



## CASA Program Newsletter Spring 2014



Aloha!

The year has only just begun and we have lots of exciting things in store over the next few months! Coming up we have ETO Refresher Week from February 10th-16th where you'll be able to have a one-on-one meeting with your CASA Program Social Worker to help you with step-by-step support in using the ETO System. We also have our CASA Spring Picnic coming up on February 22nd, our next round of CASA Program Evaluations in February & March, our upcoming training class for new CASA's in March, our Annual CASA Conference in April and we're participating in P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.'s 3rd Annual Kick Child Abuse Out of Hawaii Kickball Tournament on Saturday, April 5th! Whew, and that's only the next three months!

If you receive a CASA Program Evaluation from me by email, please fill it out and complete it as quickly as possible! We're coming to the end of our first year of using these evaluation forms, and have convened a CASA Program Improvement Committee to go through all of your comments and work towards making our CASA Program as supportive as possible! To do this, we need your input! All of the evaluations are seen by me alone, and I compile them into a larger, completely anonymous report, which is then given to the CASA Program and Improvement Committee to use to improve the Program. Please be as honest as possible in your evaluations, as that's the best feedback. Let us know what you love and what you think could be better, and we'll work to continuously build a CASA Program that all of you can be proud of!

If you'd like to be part of the CASA Improvement Committee, please contact me! All CASA's are welcome to join the committee!

See you at our CASA Spring Picnic on Saturday, February 22nd!

*Tara A. Buckley, MSW, LSW*  
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**Welcoming new CASAs! Swearing-in ceremony with Honorable Judge Bode Uale on November 20, 2013.**

### CASA Picnic!!!

**Please join us on Saturday, February 22nd for a fun-filled day of food and good company at Ala Moana Beach Park!**

**Meet the Friends of CASA Hawaii Board of Directors, spend time with your families and other CASA's, and enjoy a day in the sun!**

**We'll provide the meat to grill, along with plates, napkins and utensils...you bring a side or a dessert to share!**

**Please RSVP to Shari Yamashiro by Monday, February 17th at 954-8121 or at [shari.e.yamashiro@courts.hawaii.gov](mailto:shari.e.yamashiro@courts.hawaii.gov).**

**See you there!!!**

## CASA Program Staff

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## Check Out Our New CASA Closet!

The CASA Closet first began with generous donations from the Children's Justice Center and continues to be filled by all of your kind and thoughtful donations. The "closet" contains slippers, small clothing items, small toys, accessories, school supplies and books, which are available to the children that you work with.

Below is a letter from CASA Social Worker, Michele Shaner, highlighting some recent CASA Closet stories!

*I want to thank you and others for items in the CASA Closet. The CASA Closet brightened the lives of three girls recently assigned to the CASA Program. Their CASA took a couple of pairs of rubber slippers for each girl along with some hair accessory items for her first visit with them. The three were thankful for the slippers, initially thinking they could only have one pair. When the CASA asked if they needed more than one pair, they said "yes" and we happy to have more. One was doing some self-harming behaviors and the CASA gave them composition books with pens to journal their feelings. Another was very happy to receive a mirror and brush set.*

*I also appreciated hearing you share about the 17-year-old who wanted a book from the CASA Closet to start a library at the shelter where he was placed, and then asked for a stuffed animal for his 1-year-old nephew who he just met at court and who had a Family Court case separate from his.*

*All of the children were encouraged by the items and had an enjoyable moment when receiving them!*

*Thank you, Michele*

### **Advocacy Resources National CASA**

[http://  
www.casaforchildren.org/  
site/c.mtJSJ7MPIsE/  
b.5301325/k.B550/  
Advocacy\\_Resources.htm](http://www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtJSJ7MPIsE/b.5301325/k.B550/Advocacy_Resources.htm)

