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Why were the Child Well-Being Assessments created?

During their December 2022 board meeting, the Iowa Child Advocacy Board (ICAB) discussed replacing the existing child assessment tool used by the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program. Feedback from volunteers and Coordinators raised concerns about how time consuming and cumbersome the assessment was, resulting in low completion rates. The data collected from this assessment also proved less useful than originally intended.

ICAB and its administrators believe data collection plays a vital role in fulfilling our organization's mission and improving outcomes for the children and families served by our programs. In light of this, the board has tasked ICAB staff with developing and implementing a new child assessment tool to replace the previous version. So, with help and feedback from CASA Coordinators and volunteers, the Child Well-Being Assessments were created.

What are the Child Well-Being Assessments?

The Child Well-Being Assessments are surveys completed by Iowa CASAs to assess and track the well-being of the children and families they serve. This information is gathered across four domains:

1. **Permanency and Safety**
2. **Education and Development**
3. **Health**
4. **Connections and Opportunities**

The survey questions aim to track key factors impacting case outcomes and identify potential barriers in each area of well-being for the child and family.

When should the Child Well-Being Assessments be completed?

The Child Well-Being Assessments consist of three unique surveys to be completed at specific times in the life of the CASA case:

1. **Initial Volunteer Assessment** – administered at the time the CASA volunteer writes their first court report on a newly assigned case;
2. **Ongoing Volunteer Assessment** – administered bi-annually, in April and October, to every CASA volunteer who has been assigned to a case for at least 6 months; and,

3. **Case Closure Volunteer Assessment** – administered at the time the juvenile court case and the CASA’s role in it terminate.

Volunteers are asked to complete a separate survey for each child they serve in their role as a CASA. So, if there are three children involved in the case you are assigned to, you will need to complete each survey three times. When filling out the survey, you should answer each question as it relates to that specific child. This allows ICAB to track the well-being of each individual child throughout their involvement in the child welfare system and CASA program.

How will the information gathered be utilized?

The data collected through these surveys can be valuable in many ways. Some of the potential uses for this information include:

- **Identifying barriers to positive case outcomes**
 - Collecting and analyzing this information helps to improve our understanding of the impact various factors have on the outcomes and overall well-being of the children and families we serve. It can also help to identify systemic barriers impacting cases in specific service areas or statewide.
- **Improving ICAB programs**
 - Identifying barriers in specific counties or service areas allows ICAB to actively respond to the needs of our volunteers and families. Some examples could include developing trainings and community partnerships, so volunteers can more effectively advocate for the greatest needs and barriers facing their community. Regularly collecting this data will allow ICAB programs to continuously evolve, adapting to the ever-changing needs of our volunteers and the families they serve.
- **Demonstrating value and impact to stakeholders**
 - Funders, legislators, and other community stakeholders want to see evidence of the CASA program’s impact. We know how valuable CASAs are to the children and families we serve. This is how we prove it to those outside of the program.
- **Advocating for positive change in Iowa’s child welfare system**
 - Each year, ICAB is required to report its findings on issues affecting the best interests of children and families in Iowa's child welfare system and to offer recommendations for improvements. The information gathered through these surveys will allow us to do this in an effective and meaningful way.

- **Guidance for new CASA volunteers**

- The surveys ask volunteers to consider all aspects of the child and families well-being. This may help new CASA volunteers recognize potential barriers and needs while serving their child and family.

ICAB hopes the information collected through the Child Well-Being Assessments will prove beneficial to the board and administrators, CASA program coordinators, CASA volunteers, and the children and families we serve. Collecting this data allows ICAB to adapt and respond to program needs, better support volunteers and better serve children and families.

What is the child's CAMS ID number and how do you find it?

The child's CAMS ID number is a unique 5-digit number assigned to each child involved in the CASA program. This is the most important piece of information you provide in each survey. By collecting this number, ICAB can connect data from every survey completed on behalf of this child and track changes to the child/family's well-being throughout the life of the case.

To locate the CAMS ID for the child/ren you serve:

1. Log into CAMS
2. On the home page, click on "CASA case management"
3. Scroll to the "caseload dashboard" and click on the case name
4. Scroll down to the "Children in case" section and find the name of the child for whom you will be completing a survey, then click on the child's name
5. The Child's CAMS ID number is the 5-digit number labeled "child number" (see the image on the next page for reference)
6. If there is more than one child for which you need to complete this survey, click the home button in the top left corner of the page and repeat steps 2 through 5 for each child

Johnny Appleseed

Child Information		[Edit]
Child Number:	08047	
Child Name:	Johnny Appleseed	
Alias:		
Preferred Name:		
Pronouns:		
ICWA:		
Date of Birth:	05/01/2018	
Age:	4	
Gender:		
Race:	White	
Primary Language:		

How and when do I need to complete surveys for my case(s)?

CASA volunteers are asked to complete a separate survey for each child they are assigned. So, if you are assigned to three children involved in the same Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) case, you would fill out each survey 3 times, once for each child. Similarly, if you are assigned as a CASA to more than one case, you would fill out the appropriate surveys for every child involved in each case.

