**HCCASA CALENDAR + ANNOUNCE LIST OCTOBER 2021**

***New fiscal year, new laws in effect in child welfare, various outcomes.*** See the following articles for information about this; 1 hour CE credit if you read / listen to both and log it into Optima (special thanks to Ann Taylor for sending these forward):

From San Antonio Express News: [Blistered by Federal Judge, Texas Foster Care Chief says “I do feel like I am failing children”](https://www.expressnews.com/news/legislature/article/Blistered-by-federal-judge-Texas-foster-care-16458271.php)

From TPR: [After a Decade of Legal Scrutiny, Texas’ Foster Care System is Still Failing to Keep Kids Safe](https://www.tpr.org/podcast/the-source/2021-09-15/after-a-decade-of-legal-scrutiny-texas-foster-care-system-is-still-failing-to-keep-kids-safe)

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**Press CTRL+Click of the links below to go straight to the topic:**

**CTRL + Click here to go straight to: [COVID-19 Webpage and Information](http://www.hccasa.org/covid19)**

**[Court Hearings + Video Attendance Protocols](#_COURT_HEARINGS:)*****[(with updated Zoom video protocols from May 2021)](#_COURT_HEARINGS:)***

[**October Court / Meeting Calendar**](#_CASA_CALENDAR_SEPTEMBER)

**[Meetings](#_MEETINGS:)**

[**Child Visits**](#_CHILD_VISITS:)  ***(with updated Visitation Protocols for May 2021)***

**[CASA Office Hours](#_CASA_OFFICE:)**

**[CASA LIVE Virtual Training](#_CASA_VIRTUAL_TRAINING:)**

**[CASA At-Your-Own Pace Training](#_AT_YOUR_OWN)**

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# COURT HEARINGS:

HCCASA Court Swear In: *“Name, Hill Country CASA, Guardian Ad Litem for the Child(ren)”.*

**Court has announced that all participants MUST be on video - only exceptions allowed are due to connectivity.**

**PROTOCOLS FOR HCCASA STAFF/VOLUNTEERS ATTENDING HEARINGS BY VIDEO**

1. Log into your account at zoom.us and choose “Join Meeting”
2. Enter the Meeting ID and Passcode listed in the Calendar, to the left of your name.
3. If a pop-up window “Open Zoom Meetings?” appears in your browser, click the “Open Zoom Meetings” button.
4. When the Zoom screen appears, choose “Join with Computer Audio”.
5. Use the MUTE button on the bottom left of the screen at all times when not speaking (when the MUTE is ON, there will be a red line through the microphone icon)
6. Listen for your Case Supervisor to announce themselves, and then unmute and announce yourself - “Name, Hill Country CASA, Guardian Ad Litem for the Child(ren)”
7. When called upon by the Judge, unmute yourself to give oral testimony, and then mute yourself again
8. Click End button on bottom right of screen when your hearing is concluded



Click “Start Video” to enable your webcam.

Use the MUTE button when you’re not speaking. When MUTE is ON, there will be a red line through the microphone icon

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# CASA CALENDAR OCTOBER 2021

**Abbreviations**: Adversarial Hearing (**Removal**), Family Group Conference (**FGC**), Transition Plan Meeting (**TPM**), 60 Day/Status Review (**Status**), Initial Permanency Hearing (**IPH**), Permanency Review before Final Order (**PH**), Permanency Review after Final Order (**PR**), Progress Review (**Progress**), Permanency Planning Meeting (**PPM**), Pre-Trial Conference (**PTC**), Merits Trial (**Merits**), Adoption (**Adopt**) and Dismissal (**Final**).

**All Hearings will be held by Zoom; we will send a calendar with Zoom ID information the week of the hearing, as we receive it from the Court.**

**Tuesday, October 5, Family Meetings**

10:00-11:00 Fontenot Wienecke (331) RL

11:00-12:00 Carrizales-Moore (Mom’s meeting) Berlin (823) RL

12:00-1:00 Carrizales-Moore (Dad’s meeting) Berlin (823) RL

**Tuesday, October 5, Mediation**

1:00 McCain-Overgard-Shelton Lukacs (439) CR

**Wednesday, October 6, Kerr Court**

9:00 Vargas (PH/Merits) J. Sheehan (138) CR

9:30 McCain-Overgard-Shelton (Merits) Lukacs (439) CR

10:00 Fontenot (PH) Wienecke (331) RL

10:30 Carrizales-Moore (PH) Berlin (823) RL

11:00 Stewart-Stokes (Merits) Luttrell (676) AH

11:30 Salinas (PH) Clyburn (597) RL

1:30 Ballard (Merits) Andrews (994) CR

2:30 Myhre-Beggs (PH) Berlin (823) RL

**Thursday, October 7, Family Meeting**

3:00-4:00 McLaury Brischettos (416) GR

**Friday, October 8, Bandera Court**

9:00 Judkins (PH) Fields-Himes (496) GR

9:30 Martinez-Parks (PH) Taylor (902) GR

10:00 Bennack-Brawner (PH) Weber (688) GR

10:30 Phillips (Status) Richardson (640) GR

**Wednesday, October 13, Kerr Court**

9:30 Hernandez (IPH) Weaver (922) AH

10:00 Bernal (PR) Taylor (902) RL

**Wednesday, October 13, Kendall Court**

11:00 Seitzer (PR) Darling (862) RL

**Wednesday, October 13, Kerr Court**

1:00 Aleman, K. (PR) Hecht (744) RL

1:30 Demaray (PR) Janosek (032) RL

2:00 Frausto (PH) E. Sheehan (138) CR

**Thursday, October 14, Family Meeting**

3:30-5:00 Anderwald Pond (504) GR

**Wednesday, October 20, Kendall Court**

9:30 Williams (Merits) Oates (568) RL

10:00 Leonard (IPH) Melilli (938) RL

11:30 Wallace (Status) Prince (105) RL

**Wednesday, October 20, Kerr Court**

11:00 Lacey (PH) Weber (688) RL

**Thursday, October 28, Bandera Court**

9:00 Chavez (IPH) Pfeiff (381) GR

**Thursday, October 28, Gillespie Court**

9:30 Nieto (IPH) Colburn (167) AH

1:00 Allen (PR) Hartnett (674) AH

1:00 LeLeux (PR) E. Sheehan (138) AH

1:30 Cole (PR) Aleman (983) AH

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# MEETINGS:

As of October 1, 2021, we are told meetings are mostly continuing virtually.

