



*Providing a Voice for
Abused and Neglected Children*



Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)/ Prince
George's County, Inc.
Annual Report
June 2013-July 2014



CASA's primary work is to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children. Each case is assigned to a CASA volunteer, who takes on the case of only one child at a time, and gathers information used to develop an independent report containing recommendations to the Juvenile Court as to the child's best interest. CASA volunteers are trained and supervised by professional staff that each supervises the work of no more than 30 volunteers to ensure a high level of support and professional services to the children served by CASA volunteers.

In addition to advocating for abused and neglected children, CASA provides additional training and support to our volunteers and staff working with youth preparing for emancipation through our Transitioning Youth Program. Through this program, we are advocating for effective transition planning and ensuring that youth are stably housed and ready to live independently when their cases close.

CASA concluded a three year strategic plan directing the organization to expand to serve additional children and provide our older youth with additional assistance as they prepare to become independent adults. Over the past year, CASA has also conducted an HR project with funding from the National CASA Association to ensure that as we grow our capacity, we build on an efficient and effective foundation. These capacity building projects will result in a strong organization that is well positioned to grow and serve our community.

CASA currently serves approximately 20% of the nearly 600 children living in foster care. CASA feels that all children could benefit from a volunteer as all children need a strong advocate who is consistently on their side. Children in Prince George's County spend an average of 54 months in foster care before being placed in a safe, permanent home. In order to meet the needs of the juvenile court, even more volunteers must be recruited, trained and supported by a professional staff. With your support, we will continue to build our organization until we are able to match every child in need with a CASA.



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Sarah Bosken, Lead Case Supervisor
Kara Bundy, Development Director
Penny Gerber, Program Administrator
Rodi Moore, Program Director
Cheryl Richards, Transitioning Youth Coordinator

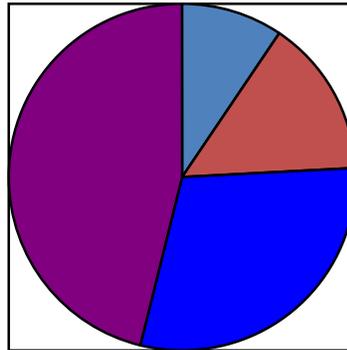
Mission Statement:

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)/ Prince George's County, Inc. is a volunteer-based organization that partners with the juvenile court to improve the lives of abused and neglected children living in foster care. With a strong commitment to diversity, CASA trains and supervises volunteers from the community who advocate for the best interest of children, recognizing and respecting each child's individual needs. By providing a voice to children in the foster care system, it is our goal to promote the timely placement of the children we serve in safe, permanent homes.

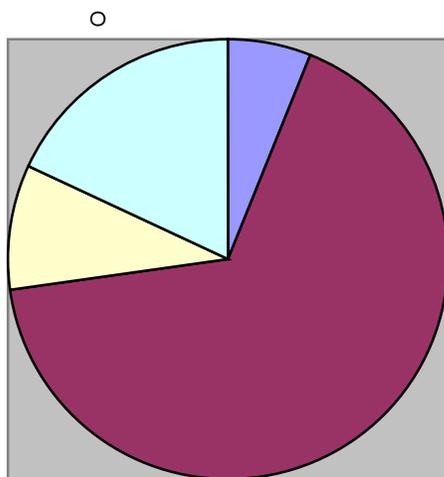
Children and Youth Served, by Age

Who We Serve

- About 20% of children in care in Prince George's County are assigned a CASA
- 58% have a permanency plan of Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (APPLA)
- Though CASA serves children 0-21 years old, 70% of youth served are 12-21 years old



- 1-10 years old
- 11-13 years old
- 14-16 years old
- 17 and up



Cases, by Allegation Type

- Physical Abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual Abuse
- Multiple Allegations

CASA is assigned to the most complicated cases including:

- Multiple forms of abuse or neglect
- Significant medical or mental health needs
- Cases lacking effective communication
- Children who have been in care long-term

