

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

Fiscal Year 2024



**Administrative Office of the Courts
February 2025**

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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. In addition to providing the courts with critical information, CASA volunteers develop trusting relationships with the children they assist, relationships that have a critical impact as is illustrated by this case story from the Montgomery County Voices for Children CASA program:

At eight years old, Danielle was placed in foster care because of her mother's substance use. Her father was not involved in her life. One year later she was returned to her mother. When she was eleven, she was once again removed from her mother's care due to neglect as her mother continued to struggle to maintain sobriety. This time, the court appointed a CASA to advocate for Danielle and provide information to the court. After a year in foster care, Danielle's parents' rights were terminated. As the CASA got to know Danielle, she learned that Danielle had an extensive network of relatives living in southwestern Virginia. Danielle's caseworker was opposed to contacting these relatives as she was concerned about the logistics of arranging visits with Danielle because she had not seen these relatives since she was a small child. The family had lost touch with Danielle's biological mother and did not know Danielle had been placed in foster care. Despite the Department's resistance, the CASA persisted, and the court ordered that Danielle have visits with her relatives. Despite the continued resistance of the Department, Danielle continued to visit her relatives, and her family members travelled from southwestern Virginia to Maryland to attend court hearings and show their commitment to Danielle. After three years of foster care, the court ordered her to be placed in the custody of her great-aunt, where she remains. The Department appealed this decision, but it was upheld by the court, which cited the well-researched and thorough CASA report in its decision. Without the research and advocacy of her CASA volunteer, Danielle would not have been reunited with her relatives.

Supporting the ongoing work of CASA programs aligns with the Maryland Judiciary's mission to provide fair, efficient, and effective justice for all and advance its strategic initiatives to (1) promote accountability and public trust, (2) improve access to justice, and (3) encourage a service-oriented approach to court operations. The Maryland Judiciary's support is critical to the success of these programs.

II. Program Operations

A. Counties Served

CASA programs were active in 23 Maryland jurisdictions in Fiscal Year 2024, serving all jurisdictions except Garrett County.

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* <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 * <i>*Program closed and Worcester was served by the new Lower Shore CASA in FY23.</i>	Worcester Wicomico	2002 - 2022 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 (formerly <i>CASA of Allegany County</i>)	Allegany Washington	2013 2021
CASA of Cecil County	Cecil	2015
Lower Shore CASA	Somerset Wicomico Worcester	2022 2022 2023

B. Funding Sources

All local CASA programs were funded by the Maryland Judiciary in Fiscal Year 2024. 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, and program performance. Grantees are required to match 100 percent of funds awarded. Total awards increased by \$151,627 over Fiscal Year 2023. This included a seven percent increase to support cost-of-living adjustments for staff, to provide increases at programs where the need is greatest, and to maintain increased capacity in programs with demonstrated growth.

FY24 Award Amounts by Program

CASA of Baltimore City	\$289,500.00
Voices for Children of Montgomery County	\$246,998.00
Lower Shore CASA	\$227,588.00
CASA of Prince George’s County	\$227,370.00
CASA of Baltimore County	\$196,605.00
CASA of Harford County	\$147,726.00
CASA of Frederick and Voices for Children of Carroll County	\$125,578.00
Anne Arundel County CASA	\$121,598.00
CASA of Cecil County	\$115,198.00
CASA of the Mid-Shore	\$110,374.00
Voices for Children of Howard County	\$108,591.00
CASA of Southern Maryland	\$106,968.00
CASA of Western Maryland	\$100,059.17
CASA of Caroline	\$33,368.00

The support that programs receive from other funders varies. Some CASA programs are small independent non-profits; others are programs within larger organizations.

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

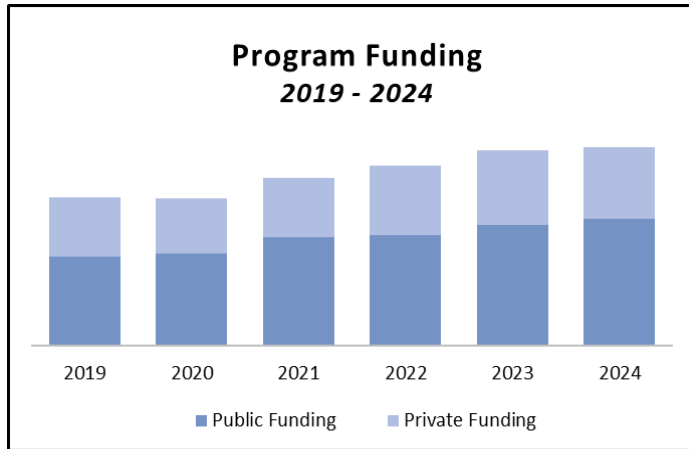
- 29.4% AOC-JFS CASA Grants
- 23.0% Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy – (GOCPP) Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)
- 9.4% County/City
- 2.5% Other Public Sources (AOC – Foster Care Court Improvement Project Federal Sub-Grants, GOCPP - Children's Justice Act)

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

- 9.5% Individual Contributions
- 8.6% Foundations/Private Grants
- 8.2% Special Events
- 4.4% Other Private Sources
- 2.3% Corporate Contributions

- 1.9% Product Sales & Other Fundraising Activities
- 0.9% United Way/CFC/Maryland Charity Campaign
- 0.1% National CASA

Program income continues to grow. There was a decline in Fiscal Year 2020 during the pandemic, but the programs have rebounded since that time. Public funding has increased by five percent while private funding decreased by four percent. This decrease was due to a \$119,717 decrease in National CASA funding. National CASA did not provide grant funding in Fiscal Year 2024 as it has done in past years due to Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention funding limitations. As the National Association works out those issues, more funding may become available for local programs in the future.



