

Session 3: Cultural Competence & Disproportionality—The Lavender & Amarillo Cases

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American Legion
Child Welfare Foundation



Session Overview

This session explores the importance of cultural competence in the CASA/GAL volunteer role. You'll also learn about issues related to domestic violence and substance abuse. You'll continue to apply your new knowledge and skills in two case simulations.

Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to...

- Explain how diversity and cultural competence among CASA/GAL volunteers benefit children and families
- Describe how becoming culturally competent can help you avoid stereotyping
- Identify community resources that will increase your understanding and appreciation of other cultures
- Determine the steps you can take to increase your cultural competency skills and demonstrate the high value you place on culturally competent child advocacy
- Explore your identity and your culture's effects on your values, attitudes and behaviors
- Explore some of the root causes of the disproportionate representation of children of color in foster care and the disparate outcomes that children of color experience in foster care
- Identify reasons that people abuse substances and how substance abuse can affect children and their families
- Identify some of the markers of domestic violence and describe how it affects children and families
- Examine how your personal values and biases about mental illness, domestic violence and substance abuse can affect your objectivity regarding the best interest of the child
- Describe some strategies for writing an effective court report

Online Learning

Cultural Competence

As a general term “diversity” refers to difference or variety. In the context of CASA/GAL volunteer work, “diversity” refers to differences or variety in people’s identities or experiences: ethnicity, race, national origin, language, gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class and so on. The term “cultural competence” refers to the ability to work effectively with people from a broad range of backgrounds, experiences and viewpoints.

The United States is becoming increasingly multicultural. According to the 2010 US Census, approximately 36.3% of the population currently belongs to a racial or ethnic minority group. The Census Bureau projects that by the year 2100, non-Hispanic whites will make up only 40% of the US population. As you work through the activities in this session, keep in mind the particular cultural groups with whom you will work as a CASA/GAL volunteer. Keep in mind that “culture” is not limited to race and ethnicity.

Understanding issues related to diversity and culturally competent child advocacy is critical to your work as a CASA/GAL volunteer. It can enhance your ability to see things from new and different perspectives and to respond to each child’s unique needs. Developing cultural competence is a lifelong process.

Activity 3.1: The Value of Diversity

Part 1: Read the National CASA vision and guiding principles that follow and circle the principle that you think is the most important.

National CASA’s Vision

The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association “stands up” for abused and neglected children. Building on our legacy of quality advocacy, we acknowledge the need to understand, respect, and celebrate diversity including race, gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status and the presence of a sensory, mental or physical disability. We also value diversity of viewpoints, life experiences, talents and ideas.

A diverse CASA/GAL network helps us to better understand and promote the well-being of the children we serve. Embracing diversity makes us better advocates by

providing fresh ideas and perspectives for problem solving in our multicultural world, enabling us to respond to each child's unique needs.

Guiding Principles for Achieving a Diverse CASA/GAL Network

1. Ethnic and cultural background influences an individual's attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors.
2. Each family's characteristics reflect adaptations to its primary culture and the majority culture, the family's unique environment and the composite of the people and needs within it.
3. A child can be best served by a CASA/GAL volunteer who is culturally competent and who has personal experience and work experience in the child's own culture(s).
4. To understand a child, a person should understand cultural differences and the impact they have on family dynamics.
5. No cultural group is homogenous; within every group there is great diversity.
6. Families have similarities yet are all unique.
7. In order to be culturally sensitive to another person or group, it is necessary to evaluate how each person's culture impacts his/her behavior.
8. As a person learns about the characteristic traits of another cultural group, he/she should remember to view each person as an individual.
9. Most people like to feel that they have compassion for others and that there are new things they can learn.
10. Value judgments should not be made about another person's culture.
11. It is in the best interest of children to have volunteers who reflect the characteristics (i.e., ethnicity, national origin, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability and socioeconomic status) of the population served.

Part 2: Using the online discussion forum, post two or three sentences about the guiding principle you circled in your manual. Briefly explain why you think that principle is most important.

Part 3: Respond to at least two of your classmates by asking a question or making a comment about what they have posted.

Remember: When you're commenting on others' posts, you may decide to empathize with, build upon or ask questions about someone else's thoughts or ideas. However, when engaging your fellow classmates online, be sure that you're approaching the online discussion from a place of genuine curiosity and desire to learn. This is not a forum in which it is acceptable to impose your values on others. Also keep in mind that when communicating online, body language and other nonverbal cues may get lost. Be sure to think about how attempts at humor or the tone/language you use may be interpreted or misinterpreted through this means of communication.

Activity 3.2: Exploring Culture and Perceptions

Part 1: As a foundation for expanding your understanding of other cultures, it is important to be thoroughly acquainted with your own. Cultural competence begins with understanding and appreciating your own identity. You are a “culturally rich” individual with your own blend of culture, ethnicity, race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, religion or spirituality, geographic location and physical and mental abilities.

For each of the categories from the list below, think about your culture and life experiences, and how you would describe yourself, your family of origin or your current family situation to someone you know pretty well. After you have some thoughts in mind for each of the categories, think about the following questions:

- Are there categories that you would have been uncomfortable sharing in front of the large group during the in-person training session?
- What contributes to your feelings of safety when you are asked to disclose personal information?

Race

Family Form (single parent, married with no children, etc.)

Ethnicity (cultural description or country of origin)

Gender

Geographic Identity (rural, urban; in the US, eastern, Midwestern, etc.)

Age

Sexual Orientation

Religion or Spirituality

Language

Disabilities

Socioeconomic Status (low-income, working-class, middle-class, wealthy)

Part 2: Now imagine that you are either Toni or Miles Bleux, and you are describing yourself to someone who has power over your life—for instance, the caseworker, the judge or an attorney. In the online discussion forum, answer the following questions:

- How do you think the caseworker or others might perceive you and what would be the implications?
- When you describe yourself to this person, what might you leave out or try to make fit what you think might be more acceptable to them? Why?
- If you often had to do this, what do you think would happen to these parts of yourself?

