

2017 |



Washington CASA

Advocacy Report

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January 31, 2018

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the first Washington State CASA Outcomes Report. The report demonstrates the impact of a CASA volunteer in the life of abused and neglected children in Washington State's dependency system.

Why a CASA Outcomes Project?

CASA has struggled for years to find a way to successfully measure its impact on the Children served. CASA is good at measuring/reporting outputs, such as the number of volunteers, number of children served, number of staff, etc. Our qualitative data, however, has mainly been limited to individual stories shared by CASA volunteers about how their advocacy impacted the child for whom they advocated. But how we measure and answer the collective "so what?" of CASA's impact on the kids we serve is severely lacking — and not just here in Washington State, but nationally as well.

As you know, funders — both public and private — really want to know their return when they invest in any social service program, and CASA is no different. If CASA is going to remain as a critical and relevant social service in the years to come, we need a better way of explaining our impact on more than just a case-by-case or story-by-story basis.

The Inspiration of the CASA Outcomes Project

Two years ago, I attended a CASA state director's meeting where I met the director of Colorado CASA. They, too, were trying to figure out a way to measure their CASA outcomes and were equally frustrated with National CASA's slow progress to lead this effort. To address this, they developed a way to have their CASA volunteers complete a very basic survey after each court hearing including data measurements that were already being collected by Colorado's DSHS system as part of their federal Children and Family Service Review process. While this method does not *measure the impact* of those children with a CASA volunteer versus those without a CASA volunteer, it does provide a way to *measure the outcomes* of children with a CASA versus the outcomes of the entire population of children in Colorado's dependency system.

The Development of the CASA Outcomes Project

Washington State CASA invited the Colorado CASA program director to present at our 2016 Fall Program Manager's Meeting. Colorado CASA explained their process, and we invited Washington State CASA program managers who were interested in pursuing a similar project here.

From there, a group of approximately 10 CASA staff from around the state met over the next several months. We conducted a small pilot project with a group of volunteers from King and Pierce Counties; we asked volunteers to complete surveys immediately following any 6-month

review hearing. However, we determined that this method was probably going to take longer to get up and running (and with a higher degree of volunteer coordinator coordination) than anticipated.

From here, we explored additional options, specifically looking at where other organizations and groups have found success in large scale data collection. We discovered that there was one in our own backyard: the counting of homeless youth. Every January, a group of volunteers does a census of all the homeless youth they can find on the streets in King County, known as the “One Night Count.”

The CASA program committee thought a similar approach might be a strategy for CASA to employ while bringing the Outcomes Project online. It would be similar in that it would provide a “point-in-time” measure, but different in that it would measure outcomes, rather than just outputs (such as the number of children served).

Washington’s Initial CASA Outcomes Project: Day of Data

After some slight modifications to the survey (Appendix A), Washington held its first ever “Day of Data” collection during the last week of September 2017. CASA volunteers were invited to fill out the survey for each child for whom they advocated for during the previous 6 months.

Leading up to this, we featured the data collection project heavily in our newsletter, website and on social media encouraging local CASA programs to do the same.

To compile the data, we contracted with an independent consultant, Dr. Alicia Summers, formerly of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and who is now in private practice.

The outcomes of the Day of Data are attached as Appendix A.

Day of Data and Beyond

As this is the first ever report of its kind here in Washington, our intention is to use this report as a baseline for future “Day of Data” samplings to be conducted annually at a minimum. The information obtained from this first report will be shared at upcoming CASA Program Managers’ meetings and used to design more effect trainings for our CASA volunteers and staff. Ultimately, by using the lessons learned from this data, CASA will promote better outcomes for the children and families we serve.

I hope you find this report beneficial in obtaining a better understanding of the collective impact that CASA volunteers have on Washington State’s dependent children. And a special

thank you to all the 1500 CASA volunteers who dedicate countless hours advocating for over 6,000 youth in 2017. This report could not have been made without you.

