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January 27, 2020

Honorable Bill Ferguson
President of the Senate
State House, H-107
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker of the House
State House, H-101
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: Annual Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Programs Report

Dear President Ferguson and Speaker Jones,

Pursuant to Courts and Judicial Proceedings, § 3-830(b)(3)(ii), please find enclosed the Annual Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Programs Report for Fiscal Year 2019.

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

Sincerely yours,

Pamela Harris
State Court Administrator

Enc.

Hon. Bill Ferguson
Hon. Adrienne A. Jones
January 27, 2020
Page 2

cc: Honorable Mary Ellen Barbera, Chief Judge, Court of Appeals
Honorable Laura S. Ripken, 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 State Court Administrator, Government Relations & Public
Affairs
Yaakov E. (Jake) Weissmann, Chief of Staff, Senate President
Alexandra Hughes, Chief of Staff, House Speaker
Sarah Albert, Mandated Reports Specialist

Annual Report for Court-Appointed Special Advocate Programs

Fiscal Year 2019



Administrative Office of the Courts

January 2020

Issued by the Administrative Office of the Courts' (AOC) Juvenile and Family Services (JFS) pursuant to Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article §3-830(b)(3)(ii).

Prepared by Kelly Franks, Senior Program Manager/Grants & Services, Jovonne Lewis, Family and Court Programs Analyst, and Karen Thomas, Grants & Services Analyst, using data provided by the programs.

Contact: Kelly Franks at 410.260.1722 or Kelly.Franks@MDCourts.gov.

Table of Contents

I. Overview	4
II. Program Operations	5
A. Counties Served.....	5
B. Funding Sources	6
C. Staffing.....	8
III. Program Activities.....	8
A. Volunteers.....	8
1. Recruitment	8
2. Training	9
3. Retention/Attrition	9
4. Advocacy.....	10
5. Service	11
6. Volunteer Demographics.....	12
B. Children	13
1. Children Served by a Volunteer Advocate.....	13
2. Children Being Served by a Volunteer on the Last Day.....	13
3. Details about Children Served in FY19	13
4. Case Closures	15
III. CASA in the Coming Year.....	17
IV. Conclusion.....	17

I. Overview

The Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program operates in Maryland subject to Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article, §3-830. The Annotated Code of Maryland states that the role of the Court-Appointed Special Advocate is to:

- (1) Provide the court with background information to aid the court in making decisions in the child's best interest; and
- (2) 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

Fifteen CASA programs were active in Maryland in Fiscal Year 2019, serving 21 counties. Only Somerset, Wicomico, and Garrett counties do not have CASA programs. Efforts are underway to start a program to serve Somerset and Wicomico counties in 2020.

Programs by Service Area and Start Date

Programs (<i>Official Names</i>)	County/Countries Served	Start Date
Voices for Children of Montgomery County (Formerly <i>CASA of Montgomery County</i>)	Montgomery	1987
CASA of Baltimore City	Baltimore City	1988
CASA of the Mid-Shore (formerly <i>CASA of Talbot and CASA of Queen Anne's & Kent Counties</i>) (<i>CASA of Talbot began serving 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
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

