



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CENTER
580 TAYLOR AVENUE
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Pamela Harris
State Court Administrator
410-260-1295

February 1, 2019

Honorable Thomas V. "Mike" Miller, Jr.
President of the Senate
State House, H-107
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Honorable Michael E. Busch
Speaker of the House
State House, H-101
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: Annual Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program Reports
CJ § 3-830(b)(3)(ii)

Dear President and Speaker,

Pursuant to Courts and Judicial Proceedings, § 3-830(b)(3)(ii), please find enclosed the Annual Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program Reports for Fiscal Year 2018.

If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Franks at (410) 260-1722, or via email at kelly.franks@mdcourts.gov.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pamela Harris".

Pamela Harris
State Court Administrator

Enc.

Hon. Thomas V. "Mike" Miller, Jr.
Hon. Michael E. Busch
February 1, 2019
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cc: Honorable Mary Ellen Barbera, Chief Judge, Court of Appeals
Honorable Kathleen Gallogly Cox, Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges
Honorable John P. Morrissey, Chief Judge, District Court
Honorable Nicholas E. Rattal, Chair, Specialty Courts and Dockets Committee
Faye Gaskin, Deputy State Court Administrator
Roberta Warnken, Chief Clerk, District Court
Kelley O'Connor, Assistant Administrator, Government Relations and Public Affairs
Yaakov E. (Jake) Weissmann, Chief of Staff, Senate President
Alexandra Hughes, Chief of Staff, House Speaker
Sarah Albert, Mandated Reports Specialist
Cathy.Kramer@mlis.state.md.us

Maryland Judiciary

Fiscal Year 2018

Annual Report for Court-Appointed Special Advocate Programs



**Administrative Office of the Courts
February 2019**

This report is being issued by the Administrative Office of the Courts' (AOC) Department of Juvenile and Family Services (DJFS) pursuant to Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article §3-830(b)(3)(ii). This report was prepared by Kelly Franks, Family Services Program and Policy Manager and Jovonne Lewis, Family and Court Programs Evaluation Manager using data provided by the programs.

For more information, please contact Kelly Franks at (410) 260-1722 or kelly.franks@mdcourts.gov.

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I. Overview

The Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program operates in Maryland subject to Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article (CJP), § 3-830. Under CJP § 3-830(a)(3), the role of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA volunteer) is to:

- (i) Provide the court with background information to aid the court in making decisions in the child's best interest; and
- (ii) Ensure that the child is provided appropriate case planning and services.

The CASA volunteer is considered a friend of the court and is appointed at the judge's discretion to represent the child's best interests. Supporting the ongoing work of CASA programs is consistent with the Maryland Judiciary's mission to provide fair, efficient, and effective justice for all, as well as its strategic goal to be responsive and adaptive to changing community needs.

II. Program Operations

A. Counties Served

There were 15 CASA programs active in Maryland in Fiscal Year 2018. These programs serve 21 counties. Only Somerset, Wicomico, and Garrett counties do not currently have CASA programs. Efforts are underway to start a program to serve Somerset and Wicomico in 2019. The current active programs and counties served are as follows:

Programs by Service Area and Start Date

Programs (Official Names)	County/Counties Served	Start Date
Voices for Children of Montgomery County <i>(Formerly known as CASA of Montgomery County)</i>	Montgomery	1987
CASA of Baltimore City	Baltimore City	1988
CASA of the Mid-Shore <i>(formerly known as CASA of Talbot and CASA of Queen Anne's & Kent Counties)</i> <i>(CASA of Talbot began in Dorchester County in 2010. In 2014, the program expanded to Queen Anne's and Kent Counties.)</i>	Talbot Kent Queen Anne's Dorchester	1990 2009 2009 2010
Court-Appointed Special Advocates of Washington County	Washington	1991
Voices for Children of Howard County	Howard	1992
CASA of Harford County	Harford	1996
Anne Arundel County CASA	Anne Arundel	1997
CASA of Southern Maryland	St. Mary's Charles Calvert	1998 2004 2007
CASA of Prince George's County	Prince George's	1992-1995 2001

Programs by Service Area and Start Date (Continued)

Programs (Official Names)	County/Countries Served	Start Date
CASA of Baltimore County	Baltimore County	2002
CASA of the Lower Shore	Worcester Wicomico	2002 2002-2008
CASA of Frederick and Voices for Children of Carroll County <i>(Became one program under the Frederick County Mental Health Association in 2011)</i>	Carroll Frederick	2002 2003
CASA of Caroline	Caroline	2004
Allegany County CASA	Allegany	2013
CASA of Cecil County	Cecil	2015

B. Funding Sources

All CASA programs were funded by the Maryland Judiciary in Fiscal Year 2018. Every grantee is required to match 100% of the funds awarded.

FY2018 Award Amounts by Program

Voices for Children of Montgomery County	\$224,800
CASA of Baltimore County	\$145,000
CASA of Prince George’s County	\$135,000
CASA of Baltimore City	\$132,450
CASA of Frederick and Voices for Children of Carroll County	\$95,000
Court Appointed Special Advocates of Washington County	\$90,410
CASA of the Mid-Shore	\$88,750
Anne Arundel County CASA	\$88,450
CASA of Southern Maryland	\$80,000
CASA of Harford County	\$75,250
Voices for Children of Howard County	\$60,000
CASA of the Lower Shore	\$56,100
CASA of Cecil County	\$29,010
CASA of Caroline	\$21,000
Allegany County CASA	\$20,000

Other support for the programs come from a variety of sources depending on the type of program. Some programs are independent non-profits and others are programs within larger non-profit organizations.