Sincerely,

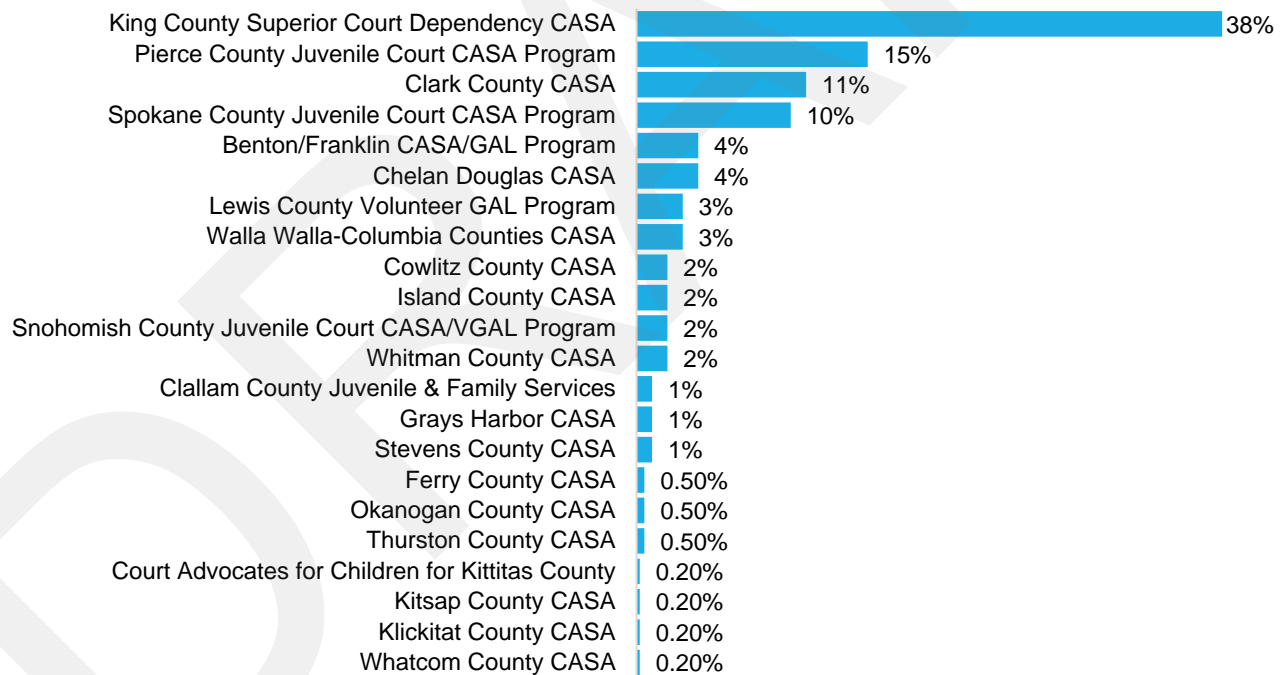
Ryan Murrey
Executive Director
Washington State CASA

Washington CASA Advocacy Report (2017)

Introduction

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers were asked to enter data on their current cases into an online CASA Survey. The survey asked a series of questions about children the CASA represent, including visitation, well-being, placement, and education related information. CASA completed the survey between September 24th and September 30, 2017. A total of 635 entries, representing 635 unique children involved in the foster care system, were made by CASA across the state of Washington. Twenty-two counties were represented in the survey, with the highest percentage (38%) from King County.

CASA Volunteer Jurisdiction

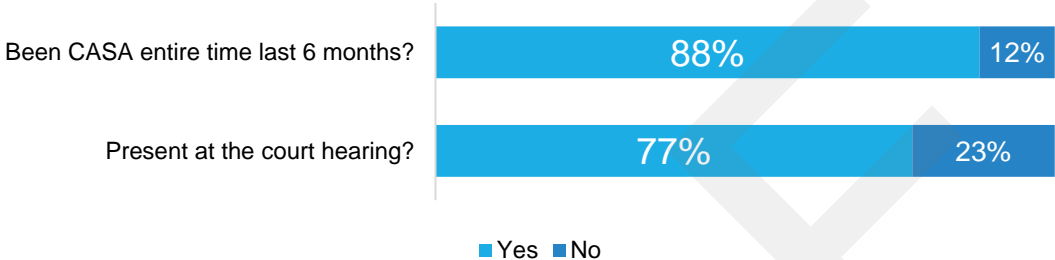


The survey asked CASA volunteers to identify the child's most recent review hearing and reflect on the child's status of this date. The review hearings identified ranged from 18 months ago to occurring the week of data collection. The questions focused on child's placement, visitation, education and general well-being. A summary of responses is presented below.