Part 3: Respond to at least two of your classmates by asking a question or making a comment about what they have posted.

Activity 3.3: Stereotyping vs. Cultural Competence

Part 1: Read the material that follows on the difference between stereotyping and cultural competence.

Stereotyping vs. Cultural Competence

Stereotypes based on appearances can impact how a volunteer approaches and builds relationships with families and children. Stereotypes are rigid and inflexible. Stereotypes hold even when a person is presented with evidence contrary to the stereotype. Stereotypes are harmful because they limit people's potential, perpetuate myths and are gross generalizations about a particular group.

For instance, a person might believe that people who wear large, baggy clothes shoplift. Because some teenagers wear large, baggy jackets, this person may assume that teenagers shoplift. Such stereotypes can adversely affect a volunteer's interactions with children and others in the community. Even stereotypes that include "positive" elements (e.g., "they" are quite industrious) can be harmful because the stereotypes are rigid, limiting and generalized.

Unlike stereotyping, cultural competence can be compared to making an educated hypothesis. An educated hypothesis contains what you understand about cultural norms and the social, political and historical experiences of the children and families with whom you work. You might hypothesize, for example, that a Jewish family is not available for a meeting on Yom Kippur, or that they would not want to eat pork. However, you recognize and allow for individual differences in the expression and experience of a culture; for instance, some Jewish people eat pork and still are closely tied to their Jewish faith or heritage. Another example might be that some African American families celebrate Kwanzaa, while others do not.

As an advocate, you need to examine your biases and recognize that they are based on your own life and do not usually reflect what is true for the stereotyped groups. Everyone has certain biases. Everyone stereotypes from time to time. Developing cultural competence is an ongoing process of recognizing and overcoming these biases by thinking flexibly and finding sources of information about those who are different from you.

Part 2: Think about a time when you felt categorized because of the way you identify yourself. How did you feel? How might a foster child feel? Jot down your thoughts. You will not share these thoughts with anyone; be as honest with yourself as possible.

Activity 3.4: Sorting People

Part 1: Click on the link to Part 1 of Activity 3.4 to access a pbs.org exercise called “Sorting People: Can You Tell Somebody’s Race by Looking at Them?” Follow the instructions to complete the activity.

Part 2: In the online discussion forum, share your answers to the following questions based on the sorting activity:

- How did you do?
- What surprised you about the exercise?
- Think about the two cases you’ve worked on so far. Did you observe any stereotyping in the Bleux case? What about in the Greene case?

Activity 3.5: Understanding Families Through Culture

Part 1: Think back to your childhood. When you had the flu, what did your family generally advise you to do in order to feel better? In the online forum, share your answer.

Part 2: Read the information below about the importance of being aware of cultural norms when you work with children and families.

The Cultural Sensitivity Lens

Another essential tool to use when looking at families is the cultural sensitivity lens. Strengths don't look the same in every family. Family structures, rules, roles, customs, boundaries, communication styles, problem-solving approaches, parenting techniques and values may be based on cultural norms and/or accepted community standards.

In the context of the CASA/GAL volunteer role, cultural competence is the ability to work effectively with people from a variety of backgrounds. It entails being aware and respectful of the cultural norms, values, traditions and parenting styles of those with whom you work. Striving to be culturally competent means cultivating an open mind and new skills and meeting people where they are, rather than making them conform to your standards.

Each child and each family is made up of a combination of cultural, familial and personal traits. In working with families, you need to learn about an individual's or family's culture. When in doubt, ask the people you are working with. It might feel awkward at first, but learning how to ask questions respectfully is a vital skill to develop as you grow in cultural competence. Once people understand that you sincerely want to learn and be respectful, they are usually very generous with their help.

It's important to understand that child-rearing practices vary across cultures. For instance, the following mainstream US child-rearing practices may be viewed as harmful to children by people from other countries: isolating children in beds or rooms of their own at night, making children wait for food when they are hungry, requiring children to wear painful braces on their teeth, forcing young children to sit in a classroom all day or allowing infants to "cry it out."

Conversely, practices that are culturally acceptable elsewhere may be misunderstood in the United States. One example is the Southeast Asian practice of "coin rubbing," a traditional curing method in which heated metal coins are pressed on a child's body. This practice is believed to reduce fevers, chills and headaches. Because it generally leaves red streaks or bruises, it can easily be misdiagnosed as

child abuse by those who don't understand the intention behind this cultural practice.

Additionally, in the United States the ideal of the nuclear family still dominates. However, in many communities extended family members take on a greater role in child rearing, and family may include members of a faith community or others who are not blood relatives.

People in different cultures and socioeconomic classes may use different skills and resources to deal with stress and problems. Material goods are one kind of resource, but some individuals and cultures prize other resources above material wealth. For example:

- **Mental ability** allows a person to access and use information.
- **Emotional resources** provide support and strength in difficult times.
- **Spiritual resources** give purpose and meaning to people's lives.
- **Good health and physical mobility** allow for self-sufficiency.
- **Cultural heritage** provides context, values and mores for living in the world.
- **Informal support systems** provide a safety net (e.g., money in tight times, care for a sick child, job advice).
- **Healthy relationships** nurture and support.
- **Role models** provide appropriate examples of and practical advice on achieving success.

Part 3: Think about your answer from Part 1. Now look at your childhood cure through a cultural lens. Do you think your childhood cure is considered normal behavior according to mainstream US culture?

Activity 3.6: Disproportionality and Disparate Outcomes

Part 1: Read the information that follows about disproportionality in the child welfare system. Then read the information the facilitator provided about disproportionality in your local area.

Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

Disproportionality is the experience of overrepresentation or underrepresentation of various groups in different social, political or economic institutions. For example, women in the United States are overrepresented as single heads of household, and African Americans and Latinos are overrepresented in the US prison population.

- There is no difference between races in the likelihood that a parent will abuse or neglect a child, but there is a great difference between races in the likelihood that a child will be removed from home and placed in foster care. Compared to white children, African American children are four times more likely to be placed in care, American Indian and Native Alaskan children are three times more likely, and Hispanic children are twice as likely.

Casey Family Programs, www.casey.org.

- Children of color make up almost two-thirds of the 540,000 children in the foster care system, although they constitute just over one-third of the child population in the US.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Families for Kids Project, www.wkkf.org.

- The number of white children entering foster care in a given year is greater than the number of African American children. Yet, African American children make up a disproportionate, and increasing, share of those who remain.

Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data.

- The percentage of Hispanic children in foster care more than doubled from 7% in 1982 to 17% in 2002.

Families for Kids Project and AFCARS data.

- Children of color experience a higher number of placements than white children, and they are less likely to be reunified with their birth families.

Casey Family Programs, www.casey.org.

Part 2: In the online discussion forum, post your thoughts about how stereotyping or bias may result in disproportionality in the child welfare system.

Part 3: Respond to at least two of your classmates by asking a question or making a comment about what they have posted.

Remember: When you're commenting on others' posts, you may decide to empathize with, build upon or ask questions about someone else's thoughts or ideas. However, when engaging your fellow classmates online, be sure that you're approaching the online discussion from a place of genuine curiosity and desire to learn. This is not a forum in which it is acceptable to attempt to impose your values on others. Also keep in mind that when communicating online, body language and other nonverbal cues may get lost. Be sure to think about how attempts at humor or the tone/language you use may be interpreted or misinterpreted through this means of communication.

Learn More!

For more information about working as a CASA/GAL volunteer to reduce disproportionality, read "6 Tips for Reducing Disparity in Child Welfare" by Honorable Louis A. Trosch Jr., which appeared in the Fall 2010 issue of *The Connection*, the National CASA newsletter:

www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtSJ7MPIsE/b.6243001/k.DCE8/Top_Tips.htm.

Cultural Competence: A Glossary

Developing a working vocabulary related to issues of diversity can help you communicate more effectively with other people and examine what more you have to learn.

Ableism: Discrimination or prejudice based on a limitation, difference or impairment in physical, mental or sensory capacity or ability

Ageism: Discrimination or prejudice based on age, particularly aimed at the elderly

Bias: A personal judgment, especially one that is unreasoned or unfair

Biracial: Of two races; usually describing a person having parents of different races

Classism: Discrimination or prejudice based on socioeconomic status

Cultural Dominance: The pervasiveness of one set of traditions, norms, customs, literature, art and institutions, to the exclusion of all others

Cultural Competence: The ability to work effectively with people from a variety of cultures, ethnicities, races, religions, classes, sexual orientations and genders

Cultural Group: A group of people who consciously or unconsciously share identifiable values, norms, symbols and some ways of living that are repeated and transmitted from one generation to another

Cultural Sensitivity: An awareness of the nuances of one's own and other cultures

Culturally Appropriate: Demonstrating both sensitivity to cultural differences and similarities and effectiveness in communicating a message within and across cultures

Culture: The shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, folklore and institutions of a group of people who are unified by race, ethnicity, language, nationality, sexual orientation and/or religion

Disability: A limitation, difference or impairment in a person's physical, mental or sensory capacity or ability. Many communities prefer the term "differently-abled" over "disabled."

Discrimination: An act of prejudice or a manner of treating individuals differently due to their appearance, status or membership in a particular group

Disproportionality: Overrepresentation or underrepresentation of various groups in different social, political or economic institutions

Dominant Group/Culture: The "mainstream" culture in a society, consisting of the people who hold the power and influence

Ethnicity: The classification of a group of people who share common characteristics, such as language, race, tribe or national origin

Ethnocentrism: The attitude that one's own cultural group is superior

Gender: A social or cultural category generally assigned based on a person's biological sex

Gender Identity: A person's sense of being masculine, feminine or some combination thereof

Heterosexism: An ideological system that denies, denigrates and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity or relationship

Homophobia: Fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality, homosexuals or same-sex relationships

Institutional Racism: Biased policies and practices within an organization or system that disadvantage people of a certain race or ethnicity

Language: The form or pattern of communication—spoken, written or signed—used by residents or descendants of a particular nation or geographic area or by any body of people. Language can be formal or informal and includes dialect, idiomatic speech and slang.

Minority: The smaller in number of at least two groups; can imply a lesser status or influence and can be seen as an antonym for the words "majority" and "dominant"

Multicultural: Designed for or pertaining to two or more distinct cultures

Multiracial: Describing a person, community, organization, etc., composed of many races

National Origin: The country or region where a person was born

Person of Color: Usually used to define a person who is not a descendant of people from European countries. Individuals can choose whether or not to self-identify as a person of color.

Prejudice: Over-generalized, oversimplified or exaggerated beliefs associated with a category or group of people, which are not changed even in the face of contrary evidence

Race: A socially defined population characterized by distinguishable physical characteristics, usually skin color

Racism: The belief that some racial groups are inherently superior or inferior to others; discrimination, prejudice or a system of advantage and/or oppression based on race

Sexism: Discrimination or prejudice based on gender or gender identity

Sexual Orientation: Describes the gender(s) of people to whom a person feels romantically and/or sexually attracted:

Heterosexual: Attracted to the other gender

Homosexual: Attracted to the same gender (i.e., gay or lesbian)

Bisexual: Attracted to either gender

Socioeconomic Status: Individuals' economic class (e.g., poor, working-class, middle-class, wealthy) or position in society based on their financial situation or background

Stereotype: A highly simplified conception or belief about a person, place or thing, based on limited information

Transgender: Describes a person whose gender identity differs from his/her assigned gender and/or biological sex

Transsexual: A person whose gender identity differs from his/her assigned gender and/or biological sex. Many transsexuals alter their biological sex through hormones and/or surgery.

