

National CASA Consumer Satisfaction Survey

Final Report

**Pat Litzelfelner, Ph.D.
University of Kentucky
College of Social Work**

Presented to:

**The National CASA Association
September 2003**

This project was sponsored by the National CASA Association with funding from the Packard Foundation and the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). National CASA Association Liaison- Joni Tamalonis, Evaluation Specialist.

National CASA Consumer Satisfaction Survey Final Report

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Part 1: Introduction – Overview of Study	7
Part 2: The Program in the Sample	8
Part 3: The Survey Instrument	11
Part 4: Response Rates	13
Part 5: Description of Final Sample	14
Part 6: Findings	17
A. Likert-type Scaled Questions	17

Listing of Findings Tables

- Table #1: All Three Survey Types Together (N = 742) (pg. 18)
- Table #2: Child Welfare Workers Survey Results (N= 343) (pg. 21)
- Table #3: Parent Survey Results (N= 287) (pg. 23)
- Table #4: Judges/Attorney Survey Results (N= 112) (pg. 25)
- Table #5: Comparison of Child Welfare Workers, Parents and Judges/Attorneys (pg. 27)
- Table #6: Differences Between Groups [Child Welfare, Parents and Judges/Attorneys] (pg. 28)
- Table #7: Comparison of Child Welfare Front Line Workers and Supervisors (pg. 30)
- Table #8: Comparison of Biological Parents/Relatives and Foster/Adoptive Parents (pg. 31)
- Table #9: Comparison of Judges, Child’s Attorney, Parent’s Attorney (pg. 32)
- Table #10: Differences Between Groups [Judges, Child and Parent Attorney] (pg. 36)

B. Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Questions 37

Part 7: Summary and Recommendations 51

- Study Limitations
- Summary
- Recommendations

Appendices

- #1: Program DATA Form
- #2: Survey Cover Letters
- #3: Survey Instruments

Executive Summary

Program Selection

Participation and support from local CASA programs was needed to conduct a national survey of CASA consumers. Programs throughout the CASA network were solicited for voluntary participation in the study. About fifty programs came forward and expressed an interest in being part of the study. For various reasons, about half of these programs could not participate. Therefore, twenty-three programs made up the study sample.

Of the 23 programs, an equal number reported to follow a *Friend of the Court* model (39%) and *CASA is the GAL (Guardian ad Litem)* model (39%); the remainder of the programs did not report on the type of model they use. Under the *Friend of the Court* model, the CASA volunteer conducts investigations with key people involved in the child's life and make recommendations to the court. This type of CASA volunteer may be thought of as the "eyes and ears" for the judge. Most of the children served by the *Friend of the Court* CASA will also have an attorney appointed as their GAL. Under the *CASA is the GAL* model the CASA volunteer is appointed as the child's Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) and is the child's sole representative in judicial proceedings. These volunteers also do investigations and make recommendations to the court.

About 39% of the programs that participated in the study are considered "small" in size (less than 25 volunteers), 21% "medium", and 26% "large". Programs

were considered “small” if they had less than 50 active volunteers; “medium” if they had between 50 and 100 active volunteers and “large” if they had over 100 active volunteers.

Surveys were mailed to all people (judges/attorneys, child welfare workers, and parents) whose names were provided by the individual programs. Some programs were not able to supply names for people in all three groups and some provided names and mailing addresses for both attorneys assisting children and attorneys assisting parents.

The Survey Instrument

The survey instrument began with likert-type scaled questions about CASA volunteers. This was followed by some basic demographic information and then finally open-ended questions were asked at the end of the surveys (The survey instrument is available in Appendix #3). Most of the questions were asked of all three groups so comparisons could be made across the groups.

Response Rate

Of the 2,465 surveys mailed out, 742 were returned. This resulted in an overall return rate of 34%. The lowest return rate was from the parent group (22%) whereas the highest return rate was for the judges/attorneys at 55%. The return rate for child welfare personnel was about 50%.

Final Sample

There were 112 judges/attorneys surveys returned, this included 48 from judges; 34 from attorneys for children; 13 from attorneys for parents; and 17 unidentified. There were 287 parents surveys returned which included 105 biological parents, relatives and grandparents; 160 from foster and adoptive parents; and 22 unidentified. The largest number of surveys returned were from child welfare personnel at 343.

