



Pitching CASA: Crafting a Clear and Compelling Elevator Speech

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CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

KENTUCKY CASA NETWORK



Agenda

- **Getting Started: The Power of Persuasive Pitches**
- **Key Components of an Effective Speech**
 - **Statement of Need**
 - **Impact**
 - **Benefits to the Volunteer**
 - **Call to Action**
- **Next Steps: Putting Your Pitch to Work**

Special Thanks

- Special thanks to the following local program staff (and rock star recruiters!) for sharing their insights and ideas for this workshop:
 - Beth Ellis – CASA of the Gateway Region
 - Liz Hansen – CASA of the Northern Bluegrass Region
 - Ben Kleppinger – CASA of Lexington



The Power of Persuasive Pitches

What is an Elevator Speech?

- Capture someone's attention and convey what we do in a limited amount of time
- Our elevator pitches should:
 - Be concise and compelling
 - Make a strong first impression
 - Use a conversational tone
 - Convey our passion and personal connection to the mission
 - Be flexible to fit a specific audience





**Yes, we are
experts on all
things CASA....**

But how do we talk about
CASA to people who have
never heard of us and don't
know what we do?



Using Your Pitch



Versions of a Pitch

- Elevator Speech: 30 seconds to 2 minutes
- Extended pitch: Expand your elevator pitch to give a longer presentation



Key Components of an Effective Pitch

Statement of Need: The Hook

- Hook listener with a captivating statement of need
 - Compelling fact illustrating the problem
 - Statistic conveying the urgency of the need
 - Descriptive statement offering the perspective of a system-involved child



Statement of Need: The Hook's Essential Ingredients



✓ **Engagement:**

- Be yourself
- Be friendly and build rapport
- Catch interest quickly

✓ **Clarity:**

- Use language that resonates with the general public
- Avoid jargon and system-specific language

Clarity: Language Do's and Don'ts

System Language You May Want to Avoid:	Terms That May Resonate with General Public:
All acronyms!	Broken system
Child welfare system	Slipping through the cracks
Out of home care	Shed light on...
Placement	Broaden the picture...
Permanency	Voice of the child
Appointed	Speaking up for the child's needs
The Cabinet, DCBS, GAL	Safe and caring homes
<i>Without more context:</i> Advocate	Caring, stable adult

Statement of Need: Developing Your Pitch

- Write one sentence that describes the need for CASA volunteers that you think will “hook” someone who doesn’t know much about us.



Statement of Need: Developing Your Pitch

- Share your “hook” statement in pairs – offer each other critical feedback.
- When offering your partner feedback, consider:
 - Did it catch your attention?
 - Did it convey a sense of need/urgency?
 - Did you hear any jargon?
 - What would make it catchier or better illustrate the need?

