

**Annual Report for  
Court-Appointed Special Advocate Programs**

**Fiscal Year 2022**



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

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## 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.

Supporting CASA programs statewide is a critically important part of the Judiciary's mission to provide fair, efficient, and effective justice for all. 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. CASA volunteers develop trusting relationships with the children they serve. Often these relationships have a lifelong impact, as is illustrated by this case/volunteer story from the Prince George's County's CASA Program:

*Tomika Holmes first became involved with Prince George's County foster care system as a child. Her mother was not capable of caring for Tomika and frequently abandoned her, leaving her to bounce from foster home to foster home. Throughout those tumultuous years, there was one individual who was always there for Tomika- her Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). CASA volunteers are trained to advocate in the best interests of abused and neglected children in foster care and her CASA volunteer was the one individual who was there for her no matter what.*

*Tomika was eventually reunited with her father and went on to raise a happy family of her own but always wanted to find the individual who helped her through those difficult years and give back in a meaningful way. When Tomika learned about CASA/Prince George's County, she realized that it was a CASA volunteer who had helped her. In the past three years, she has become a model CASA volunteer, working with a teenage girl who will age out of foster care to independence when she turns 21. Tomika talks with the girl every day and has been there for every significant milestone. Despite going significantly above and beyond her required service, Tomika constantly questions what else she could do to help this young lady prepare to step out on her own.*

*After overcoming multiple obstacles in her own life, Tomika has developed a personal philosophy that reminds her to keep the past in the past and keep looking forward and that is exactly what she is inspiring her CASA assigned child to do. She is a stirring model of what you can achieve when you let go of what has happened to you and focus on the life you want to create for yourself.*

As the world recovers from the pandemic, we are only beginning to see the impact on children. The CASA volunteer has become more critical than ever before. Children have become more

disconnected with the systems that protect them and CASA volunteers have stepped-in to ensure that youth are provided the services and resources they need to thrive. CASA programs continue to meet the needs of the court by providing timely and accurate information about the needs of the children they serve. During a time when Maryland's most vulnerable populations are most at risk, CASA programs have been critically important in helping courts have the information they need to protect children.

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

CASA programs were active in 23 Maryland jurisdictions in Fiscal Year 2022, serving all jurisdictions except Garrett County. In Fiscal Year 2022, CASA expanded to serve Somerset and Wicomico counties. Service to Garrett County was expected in Fiscal Year 2023, but the retirement and current vacancy in the circuit court judge position, coupled with the departure of CASA of Western Maryland's Director, have caused delays in that expansion.

#### Programs by Service Area and Start Date

Programs ( <i>Official Names</i> )	County/Counties 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 &amp; 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* <i>*Program closed 03/31/21.</i>	Washington	1991-2021
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
CASA of Western Maryland <i>(formerly CASA of Allegany County)</i>	Allegany Washington	2013 2021
CASA of Cecil County	Cecil	2015
Life Crisis Center: CASA of Somerset & Wicomico	Somerset Wicomico	2022

## B. Funding Sources

All CASA programs were funded by the Maryland Judiciary in Fiscal Year 2022. 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.

### FY22 Award Amounts by Program

Voices for Children of Montgomery County	\$226,500
CASA of Prince George's County	\$166,351
CASA of Baltimore City	\$154,450
CASA of Baltimore County	\$154,175
Anne Arundel County CASA	\$130,000
CASA of Western Maryland	\$118,572
CASA of Frederick and Voices for Children of Carroll County	\$114,757
CASA of the Mid-Shore	\$107,775
CASA of Harford County	\$97,050
CASA of Cecil County	\$90,762
CASA of Southern Maryland	\$85,249
Voices for Children of Howard County	\$79,763
CASA of the Lower Shore	\$58,149
CASA of Caroline	\$25,500
Life Crisis Center: CASA of Somerset & Wicomico <i>Start-up funding awarded 2/2/2022</i>	\$17,590

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

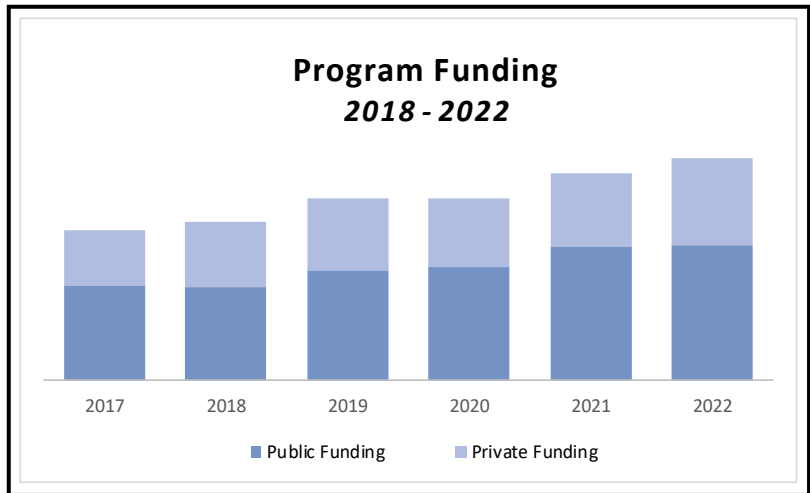
Sixty-one percent of CASA funding comes from public-sector funders.