Findings

The results of this study demonstrate very positive findings for volunteer CASA/GAL programs. The one survey item that consistently scored high by all three groups was *I understand the role of the CASA/GAL volunteer*. The two survey questions that consistently scored low were: *The CASA/GAL understands the court system* and *The CASA/GAL provides an objective opinion*.

Judges and attorneys expressed the highest overall satisfaction with CASA programs. Child Welfare Workers and Parents scored most items a bit lower than judges/attorneys. Child welfare workers scored the statement, *the volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system* the lowest. When examining the comments from child welfare workers on the open-ended questions, it is clear that child welfare workers had very mixed sentiments about CASA volunteers. Two other themes that consistently emerged in the open ended responses from child welfare workers had to do with 1) improved communications and 2) the need for volunteers

to formulate their own opinions versus relying on the opinion of the child welfare worker.

The ratings from parents should also be considered overall very good for CASA programs. There were not statistically significant differences between biological parents and foster parents on any of the survey items. Parents in general spoke highly of CASA volunteers and CASA programs. However, there were some negative comments regarding specific CASA volunteers from parents in the open-ended question part of the survey.

The limitations of the study are discussed in the final section of the report.

Recommendations:

- 1) continued funding for CASA programs and the need for more CASA volunteers,
- 2) improved communication among child welfare workers, court personnel and CASAs – perhaps through joint training programs,
- 3) discussion and research about what to look for when searching for the “most capable” or “effective” volunteer and an examination of the screening process used by programs,
- 4) frequent evaluation of training programs and on-going assessment of whether or not the training is meeting the needs of the volunteers,
- 5) frequent contact between CASA volunteers and their supervisors and meaningful performance reviews,
- 6) the establishment of policies and practices that allow for the termination of “ineffective” volunteers,
- 7) CASA training and subsequent in-services and case discussions should frequently discuss the complex issues of child versus parent versus family advocacy,

- 8) the survey instrument should be refined and designed for use by local programs. Individual programs can then administer the survey and report their results to the National CASA.

Note: Some of the comments made by participants and recommendations in this report may be against the recommended standards provided by the National CASA Association. Programs will want to consult these standards and make their own determinations regarding compliance.

National CASA Consumer Satisfaction Survey Final Report

Part 1: Introduction – Overview of Study

This study began in the Spring of 2001 when the National CASA Association expressed an interest in finding out more about the views of different consumers regarding CASA services. For the purposes of this study, consumers were considered judges/attorneys, GALs, child welfare workers, parents (biological, foster and adoptive), and the children themselves.

Although several CASA programs throughout the network have conducted their own “satisfaction” surveys, few have included the parents and caregivers of the children. The last attempt to survey consumers on a national level was a study done by C.S.R., Inc. in 1990. This study included interviews with attorney GALs, judges/attorneys and caseworkers but the focus was not on CASA satisfaction but rather the role of GALs, their caseloads, training, and supervision.

Given the lack of national information on consumer satisfaction with CASA/GAL volunteers, it was believed important to capture opinions for various consumer groups (i.e., parents, child welfare workers, and judges/attorneys/attorneys) as well as from various regions of the country. This report includes program and sample selection, information about the survey instrument, a description of the final study sample and the findings.

Reference: C.S.R., Incorporated, 1990, National Study of Guardian ad Litem Representation. Washington, D.C.: CSR, Incorporated.

Part 2: The Program in the Sample

During the Spring and Summer of 2001, CASA/GAL programs throughout the network were solicited to participate in the survey. This was done through an announcement at the 2001 CASA conference, handing out flyers at the conference, sending an e-mail to all programs in the network, and placing information about the survey in the newsletter. Through these efforts about 50 programs came forward and expressed an interest in being involved in the survey. The researcher corresponded with each of these programs and informed them of what participation would involve. This included:

- 1) compiling and sending mailing labels for each of the three groups of participants (parents, judges/attorneys/and child welfare workers),
- 2) obtaining appropriate consents from judges/attorneys and parents, and
- 3) filling out a program informational DATA form.

