

Bonita Sergent



- 7 years
- 2 cases
- 5 kids

Bonita Sergent has worked on several cases in her seven years as a CASA. Tragically, they have all dealt with domestic violence.

In her current case, the father had beaten the mother while the child was in the same bed. He went in and out of prison for assault and heroin use, everything rooted in his own molestation by his father. That cycle doesn't depress Bonita. It inspires her.

"I try to see if there's ways things can be different for these two children," Bonita says. "I want them to have a better chance at life."

It can be complicated. Who is telling the truth? What is really going on in a home? Bonita has found that she can figure things out by having as many relationships as possible with those around her ProKids children. And it pays off in safety for the little boy and his younger sister. Like the time a neighbor slipped her a phone number as she drove away from the home. Bonita called the number and discovered it was the landlord. He wanted to let her know the abusive boyfriend was back in the home.

Or the time that she noticed an elaborate fish tank was no longer in the home. "When I asked about it, the little boy started to tell me something and his mother shushed him. I asked around and found out that the father had busted it in his anger and the landlord had to charge for the damages."

Candy Stemple, the CASA Manager who works

with Bonita, says Bonita finds out things no one else can. "She becomes someone that people trust, even when they don't trust anyone else," Candy says. "And she is not afraid to tackle difficult cases... and deal with difficult adults."

Bonita says that she visits families often to make sure children stay safe at home and in foster care. In this case, the mother has come to realize that nothing can fool Bonita. "She doesn't like anything I say but when I remind her that the magistrate said she needs stable employment, stable housing, she knows that she has to get it together, because Juvenile Court wants the family reunified."

Bonita talks frankly with the children's mother when it comes to parenting. The son, now 11, has attended nine schools and struggles in school. But his mother often lets him roam the town they live in, not always making sure that he does his homework. She was upset recently when he lied to her about something.

"I just said to her 'you've been teaching him how to lie by lying to us since he was a 5 year-old. Of course he's going to lie,'" Bonita says. "I think some of that sinks in."

Whether the children can stay with their mother – it's now the longest they've been with her in years – is really up to her, Bonita says. "I'm pretty streetwise. I know when she's just playing along and when she's telling the truth. And I'm going to make sure these children are safe as long as I am their CASA volunteer."

99%
of
ProKids
children
are safe
and free
from
abuse
and
neglect
both
during
their case
and after
it closed.

More than
2,700
children
were in the
Hamilton
County
child
protection
system in
2013.