

Abused children can't wait

The road to visiting George's mother in prison was not an easy one for Diane. She mailed George's mother a letter asking to be added to her visitors' list. Then she contacted the warden who requested she mail copies of her driver's license, her CASA badge and the court order appointing her to George's case. The prison had never had a visit from a CASA volunteer before and needed extra time to approve the visit.

After several weeks of waiting, Diane received permission to visit and made an appointment. One Saturday, she drove to the prison two hours away in time for visiting hours. After going through security, she was finally able to meet George's mother in person.

The meeting was an emotional one. George's mother had many questions about where George was living, how his grades were and how he was doing emotionally. And she was amazed a volunteer advocate for her son had gone to so much trouble to see her. The two spoke for an hour.

When Diane returned to Dallas, she called George, who peppered Diane with questions. How did his mother look? What was she wearing and how was her hair? Was Diane able to hug his mother?

"And did she ask about me?" George asked Diane.

Diane assured George that his mother's primary concern was him. Diane was able to tell his mother about the basketball team he was playing on, that his grades were all As and that he was living safely in a foster home with other teen boys.

George was visibly relieved to know his mother was okay and still loved him. Despite letters from her, George had needed someone to see her and to assure him she was not in danger.

For Diane's Dallas CASA supervisor, watching Diane become connected to George, caring deeply for a boy in crisis, was remarkable.

"Diane was so supportive of everyone in this case," Shashuanda Williams said. "Working with an older teen is different. Unlike a baby or toddler, George was able to tell her exactly what he wanted and she went above and beyond to do what was best for George."

George's mother has been taking parenting classes while in prison and is scheduled to be released this summer. She's decided to go to a halfway house initially while George stays in foster care. Both want the opportunity to be successfully reunited permanently.

