

PARENT COUNSEL

General Best Practice Tips

- *Handle these cases as you would any other.*
- *Seek a productive working relationship with DHS, the AAL, and the CASA program.*
- *Maintain at least monthly contact with your client. Meet prior to each hearing to explain the purpose of the hearing and to prepare your client.*
- *Provide your client with all pleadings and court documents. Ensure that he/she understands them.*
- *Review all court orders for thoroughness and accuracy.*
- *Explain concurrent planning; work with your client and the DHS caseworker to expeditiously explore both maternal and paternal relative placements and the possibility of designation as a provisional foster home; make ICWA inquiries.*
- *Regularly remind the client that the clock is ticking, and that services must be completed quickly.*
- *Advocate for appropriate services for your client, including appointment of CASA, if appropriate.*
- *Know that, for parents who are addicted, relapse is part of recovery. Help them access services quickly so that a slip does not turn into a full relapse.*
- *Advise your client of alternatives, and the pros and cons of each.*
- *Attend all staffings. If DHS doesn't schedule a staffing, request one prior to court. Consider mediation in place of, or in addition to, a pivotal staffing.*
- *Use discovery and contempt if necessary.*
- *Request CHRIS notes from the DHS caseworker in advance of the hearing.*
- *Collect and review progress reports from the CASA volunteer and service providers prior to court, and determine if the OCC attorney and attorney ad litem will allow those into evidence without requiring the presence of the person who wrote the report.*
- *Subpoena necessary witnesses for each hearing; interview witnesses to be called by DHS and the AAL.*
- *Make sure relatives who are requesting, or have placement, are notified of and attend the hearing.*
- *Individualize request for next hearing date based on the needs of the client/case (3 months, 6 months, etc.), to insure services are being provided as ordered. Again, use contempt if necessary.*
- *Make sure the Order to Transport is done if you are representing an incarcerated parent.*
- *No ex parte communication with the court.*
- *Make record for appeal.*
- *Always carry your calendar to court, to set next hearing date and staffing dates.*