In return, the researcher agreed to compile individual results for each participating program.

Initially, about 50 CASA/GAL programs expressed an interest in participating in the study. However, several of the programs were unable to follow through or eventually chose to not participate. A total of twenty-three CASA/GAL programs participated in the survey. This participation was strictly voluntary so the sample is considered a *convenient* sample because programs sites were not randomly selected.

Thus, results from this research cannot necessarily be generalized to all CASA/GAL programs.

Surveys were mailed to all people (judges/attorneys, child welfare workers, and parents) whose names were provided by the individual programs. Some programs were not able to supply names for all three groups. The researcher has agreed to keep confidential which programs are included in the final sample.

The 23 programs in the final sample are located in the following 17 states:

California	Missouri	Ohio
Colorado	Montana	Oklahoma
Florida	Nebraska	Oregon
Illinois	Nevada	South Carolina
Kentucky	New Jersey	South Dakota
	New York	Texas

Participating programs were asked to fill out a DATA form [Appendix A]. Among other items, the DATA form asked programs to identify the “type of community” their programs served. The forced choice options were 1) rural, 2) City/Urban and 3) Suburban. Operational definitions of what constituted each of these community types were not provided.

The programs in the study represented the following self-identified community types:

Rural = 7 (31%)
City/Urban = 10 (43%)
Both Rural and Urban = 4 (17%)
Suburban = 1 (4%)
Unknown = 1 (4%)

Programs were also asked to identify the type of program model their program followed. The forced choice selections for program type were 1) Friend of the Court Model, 2) CASA is GAL and is a volunteer and 3) CASA is GAL and is paid.

The programs models identified for the programs participating in the study were as below:

Friend of the Court Model = 9 (39%)
CASA is GAL Model = 9 (39%)
Combination of both (the above) = 2 (8%)
CASA is GAL and paid = 0
Unknown/Unanswered = 3 (13%)

Under the *Friend of the Court* model, the CASA volunteer conducts investigations with key people involved in a child's life, and make recommendations to the court. This type of CASA volunteer may be thought of as the "eyes and ears" for the judges/attorneys. Most of the children served by the "friend of the court" CASA will also have an attorney appointed as their GAL. Under the *CASA is the GAL* model the CASA volunteer is appointed as the child's Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) and is their sole representative in judicial proceedings. These volunteers also do investigations and make recommendations to the court.

Programs were also asked to report the number of active volunteers and the number of children their programs were currently serving. Based on this information, the researcher categorized the programs as being "small", "medium", or "large". Programs were considered "small" if they had less than 50 active volunteers; "medium" if they had between 50 and 100 active volunteers and "large" if they had

over 100 active volunteers. Based on the above definitions, programs in the study

were considered:

Small = 9 (39%)

Medium = 5 (21%)

Large = 6 (26%)

Unknown = 3 (13%)

Part 3: The Survey Instrument

The three surveys instruments [parents, judges/attorneys and child welfare workers] that were utilized are available in Appendix #3. The survey questions were similar to those developed by the researcher and colleagues at the University of Kansas in 1997.

The original survey instruments are available online on CASANet and in the publication, “*Measuring Child Outcomes: A Guide to Determining CASA Effectiveness*” available through National CASA. Since 1997, many programs throughout the network have utilized these or a variation of these surveys. Those programs have often contacted the researcher about ideas and changes they would suggest. The final survey instruments utilized in this study are based on 1) the original instrument, 2) on-going feedback from programs that have used them and 3) program directors and staff who participated in this study. Each of the three surveys were mailed to participating programs prior to the beginning of the study, in order to obtain feedback from program directors and staff.

As is common in survey research, the survey instrument began with likert-type scaled questions, followed by some basic demographic information and then finally open-ended questions were asked at the end of the surveys.

A purposeful effort was made to ask the three groups the same questions so comparisons could be made across the groups. One of the goals of the study was to

find out if there were differences between the groups in their opinions about CASA/GAL volunteers. However, there were a few questions asked on the surveys that were specific to only that group. These questions are noted on the findings tables.

