

# CASA of Cochise County

## News & Views



Abby Dodge – CASA Coordinator ~ Lissete Borbon – Support Staff ~ Phone: 432-7521 Fax: 432-7247

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[www.casaofarizona.com](http://www.casaofarizona.com)

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Lissete Borbon  
Interim Commentator

What a blur February was for me! I had a very busy and productive month. I did a total of 8 court reports! I want to thank everyone for submitting those right on time. It truly made it easier to submit to the court not only with plenty of time for review but also I was able to take my time and double check them since I was doing the formatting and editing all on my own. For March there's only (!) 5 court reports due. By now you probably already saw the e-mail reminder. If you have a court report due, please submit it two

## Coordinator's Comments

weeks in advance, if possible, to ensure proper handling!

I also wanted to remind you all that during Abby's absence (even when she's here), if need be, reach out to one another but mainly your mentor. Although it is a pleasure helping you all with whatever you need, I feel I haven't been too helpful in regards to your issues. It might be that since I'm alone, my mind is always running in different directions. It may well be that I'm a mom and that my mind running in many directions is just the norm! I guess we'll never know. But seriously, if you have an issue and I'm not helping you get anywhere, please reach out to your mentor. They are there to guide you when you need it and honestly they're probably more knowledgeable than me! The good thing is that you are all so great at what you do, it's rare the times you are in need of extra help! I'm grateful for the wonderful group of volunteers we have. It really is a pleasure to assist you!

Last, but definitely not least, during the Support Group Meeting in February, Abby came by to introduce baby Caitlyn. What a precious baby girl! I might have a tiny obsession! We are in the final stretch of Abby's absence, and I'm hoping I won't bother her as much as I've been in the past weeks so that she can enjoy herself before coming back into the routine. Bear with me everyone!

***Happy March!***

The word "Spring" is written in a blue, textured, hand-drawn font. A red tulip with a green stem and leaves is positioned behind the letter 'i'.

## Financial Assistance for Children in Foster Care

By **Ned Letto**, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Many times we find that children involved in a dependency have needs or wants that are not covered by DES or other government agencies. Many times these needs/wants are connected to making life better.

Here, we have the Cochise County Council for CASA. The CASA Council is a support organization that can be used by CASA Volunteers to request funds to cover things we feel will help the children. The CASA Council has funded many different types of items or activities.

Recently, the CASA Council has become aware of another organization that also helps children in foster care. This is the Arizona Friends of Children in Foster Care Foundation (AFFCF). This organization is based in Phoenix and available to any child in foster care in the state of Arizona.

The assistance from AFFCF can be requested by anyone. There is only some basic information needed to apply. They request information about the caregiver, the child and the case worker.

The CASA Council is now asking that those requesting funds from the CASA Council first check with the AFFCF to see if they will fund the need before asking for funding from the CASA

Council. The AFFCF has far more resources to fund needs than the local CASA Council.

For more information about the AFFCF, go to <http://www.affcf.org/>. If the AFFCF is unable to assist you, please make your request for assistance from the CASA Council through the CASA Office.

Here is some of the basic information about the AFFCF.

### **AFFCF Award Guidelines**

AFFCF cannot reimburse for anything paid for prior to receiving our committee's approval so we always need the completed application and response from the CPS caseworker (confirming the child is currently in the foster care system here in Arizona) to send to our committee for its approval first. AFFCF also needs supporting documentation displaying the cost of the request so that once the committee approves, then AFFCF can make the check payable to the vendor providing those services—for example, YMCA for swimming lessons.

## Financial Assistance for Children in Foster Care (Continued)

### What AFFCF Does Not Fund

- Applications requesting reimbursement for funds spent prior to AFFCF approval
- Children who are adopted or not currently wards of the court in Arizona
- Services or benefits that are available from other public, private, or governmental agencies (daycare, pre-school, counseling services, wheel chairs, healthcare, legal aid, etc.).
- Furniture or home fixtures
- Debt relief (i.e. home bills, utilities, etc.)
- Any type of airfare or travel
- Any type of electronics (computers, tablets, stereos, electronic games, TV, etc.)
- Modeling classes
- Day-to-day clothing or school uniforms
- Orthodontics or any type of medical expense
- Applications from group homes or other groups for the same activity at the same location and time



### What AFFCF will fund

*(see details online for amounts and restrictions)*

Athletic Registration & Equipment  
Apartment Set-Up  
Bicycles  
Camps  
Class Pictures  
Clothing  
Graduation Expenses -  
Instrument rental  
Lessons  
Optical expenses  
School Field Trips  
Scooters, Skates and Skateboards  
Theme Park Admission  
Tutoring Services

Financial assistance is available to help children through the dependency process. We just need to know where to go to get that assistance.