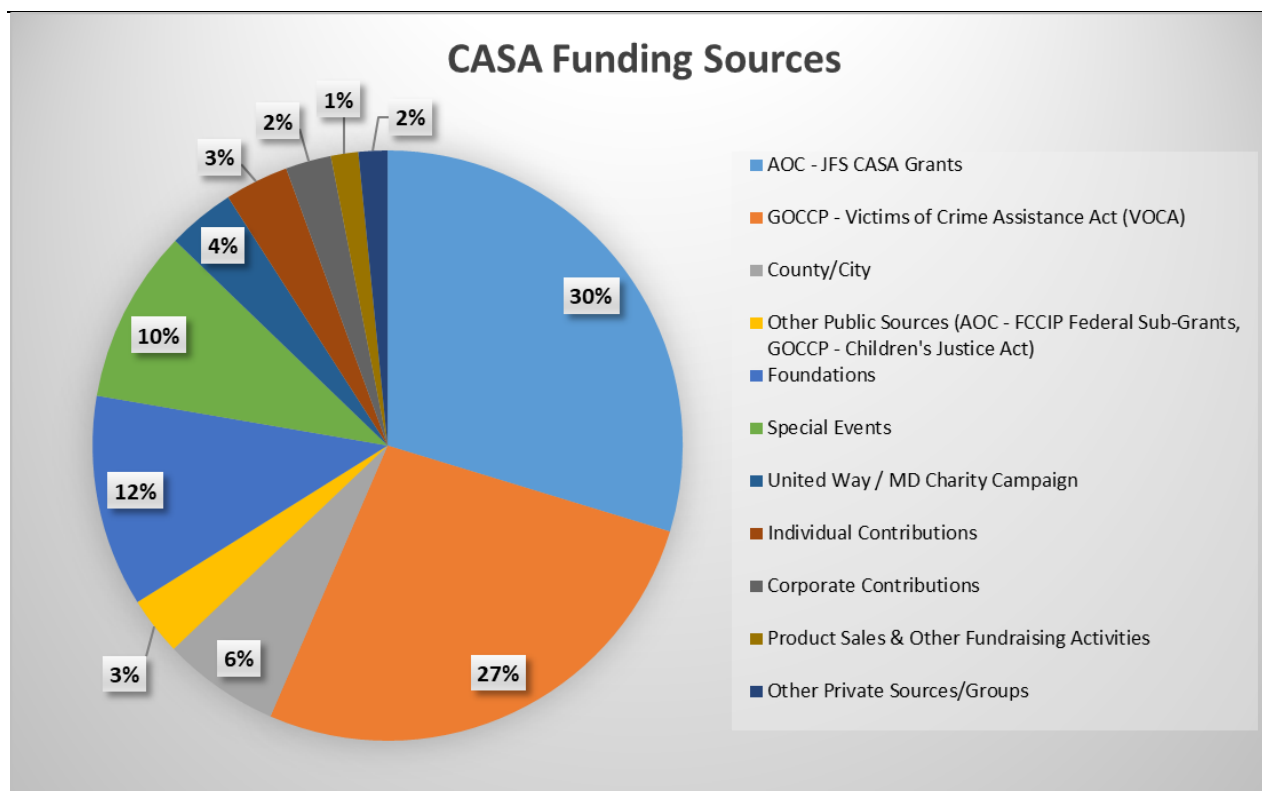
B. Funding Sources

All CASA programs were funded by the Maryland Judiciary in Fiscal Year 2019. Judiciary funding amounts are determined using a formula which factors in the number of volunteers who have served children, the number of volunteers trained, the needs of the community to be served, and the performance of the program. Grantees are required to match 100 percent of funds awarded.

FY19 Award Amounts by Program

Voices for Children of Montgomery County	\$220,000
CASA of Baltimore County	\$152,350
CASA of Prince George's County	\$141,500
CASA of Baltimore City	\$124,567
CASA of Frederick and Voices for Children of Carroll County	\$110,000
Court Appointed Special Advocates of Washington County	\$90,729
CASA of the Mid-Shore	\$88,450
Anne Arundel County CASA	\$80,000
CASA of Southern Maryland	\$75,250
CASA of Harford County	\$65,000
Voices for Children of Howard County	\$60,000
CASA of the Lower Shore	\$56,100
CASA of Cecil County	\$44,250
CASA of Caroline	\$25,100
Allegany County CASA	\$24,253

Support for programs from other funders varies by program. Some CASA programs are independent non-profits; others are programs within larger non-profit organizations.



Sixty-six percent of CASA funding comes from public-sector funders. The public sources include:

- 42 % AOC - JFS CASA grants
- 39.7 % Victims of Crime Assistance Act funding through Governor’s Office on Crime Control and Prevention
- 13.2 % County/City
- 5.1 % Other public sources (Foster Care Court Improvement Program, Children’s Justice Act Committee)

Thirty-four percent of CASA funding comes from private-sector funders and individual contributions. The private sources include:

- 38.4 % Foundations/grants
- 29.0 % Special events
- 12.2 % Individual contributions
- 7.6 % Corporate contributions
- 5.6 % United Way/CFC/MD Charity Campaign, etc.
- 2.0 % Product sales & other fundraising activities
- 3.3 % Other private sources
- 1.9 % Groups or organizations

C. Staffing

Although there are 88 positions in CASA programs statewide, AOC - JFS grant funding only supports the full or partial salary and/or fringe costs of 51 positions within the CASA programs.

Total Positions: 88

Full time: 49 Part time: 39

Based on the total working hours, the Full-Time-Equivalency (FTE) for all positions is 71.2 full-time positions.

Total Positions Supervising Volunteers: 56

Full time: 28 Part time: 28

Based on the total working hours, the Full-Time-Equivalency (FTE) for positions supervising volunteers is 42 full-time positions.