The instrument has not been tested for reliability or validity measures of satisfaction. Therefore a cumulative score (adding up all the responses to each item) would not be appropriate. Each item on the survey is examined independently.

The three groups (parents, judges/attorneys, child welfare workers) were also asked the same open-ended questions with the exception of the final open-ended question that was not asked on the judges/attorneys' survey.

Part 4: Response Rates

Chart #1 below shows the number of each survey type that was mailed and the return rates (percent completed).

As expected the lowest return rate was from the parent group (22%).

The return rate for the judges/attorneys/attorney surveys was the highest at 55% followed by the child welfare workers at 50%. The overall return rate was 34%. The low returns by parents brought the overall rate down to 34% which is considered a “good” rate in survey research. However, when considering judges/attorneys and child welfare workers only, the return rate would be about 52.5% which is considered a “high” return rate for mail surveys.

Chart #1: Surveys Mailed and Return Rates

Survey Type	Mail-Out	Return to Sender	Number Completed	Return rate
Parents	1,564	231	287	22%
Judges/Attor.	211	9	112	55%
Child Welfare	690	12	343	50%
Total	2,465	252	742	34%

Note: parents includes biological, adoptive, and foster parents; child welfare workers include front line workers and supervisors; “judges/attorneys” include child and parents’ attorneys.

Part 5: Description of Final Sample

All those who completed and returned the surveys from all sites comprise the final sample. The sample includes 112 judges/attorneys; 343 child welfare workers; and 287 parents which totals 742 respondents. Further information regarding the final sample is offered below.

Judges/Attorneys: N = 112

One hundred twelve ‘judges/attorneys’ surveys were returned. It should be noted however, that ‘judges/attorneys’ surveys were mailed to Attorneys for the Child (Child’s GAL) and Attorneys for Parents when those people were included on the mailing lists from the participating programs. Below is the breakdown of who actually filled out the “judges/attorneys” surveys.

Judges/attorneys = 48 (43%)
Attorney for Child = 34 (30%)
Attorney for Parent = 13 (12%)
Other and Unidentified = 17 (15%)

Parents: N = 287

Two-hundred and eighty-seven surveys were returned by parents. This was 22% of those mailed out that were NOT returned to sender/address unknown. In other words, of the 1,564 surveys that were mailed to parents, it is assumed that 1,333 actually reached the home of a parent and that 22% of those were answered and returned to the researcher. On the demographic section of the surveys, parents were asked to identify themselves as either a biological parent, relative, foster parent,

adoptive parent or other. Below is the number and percentage of each category of parent as self-identified by the participant.

Biological = 62 (23%)
Relative = 35 (13%)
Grandparents = 8 (3%)
Relative + Grandparent = 43 (16%)
Biological + Relative + Grandparent = 105 (39%)
Foster Parents = 149 (54%)
Adoptive = 11 (4%)
Foster + Adoptive = 160 (58%)
Other = 11 (4%)

Child Welfare Workers: N= 343

The largest group of participants were the child welfare workers. Three-hundred forty-three surveys were received from child welfare workers. These workers were categorized as front line workers, supervisors, or other. The breakdown of the child welfare worker group is:

Front Line Workers = 261 (77%)
Supervisors = 53 (16%)
Other = 23 (7%)

Additional Descriptive Information

Survey participants were all asked how many CASA/GAL volunteers with whom they had experience. The number of volunteers participants had involvement with is presented below. It should be noted that when parents and front line child welfare workers had involvement with more than one volunteer, the instructions on the survey told them to fill out the survey considering the “most recent” CASA volunteer with whom they had involvement. The instructions on the

judges/attorneys and child welfare supervisor survey asked them to give an “overall” rating of the CASA program.

Number of CASA volunteers with whom respondents had experience:

Range 0 = 25

Mean (avg.) = 2.7

Median = 2

Mode = 1

Additional “informational only” questions were asked on the parent survey.

Upon constructing the survey instrument, the researcher added these questions in hopes of gaining a deeper understanding of the parent participants and their views. However, upon examining the data, the researcher concluded that this information really didn’t add anything to the findings of the study.

