

## Monitoring my CASA child's wellbeing: guide for CASA volunteers



An important part of your job as a CASA volunteer is monitoring your assigned child(ren)'s strengths and needs reporting your advocacy actions.

Research shows that a caring adult and concrete supports buffer against adverse childhood experience and increase children's resilience. Children who have supportive adults in their lives are more likely to find healthy ways to cope with trauma and less likely to have negative impacts related to development, education, risky behaviors, health, relationships, and more.<sup>1</sup>

**Wellbeing assessments provide an opportunity to pause and reflect on the strengths and needs of the child and brainstorm your next steps. Use them as an opportunity to:**

- **Check-in with key partners on the case**
- **Consider how your assigned child is doing in key domains**
- **Reflect on what they need to best cope with the challenges, and ultimately thrive.**

In addition, this information helps CASA programs ensure we are providing high quality, best interest advocacy for all children assigned a CASA volunteer in Colorado. It helps us understand trends of strength and need, which is vital as we engage external stakeholders and secure resources to continue to support our important work.

From case assignment to case close, we monitor domains connected with protective factors and equity, or in other words, connected to the child thriving now and in the future. The domains are: safety and permanency, development/education, health, relationships and opportunities, and transition needs/skills (youth 14 and over).

### **Starting your case:**

Case opening assessments are emailed to CASA volunteers on the 1<sup>st</sup> business day of each month. If you start your case in the last week of the month you will receive the assessment in the following month. For example, if you start your case on January 15<sup>th</sup>, you

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<sup>1</sup> Development Services Group, Inc., & Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2015). Promoting protective factors for children and youth in foster care: A guide for practitioners. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau.

will receive a survey request on the first business day of February. If you start your case January 29<sup>th</sup>, you will receive your opening assessment the first business day of March. Complete your case opening assessment within 2 months of assignment, if possible.

Before completing this assessment:

- Meet the child(ren)
- Read case documents
- Connect with case professionals
- Collect basic information about the child's current wellbeing including placement, education, health, siblings, and participation in community activities

**Ongoing monitoring:**

Ongoing wellbeing assessments are emailed to volunteers the first business day of October, February and June and open for a two-week window. These assessments cover key domains and your advocacy work since the last assessment. They are emailed to CASA volunteers who have been on a case 3 months or longer from the assessment date

They close at midnight on the last day listed. The dates for 2020 are:

- February 3-17<sup>th</sup>, 2020
- June 1<sup>st</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 2020
- October 1<sup>st</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Case closing:**

Case opening assessments are emailed to CASA volunteers on the same schedule as case opening assessments. Note, we use case closing date, NOT CASA discharge date to send assessments. If you are discharged from a case that remains open for the CASA program you will not be sent an assessment. Please complete this request within 1 month of your case closing. It contains wrap-up information for your assigned child and some questions about your experience.

**Taking the surveys:**

Colorado CASA, the statewide CASA organization sends the assessments. You will receive the email from Lily Sussman ([lily@coloradocasa.org](mailto:lily@coloradocasa.org)). Please add her email to your contacts so the assessments don't go to spam. The Survey will be sent to the email you mark 'best,' in Optima. You can edit your email address in Optima any time by clicking on 'Personal Info' from the home

screen, and then 'Edit.' Please note: emails for the survey are pulled about two weeks before the send date, so make sure to update your email address well in advance or contact your supervisor about any last minute changes.

#### **FAQs:**

Q-How long will the assessments take?

*A-About 10 minutes.*

Q: Why aren't we using Optima for assessments?

*A: Optima does not allow us to use survey logic. For example, with logic if the child has siblings you will be asked follow-up questions about visits. Without survey logic we would have to ask all CASAs the exact same question, which would make the surveys longer and less relevant. Survey Monkey is also an upgrade for exporting data in a form useful for analysis.*

Q-What if I serve multiple children?

*A: In most cases, you will receive a unique link for each child. The email invitation will include the child's age and gender. Make sure you take the correct survey for each child, as we track results over time. If you serve multiple children of the same age and gender your CASA supervisor will be in touch with your children's ID numbers to determine which child is linked to which survey.*

Q: What if I'm assigned to child(ren) with another CASA volunteer? Will we both get the assessment? *For now, you will be both be emailed the assessments. Please talk and decide who will complete the assessment. We only need one per child. \*Note: if you are a CASA with VFC-Boulder, you may NOT get a wellbeing assessment for every child you serve do to a difference in how the program uses Optima to assign cases.*

Q-Why did the questions change?