III. Program Activities

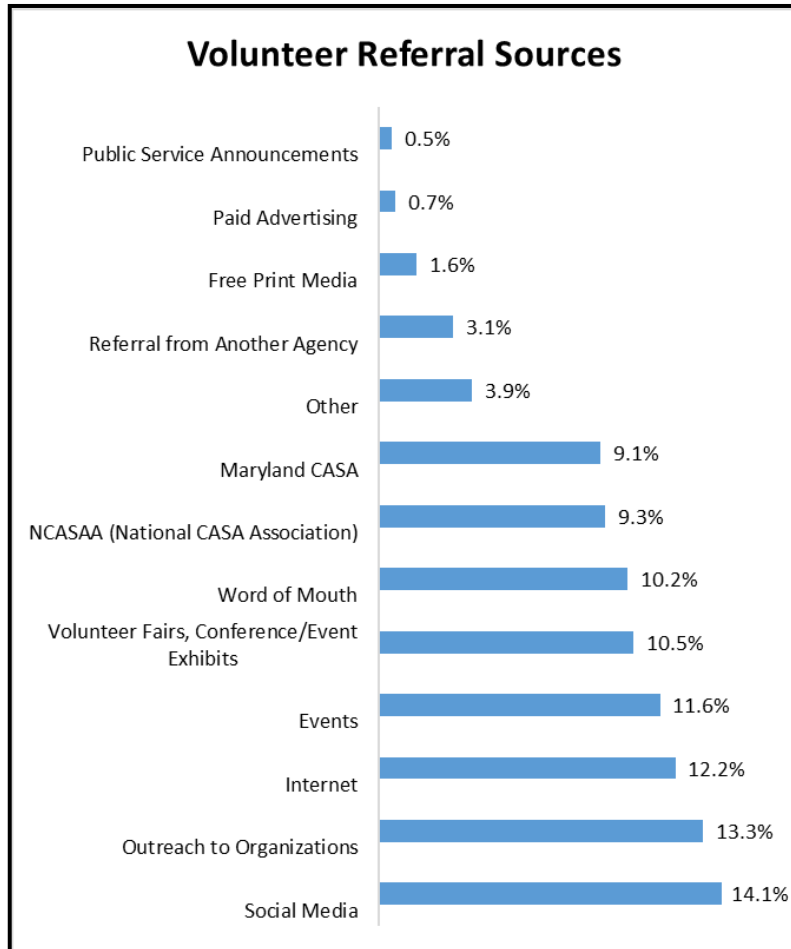
A. Volunteers

1. Recruitment

In Fiscal Year 2019, 2,207 volunteer inquiries were received statewide. More than 26 percent of volunteers reached their local CASA program through online resources. Of those, 14 percent learned about CASA through social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Approximately 18 percent of volunteers were referred to their local CASA program by the National CASA Association (NCASAA) or the Maryland CASA Association.

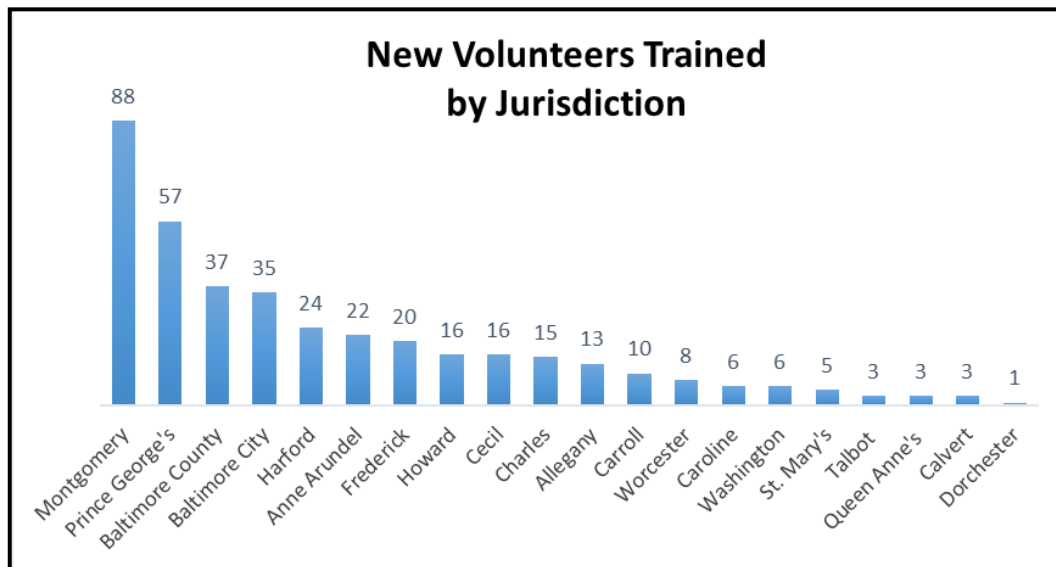
Volunteer applications received: **700**. Of the total volunteer inquiries, 32 percent resulted in an application being submitted.

