

CASA Volunteer Guide: Building Meaningful Connections with Children

Welcome!

This guide gives practical, step-by-step ways to build trust, rapport, and meaningful connections with the children you advocate for. Small, consistent actions make a big difference in a child's life.

1. Be Consistent and Reliable

- Visit or communicate regularly (calls, video, in-person).
- Small gestures like remembering birthdays or favorite activities build trust.

2. Listen Actively

- Ask open-ended questions: *"What was the best part of your week?"*
- Let the child guide the conversation.
- Reflect back what you hear: *"It sounds like that made you happy."*

3. Learn About Their Interests

- Find out what hobbies, sports, or games they enjoy.
- Plan small shared activities around these interests.

4. Respect Their Comfort Level

- Allow children to open up at their own pace.
- Avoid forcing sensitive conversations.
- Understand that young children may express emotion differently (crying, withdrawal, silence).

5. Support Their Relationships

- Ask about important people in their life — siblings, parents, friends.
- Encourage safe, supervised connections with family when appropriate.
- Facilitate communication between biological parents and foster parents if needed.

6. Observe and Document

- Notice how the child interacts and what makes them happy or anxious.
- Take notes to share with your CASA supervisor for advocacy purposes.

7. Be Honest and Transparent

- Explain your role in age-appropriate terms: *“I’m here to help you be safe and have your voice heard in court.”*
- Avoid promises you can’t keep.

8. Provide Stability and Support

- Celebrate achievements and milestones.
- Be a calm, consistent adult presence.
- Encourage their strengths and interests to build confidence.

9. Reflect on Your Approach

- Ask yourself: *“Am I showing up in ways the child feels seen, heard, and valued?”*
- Adjust your approach based on the child’s personality and comfort level.

10. Connect Beyond Visits

- Small gestures matter: send a card, note, or text.
- Even brief check-ins show the child they are important and remembered.

Tip for Volunteers:

Every child is unique. Building connection takes patience, empathy, and small, consistent steps. Focus on meaningful moments rather than big gestures — they matter more than you think!