Each survey is meant to track the well-being of one specific child. When filling out a survey, you should answer each question focusing on the child whose CAMS ID number you entered at the beginning of the survey.

The survey types and additional details are explained below:

- **Initial Volunteer Assessment**
 - This survey is to be completed at the time you write your first court report for a newly assigned case. You should complete a separate survey for each child involved in this particular CINA case.

- **Ongoing Volunteer Assessment**
 - This survey is to be completed regularly, every 6 months (April and October). You should complete a separate survey for each child you have served as a CASA for at least 6 months' time. This survey will remain open for a period of 2 weeks.
- **Case Closure Volunteer Assessment**
 - This survey is to be completed at the time the CINA case is terminated. You should complete a separate survey for each child involved in this particular CINA case.

Volunteers will receive an email containing a pdf copy of the survey, the survey link, and due date. If you wish to take some time considering the survey questions, you can download or print out the pdf copy of the survey included in the email and review the questions before opening the link. Because SurveyMonkey does not allow you to save your progress, please make sure to complete the entire survey from start to finish. Incomplete survey responses will not be counted in the data collected.

What types of placements are there and how should the total number of placements be tallied?

Below are some helpful definitions related to child placements:

- **Kinship care** – Child is placed with a relative or fictive kin, regardless of whether this is a licensed foster care placement.
- **Foster care** – Child is placed in a licensed foster care home with foster parents who are not kin or fictive kin.
- **Group home/shelter care** – Child is placed in temporary/emergency shelter care. This is usually a short-term placement.
- **Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP)** – QRTP is an out of home placement option that offers a structured living environment for children up to age 18 for whom an assessment determines that the child's needs cannot be met in a less restrictive, family-based setting because of their serious emotional or behavioral disorders or disturbances.
- **Psychiatric Medical Institutions for Children (PMIC)** – PMICs are inpatient psychiatric treatment institutions which provide twenty-four hours of continuous care involving long-term psychiatric services to three or more children in residence.
- **Runaway** – Child has run from current placement and their whereabouts are currently unknown.

When answering questions regarding the total number of placements, please include every placement the child has been moved to, no matter how short the stay. For instance, if a child was removed from one foster placement and placed in emergency shelter for two days, then moved to another foster home, this would count as 3 placements for that child.

What is the difference between a Guardian Ad Litem and the child's stated interest attorney?

In Iowa child welfare proceedings, a guardian ad litem is an attorney appointed by the court on behalf of a child to represent their best interests during the case. If the child's wishes do not align with the recommendations of the guardian ad litem, the child may be appointed a stated interest attorney who can represent the child's wishes in the proceedings.

Guardians ad litem are appointed to every child involved in child welfare proceedings, however, not every child is appointed a stated interest attorney. When answering questions related to the stated interest attorney, please select "not applicable" if the child does not have one appointed.

How do you answer agree/disagree Likert scale questions?

Throughout the surveys, you will be asked your level of agreement with lists of statements. There is no right or wrong answer to these questions, you are simply asked to consider how the statement may or may not relate to this particular child's current well-being and respond accordingly. Some helpful tips for responding to these questions:

- If you feel confident that the statement does or does not relate to this child, select "agree" or "disagree";
- If you are less confident, chose "somewhat agree" or "somewhat disagree", depending on which way you are leaning;
- Select "unknown/unsure" if you do not have enough information about the case to judge how the statement relates to the child; and,
- Select "not applicable" if the statement does not apply or make sense for this child (e.g. "The child behaves appropriately in the school setting" would not apply to a 2-year-old child).

How do you answer barrier questions under each area of well-being?

Throughout the surveys, you will be asked to share potential barriers to the child/family's well-being in each of the four domains. These questions attempt to offer exhaustive lists of potential barriers to choose from. Again, there are no right or wrong answers here. You simply click the box next to each barrier that applies to this particular child. If you have identified a barrier that is not listed, please select "other" and type in your own response.

If you do not believe there are any current barriers for this child regarding that area of well-being, select only the very last option on the list that states "no known barriers..."

You must select at least one option from the list to move on to the next question, whether that is one of the barriers listed, other and typing in your own, or selecting no known barriers.

What should I do if I do not know the answer to a question?

While most of the questions asked by the surveys should be knowledge you have already gathered while serving as a CASA on the case, there may be questions or specific aspects of the child's well-being you are not aware of. This is especially true when completing the Initial Volunteer Assessment, as you may not have had an opportunity to gather information about all areas of the child's well-being so early in the case.

If you do not know enough about an aspect of the case or the child's life to answer one of the questions, you can simply select "unknown/unsure". There is nothing wrong with choosing this response, as it helps ICAB to identify areas and aspects of cases that volunteers may be less knowledgeable on. ICAB can then create/offer trainings and other supports to address this knowledge gap.

Though not required, you may also check in with relevant parties on the case to gather any missing information you need to answer the question. However, please be mindful of the survey due date listed in the email with the survey link. Ongoing assessment surveys are open for a period of 2 weeks and then close until the next survey opens in 6 months. It is far more helpful to fill out the survey with the case knowledge you have available than to delay and miss the chance to submit a response.

Who should I contact if I have questions about the surveys?

Please contact your coordinator if you have any additional questions about the surveys.