- 25.3% AOC-JFS CASA Grants
- 21.8% GOCPV - VOCA
- 11.4% County/City  
Other Public Sources (AOC - FCCIP  
Federal Sub-Grants, GOCPYV - Children's  
Justice Act)
- 2.9%

Thirty-nine percent of CASA funding comes from private-sector funders and individual contributions.

- 10.4% Foundations/Private Grants
- 10.0% Individual Contributions
- 8.5% Special Events  
Product Sales & Other Fundraising
- 2.8% Activities
- 2.3% Other Private Sources
- 2.0% Corporate Contributions
- 1.9% National CASA  
United Way/CFC/Maryland Charity
- 1.0% Campaign

Program income has grown over the past five years. There was a two percent decline in Fiscal Year 2020 related to the many fundraising events that were canceled due to the pandemic. Despite this slight decrease, program funding rebounded in 2021, growing by more than \$750,000. In 2022, fundraising activities and events returned, which reflected in the growth of income from private sources which grew by \$378,745. AOC funding grew by \$64,248 overall as a result of the AOC's funding increase.



### C. Staffing

Although there are 95 positions in CASA programs statewide, AOC - JFS grant funding only supports the full or partial salary and/or fringe costs of 57 positions within CASA programs.

Total Positions: 95

Full time: 45                      Part time: 50

*Based on the total working hours, the Full-Time-Equivalency (FTE) for all positions is 76.8 full-time positions.*

Total Positions Supervising Volunteers: 55.5

Full time: 18                      Part time: 37.5

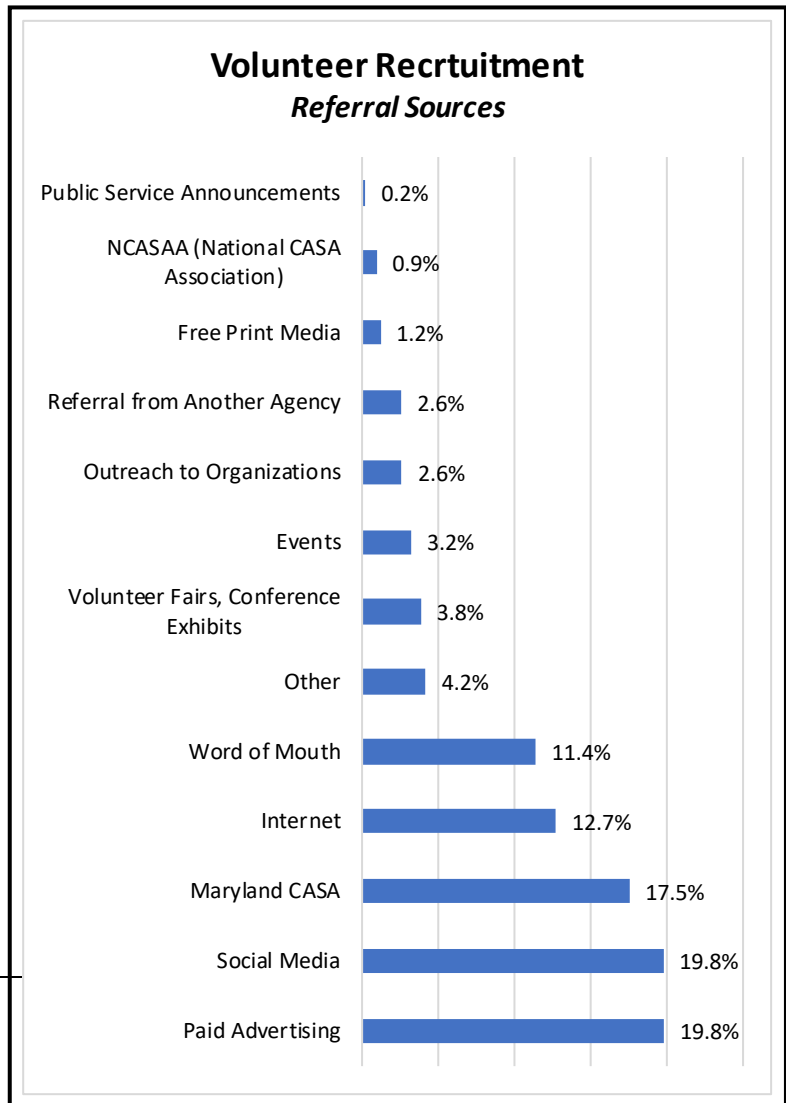
*Based on the total working hours, the Full-Time-Equivalency (FTE) for positions supervising volunteers is 38.95 full-time positions.*

