



ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS HANDOUT

SESSION 3 - GREENE CASE

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION VS. CLOSED-ENDED QUESTION

Invite others to engage in a dialogue with you. In your work as a CASA/GAL volunteer, using open-ended questions allows children and adults to give more thoughtful answers since these questions cannot be answered with a simple yes, no or one-word answer. Sometimes open-ended questions are phrased as a statement that requires a response (for example, “Tell me about...” or “Describe for me...”).

Examples of open-ended questions:

For child: “Please describe what your morning is like from the time you wake up until you go to school.”

For adult: “How did your family come to be involved with the court system?”

Closed-ended questions

Useful when you are trying to obtain factual information. They can be answered with a simple yes or no, or with a single word or short phrase.

Examples of closed-ended questions:

For child: “Is your aunt still living nearby?”

For adult: “How many times has Johnny been to the emergency room this month?”

Clarifying questions

Used to gather additional details or clear up any confusion.

Examples of clarifying questions:

“I didn’t understand the phrase you just used. Could you explain it?”

“You mentioned someone named James. What is his relationship to the child?”

Do not ask leading questions! A leading question is one that suggests a desired answer. Leading questions are never appropriate in any CASA/GAL volunteer interview.

Example of a leading question:

“Your favorite weekends are spent with your dad, right?”

More Examples:

Closed-Ended Question:

- (For a child): Do you want to live with your mother or your father?

Open-Ended: Question:

- Who would you like to live with?
- Who do you think you’d be happiest living with?

Closed-Ended Question:

- (For a parent): You seem unhappy lately. Are you?

Open-Ended Question:

- How have you been feeling lately?
- How are you doing emotionally?

Closed-Ended Question:

- (For a child): Does your mom leave you alone at night a lot?

Open-Ended Question:

- Tell me what it’s like at home at night.
- Who is around when you’re at home at night?

Closed-Ended Question:

- (For a parent): Do you understand the difference between a CASA/GAL volunteer
- and a caseworker?

Open-Ended Question:

- Tell me your understanding of my role as a CASA/GAL volunteer.
- How do you think my role is different from that of the caseworker