

COURT REPORT STYLE GUIDE

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to provide written guidelines for staff to follow when drafting court reports.

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Court Report Editing Cheat Sheet

Best Practices

Always review the previous report to make sure the CASA is not reusing old information.

Check last report's Assessment of Child's Needs section to confirm that any prior needs have been addressed. Check the Current section to ensure anything on which the CASA was going to follow is also addressed. Always read case notes entered since last report.

When using track changes, NEVER "accept all" changes. It is important to look at each change so you can learn from them, and to make sure you catch any spacing or formatting issues that may happen.

Never send the CASA a report with track changes or with your questions on the side in comments. Call or send the questions separately via email.

Editing Guidelines

Names/Abbreviations

Do not use names in reports, other than for children and parents. For parents, on first introduction, use full names. Thereafter, only use their prefix and last name (e.g. Ms. Smith). Ms./Mr./Mx. Last Name.

All professionals will be referred to by title/role

Be specific about how relatives are connected to the family (e.g. maternal grandmother, paternal uncle, Ms. Smith's cousin)

Once an acronym has been used once, no need to spell out again – this includes those written in Persons Contacted and History

These common acronyms DO NOT need to be spelled out

CPS

DPSS

A fuller reference list of acronyms and capitalization rules can be found on the server at: S:\CASA Riverside County\CASA Court Reports\Court Report Writing Resources\Style Guide

Chronological Listing

Please list all things chronologically. This includes:

The reason for removal in History (Begin with the date that CPS received the referral leading to the child/children's removal)

Placement information in Current and History – if child has lived in more than one placement during reporting period, list them chronologically. Do not begin with current placement

School information in Current – if child has attended more than one school during reporting period, list them chronologically. Do not begin with current school

Lists

Do not use bullet points when the need for a list of items arises. Instead, please include in a sentence with each item separated by a comma.

For example: The services Josh receives include preferential seating, extra time to complete assignments, individual help with math assignments, and 15 minutes of tutoring before school.

Confidential Placements

All placements are confidential.

Do not name the school. Teachers can be listed in Persons Contacted, but by title only. Their name should be listed as confidential.

If unable to confirm whether placement is confidential, treat the placement as confidential.

Do not use social service practitioner's report to determine whether a placement is confidential.

SW Recommendations

No need to include recommendations on Post Permanency reports UNLESS the permanent plan is changing.

No need for CASA to ask for recommendations on NMD cases UNLESS eligibility is in doubt. If eligibility is not in doubt, use language similar to the sample below.

Sample language: Pearlene meets the eligibility criteria for extended foster care (EFC) by working full time.

Needs Section

The goal is to make this section simple and clear for the judge to read; the focus should be on actual needs.

Needs section should always start with something positive about the youth. Do not repeat everything that is going well.

No needs: Karen is a sweet 8-year-old girl who is thriving in her placement. The family are providing her with everything to meet all of her needs.

Needs: Karen has been doing well in her placement, but she has struggled in school. I am hopeful a tutor can be found soon.

No needs, but uninvolved CASA: Karen is a sweet 8-year-old girl who loves drawing. I am unaware if she has any unmet needs at this time.

We cannot say there are no unmet needs if the CASA has not done enough to assess this.

Boilerplate Language

Medical

The below sentence can usually suffice, unless there is a specific issue that needs to be addressed such as a missed dental appointment. Best practice is to include the most recent appointment date if known. If the child is medically fragile or has a specific medical issue – it should be discussed here but try to avoid overly lengthy detail.

The [insert source] told me on [insert exact date] that Karen is up to date on her medical and dental appointments and immunizations

Inland Regional Center

Karen is a client of the Inland Regional Center IDRC

IEPs

Karen has an individualized education program (IEP) with the qualifying disability of intellectual disability and a secondary disability of speech or language impairment (SLI). Her IEP was last reviewed on...

Recommendations

The SSP is recommending that Ms. Mensa continue to receive reunification services.

The SSP is recommending that [child] begin a 60-day trial visit with Ms. Solis. Also, that Ms. Solis receive family maintenance services, and that Mr. Solis receive family enhancement services.

The SSP is recommending that Karen be placed with PARENT and receive family maintenance services.

The SSP is recommending that jurisdiction be terminated.