- a.) Program Funding (Public Sources): **58.6% of total funding**
 - 29.3% AOC-DJFS CASA Grants
 - 19.0% Victims of Crime Assistance Act (VOCA) funding through Governor’s Office on Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP)
 - 7.6% County/City
 - 2.8% Other Public Sources (Foster Care Court Improvement Program, Children’s

Justice Act Committee)

b.) Program Funding (Non-Public Sources): **41.4% of total funding**

- 10.6% Special Events
- 10.5% Foundations/Grants
- 4.5% Individual Contributions
- 4.2% Corporate Contributions
- 4.1% Other Private Sources
- 2.7% United Way/CFC/MD Charity Campaign, etc.
- 2.7% Product Sales & Other Fundraising Activities
- 1.1% Groups or Organizations
- 0.8% National CASA

C. Staffing

Although there are 80 positions statewide, grant funding only supports the full or partial salary and/or fringe costs of 55 positions within the CASA programs.

- a) Total Positions: 80
 Full Time: 44 Part Time: 36

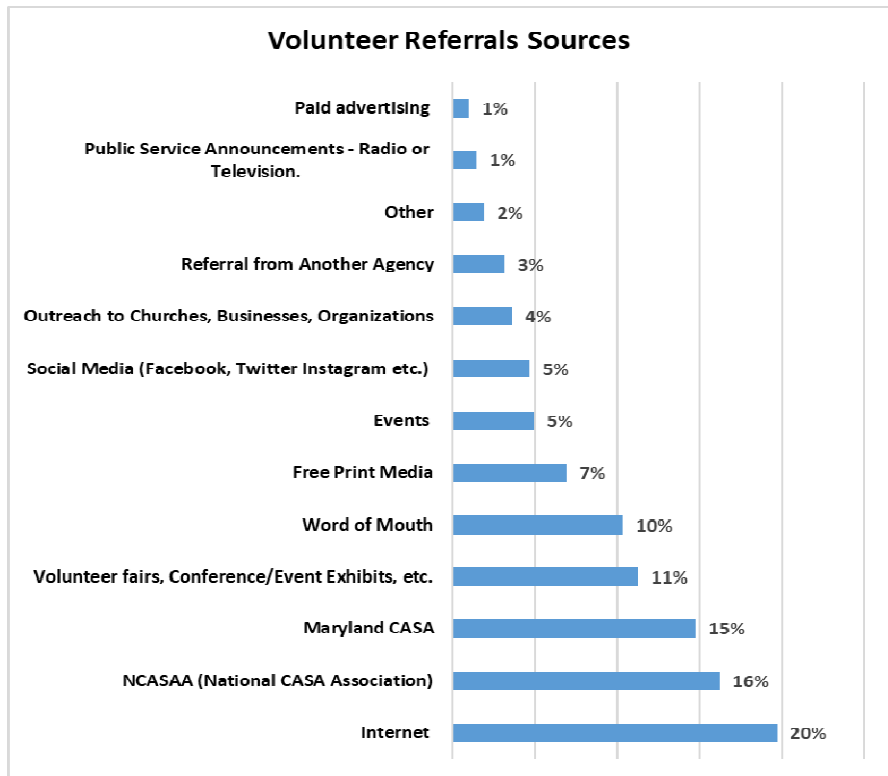
- b) Total Positions Supervising Volunteers: 52
 Full Time: 26 Part Time: 26

III. Program Activities

A. Volunteers

1. Recruitment

In Fiscal Year 2018, approximately 31% of volunteers were referred to their local CASA program by the National CASA Association (NCASAA) or the Maryland CASA Association, and about 25% reached their local CASA program through internet resources. These resources include the program websites as well as sites such as VolunteerMatch.org.



a. Volunteer Inquiries Received: 2,181

b. Volunteer Applications Received: 829

Of the total volunteer inquiries, 38% resulted in an application being submitted.

