



Guidance from the Kentucky CASA Network on Returning to Work, Social Distancing, and Program Operations During COVID-19

Updated July 10, 2020

Please note this document should serve as guidance and recommendations from the Kentucky CASA Network for consideration and adoption by each individual local CASA program board of directors as it pertains to reopening offices and returning to program operations. These recommendations are based on [Executive Orders](#) currently in place from the Commonwealth of Kentucky as well as [recommendations from the CDC](#).

The Kentucky CASA Network recommends that local CASA programs continue to telework and provide remote advocacy services until at least August 15, 2020 in order to protect the health of children and families, staff, volunteers, and our local communities and to be consistent with Kentucky's "Healthy at Work" phased reopening of businesses. Specific recommendations and guidance in subject areas are outlined below.

The KCN staff will be prioritizing teleworking with limited time in the office through at least August 15, 2020.

Assess Readiness and Return to the CASA Office and Develop Plans for Reopening for CASA Program Staff:

- ☐ Use local and state public health information to determine when to reopen your physical CASA office for both employee access and outside visitors.
- ☐ Allow staff to choose whether to return to the workplace or not, based on their assessment of their personal health risk to themselves or their families. Staff with a health concern should be allowed to telework. Review this timeline and assess the local health risk every 30 days.
- ☐ Programs should assess mental, emotional, and physical health when considering an employee's return.
- ☐ Programs should consider access to childcare due to childcare closings and track for the phased reopening of childcare services.

When the Program Reopens, Maintain Social and Physical Distancing Measures:

- ☐ Rearrange workstations to increase physical distancing. Do not have employees share offices.
- ☐ Restrict access to common areas, break rooms, and conference rooms.
- ☐ Mark six-foot distances on the floor of the offices.
- ☐ Prioritize using phone and videoconferencing even among employees in the office.
- ☐ Create rotating work schedules.

- Require the use of facial masks and coverings when staff are outside of their office space [per Executive Orders](#).
- Restrict all non-essential travel. Allow employees the option of attending future in-person trainings based on their comfort level.
- Establish clear policies regarding illness, including not allowing access to the CASA office if staff are ill or have a fever.
- Ensure hand sanitizer is available to all employees.
- Prioritize conducting board meetings virtually via videoconferencing platforms through at least August 15.
- Do not hold fundraisers or events that will bring in more than 50 people through at least August 15.
- When interviewing, follow [National CASA/GAL's guidance](#) on interviewing volunteers and employees during COVID-19. Virtual interviews can be conducted but an in-person interview should be completed by at least one staff or board member prior to an offer of employment; proper social distancing requirements should be met during this in-person interview.

When Program Operations Reopen:

- Follow [Executive Orders](#) regarding group gatherings for trainings and meetings.
- Prioritize and offer virtual in-service trainings for the required 12 hours of in-service each year.
- Restrict non-essential visitors, volunteers, and other activities. Allow on a case-by-case basis only when doing the work remotely is not possible. Prioritize remote check-ins with volunteers versus having them come into the office.
- Require the use of facial masks and coverings for CASA staff when meeting with volunteers. Provide masks to volunteers.
- Follow local policies on returning to court. Maintain social distance and require staff to wear a face covering when attending court. Do not require CASA volunteers to attend court in-person if they are not comfortable.
- Encourage and prioritize virtual visits with CASA children until at least August 15. Continue to complete an exception form for the virtual visits each month. Every monthly contact should be documented with either an exception form or completed screening questions (see below).
- If necessary, due to case concerns and emergencies, begin face-to-face home visits no earlier than July 1, but have a procedure that volunteers and staff must follow for proper social distancing and wearing masks during visits, prioritizing meeting in outdoor settings (parks, backyards, patios). We also recommend contacting the family ahead of time to [ask screening questions](#) and for supervisors to ask screening questions of volunteers before visits, including documentation in the case file. Please see [these tips](#) for interactions with children during COVID-19 from CASA of West Kentucky. For programs that are allowing in-person visits with masks and social distancing, consider using [this waiver from the National CASA/GAL Association](#).