C. Staffing

Although there are 98 positions in CASA programs statewide, AOC - JFS grant funding only contributes to the salary and fringe costs of 70 positions.

Total Positions: 98

Full time: 58 Part time: 40

Based on the total working hours, the Full-Time-Equivalency (FTE) for all positions is 83.5 full-time positions.

Total Positions Supervising Volunteers: 54.5

Full time: 25.5 Part time: 29

Based on the total working hours, the Full-Time-Equivalency (FTE) for positions supervising volunteers is 40.4 full-time positions.

III. Program Activities

A. Volunteers

The Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report focused on the nationwide decline in volunteerism as reported by AmeriCorps in partnership with the Census Bureau. An [update](#) to that study was released in 2024 and shows that volunteer engagement is rebounding in many places across the country. Maryland’s rate of volunteerism, however, remains below 2019 levels. CASA programs rely on volunteers to operate, and they have been affected by this decline. To address it, many of Maryland’s CASA programs are changing their volunteer management practices in hopes of recruiting and retaining volunteers more successfully. For example, Prince George’s CASA analyzed the steps of the process from recruitment to service to determine when volunteers drop-

off. As a result of that analysis, they have added an information session for interested volunteers, changed their pre-service training to hybrid (in-person/online), and followed-up with interviewed volunteers who have not completed training to foster a sense of connection with the program.

Another avenue some programs are exploring is having paid staff advocates to serve children placed outside their county. A statewide average of 36 percent of foster youth served by CASA programs are placed outside their county, and in several Eastern Shore counties, nearly 75 percent of children are placed out of county. Programs often have difficulty finding volunteers who have the time and ability to travel to visit with the child on a regular basis. Staff advocates serve the children that volunteer advocates cannot. Cecil County implemented this model at the start of Fiscal Year 2024 and their paid advocate has served eleven children. In Prince George’s County, the program recently received funding from National CASA to hire a paid staff advocate and that position will start in Fiscal Year 2025.

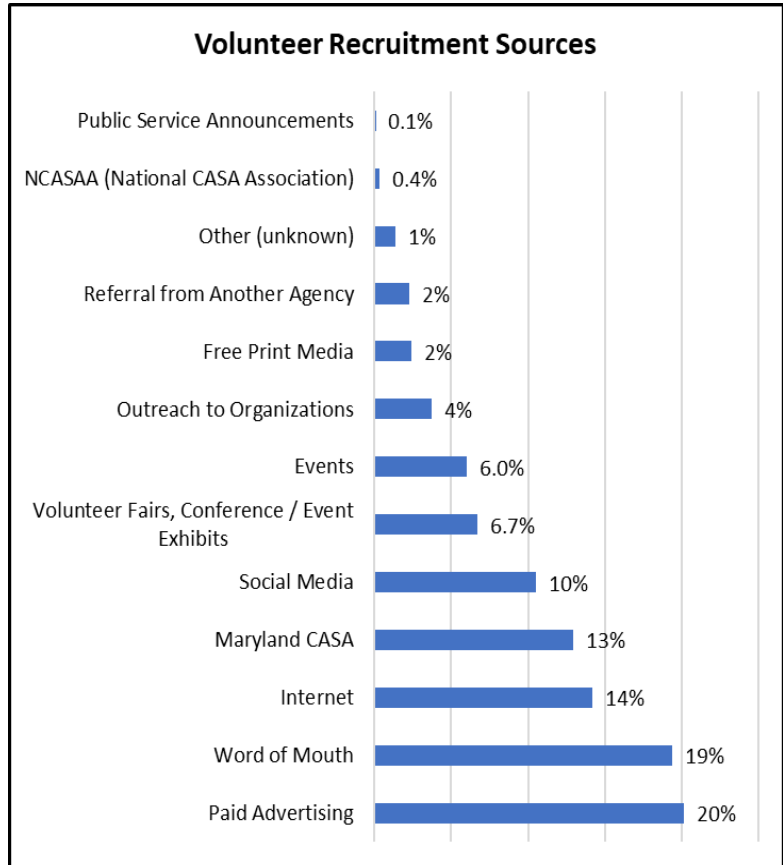
As programs continue to reexamine their current practices and implement new ideas, they will be more successful in serving all the children referred to them by the court. JFS will continue to track and report on these innovations.

1. Recruitment

In Fiscal Year 2024, CASA programs statewide* received **1,994** volunteer inquiries. This was a nearly three and a half percent increase from Fiscal Year 2023. In Fiscal Year 2023, programs reported the lowest number of inquiries since 2011, the year JFS began tracking inquiries. The number of inquiries has rebounded slightly from Fiscal Year 2023 but remains lower than previous years. Volunteer inquiries increased in Caroline, Harford, Prince George’s, Anne Arundel, Montgomery, Cecil, and the Lower Shore in Fiscal Year 2024.

