

Early Collaborative Family Engagement (ECFE)

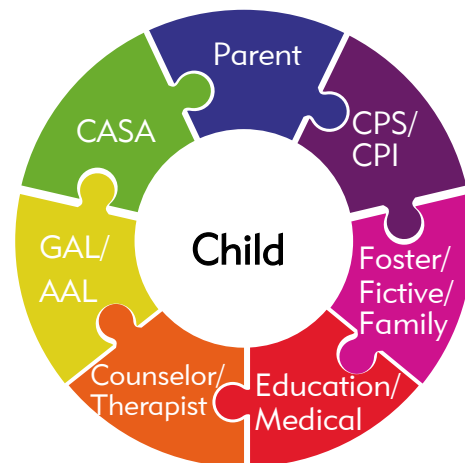
WHAT IS ECFE?

ECFE is Collaborative Family Engagement done within the first 14 days before the adversary hearing, primarily by CASA. This CASA advocacy approach starts the work of building connections for children and families from the earliest point in the case. Through introduction of CFE engagement and connection tools, the CASA volunteer can ensure that the child remains connected to those important, safe people in their lives.

Working with the parents and family of the child from the earliest point of the case (the first 14 days) helps to build a trusting relationship between CASA and family. Starting the CFE work earlier helps ensure that the parents and family clearly understand the role of the CASA volunteer and helps the volunteer to gain important information about the family as soon as possible. This information will help the volunteer create a calendar of connections and support for the child and family that can be implemented from the very beginning of the case, thus helping to reduce trauma and identify natural supports.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Everyone working with the child and their family can help ensure children stay connected and families identify their natural support systems. While ECFE is a CASA focus, CASA may also work with Child Protective Investigations (CPI), Attorneys, Child Protective Services (CPS) and others involved.



HOW DOES ECFE WORK?

There are four elements, known as the four C's, that make up the CFE approach. Using these four C's early on in the case helps CASA to start building lifetime connections for the child and family earlier. The four C's are Collaborate, Cultivate, Convene and Connect. During the **Collaborate phase**, information sharing between those involved in the case in the beginning helps involve families and identify active connections. During the **Cultivate phase**, CFE tools are used from the initial start of the case to engage, connect and/or find families quickly and actively engage them with the child and family prior to the adversary hearing. During the **Convene phase**, early use of tools helps parents identify those supportive members to include in the CPS family meetings that will be held in the future. During the **Connect phase**, the goal is to identify who can be a support and a connection to the child and their parents, and to create a calendar of support for the child that is ready to be presented by the adversary hearing.

Collaborate

Greater collaboration and information sharing between CASA and others from the earliest part of the case helps to involve families and build a network of active connections early.

Cultivate

CASA utilizes connection, engagement and searching tools to engage and find family/important relationships quickly.

Convene

Families and their support network can be identified and prepared for future family meetings.

Connect

A calendar of connections can be created by the time of the adversary hearing to ensure children remain connected and trauma is reduced.

WHY DOES ECFE WORK?

Having CASA involved from the earliest point of the case can help create many positive outcomes. Known and active connections are identified and engaged earlier, thus keeping the continuity of connections for children from the earliest part of the case. CASA is introduced earlier to parents, providing role clarity and helping to promote a more trusting relationship where information is freely shared. Finally, the information provided from families may allow children to be placed sooner with family or fictive kin, helping to ensure children stay connected to their family.