Statement of Need: Example “Hook” Statements

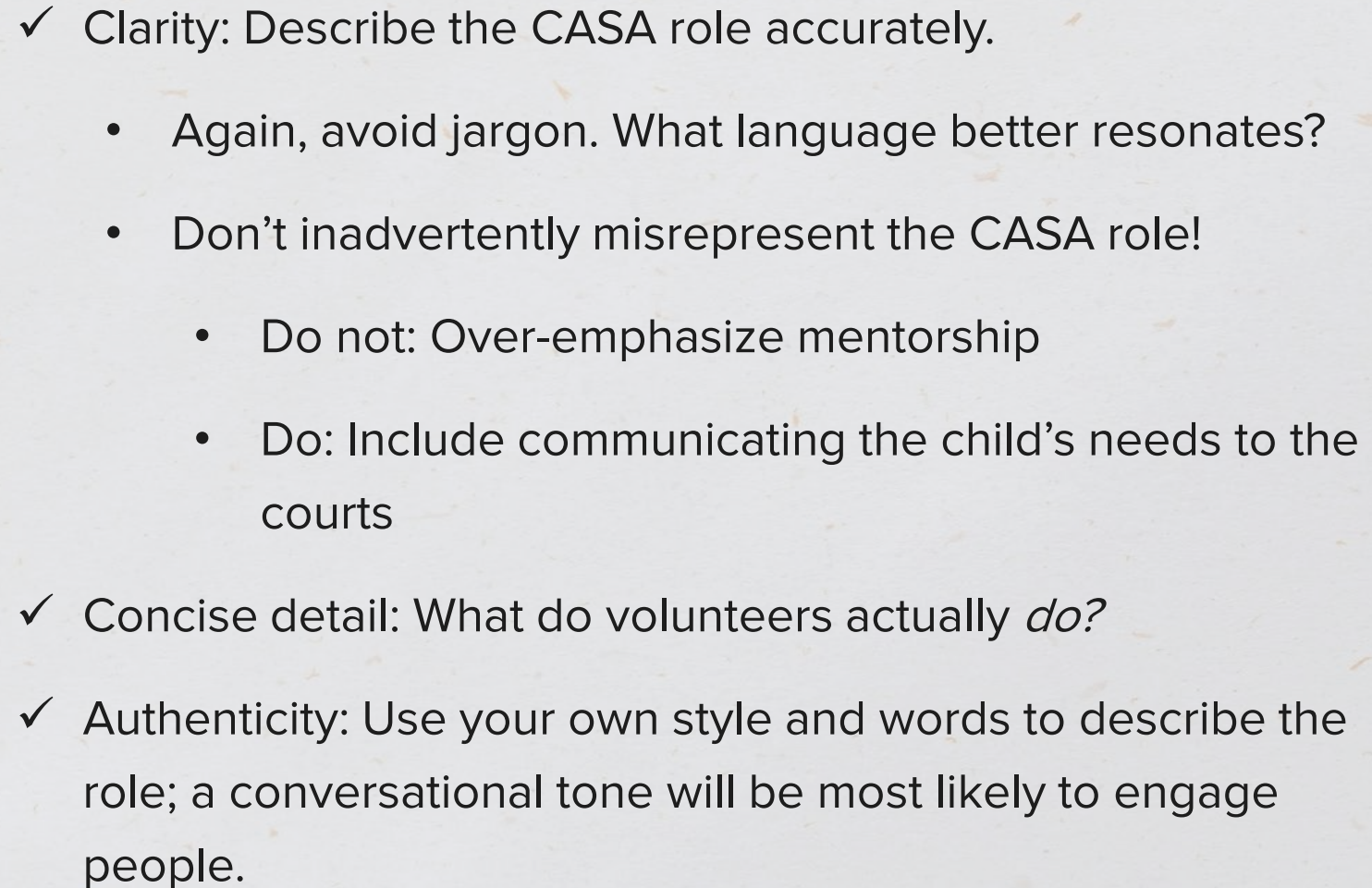
- **The universal hook:** Children who have been abused or neglected already have enough to worry about – they shouldn’t have to wonder what happens next and how a judge they’ve never met will be able to make decisions impacting their future.
- **The heart strings opener:** Imagine a child caught up in chaos of the system after experiencing abuse – maybe they’ve been pulled out of the only home they’ve ever known, are living with a foster family they just met, and are feeling alone, scared, and uncertain of what will happen to them next.
- **For the justice-oriented person:** When the system is so stretched and overwhelmed, important things can slip through the cracks – and children who have been abused or neglected cannot afford for the courts to overlook their needs.
- **For the analytical person:** In our county, there are [insert number] children a year who go before the courts because they have been abused or neglected; children need a strong voice advocating for them to make sure their needs are heard.

The Impact of CASA Volunteers

- How do CASA volunteers address this need?
- What makes CASA unique from other players in the system?



The Impact of CASA Volunteers: Essential Ingredients

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- ✓ Clarity: Describe the CASA role accurately.
 - Again, avoid jargon. What language better resonates?
 - Don't inadvertently misrepresent the CASA role!
 - Do not: Over-emphasize mentorship
 - Do: Include communicating the child's needs to the courts
 - ✓ Concise detail: What do volunteers actually *do*?
 - ✓ Authenticity: Use your own style and words to describe the role; a conversational tone will be most likely to engage people.

Describing the Impact – Without Overwhelming

- “The court does not want another legal expert – judges need someone who can give a perspective on the everyday, basic needs of a child.”
- “We will walk alongside you while you work a case – CASA staff know the system inside and out, so you don’t have to. If you care about kids, you will have everything you need to be a great advocate!”
- “CASA volunteers gather information, but we don’t make decisions – we pass along what we learn and leave the decisions to the court and child protection professionals.”
- “Most of our volunteers do not have a social services or legal background. It’s their different perspectives that help us be the most useful.”