**NOTE: CASA of Western Maryland did not report reliable recruitment source data and has been excluded from this section of the report.*

As shown on the table to the right, the most successful source of volunteer inquiries in Fiscal Year 2024 was paid advertising followed closely by word of mouth. Ninety-seven percent of the volunteers’ inquiries resulting from paid



advertisements were in Prince George’s County. Overall, Prince George’s County received 40 percent of the volunteer inquiries reported and the most in the state. The twenty-four percent of volunteers who reached their local CASA program through online resources did so through Google searches, program websites, and websites such as Idealist and Volunteer Match. Of those individuals who reached CASA through the internet, ten percent learned about CASA through social media outlets such as Facebook, X, and Instagram.

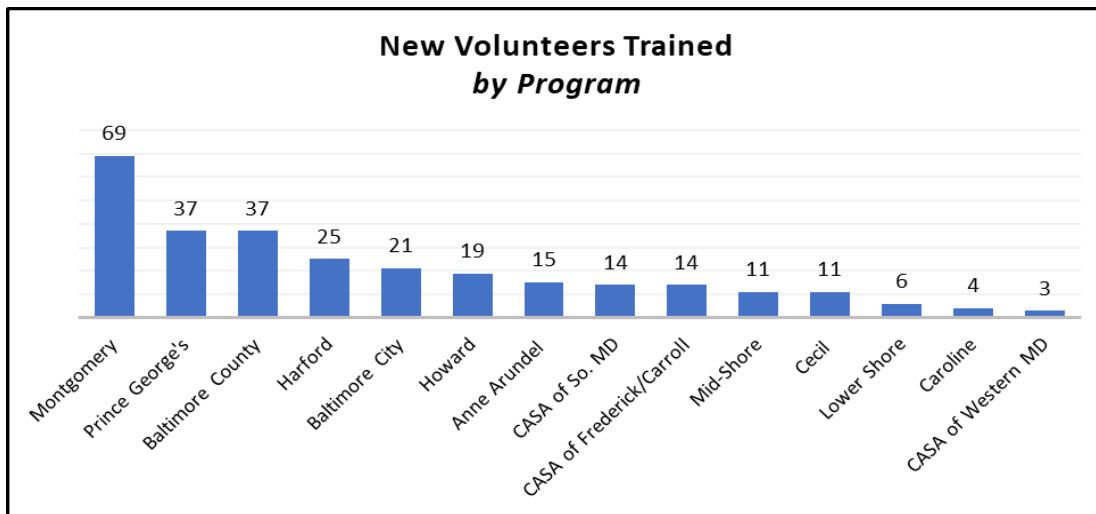
Volunteer applications received: 464. Although programs received more inquiries than in prior years, the number of applications received decreased by 28 percent. Only Harford (+30) and Cecil (+2) received more applications from prospective volunteers in Fiscal Year 2024.

Prospective volunteers interviewed: 359. Programs interviewed 77 percent of the prospective volunteers who submitted applications. This is a (34%) decrease from the 543 interviews conducted in Fiscal Year 2023. Only Harford (+24), Anne Arundel County (+3), and Cecil (+2) interviewed more prospective volunteers in Fiscal Year 2024.

2. Training

Pre-service training:

In Fiscal Year 2024, **286** new volunteers completed pre-service training. The number of volunteers trained in Fiscal Year 2024 decreased by 16 percent from Fiscal Year 2023 and is the lowest number in the thirteen years we have been tracking this information. Only four programs had increases in the number of volunteers trained: Baltimore County (+11), Harford County (+7), Mid-Shore (+5), and Howard County (+1).



In-service training (continuing education): CASA programs provided **493** hours of ongoing training to active volunteers. This is a 28% decrease from Fiscal Year 2023. CASA volunteers are required to complete twelve hours of in-service training per year. Many training opportunities are now provided virtually, which has helped to increase attendance.