## III. Program Activities

### A. Volunteers

#### 1. Recruitment

In Fiscal Year 2022, CASA programs statewide received 2,371 volunteer inquiries. This was a 14 percent increase from Fiscal Year 2021. During Fiscal Year 2022, more than 50 percent of volunteers reached their local CASA program through online resources. Of those, nearly 40 percent learned about CASA through social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. CASA/Prince George’s County used a marketing grant from the National CASA Association to utilize paid social media ads promoting their program. These ads were successful in increasing volunteer inquiries resulting in 469 additional volunteer inquiries. As in Fiscal Year 2021, nearly 20 percent of volunteers were referred to their local CASA program by the National CASA Association. (NCASAA) or the Maryland CASA Association.



Volunteer applications received: 621. Although programs received 14 percent more inquiries than received in Fiscal Year 2021, there was a 20 percent decrease in applications received.

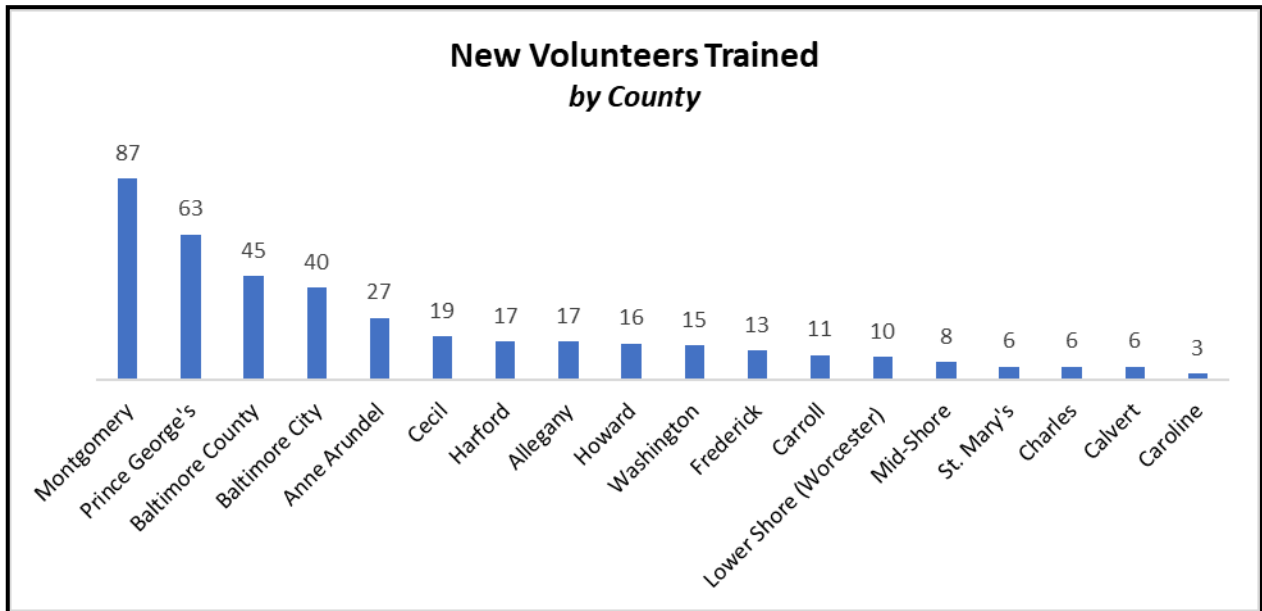
Prospective volunteers interviewed: 511. Programs interviewed 82 percent of the prospective volunteers who submitted applications. Overall, 151 fewer (23%) interviews were conducted than in the prior year.

## 2. Training

### Pre-service training:

In Fiscal Year 2022, 564 new volunteers were trained. Of the volunteers who started training, 73 percent (409) completed training. Some volunteers are screened-out through the interview process and others are screened-out during training. The number of volunteers trained in Fiscal Year 2022 decreased by 15 percent from Fiscal Year 2021. Only Baltimore County (+2), Calvert County (+3), Caroline County (+1), Carroll County (+1), St. Mary’s County (+1), and Washington County (+12) had increases in the number of volunteers trained.

