

Research Summary



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS
CENTER FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN
& THE COURTS

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Court Appointed Special Advocates and the Courts: An Assessment

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a volunteer from the community who serves as an advocate for a child in the foster care system. The CASA is appointed by the juvenile court judge and works with the child, parents, foster parents, school personnel, and others to advocate for the child in court.

At the end of 2007, approximately 81,000 of the 10 million children in California were in foster care. At the same time, about 3,600 CASA volunteers were actively assisting about 5,000 dependent children in California. Most of those 5,000 children with CASAs were living in private foster homes or group homes, but about one-quarter were living at home or in kin placements. It is safe to say from these data that no more than 5 percent of California's foster children are being assisted by a CASA at any given time. Meanwhile, the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care has recommended that CASA programs be developed and expanded to all California counties in order to make available CASA volunteers for all foster children and that state funding for CASA programs be expanded to allow for appointments in all cases – in other words, for the 95 percent of foster children who do not currently have the benefit of CASA advocacy.

In order to inform this recommendation for expansion, this Research Summary brings together several sources of information, including new research conducted specifically for the purposes of assessing the current state of CASA programs in California, and makes suggestions for sustained CASA program growth in the coming years.

The CASA assessment was carried out in 2008 by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Center for Families, Children & the Courts (CFCC) with assistance from Sphere Research and the California CASA Association. The assessment was designed to develop a better understanding of how CASAs serve judicial officers and the juvenile court, the role CASAs play in the lives of children, the services provided by CASAs statewide, the needs of juvenile courts for CASAs, and the cost of expanding CASA programs.

The data for the assessment was collected through surveys of CASA program directors and volunteers; special site visit interviews and focus groups with judges, directors, volunteers, community partners, dependent youth, and volunteer supervisors; program quarterly reports to funders; and triennial oversight visits. A more complete description of the assessment methodology is found at the end of this summary.

I. Key Findings

Highlights of the findings from surveys, interviews, and focus groups include the following:

CASAs serve the most vulnerable children.

- The proportion of teenagers served by CASAs is higher than the proportion of teens in the foster care system overall.
- Almost one-third of children served by CASAs live in group homes and other institutional settings.

CASAs are trusted by children, judicial officers and other system partners.

- Dependent youth and others in the juvenile justice system who were interviewed usually saw CASAs as trusted advocates. CASAs were routinely described as being the most stable adult presence in the cases and the best source of information about the children, playing an important role in bringing the children into court.
- Judicial officers in particular described CASAs as providing timely, accurate information through well-written reports and court appearances, to help the judicial officers make decisions and assess whether their orders are being followed.
- Extensive training of CASA volunteers and regular oversight by CASA staff are essential to developing and managing the CASA-child relationship and presenting the information gained from that relationship to the court.
- CASAs have a unique role that neither duplicates nor replaces other services in the dependency system. Key aspects of that role are the individual attention CASAs give their children, the volunteer status of CASAs, and the independence of CASA programs.

The CASA program statewide is not growing.

- The number of children with CASA volunteers has not grown appreciably in the past five years. Program growth has been hindered by executive director turnover and a lack of focus on strategic planning.

The CASA program statewide needs to become more demographically representative.

- White children make up one-quarter of the foster care population but one-third of the population served by CASA programs. Black and, to a greater extent, Hispanic children are underrepresented in the CASA population while White children are overrepresented.

II. Descriptions of CASA Youth and Volunteers

The data in the following section were taken from the 2008 survey of CASA volunteers. The survey methodology is on page 12.

Age

As shown in Table 1, Children who have CASA volunteers tend to be older than children in the foster care system as a whole. The percentage of children in the study with CASAs rose steadily as the children got older, peaking at age 17 with 14 percent of the cohort. The most common ages of children at appointment were 12 and 13 years, accounting for 23 percent of the cohort. The fact that the study cohort tended to be older at the time of the survey reflects in part the fact that CASAs tend to stay with their children for extended periods of time. These data also appear, however, to reflect a tendency to assign CASAs to older children – perhaps because those children are more in need of CASA advocacy.

