



Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention

COURT-APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

PERFORMANCE REPORT

January-June 2018

ENHANCING SAFETY • ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY • EMPOWERING YOUTH

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INTRODUCTION

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) administers the Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program to ensure abused and neglected children receive high-quality representation in dependency court hearings; improve outcomes for children and dually-involved youth in the dependency system; provide effective advocacy for abused and neglected children; and build community capacity to support cultural diversity and competency. To achieve these goals, OJJDP funds one grantee, the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (NCASA). NCASA is a national membership organization of state and local CASA organizations. NCASA supplies members with training curriculum, technical assistance, quality standards, and pass-through funding.¹ OJJDP funding supports NCASA's training and technical assistance (TTA), resource development, and membership accreditation activities. Additionally, NCASA subgrants OJJDP funding to member organizations to strengthen state networks and to support efforts to recruit and train volunteer advocates; manage state and local CASA programs; and strengthen organizational capacity.

OJJDP requires NCASA and its subgrantees to regularly report on performance measures to demonstrate the impact of OJJDP funding. This report presents the results of NCASA and its subgrantees' activities occurring between January–June 2018. The total funding available exceeded \$20 million.

922

Active local CASA programs



62,925

Children served by local CASA programs

27%

Children who received services for the first time



15%

New volunteer advocates recruited

76%

Children who left foster care to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship



\$20.2

Total Funding (in millions)

NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER ACTIVITIES

OJJDP funding supports NCASA activities benefitting member organizations and subgrantee activities. NCASA activities include training state and local CASA program staff and volunteer advocates; leading national campaigns to recruit volunteer advocates; and giving members technical assistance to increase the number of children matched with an advocate. Subgrantees' activities include recruiting volunteer advocates and delivering and expanding state and local CASA services. The performance measures presented below highlight the results of both sets of activities.

¹ National Court Appointed Special Advocates Association. Organizational Profile. http://www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtJSJ7MP1sE/b.5453887/k.7340/Organizational_Profile.htm

SUPPORT OF LOCAL COURT-APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE PROGRAMS

NCASA uses OJJDP funding to award subgrants to state and local CASA member organizations to maintain existing services and to expand the number of local CASA programs available in communities across the country. Subgrants supported 922 active local CASA programs and the implementation of four new local programs (figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of new and existing local CASA programs



NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES ASSOCIATION PROGRAM STAFF/VOLUNTEER ADVOCATES TRAINED

In collaboration with OJJDP, NCASA develops training resources to support existing state and local CASA organizations and to target new state and local CASA programs serving communities with low representation rates, high numbers of abused and neglected children, and gaps in family and children’s services. Member organization training includes volunteer recruitment and retention; data collection and reporting; and national quality standards. NCASA also trains volunteer advocates. Training topics for volunteer advocates include the needs of children with a history of abuse and neglect, the child welfare and dependency court systems, and effective advocacy. During the activity period, NCASA had a total of 87,865 program staff/volunteers/advocates and 4,151 program staff or other relevant volunteers/advocates participated in training (figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of program staff or other relevant volunteers/advocates trained



VOLUNTEER ADVOCATES RECRUITED

OJJDP funds support national recruitment campaigns coordinated by NCASA to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect and communicate the positive impact of volunteer advocates on these children’s lives. During the activity period, state and local CASA programs successfully recruited over 5,000 new volunteers, resulting in a total of 33,374 volunteers available to advocate for children involved in dependency court (figure 3).

Figure 3. Percentage of new volunteer advocates

15% NEW volunteer advocates

5,104/33,374

PROGRAM DIVERSITY

A key goal of OJJDP’s CASA program is to increase the diversity of volunteer advocates and match children with a volunteer from a similar racial, ethnic, or cultural background. Based on the data presented in figure 4, nationally, victims of child abuse and neglect would benefit from additional volunteer advocates from African American, Native American, Multiracial, and Hispanic/Latino communities. Collectively, local CASA programs saw improvements in the number of African-American advocates recruited, with an increased ratio from 1:5 to 1:3 compared to the previous activity period. Local CASA programs experienced a decrease in the number of Hispanic/Latino advocates involved nationally. Compared to the previous activity period, the ratio of Hispanic/Latino volunteer advocates to Hispanic/Latino children decreased from 1:2 to 1:3. Recruiting more Multiracial and Native American volunteers represents the largest need.