## Kids Love Something New

By **Mary Jacobs**, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

We sometimes fall into the same habits when it comes to hanging out with our CASA kids. The mall, movies, meals, etc. There are so many wonderful ideas of things to do in our beautiful community, and if you don't know what I'm talking about, take a moment to check out the City of Sierra Vista Visitor's page! Simply go to [www.SierraVistaAZ.gov](http://www.SierraVistaAZ.gov) and click on Visitors at the top.

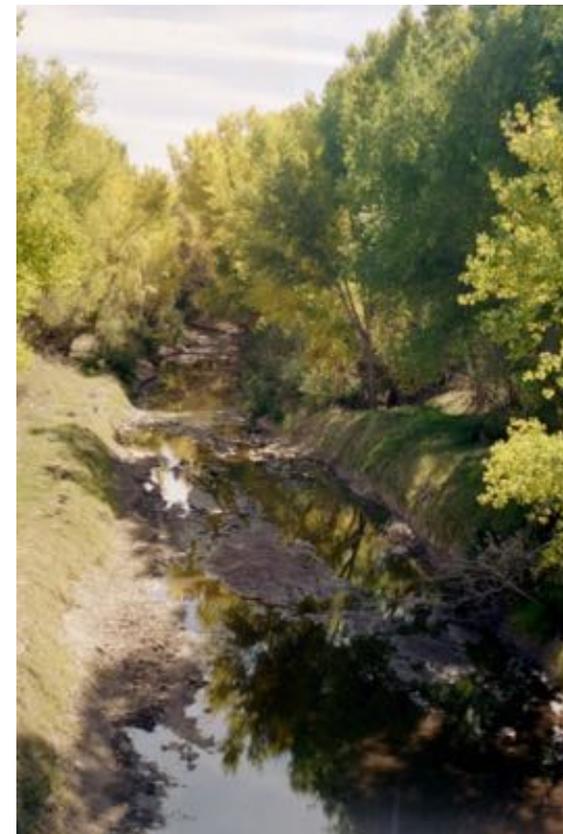
Learn about the ghost towns, hikes, museums, archeological sites, and other attractions that offer exciting opportunities to interact with your kids. Swing by Ramsey Canyon or the Brown Canyon Ranch on the way there to look around and explore. Check out the San Pedro House and then mosey over to the river to see some wildlife. Consider a ranger-led hike at the Coronado National Monument or their visitor center.



Ramsey Canyon



Coronado National Monument



San Pedro River

***Exciting adventures await!***

## Follow Through with What You Say

By **Mary C. Blanchard**, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Several times during the years, I have had teenage CASA kids who shut down and refuse to do their school work. I try talking to them, I try talking to the teachers, I try monitoring the grades, and sometimes none of this works. I then resort to my big guns. I tell them I will give them one week to start bringing up their grades, or I am going to be sitting in their classes until they start working, and then I do just that.

With girls, I find that two visits is usually enough. One girl was so horrified that she refused to go to class if I was there, but she finally went, and one week later all three of her failing grades were up to passing. She has been a model student ever since.

It has been my experience that young men can sometimes take longer to convince. It took three visits a week for three weeks for one fellow to decide it was easier to work than to have me in class. After he was jump started, I emailed his teachers several times a week to keep an eye on his progress. It worked! He graduated from high school and went on to a vocational school, and today he proudly introduces me as his CASA.

In building a foundation of respect with teens, they have to believe you. They have to know you mean what you say. They have to know that you are going to be there no matter what. And once you and your teen have come through the fires together, they know they can count on you. We all know that a teen does not request a CASA. No teen is required to like a CASA. But every teen who has a CASA needs to know that the CASA will be there for him/her ***no matter what!***



### Theater on the Move™

And Village Meadows Baptist Church Present:

**“WILD IRISH MURDER...or  
WHO KICKED THE BLARNEY BUCKET?”**

March 17th - 19th

Doors open 5:30; Show at 6:15

March 20th

Doors Open 3:30; Show at 4:15

At Village Meadows Baptist Church  
1407 El Camino Real, Sierra Vista, AZ

#### Ticket Prices

Adults: \$15

Military, First Responders and 55+: \$12

Under 14 and Students: \$8

Purchase tickets at the door or in advance at VMBC  
520-458-4500 and online at [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com)



**Don't miss CASA Volunteer Kathy Shaughnessy singing with the “The Shamrockers” and her husband Michael as a Happy Irish Drunk!!**

## Sibling Outings

*By Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer*

I work with teenagers and have recently added three elementary age girls. My two newest girls are under 13 and prone to argue. I am okay with this because I have been either a participant or a referee for over 70 years.