3. Service

Every CASA program aims 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

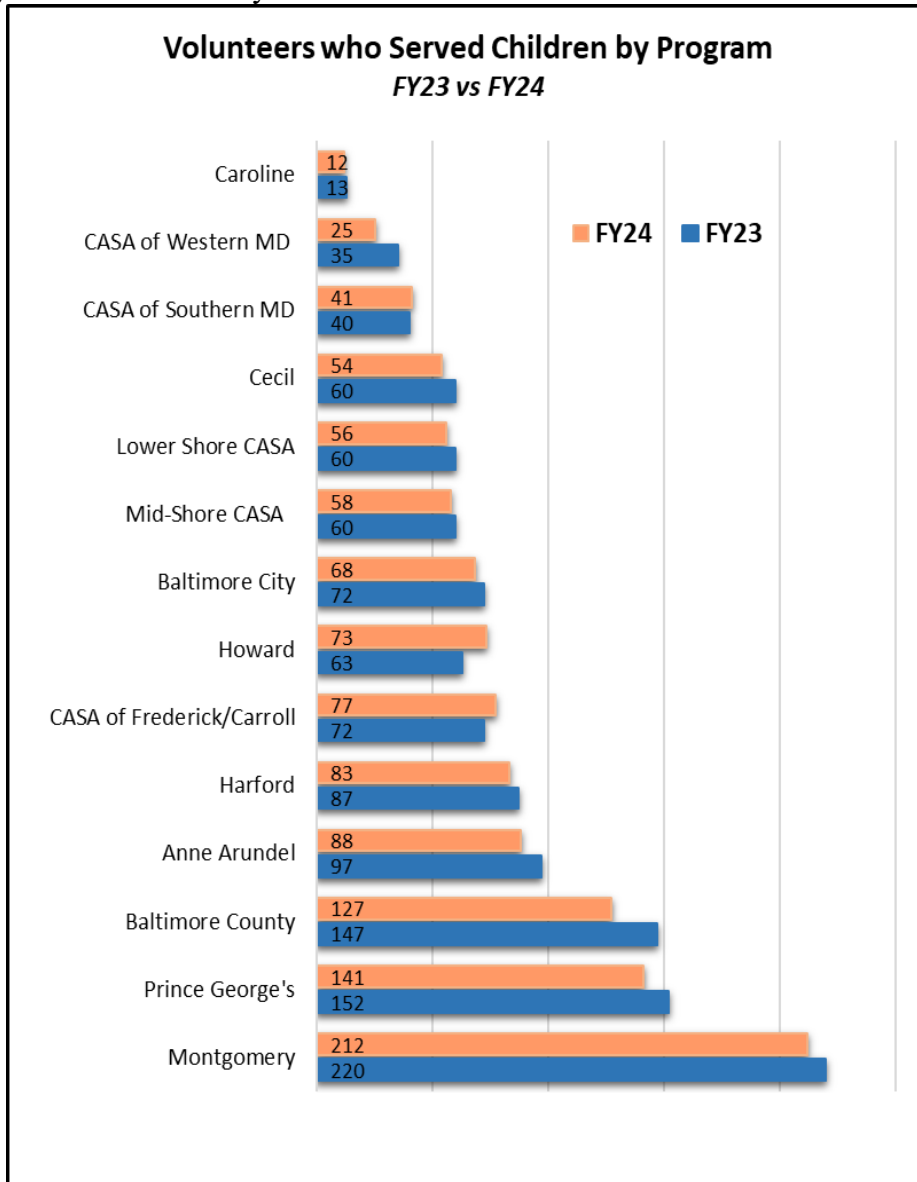
Worcester counties, the programs have provided CASA volunteers for nearly all CINA children. There are exceptions in the case of older youth who may choose not to have a CASA, and youth who have been placed so far away that assigning a volunteer may not be feasible.

Volunteers serving children in FY24: 1,115.

This number includes all volunteers who served children during the year. This number will include volunteers who remain active in addition to volunteers who have left their program. There was a decrease 63 volunteers from Fiscal Year 2023.

Volunteers serving children on the last day of FY24: 903.

Overall, the number of CASA advocates serving children on the last day of Fiscal Year 2024 decreased by 15 over the last day of Fiscal Year 2023.



4. Volunteer Demographics

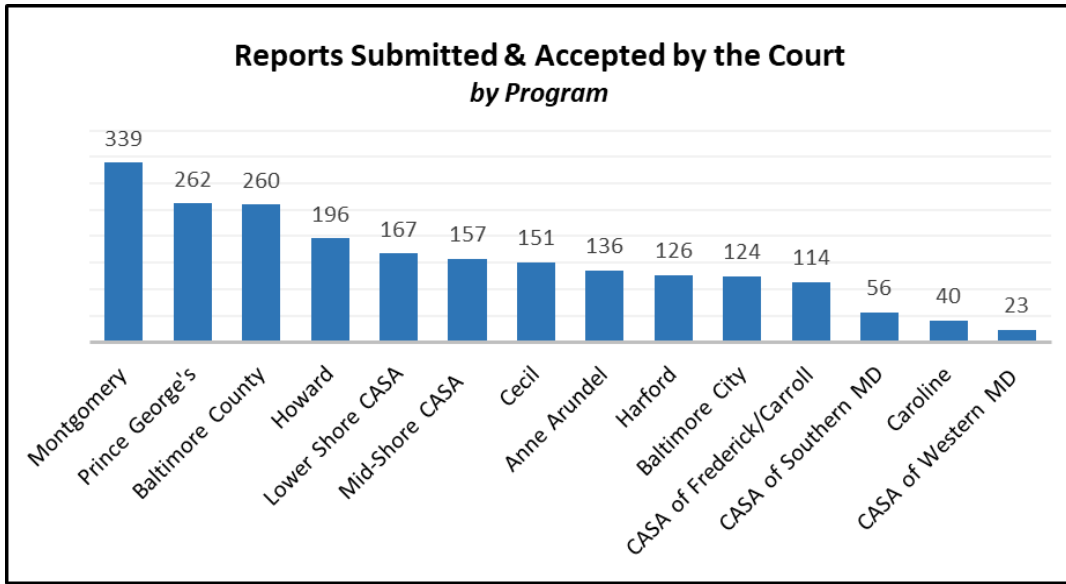
Gender Identity	
Male	14.3%
Female	85.5%
Non-Binary	0.2%
Age	
21-29	9.9%
30-39	18.9%
40-49	16.9%
50-59	21.5%
60 + above	32.8%
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.1%
Asian or Asian American	2.3%
Black or African American	24.1%
Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin	5.1%
Middle Eastern or North African	0.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0%
White	64.4%
Two or More Races and/or Ethnicities	2.7%
Other	0.7%
Education	
High School/GED	3.8%
Some College	7.7%
College	37.1%
Post-Grad	39.5%
Unknown	12.0%
Employment Status	
Full-time	61.0%
Part-time	10.7%
Retired	13.0%
Unemployed	3.1%
Unknown	8.9%
Other	3.4%

5. Advocacy

CASA volunteers advocate in court for the best interests of the children they are assigned to help. 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 CASA program support, the 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. At a minimum, these hearings occur every six months. Many courts schedule more frequent reviews.

