

“Why do I have so many workers? I can never keep track of who I should call for what!” Children and youth in foster care often have a number of different professionals who all look after different things in the child’s life. Let’s take a look at the differences between the workers, what each worker does, and who youth in care should call for different reasons.

Foster Care Case Managers (aka Foster Care Workers as they are usually called) Foster Care Case Managers look after the child in the foster home and make sure the family is providing the child with everything they need to live – food, shelter, clothing, nurturing, help with homework, etc. Your foster care worker wants to make sure that you are safe, happy, and doing well. If you ever have problems in your foster home or questions about foster care, this is the worker you would call.

#### Adoption Specialist

Adoption Specialists focus on finding a family to adopt the child his or her parents rights have been terminated. Sometimes, the foster family or relatives are able to adopt a child placed in their home and the adoption worker will help the family fill out the forms and assess them for adoption. Other times, the foster family cannot adopt a child in their home and the adoption worker needs to find other families who want to adopt the child. The adoption specialist will start recruitment activities, such as placing the child on MARE and AdoptUSKids, they will go with the child to Match Parties and other recruitment events, and anything else they can do to find a family for the child. Youth should contact their adoption specialist if they have questions or to discuss their feelings about adoption.

#### Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

GALs are court-appointed lawyers who look after the well-being of the child and report back to the court their recommendations. GALs often work closely with agencies and workers to determine the best options for the child. You should call your GAL if you have legal questions. If you are nervous calling them, you can also talk to your foster care and/or adoption specialist and they can relay the messages to your GAL.

#### Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to monitor a child’s case and advocate for the child’s needs. They stay with each case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home.

#### Wendy’s Wonderful Kids Recruiters (WWK Recruiters)

Did you know that Dave Thomas, the Founder of Wendy’s Restaurants, was adopted? The Dave Thomas Foundation works to help recruit families to adopt children and educate them about how to start the process. Part of the Dave Thomas Foundation is Wendy’s Wonderful Kids Recruiters – these are adoption specialists who children find adoptive families. WWK Recruiters help to reconnect children with family members the courts may have lost information for and recruit them to adopt their relatives who are in care. Not every child in care will have a WWK Recruiter, but they are an extra worker to help find a forever family for a waiting child.