



Change a Child's Story™

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Children of Atlantic and Cape May Counties and its trained volunteers speak on behalf of abused and neglected children in the foster care system and are dedicated to ensuring these children are placed in safe permanent homes as quickly as possible.

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

An important part of your role as a CASA volunteer is to monitor your assigned child's progress and report your advocacy actions.

Research shows that just one caring adult can increase a child'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.

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 each domain**
- **Reflect on what they need to best cope with the challenges, and 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 Atlantic and Cape May counties. 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 case assignment to case closure, we monitor domains connected with risk and protective factors, 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.

Ongoing monitoring:

Two unique ongoing wellbeing assessments are available for completion by advocates in January and June and are open for a two-week window. These assessments are the Behavioral/Physical Health assessment for children ages 0-21 and the Educational assessment for children ages 5-21. Below are instructions on how to complete the assessments in Optima, the questions included on each assessment, and a guide to help answer the questions. If you have any questions or concerns about the assessments, please contact your Program Coordinator.

Thank you for completing these assessments and ensuring the best possible outcomes for the children you serve.

Directions for Completing Well-Being Assessment in Optima

1. After logging into Optima, select your case.
2. Scroll all the way down to the bottom of the screen and click on the tab labeled **“Wellbeing”**
3. Click **“Add”** (a new screen will appear)
4. Select the Child Name/Age you want to complete the assessment for
5. Select Wellbeing Category – **“Education” or “Behavioral/Physical Health”**
6. Select Assessment Name – **“Educational Advocacy” or “Child Well-Being”**
7. Click on **“Assess”** – a window will appear asking you to complete assessment now, click **“Assess”** again
8. Answer the Yes or No questions and click **“Save”** when finished. The assessment should only take about 5-10 minutes to complete.

Behavioral/Physical Health Assessment Questions

1. Is the child/youth current with well-visits and immunizations?
 - Yes
 - No
2. Does the child/youth participate in regular dental visits?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Child not yet old enough
3. Does the child/youth have any chronic health conditions?
 - Yes
 - No
4. Is the child/youth receiving the needed care for all chronic health conditions?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Child does not have any chronic health conditions
5. Has the child/youth been a victim of or witness of a violent crime either at home or at school?
 - Yes
 - No
6. Does the child/youth exhibit positive self-image?
 - Yes
 - No
7. Does the child/youth have a parent that is currently incarcerated?
 - Yes
 - No
8. Is the child/youth currently receiving counseling/therapy?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not identified as a needed service
9. Is the child/youth connected to at least one positive adult role model other than you, their CASA volunteer?
 - Yes
 - No

10. Does the child/youth have friends or other appropriate peer relationships? Please note in the box below if you have had the opportunity to observe interactions with peers either in schools, playgroups, or daycares.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Child not yet old enough
11. Is the child/youth involved in any volunteer or other school/community based activities, or have any after school job? Please note any specifics below.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Child not yet old enough
12. Does the child/youth enjoy reading? If child is under 5, is there someone that reads to the child regularly (at least 3 times a week)?
 - Yes
 - No
13. Is the child currently placed with his/her siblings?
 - Placed with all siblings
 - Placed with some siblings
 - Not placed with any siblings
 - Child does not have any siblings
14. Does the child have regular and consistent visitation with his/her siblings?
 - Regular and consistent visitation with all siblings
 - Regular and consistent visitation with some siblings
 - No regular and consistent visitation with any siblings
 - Visitation with siblings is not currently in the child's best interest
 - Child does not have any siblings

Educational Assessment Questions

1. Is the child/youth currently enrolled in school?
 - Yes
 - No
2. If the child/youth experienced a change in schools within the last 6 months, were you in support of the change?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Child did not change schools
3. During the last 6 months, has the child/youth attended school regularly?
 - Yes
 - No
4. During the last 6 months, has the child/youth exhibited appropriate classroom behavior?
 - Yes
 - No
5. During the last 6 months, has the child/youth maintained or shown improvement in report card grades?
 - Yes
 - No
6. Is the child/youth on target to advance the next grade level?