Court reports submitted by CASA and accepted by the court: 2,151. This is an increase of 169 reports from Fiscal Year 2023. On average, programs submitted 1.7 reports for each child served in Fiscal Year 2024. On the Eastern Shore, programs submitted a higher number of reports per child: 3.1 reports per child submitted by CASA of Caroline, 2.7 by CASA of the Mid-Shore, and 2.1 by Lower Shore CASA.



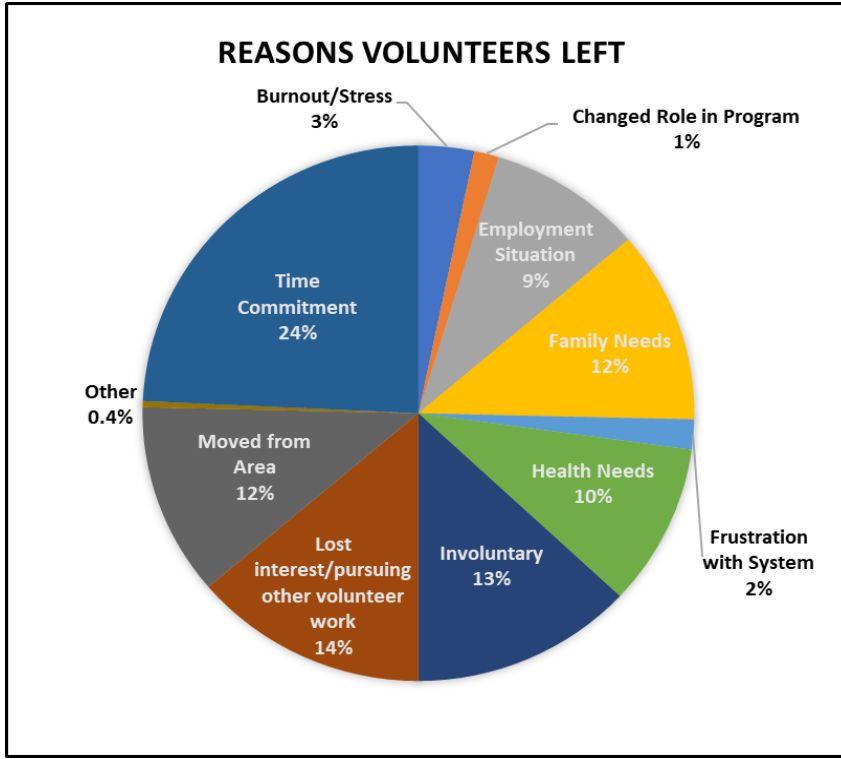
Volunteer rate of attendance at court: 78%. CASA volunteers attended 78 percent of the hearings for which they prepared a report. This rate is often affected by continuances; a volunteer may appear for the initial hearing but be unavailable to attend on the rescheduled date. CASA staff attend all hearings for which the programs have an assigned advocate.

6. 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 **79** 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 programs: 185. This is a decrease of 82 volunteers over Fiscal Year 2023 when 267 volunteers left the programs. “Time commitment” remains the most common reason volunteers left the programs. The volunteer time commitment includes regular visits with the child, meeting with all the people involved in the child’s life, and preparing regular reports for the court. Volunteers often find it difficult to juggle their CASA responsibilities with other obligations.

Many volunteers take a break after their assigned case closes but do not leave the program. At the end of Fiscal Year 2024, the programs reported 182 volunteers “on leave.” In Fiscal Year 2024, 223 experienced volunteers were assigned a second case.



Average length of service (volunteers who left): 24.6 months. Volunteers are required to commit 12 months to serving their assigned child. On average, volunteers who left their program in Fiscal Year 2024 served for two and a half years. At CASA of the Mid-Shore, the average time of service for the five volunteers who left was four years and two months with one volunteer serving for seven and a half years.

B. Children

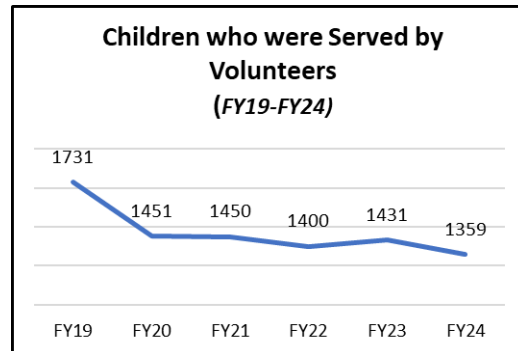
As Maryland’s Department of Human Services focuses on short-term home-based programs designed to preserve and improve family relationships and prevent out-of-home placements for children, the number of children entering the foster care system continues to decline. At the start of calendar year 2024, 3,749 children were in out-of-home placements in Maryland. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#)). This is a decrease of 327 children from the prior year. Approximately 36 percent of children in out-of-home placement received the benefit of CASA advocacy.