Prospective volunteers interviewed: **529**. Of the total volunteer applications submitted, 76 percent resulted in an interview.



2. Training

Pre-service training: In Fiscal Year 2019, 478 new volunteers were trained. Of the volunteers who were interviewed, 90 percent started training and 73 percent completed training. Some volunteers are screened-out through the interview process and others are screened-out during training.



In-service training (continuing education): CASA programs provided 570 hours of ongoing training to active volunteers. Approximately 158 hours of that training (28 percent) were focused on increasing cultural competence of volunteers.

3. Retention/Attrition

Although the goal of all CASA programs is to have volunteers serve their assigned child for the entirety of the child's foster care placement, CASA volunteers are only required to serve for a minimum of one year. More than 68 percent of the volunteers who were serving children on the last day of the Fiscal Year had been serving for 12 months or longer.

Volunteers who left the program: **309**

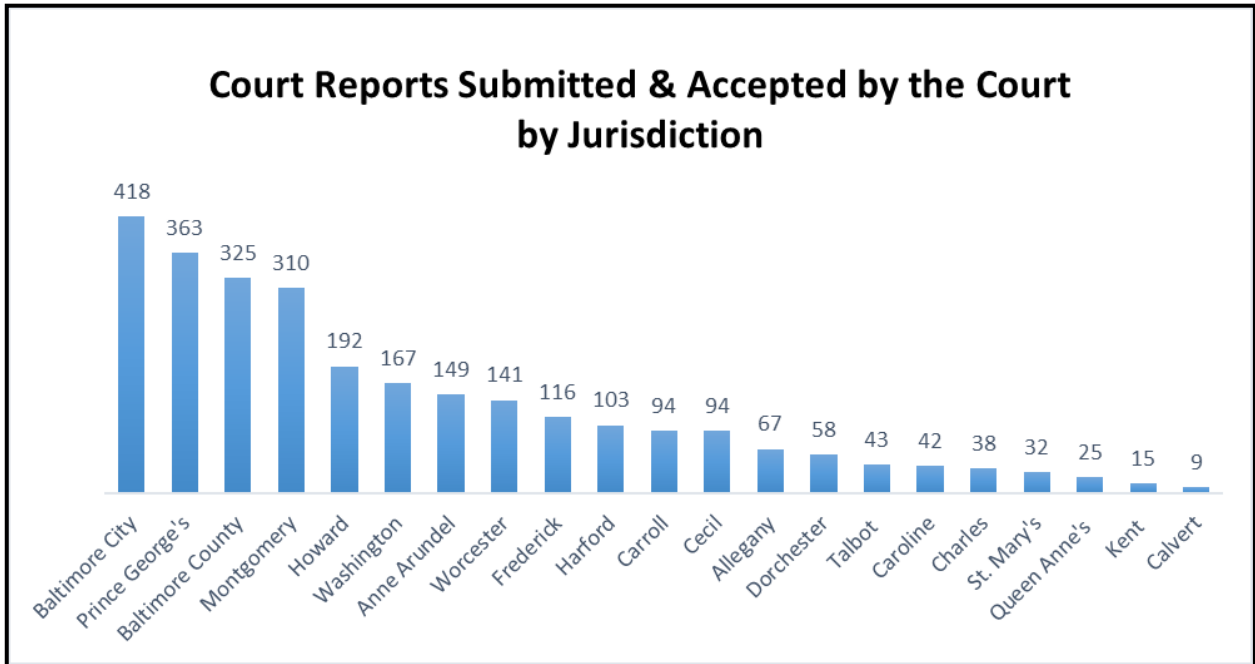
Average length of service (volunteers who left): **33 months.** On average, volunteers who left the program in Fiscal Year 2019 served for more than two years and nine months. In the Mid-Shore program, five volunteers who left the program in Fiscal Year 2019 served an average of 94 months each; each volunteer spent more than 7.8 years with the program. In the Caroline County and Frederick/Carroll programs, the average length of service was more than four years.

4. 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 CASA volunteer prepares a report which provides the court information about the child and recommendations regarding the child’s needs and future placement. Court reports with recommendations are submitted at every hearing for the children assigned to the CASA programs.

