating on Tasks That Really Don't Require Collaboration**

If you are looking for the fastest way to get a simple task done, don't collaborate on it. If, on the other hand, you want to accomplish something that one person or agency can't do alone or that will have much more impact if done with others, this is the time to consider collaboration.

#### ✓ **When might it be worth taking the extra time to use a collaborative approach?**

## Underestimating How Much Time It Takes to Collaborate

When you begin collaborating (whether it is with a family or with another agency), first talk over your goals. If you agree on goals, then talk over who will do what, and when. Draft a simple work plan and list both the tasks and how long you think each will take. It takes time to collaborate!

- ✓ **Why is it helpful to estimate the time it will take to complete a work plan?**
- 

## Lack of Clarity of Leadership

The way leadership is handled will make the difference between success and failure for a collaboration. Every group of interagency collaborators needs to figure out how they will make decisions, and who will take responsibility for each task.

- ✓ **What can you do to ensure that issues of responsibility and leadership are determined at the start of a collaboration?**
- 

## “Turf” Issues

Understanding why people and agencies are often so touchy about their turf can help you know how to handle turf issues. Every person has an “identity”—the part of us that says, “I am this, I do that.” Work is a big part of many people’s identity, and many agency workers’ identities are intertwined with the services their agencies provide. Because of these “identity issues,” caseworkers often feel blamed or criticized personally when the CASA/GAL volunteer asks for more services or calls attention to delays. The CASA/GAL volunteer can separate the person from the problem by saying, “I know you have done what you can. How can we get this service for the child?” When identities are threatened, it becomes very difficult to collaborate. When you or your collaborators seem to be getting caught up in turf issues, bring yourself (and your collaborators) back to the reason why you are collaborating: to find a safe, permanent home, preferably with the child’s family, as soon as possible, honoring the child’s sense of time.

- ✓ **This is a particularly tricky one for lay volunteers who are working with agency professionals. What can you do to move things forward while understanding that people’s identities are often very much wrapped up in the work that they do?**
- 

## Leaving Out Key People or Agencies

If you are beginning a collaboration either with a family or with another agency, be careful not to accidentally leave out important people or agencies. Ask collaborators you trust who the key players are. It is worthwhile to bring families into the decision-making process whenever possible, even though this requires extra time and effort.

- ✓ **What would you do if you discovered that you had inadvertently left out a key decision maker?**
-

## Lack of a Common Vision

Lack of a common goal and differences in ideas about how best to reach that goal are the most frequent collaboration pitfalls, whether you are working with an individual family or with an interagency group. Taking the time to explore the vision and develop goals everyone supports will pay off in the long run.

- ✓ **Why does it work well for the CASA/GAL volunteer to be a leader in keeping everyone focused on a common vision?**
- 

## Lack of Agreed-Upon Ground Rules

Many potential collaborations fail because participants don't take the time to establish some ground rules everyone involved can agree on. The process of agreeing on ground rules is as important as the list you come up with. Ground rules generally include expectations regarding confidentiality, participation, time frames, and other expectations of group members.

- ✓ **Why should ground rules be set right from the start?**
- 

## Lack of Skill in Working Constructively with Conflict

Conflict is inevitable in collaborations. It can even be a benefit because it can help the group understand each person's or agency's point of view. Good communication skills will go a long way toward resolving conflict. These skills include listening well, reflecting what another person tells you (to make sure you understand), and expressing your own thoughts and feelings respectfully.

- ✓ **Why are good listening skills a key to addressing conflict?**
- 

## Lack of Appropriate Incentive

In the best situations, people want to collaborate on behalf of a child just because they see a need and want to help. In reality, it is often unrealistic to expect the families or other agencies to put much time into collaborating unless they can benefit in some way. People and agencies already have too much to do without taking on new projects. Incentives can help the collaboration process by encouraging people to join and stay with the effort. If you are the one calling people together to discuss a possible collaboration, you can begin by briefly explaining what you are concerned about, what you want to do about it, and why you need their help. Then you can ask for their ideas and reasons for joining in (and what would keep them away from collaborating). This first step works equally well with families and other agencies.

- ✓ **How can the CASA/GAL volunteer help others to see the benefits of using a collaborative approach?**
- 

The materials for this unit were adapted from *Empowerment Skills for Family Workers*, Christiann Dean, Cornell Empowering Families Project, August 1996. Used with permission.