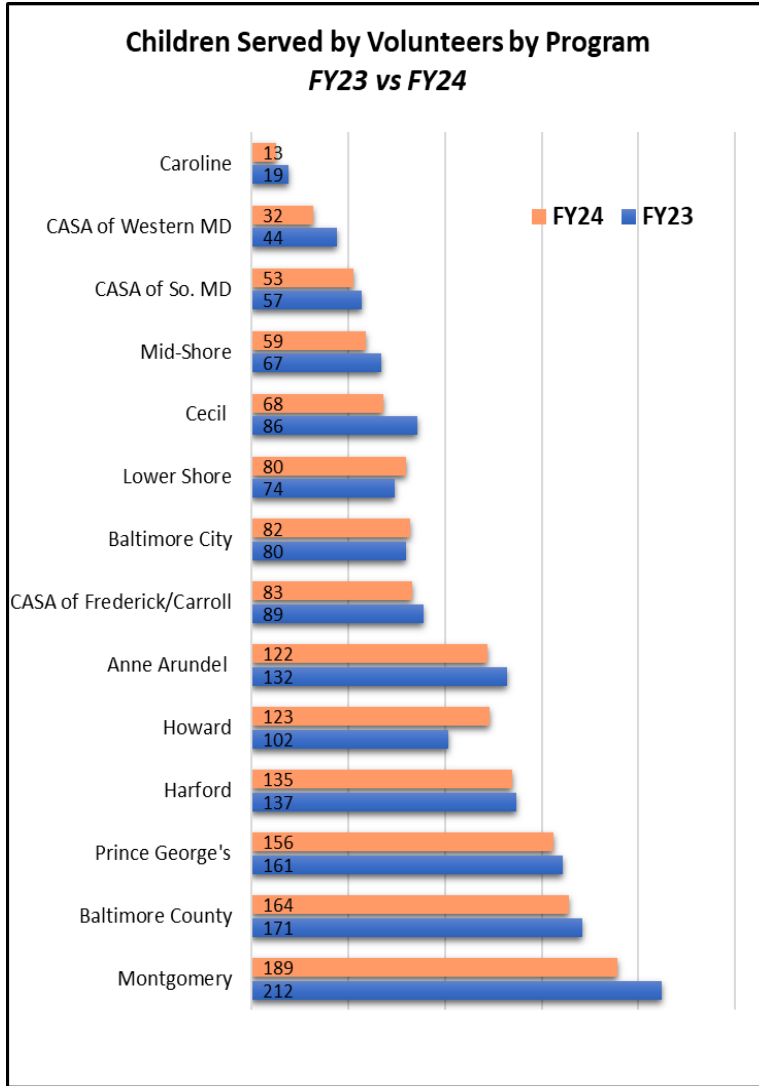
1. Children Served by a Volunteer Advocate in FY24: 1,359

This is a decrease of 72 children from Fiscal Year 2023.

2. Children Being Served by a Volunteer on the Last Day of FY24: 963

This is a decrease of 69 children from Fiscal Year 2023.





3. Details about Children Served in FY24

Nearly 50 percent of children served in Fiscal Year 2024 were 14 years of age 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 to help prepare them to be independent.

Average Age of Children Served by County	
5	Caroline
6	Somerset
7	Kent
8	Dorchester
9	Carroll, Howard, St. Mary's, Worcester
10	Anne Arundel, Charles, Harford
11	Allegany, Cecil
12	Baltimore County, Calvert, Frederick, Talbot
13	Wicomico
14	Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's
16	Baltimore City, Washington

Children Demographics

Gender Identity

Male	50.9%
Female	45.2%
Non-Binary	1.7%
Prefer to Self-Describe	2.2%

Age

Birth to 2	8.3%
3 to 6	15.1%
7 to 13	27.2%
14 to 17	26.6%
18 +	22.9%

Race/Ethnicity

American Indian / Alaska Native	0.0%
Asian / Asian American	1.8%
Black / African American	44.9%
Hispanic / Latino	7.2%
Indian	0.3%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	0.0%
White	31.0%
Two or more races	14.7%

The plan of last resort: Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)

To understand the children CASA is serving beyond the core demographics above, it is helpful to know some additional information about them and the challenges they face. Statewide, 30 percent of children with an assigned volunteer on the last day of Fiscal Year 2024 had a plan of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement “APPLA.” This is a seven percent increase from Fiscal Year 2023. APPLA is the plan assigned to children when all other options have been ruled out. Children with APPLA plans are most likely to age-out to independence without permanency. The programs with the highest rate of APPLA plans are also the programs serving more older youth. Specifically, CASA Prince George’s County (68%), Baltimore City (65%), Queen Anne’s (50%), Washington County (50%), and Baltimore County (42%). The lowest are Calvert, Caroline, and Talbot, each with only one child having an APPLA plan.

Serving children with APPLA plans is generally more challenging. Because these children are most likely to be in foster care until they are twenty-one, it is more likely that they will have more than one CASA volunteer and multiple placements. In these cases, CASA volunteers play an important role in making sure the youth they serve are prepared for independence.

