

**Annual Report of
Maryland's CASA Programs
July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009**

*Submitted by
Maryland CASA Association
to the State of Maryland --
Administrative Office of the Courts*



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

MARYLAND CASA ASSOCIATION

**Section I: Program Statistics and Operations
Budget and Staffing**

There were fourteen Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs in operation in the State of Maryland in Fiscal Year 2009. A new CASA program started in Queen Anne’s County this fiscal year and began assigning volunteers in January, 2009. CASA of Queen Anne’s County expanded to neighboring Kent County in March, 2009, increasing the number of jurisdictions served in Maryland to 18. The list below shows the name of each program, the jurisdiction(s) served, and the date each program began assigning volunteers to children’s cases:

Program	Jurisdiction(s)	Start Date
CASA of Montgomery County	Montgomery County	April 1987
CASA of Baltimore City	Baltimore City	August 1988
CASA of Talbot County	Talbot County	August 1990
Court Appointed Special Advocates Voices for Children	Washington County Howard County	March 1991 February 1992
CASA of Harford County	Harford County	January 1996
Anne Arundel County CASA	Anne Arundel County	July 1997
CASA of Southern Maryland	St. Mary’s County Charles County Calvert County	July 1998 February 2004 November 2007
CASA Prince George’s County	Prince George’s County	February 1992 – 1995; December 2001
CASA of Baltimore County	Baltimore County	February 2002
CASA of the Lower Shore	Worcester County <i>(discontinued service to Wicomico County in July 2008)</i>	February 2002
Voices for Children of Carroll County	Carroll County	February 2002
CASA of Frederick County	Frederick County	January 2003
CASA of Caroline	Caroline County	February 2004
CASA of Queen Anne’s & Kent Counties	Queen Anne’s County Kent County	January 2009 June 2009

Maryland CASA Association, the state organization for CASA, began operations in August 1998. The state organization provides training and technical assistance, fundraising assistance, legislative and policy updates to the local CASA programs, promotes public awareness of CASA, and assists in starting new programs. Thirteen of Maryland’s fifteen CASA programs, as well as the state organization, operate as private nonprofit organizations (eight operate as independent non-profits and four as part of larger non-profits); one program is fully funded by state and county dollars and one operates within the County health department.

Maryland’s CASA programs and state organization had a collective total of 26 full-time and 44 part-time employees, totaling 52.1 full-time equivalents (FTEs), an increase of 4.9 FTEs over FY 2008.

All of Maryland’s CASA programs continued to routinely assign volunteers to Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) cases in FY 2009. Two programs also appointed volunteers on a limited basis to delinquency cases and one program served a young person committed to the

Developmental Disabilities Administration. CASA programs assigned volunteers to an average* of 1.4 children at a time, the same as in FY 08. (*Note: all averages in this report were weighted to take into account the varying number of volunteers and children among the programs.)

Maryland law requires that attorneys be appointed to the cases of all children involved in CINA proceedings. Unless the child is determined not to have considered judgment, the attorney must represent the child’s expressed wishes rather than best interest. CASA volunteers are appointed at various stages of the proceedings to gather information for the court and make recommendations based solely on the child’s best interest. The breakdown of the types of hearings at which CASA was most often appointed in FY 2009 is as follows:

Type of Hearing at which CASA was Ordered	% of New Cases
Review	52%
Adjudication	34%
Shelter	11%
Other (Permanency hearing; at request of DSS or child’s counsel and ordered by judge with no hearing)	8%

The percentage of cases to which CASA was appointed at a review hearing increased significantly, from 42% to 52%, while the percentage appointed at adjudication decreased 5% from 34% to 29% from FY 2008 to FY 2009. This is concerning given CASA’s efforts to encourage the courts to appoint CASA earlier in the court process. There was an increase in the percentage of cases appointed at shelter care hearings, however. The cases of children newly served in FY 2009 were open in court an average of 16.7 months prior to the court appointing CASA volunteers to the cases. This is 3.7 months shorter than the average length of time in FY 2008 and continues an increase in the timeliness of CASA appointments.

The table below shows who requested the appointment of CASA volunteers in FY 2009:

Individual Requesting CASA Appointment	% of New Cases
Judge/Master	41%
Child’s Attorney	34%
Social Worker	22%
Parent’s Attorney	2%
Other	1%

The average length of time between a court order appointing CASA to a case and the actual assignment of a volunteer was 4.3 weeks, slightly shorter than in FY 2008. This average length of time varied widely among local jurisdictions, ranging from 0 weeks in Talbot County to 18 weeks in Prince George’s County.

Training

Maryland’s CASA programs provided an average of 38 hours of pre-service training in FY 2009, in adherence to the Administrative Office of the Courts’ *CASA Rules and Guidelines*, which require a minimum of 30 hours of pre-service training prior to a volunteer’s appointment to a case. CASA programs used between 15 and 35 hours of the National CASA Curriculum for CASA volunteers. In addition to pre-service training, CASA volunteers are required to complete

12 hours of in-service training per year. An average of 42% of CASA volunteers completed the required number of in-service training hours in FY 2009, slightly lower than in FY 2008.

