

SESSION 4 AMARILLO CASE

COURT REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS WORKSHEET

In this activity, you will be making recommendations for Maria Amarillo that will go in the court report. Remember, recommendations to the court are written to reflect the child's best interests and are the result of the CASA/GAL volunteer's work. The judge will decide whether or not to order the recommendations, so it is important to write recommendations that are concise, clear and backed by evidence that you have collected and reviewed.

Ideally, your facilitator will provide you with a template to use for this activity that comes from the local court jurisdiction in which the children and families you will serve, reside. If there is not a template available, the last page of this document can be used to write your recommendations.

Questions to Consider

Before writing the recommendations for Maria Amarillo, consider some of the challenges that Maria is currently facing:

- Maria is an older youth without legal permanency and in danger of “aging” out of foster care without permanency. If she can't achieve legal permanency, what other supports are available to her to guide her transition to adulthood?
- If Maria does age out of foster care, what plans are in place to ensure that she is learning independent living skills needed to succeed in adulthood?
- Maria has a decent academic record and seems to enjoy school. But what will her educational future be after leaving high school? What plans are in place to help her?
- There appears to be racial/religious insensitivity and bias on the part of the foster parent and the social worker. How will this be addressed?
- Due to Maria's current immigration status her options for staying in the United States are limited. What should be done?
- The separation of the sibling group and what it might mean for both Maria and her younger siblings.
- Were the parental rights of Maria's parents severed fairly? What is Maria's current relationship with her parents? Even though their rights were terminated, Maria still has contact. How might this impact her future?

ASSIGNMENT

Make your recommendations for Maria Amarillo using either the template provided to you by your facilitator or the one provided below. NOTE: There is no limit to the number of recommendations you make; however, make sure they meet the following criteria:

- 1) Written clearly and concisely
- 2) Child focused
- 3) Includes concrete outcome measures
- 4) Covers all of the needs of the child/youth (e.g., safety, permanency and well-being)
- 5) Written in such a way so as not to set up Maria's parents (or any other party to the case) for failure
- 6) Tied back to evidence for their own needs based on the notes, interviews, etc.

Questions to Consider

Once you have written the recommendations check for the following:

- Did Maria's expressed desires impact the recommendations you made to the court?
- How did the social worker's opinion affect the way you viewed and acted on this case?
- Did you address the religious aspects of this case— specifically, conflict between the child's home religion and the religious beliefs/practices of the foster family? What resources (local or otherwise) might you turn to in order to find a suitable religious outlet for Maria?
- When it comes to the hierarchy of placement/permanence options, where do nonrelative placements fall?
- How did you handle cultural issues raised in this case and did you consider whether this case might be transferable to a case not involving immigration and potential cross-border placement?
- How did you respond to a youth, like Maria, who has told you about her need for birth control medication?

WELLBEING

Did you cover all the relevant well-being areas for Maria?

- Education – high school graduation and post high-school education opportunities
- Independent Living Skills
- Physical, mental and behavioral health (including pregnancy and STD prevention)
- Immigration Status
- Employment preparation (e.g., volunteer or part-time job)
- “Normalized” teenage activities

SAMPLE SUMMARY

Maria, Joanna, and Graciela have been in CPS custody for three years. During these 3 years, Maria has lived in 7 different placements, Joanna 4 different placements, and Graciela in 3 different placements. All three girls are currently placed in the same foster home; however, that has not always been the case. Joanna and Graciela have stated that they enjoy living with their current foster parents. Maria has expressed that while she enjoys living in the same placement with her sisters, she is not happy with her current foster parents. Maria believes her foster parents are insensitive to her and her sister's religious beliefs and they force the girls to attend a church that is of a different denomination than the Catholic one they are used to attending. Maria also does not get along very well with her foster parent's daughter.

Based on the information gathered to date, I, the CASA/GAL volunteer, have some concerns regarding the girls' placement as they are still living in a foster home and not a permanent placement. The girls have been in foster care for about 3 years now with multiple moves and their parents' parental rights have been terminated. Foster care is supposed to be a temporary solution for these children. They need safety and permanency in their lives. These children are free to be adopted; however, measures do not seem to be in place to achieve this type of permanency.

Maria is facing several challenges as she is fast approaching adulthood. Maria does not currently have legal permanency in this country. She is in danger of "aging" out of foster care without legal permanency and risks being deported once she exits foster care. Maria has not acquired the skills she needs to appropriately transition from foster care to adulthood. While Maria enjoys school and has a decent academic record, without legal permanency she will not qualify for the funds needed to attend a higher learning institution. Maria is still currently in contact with her parents even though their rights have been terminated. Maria does not want anyone to know about this because she fears that she will not be allowed to continue talking to them.

The foster parents have expressed an interest in adopting the girls but have reservations about adopting Maria as she and their daughter do not get along. Maria has an Aunt who has expressed an interest in having Maria come to live with her so she can help with her cousins. The Aunt lives in El Salvador and has stated that there are not many opportunities for Maria to be a successful adult. Maria is not interested in moving to El Salvador to live with her Aunt. She has expressed an interest in being placed with kinship relatives; however, CPS has deemed this as an inappropriate placement. The family does not have the resources available to take care of these girls, they are an undocumented family and they already have several other family members living in the house.

I, the CASA/GAL volunteer have other concerns regarding the foster parents as it does not appear that they are being sensitive to the girls' cultural and religious beliefs. There appears to be racial and religious insensitivity and bias on the part of the foster parent and the social worker, as the girls are not living in a placement that allows them the freedom to embrace their cultural and religious beliefs.

CASA/GAL Volunteer Report to the Court

HEARING DATE:

CASE NUMBER:

CHILD/REN'S NAMES:

DOB:

PERSON'S INTERVIEWED

RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD

ATTEMPTED INTERVIEWS

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

PLACEMENT HISTORY

DATE:

TYPE:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SUMMARY

See above – this section has already been written for you

PERMANANCY PLAN:

RECOMMENDATIONS (please continue to the next page for additional space as needed)