

# CHAPTER 4: Understanding Families

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PLEASE READ THE MATERIAL PRIOR TO ATTENDING THE SESSION.

### Homework for Session:

Read chapter 4; answer and submit chapter 4 review questions.

### Class Objectives:

- Be able to identify family strengths.
- Gain a better understanding of the impact of poverty on the family unit.

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### Pre-Activity: Identifying Family Strengths

Look at the illustration below of a family home. Use the worksheet on the next page to note 12 to 15 positive aspects of the household pictured.



*Used with permission from the artist, Camille Doucet*

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Family strengths observed in the photo:

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_
- 11. \_\_\_\_\_
- 12. \_\_\_\_\_
- 13. \_\_\_\_\_
- 14. \_\_\_\_\_
- 15. \_\_\_\_\_

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## UNIT 1: Family Strengths

### Your Family

Write down some of the strengths (resources) and weaknesses (deficits) of your own family (origin or current).

Remember the question about whether the glass is half-full or half-empty? You can ask yourself a similar question about the families you will be working with as a CASA. If you look at a family through a “resource” lens, you focus on identifying the strengths; if you look through a “deficit” lens, you focus on the problems. All families have strengths. Using a resource lens has many advantages: it creates more options and it empowers and supports children and families.

Your ability as a CASA volunteer to identify strengths in families depends partially on which lens -- the resource lens or the deficit lens -- you use in your work with families. The lens you choose will also influence your work with others involved in the case.

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The following chart details the differences between a focus on family strengths versus family deficits.

<b>Resource Lens versus Deficit Lens . . .</b>	<b>If I look through a STRENGTH LENS, I am likely to . . .</b>	<b>If I look through a DEFICIT LENS, I am likely to . . .</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Look for the good</li> <li>. Empower families</li> <li>. Create options</li> <li>. Listen</li> <li>. Focus on strengths</li> <li>. Put the responsibility on the family</li> <li>. Acknowledge progress</li> <li>. See the family as expert</li> <li>. See the family invested in change</li> <li>. Help identify resources</li> <li>. Avoid labeling</li> <li>. Inspire with hope</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Look for deficits</li> <li>. Take control or rescue</li> <li>. Give ultimatums/advice</li> <li>. Tell</li> <li>. Focus on problems</li> <li>. See the family as incapable</li> <li>. Wait for the finished product</li> <li>. See service providers as experts</li> <li>. Impose change/limits</li> <li>. Expect inaction or failure</li> <li>. Label</li> <li>. Deflate family's hope</li> </ul>

*Adapted from materials developed by the Portland CASA program.*

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## UNIT 2: Resources in Families

People in different socioeconomic classes may use different skills and resources to deal with stress and problems. Material goods are one form of resources, but there are other resources that some individuals and cultures prize above material wealth. For example:

- Mental ability: allows for the access and use of information;
- Emotional resources: provide support and strength in difficult times;
- Spiritual resources: give purpose and meaning to people’s lives;
- Good health and physical mobility: allow for self-sufficiency;
- Cultural heritage: provides context, values, and mores for living in the world;
- Informal support systems: such as networks, clubs, or kinship ties provide a safety net, “e.g., money in tight times, child care for a sick child, job advice);
- Healthy relationships: can nurture and support; and
- Role models: provide appropriate examples of, and practical advice on, achieving success.

Using a strengths-based approach means acknowledging the resources that do exist within a family and tapping into them. While the CASA volunteer may impact the financial status of a family through advocating for a referral to a program such as job training, it is far more likely that the volunteer’s influence will be exerted to access other resources. Some examples of this are identifying a tutor for the child, advocating for medical care, assisting the family in locating culturally appropriate support systems, and connecting them with role models in their community.

### The “Hidden Rules” of Socioeconomic Class

#### “Hidden Rules” -- A Quiz

**Part 1:** Take a few minutes to work through the three quizzes on the following pages. You will not be asked to share specifics about your answers.