Findings

CASA were asked if they were present at the most recent court hearing and if they have been the CASA the entire time for the last 6 months. The majority 88% indicated that they had been the CASA for the entirety of the last 6 months. Just over three quarters (77%) indicated that they were present at the most recent court hearing.

CASA Assignment and Presence



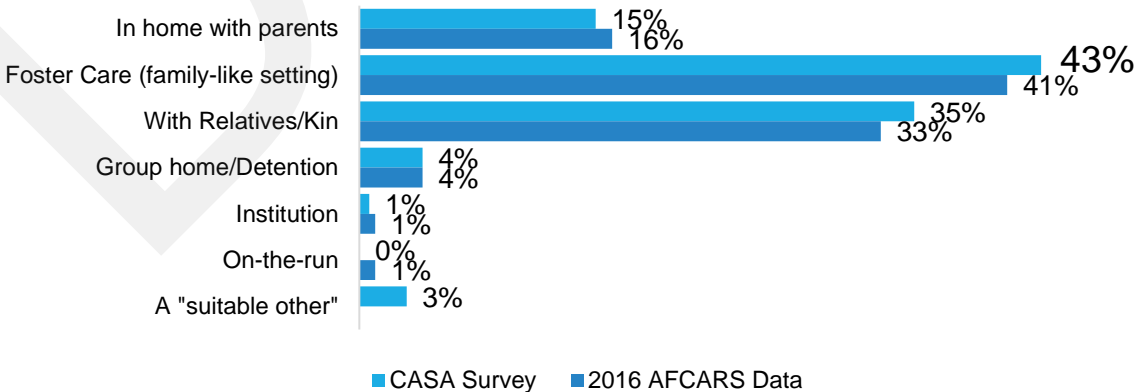
83% of CASAs reported that the child had not reunified with their parents in the last six months.

91% reported no additional findings of re-abuse or neglect in the past 6 months.

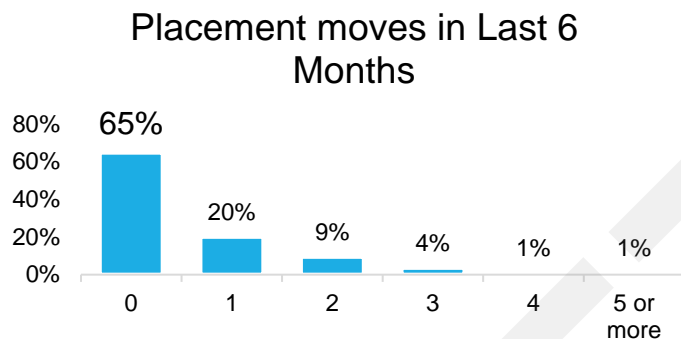
Placement & Visitation

A series of questions asked about child's placement and visitation with the mother, father, and siblings on the case. The data collected was compared to statewide data from the 2016 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). The CASA Survey data is consistent with the national data trends for placement type. As illustrated in the graph below, the most common placement type is Foster Care with a non-relative.

Child's Placement

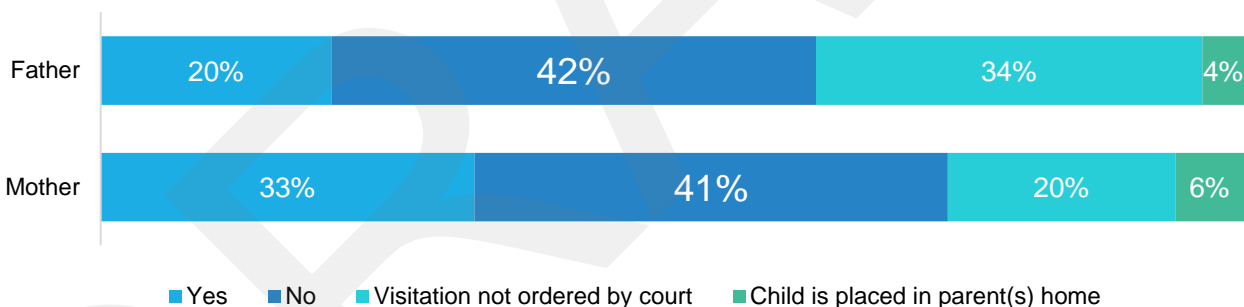


The survey also asked about the number of placement moves in the last 6 months. The majority of children (65%) had not moved placement.