Mental Health Challenges

Thirty-nine percent of youth served in Fiscal Year 2024 had a mental health diagnosis. The highest percentages were found in Harford (89%), Queen Anne’s (73%), and Somerset (63%). CASA volunteers are especially crucial in these cases where children are often being moved from placement to placement, and school to school, and the child’s health history often gets

overlooked if no one is advocating for the child’s treatment needs. CASAs can be critical to ensuring a child’s needs are met as illustrated below in the story of this Montgomery County teen:

CASA Volunteer Jen has been working with 17-year-old Paula* for nearly 4 years. Paula came into care in 2017 due to her guardian not being able to meet her mental health needs. Paula was moved to a new placement in May 2024, which is far from her home school. After the move, Jen discovered that Paula had missed 12 days of school because she wasn’t able to get to school. Jen arranged a meeting with the school counselor, social worker, and placement worker to address Paula’s transportation issues. They made a plan to get Paula to school daily. Since that time, Paula has been attending school every day and is now on track to graduate in May 2025.

**Name has been changed.*

Substance Use Disorder

Of the children served in Fiscal Year 2024, 39 percent had at least one parent whose substance use disorder was a contributing factor to their initial involvement with the Department of Social Services (DSS). This can be difficult for most parents to overcome and becomes a barrier to reunification.

Lack of Local Placements

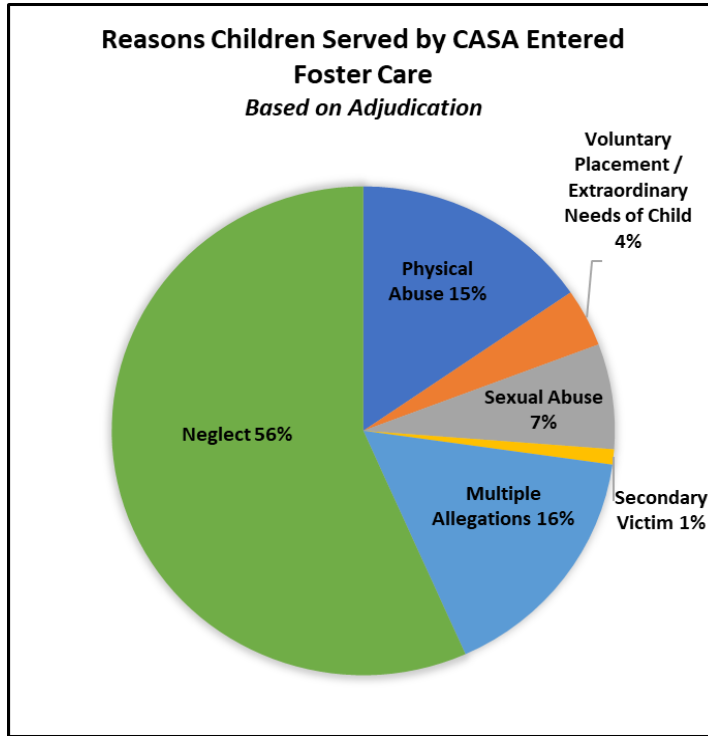
Due to the lack of appropriate placement options in some counties, 36 percent of foster youth served by CASA were placed outside of the jurisdiction from which they were removed. At Mid-Shore CASA, Cecil CASA, Voices for Children of Howard County, and Voices for Children of Montgomery, more than 50% of children served are placed outside of the county of origin. This percentage is also high in Somerset County where 75 percent of youth are placed in other counties. Serving youth placed outside of the program’s county can make it difficult to find and retain volunteers who are able to see the child regularly. Additionally, it can make it difficult for children to maintain ties with their biological family and community.

Pregnant or Parenting

In addition to many of the challenges detailed above, two percent or 40 of the youth served by CASA in Fiscal Year 2024 were either pregnant or parenting their own child. Some of these parents do not have custody of their child, but in many circumstances the parent and child may be placed together. As a CASA appointed to a child who is a parent, the CASA’s primary duty remains to be the best interest of their assigned child.

Reasons for entering care: Neglect is the most-commonly adjudicated reason that children served by CASA enter foster care, accounting for 56 percent of cases in Fiscal Year 2024. “Neglect” includes abandonment and educational/medical/physical neglect. Neglect is commonly the reason children with substance-abusing parents come into care.

In 53 percent of cases that closed in Fiscal Year 2024, CASA was appointed shortly after the case entered the court system, at the adjudication hearing.



5. Case Closures

CASA programs closed **420** cases in Fiscal Year 2024, an increase of 23 cases. Of those, 389 cases were closed by the court, and 31 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.

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 by jurisdiction. Statewide, the average is just over

Average length of time in foster care for closed cases:			
County	# of Closed Cases	Months	Years
Harford	58	39.1	3.3
Prince George's	53	55.1	4.6
Baltimore County	42	44.3	3.7
Lower Shore	39	38.0	3.2
Howard	38	29.2	2.4
Cecil	34	34.0	2.8
Anne Arundel	32	32.0	2.7
Montgomery	31	29.0	2.4
Frederick/Carroll	25	23.0	1.9
Southern Maryland	20	35.6	3.0
Mid-Shore	14	29.6	2.5
Baltimore City	13	99.7	8.3
Western Maryland	13	12.0	1.0
Caroline	8	29.9	2.5
Statewide	420	37.9	3.2