Court reports submitted by CASA and accepted by the court: 2,801

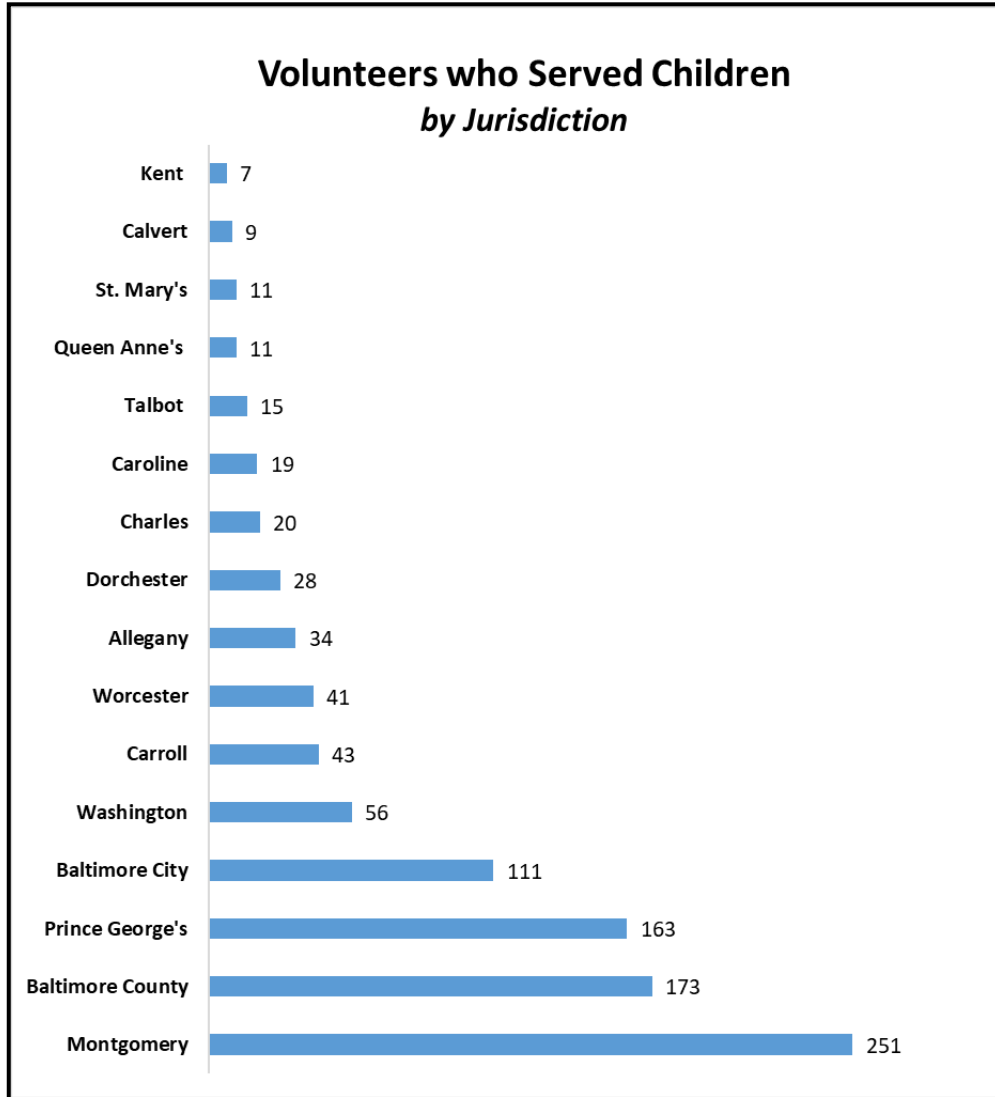


Volunteer attendance at court: CASA volunteers attended 73 percent of the hearings for which they prepared a report. This rate is often affected by continuances; a volunteer may appear for the initial hearing but be unavailable to attend on the rescheduled date. CASA program staff attend all hearings.

5. 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 CASA, and youth who have been placed so far away that assigning a volunteer may not be feasible.

Volunteers serving children in FY19: 1,376



Volunteers serving children on the last day of FY19: 1,003. Overall, the number of CASA advocates serving children on the last day of Fiscal Year 2019 increased by 3.4 percent over the first day of Fiscal Year 2019. The most significant increases came in Prince George's and Cecil counties. Each of those counties expanded the numbers of volunteers serving by 10 or more.