The Impact of CASA Volunteers: Developing Your Pitch

- Write your description of the CASA role.
 - Introduce “Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA volunteers”
 - Feel free to use CASA at subsequent mentions of the role.
- When offering your partner feedback, consider:
 - Did you hear any jargon?
 - If you knew nothing about CASA, what would you think a volunteer does?
 - Was the CASA volunteer role accurately portrayed?
 - Would the average person feel overwhelmed or intimidated by this description of the CASA role?



Impact of CASA Volunteers: Examples

- A CASA volunteer is an extra set of hands to gather information and shed more light on a child's situation. Since volunteers have just one case to focus on, we visit the child regularly to get to know them and talk to others involved in the child's life to better understand their needs. We pass this information on to the courts to help judges decide where a child will be safest and what else the child needs to thrive.

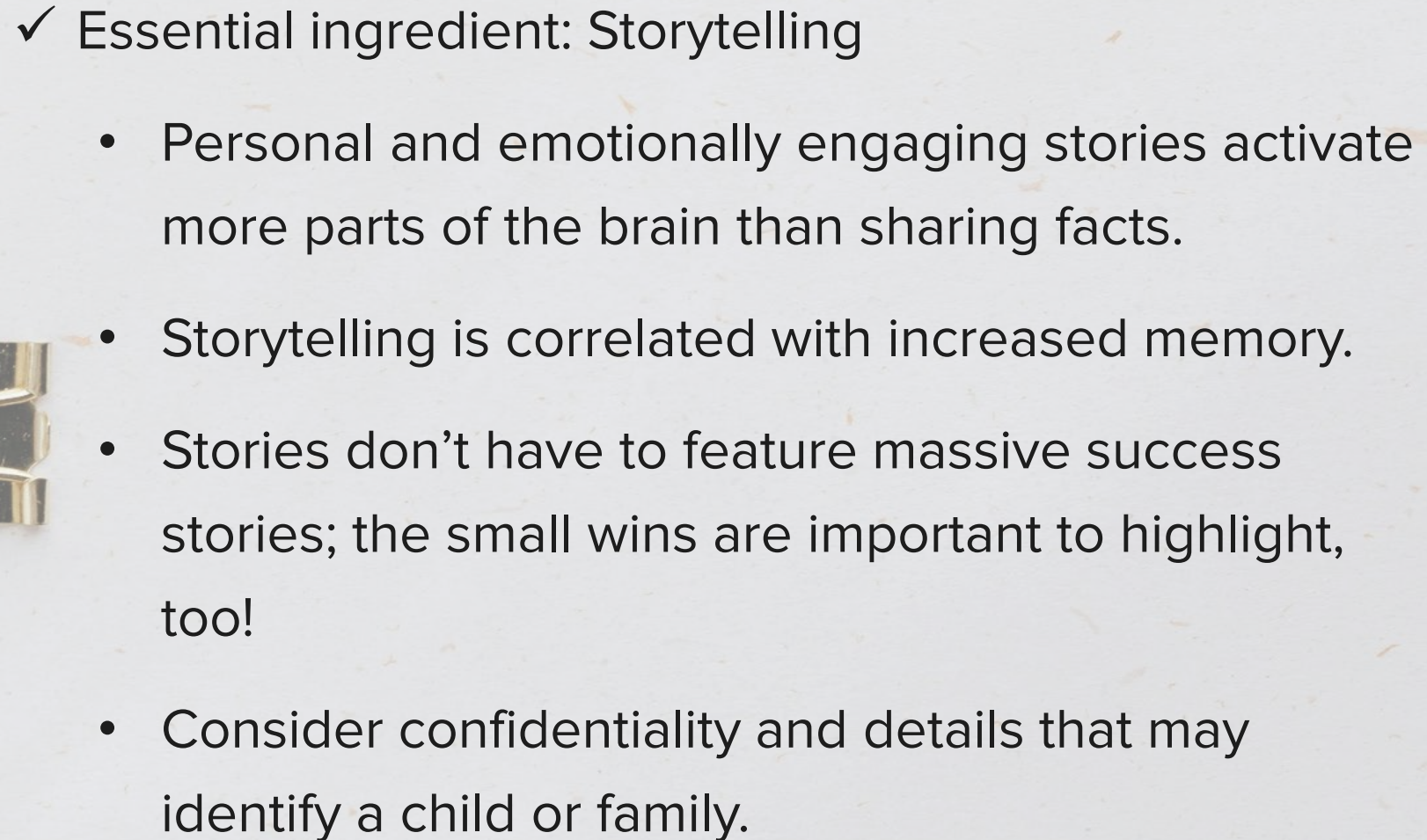
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- Through simply building a relationship with the child and getting to know other people involved in the child's life – which requires no special background or legal knowledge – a CASA volunteer becomes deeply aware of a child's needs. Judges look to CASA to help them understand what the child needs and what gaps other busy professionals may be overlooking.