Age Group	CASA Study	Foster Care	California
Under 1 year	Below 1%	5%	5%
1-2 years	3%	11%	9%
3-5 years	5%	13%	14%
6-10 years	20%	19%	23%
11-15 years	40%	28%	25%
16-17 years	27%	18%	10%
18-20 years	5%	5%	15%
Total Number	695	81,946	11,709,577

Percentage calculations do not include 'Missing'.
Data Sources: CASA and the Courts Assessment 2007, Volunteer survey; CWS/CMS 2007 Quarter 4 Extract.

Figure 1. Volunteer Age

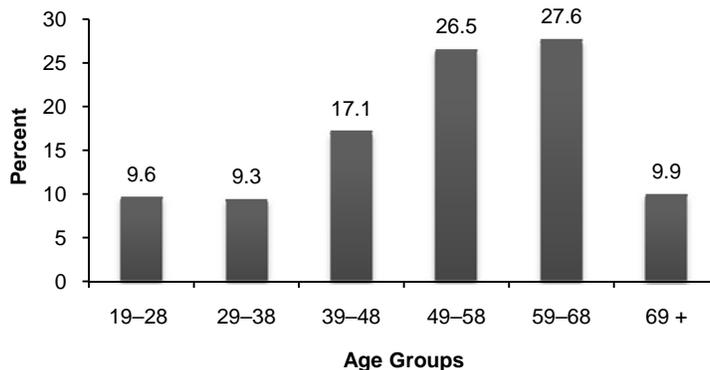


Figure 1 illustrates that volunteers tend to be older also, with 60 percent of them being over the age of 50, and about 10 percent being age 70 or older. This no doubt reflects a valuable pool of volunteers whose experience and life circumstances allow them to take on demanding roles. It also suggests that there may be untapped volunteers in other age groups, particularly those under 30, who currently make up only about 10 percent of the CASA volunteer population.

Sex

The sex of children who are assisted by CASAs is evenly split between males and females. This division matches the profile of children in foster care and the general population of children in the state. CASA volunteers, on the other hand, are three-quarters women and one-quarter men.

Race/Ethnicity

As shown in Table 2, the children in foster care in California are primarily Hispanic and Black (72 percent combined) – with Black and Native American children in particular being

Race/Ethnicity	CASA Volunteers	CASA Children in Study	Children in Foster Care	Children in California
Native American	1%	3%	Above 1%	Below 1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	3%	2%	10%
Black	4%	24%	27%	6%
Hispanic	6%	34%	45%	48%
White	86%	36%	24%	31%
Total	695	695	81,946	10,007,501

Percent calculations do not include 'Missing'.
Data Sources: CASA and the Courts Assessment, 2007–Volunteer survey; CWS/CMS 2007 Quarter 4 Extract, children aged 0–17.

placed in foster care in proportions higher than their proportion of the general population. While the proportions of children with CASAs in the various groups does more closely match the proportions in foster care than the foster care population does the general population of children in California, Hispanic children in particular are underrepresented in the CASA population while White children are overrepresented. It is encouraging to note that Native American children (those with at least some Native American ancestry) are being identified as such and assisted by CASAs at a rate slightly above their proportion of the foster care population. The small number of Native American children in the study, however, means that such a finding must be interpreted with some caution. As the chart illustrates, CASA volunteers are overwhelmingly White.

Length of Time in Care

As shown in Figure 2, almost half of the children reported in the survey had been assigned a CASA within the first six months of the case; by one year, 61 percent had CASAs assigned. Almost one-quarter, however, did not have a CASA assigned until after they had been in the system for three or more years.

If one goal is to get CASAs to children early in their cases, the first figure indicates that is being done in substantial numbers.

The fact that 39 percent of CASAs are appointed after the child has already been in the system more than one year, however, indicates that there is room for improvement. In particular, the fact that 23 percent of CASAs are first appointed after the child has been in the system three or more years – double the outside goal for achieving permanency for dependent children – indicates that some consideration should be given to encouraging the early assignment of CASAs and possibly developing criteria for assessing when CASAs could most usefully be assigned to children.

