**SFCASA DEPENDENCY COURT REPORT INSTRUCTIONS**

1. ***Email your draft report to your Case Supervisor 4 weeks before the hearing.***
2. ***Plan to write a CASA Court report for each 6 month review hearing (some additional reports may be necessary).***

**Content Guidelines:**

* **Please view the Court Report Webinar here prior to writing your first court report:** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSHqzCG7UXE**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSHqzCG7UXE)
* Court reports are rooted in fact-based observations from the past 6 month reporting period.
* The information in your report should not come as a surprise to team members, the youth, or their family.
* Collaborative writing with your Case Supervisor is to support:

1. non-judgmental clarity and bias reduction.
2. best interest advocacy through the lens of minimum sufficient level of care.
3. Include youth voice and take a strengths-based approach.

* Do not copy content from the PSW’s (county social worker) report.
* Do not copy content from previous CASA reports. *The judge has access to previous CASA reports. Verbatim repetition and old information are both unhelpful and disrespectful of the youth, their family and the Court, and diminish the impact of your report.*
* If the youth’s placement, caregiver name and/or school is designated as Confidential in a Status Review Report, DO NOT include that information in the report.

**Formatting Instructions:**

* Use the youth’s initials in the drafts you exchange with your Case Supervisor in order to protect the youth’s confidentiality.
* Let your Case Supervisor know if you’d like to include pictures with your report
* Set margins for 1.0’ on both sides and top & bottom
* Delete all instructions prior to submitting your draft report, including this page
* Starting on page 2, insert centered page numbers at the bottom of the report
* Use Times New Roman,12 point font.
* Do not use contractions (use “they are” instead of “they’re”).

**Distribution:**

* The final court report will be signed on your behalf by your Case Supervisor.
* SFCASA will file and electronically distribute a password protected filed copy of your court report to the named parties (including you!)
* A copy of your filed court report will be uploaded to the specific Court Hearing in the youth’s Case Record in the Advocate Link database.

Advocates who are new (3 months or less) will write an abbreviated Court Report including only:

• Same Header as standard Court Report

• Court Appointed Special Advocate

• Persons Contacted

• Records Reviewed

• Summary of Contacts (in which you will explain that you are recently matched, just getting started on the case, who you have spoken with, if you have met the youth or not – 1 paragraph)

• Number of Hours on the Case

• Signatures as standard Court Report

**COURT REPORT**

**Name of Dependent: Petition No.:**

**Date of Birth: Dept. No.:**

**Age: Time of Hearing:**

**Date of Hearing:**

**Type of Hearing:**

**COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE:**

First Last

**PERSONS CONTACTED:**

First Last (Youth’s Initials), Dependent

First Last, PSW

First Last, Dependent’s Attorney

* Additionally, list first and last names of all the professionals and family you spoke with **during the current reporting period** (include appropriate titles and organization for professionals).
* Other contacts may include parents, resource parents, and relative and non-relative supportive relationships.

**RECORDS REVIEWED:**

HSA-FCS File *(if this is your first court report, include date of review, otherwise omit)*

HSA-FCS Status Review Report for Six-Month Review Hearing on [insert date] (if you have seen the report prior to filing your report)

* List any current educational, health, or permanency-related documents (for example, IEPs, grade progress reports, Health and Education Passports (HEP), genograms, etc) with the dates of the document in parentheses.
* If the youth has an active JV-220 review and include.

**CONCLUSIONS: *(Conclusions should be brief, clear, and numbered statements. Conclusions are the heart of your court report, and must be supported in the following sections of the report.)***

1. State whether the dependent [use dependent’s initials] should remain a dependent of the Court or the case should be dismissed.
2. State whether the dependent should remain in current placement/home or not.
3. In separate conclusions, list the need for specific services in order of importance (educational needs, medical/dental needs, mental health/behavioral health therapy, etc.) that the dependent should be supported in accessing. What additional supports would encourage this access?
4. If visitation is recommended, state with whom. Consider if the dependent has appropriate access to family members such as biological parents and siblings.
5. List other sources of support or needs to be considered (e.g., enrichment activities, family-finding and engagement, housing, financial literacy, access to job training/supportive employment, etc.).

**SUMMARY OF CONTACTS** ***(paragraph form – please do not use bullet points)***

* Start by stating when you were assigned to the case: “I was appointed as the CASA for [initials] on month, day and year” (dates should be formatted: 01/01/2001).
* Provide a short summary of the general communications you had with service providers (PSW, attorney, and caregiver) during reporting period. *This section should be brief.*
* Briefly describe your time with the youth during this reporting period (frequency, activities engaged in). Briefly describe the strengths you have observed in the youth, bringing them to life with your observations. This is a preview of your Summary section at the end.

**BODY OF REPORT INSTRUCTIONS:**

This section is about the youth and how they are doing, and less so about your advocacy efforts.

In the following sections, provide factual information about the youth from the most recent reporting period. Emphasize any milestones achieved and progress made by the youth. Include current challenges or barriers the youth is facing, and any deficits in community resources or services.

Depending on the individual case and its level of activity, your comments may be more or less extensive for any one of these advocacy areas. **Ground the reasons for each of your Conclusions above with *fact-based observations*.** If you are including information gathered from others, note the source and dates of those conversations and/or documents. If you don’t have the exact date, provide an approximate date.

Please refer to people name in the body of the report. After being introduced by name and title in Persons Contacted, they should be referred to as “Ms. Soandso”, “Mr. Whatshisname” (not as “the foster parent,” “the social worker,” or “the mom”) If using “Firstname” only for gender spectrum considerations, please be consistent with this convention throughout the report.