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- Abuse and neglect cases can last a long time. Children may be assigned several different social workers throughout their case and may even move between foster homes or facilities several times. The CASA volunteer is often the one caring, consistent adult throughout their case and can contribute to the stability the children are craving.

The Impact of CASA Volunteers: Storytelling

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- ✓ Essential ingredient: Storytelling
 - Personal and emotionally engaging stories activate more parts of the brain than sharing facts.
 - Storytelling is correlated with increased memory.
 - Stories don't have to feature massive success stories; the small wins are important to highlight, too!
 - Consider confidentiality and details that may identify a child or family.

The Impact of CASA Volunteers: Example Stories

A child moved to a new foster home but none of his belongings came with him. No one else had noticed or brought this up until the CASA volunteer visited 5 days later and noticed the child was still wearing the same clothes. The CASA volunteer went to work making sure this child had all the clothing and supplies he needed.



The Impact of CASA Volunteers: Example Stories

A volunteer was assigned to a case involving four siblings who were living in an unsanitary environment. The family went to court, but the parents were still not addressing the issues in the home. When the volunteer met with the parents, though, he discovered that they were both illiterate – they did not understand the case plan or resources that had been given to them. The volunteer brought this to the court’s attention and the parents were given additional support and guidance. The children’s parents immediately began addressing the issues noted by the court and the home environment improved drastically. The children, who desperately missed their parents, were safely returned to their home. Their health improved and their teachers noted they were thriving.

The Impact of CASA Volunteers: Example Stories



A CASA volunteer noticed that a child was hoarding food in their foster home – she was two weeks away from being adopted by this foster family. The CASA volunteer noted their concerns to the County Attorney, and it turns out the foster family was not adequately feeding the child. The child was malnourished and no one realized it. She was moved to a different home and within three months, she were physically and emotionally thriving.

The Impact of CASA Volunteers: Example Stories

One volunteer may have saved a child's life when she looked back through the child's medical records to discover she wasn't receiving medication she needed for a problem with her kidneys. No one else on the case had the time available to do the research, and the child had been moved so many times, the record of her medical need had been lost and forgotten.



The Impact of CASA Volunteers: Example Stories



A CASA volunteer was assigned to a case of a girl in elementary school who was about to be moved into a remedial reading class. The volunteer got to know the child and learned she always saw letters as “fuzzy” and thought that was just how they were supposed to look. The volunteer recommended an eye exam and glasses, and within two weeks, the girl was moved into her class’s advanced reading group.

The Impact of CASA Volunteers: Developing Your Pitch

- Take a moment to reflect upon your experience with CASA. In pairs, discuss an example from a case that helps convey the importance and impact of CASA volunteers.