Figure 2. Months Child Is In System Before Receiving CASA

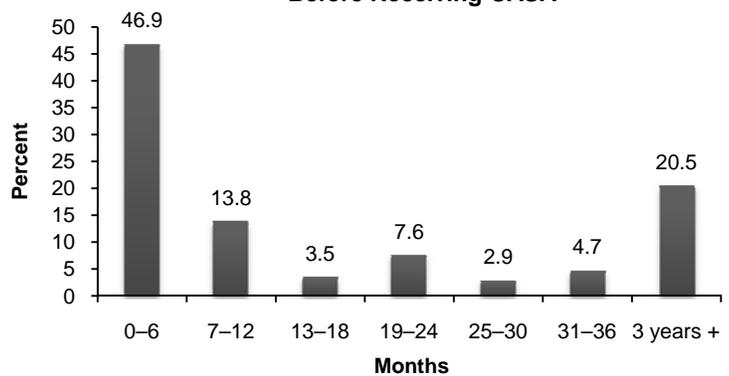
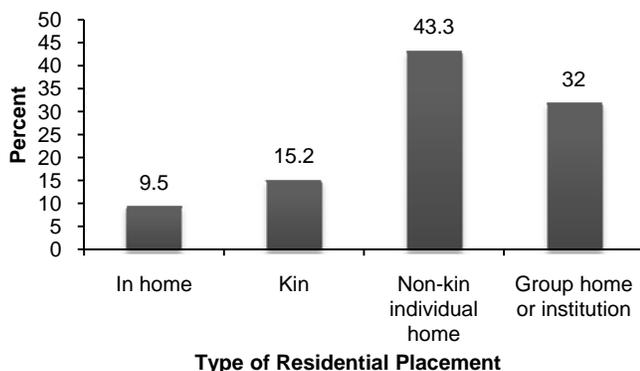


Figure 3. Placement When CASA Appointed



Placement

The study data regarding residential placements is consistent with the claim that CASAs are often assigned the most difficult cases, as shown in Figure 3. About three quarters of the CASA children live in non-kin foster care or some type of group home or institutional setting. While one third of CASA children live in group homes or institutional settings (mostly group homes), only about 14 percent of foster children statewide reside in such placements. Children placed in non-kin foster care or group homes are generally thought to be among the most isolated, having the least access to supportive family and community.

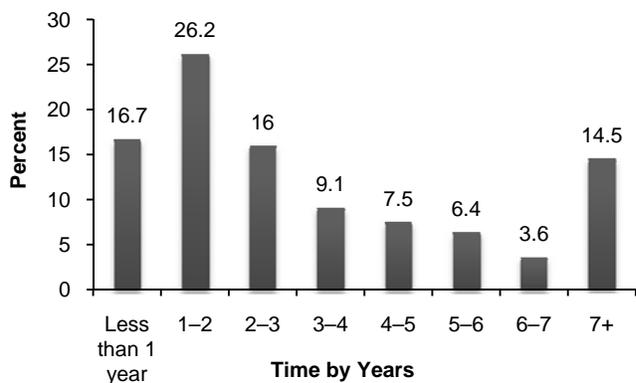
CASA Volunteer Characteristics

While many discussions of the service assume that CASA volunteers are usually retired or not employed, more than half (57 percent) reported that they are working. Forty percent reported working full time, and only 25 percent said that they are retired. These data suggest that volunteers can be successfully recruited from among people who have full time employment, and arrangements should be made by courts and CASA programs to make it as convenient as possible for employed CASAs to attend court and present their information about the children.

Two-thirds of CASAs reported advocating for only one child. Of the one-third who reported advocating for more than one child, approximately half of those said they were assisting a sibling group. CASA caseloads are an important indicator of how CASA programs work and may have implications for volunteer recruitment and retention. CASA volunteers reported in focus groups that getting to know a child was both an important function and a reward of their positions. Judicial officers in focus groups noted that the volunteer’s focus on a single child (or at most a small number of children) was crucial to developing the kind of in-depth, reliable information they depended on the CASA service to provide.

At the time of the study, Figure 4 illustrates that about half of the volunteers had been active for two years or less. While this does not tell us definitively what their ultimate tenure will be, it does indicate that CASA programs have many relatively new volunteers and that volunteers generally take one or two cases. At the other end of the spectrum, 15 percent of the volunteers said they had been active seven years or more. This indicates a substantial commitment to children in dependency and represents an important well of experience from which to provide support to new recruits.