In-service training (continuing education): CASA programs provided 382 hours of ongoing training to active volunteers. Many training opportunities are now provided virtually, which has increased attendance.

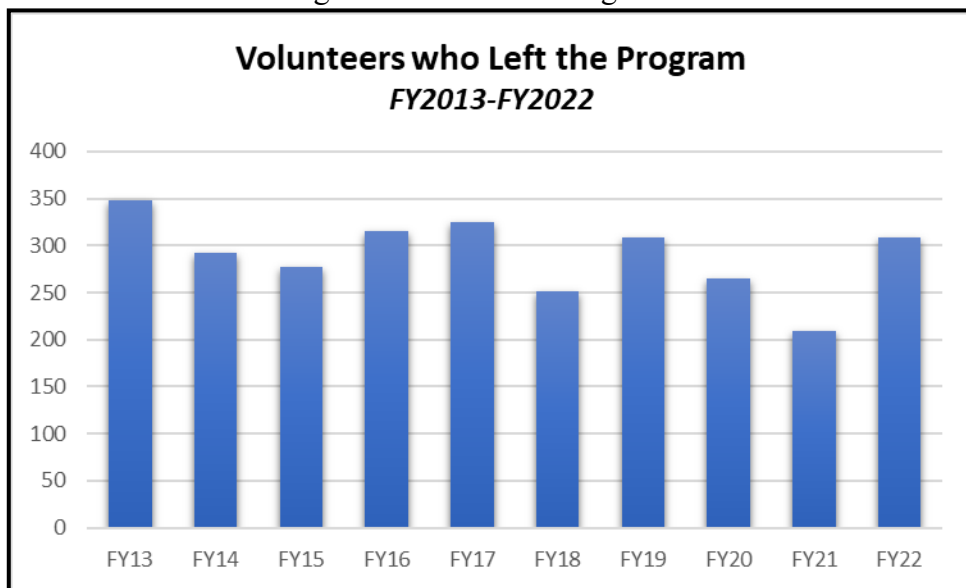


### 3. Retention/Attrition

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 70.3 percent of the volunteers who were serving children on the last day of the Fiscal Year had been serving for 12 months or longer. This is an increase of 22 percent over Fiscal Year 2021.

Volunteers who left the programs: 304.

This is an increase of 50 percent over Fiscal Year 2021 when 209 volunteers left the programs. While this seems like a large increase, the figure below shows that this number fluctuates from year



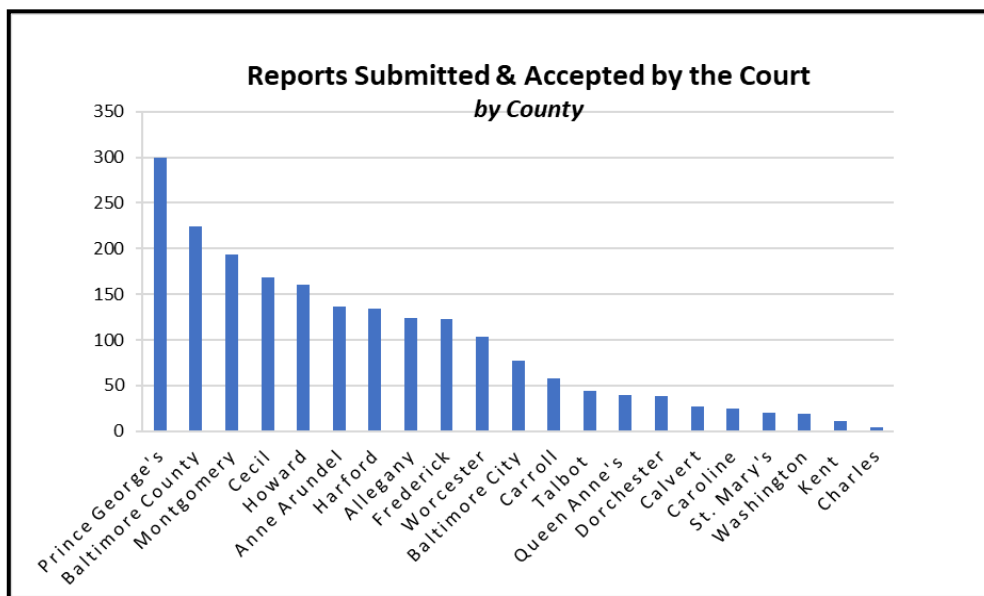
to year. Despite the increase in the number of volunteers who left, the reasons for leaving remain consistent. The top reasons volunteers leave are: (1) time commitment; (2) family needs; and (3) employment needs.