Knowing that contention was likely, I set down ground rules that have worked in the past when I have used them with my children, grandchildren and other CASA kids. I simply tell them that if there are arguments, I will warn them and give them a short break to regain control, and if the argument is not resolved, we will go home.

The oldest girl said she knew how to get to the library and took responsibility for getting us there. The youngest said she could find McDonald's, so I had my two guides. We found the library after overshooting it the first time, but we were all very motivated to get there. We worked as a team and finally made it to the library parking lot.

I had two plastic Target bags in the car. One had a notebook and pencils for each child, the other had 10 pictures of the exhibits at the Children's Museum. I had the bags in the front, the girls were in the back, and when the car was parked, I gave each girl a bag. The youngest insisted on changing bags and began a medium-sized meltdown. The oldest was about to hand over her bag, but I stopped her and explained that each girl had a bag and was responsible for that bag. I casually mentioned that we were in a short break, and if that didn't work we would have to go back home. I used my calm, but very firm middle school voice. The girl managed to stop crying, she pulled herself together, and said she was okay. We got out of the car. I asked if the younger girl needed someone to hold her hand crossing the parking lot. The older sister took her hand. The younger sister told

me her sister was her guardian. The older told me that it was her job to be the protector.

When we sat down in the library, I let the girls choose a notebook and a box of pencils. Then we looked at the 10 pictures, and each girl voted on whether she wanted to see the exhibit or skip it. Eight exhibits got positive votes from both girls. We agreed these were the exhibits we would visit in April when we go to the museum.

I did my standard ice breakers: favorite color, favorite ice cream, favorite music, favorite TV show, etc. The girls got so into the activity that I switched it up and asked one sister to guess something about the other. They knew the other's favorite food and favorite activity.

After all this work, we needed a snack, so we returned to the car, and the younger girl started giving us the directions. She enlisted her sister's help when McDonald's wasn't where it was supposed to be. We had truly earned our ice cream when we arrived.

On the way home, I turned on the radio and let them choose the station. When we arrived back at the house, I had them wait, and we processed what happened during the visit. The youngest mentioned the meltdown and said it took her a while to recover. The girls estimated it took three minutes for her to recover. They were proud to be direction givers, they are eager to go to the museum, and they both repeated the special promise I made during the visit.

They told me that I am their CASA, and I will be with them until the case is dismissed.

## First Evening Support Group Meeting

By **Mary C. Blanchard**, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

On February 3, 2016 we held our first evening support group meeting. Deb Scott, Mary Blanchard, LuRue Troyer, and Cheryl Tomlinson were in attendance. This support group was formed for the CASAs who work or otherwise prefer not to attend during the day. Our meeting date is going to be flexible. Our goal is to hold our meetings when everyone who is at the meeting can attend. March looked very iffy, so we are holding our second meeting on Monday, February 29th from 7:00-9:00pm. The location is LuRue Troyer's house, 2300 Iris Drive in Sierra Vista.

Those of you who are working CASAs or CASAs who cannot make our daytime support group meeting, please join us. We exist to support each other when we encounter problems with our cases.

We got off to a roaring start because Cheryl's husband was worried that she might get lost, so he escorted her on his motorcycle. When I drove up, there was a huge motorcycle in front of LuRue's house. The driver roared off, and I felt like an actress in an action movie.

We shared experiences and problems for the whole 2 hours.



**Second Thursday of the Month**

**10:00am-12:00 noon**

Home of Lynn Vanderdasson

5776 E. Penny Lane

Hereford, AZ 85615

Come join us on

March 10th!

I shared the importance of making sure that advocating for the best interest of the child is the main focus of the court report. I had a complex case where two families wanted the child. I argued for the placement that I felt was in the best interest of the child. The CASA is the only person in the court who is solely charged with doing this. Keep this in mind when you write your report.