Values: What a person believes to be important and accepts as an integral part of who he/she is

Xenophobia: A fear of all that is foreign, or a fear of people believed to be "foreigners"

10 Benefits of Practicing Culturally Competent Child Advocacy

- 1.** Ensures that case issues are viewed from the cultural perspective of the child and/or family:
 - Takes into account cultural norms, practices, traditions, intrafamilial relationships, roles, kinship ties and other culturally appropriate values
 - Advocates for demonstrated sensitivity to this cultural perspective on the part of caseworkers, service providers, caregivers or others involved with the child and family
- 2.** Ensures that the child's long-term needs are viewed from a culturally appropriate perspective:
 - Takes into account the child's need to develop and maintain a positive self-image and cultural heritage
 - Takes into account the child's need to positively identify and interact with others from his/her cultural background
- 3.** Prevents cultural practices from being mistaken for child maltreatment or family dysfunction
- 4.** Assists with identifying when parents are truly not complying with a court order and when the problem is culturally inappropriate or noninclusive service delivery
- 5.** Contributes to more accurate assessment of the child's welfare, family system, available support systems, placement needs, service needs and delivery
- 6.** Decreases cross-cultural communication clashes and opportunities for misunderstandings
- 7.** Allows the family to utilize culturally appropriate solutions in problem solving
- 8.** Encourages participation of family members in seeking assistance or support
- 9.** Recognizes, appreciates and incorporates cultural differences in ways that promote cooperation
- 10.** Allows all participants to be heard objectively

Adapted from a document created by CASA for Children, Inc., Portland, Oregon.

Activity 3.7: An Action Plan for Increasing Cultural Competence

Part 1: Read the following information about becoming more culturally competent and think about what steps you will take to improve your cultural competency skills. On the worksheet that follows, write down the steps you will take. This plan is for you and will not be shared with the group.

13 Tips on How to Become More Culturally Competent

1. Learn about your culture and values, focusing on how they inform your attitudes, behavior and verbal and nonverbal communication.
2. Don't think that "good" and "right" values exist in your own culture exclusively; acknowledge that the beliefs and practices of other cultures are just as valid.
3. Question your cultural assumptions: Check their reality, rather than immediately acting on them.
4. Accept cultures different from your own and understand that those differences can be learned.
5. Learn to contrast other cultures and values with your own.
6. Learn to assess whether differences of opinion are based on style (communication, learning or conflict) or substance (issue).
7. Practice the communication loop; don't rely on your perceptions.
8. Examine the circle in which you live and play (this reflects your choice of peers). Expand your circle to experience other cultures, values and beliefs.
9. Continue to read and learn about other cultures. Do your homework: Know something about another culture group prior to approaching them.
 - Follow appropriate protocol: Know and demonstrate respectful behavior based on the values of the group.
 - Use collaborative networks—church (spiritual), community or other natural support groups of that culture.
 - Practice respect.
10. Understand that any change or new learning experience can be challenging, unsettling and tiresome; give yourself a break and allow for mistakes.
11. Remember the reciprocal nature of relationships—give something back.
12. See multiculturalism as an exciting, fulfilling and resourceful way to live.
13. Have fun and keep your sense of humor!

Adapted from materials developed by CASA for Children, Inc., Portland, Oregon.

Individual Action Plan for Cultural Competence

Name _____ Date _____

Specific: Write a very specific behavioral statement. (*For example, choose to develop or improve a skill or ability related to your cultural competence that could be seen on a videotape.*)

Measureable: Identify how you will measure your progress. (*How will you know when you have achieved your goal? Will something look different? Will you receive certain types of feedback?*)

Attainable: Is this goal within your reach? Describe how this goal *is* within your reach.

Realistic: Identify personal strengths or favorable factors in your environment that will support your progress.

Timely: Set a deadline by which you will accomplish this plan of action:

Benefits: What are the benefits (for you, for others) of setting and accomplishing this goal?

Signature/Date

Activity 3.7: An Action Plan for Increasing Cultural Competence

Part 2: There are many resources in your community for increasing your cultural competence. Consider going to the following places to learn more:

- Your local library
- Museums
- A university in your community
- The Internet
- Community agencies (such as the health department)
- Communities of faith
- Community groups focusing on the cultural traditions and norms of, as well as health services for, particular cultural or language groups

Can you think of any particular resources in your community for expanding your cultural competence? Go to the online Community Resources section that you and your classmates have been compiling online and add one community resource that could be used for expanding cultural competence. Remember, while race and ethnicity are often the first things that come to mind when people think of the word “culture,” there are many other aspects to culture—and many ways to develop cultural competence in every community.

The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children and Families

Activity 3.8: Janet's Story—Putting a Face on Domestic Violence

Part 1: Click on the link to Part 1 of Activity 3.8 to watch “Janet’s Story: A Tale of Domestic Violence.”

Part 2: Read the information that follows about domestic violence and how it impacts the work of CASA/GAL volunteers.