You have the choice to attend these meetings virtually (with video) or by phone (without video). *We’ve found it is easier to participate if you are on by video, as you can see the others participating in the meeting.*

In any case, your Case Supervisor will send instructions as we receive for your meeting(s).

If you choose to attend meetings virtually, please be mindful of your background and follow the normal protocols for meetings in person regarding dress, decorum.

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# CHILD VISITS:

According to local news over the weekend, **COVID cases among school aged children and youth appear to be dropping locally**. The adult case numbers and hospital numbers continue to be high in our communities.

On September 25, 2021, Texas CASA *extended the waiver, allowing virtual contact with children to replace the requirement for face to face contact*. This will continue until at least February 25, 2021.

With lower case numbers among children, **we encourage volunteers to carefully visit children in person when you feel safe to do so**, and using the protocols below.

*Remember, children living in congregate care settings (RTC, CWOP, juvenile detention) are at highest risk of catching and transmitting COVID.*

Thus, we ask you call and let us know if you’re thinking of visiting in person, so if we have any recent information about the placement’s COVID status, we can share with you.

# CHILD VISIT PROTOCOLS (updated May 2021)

1. Both you as the CASA advocate and the current placement need to agree to the visit. If the placement has an objection, find alternative means to make the visit. Those alternatives could be:
2. Drive by visit where the placement and child go out to the porch and/or sidewalk to visit with you in your car
3. Visit outside with social distancing and masks
4. Meet placement/children at a public location and visit over a meal
5. If no other options, do a virtual visit – let your supervisor know if placement will not allow you to visit
6. Before your visit, check with the placement about any contact with someone who has been sick, quarantined or tested positive for COVID-19; reschedule your visit if risk factors are present.
7. During visits you are **court ordered** to wear a mask and practice social distancing to the best of your ability.
8. **Effective May 1, 2021 CASA transportation of children is reinstated.** Please only transport children if all these conditions apply: you feel comfortable doing so; CASA supervisor has approved; CPS has approved; you have driving record check on file at CASA.
9. **Effective May 1, 2021, CASA may bring items (toys, books, etc) to children they visit in person.** CASA office has lots of games and toys and things for children to share.
10. Should you become ill and suspect you have exposed a child after a visit, please make sure to notify the individuals with whom you have been in contact so they can take the appropriate steps. Also, notify your Case Supervisor.
11. If you identify issues of abuse or neglect during a visit, please report the information you obtained to:
12. CASA Case Supervisor
13. CPS Caseworker through email and phone call
14. CPS Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-5400

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# CASA OFFICE HOURS:

The CASA office is open Monday through Thursday, from 9 AM to 5 PM each week. Fridays, staff will all work remotely and the CASA office will be closed.

Due to continued high local adult case numbers, the office is open by appointment only until further notice. If you need an appointment, call your Case Supervisor. Please do not visit the office if you feel ill; if you are unvaccinated we ask that you wear a mask while in the building.

Effective August 16, 2021, and for at least the next couple of weeks, the staff has split into 2 teams to reduce our contact with each other. This is so that in case of exposure/illness, we will not have to close the operation entirely.

Monday – Stephanie / Goldie / Raquel in office

Tuesday – Stephanie / Goldie / Raquel in office

Wednesday – Amy / Colleen / Judy in office

Thursday – Amy / Colleen / Judy in office

Friday – all staff will continue to work remotely

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# CASA VIRTUAL TRAINING:

**BROWN BAGS Fall Semester Dates/Topics are below.** All will be offered by Zoom using the same log in information (immediately below). When the COVID numbers are improved we will also offer the option for folks to come in-person (we’ll let you know via these Announcements in a coming month).

*Log in to Zoom or for phone-only access dial:**1.346.248.7799*

*Meeting ID: 834 5393 2475*

*Passcode: 788792*

10/12/2021 Zoom 11:30 – 1:00 Changes to the Current System

*10/26/2021 Save the Date for CASA Christmas Gift Card pickup in your area*

11/9/2021 Zoom 11:30 –1:00 Helping your CASA kids “pack their bags” for reunification

11/30/2021 Zoom 11:30 –1:00 How to Evaluate a Home Study for safety

12/14/2021 Zoom 11:30 –1:00 How to say Good-Bye when permanency is achieved

# AT YOUR OWN PACE LEARNING:

**On September 30, 2021** Mercy Gate Ministries is offering a training called Hill Country Conversations, spreading awareness about human trafficking prevention. This live event is going to be in Kerrville and [registration is free](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/hill-country-conversations-child-sex-trafficking-awareness-event-tickets-169501073273).

Click here for [HCCASA Resources](https://hccasa.org/resources/) & [Independent Study](https://hccasa.org/learning-a-distance/) webpages at hccasa.org.

[Click here to go straight to our video library.](https://vimeo.com/showcase/learning-a-distance) (The password is CASAKIDS). There are dozens of videos with helpful information about a range of topics relevant to CASA work.

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