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you will collaborate often with the parents or relatives of a child, as well as with professionals from the agencies that serve children and their families. Collaboration means starting where the other person is instead of where you would like them to be. It is about listening, often listening more than you speak—and when you do speak, paying attention to the words you use. It is important to use “people-first” language. “People-first” language recognizes that people should not be reduced to their conditions. People have disabilities or illnesses—they are not the illness (e.g., “a person who has an addiction to drugs” versus “the drug addict”). Using adjectives that describe a person’s condition as nouns often results in a derogatory label beginning with the word “the” (e.g., people who do not earn enough money to meet their needs become “the poor” or “the disadvantaged”). With this in mind, you are encouraged to ask about concerns, look for strengths, question labels, and work with people as collaborators.

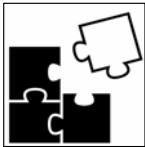


## UNIT 4: Dealing with Conflict

The common root of all conflicts is the incompatibility between the concerns of two or more parties. Not only do the different parties in a child abuse/neglect case have different roles and perspectives, they may have—or perceive that they have—incompatible concerns. In your role, there will be times when you will need to address a difference of opinion or challenge someone’s firmly held belief. When you are in a conflict situation, one way to deal with conflict is to recognize that you can choose among different styles of handling conflicts based on your own personal style, the style of others involved in the conflict, and the nature of the conflict itself. Different situations may call for different strategies.

One approach to describing these styles for handling conflict, based on a system developed by Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann, is used extensively in business and educational programs. A person’s style in dealing with a particular conflict depends on the degree to which he/she attempts to satisfy his/her own concern (by acting assertively or unassertively) and to satisfy the other party’s concern (by acting cooperatively or uncooperatively). When these two considerations are put together, they can form a grid:





## Activity 7K: Conflict Management Styles

Read the outline of the five conflict management styles that follows. Honestly consider how you have handled conflict in any area of your life, and answer the following questions:

<b>Which style do you use the most?</b>
<b>Which style do you like using the most?</b>
<b>Which style do you use the least?</b>
<b>Which style do you feel the least comfortable using?</b>

### The Competitive Style

Someone using this style is very assertive or even aggressive and is interested in getting his/her own way. The rationale might go something like this: "I don't care what others think, I'm going to make sure I get my way." You satisfy your concern at the expense of others, by forcing people to do it your way, arguing, and pulling rank. You use your power to achieve your objective; and if you have enough power you can succeed.

This style is useful when:

- The issue is important to you or you feel you must act quickly to get your way immediately; or
- You feel confident you will win because you have the power or position to do so.

### The Avoidant Style

In this style you don't assert yourself, you don't cooperate, or you avoid the conflict entirely. You don't attempt to satisfy your own or the other's concern. Instead, you sidestep the issue by ignoring it, passing the buck, delaying, or using other tactics. For example, "Why don't we tackle this next week when we can look at this with fresh eyes."

This style is useful when:

- You are in a no-win situation or tensions are too high and you feel a need to cool down;
- You don't have enough information and have the option of waiting; or
- You believe the situation will resolve itself in time.

## The Accommodative Style

You work cooperatively with others without trying to assert your own concerns. You sacrifice your own concern in order to satisfy another's concern by agreeing, conceding, taking pity on that person, or otherwise giving in. For example, "This is not important enough to me to argue about it."

This style is useful when:

- It is more important to maintain a relationship with someone than to get the matter decided your way;
- You want to keep the peace and maintain harmony; or
- The outcome is more important to the other person than to you.

## The Compromising Style

You give up a little bit of what you want to get the rest of what you want, and the other parties do the same. You do this by making concessions and exchanges, and bargaining to come up with a compromise solution to which you can each agree. The emphasis is not on win-win; rather, you acknowledge, "We can't both get what we want so let's work out something we can live with."

This style is useful when:

- Neither party has the energy for collaboration;
- You have mutually exclusive goals; or
- A compromise will make a relationship or agreement work, and you'd rather have that than nothing at all.

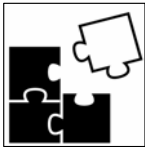
## The Collaborative Style

You get actively involved in working out a conflict by asserting what you want, while still trying to cooperate with the other person. If the parties have the time and see the issue as important enough, this is a good way to find a win-win solution that satisfies the needs of all parties. It is a more complicated approach, and the key to successful collaboration involves taking the time to look at underlying issues and needs in order to find some way to meet them. All parties have to make a time commitment, and they have to be able to clarify their wants, express their needs, listen to others do the same, and then explore alternatives and agree to solutions. Together the parties might search for new alternatives or work out good compromises once all the issues are understood. For example, "I think if we take some time and talk things out, we can come up with a solution that works for all of us."