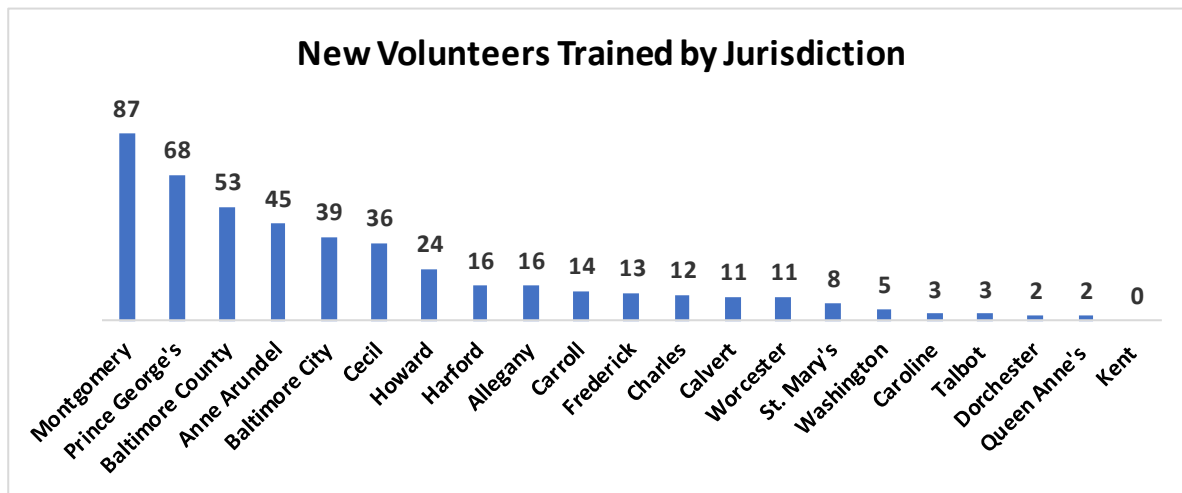
c. Prospective Volunteers Interviewed: 695

Of the total volunteer applications submitted, 84% resulted in an interview.

2. Training

a. Pre-Service Training: 468 new volunteers trained in Fiscal Year 2018.

Of the volunteers who were interviewed, 85% started training and 67% completed training. Some volunteers are screened-out through the interview process and others are screened-out during the training.



b. In-Service Training (Continuing Education)

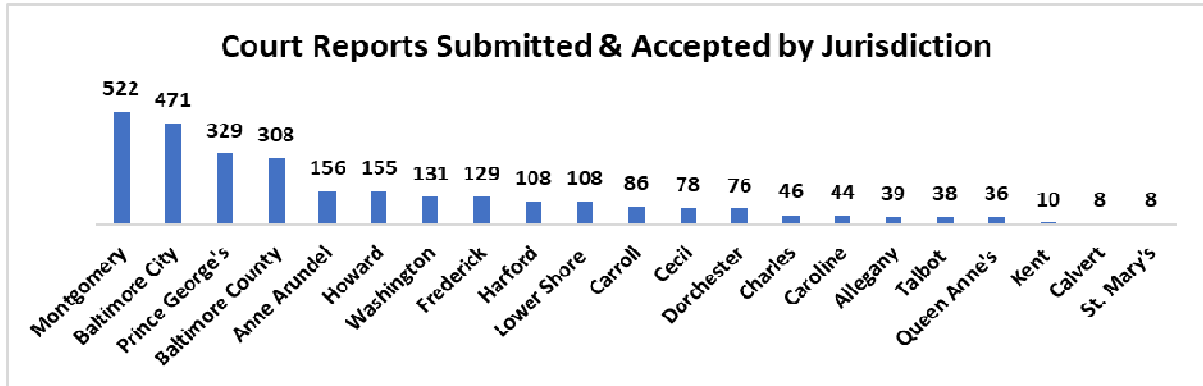
CASA programs provided 422 hours of ongoing training to active volunteers. Approximately 120 hours of that training (28%) were focused on increasing cultural competence of volunteers.

3. Advocacy

CASA volunteers advocate in court for the best interest of the children they are assigned to serve. To inform this advocacy, CASA volunteers visit regularly with their assigned child and meet with family members and professionals involved in the child's life (e.g., social workers, therapists, teachers). With the support of the program, the volunteers prepare reports which provide the court with information about the child and recommendations regarding the child's needs and future placement.

a. Court Reports Submitted by CASA & Accepted by the Court: 2,886

Court reports with recommendations about the child’s needs are submitted at every hearing for the children assigned to the CASA programs.