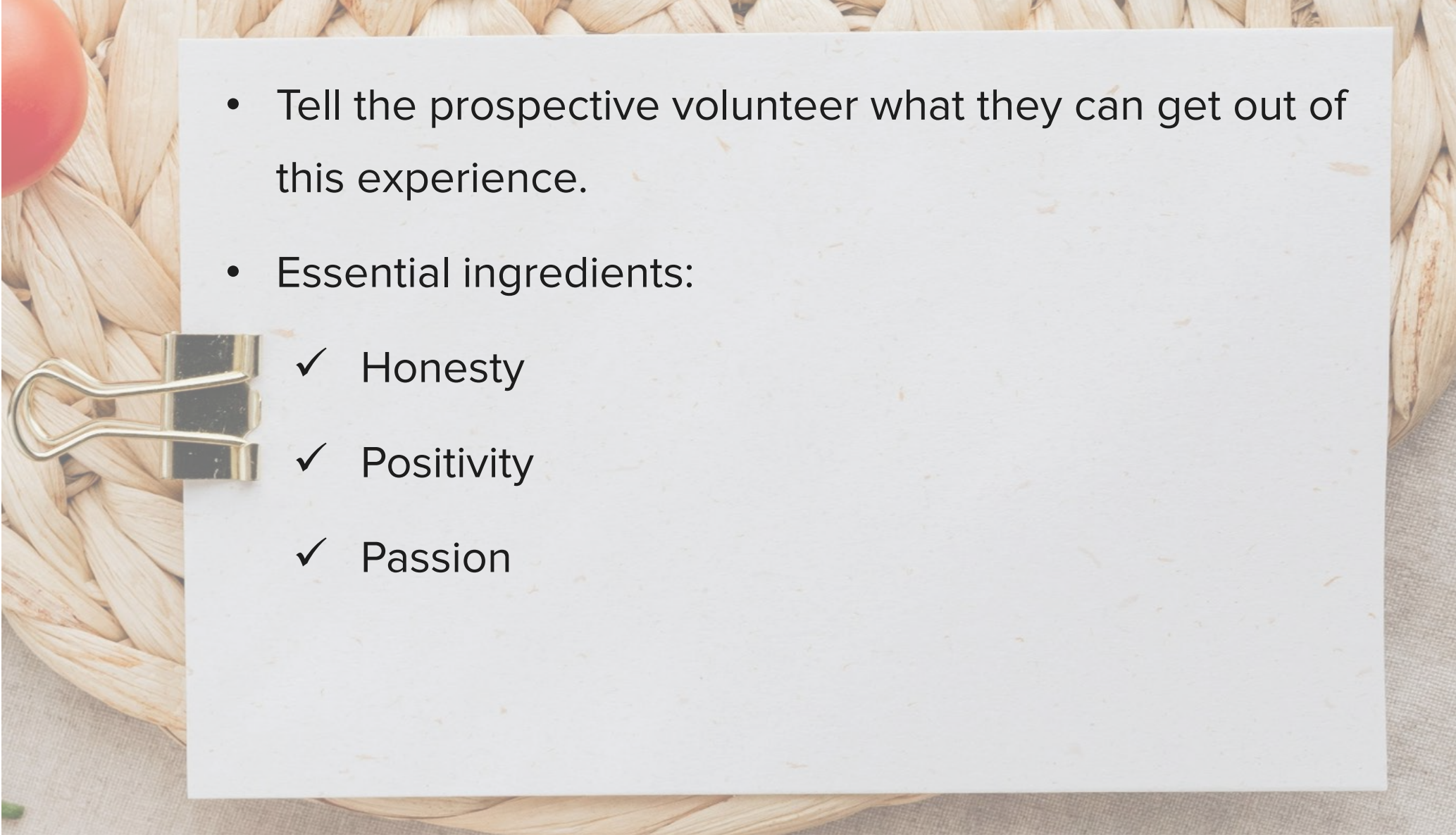


The Impact of CASA Volunteers: Developing Your Pitch

- Take a moment to reflect upon your experience with CASA. In pairs, discuss an example from a case that helps convey the importance and impact of CASA volunteers.
- Jot down the “Cliff’s Notes” version of this story so you don’t forget to add it to your pitch.