**PLACEMENT *(paragraph form – please do not use bullet points)***

* Describe the placement, length of time, and suitability for current level of need.
* Relay what the youth has shared about their feelings on where they live and their caregivers.
* Describe how the youth’s voice and opinions are incorporated into decision making around placement. Use quotes wherever possible.
* If the youth had multiple placements during this period, describe the housing and length of time in each, including any details regarding why the move occurred.
* Carefully consider any inferences you are making. For example, if you describe the caregiver(s) as “conscientious,” include observations of behaviors and actions that demonstrate this.
* Refrain from using vague and subjective adjectives such as “loving” and “caring.” Refrain from using language such as “it seems” and “it appears.” Instead, include direct observations or quotes.

**EDUCATION *(paragraph form – please do not use bullet points)***

* If a CASA volunteer is holding Educational rights for the youth, please state “Please see accompanying JV537 from the Educational Rights Holder”. In this case, this section will be brief.
* List the school or program name, grade level, and any school changes during reporting period.
* State the name and relationship to the youth of the Educational Rights Holder. If you do not hold education rights, describe your communications with the ERH.
* In order to support recommendations for increased support or celebrate growth, include the youth’s current grades, attendance record, school achievements/awards, and any discipline actions. Provide context and always celebrate progress.
* If you highlight an area that is in need of attention, ensure that you are making a specific ask that would support that need.
* If the youth currently has an IEP or 504 Plan, list the last meeting date and the services/accommodations they are receiving. What is working and what is not?
* If relevant, provide information regarding tutoring or status of requests for tutoring.
* Share the youth’s voice on current/future goals and postsecondary/vocational plans.
* If they are moving onto or currently attending postsecondary education, describe the status of college and financial aid applications (FAFSA, Dream Act, Chafee, CalGrant, etc.).

**HEALTHCARE *(paragraph form – please do not use bullet points)***

* Physical health: include recent medical, dental, and vision appointments, any outstanding needs, and any needs met during the reporting period.
* Mental and behavioral health: include a brief description of any need for services, the services they are involved in, their frequency, and highlight the progress and/or goals of their services—as appropriate and respectful.
* *Be mindful that your Case Supervisor may advise that certain healthcare information should not be included for reasons of privacy and/or confidentiality.*
* Highlight the youth’s voice and opinions around the health services they receive.
* If the youth has an active JV-220 (is currently being prescribed psychotropic medications), include the type, basic symptoms being treated, any behavioral or therapeutic services the youth is receiving, the youth’s opinion of the medications, and any concerns about the type or amount of medications.

**COMMUNITY AND FAMILY CONNECTIONS *(paragraph form – please do not use bullet points)***

* Describe the formal, informal, family, and non-kin relationships the youth has, including how frequently they see each other.
* Remember to consider all avenues of permanency, such as school friends, older siblings, relatives in other states, coaches, friends’ families, etc.
* Describe any relationships in need of exploration and/or support, including any court-ordered visitations or informal visitations.
* Describe involvement in extracurricular activities (and need for support to access). This can include school activities (sports, band, student government, school clubs, etc.) or other community activities.
* Describe if the youth has access, or needs support, to engage with their personal passions.

**INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS (for Youth ages 16-20) *(paragraph form – please do not use bullet points)***

* List when youth was referred to ILSP/ILP services and how they access services, as well as involvement in other programs supporting independent living skills.
* Describe how the youth is learning about their rights and the resources available to them. Consider the youth’s progress in independent living skills such as:
  + financial literacy/independence (budgeting, checking account, credit checks).
  + use of public transportation and/or progress toward a driver’s license.
  + employment (job search techniques, resume writing, interviewing skills).
  + management of healthcare needs (expressing needs and accessing services).
  + goal setting, self-advocacy, including around the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.
* Include successes and milestones in addition to areas of growth and need.
* As relevant, include current employment and/or job training.

**SUMMARY *(paragraph form – please do not use bullet points)***

* Lastly, conclude your report with a short paragraphor two that includes:
  + What do you enjoy about working with the youth?
  + What do you observe and experience to be their strengths?
  + How can the court, the team, the service providers, and you as the CASA provide additional support to meet the needs you have listed in the report?
  + What do you hope to support the youth with during the next period?
  + What, if anything, have they asked specifically for your support with?

**NUMBER OF HOURS SPENT ON CASE:**

To date, I have spent a total of [include cumulative number of hours here— available in Advocate Link] hours on this case, [include number of hours with youth here—available in Advocate Link] of which have been spent directly with [youth’s initials].

STOP!

1. Did you remove all instructions from your draft?
2. Did you make sure you have 1.0’ margins?
3. All dates are in the mm/dd/yyyy format e.g. 07/02/2022?
4. With the exception of the first page, all pages are numbered.
5. Spacing between sentences and paragraphs is consistent.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Your Name – First Last Case Supervisor Name – First Last

SFCASA Volunteer SFCASA Case Supervisor

Date Submitted:

***(contact information can be found in Advocate Link)***

cc: First Last, PSW

First Last, Dependent’s Attorney

First Last, City Attorney

First Last, Mother’s Attorney\*

First Last, Father’s Attorney\*

First Last, Court Appointed Special Advocate

[Any additional attorneys on case (e.g. any Guardian ad litems or other attorneys appointed for special needs, such as education, estate planning, etc.)]

*\* When a youth reaches age 18 and elects to remain in dependency as a non-minor dependent (NMD), attorney(s) for the parent(s) are relieved of their assignments. Similarly, if parental rights have been terminated in the matter of a minor youth, attorney(s) for the parent(s) are relieved. In these matter attorney(s) for parent(s) should not be listed.*