Average length of service (volunteers who left): 28.5 months. Volunteers are required to commit 12 months to serving their assigned child. On average, volunteers who left the program in Fiscal Year 2022 served more than two years. At CASA of the Mid-Shore, the average time of service for the 19 volunteers who left was six years. At CASA of the Lower Shore, it was nearly five years, and at CASA of Cecil County, it was three years.

### 4. Advocacy

CASA volunteers advocate in court for the best interests 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 that provides the court with 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: 2,026.



Volunteer rate of attendance at court: 79%. CASA volunteers attended 79 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 staff attend all hearings for which the programs have an assigned advocate.

## 5. Service

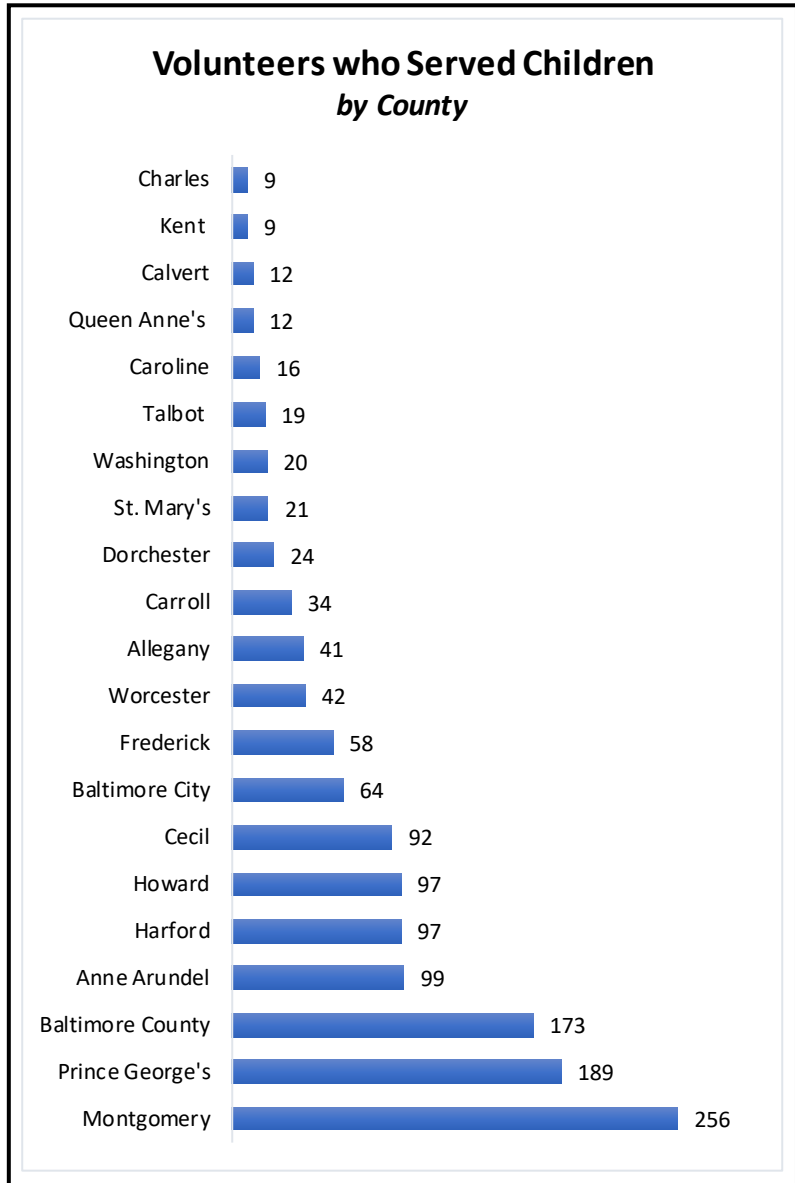
A goal of every CASA program is to provide a volunteer for every child who is adjudicated as a child in need of assistance (CINA). In Carroll, Dorchester, Howard, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, and Worcester counties, the programs have provided CASA volunteers for nearly all CINA children. There are exceptions 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 FY22: 1,384.

This number includes all volunteers who served children during the year. There was an increase of 163 volunteers (13 percent) from Fiscal Year 2021. This increase was partially offset by the increase in the number of volunteers who left the program.

Volunteers serving children on the last day of FY21: 963.

Overall, the number of CASA advocates serving children on the last day of Fiscal Year 2022 increased by 16 (nearly two percent) over the last day of Fiscal Year 2021.