Cheryl, LuRue, Deb, and I invite you to join us.

From **Cheryl Tomlinson**

Cochise County CASA Volunteer

I really got so much from the meeting the other night. I appreciate Mary, LuRue and Deb being willing to meet in the evening. Thanks!

From **Mary Kay Holcombe**

Cochise County CASA Volunteer

I would like to thank Mary and LuRue for starting the support groups. It is wonderful to be able to come and talk about your case and know the group understands. Also, it is comforting to have the group make you feel like you are doing the right things. The support from them is wonderful if you are down. If you haven't been to a support group, try one out as it is **awesome**.

Evening Support Group

Mon, Feb 29th, 7:00pm

Home of LuRue Troyer

2300 Iris Drive

Sierra Vista

# CASA of the Month!

## March 2016

### LuRue Troyer

LuRue has been with CASA since 2003. In 2009 she took charge of the wonderful newsletter we see each month. LuRue is no longer assigned to any cases but don't be fooled, she stays as active and involved as possible! LuRue attends the necessary trainings every year and also participates in the monthly support group meetings. She's currently hosting the evening meetings in her home and also attends the morning meetings.

LuRue has been helping with the filing for a couple of years. But this year, in Abby's absence, LuRue has helped me tremendously with filing! Thanks to her I was able to keep the office going without having the big pile of paperwork staring back at me. And if being an active CASA wasn't enough, she also volunteers with the SV Police Department and is a world traveler!

LuRue, thank you so much for the great help you provide in the office. We truly appreciate you coming in to help out!



# CCCC, Inc

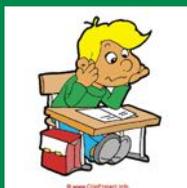
## Cochise County Council for CASA, Inc

is a nonprofit organization that raises funds to the unmet needs of abused neglected and abandoned children in the CASA of Cochise County Program. The primary focus is to ensure the educational progress of CASA children through tutoring and scholarships. In addition the council provides clothing, toys and personal items.

**If your CASA child/youth has an unmet need, consider the Cochise County Council for CASA to help!!**

**Call your CASA Coordinator at 432-7521 OR**

**Send an email to [Adodge@courts.az.gov](mailto:Adodge@courts.az.gov)**



## “Educational Issues of Foster Children”

**During the Support Group on February 29th, Deb Scott mentioned this excellent Webinar. To listen to it, go to this website**

<http://azsba.org/learning-center/webinar-archive/>

**click on the most recent year, and then choose the appropriate video. As of this writing, the webinar has not yet been posted, but it was possible to listen to the webinar of September 2015 while watching the PowerPoint presentation. You may have to check back a few times until it is posted.**

**The September video (What's next for AZMERIT scores?) is 52:57 minutes, so a short write-up for a video of this length submitted to the CASA office will count as one hour of training time.**

**Thanks, Deb, for bringing this resource to our attention!**

## CASA Kids Going to the Prom

By **Allison Hurtado**, *CASA Marketing & Community Outreach Specialist, AZ Supreme Court*

Teens across the state are preparing for prom in March and April and kids in the foster care system don't need to be the exception. There are several programs across the state that offer free or low-cost resources to help kids get to prom but specifically for kids in foster care, there's the Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation.

AFFCF will fund up to \$300 for prom expenses including hair, nails, dress or tux, shoes, dinner, even tickets to the dance. The only catch is the application process.

"The way we usually do business is we write a check to a vendor, mail it to the caregiver and the caregiver signs the child up for the activity," said Kris Jacober, executive director of AFFCF. "We don't have that luxury with prom because kids go all over for stuff."

For prom, the funds are reimbursed and not paid up front. Jacober said while that does present a problem in some cases, AFFCF will do everything they can to help kids get to prom.

The process is simple. The youth, a caregiver or CASA must apply for the award through the AFFCF website, [www.affcf.org](http://www.affcf.org). AFFCF confirms with the youth's caseworker that he/she is a ward of the state. Once that is confirmed the applicant will get an email letting them know the award has been granted. Then, the guardian, CASA or child must purchase what they need up front. Receipts can be submitted to AFFCF for reimbursement up to \$300.

Typically, AFFCF appreciates two or three weeks to process an application but Jacober said she has gotten calls from caseworkers who ask for help getting a child to prom the next day.

"She was the case worker so she was able to confirm right away, she collected donations from her office to pay for what they needed and we wrote her a check to reimburse those donations," she said.