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Put a check by each item you know how to do.	
Could You Survive in Poverty?	1. I know which churches and areas of town have the best rummage sales.
	2. I know which rummage sales have “bag sales” and when.
	3. I know which grocery stores have the best sales on which days.
	4. I know how to physically fight and defend myself.
	5. I know how to get a gun.
	6. I know how to keep my clothes from being stolen at the laundromat.
	7. I know how to get someone out of jail.
	8. I know what problems to look for in a used car.
	9. I know how to live without a checking account.
	10. I know how to live without electricity and a phone.
	11. I know how to use a knife as scissors.
	12. I can entertain a group of friends with my personality and my stories.
	13. I know what to do when I don’t have money to pay the bills.
	14. I know how to move in half a day.
	15. I know how to get and use food stamps or an electronic card for benefits.
	16. I know where the free medical clinics are.
	17. I am very good at trading and bartering.
	18. I can get by without a car.

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Put a check by each item you know how to do.	
Could You Survive in Middle Class?	1. I know how to get my children into Little League, piano lessons, soccer, etc.
	2. I know how to set a table for guests.
	3. I know which stores are most likely to carry the clothing brand my family wears.
	4. My children know and wear the best current name brands in clothing.
	5. I know how to order in a nice restaurant.
	6. I know how to use a credit card, checking account, and savings account -- and I understand what an annuity is. I understand term life insurance, disability insurance, and 20/80 medical insurance policy, as well as house insurance, flood insurance, and replacement insurance.
	7. I talk to my children about going to college.
	8. I know how to get one of the best interest rates on my new car loan.
	9. I understand the difference between principal, interest, and escrow statements on my house.
	10. I know how to help my children with their homework and do not hesitate to call the school if I need additional information.
	11. I know how to decorate the house for the different holidays.
	12. I know how to get a library card.
	13. I know how to use the different tools in the garage.
	14. I repair items in my house almost immediately when they break -- or know a repair service and call it.



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Put a check by each item you know how to do.	
Could You Survive in Wealth?	1. I can read a menu in French, English, and another language.
	2. I have several favorite restaurants in different countries of the world.
	3. During the holidays, I know how to hire a decorator to identify the appropriate themes and items with which to decorate the house.
	4. I have a preferred financial advisor, legal service, designer, family employment service, and hairdresser.
	5. I have at least two residences that are staffed and maintained.
	6. I know how to ensure confidentiality and loyalty from my domestic staff.
	7. I have at least two or three “screens” that keep people who I do not wish to see away from me.
	8. I fly in my own plane, the company plane, or first class.
	9. I know how to enroll my children in the preferred private schools.
	10. I know how to host the parties that “key” people attend.
	11. I am on the boards of at least two charities.
	12. I know the hidden rules of the Junior League.
	13. I support or buy the work of a particular artist.
	14. I know how to read a corporate financial statement and analyze my own financial statements.

*“Hidden Rules Quiz” from A Framework for Understanding Poverty,  
Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., Baytown, TX: RFT Publishing Co., 1998.  
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### “Hidden Rules” -- A Quiz

**Part 2:** Did you relate to the “Hidden Rules” for one or more socioeconomic class as identified by this exercise?

What are the implications of knowing the “Hidden Rules” for CASA volunteer work?

“**Hidden rules**” are the unspoken understandings between individuals within one socioeconomic group (class) that helps them recognize if others fit in or are a member of that socioeconomic class.

No matter the class, the rules of socioeconomic class are so “hidden” that they are taken for granted by class members. People assume that everyone knows what they know. Hidden rules govern much of a person’s immediate assessment of an individual and his or her capabilities. People typically assess others from their own worldview. This is often a factor that keeps an individual from moving upward in a career -- or even getting a particular position in the first place.

Evaluations of “intelligence” or how a person approaches school or work may be expressions of hidden rules more than any true measure of ability. Many of the attitudes that children and families bring with them are an integral part of their life situation coupled with their culture and belief systems. Middle-class solutions, typical of “the system,” should not necessarily be imposed when other appropriate and workable solutions can be found which better suit a particular family’s worldview.