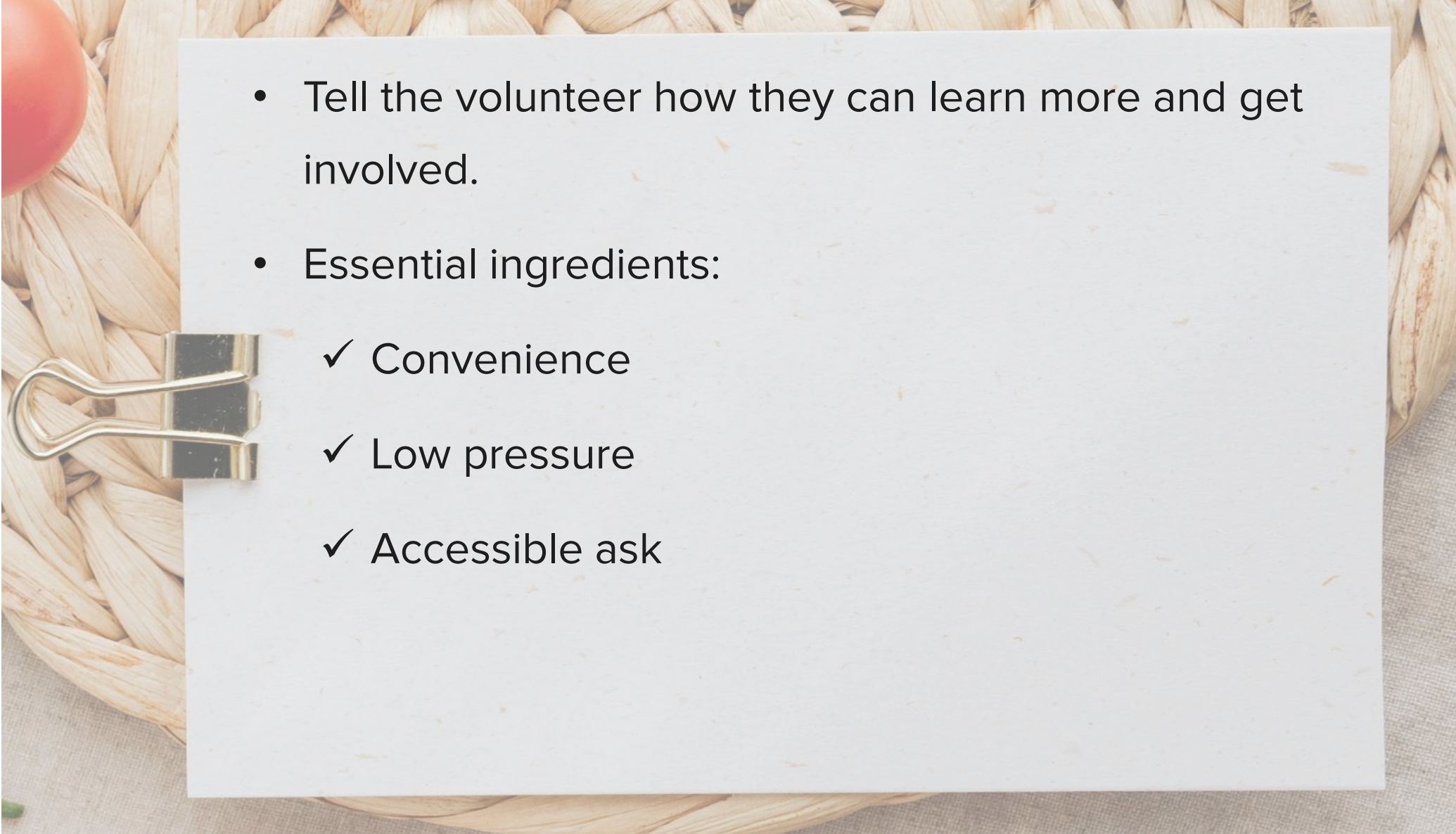
Benefits to the Volunteer

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- Tell the prospective volunteer what they can get out of this experience.
 - Essential ingredients:
 - ✓ Honesty
 - ✓ Positivity
 - ✓ Passion

Benefits to the Volunteer: Examples

- **It's rewarding:** “Being a CASA volunteer is very different from other volunteer roles – where else can you volunteer your time and have such a significant, lasting impact in the life of a child?”
- **It's inspiring:** “We have CASA volunteers who get updates from the children on their cases long after the case closes, and the accomplishments of these youth are inspiring.”
- **It's flexible:** “Outside of the scheduled court hearing that we attend together, you can work everything else around your own schedule.”
- Align the benefit with your specific audience's values/interests:
 - **Pitch to a teacher:** “This gives you the opportunity, outside of the classroom, to use your skills to support an individual child.”
 - **Pitch to a business owner:** “Employees who are encouraged and supported to volunteer in the community are more likely to feel connected to their workplace.”
 - **Pitch to members of a faith community:** “This is an opportunity to live your values by serving vulnerable children.”