Maryland CASA Association hosted the 3rd Annual Maryland CASA Conference for CASA volunteers and staff members from across the state. The conference was held at the Community College of Baltimore County – Catonsville Campus and approximately 80 participants attended.

Section II: Volunteer Information

1,169 volunteers served as Court Appointed Special Advocates for CINA cases statewide in FY 2009. This is a 15% increase over the number of volunteers who served in FY 2008. All but four of the programs experienced an increase in the number of volunteers, from 7% in Baltimore County to 50% in Carroll County.

CASA programs collectively assigned 389 new volunteers to their first CINA cases in FY 2009. This is a 24% increase in new volunteer assignments over FY 2008 and continues an upward trend in the number of new volunteer assignments. The number of new volunteer assignments ranged from 0 in Talbot County to 86 in Montgomery County. The median increase was 10 new volunteer assignments during the year.

A snapshot approach was used in calculating volunteer service hours in FY 2009. 386 CASA volunteers reported more than 3,677 hours of service for the month of October, 2008. This translates to 9.5 hours per volunteer per month and, when multiplied by the average number of volunteers that served during the year, gives an estimate of 113,886 hours. 269 additional individuals volunteered in other capacities to assist their local CASA programs and the state organization, serving as members of Boards of Directors, advisory boards and fundraising committees, as Friends of CASA, web masters, interns, etc. These volunteers contributed more than 6,014 total hours of service during the year.

CASA volunteers come from all walks of life and range in age from early 20s to over 70. The demographics of the volunteers who served as CASAs in FY 2009 are as follows:

Age

21 – 29 years	10%
30 – 39 years	13%
40 – 49 years	23%
50 – 59 years	27%
60 + years	27%

Gender

Female	71%
Male	29%

Education Completed

High School	8%
Some College	23%
College	38%
Post-Graduate	32%

Student Status

Full-time	3%
Part-time	4%
Not a Student	93%

Employment Status

Full-time	48%
Part-time	14%
Retired	20%
Unemployed	9%
Other (includes stay-at-home parents)	9%

Ethnicity

African American/ Black/African	28%
Asian American	2%
Caucasian	66%
Latino	3%
Native American	0%
Bi-racial	1%
Other	0%

These demographics are similar to those for volunteers who served in FY 2008. CASA volunteers generally reflect the racial makeup of their respective jurisdictions while our goal is for the volunteer pool to reflect that of the children CASA serves. All volunteers are screened and trained to be culturally competent, and case assignments are made on the basis of each child's best interest.

268 CASA volunteers left their respective programs during FY 2009, 31 (10%) fewer than in FY 2008. Volunteers who left the program served an average of 22 months, five months shorter than those who left in FY 2008 (this does not include Baltimore City's and Prince George's County's volunteers' length of service). Length of service ranged from 1 month in Caroline County to 53 months in St. Mary's County. Statewide, 23% of all the volunteers who served during the fiscal year left the program, 7% less than in FY 2008. Percentages ranging from 6% in Charles and Caroline Counties to 44% in Prince George's County. Volunteers left the program for a variety of reasons, including time constraints (22%), employment situation (18%), health needs (9%), family needs (8%), moved from area (8%), lost interest or pursuing other volunteer work (5%) and due to burnout or stress (2%). 14% left involuntarily and 14% left for other reasons (e.g. death, did not specify, etc.).

Section III: Children Served

CASA volunteers served 1,430 children in FY 2009, including 1309 adjudicated CINA, 67 guardianship cases and 50 Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) cases. This is 5% higher than the number of children served in FY 2008.

The following is a breakdown of demographics for the children served during FY 2009:

Age

Birth to 5 years	19%
6 – 11 years	25%
12 – 18	45%
18 +	11%

Gender

Female	48%
Male	52%

Ethnicity

African American/ Black/African/West Indies	52%
Caucasian	34%
Bi-racial	7%
Latino	6%
Asian American	1%

Type of Maltreatment

Neglect	59%
Physical Abuse	16%
Other (e.g. secondary victim, extraordinary needs of child, voluntary placements)	10%
Multiple forms of maltreatment (e.g. physical and sexual abuse)	7%
Sexual Abuse	6%
Mental Injury	2%

The demographics of the children served in FY 2009 changed only slightly from FY 2008.

Maryland’s fourteen local CASA programs served 461 new CINA children in FY 2009, 57 (14%) more children than in FY 2008. The number of new children served by local programs ranged from six in Calvert County to 136 children (more than double) in Montgomery County, with an average of 28 new children served (median = 19.5).

The collective capacity of the CASA programs increased by 17% during FY 2009, as measured by the number of children being served on the last day of the fiscal year compared to the number served on the last day of the prior fiscal year. Changes in individual program capacity ranged from a decrease of 28% (11 children) in Talbot County to an increase of 48% (68 children) in Montgomery County. The average change in capacity was an increase of nine children (median = 7).

