

CASA Kids Newsletter

May 2019

You Are Invited!

CASA Kids invites all CASAs & a guest to a brunch (vegan and gluten free options available) to acknowledge your hard work and celebrate your contributions to the families in our community.

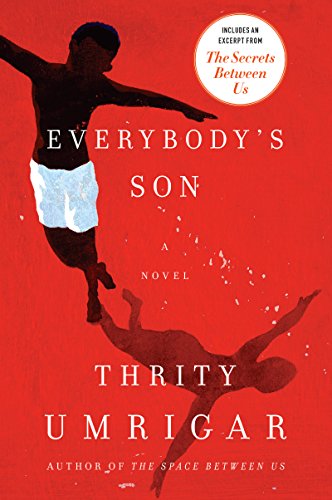
When: Saturday, May 4th, 10am – 12pm

Where: Totem Yacht Club, 5045 N. Highland, Tacoma

DEPENDENCY PROGRAM BOOK CLUB



Everybody’s Son, By: Thrity Umrigar



Meet at the **Point Ruston Anthem**

5005 Main St #105

Tacoma, WA 98407

**May 16, 2019**

**5:30-7:00pm**

Questions? Please call Buffy Via at 253-625-4006

 **Morgan’s Legal Corner**

**Confidentiality as a CASA: Can I Share This Information?**

You are finishing up a home visit with a child who has been placed with their Aunt. As you are headed out the door, Aunt says to you, “I heard Father got into inpatient treatment. How is he doing there?”

Confidentiality is one of the most important obligations that a CASA has. As a CASA, you are routinely faced with the question: **Can I share this information with someone else about this child or this case?**

Confidentiality obligations are governed by Guardian ad Litem Rule (GALR) 2(n) and RCW 13.50.100. Under the GALRs, a CASA has an obligation not to make any disclosures about the case, parties, or investigation except in reports to the Court or as necessary to perform the duties of the Guardian ad Litem. Generally, you are permitted to disclose information to the parties in the case (or their attorneys), although information about one parent shouldn’t be disclosed to the other parent (or their attorney).

Under RCW 13.50.100, a CASA may only release confidential information about a case to another participant in the juvenile justice system when the other participant is involved in a case about the juvenile. This statute allows us to reveal information to the parties involved in the dependency case, as well as (in limited circumstances), law enforcement, the prosecutor’s office, schools, and the office of the family and children’s ombudsman.

So, what can you tell the Aunt in the above scenario? Aunt is not a party to the case, so unfortunately, you can’t reveal any information to her. Even confirming that Father is in inpatient treatment could be a violation of your confidentiality obligations. The best practice is to tell Aunt that your confidentiality obligations as a CASA don’t permit you to share information with her about the parents, but she can follow up with the social worker, if she has any questions or for more information. The Aunt may be frustrated with you, but you have an obligation to the Court to protect confidential information.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about what information you can or cannot reveal and to whom, please talk to your CASA Coordinator or Morgan Chaput, the CASA Program attorney. If you don’t have the Pierce County CASA’s “Disclosure Flowchart,” please ask your CASA Coordinator for a copy! If you’d like a refresher about the Guardian ad Litem Rules training, please contact your CASA Coordinator for upcoming dates.

**Ambivalence & Being a CASA  
By Starr Mayer**

I have been working with a family for a year, but I have encountered versions of them many times before. Perhaps you have, too. The children are in foster homes where they started out in rough shape but are now thriving. The parents love their children very much and want them “home,” but they are enmeshed in the net of addiction. For the first year, most weeks brought promises of visits, telephone calls, behavior changes – but they never happened. Each meeting the parents asked the same question: what do I have to do to get my kids back? I always responded with the same short list of the recent court’s requirements.

Meanwhile, the kids struggled. The little ones, born with drugs in their system, grappled with multiple health issues. The older kids experienced mental health problems exacerbated by inadvertent changes in living situations after plaintive requests to be placed with family or inappropriate relatives were denied. Gradually, though, thanks the stability of their current placements, and the love and care and patience of acting parents, the children began to thrive. The little ones developed abilities to talk and walk and hug. The older ones developed skills to self talk through disappointments and to handle their general anger in healthy ways. And the foster parents, in spite of their knowledge and self awareness, began to think of becoming forever families. After all, they had lived through the worst – the multiple doctor appointments on a weekly basis, the anger directed at them that should have gone elsewhere, the sacrifices made to other family members, and – perhaps most difficult of all – the love that other family members now felt for the newcomers.

Each month, during visits, I would be asked “What’s happening? What’s next?” I knew that what I couldn’t tell them they were already discussing with each other. They desperately wanted clarity and permanency, even though they knew they were unlikely to receive either.

And then, as the date for decision making grew near, the parents gathered all their courage and cut a hole in the nets that had contained them. They went to treatment programs. They did mental and physical evaluations. They turned into sober and happy and hopeful adults and parents. They had creative ideas for visits with the children. They were consistent in promises made and kept. And I was so proud of them.

And that’s when I got hit by this gigantic load of ambivalence. I, too, was happy; I was also sad. I was hopeful; I was scared. I was positive; I was cautious. In fact, every single person involved intimately with this case experienced the exact same feeling of being split, with our feet facing two different directions.

I love this stage in a case; I hate this stage in a case.

I don’t know how this will end. I do know that this period of time in a case – when we are called upon to suspend our knowledge of past experiences, to climb over our fears, to believe in each individual child and adult, and support each bit of progress – is hard and painful.

Maybe someday they will create a pill for this sort of ambivalence and ambiguity. If so, I plan to ask for enough for all of us.