It's important for those paying the upfront costs to hold off on purchases until an application is approved. If a dress is purchased before the application is approved the cost cannot be reimbursed.

The application should be filled out online. Jacober said if anyone has questions about the application or the process, the staff and volunteers at AFFCF are ready to answer calls and take questions.

"We try to be customer-friendly around here," Jacober said. "The more kids that get to go to prom, the happier we are."

For more information on grants from AFFCF, visit [www.affcf.org](http://www.affcf.org) or call 602-252-9445.

## Trauma

By **Allison Hurtado**, *CASA Marketing & Community Outreach Specialist, AZ Supreme Court*

Abuse, neglect and being torn from everything familiar are all traumatizing events in the life of a foster child but caring, understanding adults working within the system can keep those children from being re-traumatized along the way.

This has been a major focus in recent years for the courts in Pima County. They're working together to become more trauma-responsive to everyone who steps through their doors.

"We're not only aware that most of our families have been through trauma but we try to act in such a way that they are not re-traumatized," said Chris Swenson-Smith, division director in Pima County. "It's learning how the things that are happening right now in a child's life will affect them and looking for ways to mitigate it and reduce it and avoid trauma and protecting themselves. It's also understanding parents probably have a trauma history too and that's why they're acting the way they do."

There are simple ways to be more trauma-responsive, Swenson-Smith said. It's mostly good customer service.

"All the things that research says can trigger people with trauma histories we try to avoid," Swenson-Smith said. "You try to make good eye contact, smile, treat everyone with respect and always tell them what's happening. Not doing things like isolating people, not using language they don't understand."

Many people who've been through trauma are instinctively afraid of authority figures, Swenson-Smith said, so going to court can be a

scary situation. They've tried to help with extra training for staff and even careful decorating in the courtrooms to make the environment as comfortable as possible. Staff have also created a one-page to-do list called "initial services" for parents to do in the first 40 to 60 days to help simplify the court process. Those small changes can also be useful for CASAs to keep in mind as they are trying to get to know a child that has been through trauma.

"Their very first instinct is to make themselves safe," Swenson-Smith said. "Their brain switches into safety mode. When you trigger someone by yelling at them or being disrespectful or a cop walks into the room, they go to that place in their brain. It's not productive to scare someone with a trauma history because it will have the opposite effect. That's a great thing for advocates to know, especially about kids. You want to demonstrate that you are a safe person by being respectful, talking kindly. There's no sense in explaining your role if you scare the child right off the bat."

CASA advocates should also be aware that vicarious trauma exists. As volunteers read court cases they need to take time to check their own emotions and take care of themselves. CASA of Pima County was chosen to present two workshops on trauma at the 2016 National CASA Conference.

For more information on the effects of trauma visit the National Child Traumatic Stress Network website <http://www.nctsn.org/> or the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges website <http://www.ncjfcj.org/>.

# Preventing Mental Illness, Crime, & Homelessness Among Children in Foster Care and Adoption

A Guide for Attorneys, Judges, Therapists and Child Welfare Workers

By James Kenny, PhD, and Lori Groves, MMFT

## Bonding is a Critical Issue

When two items are attached with crazy glue, they are bonded. Pulling them apart is very difficult. Separation is possible but at some considerable cost. Parts of both sides may be ripped apart. The result is ugly.

Bonding between humans shares this quality. Bonds are tight and they are broken at the considerable risk of harming both sides. Bonding is a stronger term than attachment. Much more than attachment, bonding has a tenacious sticking quality. One breaks or violates a bond at a high price. The severance of a bond is more critical to the child's well-being than many have allowed.

Relationships are essential to the human condition. We need some degree of trust and intimacy with our fellows. Failure to develop intimate ties deprives us of personal growth and the capacity to perceive the needs of others as our own. No one is self-sufficient. We all need one another. Bonding is vital for survival and our sense of self.

Excerpt from an article found online regarding the importance of bonding

Our connection to other humans, especially to our parents and siblings, shapes our development. Our self-image is fashioned in good part by the way that we imagine we are perceived. Children internalize and view themselves in accord with how they are treated.

Children depend on adults for nurture and survival. Children who have suffered significant loss may see no safe options. To a child, love and bonding mean safety. They have no lasting experience with separation. Each loss becomes global and forever, a dire prophecy of what will happen in the future. The child may decide: "It hurts to count on others. No one will ever love me. I will never again let myself get this close to anyone."

