

2017 Pre-Service Curriculum Launch FAQ

Why has the National CASA Pre-service curriculum been revised?

- 1) This latest edition of the Pre-service curriculum contains current research from child advocacy sources that will equip your volunteers with relevant information, and will make them better informed advocates.
- 2) Specifically, you will see information on Adverse Childhood Experiences, educational advocacy, LGBTQ identity issues, disproportionality and trauma informed care that will arm volunteers with the most up-to-date information on which to base their recommendations for children.
- 3) In addition, this new version of the curriculum incorporates updated case studies based on real-world scenarios that are meant to present challenges to volunteers that will stretch their problem-solving skills and give them a sense of what it's like to advocate in the child welfare system. Educational research shows that including hands-on components to training significantly improves knowledge transfer for adult learners.

How do I access this curriculum?

Go to: www.casaforchildren.org/curriculum

The web address above contains all files for facilitator and volunteer training.

In order to access the revised curriculum, you must sign in using your program's ID and password at National CASA's website (www.casaforchildren.org). All programs in good standing are invited to download the materials. You will be asked to sign an agreement electronically that stipulates your agreement to limit distribution to CASA/GAL trainings.

Is this an entirely new curriculum?

Not at all. This curriculum combines the strongest elements from the 2007 pre-service edition, Flex Learning, Fostering Futures with current research. Those who have facilitated either the 2007 in-class edition or flex learning, will find this to be a familiar tool.

As a program director, when will I be trained on the new curriculum?

A representative from each state has been designated to be trained in one of four National CASA Master Trainer courses that will be completed by August 2017. Once trained, these facilitators will coordinate with their state leadership to determine the

best plan for training facilitators for local programs. In the meantime, please familiarize yourself with the revised curriculum in order to determine your preparation plans.

When will this new curriculum be available for my volunteers?

The curriculum is now available to your program in order for you to begin preparing to use it to train potential volunteers.

Although you may choose to facilitate this training without completing the Training of Facilitator course, we strongly encourage you to coordinate with your state leadership before proceeding.

What specifically has changed? Is the training harder or does it take longer?

This is a revision – not a rewrite – of the existing curriculum. Although the chapters have been reduced from 10 to 8, the training itself is still approximately 30 hours. The reduction is to bring more alignment around the core competencies expected of advocates, while allowing for additional case studies in order to increase participants' knowledge transfer.

Pre-work (homework) will allow participants to better prepare for in-class work that will include more complex and case studies that are emblematic of real world challenges. This learning program will enhance the advocates' experience while better preparing them to serve the children to whom they will be appointed.

If a volunteer participated in a previous training, does she or he need to do it again?

Not at all. Although there are additional resources, updated evidence and new case studies, volunteers trained in the previous curriculum will not be required to complete any additional training.

Is this applicable to staff training?

Yes, National CASA does recommend that the new material be incorporated in in-service trainings offered to existing volunteers and staff as well.

How was this curriculum developed?

This has been a four-year process working with child welfare field experts both inside and outside the CASA/GAL network. Particularly, the Curriculum Development Committee (comprising members of the network) have worked diligently to create a revision that is both for, and by, those providing the advocacy at the local level.

Additionally, National CASA has engaged experts in the field of training, child development and advocacy to provide feedback and input into the product. Lastly, ten

CASA/GAL programs across the nation, as well as National CASA staff, have piloted this revision to test its relevance to our work.

Why wasn't my state or local program consulted during the development process?

This revision has been a collaborative process, with input from representatives at state and local levels. National CASA has made every effort to ensure collaboration in creating this product.

Please note that our intent is to update this material more frequently with current research and information, utilizing updated technology means to gather input and distribute results. Anyone interested in participating in ongoing curriculum development is encouraged to contact his/her state organization or National CASA.

You mentioned improving respect for all viewpoints, does that mean volunteers weren't respectful in the past?

Not at all. But as we move forward in the work we do in the child welfare field, new discoveries are being made and new practices identified for serving children who have been abused or neglected. National CASA strives to ensure that programs and the volunteers they support are equipped with the best resources to advocate for children.

Does this new curriculum signify a change in philosophy or values for CASA/GAL programs?

In some ways, yes. Training and education should be provided on a continuous basis. Creating a curriculum that is static – as was the 2007 version – is a thing of the past. National CASA is committed to working with, and providing the best product to the network in order to improve best-interest advocacy. This revision represents the beginning of a new philosophy to continually provide updated resources to both train and inform the work that the network does every day.

How will this curriculum help increase cultural competency and reduce racial/ethnic bias, so that volunteers can deliver advocacy in keeping with values shared across the CASA network?

Cultural competency topics are present in every chapter. Although National CASA has long been a facilitator of trainings that strive to diminish bias in the field of child welfare (including utilizing trainings like “Knowing Who You Are”), this revision increases the emphasis on cultural competency, acknowledging bias and recognizing disproportionately for children and families involved in the foster care system.

Can I share this curriculum with anyone?

This evidence-informed manual has been created by contributors who are experts in their field, with the sole purpose of training CASA/GAL advocates to provide the best advocacy for the children served. Out of respect for this work, and because of the copyrights and legal protections this manual possesses, use of this manual (in part or in whole) by any person or entity that is not a member in good

standing of National CASA is strictly forbidden. Additionally, this manual is only to be used as a pre-service curriculum for potential advocates that have been recruited and screened by CASA/GAL programs in good standing with National CASA.

As facilitators, please express condition of use to any participant undergoing training or accessing this manual. If any violation of this policy is discovered, National CASA is to be notified immediately in order to ensure the integrity of curriculum's use.

What capacity does the curriculum deliver for the future?

Increasingly the network continues to set the national bar for well-trained highly skilled volunteers. Our shared intent in the newly revised curriculum strengthens the transfer of learning to significantly advance the outcomes of safety, permanence, and the opportunity to thrive.

State-of-the-art competencies are incorporated through the case studies and content to ensure every volunteer has what the need to know about the development of the child and the role of best-interest advocacy. As we move forward together, training experiences and newly generated knowledge will be incorporated in future versions of the curriculum. The new curriculum provides thought leadership and opportunity for collaborative impact across the next work as we move to the next level for highly effective best-interest advocacy.