6. Volunteer Demographics

Gender Identity

Male	13.8%
Female	86.2%

Age

21-29	8.7%
30-39	16.0%
40-49	20.6%
50-59	25.8%
60 + above	29.0%

Race/Ethnicity

American Indian / Alaska Native	0.1%
Asian / Asian American	2.3%
Black / African American	25.1%
Hispanic / Latino	3.7%
Indian	0.3%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	0.2%
White	66.7%
Two or more races	1.4%
Other	0.2%

Education

High School/GED	6.3%
Some College	12.5%
College	40.7%
Post-Grad	31.6%
Unknown	8.5%
Other	0.4%

Employment Status

Full-time	53.3%
Part-time	17.9%
Retired	19.1%
Unemployed	6.8%
Unknown	1.7%
Other	1.2%

B. Children

In June of 2019, 4,603 children were in foster care in Maryland. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#).) Approximately 38 percent of these children received the benefit of CASA advocacy.

1. Children Served by a Volunteer Advocate in FY19: 1,731

2. Children Being Served by a Volunteer on the Last Day of FY18: 1,176

3. Details about Children Served in FY19:

Demographics

Gender Identity

Male	48.5%
Female	51.5%

Age

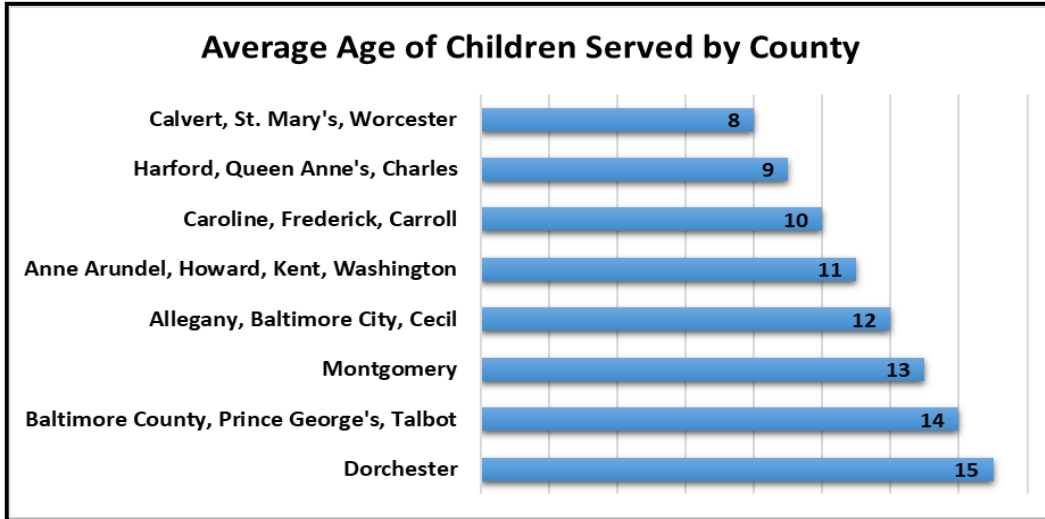
Birth to 2	11.0%
3 to 6	14.9%
7 to 13	26.2%
14 to 17	25.9%
18 +	22.0%

Race/Ethnicity

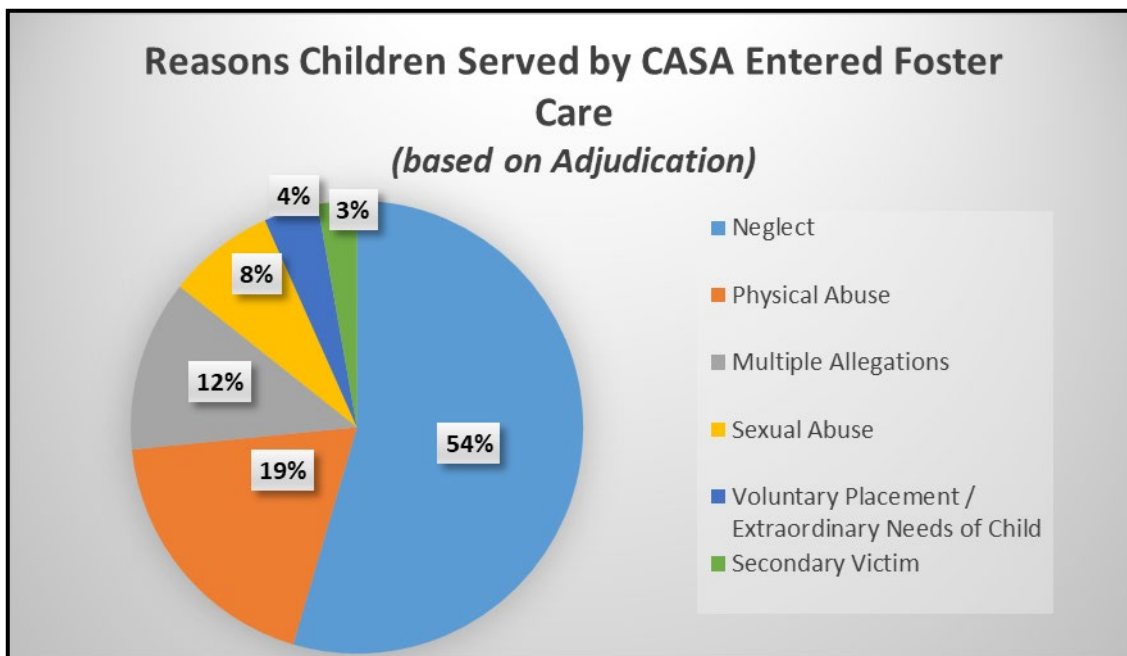
American Indian / Alaska Native	0.0%
Asian / Asian American	0.9%
Black / African American	39.7%
Hispanic / Latino	8.4%
Indian	0.0%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
White	37.2%
Two or more races	13.6%