This style is useful when:

- Parties are clear about the problem and what they want;
- Parties are willing to work together as equals to come up with a solution; or
- The issues are important to all parties and no one is willing to let go entirely.

Adapted from *Resolving Conflict: With Others and Within Yourself*, Gini Graham Scott, Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 1990.



## Activity 7L: Keys to Communication & Principled Negotiation

**Part 1:** Review the following material on conquering conflict and using principled negotiation.

Call an experienced CASA/GAL volunteer or program staff person and ask any questions. Also, ask them to describe a potential conflict situation in CASA/GAL volunteer work. Together, list some of the important things to remember as you handle such conflicts.

### ***The Keys to Communicating to Conquer Conflict***

The way you communicate—and set the stage to help others communicate—can go a long way toward avoiding a conflict or dissipating one. The basic keys include the following:

- ✓ Pay attention to nonverbal cues that suggest a discrepancy between what the speaker is thinking or feeling and what he/she is saying. Bring these issues out in the open.
- ✓ Watch for hidden or incorrect assumptions—your own or the other person’s. Bring them out in the open so mistakes can be corrected. Use reflective listening—state back what you believe you heard the other person say and ask if you understood correctly.
- ✓ Work toward open channels of communication. Say what you think or feel diplomatically, and encourage the other party to open up and talk to you, too.
- ✓ Be clear. If something is unclear to you, ask for clarification so you understand. And if someone else seems unclear, check this out and then provide the necessary explanations yourself.
- ✓ Learn to listen well. Do so with interest and concern and respect. You want to show empathy, and to indicate that the speaker is being heard and understood. Also, listen attentively without interruption or judgment. From time to time reflect back what you heard to show the other person you’re following the conversation.
- ✓ Express your own feelings and needs in a non-threatening way, using “I” statements. Avoid “you” statements, which can make the other person feel judged, put down, or blamed. An “I” statement is one in which the speaker takes responsibility for their feelings, such as “I feel worried when you come home late.” An example of a “you” statement would be “you make me feel worried when you come home late. An “I” statement is less likely to put the receiver on the defensive, thus keeping channels of communication open.

Adapted from *Resolving Conflict: With Others and Within Yourself*, Gini Graham Scott, Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 1990.

# Principled Negotiation

Principled negotiation is a method through which issues are decided on their merits rather than through a haggling process focused on what each side says it will and won't do. The method of principled negotiation can be boiled down to four basic points:

## 1. PEOPLE: Separate the people from the problem.

There is an eighty-twenty rule of negotiating for agreement: Listen eighty percent of the time and talk twenty percent of the time. By using effective communication skills, by listening without interruptions, by asking questions, by not arguing, by admitting your own errors, and by empathizing with the others involved, conflict can be resolved. If you are dealing with an angry person, in order to allow yourself and the other to separate out real issues, do the following:

- Change the environment (e.g., move to a different place for your meeting);
- Schedule a series of short meetings (e.g., spend fifteen minutes, and if the person is still angry, schedule again for the next day, and so on, until the anger is dissipated); and
- Don't be afraid to bring in a mediator if necessary to help resolve the dispute.

## 2. INTERESTS: Focus on interests, not positions.

Find out the background behind each position, then step back from the positions to see what the interests are. Ask "Why is that position important? What's getting in the way of accepting my position?" Then make positive statements. Say what you do want rather than what you don't want.

## 3. OPTIONS: Generate a variety of possibilities before deciding what to do.

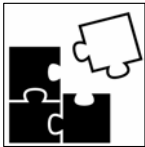
Have suggestions available, but don't get too tied to them. Brainstorm, don't evaluate. Be encouraging. Keep a list in case you decide on a mutual solution that doesn't work. Watch out for "killer phrases," such as "You did a really good job today, but..." or "We tried that before and it won't work." Use building phrases, such as "We haven't tried that yet."

## 4. CRITERIA: Insist that the result be based on some objective standard.

Ask "How will we know if the solution works? How will we measure the success?" Everyone should agree on criteria focusing on success of the solution not the process. Remember, individuals don't fail, solutions do. If you are dealing with attitudes, figure out the behavior that attitude is affecting. Reason together which standards are acceptable to all.