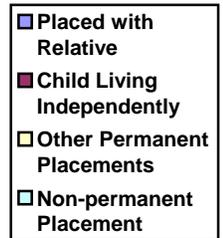
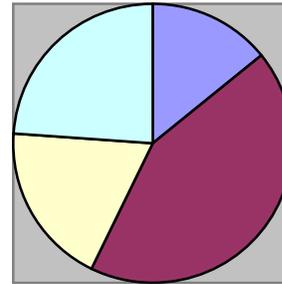
(children to which CASA is assigned spent an average of 54 months in foster care)

Our Volunteers

- New volunteers trained this year= 65
- Number of volunteers who advocated for abused and neglected children= 141
- Average length of service= 24 months
- 40% of the time volunteers spent on their case was spent with the children to whom they were assigned. The remaining 60% was spent in treatment team meetings, court hearings, education planning sessions or coordinating services or visitation

Case Closures

The Case Closure chart (see chart on right) illustrates the fact that the majority of cases to which we are assigned are youth who are preparing to transition out of foster care to national trend that we expect to continue for the foreseeable future. However, CASAs continue to work towards finding a permanent placement, regardless of the plan. CASA advocates for “Family Finding” and has assisted the Department of Social Services in their Relative Locator efforts, increasing the overall success rate resulting in more children being placed in a safe, permanent home as quickly as possible. For those youth who are not placed in a permanent home before they age out of the system, CASA is working hard to make sure they have safe, stable housing when their cases close. In the first year of our Transitioning Youth Program, 79% of the youth whose cases closed were stably housed whereas many youth without a CASA are homeless or living in unsafe or unstable living arrangements when their cases close.



Non-permanent placement refers to unstable placements such as when a child has run away or is incarcerated or when a youth who has transitioned to independence is living with an inappropriate relative, against the Court's recommendation.

Accomplishments

- 82% of CASA recommendations made to the court were ordered
- 142 children were served; 97 families were served (some families have multiple siblings assigned to a CASA)
- Experienced continued success with the Transitioning Youth program, helping youth prepare to transition successfully to independence when their case closes.
 - 21 volunteers received Fostering Futures training
 - Pre-service curriculum was revised to include Fostering Futures training so that all volunteers are prepared to address needs of transitioning youth
 - 79% of youth were in stable housing at the closure of their case
 - Program was sustained through investments from the National CASA Association and Wells Fargo to continue to address the unique needs of this population

An Example of our Impact

*The five Thompson children came into foster care several years ago. They had all been severely abused by their father while their mother remained silent and the mother was in such deep denial that she did not understand why she was being penalized for her role in the abuse. Several CASA volunteers were assigned to the case and worked together to advocate for sibling and family visits and for services for everyone, including mom. Through therapy and hard work, mom now understands her role and has re-dedicated herself to her children, spending one-on-one time with each of them every day to ensure that they have an open line of communication. The children are now living with mom and are looking forward to spending the holidays with **their family, at home.***

Financials

Income:

Government Grants	\$248,607
United Way/CFC	\$4,528
Events	\$7,083
Individuals and Foundations	\$68,737

Total Income: \$328,955

Total Expenses: \$413,743

Difference: **-\$86,309**



FY14 provided several challenges and opportunities for CASA. Due to starting the year with a deficit and anticipated grants that were not awarded, in the 3rd quarter it was identified that there would be a budget shortfall. At the same time, CASA had the opportunity to move to a larger space that would accommodate staff and provide for the private offices that best practices require due to the confidential nature of our work. CASA also participated in several strategic capacity building projects. With sound management by the Board and Executive Director, CASA was able to weather the shortfall without any lay-offs and has started FY15 in the black.

CASA thanks all of our sponsors for making what we do possible!

Government Sponsors

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Council Member Eric Olson
Governor's Office on Crime Control and Prevention: Children's Justice Act ,Victims of Crime Act
Prince George's County Department of Housing and Community Development

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National CASA Association
Prince George's County Bar Association
Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Washington
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Singh Taneja
Thomas Hendershot
William and Kara Bundy

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The Foundation of Hope is a CASA donor leadership circle. Foundation of Hope members make it possible for CASA to truly have an impact in our community by investing at least \$500 per year to provide a voice for abused and neglected children.

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