



## WHAT TO DO WHEN A CASE INVOLVES SUBSTANCE ABUSE

### Gather Information

- Review documents and records pertaining to parent progress on their substance abuse plan.
  - Are they attending classes/counseling?
  - Have they submitted drug screenings? What were the results?
- Ask the parents how they are doing with their treatment plan.
  - Ask if they feel they have the support and resources they need.
- Is the child in counseling/therapy?
- Ask caseworkers about parent progress and potential barriers to treatment.

### Document Findings

- Keep detailed records of the information you collect.
- Use first-hand information that you receive through independent casework.
- Share about your findings with the CASA Supervisor/Coordinator.
- Write about your findings in your Court Report.

### Keep an Open Mind

- Do your best to view substance abuse as a mental health issue, not a behavioral issue.
- Consider if the parent has faced trauma that possibly led to his/her substance abuse disorder.
- Endeavor to never speak about the parents in a negative way. Be a positive, supporting person at all times.
- If the child is older, watch for signs of substance use.

### Make Recommendations

- What kind of supports do the parents need to address mental health problems?
- What kind of support does the child need?
- **In Court:** In your court report, update the court on developments with agencies, family members, and the child. Also include any recommendations you have you believe are vital to the child, case, and permanency.
- **Outside of court:** You don't have to wait for the court report to make recommendations! As soon as you recognize a need, begin discussing these things with the appropriate professionals on the case.