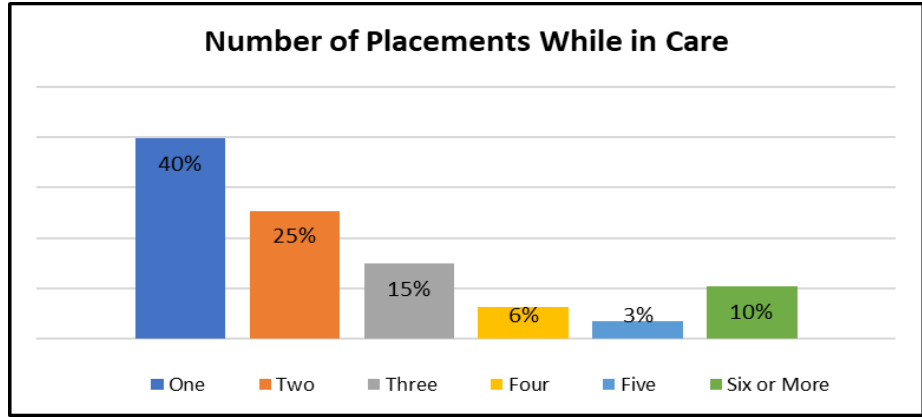
three years, with 186 youth served by CASA spending three years or more in care and thirteen youth spending more than 10 years in foster care. Forty-eight youth spent one year or less in foster care before their case closed.

Placements at Court Closure

At the time their case closed, 80 percent of children served by CASA had lived in three or fewer placements. CASA advocates strive for stability and permanency for all children they serve.

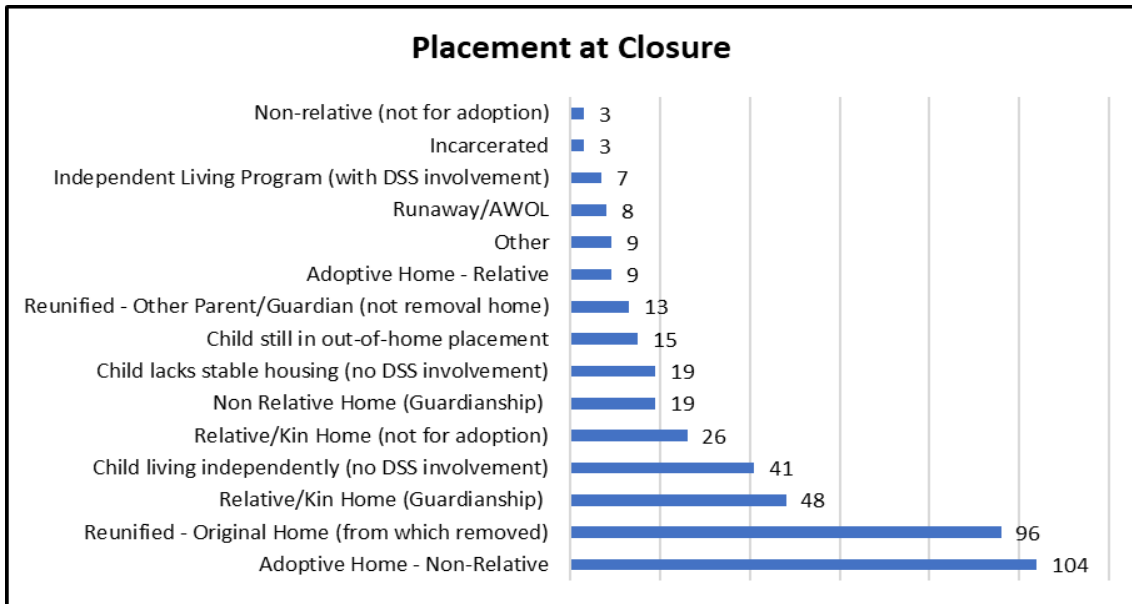
Permanent placements:

In Fiscal Year 2023, 85 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 due to permanency, 50 percent were reunified or placed with family members. Of those reunified with their family, 52 percent went home to their parent(s) and 48 percent went to live with other relatives.

Non-permanent placement: Sixty-four children were living in “non-permanent” living situations at closure. These include twenty-two youth who remained in out-of-home placements or independent living programs through the Department of Social Services with fourteen of these cases remaining open in court. Thirty-five youth were over the age of 18 and were out of contact, had run-away, were living with friends, or were in other unstable housing situations. Five youth were placed in programs for adults with disabilities, and three were incarcerated.



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 2024 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 **20.3 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 eight-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. On average, children assigned earlier, had two placements vs. three placements when assigned after review.
- In Fiscal Year 2024, children assigned to CASA before their case reached the review stage were **more likely to be in a permanent placement** when their case closed. Eighty-eight percent of these children were in a permanent placement when their case closed, with forty-eight percent reunited with a parent or guardian or placed with other family members.

IV. CASA in the Coming Year

As we start a new year, CASA programs continue their efforts to increase their capacity to serve more children. With volunteer recruitment continuing to be a challenge in Maryland and beyond, programs are finding new ways meet their goals. As this report demonstrates, many programs are analyzing their outcomes to be more successful. From recruitment to training to advocate supervision, programs are re-evaluating their operations and adjusting their practices to be more effective. During this exciting time of transition and innovation, JFS will continue to provide training and technical assistance to support the programs' efforts. The Judiciary's continued support will ensure programs are stronger and more able to provide information which aids the courts in making 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 initiatives to (1) promote accountability and public trust, (2) improve access to justice, and (3) encourage a service-oriented approach to court operations. The Maryland Judiciary continues to be a critically important source of funding for CASA programs across Maryland.