The SSP is recommending that Ms. Mensa's reunification services be terminated and a 366.26 hearing be set to determine a permanent plan.

I have not been able to reach the SSP and am unaware of what they are recommending.

The SSP is requesting a 90-day continuance to find an adoptive placement for Karen.

The SSP is recommending that parental rights be terminated and adoption be identified as the permanent plan.

The SSP is recommending that the Court order Karen into legal guardianship with her current caregiver and terminate jurisdiction.

Introduction to Court Report Writing

The following guide highlights areas of frequent editing in court reports and proscribes Voices for Children's preferred usage for these situations. Although multiple approaches in many of these situations may be correct and more a matter of preference or training, a standardized approach will maximize efficiency and reduce the need for repeated corrections.

This guide will also touch on some approaches to clearer, livelier, respectful, and inclusive writing to connect with the reader and provide more effective advocacy.

The court report is an opportunity to provide the judge and other parties with insight into the children for whom we advocate. The most powerful way to make an impression through the court reports is by making the children come to life through storytelling. The judges and others will respond more to personal observations and interactions than what can be gleaned from social services practitioners' reports and other documents. Try to be as specific as possible and include details that convey pictures.

Best Practices and Practical Tips

Keep It Fresh: Each report should be fresh and original with new information from this reporting period, although the History section can be used in subsequent reports. Judges may notice repeated information.

Focus on the Child: Always make the child the focus of the report and emphasize the positives. While the report must be objective, CASAs are advocating for the child and may be the only source of positive information about the child. Everyone involved will likely know that Johnny was suspended, but not everyone will know that Johnny helped another child with their homework, apologized, without being asked, for an action, or frequently picks up litter on walks with his CASA.

Be Respectful: Use correct pronouns for people. There is no need to specify or emphasize a child's appearance, race or ethnicity if it is not relevant to the report. Physical descriptions should add value to the report, and give the reader a better understanding of who the child is. It is okay to highlight a child's culture, ethnicity or physical appearance if it is something the youth has indicated to the CASA as important to them. Avoid using details that can be gleaned from a photo.

- Ex. Rather than "Jose is a beautiful 5-year-old boy with chocolate brown skin and brown eyes..." say "Jose is a 5-year-old boy who continues to share how proud he is of his Mexican heritage during our visits."

- Ex. Rather than “Cecilia has long dark hair...” say “Cecilia has long dark hair with which she likes to experiment. Each time I see her, she tries a new style or highlight color.”
- Ex. Rather than “Maria is a chubby 10-year-old girl who loves Doritos.” say “Maria is a 10-year-old girl who loves Doritos.”*
- Ex. “Angelica is involved in the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) club at her high school and always tells me how excited she is about upcoming events.”
- Ex. “Adrian is a 14-year-old boy who is over six feet tall. He often gets mistaken for being much older due to his height.”

*A child’s weight or other physical condition may be appropriate to mention in the medical section of the report IF a medical professional has indicated a concern.

Be Specific: Be specific and include details. In describing abuse, especially sexual abuse, court reports should maintain a balance between being overly explicit and being too vague or euphemistic. Vague words such as “inappropriate” can obscure the degree of the abuse or behavior. Judges will have access to original social services practitioner reports. Enough details, however, will save the reader from the trouble of referring to other documents to find out what happened.

Write Active: In general, using active voice when writing is most effective. Active voice is more concise and reads easier. Passive voice tends to be stiffer and excessively formal; it also obscures the sentence’s subject.

Active: Mr. Walters, the DPSS social services practitioner, and I attended the meeting.

Passive: The meeting was attended by Mr. Walters, the DPSS social services practitioner, and I.

There are instances in which passive voice is appropriate and potentially clearer. Examples of when the passive voice may be appropriate:

Ex. “The IEP was last reviewed on May 6, 2021.”

Ex. “Reunification services for the parents were terminated on January 14, 2020.”

Ex. “Sam was detained at PCC on December 5, 2021.”

Attributions: Be sure to attribute when referring to others' information. Phrases such as "according to the DPSS social services practitioner," "the foster mother told me," "the teacher said," etc., help clarify the source of information and adds credibility. It also helps an advocacy supervisor gauge whether a court report leans too heavily on information from the youth, caregiver, or third-party source. Try to include a date when possible.