Programs strive to achieve cultural competence in all the volunteers they train. However, there remains a wide disparity in reported racial and gender identity between volunteers and CASA youth. Youth served by CASA who identify as white (non-Latino) make up 37 percent of the population, while the remaining 63 percent of the youth served by CASA programs have a racial identity other than white. Volunteers who identify as white (non-Latino) make up 67 percent of the volunteer population. Additionally, while 51 percent of the youth served identify as female and 49 percent as male, 86 percent of volunteers identify as female. The Maryland Judiciary has partnered with the Maryland CASA Association to bring diversity, equity, and inclusion training to CASA programs. As of Fiscal Year 2020, this training is being performed regionally to help program managers and staff to think about how to make their programs more welcoming to all people.

Nearly 50 percent of children served in Fiscal Year 2019 were 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 working to prepare youth to be independent.



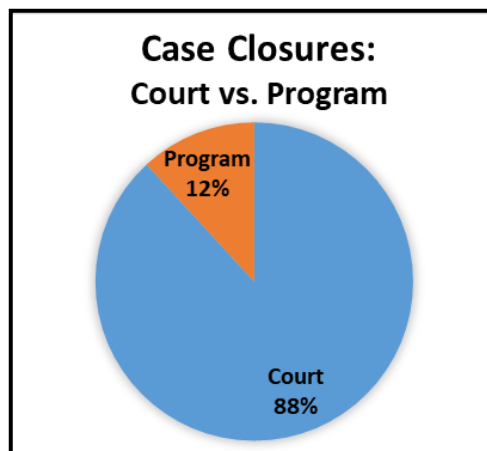
Reasons for entering care: Neglect is the most-commonly adjudicated reason that children served by CASA enter foster care, accounting for 54.5 percent of cases in Fiscal Year 2019. “Neglect” includes abandonment and educational/medical/physical neglect. Neglect is commonly the reason children with substance-abusing parents come into care. Of the children served by CASA programs in Fiscal Year 2019, 39 percent had at least one parent whose substance abuse was a contributing factor to their involvement with the Department of Social Services (DSS).



4. Case Closures

CASA programs closed 456 cases in Fiscal Year 2019. Of those, 402 cases were closed by the court, and 54 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, 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 54 program closures, 37 percent occurred in Washington County and 26 percent occurred in Baltimore County. In Washington County, 100 percent of the children whose cases were closed by the program were in permanent placements at the time of closure.



Time spent in foster care: The amount of time children served by CASA will spend in foster care before finding a permanent home, or aging-out of the system, varies from county to county. Statewide, the average is three years, with 124 youth served by CASA spending more than three years in care and 22 youth spending more than 10 years in foster care.