### **Other Important Phone Numbers**

#### **CASA After-Hours Hotline**

285-4186

#### **DHS Reporting Hotline**

832-5300

#### **ETO Help Line & Support**

(866) 732-3560, ext. 2

support@socialsolutions.com

## Letter from a Child Victim to a Judge

### Therapist's Notes:

*The below letter was written by a 16-year-old victim of sexual abuse. Her perpetrator/step-father will not be prosecuted for his crimes. She is living with her mother, who is now aware of the abuse, but her mother does not think it's a big deal. Her mother wants to be with the perpetrator but cannot due to CWS involvement. If you met this client you would never know that anything is wrong in her life. She is a good student, very involved in school activities, polite, well-behaved and she does not get into trouble. On the outside everything looks good. Because she's doing "so well," visitation with the perpetrator was discussed. She declined. Her mother doesn't understand what the problem is because her daughter is doing "so well." The client wanted to write a letter to the judge to let him/her know how she felt about the lack of prosecution. She expressed how she truly felt on the inside via this letter.*

*This is a good lesson to all service providers who work with sexually abused children. Never assume that a child is "okay" or "doing well" based on how he/she presents. Also, please be aware that sometimes, the reaction of the non-offending parent is just as damaging to the victim as the actual act of sexual abuse.*

### Youth's Letter to the Judge:

Your Honor,

*For a little over a year now, I have been going through emotional struggles. This situation, and what has happened to me, has affected everything in my daily life. It has made things much harder. It's harder to concentrate and focus no matter how hard I try. Getting good grades in school has been harder for me, and although school is always challenging, it's even more challenging now. I push myself academically and constantly try to distract myself by participating in extracurricular activities, making new friends and such. However, I find myself having hardship in making and maintaining friendships, and communicating has been difficult.*

*I have many emotions that aren't always the best emotions to be feeling. I'm a very angry person, and sometimes it drives me to tears. Never have I ever hated anyone so much. I feel alone a lot of the time and it sucks because I can't really do anything about it. Oftentimes I get nightmares that don't leave me alone for weeks, and sometimes even months at a time. I feel so lonely and like no one understands me. I feel lost and confused.*

*It's not right what happened to me, nor will it ever be right. Although it may seem like it was nothing "too serious," explain to me why I am still going to therapy and why I'm still struggling. My situation is like a paper cut or a splinter; it's really small and may even be unnoticeable, but it's still very, very painful. I feel the same pain as another individual would in a more "serious" situation. I am not comfortable socializing with other people, I am very defensive and try to protect myself by being offensive, and sometimes my stomach begins to feel like a bottomless pit.*

*My mood switches and I'm very irritable and paranoid, and it affects my relationships with my most loved ones. I know that this isn't the person I'm supposed to be, and I feel horrible when I sever my relationship with my little brother because I am fun to be with one minute and then the next I'm yelling and screaming at him. I'm not saying I was perfect and overly, necessarily happy before everything happened to me, but I was much better than this.*

### The Take-Away:

Please don't ever assume that a child is okay simply based on their behavior, grades in school, or anything else that looks "normal" to you. Just because a child may say they are okay, or pretend to be, doesn't mean that they are.

Rely on the experts, including counselors and therapists for the child, who will be able to tell you how the child is doing emotionally.

Experts can also explain how children tend to act in these situations, including that many look okay on the outside, and that this is common, but does not mean that the child is doing fine.

Pay attention to how the non-offending parent is reacting to the sexual abuse. Are they supportive of the child or the perpetrator? Do they minimize the abuse? Are they still in a relationship with the perpetrator?

## CASA Practice Pointers Responses to Your CASA Program Evaluations

### **Infrequency of Court Hearings**

The general rule is that Periodic Review Hearings are held once every 6 months, as required by state and federal laws. This schedule reasonably serves judicial economy considering the number of cases that need to be heard and the number of courtrooms available to hear cases.

However, this does not mean a case cannot be reviewed more frequently by the courts. For more complicated cases needing closer court oversight, or cases where issues linger and continue to adversely affect the child's best interest, the court has the discretion to order all parties to return sooner than the 6 month period. In extreme cases, the court has ordered everyone to return monthly, and even more often, until the presenting issue was resolved.