Ex. "On February 4, 2021, the caregiver told me..."

Stay Simple: Embrace simple language. Avoid using unnecessarily big words. For example, "use" is a much better word than "utilize" in most cases.

CASA Voice: Often, CASAs write in a voice that is unique to them, which can add a more personal aspect to a report. Be considerate of CASA's voice and opinion when editing their writing. A 'big' word may add color to a report that only CASAs can provide.

Punctuation & Capitalization

Acronyms: Place acronym in parentheses following its first usage. Use only acronyms in subsequent references. Please note that words that make up the acronym generally should not be capitalized unless they are proper nouns: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) vs. Polinsky Children's Center (PCC).

Apostrophes: Do not use apostrophes to form plurals for numerals or acronyms: The boy enjoyed music from the 1960s; The temperature was in the 70s; The CASAs enjoyed writing court reports; and The girl earned As and Bs in school.

Capitalization: Avoid unnecessary capitalization whenever possible. This includes medical diagnoses. Unless the disease includes a proper noun, do not capitalize, e.g., autism vs. Lou Gehrig's disease; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Also avoid capitalizing the types of reports, such as a detention report or a jurisdiction/disposition report.

Capitalize job titles in the Persons Contacted section, do not capitalize them in the body of the report.

Exceptions

- Capitalize "Court" when it refers to a specific judge's action: The Court ordered reunification services to be continued, but "The court-ordered reunification services continued."
- In most cases, do not capitalize school subjects unless based on a proper noun, for example, math, science, English, Spanish, U.S. history. Unless you are listing them as grades, then they should be capitalized.
- Commas: For optimal clarity, use the serial comma which is a comma placed before the conjunction "and" or "or" in series or three or more items. The girl ate pizza, lasagna, and apples. He could paint his car red, white, or blue.
- Try to avoid connecting two independent clauses with a comma and an "and." Often, such sentences, can be better written as two sentences. For example, "Mary had a little lamb, and its fleece was white as snow." could be split into "Mary had a little lamb. Its fleece was white as snow."
- Contractions: Do not use contractions.
- Dates: Spell out months. Use specific time elements as possible. A specific date, January 23, 2013, is better than a month and year, which is better than a season. In all cases, include a year for context. Without a year, timing issues can be confusing. Years will be offset by commas when a day is included in the date, for example, "On April 15, 2013, I attended an individualized education program (IEP) meeting for my case child. "No comma is used if you are only listing the month and year, for example "In April 2022, "
- Exclamation Points and Emojis: Do not use exclamation points or emojis.
- Names: Use first names for case children and their siblings. For parents, use full name on first reference and Mr. and Ms. on subsequent references. For example, Mr. Brown and Ms. Green rather than father and mother. All other adults should be referred to by their relation to the child. For example, DPSS social services practitioner, maternal grandmother, caregiver, resource parent, special education teacher, therapist..

- Numerals: Generally spell out whole numbers less than 10 and use numerals for figures 10 or more. Use numerals for ages and other measurements: 7-year-old, 5'3", 178 pounds, level 4 group home, etc.
- Examples: The boy was 11 years old. The 11-year-old boy liked cheese. The boy was placed on a 72-hour 5150 hold. The woman was detained at the psychiatric hospital for three days. Exceptions include 6 month review, 12 month review, and 18 month review when specifying hearing type.
- With writing decimals less than one, add a zero before the decimal point for added clarity, i.e., Brian's GPA was 0.7.
- Spell out all grade levels, including tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. Use eleventh grade, not 11th grade.
- Prepositions: Try to avoid ending sentences with prepositions (of, to, with, etc.) unless doing so provides greater clarity.
- Pronouns: Use pronouns (he, she, they) carefully as they can create ambiguity.
- Spacing: At the end of a sentence, use one space, not two, between period and next sentence.