*A: The goal of the new assessments is to track status, needs and changes for children in key areas, as well as the types of advocacy you engage in. This helps us better understand and document how we're making a difference for children and note gaps that may exist. There are 18 CASA programs in Colorado and a statewide umbrella organization, Colorado CASA. The network decided to invest in a statewide Program and Evaluator position for the first time in December 2018. We are committed to providing data-informed advocacy for children and these assessments will enhance our ability to do that.*

Q: I serve multiple children and it would be easier to see the children's names on each survey. Why can't we do that?

*A: We take confidentiality seriously and only share names of children when mandated or when specific permissions have been granted. Since wellbeing assessments are administered by Colorado CASA and data is aggregated statewide, we use child and volunteer ID numbers to protect confidentiality.*

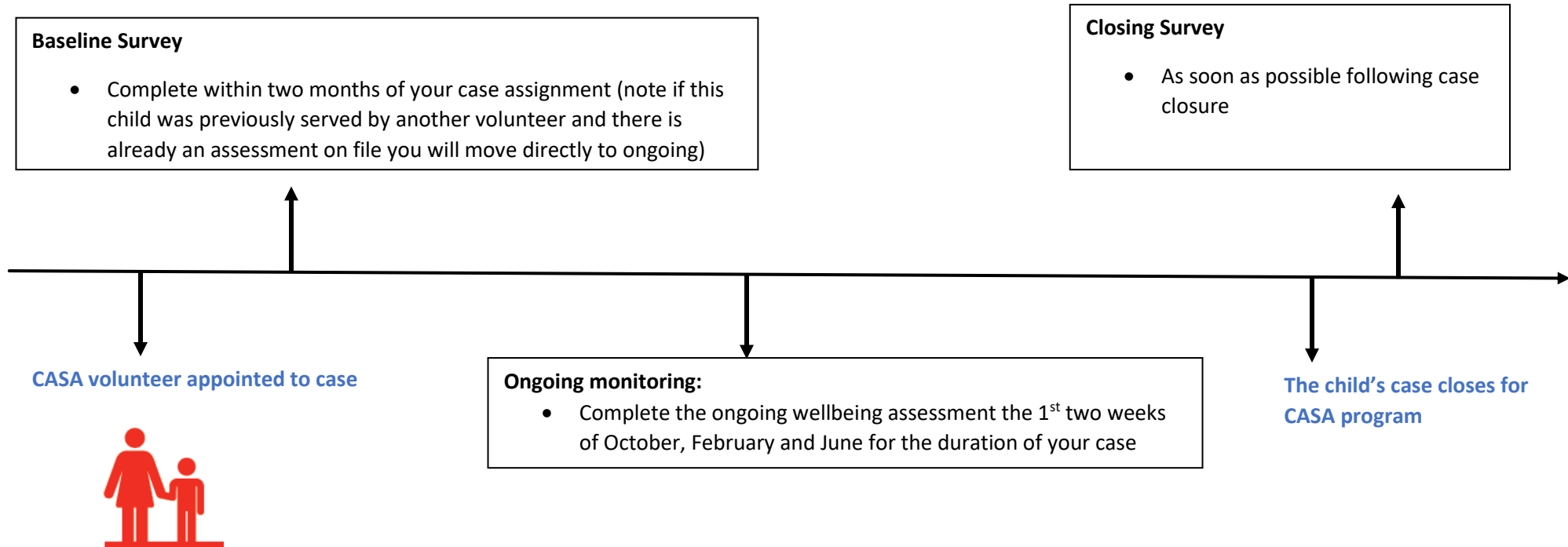
*Q: Does the time I spend checking-in and completing the wellbeing assessments count toward my total case time?*

*A: Yes! Please enter a contact log in Optima to reflect the time you spend. Each program has slightly different contact log categories, so check in with your program staff if you're unsure how to document.*

*Q: The first business day of the month past and I don't see my wellbeing assessment email.*

*A: Check your spam folder and look for an email from Survey Monkey. To avoid the email going to Spam in the future please add the email address to your contacts/address book. If you still don't see it, email both your supervisor and [lily@coloradoCASA.org](mailto:lily@coloradoCASA.org) with the subject line: MISSING ASSESSMENT.*

## Summary of Monitoring Timeline for CASA Volunteers



**How will I get the surveys?** You will receive an email from Lily at Colorado CASA. It will include the child's ID #, which you will use to take the survey.

### What's the key information on the surveys?

- Child's placement, safety and permanency
- The child's progress in school or development (if 5 or under)
- The child's access to health and health needs
- The child's participation in extracurriculars (if 6 or older)
- Whether the child has siblings/in placement/can visit
- Your advocacy actions in each of the above categories

**How long will each survey take?** The surveys will take approximately 8-10 minutes to complete.

**What if I am assigned multiple children?** You will receive a unique link for each volunteer. Please note the age and gender listed (the ID if necessary) to ensure you take the correct assessment for each child.