Any party, including the CASA, **CAN** request that Review Hearings happen sooner than the normal course. To request a shorter return date or more frequent hearings, we must provide the court with specific reasons and impress upon the court why it is in the best interest of the child(ren) to come back sooner. Placing a child in a stable and permanent home is good example. In cases where we have young children in an emergency shelter for an extended period of time, and failed attempts to get DHS to place the child in either a family or stable home, we would argue to the court the need to come back sooner to make sure this issue is addressed.

Another example, would be to address delayed services for the child. The CASA can request for shorter return hearings when we have exhausted our efforts with DHS to get services for a child. The key in both these examples, and how it should be applied in your cases, is a showing of our fruitless efforts in trying to resolve the issues with the DHS. Ultimately, the court will then determine whether it is necessary to come back sooner. Aside from frequent review hearings, the CASA can also file a motion to come to court sooner to address a significant issue in between the review hearings. The CASA staff can advise you in determining whether the situation warrants a motion for immediate review should be filed.

### **Working with DHS Social Workers**

*We know that collaborating with your DHS Social Worker isn't always easy, so here are some tips:*

Put something positive in the DHS section of your court reports about the work that your DHS Social Worker is doing. You should always be able to find something!

Send your DHS Social Worker a thank you note if they help you out in some way, or if they do something great for one of the families that you're working with. The appreciation WILL be noticed and remembered!

Build rapport with your DHS Social Worker while you're waiting for court hearings. Ask them how they're doing, how you can help them to reach your common goals, and even ask them to go to lunch or have coffee if you have time!

Ask your Social Worker what the best way to contact them is, and what kind of information they need/want you to leave when you call or email them. Also ask for their assistant's name and contact information, and find out what they would prefer that you call the assistant for. Usually this would be for payment issues with resource caregivers, clothing allowances, bus passes for parents, paperwork requests, etc.

*You CAN have a great relationship with your DHS Social Worker! Just remember that their caseloads and workloads are incredibly high, and remember that it takes some time for them to get back to you and get things done. This doesn't mean that they aren't doing their jobs!*

## Upcoming Events

### February

2/10/14-2/16/14: ETO Refresher Week

2/22/14: CASA Spring Picnic

### March

CASA Training (please refer friends and family!)

Workshop: "Engaging Children & Families: Forensic Interviewing and Practice"

### April

4/4/14: Annual CASA Conference: "Effective Advocacy for Older Youth in Foster Care"

4/5/14: P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc. Kickball Tournament

### May

Workshop: "Drug Trends in Hawaii: Substance Abuse and it's Effects on the Family System. Best Practices for CASA Advocates for Case Planning and Reunification."

### June

CASA Training (please refer friends and family!)

## ETO Refresher Week

The CASA Program will be having an ETO Refresher Week for all CASA's, from February 10th to February 16th. Your CASA Program Social Workers will be available to come out and meet with you one-on-one and help you with any topics regarding ETO, including preparing well-being assessments, recording efforts and utilizing the system to prep court reports! Please call your CASA Social Worker to set up an appointment!

## ETO Help Line & Support Services

Now you can contact ETO Social Solutions directly for help with ETO! They are available 3am-3pm HST, Monday through Thursday, and 3am-1pm on Fridays.

### **Here's how to reach them:**

Phone: (866) 732-3560, ext. 2

Email: [support@socialsolutions.com](mailto:support@socialsolutions.com)

Through the "Support" link in the bottom right corner of ETO.

Through "Chat" from 4am-12pm, Monday through Friday!

Honorable Judge R. Mark Browning stopped by our Friends of CASA Hawaii Board Meeting on January 8th to present Ken Bailey and Sue Matthews with Certificates of Appreciation and lei for all that they've done as creators and founding board members! We can't thank the two of you enough for your dedication and service to the CASA Program and the children it serves.

**You are already greatly missed!**