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## Unit 3: The Importance of Family to a Child

### Why the “Minimum Sufficient Level of Care” Standard is Important

Children grow up best in families. To develop into functional, emotionally stable adults, they need that unique sense of belonging that comes from being part of a family. Children need that safety net that only the unconditional acceptance of family can provide. They need that knowledge of and connection to their cultural/ethnic heritage that is learned within the family.

*Based on information from Beyond Rhetoric:  
A New American Agenda for Children and Families, National Commission on Children,  
Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991*

When a child’s biological family is unable to meet these needs, what then? What is in the child’s best interest? These are not easy questions to answer. The CASA volunteer starts with the assumption that a child’s own family is usually the best setting for raising and nurturing that child. This is true even if the family’s lifestyle, beliefs, resources and actions are radically different from the volunteer’s. *As long as the child’s family meets or can be helped to meet the minimum sufficient level of care required for the safety of that child*, the child belongs with his or her family.

A minimum sufficient level of care (MSL) means that all basic needs are met and the child is not harmed physically, sexually, or emotionally. On the other hand, the optimum level of care means that the child has considerably more than the minimum: things like a library card, tutoring, tennis lessons, a community of faith, Little League, college, a loving extended family. The state intervenes when basic needs are not met -- not when a family is unable or unwilling to provide an optimal level of care.

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In considering what the minimum sufficient level of care is for any one child, it is important to remember the key parameters of this standard:

1. It relates to a particular child.
2. It is a set of minimum conditions, not an ideal situation.
3. It is a relative standard, depending on the child's needs, social standards, and community standards. It will not be the same for every family or every child in a particular family.
4. It remains the same when considering removal as when considering reunification.

The idea that a minimum sufficient level of care should be the standard for families is often difficult for CASA volunteers to embrace. It feels counter-intuitive, almost like it defies common sense. Volunteers are tempted to ask, "Wouldn't any child be better off in a family without the limitations that are present in this situation?" The truth is that most would not. The overwhelming sense of loss that children suffer when removed from their home -- loss of love, of security, of the familiar, of their heritage, of control in their lives; feelings of worthlessness; and the almost unendurable pain of separation -- is far worse for most children. Despite the bad things that have happened in their lives, most children in the system love their families and want desperately to be reunited with them. In some ways, that is not strange at all. Take a moment to think back to your own childhood. Whatever it was like, how would you have felt if a stranger came one day to take you away to live with a "better" family?

If parenting hovers at minimum sufficient level of care, the child protective services system and the court likely will not get involved. If parental care drops below the minimum sufficient level of care (meaning the child's basic needs are not being met and/or the child is being abused), the child protective services system steps in. Once the system has intervened, the responsibilities of the parent (e.g., seek substance abuse treatment, learn parenting skills) and those of the child protective services agency (e.g., provide visitation, financial aid, etc.) are spelled out in agreements that are enforced by court orders.

Ideally, these agreements will help the parent move at least to a minimum sufficient level of care, and hopefully beyond. The steps in these agreements with parents need to be in small, manageable segments. Appropriate resources need to be available to support changes that the parent makes. If the steps are too big or complex, the parent may give up, causing the family situation to deteriorate and the child to lose the chance to ever return home. It is also helpful if these agreements are specified in a way that allows success to be measured. For example, a parent can "attend parenting classes" for six months without ever making a change in behavior. If the agreement specifies that the parent is "able to describe and apply five ways to discipline their child without spanking," both the parent and any observer will be able to tell whether the task gets accomplished. CASA volunteers should routinely ask the question of both parents and case managers, "How will you know when this requirement is met?"

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## Unit 4: Poverty: Facts, Myths & Risks

### Poverty: The Facts for Children

Socioeconomic status, or class, is a major difference that greatly defines how people live in the world. There are many myths and stereotypes associated with being poor. To separate myths from reality, it is important to look at what we do know about children and poverty in the United States. For instance, a four-person family was considered “poor” in 2012 if they earned less than \$23,050, but the more realistic income for poor families with children was less than \$16,135 or \$1,344 a month, \$310 a week, or \$45 a day to meet all basic needs: food, clothing, shelter, health care, etc.