1,040 families were involved in the cases of children served in FY 2009, 62 (6.3%) more than in FY 2008.

CASA volunteers submitted 1,524 reports to the court during FY 2009, 9% fewer than in FY 2008. The reports contained 7,461 recommendations on behalf of their assigned children, 5% fewer than in FY 2008. Judges ordered 5,958 (80%) of the recommendations, slightly lower (1%) than in FY 2008.

Case Outcomes

394 children’s cases closed during FY 2009, eight (2%) fewer cases than in FY 2008 (402). 84% of the cases were closed in court, slightly more than in FY 2008, and CASA was rescinded from the remaining 16% of the cases. This continues a positive trend of greater numbers of cases closing in court versus CASA being rescinded from cases that remain open in court. The table below shows the breakdown of case outcomes for the children whose cases closed in court.

Placement at Case Closure	% of Cases Closed in Court	% of All Closed Cases
Returned to Biological Parent/Guardian	47%	39.6%
Placed with Relative/Guardian (not adopted)	8%	6.6%
Adopted	23%	19.5%
Living Independently	14%	11.7%
Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)	2%	1.3%
Other	1%	1.0%
TPR Granted/Pending – Living in Pre-Adoptive Home	2%	2.0%
Runaway/AWOL	2%	2.0%
Remained in Out-of-Home Care (not APPLA)	1%	0.5%
Total	100%*	84.3%

**percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.*

The above figures show some significant shifts in the case outcomes for children served in FY 2009. 4% more children were returned to their biological parents or guardians. 8% fewer children (and 9% fewer of the children whose cases closed in court) were placed with relatives or guardians and not adopted. 9% more of all the children whose cases closed were adopted. A slightly higher percentage of children were living independently and slightly fewer children’s cases closed with a plan of APPLA.

The table below shows the placements of children at the time CASA was rescinded from the cases but the cases remained open in court.

Placement at Case Closure	% of Rescinded Cases	% of All Closed Cases
Remained in Out-of-Home Care	42%	6.6%
Living Independently	6%	1%
TPR Granted/Pending – Living in Pre-Adoptive Home	10%	1.5%

Placed with Relative/Guardian (not adopted)	11%	1.8%
Other (APPLA, detention, transferred to another jurisdiction, etc.)	8%	1.3%
Returned to Biological Parent/Guardian	16%	2.5%
Runaway/AWOL	2%	0.8%
Adopted	0%	0%
Total	100%*	15.7%

*percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

7% fewer children than in FY 2008 whose cases remained open in court when CASA was rescinded were still living in out-of-home placements. 7% fewer were living independently. The most significant difference between FY 2008 and FY 2009 was an 11% increase in the number of children who were living with biological parents or guardians when CASA was rescinded from their cases. Children whose cases closed in court continued to have a higher rate of permanency than children in cases from which CASA was rescinded. Overall, 86% of the children whose cases closed in FY 2009 were living in permanent placements or independently at the close of their cases, up 5% from 81% in FY 2008. 10% of the children whose cases closed remained in non-permanent living arrangements, down from 13% in FY 2008, and 1.3% were in alternative planned, permanent living arrangements (APPLA), down from 4% in FY 2008. The outcomes of all cases closed during FY 2009 are as follows:

Placement at Close of Case	% of Closed Cases
Returned to Biological Parent/Guardian	42%
Placed with Relative or Guardian (not adopted)	8%
Adopted	20%
Living Independently	13%
TPR Granted/Pending; Living in Pre-Adoptive Home	4%
Remained in Out-of-Home Care	7%
Runaway/AWOL	3%
Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)	1%
Other Non-Permanent Placement: Transferred to DJS, transferred to another jurisdiction, detention/incarceration, death	2%

7% fewer children whose CASA cases closed in FY 2009 were living with relatives or guardians than in FY 2008. 4% fewer children were living in out-of-home placement when their cases closed, and 3% fewer cases were closed with an APPLA plan. The average length of time spent in foster care among the 394 children whose cases closed in FY 2009 was 44 months, five months longer than in FY 2008. The average length of time in foster care among the programs ranged from 18 months in Harford and Worcester Counties to 102 months in Baltimore City. CASA volunteers were assigned for an average of 24.4 months to cases that closed in FY 2009, four months longer than in FY 2008.

Maryland's CASA programs were collectively serving 1,101 children adjudicated CINA on 6/30/09, 95 (9.4%) more than on 6/30/08. This is approximately 12% of the estimated 9,735 CINAs on that day in the eighteen jurisdictions CASA serves. This is a slightly larger

percentage than in FY 2008, due in large part to the decreased number of children under court protection in the jurisdictions served. Individual program percentages ranged from 2.4% in Baltimore City to 100% in Talbot County (median = 28.5%).