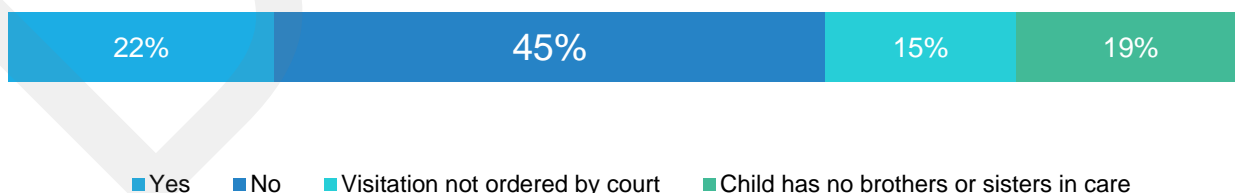


The survey also asked if the child has maintained consistent visits with parents and siblings in the last six months. As noted in the graphs for visits with mothers and fathers, the most common response was No (42%, 41% & 45% respectively for fathers, mothers, and sibling). These data indicate that *when visitation is applicable, only approximately one third (33%) of children are maintaining consistent visits with their siblings or father*. For mothers, this number is a little higher. Of those ordered visitation and not placed at home, mothers visit consistently about 44% of the time. The data also indicate that father visits are more likely **not** to be ordered (34%) than sibling (15%) or mother visits (20%).

Maintained Consistent Visits with Parent in Last 6 Months



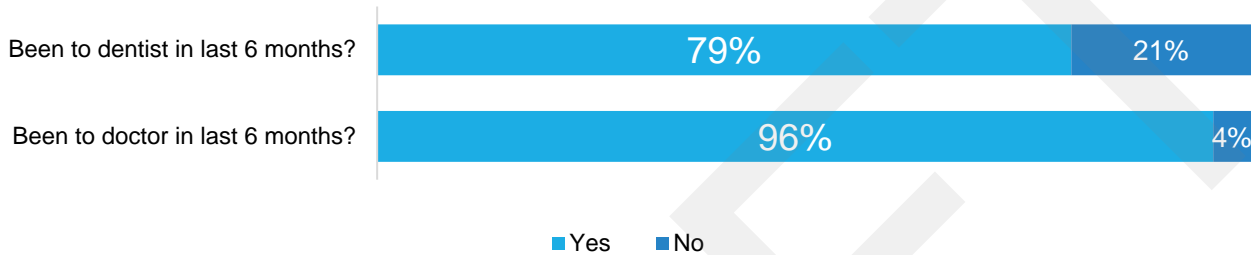
Maintained Sibling Visits in Last 6 Months



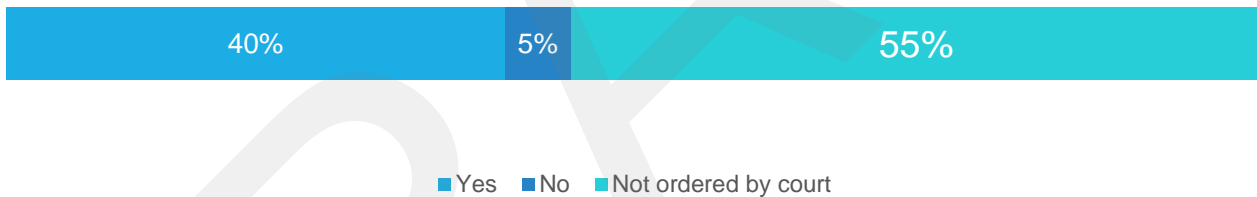
Health & Well-being

The CASA survey asked about child's health and wellbeing. In particular the survey asked about participation in services with the last 6 months. The majority of children has been to the dentist (79%) and to the doctor (96%) in the last 6 months.