Domestic Violence—The Problem

- Estimates of violence against a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend range from nearly 1 million to 4 million incidents each year.
US Department of Justice, Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends, and Girlfriends, 1998.
- Domestic violence is statistically consistent across racial and ethnic boundaries.
Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, Violence Against Women: Estimates from the Redesigned Survey, 1995.
- In 2001, women accounted for 85% of the victims of intimate partner violence and men accounted for approximately 15% of the victims.
Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief, *Intimate Partner Violence*, February 2003.
- As many as 95% of domestic violence perpetrators are male.
A Report of the Violence Against Women Research Strategic Planning Workshop, sponsored by the National Institute of Justice in cooperation with the US Department of Health and Human Services, 1995.
- Between 1993 and 2004, intimate partner violence on average made up 22% of nonfatal intimate partner victimizations against women. The same year, intimate partners committed 3% of all violent crime against men.
Bureau of Justice Statistics, Intimate Partner Violence in the U.S. 1993–2004, 2006.
- Only approximately one-quarter of all physical assaults, one-fifth of all rapes, and one-half of all stalkings perpetuated against females by intimate partners are reported to the police.
Tjaden, Patricia & Thoennes, Nancy. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey,” (2000).
- Witnessing violence between one’s parents or caretakers is the strongest risk factor of transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next.
Break the Cycle, (2006). *Startling Statistics*.
http://breakthecycle.org/html%20files/l_4a_startstatis.htm.

- There are 16,800 homicides and 2.2 million (medically treated) injuries due to intimate partner violence annually, which costs \$37 billion.
The Cost of Violence in the United States, 2007. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centers for Injury prevention and Control. Atlanta, GA.
- 30% to 60% of perpetrators of intimate partner violence also abuse children in the household.
Edelson, J.L., (1999). "The Overlap Between Child Maltreatment and Woman Battering." *Violence Against Women*. 5:134-154.

As a CASA/GAL volunteer, it is important for you to be aware of the possibility that domestic violence exists in the families you encounter. If you suspect domestic violence is occurring, make sure the victim has several opportunities to talk to you alone. The partner who has been battered is often terrified of revealing the truth for fear of further violence. Observe body language carefully. Look for typical characteristics:

- A conspiracy of silence prevails.
- The batterer often seems more truthful, confident and persuasive than the victim.
- The victim may seem angry and frustrated.
- There is often no police or medical record of the violence.
- There is a recurring cycle of family tension, followed by the batterer's explosion, followed by a period of calm (often filled with apologies and promises) that then begins to build back to tension.

Domestic violence is about control and domination. When a battered partner leaves the family home (or the batterer is forced to leave), the batterer feels a loss of control formerly exerted. This makes the batterer even more likely to be violent. This increased level of danger makes many victims reluctant to leave, even when the consequence of staying may be the placement of children in foster care.

Definition

Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual and psychological attacks and economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use to control their current or former intimate partners (e.g., spouses, girlfriends/boyfriends, lovers, etc.). Domestic violence ranges from threats of violence to hitting to severe beating, rape and even murder. Victims and perpetrators are from all age, racial, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, educational, occupational, geographic and religious groups. Abuse by men against women is by far the most common form, but domestic violence does occur in same-sex relationships, and some women do abuse men.

Causes

Domestic violence stems from one person's need to dominate and control another. Domestic violence is not caused by illness, genetics, gender, alcohol or other drugs,

anger, stress, the victim's behavior or relationship problems. However, such factors may play a role in the complex web of factors that result in domestic violence.

Domestic violence is learned behavior; it is a choice.

- It is learned through observation, experience and reinforcement (perpetrators perceive that it works).
- It is learned in the family, in society and in the media.

Legal System Response

The legal system can respond to domestic violence as a violation of criminal and/or civil law. If the violence has risen to the level of assault, it can be prosecuted criminally. While definitions and procedures differ from one state to another, physical assault is illegal in all states. Law enforcement can press charges in criminal court with the victim as a witness. Victims may also secure a restraining/protective order and, in rare instances, may bring a civil lawsuit.

Whether a case proceeds in civil court or criminal court is dependent on a number of factors, many of which are beyond the victim's control. Availability and willingness of court personnel to act in domestic violence cases vary widely. Unless judges and attorneys, including prosecutors, have been educated about the dynamics of domestic violence, protective laws are inconsistently enforced. The repeated pattern of the abused spouse bringing charges and subsequently dropping them often discourages law enforcement personnel from giving these cases their immediate attention. Thus the victim is re-victimized.

The other setting in which the legal system and domestic violence may intersect is a court hearing regarding allegations of child abuse and/or neglect. As a CASA/GAL volunteer, you should be aware that a determination of domestic violence within the child's home will significantly influence placement decisions and what is expected of the non-abusing parent to retain/regain custody. The standard risk assessment conducted by child welfare agencies to evaluate whether a child needs to be removed from his/her home generally includes domestic violence as a factor that negatively relates to the child's safety at home. A child found to be living in a violent home is more likely to be removed. A child abuse or neglect case also may be substantiated against the battered parent for "failure to protect" the child because the victim did not leave the batterer, even if the victim lacked the resources to do so or it was not safe to do so.

Barriers to Leaving a Violent Relationship

For people who have not experienced domestic violence, it is hard to understand why the victim stays—or returns again and again to reenter the cycle of violence. The primary reason given by victims for staying with their abusers is fear of continued violence and the lack of real options to be safe with their children. *This fear of violence is real; domestic violence usually escalates when victims leave their*

relationships. In addition to fear, the lack of shelter, protection and support creates barriers to leaving. Other barriers include lack of employment and legal assistance, immobilization by psychological or physical trauma, cultural/religious/family values, hope or belief in the perpetrator's promises to change and the message from others (police, friends, family, counselors, etc.) that the violence is the victim's fault and that she could stop the abuse by simply complying with her abuser's demands. Leaving a violent relationship is often a process that takes place over time, as the victim can access resources she needs. The victim may leave temporarily many times before making a final separation.

Adapted from Domestic Violence: A National Curriculum for Children's Protective Services,
Anne Ganley and Susan Schechter, Family Violence Prevention Fund, 1996.