#### **Poverty: The Numbers**

Consider the above statistics about poverty. If you had \$23,050 a year to live on, what changes, if any, would you and your family have to make?

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### Thinking It Over

Read the sections that follow: “Key Facts about American Children” and “Why Are Poor Children More Likely to be in the System?” Consider possible answers to the following questions. There are many possible answers for each question.

- . What effect might living in poverty have on access to education, health care, and daycare?
- . What effect might current poverty have on the likelihood of future poverty?
- . Is poverty viewed differently in different communities, geographic regions, neighborhoods, and/or religions? Why or why not?
- . Are the experiences of poor families of color distinct from those of poor white families? Why are race and income level interconnected issues?

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### Key Facts About American Children\*

- . Children are 60% more likely to be poor than adults ages 18-64
- . Children are 2-1/2 times more likely to be poor than seniors
- . 1 in 5 children were poor in 2012
- . 1 in 4 children under age 5 were poor in 2012
- . In 2012 more than 2/3 of poor children lived in families with at least one working family member
- . Nearly 1 in 3 children of color was poor in 2012
- . 1 in 5 Black & 1 in 7 Hispanic children were in extreme poverty in 2012
- . 1 in 18 White, non-Hispanic children were in extreme poverty in 2012
- . 1 in 4 children under age 5 were poor in 2012
- . Almost 1/2 of Black children under age 5 and more than 1 in 3 Hispanic children the same age were poor

“... Poverty impairs all aspects of a child’s development and can have lifelong detrimental consequences. Poor children are more likely to go hungry, less likely to be read to during their early years ... less likely to have health insurance ... more likely to start school behind more affluent peers ... less likely to graduate from high school ... more likely to be poor as adults and become involved in the criminal justice system ...” \*

*Excerpted from Child Poverty from The State of American’s Children 2014, Children’s Defense Fund.*

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## Why are Poor Children More Likely to Be in the System?

The majority of children the CASA volunteer works with will be living at or below the poverty level. Developing a better understanding of the realities of poverty will assist you in being a better advocate. Keep in mind, knowing people's socioeconomic status -- like knowing their race, ethnicity, or other group membership -- does not necessarily mean you can predict their attitudes or behavior. However, knowing their socioeconomic status does help to better understand their life experience, specifically some of the hardships they face.

While abuse and neglect occur in families at all socioeconomic levels, poor children are more likely to come to the attention of the child protection system. This happens for a variety of reasons. One reason is that middle- and upper-income families have access to many more resources within their families than poor people do. Even though family crisis, including abuse, happens at all income levels, it is the poor who often have to turn to the system for support. For people living in poverty, initial contact with "the system" is usually for reasons other than abuse. The contact may be about accessing medical care, food stamps, housing, etc. Once this contact is initiated, these families are communicating with many more "mandated reporters," increasing the likelihood that serious issues of child maltreatment and neglect will be investigated.

Poverty, which can be defined as a lack of resources, causes great stress in families. Because of this stress, poverty itself is a major risk factor of abuse, which increases the likelihood of both immediate and lasting negative effects on children. However, poverty is not a causal agent of abuse. Most poor families do not abuse their children.

Children living in families in poverty are more likely:

- . To have difficulty in school;
- . To become teen parents; and
- . As adults, to earn less and be unemployed more.

Poverty in the first years of life can have critical consequences. Research in brain development shows the importance of the first years of life for a person's overall emotional and intellectual well-being. Poor children face a greater risk of impaired brain development due to their increased exposure to a number of other risk factors. These risk factors include:

- . Parental substance abuse;
- . Maternal depression;
- . Exposure to environmental toxins (because of where they are forced to live); and
- . Poor quality daycare.

Children who live in poverty are far more likely to have both reports of abuse and substantiated incidents of abuse in their lives. While poverty is not the causal agent of the abuse, it is a risk factor that cannot be ignored or overlooked in its importance.