A fuller reference list of acronyms and capitalization rules can be found on the server at: <\\vfcdata\files\Program Forms\Resources\AS Tools\Court Reports>

Words to Use or Avoid

affect/effect: In most cases, affect is a verb and effect is a noun.

another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA) on first reference, APPLA thereafter.

approximately: long word, consider using "about" instead.

as well as: wordy, generally use "and" instead.

biweekly and bimonthly: Because biweekly can mean either twice a week or every other week, it is a useless word in most cases. Avoid using. Bimonthly is similarly problematic.

bond: Avoid using "bond" to describe close relationship or process of forming a close relation. Word can have ambiguous legal implications.

checkup (no hyphen)

child/children: Use child or children instead of kid or kids.

child and family team (CFT) meeting, on first reference, CFT thereafter.

currently: largely unnecessary and long word, implied by present tense. If need to emphasize time element, consider using "now" instead

dad: Do not use except in direct quotations. Use "father" in first mention and then Mr. [LAST NAME] for the remainder of the report.

detained vs. placed: Children are detained at temporary shelters like the Welcome Center, Juvenile Hall, emergency shelter care (ESC) foster homes, and secure psychiatric hospitals but placed in foster homes and group homes.

Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (DSEP) on first reference, DSEP thereafter. DSEP is proper name of program offered by Rady Children's Hospital.

driver license or driver training (not driver's)

e.g. Do not use.

educational rights (not education)

foster family agency (FFA) upon first usage, FFA thereafter.

full-time

GPA: acceptable on first usage; no need to spell out grade point average.

great-grandmother, great-grandfather, great-grandparent

half brother, half sister, half-siblings

DPSS: acceptable on first usage; no need to spell out Health and Human Services Agency. Use DPSS instead of "The Agency."

i.e. Do not use.

independent living skills (ILS) on first reference, ILS thereafter.

individualized education program (IEP) upon first usage; IEP thereafter. Remember, individualized, not individual, and program, not plan.

kid/kids: Do not use except in direct quotations.

mom: Do not use except in direct quotations. Use "mother" in first mention and then Ms. [LAST NAME] for the remainder of the report.

non-relative extended family member (NREFM) (not non-related)

nonminor dependent (NMD) No hyphen or space between non and minor, despite NMD abbreviation

part-time

pick-up-and-detain order

placed: See "Detain vs. place."

prescribed: Use "prescribed" rather than "taking" when discussing medications. Just because a child is prescribed a medication does not mean the child is actually taking it. Also, be sure to mention the drug by brand (capitalized) or generic (not capitalized) name, the dosage and frequency, and the condition the medication addresses. Example: Daryl was prescribed 3 mg of Concerta daily for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Dosages are important, especially for psychotropic drugs, as they provide a sense of how medicated or overmedicated the child may be.

Rady Children's Hospital (not just Children's Hospital or Rady's Children's Hospital)

said/says: beautiful words. Less stilted than "stated." Reserve "stated" for especially formal pronouncements.

Inland Regional Center (IRC) on first reference; IRC on subsequent references. Not just Regional Center.

shared with: Wordy. Avoid using for "told" or "said." Use "share" for physical items, such as toys or pies, rather than information.

Social Security card: Social Security is proper noun for government program.

Substances: Use the words "substance misuse" instead of using substances or using drugs. Say, "A substance misuser" instead of substance or drug user.

stepbrother, stepsister, stepfather, stepmother, step-grandfather, step-grandmother

student study, or "success" in some districts, team (SST) on first reference, SST thereafter

supervised independent living placement (SILP) on first reference, SILP thereafter
therapeutic behavior services (TBS) upon first reference, TBS thereafter.

tic -spasm associated with Tourette syndrome, not to be confused with tick, a
blood-sucking pest

Tourette syndrome not Tourette's or Gilles De La Tourette's

toward, not towards. When in doubt, opt for shorter word.

transitional housing program plus foster care (THP+FC) on first reference, THP
thereafter.

treatment team meeting (TTM) on first reference, TTM thereafter.

young man/young woman: Do not use to describe children under 18. We want to
emphasize the fact that they are children, boys, or girls. Similarly, avoid use of
"ladies" and "gentlemen."

Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 300 (b) on first reference, WIC 300 (b) on
subsequent references. Place each subsection within its own parentheses: WIC 300
(a), (b), and (d).

A fuller reference list of acronyms and capitalization rules can be found on the
server at: <\\vfcdata\files\Program Forms\Resources\AS Tools\Court Reports>

Section Specific Suggestions

History: Usually, the History section should be reused from a previous report.
However, please be sure to update the children's placement history as necessary.
Please also amend any errors/changes in circumstances included in the "History"
section. For example, a presumed father may have been located after the original
"History" section reported his whereabouts as unknown.