Early and repeated loss of a bonded and loved parent may cause a child to pull back, to guard against any future attachments. A frightful dilemma is created. While all love may end in the tragedy of loss, as C. S. Lewis said so well, not to love is the very definition of hell. The child who resists significant relationships (bonding) faces the same bleak choices.

Children are too often left to drift in foster care. This poses a nearly impossible dilemma for foster parents. Foster care is intended by law to be temporary. Unfortunately, in the real world, it is not. Children and their foster parents may become bonded over the time spent living together. Such relationships are often carelessly interrupted and the child suffers serious harm from the loss of family and friends.

Continued on next page~

## Bonding is a Critical Issue (Continued)

The rights of the child are paramount, according to the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act. ASFA shifted the legal emphasis from the absolute right of birth parents to the child's own need and right for safety and a secure home. Bonding and permanence are legally recognized as issues critical to a child's development.

Permanence is the outward expression of bonding. Every child has the right to a permanent home. Bonding and permanence are the reverse side of one another. Bonding is psychological. Permanence is the necessary milieu or the objective reality in which bonding may take place.

Much has been written about attachment disorders and their treatment. This book is different. First, objective definitions of attachment and bonding are provided. Second, evidence-based practices are suggested to help foster parents, therapists, attorneys, and judges find a permanent home for every child.

Bonding and permanence are critical issues. Clear and evidentiary definitions for key terms are provided, along with factual data to predict outcomes. When does an attachment pass the tipping point and develop into a bond, a relationship so strong that its rupture tears a hole in the lives of the persons involved? What do the statistics show about the immediate and later-life effects in increasing the likelihood of mental illness, crime, homelessness, and poverty?

How can foster parents help? What is the role for caseworkers and psychologists?

How can the case for bonding and permanence be presented in court? Federal laws and state welfare policies are provided, together with appellate court decisions that define and decide in favor of bonding in disputed adoptions.

We, the authors, are grateful for the attorneys who have worked extensively with foster children and been our advisors as we prepared this book. Thank you, Peter Kenny and Mark Bontrager. We thank my grandson, Patrick Kenny, for his detailed editing, and my son, Bob, for his thorough and detailed formatting.

We have nine adopted children between our two families, and have had many more foster children. We appreciate the down-to-earth experience so lacking in sterile manuscripts, sometimes teaching us more than we wanted to know. We are grateful to them all for the wisdom and common sense they forced on us. Thanks to all of you. You made us grow up.

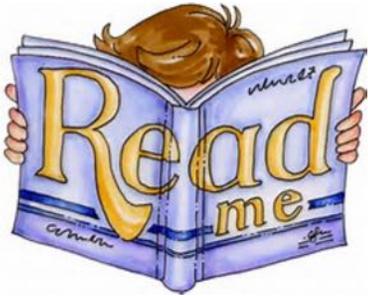
Finally, we thank our spouses.

To Mary, my wife and lifetime partner in raising our children, for her constant wisdom and practicality, and for her careful editing of this book.

To Ken, my husband and best friend, for his constant encouragement, patience, and support as I pursue my dreams.

James Kenny and Lori Groves

March 2016						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Peanut Butter Lovers' Day!	2 Please see below 	3 <u>Deb</u> : Court Report due for CS.	4 National Salesperson Day!	5
6 Dentist's Day!	7	8 <u>Morrisa B.</u> 	9 Panic Day!	10	11	12 <u>Cheryl T.</u> 
13	14 National Pi Day!	15 Incredible Kid Day!	16	17 St. Patrick's Day 	18	19 National Quilting Day!
20	21 <u>Zanetta B.</u> 	22	23	24	25 Pecan Day!	26
27 	28	29	30 Take a Walk in the Park Day!	31 Bunsen Burner Day!	 <u>3/2/16</u> <u>Bekki</u> : Court Report due for EP <u>Lynn</u> : Court Report due for KW <u>Julia</u> : Court Report due for EC <u>Melissa</u> : Court Report due for HC/RC	



# From the Beyond the Basics Training Manual

FROM THE BASICS

From the CASA of Arizona Program - Getting Started training manual.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### THE PROBLEM

- About 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner. This translates into over 65 million victims at any given time in the United States.
  - *Source: Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control*
  - *2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*
- The majority of victims of rape knew their attacker, and over 50% of female rape victims were attacked by a current or former intimate partner.
  - *Source: Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control*
  - *2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*
- Assaults by siblings peaks during the middle childhood years (ages 6 to 9), although there is no age trend for witnessing family violence; all age groups are exposed at a narrow range of 6

to 11%.