Call to Action

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- Tell the volunteer how they can learn more and get involved.
 - Essential ingredients:
 - ✓ Convenience
 - ✓ Low pressure
 - ✓ Accessible ask

Call to Action: Examples

- Provide a range of options:
 - Share contact information for follow up
 - Attend a CASA 101 to learn more
 - Take a handout with info and upcoming training dates
 - Share an application, where appropriate.
 - Consider joining “Friends of CASA” or the Board of Directors
 - If this isn’t the right time for them to volunteer, share our information on social media or with two friends who might be a good fit.
 - Make a donation to the CASA program.



Call to Action: Examples

Dear NAME,

Thank you for your interest in CASA. Across Kentucky, more than 13,000 children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect are waiting for a trained CASA volunteer to be their voice in court. We are grateful for your interest in changing the lives of these vulnerable children.

There are several ways that you can get involved with CASA:

1. [Become a CASA Volunteer](#)

- You can click on the link above to fill out our inquiry form or respond to this email directly with the county you would like to volunteer in and I will send you contact information of the local program nearest you.
- [This document](#) contains additional information about CASA and the role of a CASA volunteer for further review. You may also wish to watch this short [informational video](#).

2. [Join a CASA Board of Directors](#)

- We encourage you to submit an inquiry to become a CASA board member - either for the Kentucky CASA Network or for a local CASA program.
- Please note that not all CASA programs are currently accepting applications for new board members. However, your information will be passed on to the CASA program and they will follow up with any additional information.

3. [Become a Friend of CASA](#)

- Friends of CASA is a new individual membership category with the Kentucky CASA Network. Your membership dues will help us promote the CASA mission, highlighting the advocacy that CASA volunteers provide for children.
- Memberships purchased in 2024 will be locked in at \$40 per year. Memberships are valid through the end of the calendar year and can be renewed annually.

4. [Donate to the Kentucky CASA Network](#)

- With your donation, we can support our local CASA programs as they recruit, train, and supervise more volunteers to advocate for more children.

Thank you again for your interest in CASA and the vulnerable children we serve. If you have any additional questions, do not hesitate to contact the Kentucky CASA Network office at (502) 238-2154 or by [email](#).

Kind regards,
Courtney

Putting it All Together

- Add transitions where needed.
- Review and revise.
- Practice and get feedback!



Putting Your Pitch to Work

Tips for Using Your Pitch

- Keep it casual and conversational.
- Tweak it for the setting and audience.
- Be flexible and adjust for time – sometimes it will be shorter, sometimes it will be longer.
- Be prepared to address frequently asked questions!

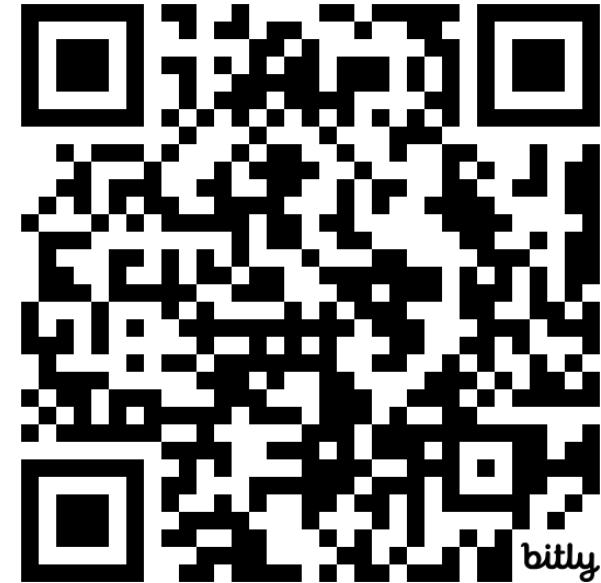


After the Pitch

- Be persistent but not pushy!
 - It's a volunteer role – life happens and other things will sidetrack people's attention. We have to work for it!
 - Continue to engage them through email newsletters, invites to events, etc.
 - Email interested volunteers every time you have a new pre-service training scheduled.
 - Follow ups are often appreciated!
 - “I know life is busy and if right now is not the time for you, we get it! Just let us know if something changes down the road and you want to be removed from our list.”

Resources

- Story Bank Template
 - Programs: Create a story bank for all staff, volunteers and board members to use. (Include small wins, big impact stories)
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)





Questions?

Contact Us

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Thank You!

CHANGE A
CHILD'S STORY.™