Current Situation: The first paragraph of the "Current Situation" section is the
best opportunity to bring the child in full color to the judge and other parties.
Describe the child, the child's interests and activities, and how the child reacts and
interacts with the world around. For example, "Brian is an energetic 8-year-old boy
who enjoys playing soccer, climbing trees, and jumping in puddles. Although
generally polite, he can sometimes forget his manners when served ice cream, his
favorite treat."

Remember to change this description with each report to reflect how the child has been in the current reporting period. The report must offer fresh insights into the child's personality, interests, activities, etc. Follow the template to ensure all basic areas are covered.

Do not rely on repeating the social services practitioner's information. Make certain that all information is current and accurate. If newer information is unknown, for example, information on the parents' progress with reunification services, acknowledge that the information is unknown.

Please do not quote attorneys in reports and be careful when attributing actions to them. We should not be including reference to an attorney's opinion, feedback, or comments on how things are going on a case.

Needs of the Child/Children: This section should highlight the child/children's ongoing needs or concerns. If something is highlighted in this section, it should be first brought up in greater detail in the current section of the report. This section is where the CASA's opinion can be detailed and words like "I believe that-" "I feel that-" can be used. While CASA opinion is allowed, make sure it is expressed in a non-judgemental, unbiased way. CASA's concerns should keep different cultural norms and values in mind and be respectful of other ways of living.

Riverside Specific Sections

Assessment: The "Assessment" section provides the Court with the CASA's analysis of information within the current section and provides the rationale for all recommendations listed in the Recommendations section.

Be sure that facts discussed in the "Assessment" section have been previously introduced in the "Current Situation" section and that the "Assessment" section covers the reasoning for all of the recommendations in the Recommendations section. Follow the template to ensure all basic areas are covered.

The "Assessment" section also allows the CASA to discuss certain situations in which a formal recommendation may not be appropriate or possible. The "Assessment" section can also explain why a formal recommendation on certain topics, such as reunification services and parental visitation, has not been made.

Recommendations: Make recommendations based on underlying solid facts and CASA analysis of those facts. All recommendations should be supported by clearly stated, factual, objective information obtained by the CASA and presented in the Current Situation.

Recommendations for children’s services should always be considered and included when appropriate, however, specific recommendations can be excluded if CASA has insufficient information to support the recommendation.

Inclusive Language

What is ‘inclusive language’?

“Inclusive language is not the same as being politically correct. Political correctness is focused on not offending, whereas inclusive language is focused on honoring people’s identities. While both inclusive language and political correctness certainly posit that there are certain things you should not say, political correctness often creates barriers that prevent people from engaging. On the other hand, inclusive language allows for more flexibility and connectedness. It is focused on education, dialogue, and naming people in accordance with their personal identities.” - American Marketing Association (2021)

Person-First Language vs. Identity-First Language

Person-first language puts the person before the disability, identity, or unique attribute, and describes what a person has, not who a person is. Person-first language uses phrases such as “person with a disability,” “individuals with disabilities,” and “children with disabilities,” as opposed to phrases that identify people based solely on their disability, such as “the disabled.”

Identity-first language recognizes the inherent nature of certain aspects of identity, and that there is nothing of to be ashamed. Identity-first language uses phrases such as “Jane is Deaf”, or “Tommy is autistic” to acknowledge the importance of these facets to an individual’s identity.

The use or not of person-first language is a sensitive, important discussion. There are no concrete rules to guide the use of person-first language in regards to attributes and individuality. Instead, it is most important to focus on how the child or individual would like to be referred to (can sometimes be determined by listening to context clues). In instances where an individual’s preference is not known by the CASA, defer to the guidance of the community. Some common examples are included below.

Child in foster care/living in foster care vs foster child. Do not label a child as a foster child, rather a child in foster care, or as one who is living in foster care.