Part 6: Findings

A. Findings on likert-type scaled questions

The tables below represent the findings from the likert-type scaled questions in the survey. The likert scale was such that respondents circled 4 if they *strongly agreed* with the statement, 3 if they *agreed*, 2 if they *disagreed* and 1 if they *strongly disagreed* with the statement. A mean score between **3.0** and **4.0** would be considered excellent for CASA programs whereas between **2.5** and **3.0** would be considered positive and a mean score below **2.5** might provide the program with areas on which to improve.

In each box following the survey statement, there is the actual number of respondents who chose that response as well as the percentage of respondents that chose that response. *Note: these numbers do not always add up to the total N or to 100%. this is due to respondents simply skipping that question or rounding errors.* Mean scores (average) for each statement are also provided.

As indicated under the survey instrument section of the report, some questions were asked of all three groups, while others pertained to only two groups and some to only one group. It should be assumed that all three groups responded to the survey question unless otherwise noted on the findings table.

Listing of Findings Tables

Table #1: All Three Survey Types Together (N = 742)

Table #2: Child Welfare Workers Survey Results (N= 343)

Table #3: Parent Survey Results (N= 287)

Table #4: Judges/Attorney Survey Results (N= 112)

Table #5: Comparison of Child Welfare Workers, Parents and Judges/Attorneys

Table #6: Differences Between Groups [Child Welfare Workers, Parents and Judges/Attorneys]

Table #7: Comparison of Child Welfare Front Line Workers and Supervisors

Table #8: Comparison of Biological parents/relatives and foster/adoptive parents.

Table #9: Comparison of Judges, Child's Attorney, Parent's Attorney

Table #10: Significant Differences Between Groups [Judges, Child Attorney, Parent Attorney]

Table #1:

This table includes the combined findings from all three groups

[Judges/Attorneys (n= 112), Child Welfare Workers (n=343), and Parents (n=287)]

So the three groups combined total 742 surveys. Except where noted, under the survey question, the question was asked of all three groups of participants.

Table #1: All Three Survey Types Together (N = 742)		4	3	2	1
<i>[Judges/Attorneys n= 112 + Child Welfare Workers n = 343 + Parents n = 287]</i>		<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>
1	I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL. Mean = 3.5	436 (59%)	272 (37%)	18 (2%)	10 (1%)
2	The volunteer CASA/GAL acts professionally. Mean = 3.2	296 (40%)	331 (45%)	66 (9%)	36 (5%)
3	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the court system. Mean = 3.1	220 (30%)	368 (50%)	102 (14%)	27 (4%)
4	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system. Mean = 2.9	175 (24%)	342 (46%)	144 (19%)	53 (7%)
5	The volunteer CASA/GAL has an understanding of the needs of child(ren). Mean = 3.1	263 (35%)	307 (41%)	90 (12%)	62 (8%)
6	The volunteer CASA/GAL respects my opinion. Mean =3.1	274 (37%)	280 (38%)	104 (14%)	66 (9%)