**Therapeutic Courts: Best for Babies & Family Recovery Court (FRC)**

Best for Babies supports families in dependency who have infants and toddlers ages 0-3. Goal: Earlier permanence, with desired goal being reunification for kids ages 0-3 Program components: • Focus on infant mental health, child focused services • Attachment to parents and caregivers • Best for Babies Family Team Meetings every 60 days • More frequent court hearings • Frequent family time • Collaborative team approach • Concurrent planning Why choose Best for Babies? • Children under 3 • One parent must opt in Contact: Kris Freeman 253-798-7944 Julie Hoffman 253-777-3622

Family Recovery Court (FRC) FRC is for families where substance use is the primary issue contributing to inability to safely parent (dependency and non-custodial cases). Goal: Address parents’ substance use to support earlier reunification with kids ages 0-17 Program components: • Substance use disorder outpatient treatment (inpatient referrals when necessary) • Treatment representative at every court hearing • Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) • Mental health therapy • Onsite family time at Pierce County Alliance (PCA) • Parenting skills training • Intensive case management on life domains • Community speakers and guest speakers at PCA Why choose FRC? • Access to substance use treatment • Immediate and interim family time • Ability to address all basic needs (transportation, food, housing, medical, employment and education) • Parents have significant substance use issues Screen in every Wednesday at Superior Court in Tacoma Contact: Qytrice McHenry 253-999-2043 Holly Jo McGuire-Shride 253-302-2019

**CASA Highlights**

Christal Davis wants to single out her CASA Sarabeth Butts, who advocates for a 17 year old who turns 18 in a few months. The teen was placed with a relative and unbeknown to the CASA, the placement disrupted and the teen was moved to a group home. The teen’s attorney filed a motion to move the child in the home of her boyfriend and his family. Due to Sarabeth’s diligence, she was able to visit the teen, go and meet the boyfriend and his family, and conduct a walk through of the home as well as completing background checks on all the parties. Thanks to her efforts, the Court sided with Sarabeth's wishes, and agreed to place the teen in the home of the boyfriend. Great job, Sarabeth!

**Friendly Reminders About Mandatory Training Hours**

CASAs are required to attend at least 12 hours of on-going training each year.  The new CASA Manager database makes it a lot easier for coordinators to track CASA hours. Many things qualify for the training hours, including lunch box learnings, observing court, and even participating in the CASA book club. CASAs can also capture all the hours by attending the Washington State CASA Conference in October or the Children’s Justice Conference in May.  In addition, CASAs can attend community trainings and for those CASAs who are currently students, some relative classes may count towards training hours—just check with your coordinator.

Three Reasons to Meet Training Hours:

1. Dependent on funding, for every training you go to you are entered into a drawing for a free registration (and possibly hotel as well) at the WA State CASA Conference in October.
2. If you are ever called to testify in a case, you will be asked about any trainings you have attended.
3. Ongoing training is required by the rules that govern all CASAs.



**Treehouse: Educational Support for Foster Kids**

**By: Lauren Stasiak**

Located in Seattle, and serving foster kids in the Tacoma, Clover Park, Franklin Pierce, Puyallup, and Bethel school districts, Treehouse provides academic and other essential support for more than 7,000 youth in foster care across Washington state every year.

One of the key Treehouse services many CASAs utilize is educational advocacy for pre-Kindergarten to high school students in foster care. These advocates work with CASAs, teachers, and caregivers to help with developing and supporting IEPs (Individualized Education Program), easing the transition to a new school due to a change in placement, and more.

The program welcomes inquiries from CASAs, and can provide information, quick evaluations, and educational advocacy for children on your case. For more information about how educational advocacy might help a child on your caseload, visit the Treehouse website at <https://www.treehouseforkids.org/> or contact Rodney Robinson at Rodney.Robinson@treehouse.org.

CASAs are also welcome to refer a child directly to the program through the “Make a Referral” button on the website <https://www.treehouseforkids.org/> but before doing so, please check in with your coordinator.

**Upcoming Trainings**  
  
**Investigate/Monitor l** Wed 6/5 **l** 5:30 to 7:30

**Report Writing** **l** Wed 7/24 **l**5:30 - 7:30

**Lunch Box Learning & Case Consults: l** Fri 5/17 & Fri 6/21**l** Lunch Box @ 11:00-12:30 **l** Case Consults 12:30-1:00 **l**  
 **GAL Rules l** Thurs 8/8 **l** 5:30 to 7:30

**Training for New CASAs**  
Sat 2/9 **l** Sun. 2/10 **l** Sat. 2/16 **l** Sun. 2/17 **l** Ts. 4/23  
Sat. 3/2 **l** Sat. 3/9 **l** Sun. 3/17 **l** Sun. 3/24 / **l**Ts. 5.21  
Sat. 4/27 **l** Sun. 5/5 **l** Sat. 5/11 **l** Sun. 5/19 **l** Ts. 7/23  
Sat. 7/13 **l** Sun. 7/21 **l** Sat. 7/27 **l** Sun. 8/4 **l** Ts. 10/1  
Sat. 9/21 **l** Sun. 9/29 **l** Sat. 10/5 **l** Sun. 10/13 **l** Ts. 12/10



**Board of Directors & Committees**  
  
Mary Bartley: President **l** Kathy Bertram: Vice President; Recruitment & Retention **l** Jenny Kenyon Gentry  Secretary; Recruitment & Retention; Community Relations & Social Media **l** Dan Casey: Treasurer, Children’s Program **l** Buffy Via: CASA Liaison **l** Lauren Stasiak: Newsletter **l** Mike McCowan: Fundraising  
  
CASA Kids meets on the 2nd Wednesday, every other month, from 5:30 - 7:30 in the CASA room at Remann Hall. Meetings are open to all.  
January **l** March **l** May **l** July **l** September **l** November