After going through the negotiation process, check the objective criteria within two weeks. Finally, remember you cannot resolve all conflicts this way (about five percent don't work) but try this process first.

Adapted from *Getting to Yes*, Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton, New York: Penguin Books, 1991.



## Activity 7L: Keys to Communication & Principled Negotiation

**Part 2:** Read the two conflict resolution scenarios that follow. Determine one “principled” way you might handle each conflict as a CASA/GAL volunteer and describe your solution in the space provided. These conflict scenarios are based on real situations.

**Scenario 1:**

**Scenario 2:**

### Conflict Resolution Scenario 1

#### CASA/GAL Volunteer

You are a new CASA/GAL volunteer on a case involving twin three-year-olds. You are having a disagreement with a caseworker regarding the need for developmental evaluations. The state has legal custody of the children. The maternal grandmother, who has physical custody of the girls, has reported to you that the girls have hardly any verbal skills. You have met the girls and they only seem to know a few words. You believe that a professional in child development should decide if the children need evaluations.

The grandmother has no transportation and is caring for two other school-age children. She appears to you to be overwhelmed and genuine in asking for help. She is willing to attend the evaluations but needs help setting them up and getting there. You feel it is a CPS responsibility to set up the evaluations and transport the girls.

#### Caseworker

You have worked as a caseworker for the state for five years. You have some very difficult cases that are taking a great deal of your time and your caseload has been soaring. Your department has just been reorganized—again—and you have a new supervisor who is very concerned about budget and has been complaining about the high incidence of referrals for outside services (such as developmental evaluations). You don’t believe that evaluations on these children are really necessary; you have had some experience with twins whose language development was delayed because they had developed their own ways of communicating with each other and believe that is the situation here. You have also had some contact with the grandmother and are not convinced that she will follow through with plans.

Adapted from material from the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem volunteer training curriculum.

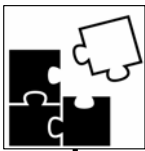
## Conflict Resolution Scenario 2

### Psychologist

For the past six months, you have been providing therapy to a mother whose seven-year-old daughter is in foster care because the mother was so depressed she was unable to care for her properly. The mother has been making good progress in therapy and she reports that visits with her daughter have gone well. You feel that she is ready for longer visits and that weekend overnight visitations with her daughter would enhance the connection between them and prepare for the child's return to the home.

### CASA/GAL Volunteer

The foster parent has reported to you that since the child returned from the visit with her mother at which the weekend overnight was announced, the child has developed night terrors, has begun to wet her bed again, and has begged the foster mother not to make her go. While you support visitation, you believe that an overnight visit is too abrupt a change for the child.



### Activity 7L: Keys to Communication & Principled Negotiation

**Part 3:** Choose one of the above conflict resolution scenarios, and using the space provided below name one positive step you can take if the outcome is contrary to your recommendations.

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# UNIT 5: Confidentiality Revisited