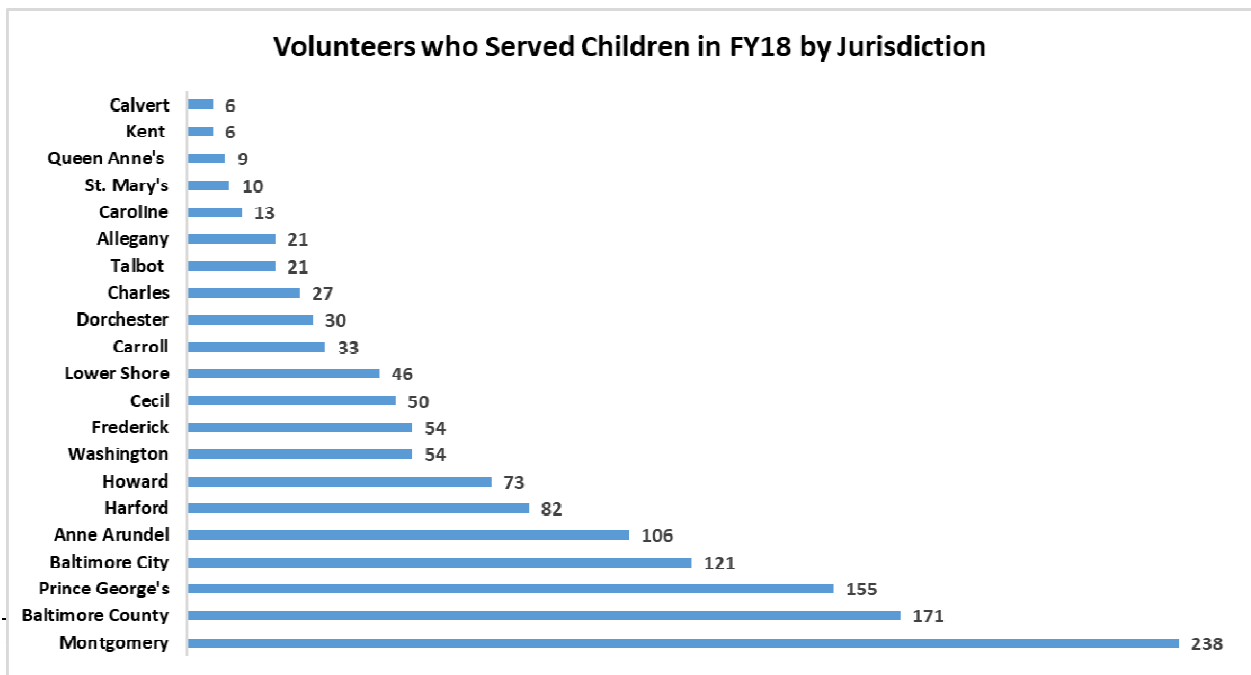
b. Volunteer Attendance at Court

CASA volunteers attended 73% of the hearings for which they prepared a report. This rate is often affected by continuances; a volunteer may appear for the initial hearing but be unavailable to attend on the rescheduled date. CASA program staff attend all hearings.

4. Service

A goal of every CASA program is to provide a volunteer for every child who is adjudicated as a child in need of assistance (CINA). In Carroll, Dorchester, Howard, Kent, Queen Anne’s, Talbot, and Worcester counties, the programs have provided CASA volunteers for nearly all CINA children. There are exceptions in the case of older youth who may choose not to have a volunteer, and youth who have been placed so far away that assigning a volunteer may not be feasible.

a. Volunteers Serving Children in FY18: 1,326



b. Volunteers Serving Children on the Last Day of FY18: 985

Overall, the number of CASA advocates serving children on the last day of Fiscal Year 2018, increased by 4% over the first day of Fiscal Year 2018. The most significant increases came in Howard, Prince George’s, and Cecil Counties. Each of those three counties expanded the numbers of volunteers serving by 10 or more.

5. Volunteer Demographics

Gender	
Male	14.6%
Female	85.4%
Age	
21-29	9.4%
30-39	14.8%
40-49	19.5%
50-59	24.1%
60 + above	32.3%
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian / Alaska Native	0.2%
Asian / Asian American	1.5%
Black / African American	25.6%
Hispanic / Latino	3.0%
Indian	0.6%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	0.2%
White	67.4%
Two or more races	1.5%
Other: Input	0.1%
Education	
High School/GED	6.7%
Some College	11.7%
College	39.8%
Post-Grad	33.8%
Unknown	7.7%
Other	0.3%
Employment Status	
Full-time	51.6%
Part-time	16.6%
Retired	20.3%
Unemployed	7.8%
Unknown	2.8%
Other	0.9%

