

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Starting your case:

Case opening assessments are emailed to CASA volunteers on the 1st business day of each month. The assessment is sent to you within 2-3 months of case assignment. Complete your case opening assessment within 3 months of receiving the first assessment email, if possible. Reminder emails are sent at the beginning of each month. Up to two reminder emails will be sent.

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

Before completing this assessment:

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

Ongoing monitoring:

Ongoing wellbeing assessments are emailed to volunteers the first business day of October, February and June and open for a two-week window. These assessments cover key domains and your advocacy work since the last assessment. If your case is less than two months old or you took the case opening within 30 days, you will not receive the ongoing assessment until the next round.

Surveys close at 11:59pm on the last day listed. The dates for 2022 are:

- February: 1-15th (Wednesday to Wednesday)
- June: 1-15th (Thursday to Thursday)
- October 3rd-17th (Tuesday-Tuesday)

Case closing:

Case closing assessments meant to capture how the child is doing in key areas at the end of the case, or the CASA program's time serving the case. They are emailed to CASA volunteers the first business day of each month based on the case or child closure date. If you are discharged but the case is not yet closed, you will not receive an assessment. Please complete this request within 1 month of your case closing. It contains wrap-up information for your assigned child and some questions about your experience.

Taking the surveys:

Colorado CASA, the statewide CASA organization, sends the assessments. You will receive the email from Kelsey Fife Duarte (kelsey@coloradocasa.org). Please add her email to your contacts so the assessments don't go to spam. The Survey will be sent to the email you mark 'best,' in Optima. You can edit your email address in Optima any time by clicking on 'Personal Info' from the home screen, and then 'Edit.' Please note: emails for the survey are pulled about two weeks before the send date, so make sure to update your email address well in advance or contact your supervisor about any last minute changes.

FAQs:

Q-How long will the assessments take?

A-The average time spent in June 2020 was 10 minutes. Assessments are shortest for the babes (kids not yet attending grade school) and longest for those over 14, as we ask about transition to adulthood.

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

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

Q-What if I serve multiple children?

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

Q: What if I'm assigned to child(ren) with another CASA volunteer? Will we both get the assessment? *You will be both be emailed the assessments. Please talk and decide who will complete the assessment. We only need one per child.*

Q. What if I take over a case for another CASA? Will I take the case opening? *No. The wellbeing assessments follow the child's trajectory while served by the CASA program. We use the date the child was FIRST appointed a CASA volunteer to send the case opening assessments. If you take over a case you will pick up where the other CASA left off, and most likely be send the next ongoing monitoring assessment (February, June, October). You can ask your supervisor about seeing the prior wellbeing assessments.*

Q-Why did the questions change?

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

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

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

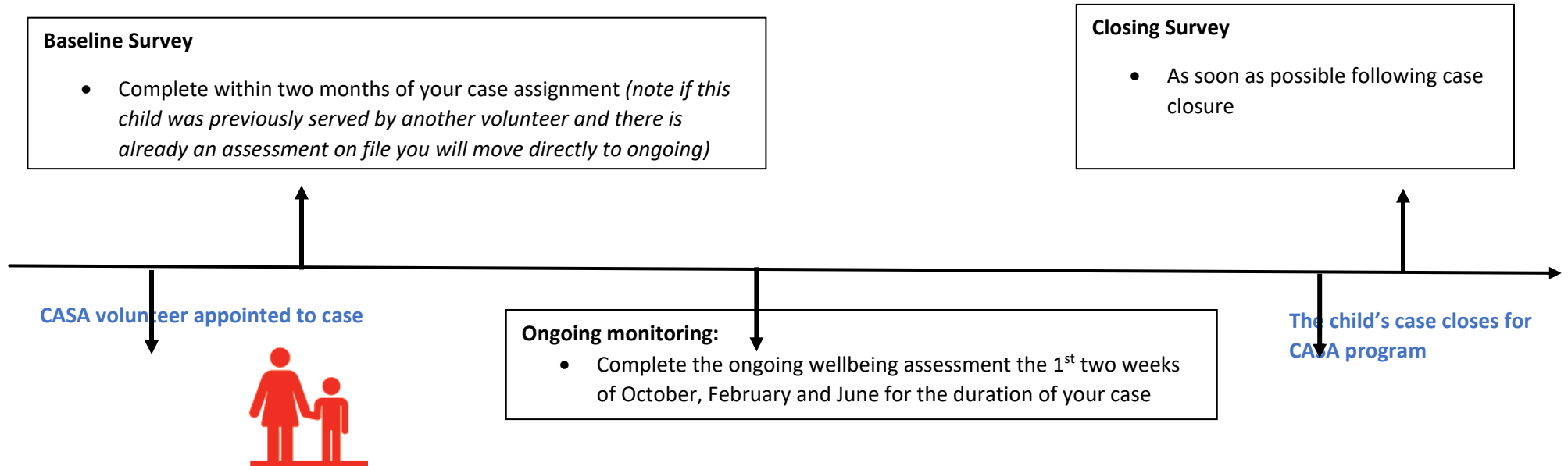
Q: Does the time I spend checking-in and completing the wellbeing assessments count toward my total case time?

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

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

A: *Consider if you're eligible—if you were emailed a case opening assessment within the last two months or completed the the Case Opening Assessment in the last 30 days, we don't need another assessment. Also, if you serve a non-D&N case, the child is not eligible to be assessed. If you think you should have received it, check your spam folder and look for an email from kelsey@coloradocasa.org. To avoid the email going to Spam in the future please add the email address to your contacts/address book. If you still don't see it, email both your supervisor and kelsey@coloradoCASA.org with the subject line: MISSING ASSESSMENT.*

Summary of Monitoring Timeline for CASA Volunteers



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

What's the key information on the surveys?

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

How long will each survey take? Approximately 8-10 minutes to complete.

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