Table 4. Diversity Matrix

Race/Ethnicity/ Cultural Group	Number of Volunteer Advocates ²	Number of Children	Ratio Volunteers : Children
African American	5,280	15,573	1:3
Asian/Pacific Islander	485	250	1:1
Caucasian/Non-Latino	24,385	34,143	1:1
Hispanic/Latino	1,782	6,097	1:3
Multiracial ³	608	4,487	1:12
Native American	145	1,103	1:7
Other ⁴	0	0	0:0
Do not know	1,410	2,274	1:2
Total	34,051	63,627	1:2

CHILD AND YOUTH OUTCOMES

Research indicates that representation by a volunteer advocate improves the lives of children involved in the dependency court system. The goals of OJJDP’s CASA program are to increase the number of children matched with a volunteer advocate, keep children safe, and increase the number of children who exit a state and local CASA program to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship. The performance measures below highlight the success of state and local CASA programs awarded subgrants from NCASA in meeting these goals.

² Adults may be self-identified.

³ Multiracial is selected if a person identifies in more than one group.

⁴ Count of people who identified in all other racial, ethnic, or cultural groups.

CHILDREN SERVED

NCASA subgrants support the ability of state and local CASA programs to provide abused and neglected children with a volunteer advocate. Between January–June 2018, state and local CASA programs served a total of 62,925 children. Additionally, funding supports recruitment activities to increase the number of children served in a CASA program. Twenty-seven percent of the children served ($n = 16,771$) received services for the first time.

16,771

Children Receiving
Services for the First Time

SUBSTANTIATED/INDICATED CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT

State and local CASA subgrantees served 62,925 youth during the activity period, all reported as victims of substantiated child abuse or neglect. Youth ending services 6–12 months before the activity period experienced a drastic reduction in substantiated child abuse or neglect.⁵ Of the 17,250 youth who ended services 6–12 months prior to January–June 2018, only 3 percent experienced a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect ($n = 475$). The small percentage could stem from the challenges with tracking youth long-term and not reflect the true instances of long-term child abuse or neglect experienced by the youth served.

Figure 4. Substantiated/Indicated child abuse or neglect

100%

of children with substantiated child abuse or neglect reports in the **SHORT-TERM**

62,925/62,925

3%

of children with substantiated child abuse or neglect reports in the **LONG-TERM**

475/17,250

CHILDREN WHO EXITED CASA PROGRAMS TO REUNIFICATION, ADOPTION, OR LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP

OJJDP's CASA program encourages permanent placement for children removed from the home by the dependency system because of abuse and neglect. Reunification is preferred, followed by adoption and legal guardianship. Reunification requires parental engagement and progress in meeting case goals. NCASA guidelines advocate for kinship care or adoption if a parent cannot safely care for a child, reunification is not in the child's best interest, or the court sanctions permanent legal separation from the birth family. Relative or non-relative

14,634

CASA children
left foster care



76%

11,141 children left foster care to
reunification, adoption, or
legal guardianship

⁵ Short-term is defined as an unduplicated count of the number of children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect served during the activity period. Long-term refers to an unduplicated count of the number of youth who were victims of substantiated or indicated abuse and/or neglect who ended services 6–12 months before the current activity period.

adoption requires termination of parental rights. Permanent guardianships could be granted to a relative or non-relative if adoption is not in the child’s best interest. Guardianships do not sever birth parents’ rights and responsibilities and maintain the bond and connections between child and family.⁶ Of the number of youth who exited state and local CASA programs, 76 percent ($n = 11,141$) exited to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship, an 11 percent increase from the previous 6 months.⁷ The data does not include children who aged out of the child welfare system before obtaining permanency.

CONCLUSION

Involvement in the child welfare system is daunting and traumatic for child victims of abuse and neglect, with a lasting impact on their emotional, educational, and social development. OJJDP’s CASA program strives to improve the outcomes for children in the dependency system by increasing the number of children represented by a volunteer advocate and increasing the number of children exiting to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship. OJJDP achieved its goals by funding NCASA’s delivery of TTA and subgrants to local and state CASA organizations to provide children with a volunteer advocate.

OJJDP awarded NCASA a total of \$20,244,360 over the activity period. During the January–June 2018 activity period, NCASA trained 4,151 program staff and/or volunteer advocates. Subgrantees served 62,925 children, with 27 percent receiving volunteer advocacy services for the first time. The long-term impact of state and local CASA programs resulted in only 3 percent of youth exiting programs 6–12 months prior to the activity period with a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect. Additionally, of the youth who exited state and local CASA programs, 76 percent exited to reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship; an 11 percent increase over the previous 6 months.

⁶ Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocates, Inc. (February 2018). *Path to Permanency: Practical Considerations for CASA*.
<https://www.gacasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Path-to-Permanency.pdf>

⁷ Overview of the PMT Data for Court-Appointed Special Advocates Program Grants: July–December 2017.
<https://ojjdppmt.ojp.gov/help/CASAJulDec2017.pdf>