Mental Health Disorders: "With mental health disorders, it's usually best to use person-first: a youth with schizophrenia (not schizophrenic) or a child with bipolar disorder (not a bipolar child). However, when you get to conditions that relate to different ways of perceiving or interacting with the world, person-first is often discouraged by those in that community" - Association of Health Care Journalists (2019)

Deaf/Hearing Impaired: "Deaf and hard of hearing people have the right to choose what they wish to be called, either as a group or on an individual basis. Overwhelmingly, deaf and hard of hearing people prefer to be called "deaf" or "hard of hearing." Nearly all organizations of the deaf use the term "deaf and hard of hearing". They use the lowercase deaf when referring to the audio logical condition of not hearing, and the uppercase Deaf when referring to a particular group of deaf people who share a language (sign languages) and a culture. We distinguish [Deaf individuals] from, for example, those who find themselves losing their hearing because of illness, trauma or age; although these people share the condition of not hearing, they do not have access to the knowledge, beliefs, and practices that make up the culture of Deaf people." - National Association of the Deaf

Autism: "In the autism community, many self-advocates and their allies prefer terminology such as "autistic," "autistic person," or "autistic individual" because we understand autism as an inherent part of an individual's identity" - Autistic Self Advocacy Network

SAY THIS NOT THAT REFERENCE CHART	
THIS!	NOT THAT!
MMISUSING SUBSTANCES	DRUG ADDICT, CRACKHEAD, STONER
WHY? Describing anybody as the latter perpetuates the negative stigma associated with people who struggle with substance use. It also strips them of their identity as a person and reduces them to be identified only as a person who is struggling with their addiction. An exception to this would be a phrase such as, "The baby was born addicted to drugs", when the former is not appropriate or accurate.	
STRUGGLES WITH ALCOHOLISM	IS AN ALCOHOLIC
WHY? Historically, the term alcoholic has been treated as a moral failing rather than a serious mental health condition. While we hope to illustrate to the Court the reality of alcoholism and drug misuse, we do not want to disrespect the youth or parents we serve in the process. Thinking of a youth or parent as an 'alcoholic' downplays the fact they have a health condition that can be resolved.	
UNHOUSED, EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS	IS HOMELESS, HOBO, VAGRANT, TRANSIENT
WHY? The label of "homeless" has derogatory connotations. It implies that one is "less than", and it undermines self-esteem and progressive change. The use of the term "Unhoused", instead implies that there is a moral and social assumption that everyone should be housed in the first place.	
PRONOUNS	PREFERRED PRONOUNS
WHY? To prefer something is to like it more than you like something else. "Preferred gender pronouns," while well-intended, implies that pronouns other than the ones specified are acceptable. However, in most instances, when it comes to gender pronouns, that simply is not the case.	
TRANSGENDER, TRANS	TRANSGENDERED, TRANSEXUAL
WHY? Transsexual is a term that has fallen out of favor among most trans people, as it implies a sexual component. It historically used to mean transgender people who have, or want to, use medical intervention – hormones or surgery – to permanently transition from the gender assigned at birth to the one they identify as. 'Transgendered' on the other hand suggests that being trans is something that happens to someone, as opposed to an identity someone is born with.	
AT RISK OF/EXPERIENCED COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN (CSEC), ENGAGED IN SEX WORK (ADULTS)	PROSTITUTED THEMSELF, IS A PROSTITUTE, ENGAGED IN SEX FOR MONEY

WHY? Minors cannot legally consent to being engaged in sex work, regardless of their choice to participate in it or not. The word 'prostitute' has negative historical connotations, despite sometimes being used simply to describe a profession. It is the word's duality as a profession and an insult that has led some sex worker rights organizations to challenge the continued use of 'prostitute'.

<p style="text-align: center;">UNDOCUMENTED or WITHOUT IMMIGRATION STATUS</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ALIENS, ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, DREAMER/DREAMER</p>
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The terms 'alien' and 'illegal immigrant' are dehumanizing. They define someone who doesn't have immigration status or paperwork as an illegal person. An immigrant who is undocumented is without immigration status but is still a legal person under the law. While it is accurate that some immigrants who are undocumented have violated a criminal law by their presence in the country without authorization, we do not describe other individuals who have committed crimes as "illegal." Using 'undocumented' instead removes the dehumanizing aspect and simply describes that an immigrant is someone who resides in a country without proper authorization. DREAMER/DREAMER are controversial terms that are embraced by some young immigrants and rejected strongly by many others. They should be avoided.