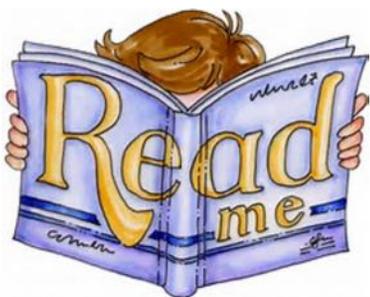
- *Source: U.S. Department of Justice National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, October, 2009*
- Over 56% of intimate partner violence was physical violence for female victims, and over 92% was physical violence for male victims. Approximately half of all U.S. citizens, both male and female, report experiencing psychological aggression by an intimate partner.
  - *Source: Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control*
  - *2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*

### DEFINITION

Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks and economic coercion that adults or adolescents use to control their current or former intimate partners (e.g., spouses, girlfriends/boyfriends, lovers, etc.).

Domestic violence ranges from threats of violence to hitting to severe beating, rape, and even murder. Victims and perpetrators are from all age, racial, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, educational, occupational, geographic, and religious groups. Abuse by men against

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## From the Beyond the Basics Training Manual (Continued)

FROM THE BASICS

women is by far the most common form, but domestic violence does occur in same-sex relationships, and some women do abuse men.

### CAUSES

Domestic violence stems from one person's need to dominate and control another. Domestic violence is not caused by illness, genetics, gender, alcohol or other drugs, anger, stress, the victim's behavior, or relationship problems. However, such factors may play a role in the complex web of factors that result in domestic violence.

Domestic violence is learned behavior; it is a choice.

- It is learned through observation, experience, and reinforcement (perpetrators perceive that it works).
- It is learned in the family, in society, and in the media.

### LEGAL SYSTEM RESPONSE

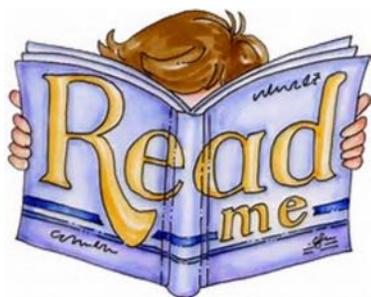
The legal system can respond to domestic violence as a

violation of criminal and/or civil law. If the violence has risen to the level of assault, it can be prosecuted criminally. While definitions and procedures differ from one state to another, physical assault is illegal in all states. Law enforcement can press charges in criminal court with the victim as a witness. Victims may also secure a restraining/protective order and, in rare instances, may bring a civil lawsuit.

Whether a case proceeds in civil court or criminal court is dependent on a number of factors, many of which are beyond the victim's control. Availability and willingness of court personnel to act in domestic violence cases vary widely. Unless judges and attorneys, including prosecutors, have been educated about the dynamics of domestic violence, protective laws are inconsistently enforced. The repeated pattern of the abused spouse bringing charges and subsequently dropping them often discourages law enforcement personnel from giving these cases their immediate attention. Thus the victim is re-victimized.

The other setting in which the legal system and domestic violence may intersect is a court hearing regarding allegations of child abuse and/or neglect. As a CASA volunteer, you should be aware that a determination of domestic violence within the child's home will significantly influence placement decisions and what is expected of the non-abusing parent to retain/regain custody. The standard risk

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assessment conducted by child welfare agencies to evaluate whether a child needs to be removed from his/her home generally includes domestic violence as a factor that negatively relates to the child's safety at home. A child found to be living in a violent home is more likely to be removed. A child abuse or neglect case also may be substantiated against the battered parent for "failure to protect" the child because the victim did not leave the batterer, even if the victim lacked the resources to do so or it was not safe to do so.

### BARRIERS TO LEAVING A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

For people who have not experienced domestic violence, it is hard to understand why the victim stays—or returns again and again to reenter the cycle of violence. The primary reason given by victims for staying with their abusers is fear of increased and continued violence and the lack of available options to be safe with their children.

*This fear is real!* Domestic violence usually escalates when victims leave their relationships; the majority of

victims killed in a domestic violence situation are murdered when they are leaving or have left the relationship. The escalation can also take the form of threats to commit suicide by the perpetrator, stalking, and threats to harm or directly harming family pets or other family members. Remember that outside support may be non-existent; the abuser frequently manipulates the victim to end all other relationships and live in isolation.

