

The Four Cornerstones for GALs

Office of the Child's Representative - www.coloradochildrep.org

Visiting

Should be as frequent and long as possible and in settings that most closely mimic family life.

Placement

Should support a child's connections to family and the people and institutions that the child was connected to before placement.

Services

Should address a parent and child's strengths and needs.

"Cornerstone Advocacy"
supports safe and lasting family reunification and overall safety, permanency and well-being.

Education & Life Skills Planning

Should promote academic and life success through stability in settings and programs tailored to the strengths and interests of the child/youth.

Conferences

Collaboration

Intensive & Upfront Advocacy

Youth Voice

The Four Strategies

The Legal Basis for Cornerstone Advocacy

"Reasonable efforts"

- The passage of ASFA prompted a renewed focus on the agency's duty to make reasonable efforts to safely reunify families. Think about how the Cornerstone applications can fairly be deemed 'reasonable efforts' in support of reunification.

State dependency statutes

- These address services and assistance. Also look to any issue-specific sections of your state statute (i.e. the portion that deals with services, visits, or placement). Argue that your advocacy fulfills the spirit if not the letter of that section.

State Regulations

- These detail the obligations that agencies owe parents and children. For example, most states have regulations which include specific agency obligations regarding visits, conferences and services, and placement.

Administrative directives, memos, and guidelines

- Find these on state and county Web sites. While not law per se, they typically represent social service providers' interpretation of best practices and legal obligations and thus can be persuasive in convincing an agency or a judge to move on a Cornerstone issue.