- Yes
 - No
7. During the last 6 months, has the child/youth received all educational evaluations and interventions in a timely manner?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No evaluations or interventions needed
 8. During the last 6 months, has the child/youth participated in school based or community based programs that support academic achievement and graduation? (PALs, Boys and Girls Club, Boy Scout/Girl Scouts, Community rec centers, etc.)
 - Yes
 - No
 9. During the last 6 months, has the child/youth connected with a mentor or mentoring program? (formal or informal, i.e. positive adult roles model, YAP, Big Brother/Big Sister, etc.)
 - Yes
 - No
 10. During the last 6 months, has the child/youth participated in any after-school programs that include a tutoring or homework help component and focuses on academic success?
 - Yes
 - No

Optima Wellbeing Assessment Question Guide

This guide is just a tool to help clarify questions and their meanings. Typically, CASA Volunteer Advocates would know these answers from the regular communication with the child and collateral contacts. If you are unsure of any questions, please contact your Peer Coach for further explanation.

Behavioral/Physical Assessment

- 1.) Based on the schedule outline by the American Academy of Pediatrics, has the child attended all well visits and received all immunizations recommended for their age?
- 2.) All children 3 or older should be seen by a dentist. Children under the age of three will have their dental needs attended to by their Pediatrician if they are on schedule with their regular well visits.
- 3.) Chronic health conditions are any medical conditions that require regular monitoring or follow-up care. These include, but are not limited to, asthma, diabetes, cerebral palsy, sickle cell anemia, or congenital heart disease
- 4.) Is the child receiving care as outlined by their Pediatrician or other medical professional?
- 5.) Violent crimes would include but are not limited to assault, domestic violence, gun violence, homicide, robbery, sexual assault or abduction.
- 6.) Does the child have a positive view of their abilities, appearance and personality?
- 7.) Is either parent or long-term caregiver in jail or prison?

- 8.) Typically, counseling/therapy is a service needed by our children.
 - Yes – engaged in the service
 - No – child not engaged because of waitlist, not yet court ordered or refusal of services by child or caretaker
 - Not identified as a needed service - because of age or inability to engage.
- 9.) Positive adult role models could include, but are not limited to, other family members, resource parents, teachers, coaches, or mentors.
- 10.) Have you observed the child interacting with peers? Have you discussed friendships the child may have either with them or with their resource parents.
- 11.) Volunteer opportunities would be any experience in which the child participates their time either at school or the community; community and school based activities include sports, organized recreational activities, boy/girl scouts, faith based groups, clubs and other groups
- 12.) Based on conversations with or observations of the child, their caregiver and teachers, does the child enjoy reading regularly?
- 13.) Does the child currently live with any or all of their sisters and brothers
- 14.) Does the child currently have visitation as court ordered with their sisters and brothers.

*Notes – Please share all of your thoughts on the needs of this child

Educational Assessment

- 1.) Any child enrolled in school, including Pre-k – Post-secondary education.
- 2.) A change in school refers to a change in district based on the child’s placement. If a child changes schools based on being promoted to the next grade level, this would not apply as a change in school.
- 3.) Attending school regularly would mean that the child’s attendance satisfactorily meets the attendance policy of the school district as noted on the child’s report card.
- 4.) Appropriate classroom behavior is defined and reported by the child’s teacher and/or caregiver.
- 5.) Maintenance or improvement in grades can be confirmed through report cards or through conversations with the child’s teacher.
- 6.) Being on target to advance to the next grade can be confirmed through report cards or through conversations with the child’s teacher.
- 7.) Based on the evaluations or interventions needed, a timely manner would be outlined in the CASA Educational Advocacy training manual as indicated by state law timelines and can be learned from conversations with teachers and caregivers.
- 8.) School-based or community based programs that support academic achievement are not limited to the suggestions listed and could include faith based programs.

9.) Mentors and mentoring programs could be formal such as YAP, Big Brother/Big Sisters or other school, community, or faith based mentoring program; Or informal, such as connecting with a positive adult role model.

10.) After-school programs that offer tutoring or homework help could be offered at school, through a community group, or through a faith-based group.

*Notes – Please share all of your thoughts on the needs of this child