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## Unit 5: Generational Versus Situational Poverty

### Walk a Mile in Someone Else's Shoes

Read the following information that distinguishes generational poverty from situational poverty. Examine the chart "Socioeconomic Class: Value Differences," which describes some of the cultural themes/"hidden rules" in generational poverty.

How might class values affect your response to each of these situations?

- . You are driving to a job interview when you notice someone on the side of the road with a flat tire -- obviously needing assistance. If you stop to help, you will not be on time for your interview.
- . Unexpectedly you receive \$5,000. What will you do with it?
- . You are seventeen years old and have to choose between completing high school or taking a job in a new factory in your town.
- . How might understanding class values help you in your work as CASA volunteer?

Many of the families that come to the attention of the child protection system live in generational rather than situational poverty. The term "**generational poverty**" means that a person has been in poverty for at least two generations, while "**situational poverty**" is defined as a lack of resources due to a particular event such as divorce, death, or chronic illness. As with all materials that describe groups of people, this material is generalized and does not necessarily apply to any one individual. There is often the stereotype that families with generational poverty are not working hard enough. As we already stated, most people who are living at or below the poverty level are working families. They work for minimum wage or less without access to health care and many other benefits considered standard to the middle class.

Many people living with generational poverty have functioning families. They have demonstrated the ability to parent appropriately and to meet their own and their children's basic needs. They fully utilize the non-financial resources at their disposal.

Other families with generational poverty have fewer resources and are more despondent and hopeless. A lack of autonomy and an inability to make choices have become the "norm" in their lives. They may feel left out of a society that places so much emphasis on material possessions. They may feel angry, frustrated, or cheated by the circumstances of their lives.

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Moving out of poverty is not possible without some type of support. If none is available, people become frustrated and hopeless. This hopelessness is sometimes expressed by an attitude that says, "Society owes me something." If you become frustrated by how your child's family thinks, consider their perspective for a moment -- "walk a mile in their shoes."

### Socioeconomic Class: Value Differences

This chart shows some of the differences in attitudes and beliefs (the hidden rules) between individuals living in poverty and those with middle-class incomes. Remember that such characterizations are generalizations and are only helpful in understanding a culture from the "big picture" perspective. Individuals and families have their unique differences. Some cultural themes in generational poverty impact the work of the CASA volunteer..

		In Poverty . . .	In Middle Class . . .
Value Differences	Driving Force	I am not in a position to control my life.	My actions affect my future.
	Language	Live in the present.	Plan for the future.
	Time/Money	Getting the point across is most important. (without "putting on airs")	Getting the point across with proper grammar is most important
	Destiny	Survival, relationships.	Work, achievement.

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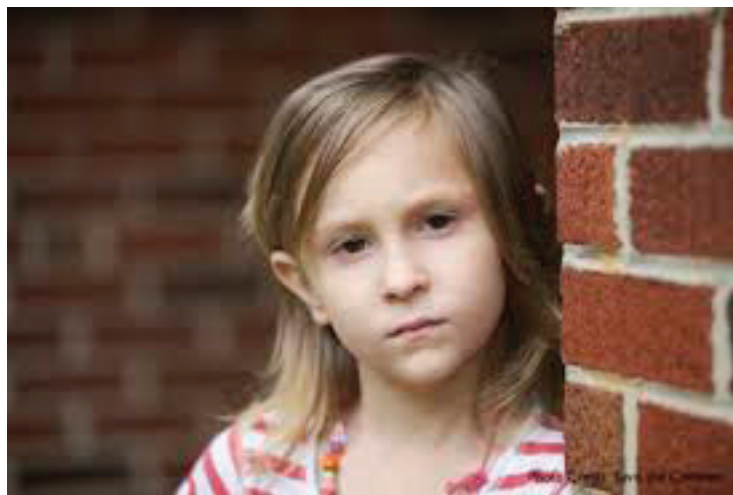
## Leaving Poverty: Roadblocks to Change

Research shows that individuals leave poverty for one of four reasons:

1. They have a clear goal or vision of something they want to be or have;
2. Their personal situation is so painful that they are willing to take big risks;
3. They have a role model who builds their confidence, teaches them that they have choices, and shows them a more complete range of life's possibilities;  
or,
4. They have a specific recognized talent or ability that provides an opportunity for them.