Please see this [link to a letter from the Children's Bureau commissioner](#) about the requirement to initiate a petition to terminate a parent's rights if the child has been in foster care for 15 out of the most recent 22 months (the 15/22 requirement). Jerry Milner writes, "In light of the devastating impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on child welfare systems and applicable exceptions to the 15/22 requirement, I cannot emphasize how strongly I urge agencies to carefully consider whether it is appropriate to terminate a parent's rights pursuant to the 15/22 requirements."

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE UPDATED EVERY 30 DAYS AND PROVIDED TO LOCAL PROGRAMS ON MAY 15, JUNE 15, JULY 15, AND AUGUST 15 THROUGHOUT THE PHASED REOPENING.

COVID-19 Work Group

7/10/2020

Introductions

Main Topics: *What has changed in your "world"- Events, courts, staffing, etc.

* Role of KCN with recommendations

Round Robin w/ Staff:

Stephanie Moss- July 1st added if you have concerns about environment of child and need to make in person visit- Mask/Social distance

*Created document for tips to do socially distance visits

*Volunteers not coming in office

*Court on Skype-ends August 1st

*System is working well- Families seem frustrated with cabinet workers. It is difficult to reach anyone (There were new cabinet workers hired right before pandemic)

*Distributed masks to kids

*Looking forward to getting volunteer masks

*Wide Spectrum- People who do not believe that COVID is real

*Feels like the virtual visits are a welcome break for volunteers

*Volunteer applications about the same (Using Social Media to recruit)

*Uniformity Requirement? - Cover liability

Have caregivers agree on types of visits- via text etc./allow for cultural difference level of risk

Andrea- Executive order- mandate masks if volunteers visits.

*Frustrated with inconsistency across the state (Example: Schools)

Stephanie Floyd

*Volunteer apps are about the same

*Liability Release wavier- using example from National CASA- Looking to board for recommendations

*Drive by visit- a couple volunteers have done this

*Some want to do home visits- but feeling very torn

*Graves county has allowed court/ via Skype for other counties

*In office (alternating shifts) Doing Zoom & phone check-ins with volunteer

*Feeling anxiety- afraid of making the wrong decision

*Andrea- taking the most cautious approach will help with this anxiety.

*Suggest if you have traveled- you do not do house visits for 14 days.

Asked Stephanie about availability of testing any area- She suggested to call doctor for apt. drive-up, CVS

Natalie Cubbage

*Volunteer wavier- helped board

*No in person visits

*Doing Guided Learning

*Staff calling in every week

*No outside visitors in office

*Court virtual

*Bi-monthly advocate meetings online

*Decrease in volunteer applications

Andrea- Mentioned AOC#- DNA petitions down 33%

Victoria Bengé

*Hiring 2 new people

*Court via zoom

*Social workers are not doing visits

*Ensure volunteers sign waivers

*Not sure about a blanket mandate- because programs are so different

*Blanket statement- could do a significant amount of damage

Laura Kretzer

*CASA has started going back to work

*Court mask/social distance

*Opinion about blanket statement mandate- if its okay for court to make their decisions- then we should keep it board, following CDC and government guidelines.

Andrea

Events are left up to individual board/Individual liability

Victoria Benge- Blanket wavier (National CASA)

Stephanie Floyd- worried about offending volunteer (Andrea suggested to say that this is a recommendation from KCN.

*Looked at 15-22 guidance (making sure that volunteers are aware of this. Include in next local newsletter

*No one has had employees uncomfortable with returning to work.

Stephanie Floyd- plan on having in person board meeting- Spaced out

Andrea, using the language “prioritize” board meeting

Stephanie Floyd- feeling disconnect from board. Feels that in person will help with this feeling.

Mentioned: County Advisory Programs

*Edits to when program operations re-open

Laura- “follow executive orders regarding group meetings for trainings” Link to executive order

*Add wavier for in person visits developed by National CASA- No dates in the language

Stephanie Floyd- Do we screen volunteers? (Should volunteers self-report)

Stephanie Moss- Recommend everyone in the office be asked questions

*Margaret pulled resources

*Tips for child interaction- will embed in documents

Andrea- Need to create policy/procedure

Stephanie Floyd create an electronic document/volunteer could upload in Optima

Stephanie Moss- Exception form/upload with every monthly contact should be document with exception form or screening questions

*Put in case file

*Looking @ DATA-Impacts