Child Health Visits



If court ordered Counseling/Mental Health Services, is it being provided?

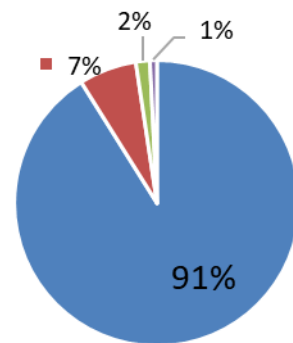


In addition to general wellbeing the survey asked about mental health. The majority of youth (55%) were not ordered to go to mental health counseling by the court. Of those who were ordered, the vast majority were being provided services.

The survey also asked about psychotropic medication use. Ninety-one percent of youth were not reported to be on any psychotropic meds. Seven percent were on one psychotropic med and 3% were on two or more.

In addition, CASAs reported that only 4% of youth had runaway from placement in the last 6 months and only 1% had been adjudicated on any juvenile offenses in the past 6 months.

Number of Psychotropic Meds Child is Currently On

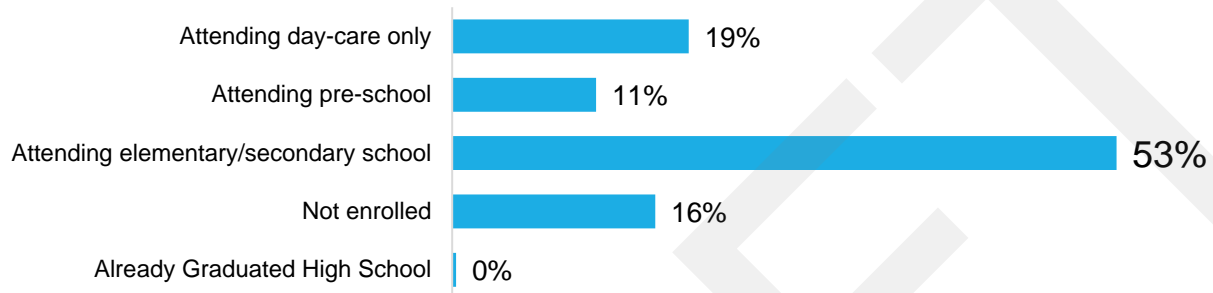


Legend: 0 (blue), 1 (red), 2 (green), 3 or more (purple)

Education

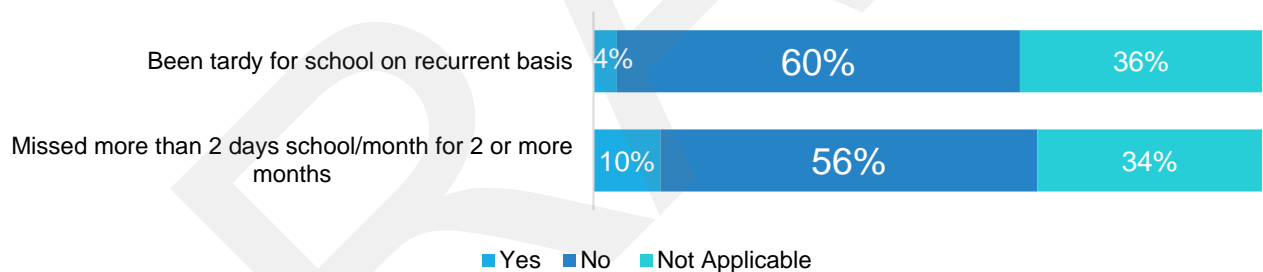
A final set of questions asked about the child's current education. 53% of youth were reported to be attending elementary/secondary school at the time of the survey.

Child's Current Education Setting



The survey also asked about absences and being tardy from school. As noted in the graph below, only a small portion of youth had been tardy for school on a recurrent basis or missed more than 2 days of school/month for more than two months.

Education: Has the Child....



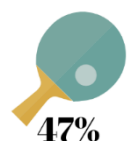
The survey also asked about school specific information. Of those in school, 99% of the CASA indicated that the child(ren) they work with had a reliable way to get to school.