Figure 4. Time as CASA



III. CASA Volunteer Activities

Time Spent on Selected Activities

CASA volunteers who had been assigned a child for three months or more reported on the number of hours they spent on specific, preselected activities in the 90 days preceding the study. The survey asked about activities that involved direct contact with the child or other persons. The results are shown in Table 3. By far the largest single block of time reported by volunteers was time spent with the child. Overall, the largest blocks of time were devoted to being with the child, the child’s siblings, or going to court. Of course, not all these categories are relevant to every case. For

Table 3. Volunteer Time on Activities in the Past 90 days

Activity	Median Hours Per Month	Number of Volunteers Reporting Activity
With child	6.0	620
With siblings	2.0	207
Going to court	1.3	349
With foster parents or relative caregivers	1.0	344
Attending meetings about child	1.0	278
With social workers	0.7	429
With school personnel	0.7	328
With parents	0.7	180
With group home staff	0.7	166
With child's attorney	0.7	245

example, only about one-third of the CASAs reported time with siblings, while 70 percent reported some time with social workers.

In addition to spending time with the child and the child’s care givers, some of the most important work of the CASA is that directed to the court. Unlike time spent directly with the child, however, court work is episodic and largely dependent on mandatory recurring court hearings. This cycle generally runs at six month intervals, and thus would not necessarily be an activity that CASAs would have engaged in during the three month period we asked about. Nonetheless, fully half of the volunteers responding indicated they had spent some time going to court, or staff attended for them, during the past three months. While the total amount of time in a month varied considerably between 30 minutes and 30 hours, the median time of 1.3 hours per month indicates that CASAs are engaged in the court process.

It is also interesting to note that about 45 percent of CASAs reported spending some time attending meetings about the child during the previous three months, with a median monthly time of one hour. CASAs not only devote time to the children and the court process but also to participating in non-court processes that concern the child’s well being and future.

CASA Activities Over Course of Case

All CASA volunteers in the study were asked to indicate whether they had ever engaged in certain activities related to providing information to the judge, advocating for the child, or obtaining information about the child. The results are shown in Table 4. Even though approximately one-quarter of the CASAs had been on the case for six months or less (and thus may have had no opportunity to participate in a regularly scheduled court hearing), four out of five had attended court hearings (or staff attended for them) and filed court reports regarding their children. Other than meeting with the child, attending court hearings and filing court reports were by far the most common CASA activities reported, and it seems fair to say that virtually all CASAs do those things.

In addition to spending time with the child and reporting to the court, most CASAs contacted teachers, therapists, and other service providers; advocated for the child in a variety of ways, including planning meetings about the child; and engaged in a wide variety of other activities for the purpose of meeting the child’s needs. Fifteen percent of CASAs surveyed checked family finding as an activity – a relatively new goal that has been suggested for CASAs.

Table 4. Types of Activities Engaged in During Course of Case

Type of Activity	Percentage of CASAs
Wrote reports for court	81%
Attended court	78%
Contacted child's school or teachers	74%
Contacted child's psychologist or therapist	61%
Attended meetings about the child (e.g., I.E.P.'s; wrap-around services)	57%
Helping child maintain community, family, or sibling connections	55%
Contacted child's school counselor	49%
Obtained needed services for child	44%
Obtained needed documents for child	39%
Advocated for change of residential placement	37%
Advocated for retention of residential placement	36%
Advocated for change of educational placement	24%
Advocated for retention of educational placement	23%
Obtained needed documents for court	23%
Contacted child's medical doctor	17%
Engaged in family finding	15%

CASA Activities with the Court

The volunteer survey, interviews, and focus group data indicate that CASAs are an important source of information to the judicial officer about the child. This finding is supported by looking at the frequency of court appearances and reports, as shown in Table 5. Overall, the making of appearances and the filing of reports were closely associated with one another.¹ The number of appearances and the number of reports filed were also both closely associated with the length of time a CASA had advocated for the child,² indicating that CASAs routinely appear and submit reports periodically throughout a case. Sixty percent of CASAs said that they had provided information to the court not provided by others while only 18 percent said that they had not. This perception of CASAs was confirmed by judicial officers in interviews and focus groups.