Impact on Children

Lenore Walker, author of *The Battered Woman*, describes the world of children who grow up in violent homes:

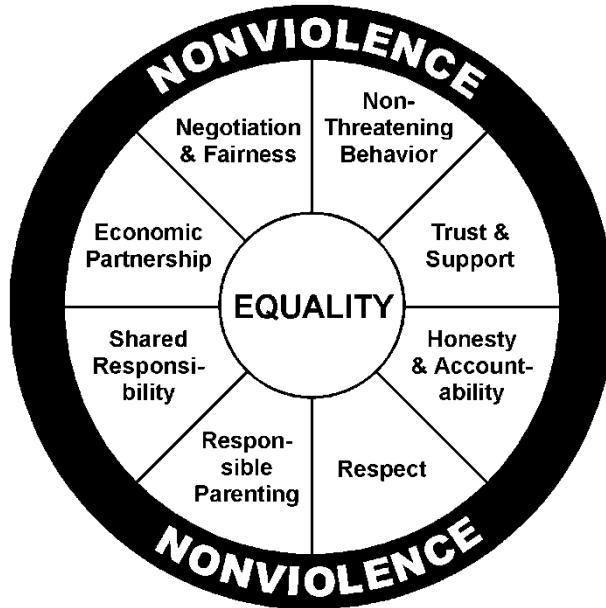
Children who live in battering relationships experience the most insidious form of child abuse. Whether or not they are physically abused by either parent is less important than the psychological scars they bear from watching their fathers beat their mothers. They learn to become part of a dishonest conspiracy of silence. They learn to lie to prevent inappropriate behavior, and they learn to suspend fulfillment of their needs rather than risk another confrontation. They expend a lot of energy avoiding problems. They live in a world of make-believe.

Children in families where there is domestic violence are at great risk of becoming victims of abuse themselves. Studies indicate this group is 15 times more likely to experience child abuse than children in nonviolent homes are. Over half of children in families where the mother is battered are also abused. In some cases, children may try to intervene and protect their mothers, getting caught in the middle of the violence. In most cases, however, children are also targets of the violence. At least 75% of children whose mothers are battered witness the violence. In some cases, the batterer deliberately arranges for the child to witness it. The effect on children's development can be just as severe for those who witness abuse as for those who are abused. Witnessing violence at home is even more harmful than witnessing a fight or shooting in a violent neighborhood. It has the most negative impact when the victim or perpetrator is the child's parent or caregiver.

Statistics from "Children: The Forgotten Victims of Domestic Violence,"
Janet Chiancone, *ABA Child Law Practice Journal*, July 1997.

The Equality Wheel...

Healthy relationships are based on the belief that two people in a relationship are partners with equal rights to have their needs met and equal responsibility for the success of the partnership. In this equality belief system, violence is not an option because it violates the rights of one partner and jeopardizes the success of the relationship. The dignity of both partners is built up in a relationship based on equality.



The Power & Control Wheel...

Abusive relationships are based on the mistaken belief that one person has the right to control another. When the actions described in the spokes of this wheel don't work, the person in power moves on to actual physical and sexual violence. The relationship is based on the exercise of power to gain and maintain control. The dignity of both partners is stripped away.



What Can a CASA/GAL Volunteer Do?

Be both knowledgeable and concerned about domestic violence.

Children from violent homes are at a higher risk for abuse than other children.

According to *A Nation's Shame*, a report compiled by the US Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, "Domestic violence is the single, major precursor to child abuse and neglect fatalities in the US."

Take into account the history and severity of family violence when making any recommendation for placement of a child.

Many professionals in the field of domestic violence believe that you cannot protect the child unless you also protect the primary nurturer/ victim (usually the mother). As part of that perspective, they advocate for placement of the child with the mother regardless of other factors, saying that to do otherwise further victimizes the mother at the hands of the system.

Determine the best interest of the child.

It may be that, with proper safeguards in place, the victim can make a safe home for the child while the threat from the batterer is reduced by absence, treatment and/or legal penalties. It is also possible that the victim has shortcomings that prevent her from caring for her family at even a minimally sufficient level. You should assess the situation with a clear understanding of domestic violence dynamics, but in the end, you must make a recommendation based solely on the best interest of the child.

Seek resources for children from violent homes.

Children need:

- Positive role models and supportive environments that will help them develop social skills and address feelings about the violence in a constructive manner
- Help adopting alternative, nonviolent ways to address and resolve conflict (through specialized counseling programs, therapy, domestic violence victim support groups, youth mediation training and relationships with supportive mentors)

Recommend help for parents.

- Try to ensure that domestic violence victims are treated fairly by the legal system and not further blamed in child abuse/neglect proceedings.
- Advocate in your community for things like housing, emergency shelters, legal procedures and court advocates that increase the safety of mothers and children and support the autonomy of the adult victim.
- Encourage parenting classes for battered parents focused on empowering them to become more effective parents and teaching them how to help children cope with the consequences of witnessing domestic violence.

- Advocate for treatment programs for batterers followed by parenting classes focused on how to parent in a non-coercive, nonintrusive manner.
- Be alert to any signs that domestic violence has recurred or even that contact between the batterer and the victim is ongoing if that might compromise the child's safety. The foremost issue is the safety of the child.

Activity 3.8: Janet’s Story—Putting a Face on Domestic Violence

Part 3: Post your responses to the following questions in the online discussion forum:

- What was going through your mind as you listened to Janet’s story?
- Did reading the material in Part 2 change how you thought about Janet’s story? How so?
- How do you think hearing Janet’s story and reading the information about domestic violence might influence your volunteer advocacy?

Part 4: Respond to at least two of your classmates by asking a question or making a comment on what they have posted.

