

## Report Writing Tips

Refer to yourself as “CASA” instead of “I”. Example: *CASA observed ...*

When it comes to making an observation, use *CASA observed....*

However, you do not need to state every time you are observing something!

Ask yourself “**How Do I know?**” Always cite your information to a source. Examples:

- *Foster Mother reported ...*
- *Kaylee said ...*

Ask yourself “**What made me think that?**” Describe what you saw.

- Incorrect: *The house is dirty and smelly.*
- Correct: *CASA observed a plate of dried up food on the kitchen floor. There was a loaf of white bread with green spots on the table, and there were at least five empty brown bottles on the coffee table. The kitchen smelled like urine and CASA observed a yellow puddle of liquid on the floor.*

When citing a source, the most utilized words are *said, stated, reported, or told CASA.*

Focus on facts and exclude opinions. Opinions often include words such as *perhaps, sometimes, probably, I feel, I think, I believe, seems, etc.* Reframe opinions into facts only.

- Incorrect: *The father did not care about the children and barely talks to them.*
- Correct: *During the visit, the father did interact with the children. CASA observed he talked on his cellphone during the 45-minute visitation time.*

Write out words the first time used in the report, followed by the acronym in parentheses.

Then use acronym throughout report. Example:

- *Foster Mother (FM) stated Kaylee sleeps on the floor. FM reported Kaylee likes mac-n-cheese and “eats like an animal.”*

Only use the abbreviations listed on your acronyms sheet. **Do not** make up your own. Examples:

- Natural Mother (NM)
- Foster Father (FF)
- Caseworker (CW)
- Paternal Grandmother (PGM)

Minimize adjectives. Keep reports simple and concise. Keep fact based. (Yes: *red* No: *better*)

No contractions (unless it is a part of a quote). Example, use *cannot*, not *can't*.

For how often something occurred, **avoid** generalized quantifiers such as *several, few, many* or *multiple*. Instead, **use** phrases such as *at least, more than, throughout the visit*. Examples:

- *Kaylee stated she loves Mommy more than three times.*
- *CASA observed NM scratching her arms throughout the visit.*

CASA reports should read like a story, not an interrogation.

- Incorrect: *CASA asked Kaylee how she likes this Foster Home. Kaylee said it is okay. CASA asked what Kaylee’s favorite food is. Kaylee said she likes mac-n-cheese. CASA asked Kaylee what she likes to do. Kaylee stated she likes Dora the Explorer books.*
- Correct: *When CASA asked how she likes the Foster Home, Kaylee stated it is “okay.” She said her favorite food is mac-n-cheese and she likes Dora the Explorer books.*

Remove modifiers before people. Examples: “her Foster Mother” → “Foster Mother” or “FM” or “the caseworker” → “Caseworker (CW)”

## Report Writing Tips

Watch verb tense. Does it accurately reflect the message?

- *FM reported Kaylee was doing well in school.* – sounds like Kaylee was doing well in school but is no longer doing well in school
- *FM reported Kaylee is doing well in school.* – sounds like Kaylee was doing well and is **still** doing well in school

Remove the word “that” when it is not needed and will not change the meaning.

- Incorrect: *CW reported that FM told her that Kaylee’s burns are healing.*
- Correct: *CW reported FM told her Kaylee’s burns are healing.*

If you need to cite text messages/emails/voicemails, use verbiage such as:

- FM emailed ...
- In a series of text messages, FM reported ...

**Ensure the quote is accurate.** Misquoting a professional could potentially damage a relationship.

- Incorrect: *Kaylee said she “misses grammy” (Paternal Grandmother).*
- Correct: *Kaylee said I “miss grammy” (Paternal Grandmother).*

Note: you **cannot record any conversations**, in-person or on the phone. Do not use a phone line that is always recorded.

Advocate Managers will ask if you can **quote** strong words. For example, did Foster Mother actually say “violent” or “bruises on her nose”?

When a quote ends a sentence, the period (.) goes inside the end of the quotation. Example: *FM reported Kaylee “eats like an animal.”*

**DO NOT use any names** in the report EXCEPT for the child(ren) or if it is a part of a quote.

Reports **do not contain any identifying info** enabling a parent to locate the foster home. Teacher names, school names, or locations of visits, etc. potentially identify the child’s location.

- Incorrect: *CASA observed Kalyee and NM at an unsupervised visit at Lippold Park.*
- Correct: *CASA observed Kalyee and NM at an unsupervised visit at local park.*

Spell out numbers under ten. For double-digits and larger numbers, use the numerals (e.g., 19).

List dates in chronological order. Format most dates as *mm/dd/yy* or *mm/dd/yyyy*.

**Submit your report on time!** You cannot be the child’s voice if the parties do not have time to read the report before the hearing.

Here’s a good example:

Caseworker (CW) reported Natural Father (NF) regularly attends family counseling sessions. NF stated he has attended at least nine times since the last court hearing. He also said he is employed at a local retail shop as “managerial staff.”

CASA observed Maggie smiles and runs to NF when she sees him during visitation. Maggie has shown CASA the cards her father has sent to her while in foster care. Maggie said she would like to be reunified with her father and “can’t wait” to be back in her own bedroom.