Table 5. Appearances Made And Reports Filed By CASA Volunteers Or Staff

Number of appearances or reports	CASAs making this number of court appearances	CASAs submitting this number of reports to the court
0	9%	13%
1	15%	20%
2	16%	16%
3	11%	9%
4	7%	8%
5	6%	5%
6	8%	5%
7-10	11%	8%
10 or more	8%	6%
No answer	9%	10%

Table 6. CASA Recommendations to Court

Types of recommendations made to court	Percentage of CASAs
Provision of services	38%
Residential placement change	34%
Contact with parents	32%
Sibling visitation	30%
Educational placement change	20%
Reunification	16%

In addition to providing information to judicial officers, CASAs also made recommendations to the courts, as shown in Table 6. About 15 percent of CASAs responding to the survey listed additional important roles they play, including making recommendations about adoption issues, helping address educational or health concerns, or making arrangements to visit with other people who were important to the child. Most CASAs (58 percent) reported feeling that the information provided or recommendations made helped the court with its decision making while only a very small percentage (3 percent) reported feeling that it did not.

Table 7. Important Roles for CASAs

Role	Percent Endorsing
Be a mentor or consistent adult presence	83%
Bring important information about child to court	70%
Monitor educational issues	63%
Advocate for needed services	57%
Assist in preparing child for adult life	51%
Ensure social services engagement	50%
Monitor child's physical health	36%
Advocate for better residential placement	33%
Find stable, long-term placement for child	31%
Advocate for better educational placement	31%
Ensure attorney engagement	28%
Ensure sibling visitation	23%
Find relative/other adult who will be a parent for child	11%
Find child's siblings	4%

Important CASA Roles

In response to a question about their most important roles as CASAs, Table 7 shows that the volunteers overwhelmingly reported two very different but interrelated roles: to be a mentor or consistent adult presence in the child's life; and to ensure that important information about the child is brought to the court's attention. Other roles frequently mentioned include monitoring educational

¹ The correlation between the numbers of reports filed and appearances made was significant at the .001 level, with a Spearman Correlation of .755.

² The correlation between the time on the case and the number of appearances made was significant at the .001 level, with a Spearman Correlation of .678. The correlation between the time on the case and the number of reports filed was significant at the .001 level, with a Spearman Correlation of .822.

issues and advocating for needed services. The least frequently checked roles were to find the child’s siblings and find a relative or other adult who will serve as a parent for the child (family finding). These judgments about their most important roles are consistent with their reports of activities and how they spend their time. Volunteers provided consistent evidence that their primary responsibility is knowing and advocating for their child and they are committed to bringing that knowledge and advocacy before the court.

IV. CASA Program Characteristics

The data in this section is primarily taken from the 2008 survey of executive directors of CASA programs. The survey methodology is on page 12.

Types of Legal Cases in Which CASAs Are Appointed

Dependency cases are by far the most common cases in which CASAs are appointed. Three-quarters of the programs reported that 95 percent or more of their CASAs serve in dependency cases. CASAs are also sometimes used in delinquency cases, with one-third of the programs reporting up to 10 percent of their CASAs assigned to delinquency cases – and a few programs reporting that as much as 18 percent of their cases are in delinquency. Several programs also reported assigning CASAs in probate guardianship cases, and one program reported using CASAs in child custody cases.

Types of CASAs

Traditionally CASAs have been conceived as nonlegal general advocates for children in court cases, usually in dependency. Some CASAs, however, are appointed with more limited responsibilities (such as focusing on advocacy for medical or educational needs), and others are general advocates with special skills or training to help specific populations of children (such as the very young or those about to age out of the system). The directors were asked several questions to try to clarify how many of these different types might be in use.

Traditional versus limited responsibility CASAs. About half of the programs use only traditional CASAs, while the other half make some use of limited responsibility CASAs. Of those that use limited responsibility CASAs, two-thirds use them in less than 10 percent of their cases and only one program reported using them in more than one-third of their cases. While the use of limited responsibility CASAs is not usual, they do seem to represent an important subset of cases.

CASAs with limited responsibility.

Of the various types of limited responsibility CASAs identified in Table 8, the use of CASAs regarding educational issues and to monitor potential CASA children on waiting lists stands out. It indicates the high need for assistance regarding educational issues and the need for more volunteers to eliminate waiting lists.

Area of Responsibility	Percentage of Programs
Educational	37%
Monitor group of cases waiting for a traditional CASA	22%
Aging-out issues	10%
Mental health/medical issues	10%
Review all cases in a group home	7%
Review court case files	5%
Out of county cases	2%

Educational surrogates. Interviews and focus groups suggested that the appointment of CASAs as formal educational surrogates is a growing trend. CASAs can be appointed as educational surrogates as part of their traditional CASA responsibilities, or their appointments can be limited to advocacy around educational issues. About 40 percent of the programs reported using CASAs as educational surrogates in less than 10 percent of their cases while another 40 percent said they were used in up to 25 percent of their cases. The remaining 20 percent of programs made such assignments at even higher rates.