Table #1 continued on next page

Table #1 continued

7	Volunteer CASA/GALs are working for the best interest of the child(ren). Mean = 3.2	333 (45%)	269 (36%)	66 (9%)	53 (7%)
8	I find volunteer CASA/GALs helpful. Mean = 3.1	296 (40%)	271 (37%)	89 (12%)	65 (9%)
9	CASA/GALs make a difference with the children they serve. Mean = 3.2	287 (39%)	291 (39%)	82 (11%)	46 (6%)
10	I would like to see more children served by the CASA/GAL program. Mean = 3.2	357 (48%)	214 (29%)	78 (11%)	61 (8%)
11	Volunteer CASA/GAL provide an objective opinion. Mean = 2.9	195 (26%)	315 (43%)	133 (18%)	73 (10%)
12	Volunteer CASA/GALs influence court decisions. Mean = 3.2	242 (33%)	372 (50%)	70 (9%)	22 (3%)
13	The volunteer CASA/GALs visit the children regularly. Mean = 2.9 <i>CWW and Parent Surveys Only (n=630)</i>	169 (28%)	272 (45%)	94 (16%)	71 (12%)
14	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks good questions. Mean = 3.0 <i>CWW and Parent Surveys Only (n = 630)</i>	182 (30%)	287 (47%)	88 (15%)	49 (8%)
15	The volunteer CASA/GAL explain their role. Mean = 3.0 <i>CWW and Parent Surveys Only (n = 630)</i>	178 (29%)	294 (48%)	92 (15%)	47 (8%)
16	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks my opinion. Mean = 3.0 <i>CWW and Parent Surveys Only (n= 630)</i>	198 (32%)	261 (43%)	90 (15%)	63 (10%)
17	Volunteer CASA/GALs are prepared for court hearings Mean = 3.5 <i>Judges/Attorneys Surveys Only(n=112)</i>	64 (59%)	38 (35%)	7 (6%)	-----
18	Volunteer CASA/GALs make appropriate recommendations. <i>Judges/Attorneys Surveys Only (n = 112)</i> Mean = 3.3	42 (39%)	55 (51%)	9 (8%)	1 (1%)
19	Volunteer CASA/GALs are valuable to the courts. Mean = 3.5 <i>Judges/Attorneys Surveys Only (n = 112)</i>	69 (63%)	27 (25%)	11 (10%)	2 (2%)
20	It is important for volunteer CASA/GALs to attend court hearings. <i>Judges/Attorneys Surveys Only (n= 112)</i> Mean = 3.6	75 (68%)	31 (28%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)
21	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a positive reputation in my community. <i>CWW and Judges/Attorneys Survey (n = 455)</i> Mean = 3.1	146 (33%)	201 (46%)	63 (14%)	28 (6%)

Table #1 continued on next page

Table #1 continued

22	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a good working relationship with others involved with the case. <i>CWW and Judges/Attorneys Survey Only (n = 455)</i> Mean = 3.0	108 (25%)	228 (52%)	77 (18%)	23 (5%)
23	Volunteer CASA/GALs are prepared for meetings. <i>CWW Survey Only (n = 343)</i> Mean = 3.0	58 (23%)	154 (61%)	28 (11%)	12 (5%)
24	I am treated respectfully by the volunteer CASA/GAL. <i>Parent Survey Only (n = 287)</i> Mean = 3.12	140 (50%)	82 (29%)	22 (8%)	38 (14%)

End Table #1

Discussion of Table #1

When judges/attorneys/attorneys, child welfare workers and parents were all asked to respond to a certain statement, the first statement, *I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL received the highest rating (3.5)*. The remaining items, asked of all three groups all received scores of between 2.9 and 3.2. However, the highest scores were from the statements posed only to the judges/attorneys. Questions #17, #19, and #20 all received very high ratings from the judges/attorneys surveys (3.5, 3.5, and 3.6 respectively).

Table #2:

This table only presents the findings from the child welfare workers (n=343). This includes front line workers (n=261), supervisors (n=53), and other (n=23). Front line workers were asked to fill out the survey considering the “most recent” volunteer they had worked with while supervisors were asked to give their “overall” opinion of CASA/GAL volunteers.

		strongly <i>agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	strongly <i>disagree</i>
1	I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL. Mean = 3.6	206 (60%)	122 (36%)	10 (3%)	3 (1%)
2	The volunteer CASA/GAL acts professionally. Mean = 3.2	105 (31%)	190 (55%)	32 (9%)	10 (3%)
3	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the court system. Mean = 3.0	74 (22%)	195 (57%)	55 (16%)	11 (3%)
4	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system. Mean = 2.7	44 (13%)	172 (50%)	88 (26%)	30 (9%)
5	The volunteer CASA/GAL have an understanding of the needs of child(ren). Mean = 3.0	90 (26%)	179 (52%)	53 (16%)	11 (3%)
6	The volunteer CASA/GAL respects my opinion. Mean = 3.0	95 (28%)	151 (44%)	73 (21%)	17 (5%)
7	Volunteer CASA/GALs are working for the best interest of the child(ren). Mean = 3.2	124 (36%)	174 (51%)	32 (9%)	7 (2%)
8	I find volunteer CASA/GALs helpful. Mean = 3.1	105 (31%)	162 (47%)	51 (15%)	18 (5%)
9	CASA/GALs make a difference with the children they serve. Mean = 3.1	109 (32%)	154 (45%)	52 (15%)	12 (4%)
10	I would like to see more children served by the CASA/GAL program. Mean = 3.1	134 (39%)	121 (35%)	51 (15%)	23 (7%)
11	Volunteer CASA/GAL provide an objective opinion. Mean = 2.7	53 (16%)	160 (47%)	88 (26%)	31 (9%)
12	Volunteer CASA/GALs influence court decisions. Mean = 3.2	107 (31%)	197 (57%)	25 (7%)	4 (1%)
13	The volunteer CASA/GALs visit the children regularly. Mean = 2.9	76 (22%)	175 (51%)	56 (16%)	25 (7%)
14	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks good questions. Mean = 3.0	82 (24%)	188 (55%)	49 (14%)	10 (3%)
15	The volunteer CASA/GAL explain their role. Mean = 2.9	70 (20%)	191 (56%)	53 (16%)	17 (5%)
16	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks my opinion. Mean = 3.0	88 (26%)	169 (49%)	60 (18%)	17 (5%)