The Impact of Substance Abuse on Children and Families

Activity 3.9: Understanding Substance Abuse

Part 1: Think of friends, family members or colleagues who currently or in the past may have abused one or more substances. As you think of these people, make two lists:

- What are their strengths? Why do you like them?
- How does/did their substance abuse impact their lives?

Strengths/Reasons I like this person...	How substance abuse impacts this person's life...

Part 2: Read the information below about substance abuse. Then click on the link to Part 2 of Activity 3.9 to look at a chart of commonly abused drugs. The facilitator will also provide information about the most commonly abused drugs in your community.

Substance Abuse—The Problem

- In 1999, 85% of states named substance abuse as one of the top two problems (the other was poverty) challenging families reported to child welfare agencies for child maltreatment.
- More than half of children in foster care have parents with substance abuse problems.
- In 80% of substance-abuse-related cases, the child's entry into foster care was the result of severe neglect.

Child Welfare League of America, Alcohol, Other Drugs, and Child Welfare, 2001.

Definitions

Psychoactive substances, whether legal (for instance, alcohol) or illegal, impact and alter moods, emotions, thought processes and behavior. These substances are classified as stimulants, depressants, opioids and morphine derivatives, cannabinoids, dissociative anesthetics or hallucinogens based on the effects they have on the people who take them.

Substance abuse occurs when a person displays behavior harmful to self or others as a result of using the substance. This can happen with only one instance of use, but it generally builds over time, eventually leading to addiction. Addiction, also called chemical dependency, involves the following:

- Loss of control over the use of the substance
- Continued use despite adverse consequences
- Development of increasing tolerance to the substance
- Withdrawal symptoms when the drug use is reduced or stopped

Causes

There are different theories about how abuse/addiction starts and what causes substance abuse/dependency. According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine, substance-related disorders are biopsychosocial, meaning they are caused by a combination of biological, psychological and social factors.

It is important to remember that people suffering from abuse/addiction are not choosing to be in the situation they are in. Try to see those who are addicted as separate from their disease. In other words, they should be seen as “sick and trying to get well,” not as “bad people who need to improve themselves.” This will help you remember to be compassionate and nonjudgmental in your approach.

Treatment

The field of addiction treatment recognizes an individual’s entire life situation. Treatment should be tailored to the needs of the individual and guided by an individualized treatment plan based on a comprehensive assessment of the affected person, as well as his/her family. Treatment can include a range of services depending on the severity of the addiction, from a basic referral to 12-step programs to outpatient counseling, intensive outpatient/day-treatment programs and inpatient/residential programs.

Treatment programs use a number of methods, including assessment; individual, group and family counseling; educational sessions; aftercare/continuing-care services; and referral to 12-step or Rational Recovery support groups. Recovery is a process—and relapse is part of the disease of addiction.

The process of recovery includes holding substance abusers accountable for what they do while using. While it is important to act in an empathetic manner toward

people with addictions, they must be held accountable for their actions. For example, a mother who is successfully participating in treatment may have to deal with her children being temporarily taken from her because of how poorly she cared for them when using. In most cases, successful recovery efforts can be rewarded.

Impact on Children

Children whose parents abuse drugs and alcohol are almost three times likelier to be abused and more than four times likelier to be neglected than children of parents who are not substance abusers. Substance abuse and addiction are the primary causes of the dramatic rise in child abuse and neglect cases since the mid-1980s.

National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, *No Safe Haven*.

It is helpful to remember that children of parents with abuse/addiction problems still love their parents, even though the parents may have abused or neglected them. However, the volunteer must always consider the impact that substance abuse has on children.

Activity 3.10: Substance Abuse and Parenting

Click on the link to Activity 3.10 to watch an online presentation. Use the space below to take notes and reflect on the effects of substance abuse on the families you might work with as a CASA/GAL volunteer. If you have questions about the material, post them in the online Parking Lot.

Notes on online presentation:

Activity 3.11: What the Child Experiences—Michelle’s Story

Part 1: Click on the link to Part 1 of Activity 3.11 to watch “Michelle’s Story” from *Powerful Voices: Stories by Foster Youth*. As you watch the video, think about the following questions:

- What role did Michelle’s family play in her life?
- How can you as a CASA/GAL volunteer help children maintain family connections?

Part 2: In the online discussion forum, post your responses to the questions you considered as you watched the video.

Part 3: Respond to at least two of your classmates by asking a question or making a comment about what they have posted.

Working with Families

Activity 3.12: Finding a Balance

Consider the following situation:

One-year-old Amber has been in foster care since shortly after her birth. She tested positive for two illegal substances at birth and showed signs of withdrawal.

Vanessa, her mother, has been in recovery for six months. She has had one known relapse but has had negative drug screens and good reports for the past two months. Everyone involved in the case agrees that she is not yet ready to have Amber live with her. She started a new job two weeks ago and does not yet have stable housing.

Part 1: In the online forum, list two reasons to terminate Vanessa's parental rights so Amber can be adopted by her foster parents. Next, list two reasons to give Vanessa more time to show she can parent Amber. As an added challenge, limit each response to one or two sentences.

Part 2: Respond to at least two of your classmates by asking a question or making a comment about what they have posted.

Part 3: Click on the link to Part 3 of Activity 3.12. Go to the last bullet point (Termination of Parental Rights Hearings) for a checklist of questions to consider in the decision whether or not to terminate a parent's rights.

Activity 3.13: What Challenges You?

Part 1: Which of the situations on this list would you find the hardest to work with? Put a checkmark next to the three you'd find hardest. What are your "hot buttons"?