Traditional CASAs with specialized experience or training. Most programs (85 percent) have at least some traditional CASAs who have specialized training in educational issues. A majority also have some traditional CASAs with specific skills for working on infant and toddler cases (63 percent) and youth aging out of the dependency system (66 percent). Finally, most (about 70 percent) reported having CASAs with specialized training in dealing with physical and/or mental health issues. This shows a strong commitment by programs to train their volunteers beyond the minimum requirements in order to meet local needs.

Waiting Lists for CASAs

While many programs have lists of children waiting for CASAs, simply looking at those lists does not tell us how many CASAs are needed. Courts may not refer children if they know there is no CASA available, and some programs purposefully do not maintain waiting lists so as not to give the impression that a CASA could be appointed soon. Eighty-six percent of the programs said they maintain a waiting list of children who need CASAs. The waiting lists ranged in length from 1 child to 325 children, with almost a third of the programs having waiting lists longer than 100 children. Overall, approximately 3,300 children were listed as waiting for a CASA. Of those programs that do maintain waiting lists, 61 percent said the cases are actively monitored (a CASA staff or volunteer periodically determines how the child is doing), 28 percent said the cases are sometimes monitored, and 14 percent said they do not monitor children awaiting CASAs.

Program Directors

Most CASA program directors have completed either a bachelor's degree (41 percent) or a master's degree (27 percent). A few have law degrees (12 percent), and two have Ph.D.s. Three directors have associate degrees, and one is a high school graduate. The most common prior work experiences are in nonprofit management (56 percent) and private business management (41 percent). Some have prior work experience as CASA staff (37 percent), and about one-quarter have some experience in the field of social work. A variety of other work backgrounds were mentioned, including law, health care, and teaching. Director tenure covered a wide range, from one month to 19 years. About one-third of the directors had been in their position 1 year or less, the next third between 1 and 4 years, and the final third between 4 and 19 years. Overall, slightly over half (51 percent) had been there 2 years of less – a period of time mentioned in some director interviews as being about the point when one becomes proficient at the job. There does not appear to be a connection between the length of time someone has been a CASA director and whether that person previously worked as CASA staff. This, combined with the fact that most CASA directors have prior nonprofit management experience, indicates that CASA programs tend to hire their directors from other management positions rather than promoting people from within the organization.

Boards of Directors

CASA program members of the board of directors are mostly White, non-Hispanic (82 percent); slightly over half (55 percent) are female.

Program Staff

The median size of CASA programs is three full time and two part time staff, while the largest CASA program in the state has 27 staff members. During 2006, half of the programs had no growth in staff, while one-third grew and 15 percent lost staff.

CASA Volunteer Tenure

One key question regarding recruitment and retention is how many CASAs take another case after their first one. A substantial amount of program resources are devoted to the training and development of CASAs, so retention of trained volunteers is an important goal. Approximately 85 percent of the programs volunteered a figure regarding the percentage of their volunteers who took a second case. That percentage varied widely and was fairly evenly distributed between a low of 10 percent and a high of 100 percent. For example, slightly over 50 percent of the programs said that 50 percent or more of their volunteers took a second case. About 25 percent of the programs said that between 50 and 75 percent of their volunteers took another case, and another 25 percent said that 75 to 100 percent of their volunteers took another case. Since there seems to be no common or usual answer to this question, programs might do well to consider why there is so much variation and whether a minimum percentage might be set that would serve as a goal to help judge program effectiveness.

Program Support of CASA Volunteers

As shown in Table 9, the most common types of support from their programs listed by CASA volunteers were assistance with court reports, individualized support from case managers or supervisors, and specialized trainings in addition to the mandatory trainings. Conversely, the least common types of assistance were arranging visits with children and offering mileage and expense reimbursement. Focus groups of volunteers reported that they would like to get mileage and expense reimbursement. Open-ended comments tended to focus on the program offering various types of individualized support – both practical advice and emotional support – or providing special funds for specific activities or things for the children (clothing, school supplies, etc.).