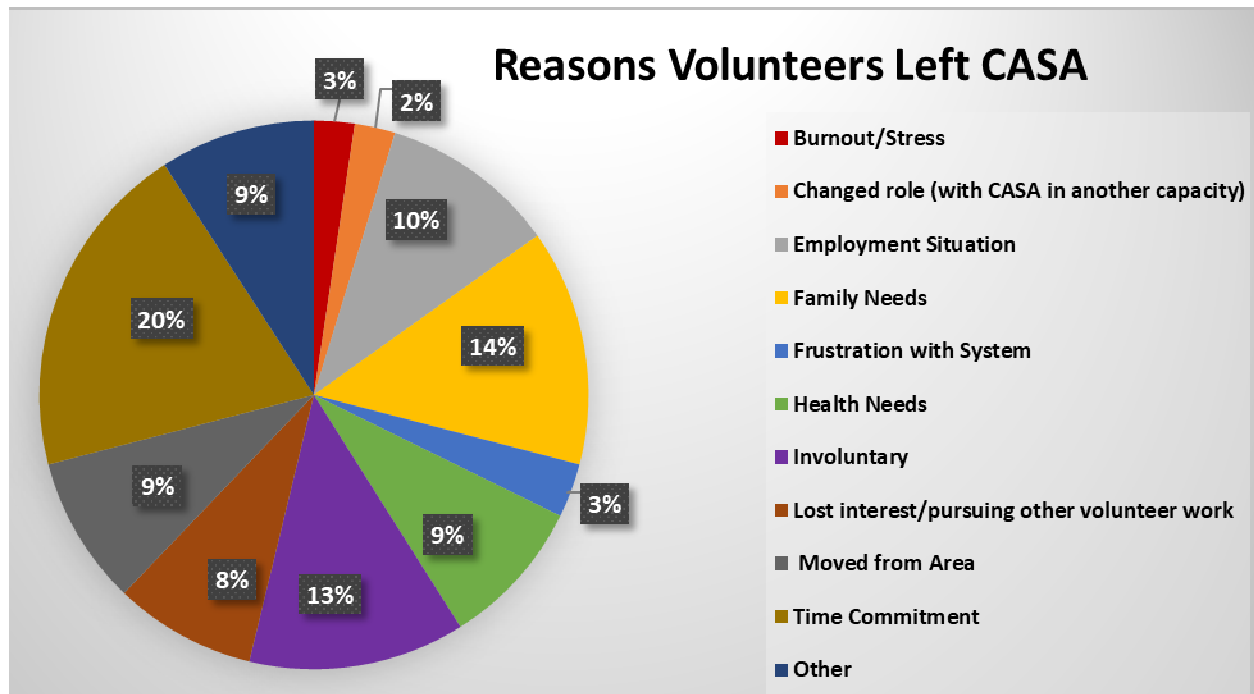
6. Retention/Attrition

Although it is the goal of all CASA programs to have volunteers that will serve their assigned child for the entire length of the child’s stay in foster care, CASA volunteers are only required to serve their assigned child for a minimum of one year. More than 68% of the volunteers who were serving children on the last day of the Fiscal Year had been serving for 12 months or longer.

a. Volunteers who Left the Program: 252

b. Average Length of Service (*volunteers who left*): 31.5 months

On average, the volunteers who left the program in Fiscal Year 2018 served for more than two years and six months. In Talbot County, the four volunteers who left the program in Fiscal Year 2018 served an average of 180.5 months each; each volunteer spent more than 15 years with the program. In Harford and Montgomery County, the average length of service was more than four years.

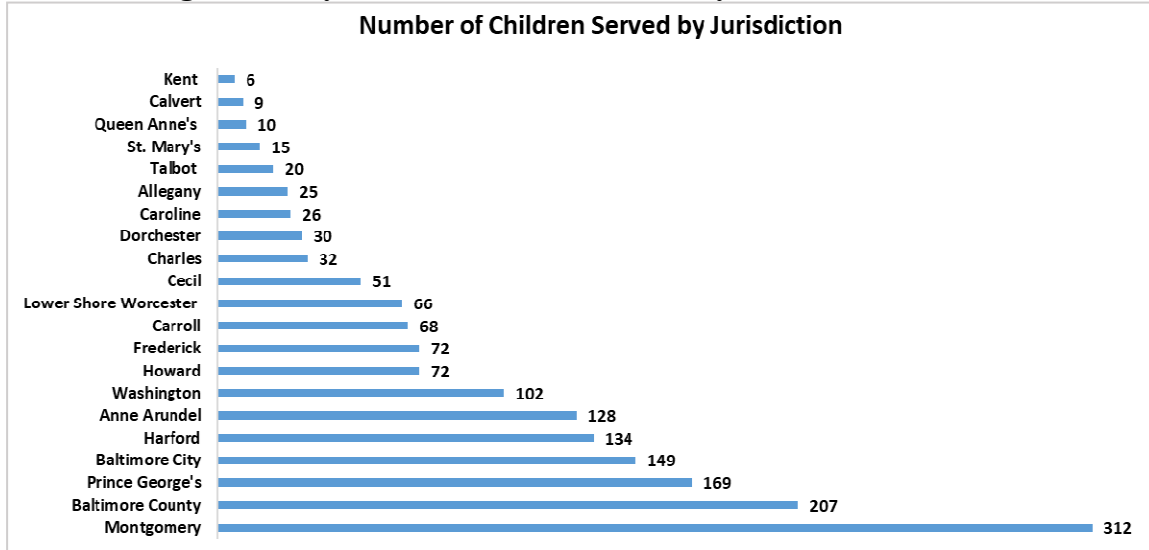


B. Children

There were nearly 5,000 children in foster care in Maryland in Fiscal Year 2018. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7707-out-of-home-placement>.) Approximately 37% of these children received the benefit of CASA advocacy.

1. Children Served by a Volunteer Advocate in FY18: 1,796

2. Children Being Served by a Volunteer on the Last Day of FY18: 1,217



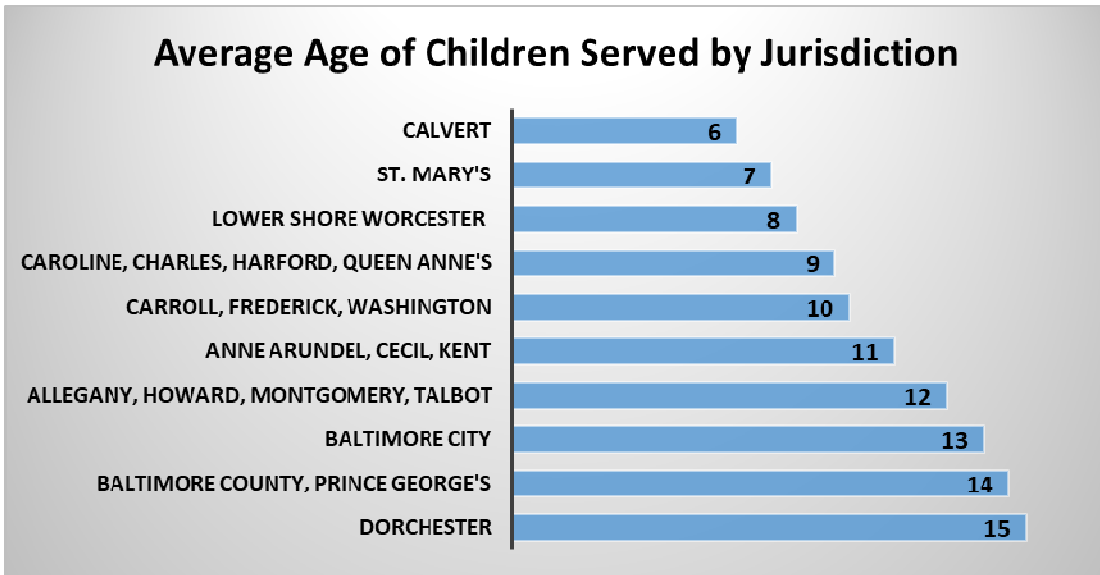
3. Details about Children Served in FY18