## 6. Volunteer Demographics

<b>Gender Identity</b>	
Male	14.5%
Female	85.5%
<b>Age</b>	
21-29	12.3%
30-39	15.8%
40-49	16.5%
50-59	22.7%
60 + above	32.7%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
American Indian / Alaska Native	0.1%
Asian / Asian American	1.7%
Black / African American	25.0%
Hispanic / Latino	3.8%
Indian	0.5%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
White	64.7%
Two or more races	2.8%
Other	1.4%
<b>Education</b>	
High School/GED	4.6%
Some College	8.4%
College	42.5%
Post-Grad	33.3%
Unknown	11.3%
<b>Employment Status</b>	
Full-time	47.4%
Part-time	13.7%
Retired	16.9%
Unemployed	6.1%
Unknown	15.3%
Other	0.6%

### B. Children

At the end of Fiscal Year 2022, 4,214 children were in foster care in Maryland in counties served by CASA programs. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#).) This is a decrease of 320 children from the prior year. Approximately 24 percent of children in out-of-home placement received the benefit of CASA advocacy.

**1. Children Served by a Volunteer Advocate in FY22: 1,400**

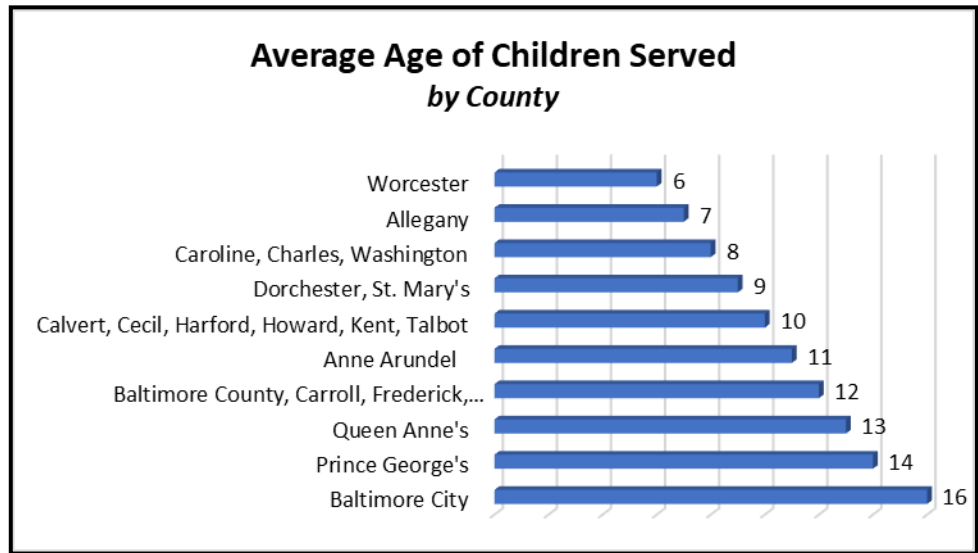
This is a decline of 50 children from Fiscal Year 2021.

**2. Children Being Served by a Volunteer on the Last Day of FY22: 1,012**

This is a decline of 39 children from Fiscal Year 2021. The number of children in out-of-home placements has been decreasing statewide. Between Fiscal Year 2018 and Fiscal Year 2022, the number of children in out-of-home placement decreased by more than 12 percent.

**3. Details about Children Served in FY22:**

Nearly 50 percent of children served in Fiscal Year 2022 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 that help prepare them to be independent.