Table 9. Types Of Support Given by Program to Volunteers

Type of Support	Percentage of CASAs
Prepare court reports	83%
Individualized support	83%
Special trainings	72%
Assist with service referrals	60%
Extracurricular activities for children	58%
Volunteer appreciation events	56%
Facilitate connections to social workers	55%
Volunteer support groups	48%
Facilitate connections to lawyers	38%
Logistical support	34%
Investigation support	29%
Mileage expense	16%
Assist with arranging visits with child	15%

Ranking of Program Effectiveness

Program directors were asked to rank in order a series of 12 program qualities, from those things they felt their programs were most effective at doing to their least effective areas. While each quality reflected a spread of opinions, a few general trends stood out.

Programs rated themselves as being most effective at working with children (71 percent put it in the top three and 93 percent put it in the top half) and working with the courts (63 percent put it in the top three and 83 percent put it in the top half). Programs rated themselves as being least effective in recruiting a diverse population of volunteers (66 percent put it in the bottom three categories, and 61 percent had it in the bottom half). Working with families of origin also appeared to raise some effectiveness concerns, with 40 percent of programs putting this in the bottom three categories, as did obtaining funding, since 41 percent ranked this in the bottom three categories of effectiveness.

V. Conclusion

This assessment highlights both the strengths and challenges that CASA programs face in California. The strengths documented here for the first time include the high level of service to older children and children in group homes, and the high level of service to the juvenile court judicial officers – both through attending court and providing written reports to the court. The challenges for CASA programs in California include representing a greater proportion of Hispanic and Black children, retaining both executive directors and volunteers, and strategic planning for program growth that includes increased diversity among board members and volunteers.

After the assessment data was collected and analyzed, groups of stakeholders including program directors, CASA volunteers, judicial officers, staff to the California legislature, researchers, and others participated in a series of meetings to discuss the results and their implications for CASA programs. The consensus of these meetings was that CASA stakeholders, including the Administrative Office of the Courts CASA Grants Program, the California CASA Association, and local CASA programs, should make the following priorities in their plans to improve CASA statewide and fulfill the California Blue Ribbon Commission’s recommendation for program growth:

1. California CASA programs should continue to prioritize the children most in need of adult connections, including older children and especially children in group homes.
2. Given the unique and valuable role filled by CASAs, programs should continue to emphasize the essential qualities that define CASAs: individual attention to children, independence, and volunteer status.
3. Each CASA program should have a detailed strategic plan for growth and improvement, including steps to diversify boards and volunteers and address disproportionate representation of Hispanic and Black children where this exists.
4. The California CASA Association and the Administrative Office of the Courts should disseminate the results of this assessment to juvenile court judicial officers and other stakeholders in the dependency system.
5. The impact of CASA programs on the ultimate child outcomes of safety, permanency, and well being must be assessed through a program of evaluation and other research.

Methodology

Data presented in this summary come from a statewide survey of program directors and a survey of a sample of volunteers statewide. All 41 CASA programs responded to the directors' survey. The volunteer survey was sent to a random sample of approximately 1,200 active volunteers (about one-third of the State's total) covering all 41 CASA programs. Active volunteers were defined as those currently assigned to at least one child or having closed a case within the past three months. Of the 695 selected volunteers, 57 percent responded to the survey. Volunteers were asked questions about themselves, their child (if they had more than one child, the one they knew best), their activities, and their CASA programs. Five local programs also participated in more in-depth qualitative investigations into their services. Each program contributed one focus group of volunteers, one focus group of juvenile court judicial officers, one interview with the CASA director, focus groups or interviews with CASA staff, and one community partners' focus group. Two programs contributed focus groups of CASA youth. This data was collected between August 2007 and January 2008. Additional data collected by the Administrative Office of the Courts include quarterly data submissions from local programs; outcomes data from programs which has been collected since 2004; annual data on volunteer recruitment and training; annual salary surveys of CASA staff; and review letters sent following evaluative site visits. Data about children in foster care in California generally, as well as the California child population, was taken from the Child Welfare Dynamic Report System Web site, a California Department of Social Services/University of California at Berkeley collaboration: Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Ataie, Y., Winn, A., Blumberg, R., & Cuccaro-Alamin, S. (2008). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved August 2008, from the University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research Web site (http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare).

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