Programs recognize the importance of diversity and strive to achieve cultural competence in all the volunteers they train. However, there is a 29.7% disparity in reported racial identity between volunteers and CASA youth. Youth served by CASA who identify as white (non-Latino) make up 35% of the population, while nearly 65% of the youth served by CASA programs have a racial identity other than white. Volunteers who identify as white (non-Latino) make up 64.5% of the volunteer population. Even though the volunteer pool does not reflect the diversity of the youth served in most programs, it does reflect the diversity of the population of the county being served. Prince George's County CASA is an exception to this with 93% of volunteers and children both having a racial identity other than white; including 76% of volunteers and 77% of youth who are black/African American. CASA of the Mid-Shore has the most demonstrated success in achieving gender diversity with 41% of volunteers being male, compared with 14.6% statewide.

Nearly one third of in-service trainings provided by the programs in Fiscal Year 2018 had the goal of increasing cultural competence. Volunteers were also provided training on other factors that affect the children, such as the impact of a parent's substance abuse (affecting 43% of children served), mental health (42% of children served have a diagnosis), aging-out (20% of youth served are over 18), and LGBTQIA issues (4% of youth identify as LGBTQIA).

a. Demographics

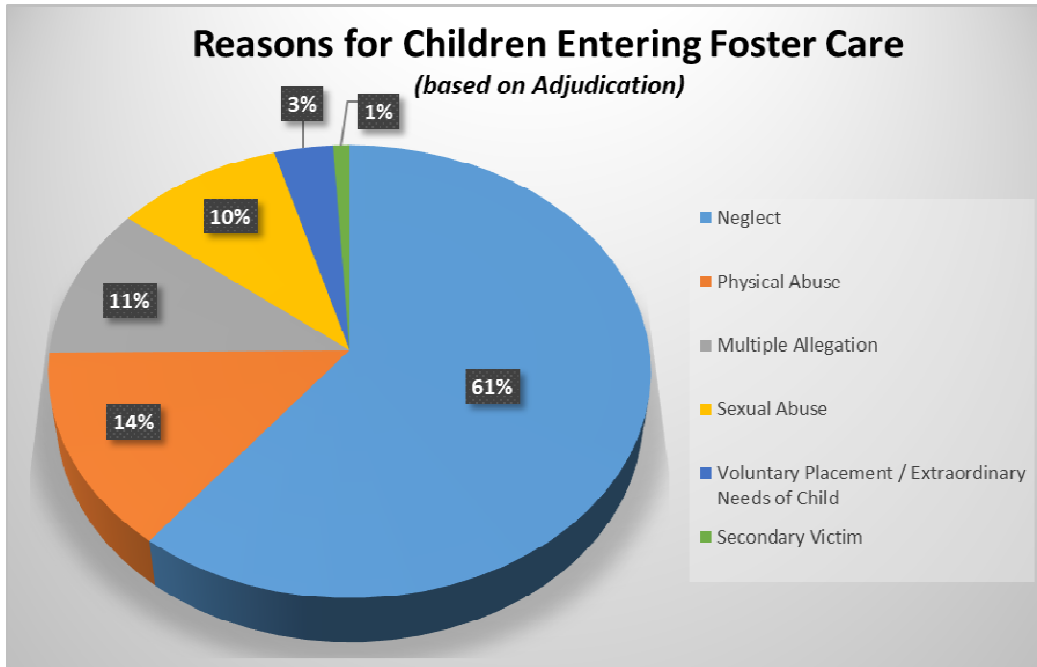
Gender	
Male	49.1%
Female	50.9%
Age	
Birth to 2	11.4%
3 to 6	16.9%
7 to 13	24.8%
14 to 17	26.8%
18 +	20.1%
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian / Alaska Native	0.1%
Asian / Asian American	0.9%
Black / African American	42.2%
Hispanic / Latino	8.9%
Indian	0.0%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
White	35.3%
Two or more races	12.5%
Other	0.1%



Nearly 50% of children served in Fiscal Year 2018 were ages 14 or older. At this age, youth participate in transition planning to prepare for adult life. CASA programs and volunteers play an important role in ensuring that youth have these plans in place and work to prepare youth to be independent.