Of the school-aged children, CASA reported that 93% of the youth they served were on track to be promoted to the next grade level or to graduate.



When asked about current IEP/504 plans, CASA reported that 37% of youth were not applicable for this. Of those applicable, only 43% have a current IEP/504 plan.

Finally, the survey asked about youth's participation in extracurricular activities. CASA reported that 47% participate in extracurricular activities.



Conclusions

The data collected for this report illustrate a point in time snapshot of the youth that CASA serve in Washington State. The data can and should be used as a discussion point to explore outcomes for children served by CASA. It is important to note that the data collected and the findings in this report cannot show any causal relationship to having a CASA. That is, you cannot say that CASA caused outcomes in the youth. Rather, this data provides some descriptive measures of what the youth who are served by CASA look like, in terms of their placement, general well-being, and education. The survey is a good starting point to begin collecting data on children in care and allow CASA an opportunity to reflect both on their practice and the youth that they serve. As discussions of the findings evolve, it is important to consider what other useful information could be gained from a reflective survey such as this and how the data may be used to look for trends in current practice. A few additions/changes to enhance the quality of the survey and increase the robustness of the data analyses are suggested below.

1. Ask how many **total placements** the youth has been in (not just in the last 6 months). This makes the data comparable to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System allows for statewide comparison between the CASA sample and the entire state.
2. Ask the CASA to report on the **age of the child**. This can help provide additional context regarding the population served as well as help to determine when educational outcomes should be not applicable.
3. Ask the CASA **at what point in the case they were appointed** for this youth. Response options could be reported in months from the start of the case.
4. Ask the CASA how **frequently they visit** the youth. This can be used as a practice measure to look at relationships between practice and outcomes.
5. Ask the CASA to report on **recently closed cases** to get a better sense of outcomes. This could include reporting on how long the case was open and what the ultimate outcome was for the child (e.g., reunification, adoption, etc.). Again, this data can be used for comparative purposes.

DAY OF DATA CASA Survey!

Your First Name *

Your Last Name *

Your Email

Your Program *

Child's Legal/Court Case Number

Date of last Court hearing *

Were you (the CASA) present for the court hearing? *

- Yes
- No

Have you been the CASA for the child over the entirety of the past 6 months?

- Yes
- No

1. Has the child been reunified with his/her parents in the past 6 months?

- Yes
- No

2. Have there been any additional findings of re-abuse or neglect in the past 6 months?

- Yes
- No

3. What is the child's current placement?

- In home with parents
- Foster Care (family-like setting)
- With Relatives/Kin
- Group/Congregate Care
- Group Care
- Detention
- Hospital or Treatment Center
- On-the-run
- A "Suitable Other"

4. Has the child maintained consistent visitation with his/her parent as ordered by the court over the past 6 months?

- Yes
- No

- Visitation not ordered by court
- Child in placed in parent(s) home

5. Has the child maintained consistent visitation with his/her siblings as ordered by the court over the past 6 months?

- Yes
- No
- Visitation not ordered by court
- Child has no brothers or sisters in care

6. How many times has the child moved placements over the past 6 months?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

7. Has the child been to the doctor in the past 6 months?

- Yes
- No

8. Has the child been to the dentist in the past 6 months?

- Yes
- No

9. If the court ordered counseling or mental health services for the child, is the service being provided?

- Yes
- No
- Not ordered by court

10. How many psychotropic medications is the child currently on?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3 or more

11. Which of the following best describes the current education setting for the child?

- Attending day-care only
- Attending pre-school
- Attending elementary/secondary school
- Not enrolled
- Already Graduated High School

12. Over the past 6 months, has the child missed more than more than 2 days of school / month for 2 months or more?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

13. Over the past 6 months, has the child been tardy (late) for school on a recurrent basis?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

14. Does the child have a reliable way to get to and from school each day?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

15. Is the youth on track to be promoted to the next grade level / graduate?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

16. Does the child have a current IEP / 504 plan?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

17. Does the child participate in any extra-curricular activities?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

18. Has the youth run away from placement during the past 6 months?

- Yes
- No

19. Has the youth been adjudicated on any juvenile offenses in the past six months?

- Yes
- No

20. What is the date of the next review hearing? *