

REPORT FORMAT

*Use all bold headings, do not retype the instructions in italics.
Use 12 pt. font throughout*

Guardian ad Litem Report to the Court _____ Hearing

(choose Merits, Judicial Review, Permanency Planning, Termination of Parental Rights, etc.)

HEARING DATE: *(make sure the date is for the current hearing)*

GUARDIAN AD LITEM: *(your name)*

DOCKET NUMBER: *(example: 02-DR-40-1234)*

IN THE INTEREST OF: *(name EVERY child in the case)*

DATE OF BIRTH:

Persons Interviewed: *with relationship to child – example: Louise Jones – maternal grandmother. Start with the children. Do not include your CASA supervisor, attorneys, or other CASA staff.*

You MUST interview:

All parties to the case:

- *each child - must visit/interview at least once a month (even infants/teens)*
- *parents – must interview, must visit home*

Additional witnesses who can provide you with relevant information on the children and their family (this list is a guide only – there may be additional people that it will be necessary to contact):

- *foster parents – must interview, must visit home. Do not name foster parents anywhere in this report, simply refer to them as “foster parents”.*
- *child’s teachers/guidance counselors/daycare staff if child attends*
- *physicians/nurses – must contact if child examined/treated concerning alleged abuse/neglect or for any other medical concerns*
- *psychologists/counselors if child is being treated*
- *police officers – as necessary*
- *witnesses to any incident of alleged abuse/neglect*
- *DSS caseworkers – must maintain regular contact*
- *potential custodians – must interview, must visit home*
- *relatives/friends/employers/religious advisors – on as necessary basis*

Interviews Attempted/Number of attempts: *include this category only if there are relevant witnesses you have tried to contact unsuccessfully – example: Sam Snead – paternal grandfather – 7 attempts*

Documents Reviewed: *include police incident reports, school records, medical records, psychological evaluations, etc. DO NOT include the Summons & Complaint, hearing notices, notes taken by CASA staff.*

Documents Requested, not received: *if applicable – list documents and the dates you requested them – example: Richland Memorial Hospital medical records for Baby Girl Jones – requested June 2, 2003*

Allegations

*Quote or paraphrase the **entire** DSS allegations contained in Complaint*

Prior DSS Involvement

*Information about **all** previous DSS involvement with the child and family (include treatment case, court case, or involvement in any other county or state) including the dates, findings, treatment services offered, significant orders or information (example: no corporal punishment, custody), and current status (open or date closed).*

Prior Court Orders, Treatment Plans, and Compliance

Describe progress in this case or any others (even if closed), including child support and visitation. It is not necessary to recite all of the provisions of a prior order verbatim; briefly state the key parts of any previous orders (example: paternity test ordered for George Jones; no corporal punishment). Unless there has been a prior case, you will most likely have only the Probable Cause Hearing order. (If the case is a Removal or Intervention, there will not be an order prior to the Merits Hearing.)

Case Facts

A concise summary of pertinent information discovered from your investigation – not your opinion, and not a journal or log of your activity. Case facts should pertain to one of the following:

- *the allegations in the complaint – was there abuse or neglect*
 - *information regarding the incident, both indisputable facts (example: child had bruises) and disputable facts (example: child says he got bruises from mom hitting him; mom says child fell; doctor says injuries not consistent with a fall).*
- *the general situation and history such as the child's family and household - who lives there, what is their relationship, and employment.*
- *information regarding each child's home, school, and medical history (if relevant and applicable).*
- *information on non-custodial parents and potential caregivers – who they are, where they live and work, along with their ability to understand the child's situation and needs and provide a safe environment for the child, etc.*
- *the current situation – is the family cooperative, remorseful, are they receiving treatment services, have home studies been completed, etc.*

Do not include your own actions unless they are clearly relevant and necessary – the facts are NOT what YOU did, but what you found out.

Children

Information the Judge needs to know about each child named in the case. You must visit each child in your case at least once per month. Include dates of contact since the last hearing, special needs to be addressed, the child's wishes (if the child is able to articulate them), the child's progress at school, in counseling, at the current placement, and potential resources for placement if the child is not returned home. Use the following heading for each child's paragraph:

Johnny Doe (contacts: 8/02/02, 8/29/02)

Do not state in your report or say that the child is manipulative or a liar. If you feel that the child has not been honest or has given contradictory information, your CASA Supervisor will help you word your report to present the information in an objective manner. Remember, you are advocating for the best interest of your child.

Conclusion

This is based upon the factual information you learned during your investigation (example: Betty Jones was beaten with a belt by her mother, causing numerous welts and bruises on her arms and legs. The conclusion forms the basis for your recommendations. If you believe no abuse or neglect occurred based on your investigation and the factual information you compiled, your CASA Supervisor will assist you with the appropriate wording to communicate your belief. The conclusion is the only place to articulate your opinion.

Recommendations

The Facts and Conclusion should support your recommendations. List the needs of each child and parent/caretaker, including custody, placement, psychological and emotional needs, health care issues, education, safety issues, visitation, and child support. You may also suggest a time frame as to when the next hearing should be held. Remember that each recommendation must relate to an issue in the case. Please consult with your CASA Supervisor and CASA attorney if you have questions about what you think can or cannot be recommended. Do not base your recommendations on what DSS says can or cannot be done. Do not recommend a non-party be ordered to do anything (example: Dept of Disabilities and Special Needs will provide services to the child).

Respectfully submitted:

Signature
Guardian ad Litem