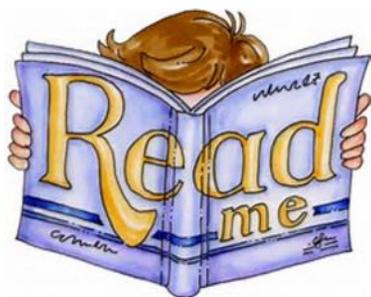
Other barriers to leaving include:

- Lack of employment and legal assistance.
- Immobilization by psychological or physical trauma.
- Cultural, religious, and/or family values.
- Hope or belief in the perpetrator's promises to change.
- Others (police, friends, family, counselors, etc.) convincing the victim that the violence is her fault and that she could stop the abuse by simply complying with her abuser's demands.

Leaving a violent relationship is often a process that takes place over time as the victim gains access to all the resources she needs. The victim may leave temporarily many times before making a final separation.

*Sources: Domestic Violence: A National Curriculum for Children's Protective Services, 1996 and University of Michigan, SAPAC, 2013*

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## From the Beyond the Basics Training Manual (Continued)

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### IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Lenore Walker, author of *The Battered Woman*, describes the world of children who grow up in violent homes:

*Children who live in battering relationships experience the most insidious form of child abuse. Whether or not they are physically abused by either parent is less important than the psychological scars they bear from watching their fathers beat their mothers. They learn to become part of a dishonest conspiracy of silence. They learn to lie to prevent inappropriate behavior, and they learn to suspend fulfillment of their needs rather than risk another confrontation. They expend a lot of energy avoiding problems. They live in a world of make-believe.*

Children in families where there is domestic violence are at great risk of becoming victims of abuse or neglect themselves. Studies indicate this group is up to 60% more likely to experience child abuse than children in nonviolent homes are. Over half of children in families where the mother is battered are also abused. In some cases, children may try to intervene and protect their mothers, getting caught in the middle of the violence. In

most cases, however, children are also targets of the violence.

At least 75% of children whose mothers are battered witness the violence. In some cases, the batterer deliberately arranges for the child to witness it. The effect on children's development can be just as severe for those who witness abuse as for those who are abused. Witnessing violence at home is even more harmful than witnessing a fight or shooting in a violent neighborhood. It has the most negative impact when the victim or perpetrator is the child's parent or caregiver. *Source: Safe Horizon, 2013*

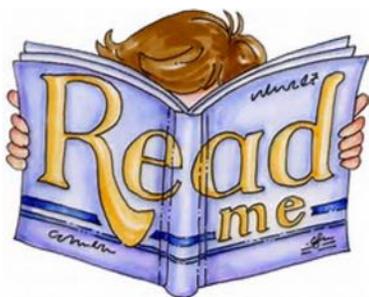
### What A CASA Volunteer Can Do

As a CASA volunteer, it is important for you to be aware of the possibility that domestic violence exists in the families you encounter.

**Be both knowledgeable and concerned about domestic violence.**

Children from violent homes are at a higher risk for abuse than other children. According to *A Nation's Shame*, a report compiled by the

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## From the Beyond the Basics Training Manual (Continued)

FROM THE BASICS

U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect,  
“Domestic violence is the single, major precursor to child  
abuse and neglect fatalities in the U.S.”

### Seek resources for children from violent homes.

Children need:

- Positive role models and supportive environments that will help them develop social skills and address feelings about the violence in a constructive manner.
- Help adopting alternative, nonviolent ways to address and resolve conflict (through specialized counseling programs, therapy, domestic violence victim support groups, youth mediation training, and relationships with supportive mentors).

### Recommend help for parents.

- Try to ensure that domestic violence victims are

treated fairly by the legal system and not further blamed in  
child abuse/neglect proceedings.

- Advocate in your community for things like housing, emergency shelters, legal procedures, and court advocates that increase the safety of mothers and children and support the autonomy of the adult victim.
- Encourage parenting classes for battered parents focused on empowering them to become more effective parents and teaching them how to help children cope with the consequences of witnessing domestic violence.
- Advocate for treatment programs for batterers followed by parenting classes focused on how to parent in a non-coercive, nonintrusive manner.

Caitlin is welcomed at the Support Group meeting at the home of Lynn Vanderdasson on February 11th.