## Should I Share Information with Someone Else About This Child or This Case?

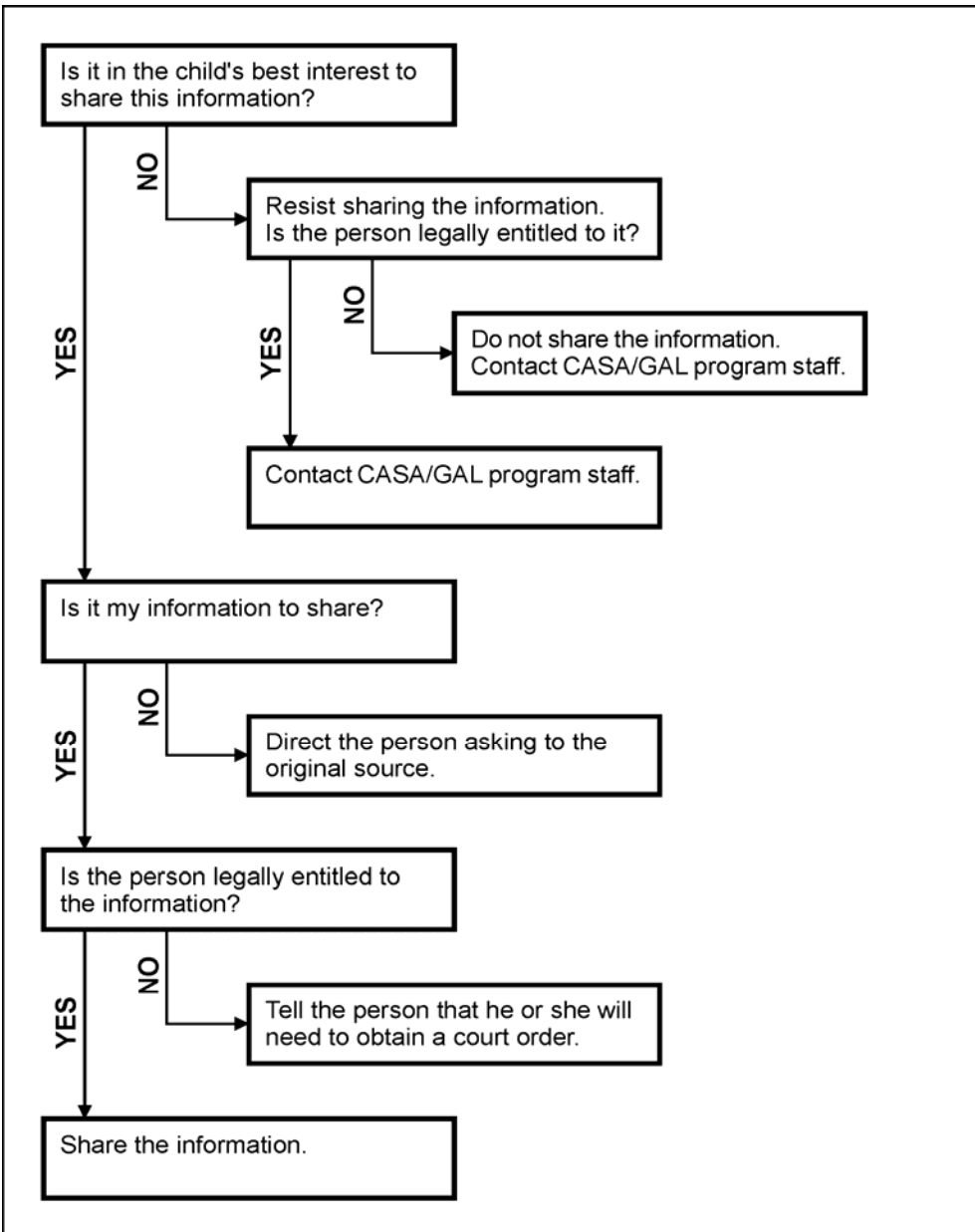
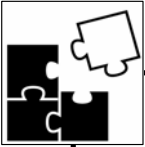


Chart contributed by Diane Robinson, State Director, Arkansas CASA.



## Activity 7M: What to Tell the Foster Parent

Read the following material about sharing information with foster parents. With regard to Damien's foster mother in the Parker-Solano training case, answer the following questions about sharing information:

**How would you answer if Damien's foster mother asked you, "What is a CASA/GAL volunteer?"**

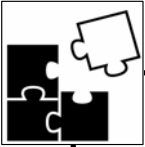
**How would you respond if Damien's foster mother asked you specifics about the case?**

**How would you respond if you discovered that Damien's foster mother did not have information that you felt was essential to ensure appropriate care and supervision of the child?**

**What other questions do you have about confidentiality?**

## Sharing Information with Foster Parents

Foster parents may seek information from you about the children in their care. In fact, federal law requires that the child protective services agency provide the foster parent with the child's health and education records at the time of placement. The records should be updated periodically and each time the child is moved to another placement. These must include, at a minimum, the names and addresses of the child's health care provider and school, the child's immunization record, known medical problems, medications, school record with current grade level performance, and other relevant health and education information (e.g., behavioral problems and/or disabilities). In order to provide adequate care, foster parents do need to know relevant information regarding the child. However, foster parents have a contractual relationship with the child protective services agency or a private licensing agency. As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you are not the foster parents' source of information about the child's case nor are you their advocate. Your job is to focus on the child's needs. It is your obligation as a CASA/GAL volunteer to keep your child informed about the case, but it is not your duty to keep the foster parents informed. Suppose, however, that you know the child has a history of sexual victimization and that he/she has been moved from an earlier foster home after being found in bed with a younger child. The current foster parent does not have this information and there is another young child in the home. In such a case, it is clearly in the best interest of both the child and other children in the home that this information be shared. After discussing the issue with staff to determine the best approach, the CASA/GAL volunteer should contact the caseworker and state a clear expectation that this critical background information be shared with the current foster care provider.