- A parent who spends most of her money on drugs
- A parent who believes his wife/partner deserves the beatings he gives her
- A parent who lies to you
- A parent who lives in a deplorably dirty home with human/animal waste and no water
- A parent who fondles his 4-year-old child
- A parent who used drugs during her pregnancy
- A parent who refuses to take the medication that controls his mood swings
- A parent who left his children in the car in a parking lot while he went drinking at bars until closing time
- A parent who won't leave the man who physically abuses her in front of her children
- A parent who is so depressed she doesn't get out of bed for weeks at a time

Part 2: After you have made your choices, post your responses to the following questions in the online forum:

- Which situations did you pick as your top three and why?
- How might your values, thoughts and feelings about these situations impact your effectiveness as a CASA/GAL volunteer?

Part 3: Respond to at least two of your classmates by asking a question or making a comment about what they have posted.

Court Report Writing

Activity 3.14: Tips for Writing Effective Court Reports

Writing an effective court report is an important skill for CASA/GAL volunteers. Click on the link to Activity 3.14 to read a list of tips. Post any questions you have in the online Parking Lot.

In-Person Training

Welcome

Activity 3.15: Welcome

As you enter the room, write on the flipchart one thing you learned from the Session 3 online portion that you think you will use in your work as a CASA/GAL volunteer.

Learning with Case Studies

Activity 3.16: The Lavender Case

Part 1: Your group will receive a hard copy of the initial case file for the Lavender case. Take several minutes to begin digesting the information in this case file. Then send your Runner to the facilitator to request an additional document (either an interview transcript from a key player you'd like to speak with or another important document you'd find during a case). You may continue to request additional interviews and documents one at a time over the course of 35 minutes in order to complete your investigation of the case at this stage. After 35 minutes, your Scribe should legibly write on the flipchart your group's recommendations to the court regarding services for the child, services for the parent and placement decisions. A large group debrief will follow.

Part 2: Take a few minutes to view other groups' recommendations, and then briefly discuss the debrief questions that the facilitator distributes. In the large group, discuss these questions and any others that arose during the activity.

Activity 3.17: Writing Effective Court Reports—The Lavender Case

Part 1: In pairs, read the three sample court report excerpts below. Then answer the following questions:

- Which statements are based in opinion?
- Which statements are fact-based?
- What's missing from each example?
- What could be improved in each example?

Example 1

John Bass (alleged father) is in the county jail approximately 100 miles from the foster placement. He was busted for pot. Admittedly, he has a history of using inhalants. According to Mr. Bass, he was not with Ms. Mailer very long but claims Lavender is his child. He has never been a father to Lavender. Mr. Bass claims that he is Native American, and Lavender is too. He claims he is of a mixed background and the Mailers are not from his tribe. He has had limited contact with Lavender throughout her life, stating Ms. Mailer would not give him "the time of day."

Example 2

Lavender Bass (child): 6-year-old Lavender Bass has been in foster care for about three weeks and is not adjusting well. Lavender spends a lot of time in the yard and seems to not be very engaged. Lavender sometimes ignores the foster mother and doesn't listen to her when she is talking. The foster mother states she has to call her time after time to get her attention. This is not the best foster placement for Lavender. According to the foster mother, she had never attended school and this is her first time in a "real school." Lavender seems on target developmentally. She is washing and dressing herself and keeping up with her school work. The child could be Native American and this will need to be investigated.

Example 3

Susan Mailer (biological mother) has a history of drug abuse and violent behavior. Three weeks ago CPS found her passed out in the car from alcohol. A criminal records check confirmed Ms. Mailer has a tendency toward violent behavior. Ms. Mailer did not show up for court during the preliminary hearing and the CPS worker continues to leave messages via the telephone. CASA is able to reach mother via telephone. Ms. Mailer acknowledges that she works at a bar and sometimes takes Lavender to work with her. She states she likes to party from time to time with alcohol and drugs. She has had no visits with her child since she was taken into foster care. According to Ms. Mailer's sister, Ms. Mailer is working long hours and makes good money. CASA feels like drugs are being done at the home of the maternal aunt and grandmother. The children are also fearful of them.

Part 2: In the large group, discuss how to improve these sample sections. The facilitator may also share examples of effective court reports and court reports that need improving.

Activity 3.18: The Amarillo Case

Part 1: Your group will receive a hard copy of the initial case file for the Amarillo case. Take several minutes to begin digesting the information in this case file. Then send your Runner to the facilitator to request an additional document (either an interview transcript from a key player you'd like to speak with or another important document you'd find during a case). You may continue to request additional interviews and documents one at a time over the course of 35 minutes in order to complete your investigation of the case at this stage. After 35 minutes, your Scribe should legibly write on the flipchart your group's recommendations to the court regarding services for the child, services for the parent and placement decisions. A large group debrief will follow.

Part 2: Take a few minutes to view other groups' recommendations, and then briefly discuss the debrief questions that the facilitator distributes. In the large group, discuss these questions and any others that arose during the activity.

Activity 3.19: Session Debrief

In the large group, consider the following questions as you compare and contrast the information in the Lavender and Amarillo cases and your experiences working through them:

- How might some of the things we've been discussing be transferrable to cases that do not involve immigration or ICWA issues?
- How does your cultural lens impact your view of cases involving other cultures?
- What is the importance of legal connections (adoption) and familial connections to children in care? For example, in Maria's case, if she ages out, she'll have no legal connections to anyone, even though she may continue to have contact with birth family.
- Where could you go to learn more about a child's culture?

Wrapping Up

Activity 3.20: Know/Want/Learn

Look at the Post-its you placed on the “W” (WANT to Learn) flipchart at the end of Session 2. In the large group, discuss the following questions:

- Are there items you learned during this session that you’d like to move to the “L” (LEARNED) flipchart?
- Are there any new items you’d like to add to the “W” flipchart?

Wrap Up

Fill out the Session 3 Training Evaluation and give it to the facilitator before you leave.

Be sure to complete the online work for Session 4 by the deadline the facilitator specifies.