Being in poverty is rarely about a lack of intelligence or ability. Many individuals stay in poverty because they don't know there is a choice or have no access to the resources that they need.

*Adapted from A Framework for Understanding Poverty, Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.,  
Baytown, TX: RFT Publishing Co., 1998.*



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## Unit 6: Understanding Families Through Culture

### The Cultural Sensitivity Lens

Another lens that you need to use when you look at a family is the lens of cultural sensitivity. Family structure, rules, roles, customs, boundaries, communication styles, problem-solving approaches, and values may be based on cultural norms and/or accepted community standards. “Cultural norms” are the expectations of behavior based on cultural beliefs and practice. “Community standards” are the shared values and expectations of a group of people living in geographical proximity.

It is important to understand the role of the extended family in raising children. In many cultures, extended family may be expected to play an extensive role.

As a CASA volunteer, your assessment of a family’s situation will be affected by whether you focus on strengths or deficits and by your awareness of how cultural issues can impact your ability to see the situation objectively. In the next activity, you will use the three lenses -- strengths/resources, deficits, and culture -- to evaluate a family situation.

As a CASA volunteer, you will work with families who will all have strengths that they can choose to employ to follow the orders of the courts -- and ultimately, to become reunited with their children and end their involvement with the child protective services system.

The “Strengths in Families Worksheet” on the following pages assesses a family using both a resource lens and a culturally sensitive lens. This worksheet is an excellent tool for you to use when working with the families of the children to whom you are appointed as an advocate. It is helpful to let the family tell you about what they see as their strengths. You can also share with the family some of the strengths you identify in order to encourage them to begin to view themselves as having strengths.

#### **Strengths in Families Worksheet**

Read the worksheet that follows. Look at each category in the worksheet and name one way that you might gather that information.

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## Strengths in Families Worksheet (1)

<b>Parent-Child Relationship</b>	1. Parent shows empathy for the child.
	2. Parent responds appropriately to the child’s verbal & non-verbal signs.
	3. Parent has the ability to put the child’s needs ahead of his or her own.
	4. When they are together, the child shows comfort in the parent.
	5. The parent has raised the child for a significant period of time.
	6. In the past, the parent has met the child’s basic physical and emotional needs.
	7. Parent accepts some responsibility for the problems that brought the child into care or to the attention of the authorities.
	8. The parent uses positive, non-violent discipline.
<p>The first items focus on the parent’s relationship with the child because the quality of the parent/child bond is one of the strongest predictors of the success or failure of treatment (Wasserman 1986). To accurately assess the parent/child bond, it is important to know the attachment behaviors of the parent’s culture. How does this culture display empathy? What are appropriate verbal and nonverbal cues? For example, language is highly valued in some groups, and not in others. Eye contact between parent and child is expected by some but considered disrespectful by others. The ability to put the child’s needs before the parent’s own is crucial. Irrespective of culture, prognosis is good for parents who have the “ability to accept significant responsibility for their contribution to the development of the problem or their past failure to deal with it” (Steinhauer 1983).</p>	
<b>Parental Support System</b>	9. The parent has positive, significant relationships with other adults who seem free of overt pathology (e.g., spouse, parents, friends, relatives).
	10. The parent has a meaningful support system that can help him or her now (e.g., church, job, counselor).
	11. Extended family is nearby and capable of providing support.
<p>All families require a positive support system to survive adversity. Items 9 through 11 reflect the quality of the parent’s relationships with the current support system. The ways in which support systems function vary depending on culture. Because of the value European-American culture places on self-sufficiency and independence, parents are expected to make their own decisions, live independently, and use the family for emotional support. Other cultures, most notably Native American cultures, expect the total group, biologically related or not, to function collectively to resolve problems (Horejsi 1992). Resolution of the problems may lie in the hands of the elders in other ethnic groups (Rottman 1982).</p>	