**4. Children Demographics**

**Gender Identity**

Male	48.9%
Female	51.1%

**Age**

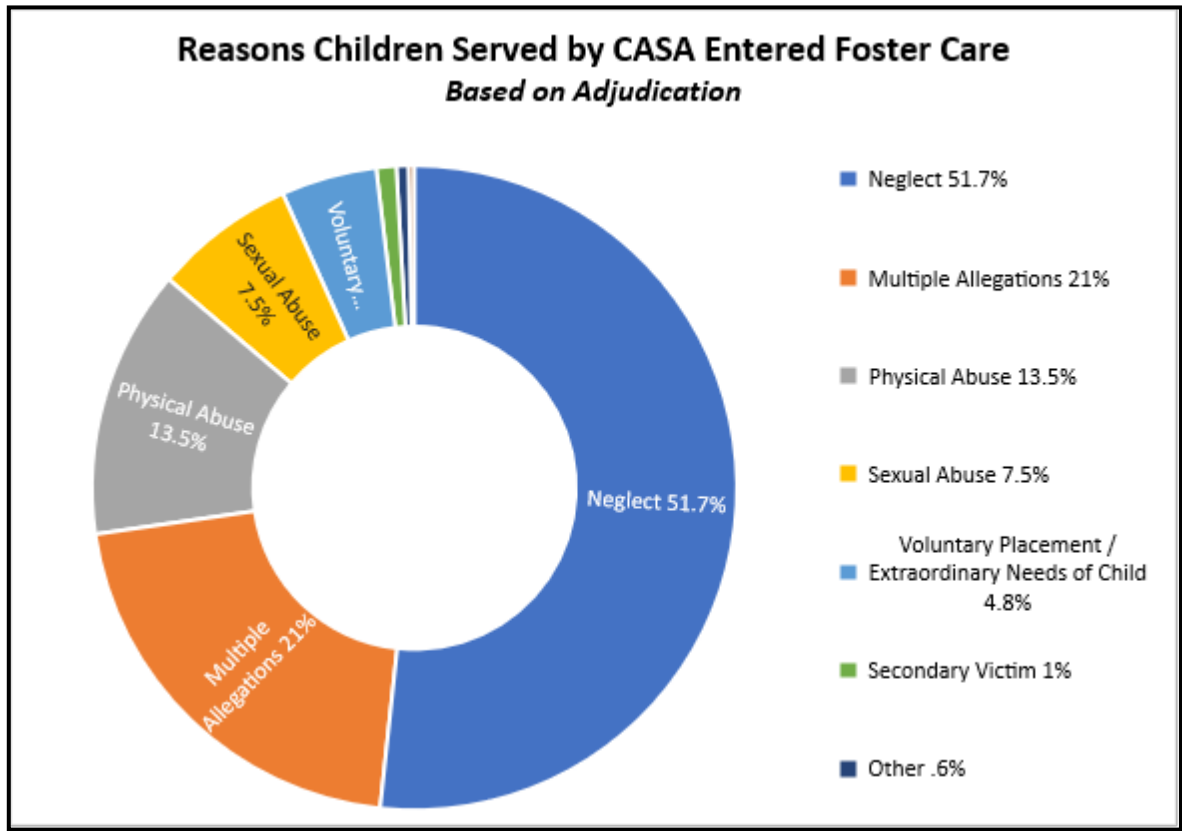
Birth to 2	10.6%
3 to 6	16.7%
7 to 13	23.3%
14 to 17	25.3%
18 +	24.1%

**Race/Ethnicity**

American Indian / Alaska Native	0.1%
Asian / Asian American	10.2%
Black / African American	33.7%
Hispanic / Latino	6.4%
Indian	0.6%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	0.5%
White	34.7%
Two or more races	12.8%

Programs strive to achieve cultural competence in all the volunteers they train. However, looking at all programs together, there remains a wide disparity in reported racial and gender identity between volunteers and CASA youth. To address this, the Maryland Judiciary has partnered with MD CASA to bring diversity, equity, and inclusion training to CASA programs. MD CASA has hired a full-time Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Acceptance and Belonging (DEIAB) and Training Coordinator to push this initiative forward. Since joining MD CASA in Fiscal Year 2021, the coordinator has evaluated each program and provided training, resources, and technical support to them as they work to become more inclusive. In Fiscal Year 2022, the coordinator worked with each program to create realistic and achievable DEIAB goals and action plans.

**Reasons for entering care:** Neglect is the most-commonly adjudicated reason that children served by CASA enter foster care, accounting for nearly 52 percent of cases in Fiscal Year 2022. “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 in Fiscal Year 2022, 36 percent had at least one parent whose substance abuse was a contributing factor to their involvement with the Department of Social Services (DSS).



**5. Case Closures**

CASA programs closed 387 cases in Fiscal Year 2022. Of those, 351 cases were closed by the court, and 36 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.

