

PEER COORDINATOR MODEL
CASA OF THE PIKES PEAK REGION
EVALUATION NOTES

1. Some results from the evaluation we did in March – similar to the one that was done in Lane County.

We did a survey similar to Lane County, but we did it after only using the model for about 8 months. In hindsight, I think we did this too soon. I think letting the new process “gel” a little longer would have given us more meaningful results. That said, I think you could categorize our needs similar to that of Lane County: Court Reports, Clarity and Consistency for Staff and PCs, Continue to reinforce the Coaching culture within the whole team.

Below are some of the results that I thought might be helpful to you:

Other Stakeholders:

Two GAL’s responded that they cannot tell a difference since we started the PC model. The number of responses to the survey was very low, but the feedback was positive.

One Magistrate responded with the following (This was the only response we got from the bench, however; this Magistrate handles a large percentage of our cases):

Newer CASA advocates are supported by volunteer peer coordinators instead of paid staff. Are you able to tell which CASA advocates are supported by paid staff and who is supported by peer coordinators? What is noticeable?

Response: Truthfully, I have not noticed the difference.

Does staff or peer coordinators attend hearings with the CASA advocate? How does their presence impact the hearing?

Response: Yes, I notice staff and/or peer coordinators at the hearings. It seems that their presence is good for the advocate, affirming their participation and helping them navigate the court process.

We do a Judges survey here in the third quarter of every year. While we did not ask specific questions this time about the PC model, we got very positive responses from the bench this year. The responses have not declined at all from previous years, even though we are using the new model. Going forward, we may add some specific questions about PCs. The results from this survey are below, so that you know what kinds of questions were asked.

During this third quarter of 2014, CASA did survey Dependency and Neglect Judges' with the following results: 100% of the Judges responded agreed or strongly agreed to the following statements/questions. 1) The contribution made by CASA volunteers makes a difference on individual cases. 2) CASA volunteers attend scheduled hearings. 3) Reports submitted by CASA volunteers are well written and effective. 4) Reports submitted by CASA volunteers are objective. 5) Reports submitted by CASA volunteers are a significant tool that is used when making decisions. 6) CASA volunteers identify appropriate program and services for the children and their families. 7) The recommendations made by CASA volunteers are made with the child's

best interest in mind. 8) When a CASA addresses the court, he/she contributes useful information regarding the case issues and/or needs of the child. 9) CASAs are respectful of cultural issues. 10) CASA informational contribution helps decrease placement moves and/or encourages appropriate placements for the children. 11) CASA volunteers understand their responsibilities and demonstrate appropriate boundaries. 12) CASA volunteers work well with other professionals.

Evaluations results from PCs:

What would be the top one or two things you would change about peer coordinator responsibilities?

Responses: Get rid of monthly report
Not give three new cases at once

Obstacles for peer coordinators:

Responses: Inconsistent guidance on what to report
Unclear when things are due
Communication – getting feedback from advocates

How do you know when you will be successful?

Responses: Advocate is self-confident and “takes the bull by the horns”
Advocate blossoms
Go to court and judge positively comments and approves recommendations
When advocate wants another case

Evaluations results from Advocates:

Note: Some of these advocates previously worked under a case supervisor, and some have only worked under a Peer Coordinator. I wish I had kept the responses separate. I think each group has unique needs that may need to be addressed and we did not capture this well. When we first started the model, we were requiring a monthly report that advocates had to give to PCs. This was a huge turn off for the “veteran” volunteers and caused many issues. We fixed it pretty quickly and no longer require these reports, but it was a bit painful for all involved. A lesson learned here was that we put the model in place and thought we needed more oversight and reporting of the advocates by peer coordinators than we did by case supervisors. We wanted to make sure the work was getting done. We quickly learned that we did not need all of the reporting and the job was still getting done.

How would you describe the role your peer coordinator plays in your CASA case?