b. Reasons for Entering Care

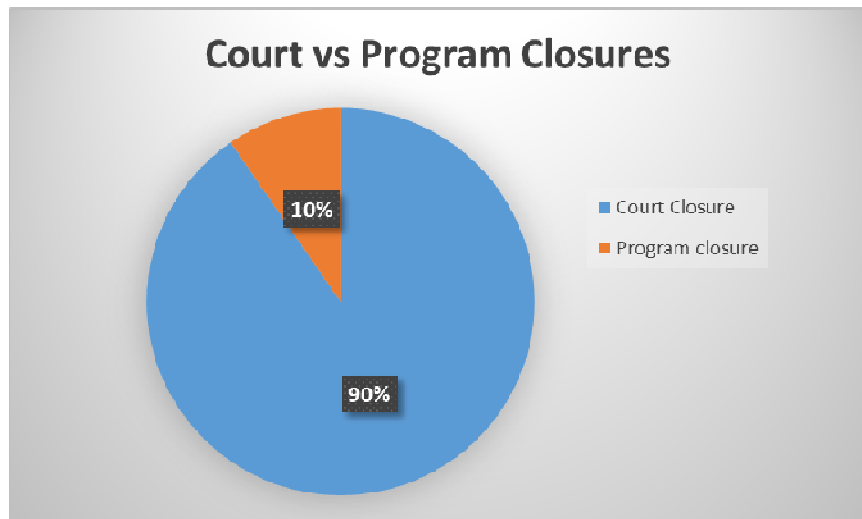
Neglect is the most commonly adjudicated reason that children served by CASA enter foster care. “Neglect” includes abandonment and educational/medical/physical neglect. Neglect is commonly the reason children with substance abusing parents come into care. Of the children served by CASA in Fiscal Year 2018, 43% had at least one parent whose substance abuse was a contributing factor to their involvement with the Department of Social Services.



4. Case Closures

CASA programs closed 447 cases in Fiscal Year 2018. Of those, 405 cases were closed by the court, and 42 cases were closed by the programs but remained open in court.

A program closure may occur for a variety of reasons. Examples include: an older child who does not want a CASA volunteer, a child who is inaccessible to the volunteer due to placement location or runaway status, or a child who is in a stable permanent placement and is no longer in need of CASA advocacy. Of the 43 program closures, 46.5% occurred in Baltimore County.



a. Time Spent in Foster Care

The amount of time children will spend in foster care before finding a permanent home, or aging-out of the system varies from county to county with an average of more than six years in Baltimore City and as little one year and three months in Queen Anne’s.

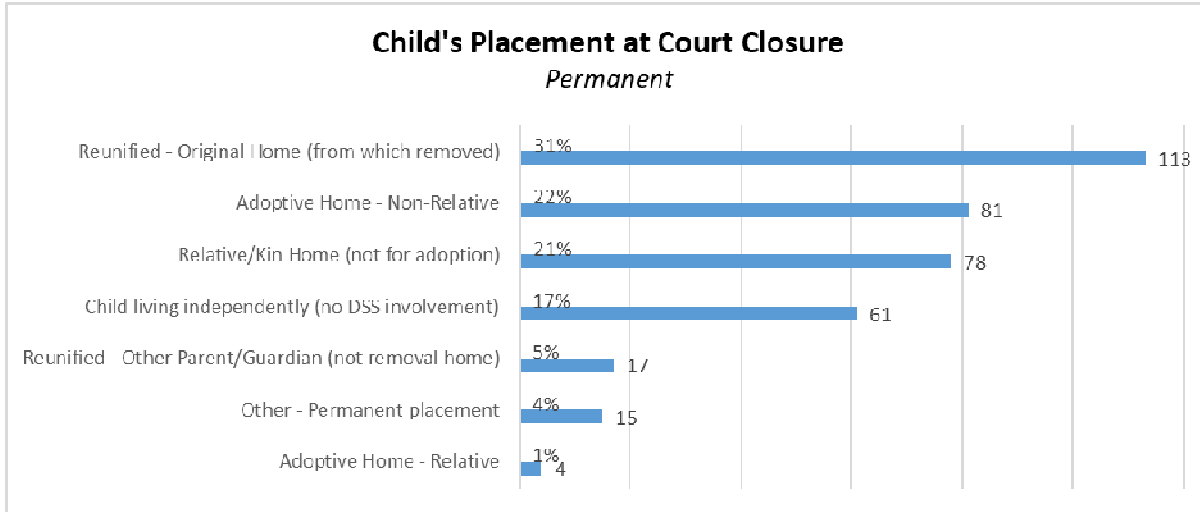
**Average Length of Time in Foster Care
for Cases Closed by the Court**

Jurisdiction	Months
Baltimore City	73
Montgomery	67
Baltimore County	54
Prince George's	48
Cecil	47
Frederick	45
Talbot	38
Kent	37
Caroline	36
Calvert	34
Dorchester	32
Anne Arundel	31
Howard	30
Harford	28
Carroll	25
Lower Shore Worcester	23
Allegany	22
Washington	19
St. Mary's	18
Charles	18
Queen Anne's	15

b. Placement at Court Closure

i. Permanent Placements

Of the 405 children served by CASA whose cases were closed by the court during Fiscal Year 2018, 91% (369) were in a permanent placement at closure. A permanent placement is any placement that has committed to providing a legal and physical home for the child until adulthood. Of the children served by CASA whose cases closed to permanency, 56% were reunified with their family members. Of those reunified with their family, 31% went home to their parent(s) and 25% went to live with other relatives.



