

Notes from In-Service monthly Continuing Education – June 22, 2021

Presenters: : **Joseph Sarkez, ODHS Resource Family Champion & Jeremiah Ripoyla, Health & Wellness Services CANS Coordinator-** Joseph will explain his role as Resource Family Champion and offer some insights to CASAs both about working with resource families, some of the key tools for resource families, and some of the special challenges resource families face. He also used to work as the state's CANS consultant so could answer some questions about CANS.

Jeremiah will do an overview of the CANS assessment – what it is, when it happens in the timeline of a youth in care, what the results give you. Also, CASA does not see the results in routine discovery on a case. Since it seems that the assessment detail and special challenges the youth faces that is in the comprehensive assessment ought to be very useful to the CASA in determining and prioritizing services to advocate for with the youth, we've asked Jeremiah to address why that is not in routine discovery and how best to request that information from DHS for the youth we represent. Bring your questions.

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In his introduction, Joe noted that he is not only the Resource Champion but he is also a Resource parent himself. The kids in his home have a CASA and the whole family appreciates the advocacy the CASA brings.

The Champion is a new role and is only about 1.5 years old so they are still a work in progress. Among his charges are to look at recruitment, show up where needed at targeted events and to focus on retention and support for resource families. Organizations like [EveryChild](#) do the actual recruiting of foster families but the Champion's role is to do planning around gaps and needed supports that would improve the experience for the families and thus aid retention.

CASA: Described that the case he is working has a serious respite need for the resource parents.

Joe: I have already set a goal of stepped up emphasis on finding what kinds of respite care are most needed and seeing that we have increased emphasis on providing that through what Every Child is already doing. Since that isn't completely operational yet, at this point, best advice is to highlight this need to the Caseworker.

Joe is developing goals around a resource family recruitment plan that is also emphasizing looking for families to fill current gaps like: families that will take teens and/or siblings; bi-lingual families, medically fragile children, etc. They are partnering with Every Child to do some recruiting events bi-lingual and some recruiting events in Spanish, some events to recruit families for teens.

CASA: What kind of training do resource families get?

Joe: They receive about 30 hours Foundational Training. This is 8 three hour course everyone gets and some selected additional trainings to make 30 hours. The principal focus of the training is on the trauma kids have experienced.

CASA: How do resource parents view their role? (CASA provided background around this question illustrating an encounter where the resource parent seemed to usurp the parent role to the detriment of the parent with child was being reunited).

Joe: The name change to Resource Family was to emphasize that this family is in a supporting role for the children and family in crisis and that the primary goal is re-unification. He believes that part of this support is connecting children to mental health services to deal with the trauma at a very young age – the three-year old in Joe’s current charge benefits greatly from the services of a therapist.

CASA: Does the name change affect the participation of resource parents? This CASA feels they are under-supported; can be demoralizing for them if parents request them excluded from FDM’s or wrap meetings.

Joe: It should not and should be the opposite in fact. Part of the retention plan is to involve the resource families more in FDM’s

CASA: Supported Joe’s position and identified that an important role of the CASA is to facilitate awareness of the needs of the resource parents.

Looking forward, training and “tracks” for resource families should be geared toward that family’s goals too: families wanting to adopt should be steered toward an adoption track, while families wanting to foster should be on a fostering track. Along with this are supports designed to address the grief and loss felt by resource parents during a re-unification. Joe wants a combination of training and support groups to assist in dealing with this.

CASA: more empathy and partnering on the part of resource families could improve outcomes in a reunification. A key training might be something that helps them prepare and assist in a return home.

At this point, halfway through our time, Joe handed the floor to Jerry.

Jerry’s introduction as the CANS Coordinator let us know that a referral for a **Child & Adolescents Needs & Strengths** assessment is made within the first 21 days of a child entering custody. CANS looks at behavioral concerns and a Personal Care assessment looks at the medical needs/concerns. The agency has 3 weeks to get this approved. The CANS establishes a level ranking

- 0 - No overt concerns
- 1
- 2
- 3 - Numerous concerns, resource parents need lots of supports (Can mean +\$960/mo in additional stipend)

After the initial CANS assessment, the assessment is repeated annually. In cases of extreme behaviors developing, they can be requested more often but not more than every 90 days.

In its specifics, the assessment goes through safety concerns, aggression, cultural, hygiene, school attendance, and performance among other things. Its important to note (although we don’t expect to see the individual item by item rankings) that not every item has equal weight in determining the overall level of support.

CASA: Where can I find the CANS? It's not in my discovery.

Jerry: Each county has its own policy on discovery. Yamhill doesn't seem to include it in discovery. The CANS can be shared with the CASA. *(at this point a flurry of CASA hands went up for our presentation).* I just met with the admins for each county and all agreed, the CASA and teachers *should* see the CANS.

At this point both Joe and Jerry advised that the CASA should reach out to the caseworker, requesting the CANS. Jerry is working to make it consistent across all Oregon counties and to emphasize its role as a case planning tool. In the interim, if the caseworker does not feel he/she can release the CANS to CASA, feel free to reach out to Jerry or Joe. *(At this point, Sarah also noted that CASA office would reach out to ODHS about this and she will also suggest that when assigning a case, office staff will request the CANS assessment just like they do initial placement information to provide the CASA's starter packet for a case.)*

There is a CANS specific to kids 0 -5, and another for youth 6 – 18.

Jerry continued his presentation with the observation that the CANS is just the start. Any score other than 0 on a CANS, requires the caseworker to draft a supervision plan in conjunction with the resource families *(in the case of a reunification or TTRS placement, this would be rolled into the in-home plan).* Jerry noted that at this point in time, there is a very low compliance rate for the supervision plan. Role of the CASA in this is only to ask if one exists and if the resource family agrees with it. Joe sees the supervision plan and the caseworker/resource family collaboration as a critical retention and case planning tool.

CASA: I have never seen a supervision plan.

Jerry: Right now they are not done in every case but they should be.

When returning a child to the biological family, it's good to share info in the supervision plan with the parents, usually in the in-home plan.

CASA: Another opportunity for the CASA to facilitate information exchange with the family. The child's best interests are served when everyone is talking to each other.

CASA: Is it still foster care, just resource family -- and that the resource family can be a resource for the child and for the family?

Joe closed with the idea that this resource family rebranding is an ongoing process.

When there were no more questions, Joe ended by expressing his appreciation of CASAs and the work they do.