Responses: Mentor, sounding board, support when not quite sure, guidance, editor, confidant, cheerleader, invaluable, they know reality, advocate for me, safety net.

My PC has given me guidance on everything from handling delicate situations to formatting the reports and everything in between. I'm able to bounce ideas and concerns off of him and he's able to share experiences and knowledge that help me do my job. He also provides encouragement and support.

Most useful part of PC role for an advocate:

Responses: mentoring and guidance, having them at court hearings, serving more kids.

I think the most useful part has been the assistance with getting familiar with the court system and reporting, the follow-up and next steps discussions.

Obstacles with PC:

Responses: Deadlines now involve three people instead of two
Too much filtering down through PC – causes miscommunication and misunderstanding
PCs not well trained
There is a gulf between PCs and paid supervisor
Schedules and timing, everyone is so busy

Now thinking about the program staff, how would you describe the role your program staff member plays in your CASA case?

Response: The program staff is definitely the additional guidance when something seems to be in the "gray" areas. Not all cases are the same and having another level of guidance and direction is very helpful.

What is the most useful part of the program staff role?

Response: I think what is most useful about that role is that there is another layer of support.

2. Recent quarterly gathering where we were asking for information:

What is going well for the PC's?

Relationships with case supervisors are amazing.
It is a big transition to "not do it yourself", I am finally there.
Appreciation from staff that we are still volunteers and still need the staff support.
It seems collaborative – staff is there when you need them, let me do my thing when I do not need them.
We have learned a lot as we went along.
Staff and agency willingness to adapt when necessary.

What is going well for the staff?

They have been able to let go more
I have complete trust in my PCs to do the right thing
It amazes me how dedicated my PCs are.
We figure out together if necessary.
My PCs are inspiring – they are so invested in their advocates.

PCs recommendations as we move forward:

Still need to improve the court report process.

Making sure expectations of advocates are consistent and clear for all.

Concerned about asking their advocates who have only had one case to become a PC, do not feel they have enough experience.

3. Some changes we have/are making due to the feedback we have received.

Coaching – We want to take our coaching skills to the next level. We have three very experienced executive coaches from the Center for Creative Leadership that have agreed to work pro bono with our case supervisors and peer coordinators to help them hone their coaching skills together, and learn ways to coach through some of the advocate issues they have been facing such as not doing what is required of them, and not communicating well.

Court Reports have been an issue for us as well. We have a few plans for that. We are offering more regular in service training on court reports, we are planning to have an in service training for peer coordinators on court report editing and how to leave the CASA advocates “heart” intact, and we plan to have some “court report sessions” where there will be case supervisors and PCs available during certain hours to help advocates with court reports. We also highly encourage the PCs to sit down with an advocate the first time they do a report and do it together, teaching good habits that will carry them through all of their court reports.

PCs asked for a support group, and we have implemented this and meet quarterly.

PCs told us to keep listening and thanked us for being flexible and adapting the program as we move forward. We continue to focus on this.

When we first started many of our PCs got three new cases very close together. They told us this was too much and that we really needed to stagger giving them cases. The other problem this presented is when you get cases at the same time, for a while they follow the same track and have court hearings close together, court reports due close together etc. We have tried to fix this a few different ways. One is to give a PC a veteran advocate when we can, as opposed to all new advocates. Veteran advocates only go to a PC if they want to once they finish a case. Of course we have some “newer veteran” advocates now that have only reported to PCs and they just go back to a PC (many are asking to work with the same one). The other way, that we are just about to test, is to recruit a new group of PCs in between when we have a new class coming out. We used to have them “graduate” at about the same time. We are hoping if the new PCs have been out for a while we can stagger better when we are giving them new cases.

We started the model with a lot of reports. Staff, PCs and advocates really did not like this. We thought we needed all of the reports to make sure that things were getting done. We found that was not the case and we were able to do away with many of the reports. We have it pretty streamlined now.