ii. Non-Permanent Placement

Of the 405 children served by CASA whose cases were closed by the court during Fiscal Year 2018, 36 children were living in a “non-permanent” living situations at closure. In 78% of these non-permanent closures, the youth was over the age of 18 and either (1) requested that the court close their case; (2) was not compliant with the Department of Social Services and the court’s orders; or (3) had been out of contact (on run-away) for a significant amount of time. In 22% of these cases, the youth remained in an out-of-home placement or independent living program without the involvement of the Department of Social Services.

c. Impact of the Stage of CASA Appointment on Outcomes

In 2011, DJFS began collecting data from CASA programs regarding case closures and stage of case at appointment. Analysis of these data has consistently shown that assigning CASA volunteers early in a child’s case leads to better outcomes.

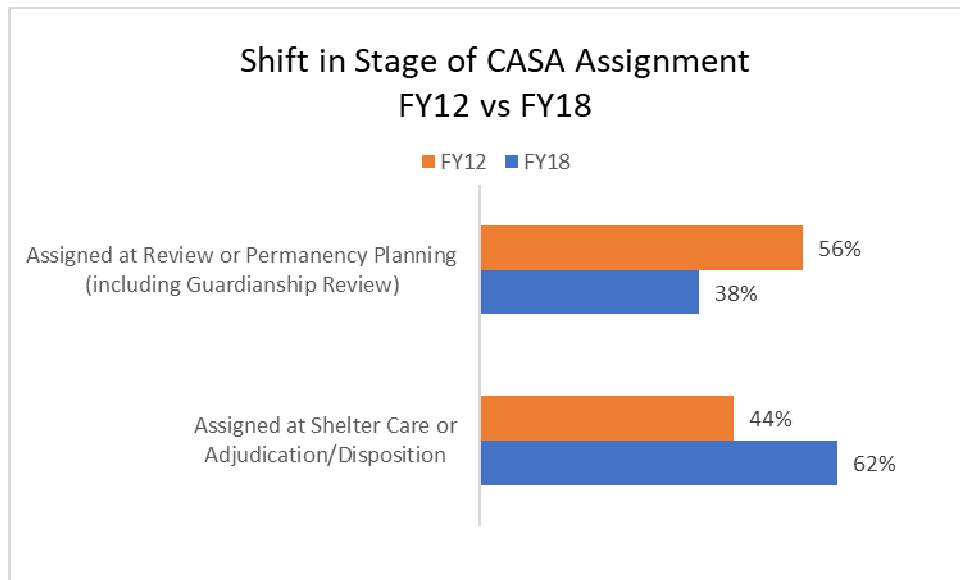
Specifically:

- a) The Fiscal Year 2018 closure data demonstrates that children who were assigned to CASA before their case reached the review stage (generally within six months of entering care) spent an average of **37.44 fewer months in care** than children who were assigned to CASA during CINA

review or permanency planning hearings. **This is a more than three-year difference.**

b) The Fiscal Year 2018 closure data also shows that children who were assigned to CASA before their case reached the review stage (generally within six months of entering care) had **fewer placements** than children who were assigned to CASA during or after the review stage: 2.34 vs. 5.34.

DJFS has been working to increase awareness of the benefits of appointing CASA earlier in a child’s case. Over the past five years, CASA has gradually been assigned earlier and earlier. As illustrated by the data, the earlier the child is assigned to CASA, the less time they spend in care and the fewer placements they experience. In Fiscal Year 2012, only 44% of closed cases had been assigned before their case reached the review stage. In Fiscal Year 2018, 62% of closed cases had been assigned before review.



III. CASA in the Coming Year

CASA programs continue to be committed to increasing capacity to serve more children and support the volunteer advocates who provide a high level of advocacy to assist the courts with making critical decisions about the best interests of the youth served. To this end, the DJFS is working with the Maryland CASA Association and the circuit court judges in Wicomico and Somerset County to start a regional CASA program to serve the children of those two counties. That program is expected to be in operation by the end of Fiscal Year 2019.

DJFS is also working with the Maryland CASA Association to ensure that high quality services are being provided to the youth and the courts. The Maryland CASA Association will provide more in-depth quality assurance and technical assistance to all the CASA programs in Maryland by adding a quality assurance specialist who

will work directly with the programs. This position will assist the programs with maintaining compliance with applicable state and national CASA program best practices and standards to ensure that the children served are receiving the highest possible level of advocacy.

IV. Conclusion

The Maryland Judiciary is committed to supporting CASA programs across Maryland. These programs provide vital information and recommendations to the judges and magistrates who are making best interest determinations in cases involving Maryland's most vulnerable youth. The advocacy that CASA provides these children furthers the Judiciary's mission to provide fair, efficient, and effective justice for all. Furthermore, by collaborating with and supporting the ongoing work of CASAs, the following Judiciary strategic objectives are also realized:

- (1) Be responsive and adaptable to community needs;
- (2) Build partnerships; and
- (3) Use resources wisely.

The Judiciary continues to be a critically important source of funding for CASA programs across Maryland.