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

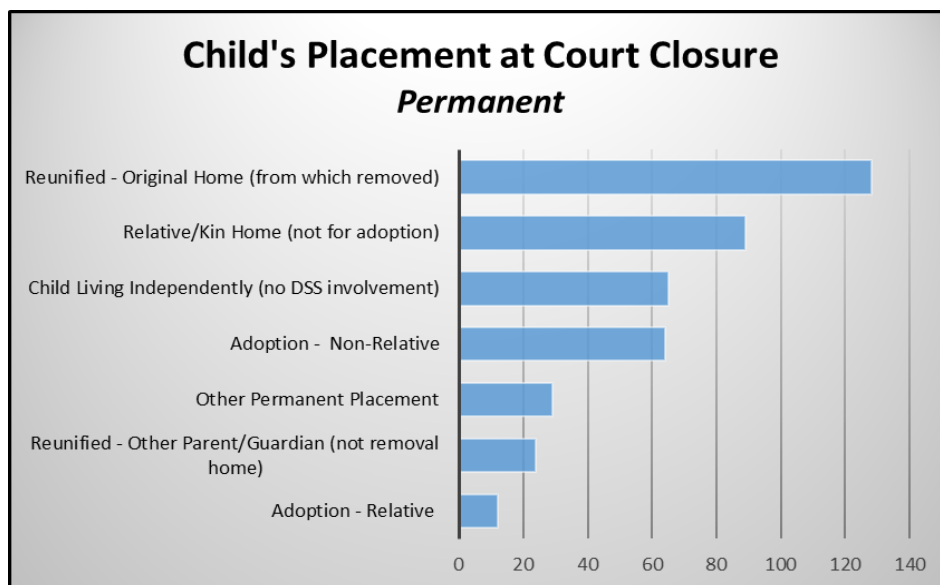
Jurisdiction	# of Closed		
	Cases	Months	Years
Talbot	2	82.0	6.8
Baltimore County	46	52.0	4.3
Montgomery	44	51.9	4.3
Caroline	9	47.2	3.9
Prince George's	30	46.6	3.9
Frederick	19	44.6	3.7
Dorchester	8	40.9	3.4
Cecil	13	38.8	3.2
Baltimore City	39	36.2	3.0
Howard	25	34.6	2.9
Queen Anne's	1	34.0	2.8
Charles	10	31.5	2.6
Anne Arundel	33	31	2.6
Carroll	14	29.4	2.4
Harford	36	27.3	2.3
Washington	26	22.3	1.9
Allegany	13	19.5	1.6
St. Mary's	9	9.7	0.8

Worcester 25 5.7 0.5

Placement at Court Closure

Permanent placements: Of the 402 children served by CASA volunteers whose cases were closed by the court during Fiscal Year 2019, 93 percent (372) 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, 62 percent were reunified or placed with family members. Of those reunified with their family, 60 percent went home to their parent(s) and 40 percent went to live with other relatives.



Non-permanent placement: Of the 402 children served by CASA volunteers whose cases were closed by the court during Fiscal Year 2019, 30 children were living in “non-permanent” living situations at closure. In 90 percent 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 DSS and the court’s orders; (3) had been out of contact (or run-away) for a significant amount of time; or (4) was incarcerated as an adult. In the remaining 10 percent of these cases, the youth remained in an out-of-home placement or independent living program without the involvement of DSS.

Impact of the Stage of CASA Appointment on Outcomes: In 2011, JFS began collecting data from CASA programs regarding case closures and stage of case at appointment. Analysis of this data has consistently shown that assigning CASA volunteers early in a child’s case leads to better outcomes. The Fiscal Year 2019 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 **24.27 fewer months in care** than children who were assigned to CASA during CINA review or permanency planning hearings. **This is a more than two-year difference.**

- On average, 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: two placements vs. five placements.

III. CASA in the Coming Year

CASA programs continue to be committed to increasing statewide capacity to serve more children and support more volunteer advocates, thereby further helping the courts with critically important decisions about the best interests of the youth served. To this end, the Judiciary is working with the Maryland CASA Association and the circuit court judges in Wicomico and Somerset counties to start a regional CASA program to serve the children of those counties. That program is expected to be in operation by the end of Fiscal Year 2020.

The Judiciary is also working with the Maryland CASA Association to safeguard the quality of services provided. The Maryland CASA Association has added a more in-depth quality assurance review process which aims to help all CASA programs in Maryland maintain compliance with applicable state and national CASA program best practices and standards. Through program reviews, trainings, and the provision of technical assistance, the Maryland Judiciary work in coordination with CASA programs and the Maryland CASA Association 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 statewide. These programs provide vital information and recommendations to judges and magistrates who are making best interest determinations in cases involving some of Maryland's most vulnerable youth. The advocacy that CASA programs provide furthers the Maryland Judiciary's mission to provide fair, efficient, and effective justice for all. By collaborating and supporting the ongoing work of CASA programs, the Judiciary is advancing its strategic objectives to (1) be responsive and adaptable to community needs, (2) build partnerships, and (3) use resources wisely. The Maryland Judiciary continues to be a critically important source of funding for CASA programs across Maryland.