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## Strengths in Families Worksheet (2)

<b>Past Support System</b>	12. Extended family history shows family members able to help appropriately when one member is not functioning well.
	13. Relatives came forward to offer help when the child needed placement.
	14. Relatives have followed through on commitments in the past.
	15. There are significant other adults, not blood relatives, who have helped in the past.
	16. Significant other adults have followed through on commitments in the past.
Items 12 through 16 look at extended family and friendships that have been helpful in the past and can be tapped again. In this section, the CASA volunteer needs to assess whether this family system has demonstrated healthy coping abilities in the past consistent with their cultural norms.	
<b>Family History</b>	17. The family's ethnic, cultural, or religious heritage includes and emphasis on mutual caretaking and shared parenting in times of crisis.
	18. The parent's own history shows consistency of parental caretaker.
	19. The parent's history shows evidence of his or her childhood needs being met adequately.
Items 17 through 19 look at the parent's own history and cultural heritage. To answer number 17, it is important to know to what extent the family has identified with, and participated in, its ethnic community.	
<b>Parent's Self-Care</b>	20. Parent's general health is good.
	21. Parent uses medical care for self appropriately.
	22. Parent's hygiene and grooming are consistently adequate.
	23. Parent has a history of stability in housing.
	24. Parent has a solid employment history.
	25. Parent has graduated from high school or possesses a GED.
	26. Parent has skills that contribute to employability.
Items 20 through 26 highlight the parent's ability to function in an adult mode (according to the expectations of his or her culture) in areas that contribute to his or her parental functioning.	

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## Strengths in Families Worksheet (3)

Child's Development	27. Child shows age-appropriate cognitive abilities.
	28. Child demonstrates an age-appropriate attention span.
	29. Child shows evidence of conscience development.
	30. Child has appropriate social skills.
	31. Major behavioral problems are absent.
	Finally, items 27 through 31 focus on the functioning of the child. The more a child's behavior challenges the parent, the more difficulty the parent will have feeling successful. The stress of parenting a difficult child increases the risk of a relapse to old behaviors and emotions.

*Adapted from Concurrent Planning: From Permanency Planning to Permanency Action, Linda Katz, Norma Spoonemore, and Chris Robinson, Seattle: Lutheran Social Services of Washington and Idaho, 1994.*

**(Note:** When using the “Strengths in Families Worksheet” in family violence situations, keep the following information in mind. Batterers often isolate the victim, thus preventing easy flight. The current parental support system may be very limited due to the isolation. The past support system may be a better predictor of possible help. It is also important to build up the current support system by identifying resources, such as a faith community or community agencies, that can help the victim and children. Also, if the parent has been a victim of family violence and was forced to flee to shelters or move frequently, a past lack of stable housing or employment history should not be used against him or her. Family violence is a topic that will be addressed at some length in chapter 5 of this training.)

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## Different Types of Families: A Portrait Gallery

### Nuclear Families

Approximately half of all families with youngsters under age 18 are composed of two biological parents and their children.

### Single-Parent Families

Single-parent families make up 27 percent of households with children under age 18.

### Cross-Generational Families

Approximately 670,000 families with children under age 18 have a family member age 65 or older living with them.

Roughly 2.5 million children under age 18 live with one or both parents in their grandparents' home.

### Adoptive/Foster Families

Approximately 120,000 children are adopted each year.  
6.3 children per 1,000 live in out-of-home foster care.

### Never-Married Families

About 1.5 million unmarried couples have at least one child under the age of 5.

### Blended Families

About 20 percent of children in two-parent households live in blended families.



# CHAPTER 4: Understanding Families

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## Grandparents as Parents

Approximately 1.3 million children under age 18 live with their grandparents.

## Same-Sex Parent Families

Some 2 million children have parents who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

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*Adapted from Caring for Your Teenager (© 2003 American Academy of Pediatrics)*