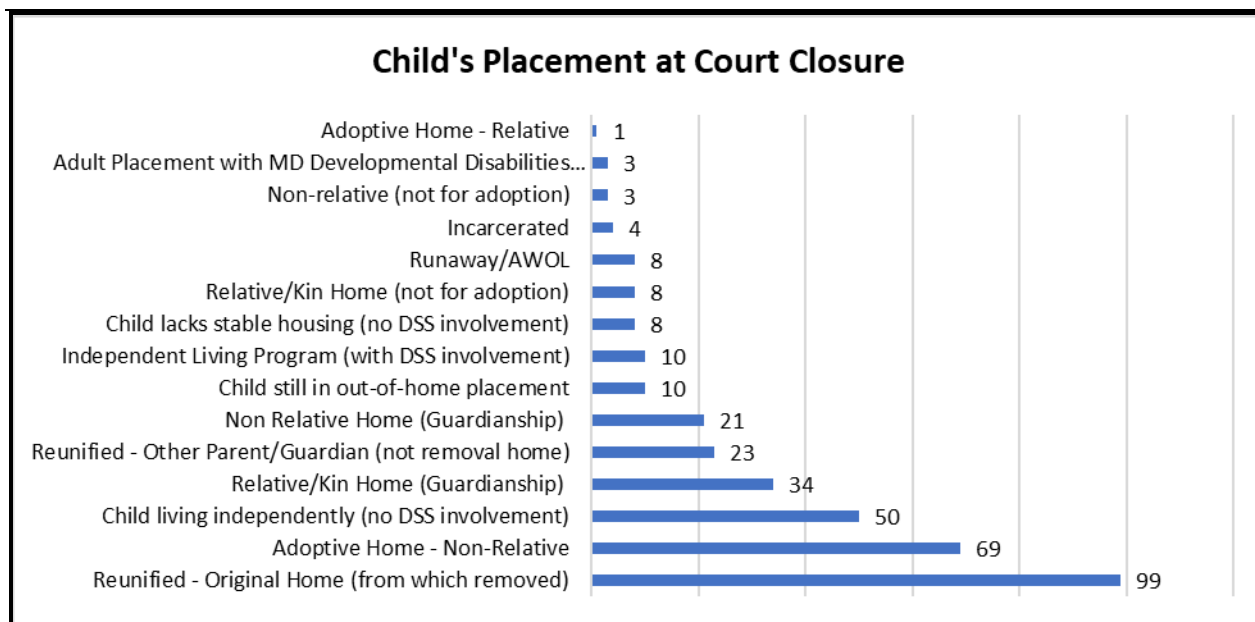
Tragically, five children being served by CASA died in Fiscal Year 2022. One child died because of a pre-existing medical issue, one was hit by a car and died from his injuries, two children took their own lives, and own child overdosed. While children have died while being served by CASA in the past, it is extremely unusual for there to be more than one or two. We will continue to work with the programs to identify concerning trends like these and will continue to monitor the programs to ensure they are advocating for the mental and physical health needs of the children they serve.

<b>Average length of time in foster care for cases closed by the court:</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b># of Closed Cases</b>	<b># of</b>	
		<b>Months</b>	<b>Years</b>
Baltimore County	50	50.4	4.2
Anne Arundel	39	36.8	3.1
Harford	32	26.1	2.2
Prince George's	31	60.5	5.0
Howard	31	28.7	2.4
Baltimore City	28	87.0	7.2
Cecil	25	50.2	4.2
Montgomery	21	41.3	3.4
Frederick	20	24.8	2.1
Allegany	16	47.3	3.9
Caroline	14	26.8	2.2
Carroll	12	28.6	2.4
Worcester	9	27.2	2.3
Charles	8	24.4	2.0
Dorchester	6	27.0	2.3
Talbot	3	36.3	3.0
Washington	2	20.5	1.7
St. Mary's	2	31.0	2.6
Calvert	1	94.0	7.8
Kent	1	45.0	3.8
Statewide	351	40.7	3.4

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 nearly three and a half years, with 170 youth served by CASA spending three years or more in care and 12 youth spending more than 10 years in foster care. Fifty-five youth spent one year or less in foster care before their case closed.

**Placements at Court Closure**

Permanent placements: In Fiscal Year 2022, 91 percent of children whose cases were closed by the court 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, 51 percent were reunified or placed with family members. Of those reunified with their family, 74 percent went home to their parent(s) and 26 percent went to live with other relatives.



Non-permanent placement: Thirty-three children were living in “non-permanent” living situations at closure. These include eight youth who were over the age of 18 and were out of contact or had run-away. Fourteen youth were over the age of 18 and requested case closure. Three youth who were placed in programs for adults with disabilities, and four who were incarcerated as adults. Four cases were transferred to another jurisdiction.

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. As a result, JFS has continued to encourage earlier appointments. The Fiscal Year 2022 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 **19.6 fewer months in care** than children who were assigned to CASA during CINA review or permanency planning hearings. **This is more than a one year and seven-month reduction in the time children spend in care.**
- 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.

## IV. CASA in the Coming Year

The new year will bring changes to CASA programs statewide. After nearly 25 years with the Maryland CASA Association, state director, Ed Kilcullen, retired in November 2022. Four other programs: Western Maryland, Caroline County, Prince George’s County, and the Lower Shore also saw the departure of their directors at the start of Fiscal Year 2023. As we welcome new

leaders into these CASA programs, we are hopeful that their fresh ideas and perspectives will propel the programs forward to meet the ever-growing needs of the children they serve.

The CASA volunteer's important role in protecting the best interests of the children in the State's care continues to be apparent. Our most vulnerable children and families continue to struggle with the issues that brought them into the system, and mental health and substance abuse challenges are at an all-time high statewide.

For CASA youth, having a CASA volunteer to advocate for their needs and provide a caring presence in their lives provides critical support many children have been lacking. CASA programs remain committed to increasing statewide capacity to serve more children and to support more volunteer advocates, thereby further helping the courts with critically important decisions about the best interests of the youth served.

## **V. 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.