## Activity 7N: Confidentiality Dilemmas

Questions of confidentiality for the CASA/GAL volunteer are often not clear-cut or easily recognized. This activity uses five scenarios to illustrate situations that test the limits of confidentiality. Read each of the five scenarios that follow and answer the question below regarding each one.

**SCENARIO 1: What problem could this cause for the CASA/GAL volunteer?**

*(For example, it could ruin the volunteer's credibility and make her appear biased toward termination of parental rights.)*

**SCENARIO 2: What problem could this cause for the child?**

**SCENARIO 3: What confidentiality breach do you see?**

**SCENARIO 4: What problem could this cause for the CASA/GAL program?**

**SCENARIO 5: What problem could this cause regarding the outcome of the case?**

## **SCENARIO 1**

A CASA/GAL volunteer was in the program office after a court hearing. She overheard another volunteer talking to program staff about a case in which a four-year-old girl was going to be placed for adoption as soon as her parents' rights were terminated. The first volunteer mentioned this adoption possibility to a friend who wanted very much to adopt a child. This friend then called CPS to inquire about adopting the four-year-old girl.

## **SCENARIO 2**

CASA/GAL volunteer Trent Watson was investigating the case of fourteen-year-old Jason Street, whose teacher, Mr. Davis, was demonstrating an active interest in his well-being. Mr. Davis asked Trent to keep him informed of things learned in the investigation that would be helpful for him as a mentor to Jason. Trent discovered that Jason's parents both had substance abuse problems and that Jason had recently revealed to his therapist that he had been sexually abused by a family friend who was attending a party at his parents' home. The parents had no knowledge of the sexual abuse. Trent shared all this information with Mr. Davis.

## **SCENARIO 3**

Volunteer Shirley Colston was at her neighborhood swimming pool. A neighbor, Stephanie Moore, asked Shirley what she did as a CASA/GAL volunteer. Shirley thought Stephanie would be a great CASA/GAL volunteer and decided to give her an example of what activities she had done on a recent case. Shirley gave no case names and slightly changed the facts in the case to preserve confidentiality. However, as Stephanie heard the altered details of the case, she still recognized the similarities to an open CPS case involving her cousin.

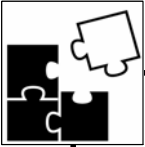
## **SCENARIO 4**

CASA/GAL volunteer Tonya Mills was at home working on her court report. She had all of her case notes on her kitchen table when her friend Caitlyn Taylor stopped by for coffee. While Tonya was preparing the coffee, Caitlyn read the top page of Tonya's case notes and learned the name of the family and several facts about the case. Later that day, Caitlyn was talking to her friend Amy Cole and mentioned the case to her. Amy is the juvenile court clerk in the county where the case is open.

## **SCENARIO 5**

Eleven-year-old Johnny Barker came to the attention of the court for neglect when he ran away from home because he wanted to quit school. Johnny told his CASA/GAL volunteer, Jack, that he needed to tell him something but that Jack must promise not to tell. Jack made that promise. Johnny divulged that he and his mom had frequently been victims of his father's violent abuse. Jack later realized that he needed to share the information with the court so that Johnny would not be returned home to a dangerous situation.

The scenarios were contributed by Alma Brown, NC GAL Western Regional Administrator.



## Activity 7O: Confidentiality Motto

Take a few minutes to think of a CASA/GAL volunteer “confidentiality motto.” Write your motto below. (*For example: Loose lips sink ships.*)

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## LOOKING AHEAD

Talking with Children...

Community Resources

### Please complete the following assignments.

Think of any child you know (including your own child) whom you can see before beginning the next chapter. On the chart below, list three things you want to learn about the child (such as how his/her day has been) and how you think you can learn each thing (such as by asking him/her a question or by observation).

What I Want to Learn	How I Think I Will Learn It
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

“Interview” the child before beginning the next chapter. Make notes below. In the next chapter, you’ll compare your expectations to your accounts of your actual interview experience.

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### Reminder—Assignment for the next training chapter

In the Looking Ahead assignment for Chapter 3 you selected an agency to research. A Reporting In form was provided to assist you in gathering information on services provided, access to services, etc.

This activity was assigned early in training to allow time for you to gather materials and information, which you will use in the next chapter. Please make a copy of your materials, including the Reporting In form, to submit to CASA/GAL program staff so they can share them with other volunteers.

If you are having any trouble collecting information, be sure to ask for help from the staff of your local CASA/GAL program.