Table #2 continued on next page

Table #2 continued

17	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a positive reputation in my community. Mean = 2.9	79 (23%)	168 (49%)	59 (17%)	25 (7%)
18	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a good working relationship with other involved with the case. Mean = 2.9	64 (19%)	169 (49%)	73 (21%)	20 (6%)
19	Volunteer CASA/GALs are prepared for meetings. Mean = 3.0	58 (23%)	154 (61%)	28 (11%)	12 (5%)

End Table #2

Discussion of Table #2

Table #2 presents the results from just the child welfare workers. The highest rating received by the child welfare workers was in response to question #1, *I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL* (average score 3.6). The lowest responses from the child welfare worker group was in regard to questions number 4 and 11. Question number 4 states, *The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system* and the mean score was 2.7. In addition, question number 11 stated, *The volunteer CASA/GAL provides an objective opinion* was also rated 2.7 by child welfare personnel. The remaining survey items received ratings between 3.0 and 3.2 which is considered positive.

Table #3:

Table #3 below presents the findings from the parent surveys (N= 287). This includes responses from biological parents (n= 62), relative/grandparents (n= 43), foster/adoptive parents (n= 160). In the event that parents had experience with more than one CASA volunteer, they were asked to consider their most recent volunteer when filling out the survey.

Table #3: Parent Survey Results (N= 287)		<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>
1	I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL. Mean = 3.5	149 (53%)	120 (42%)	8 (3%)	6 (2%)
2	The volunteer CASA/GAL acts professionally. Mean = 3.2	132 (47%)	94 (33%)	32 (11%)	25 (9%)
3	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the court system. Mean = 3.2	112 (39%)	121 (42%)	2 (9%)	15 (5%)
4	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system. Mean = 3.1	108 (38%)	106 (37%)	36 (13%)	23 (8%)
5	The volunteer CASA/GAL has an understanding of the needs of “my” child(ren). Mean = 2.9	116 (40%)	85 (30%)	30 (11%)	51 (18%)
6	The volunteer CASA/GAL respects my opinion. Mean = 3.0	124 (43%)	85 (30%)	24 (8%)	47 (16%)
7	The volunteer CASA/GAL is working for the best interest of “my” child(ren). Mean = 3.1	136 (47%)	68 (24%)	30 (11%)	44 (15%)
8	I find the volunteer CASA/GAL helpful. Mean = 3.0	124 (43%)	78 (27%)	31 (11%)	44 (15%)
9	CASAs/GALs make a difference with the children they serve. Mean = 3.1	112 (39%)	100 (35%)	27 (9%)	32 (11%)
10	I would like to see more children served by the CASA/GAL program. Mean = 3.2	148 (52%)	68 (24%)	23 (8%)	35 (12%)
11	The volunteer CASA/GAL provides an objective opinion. Mean = 2.9	100 (35%)	103 (36%)	34 (12%)	39 (14%)

Table #3 continued on next page

Table #3 continued

12	The volunteer CASA/GAL influences court decisions. Mean = 3.1	93 (32%)	123 (43%)	34 (12%)	15 (5%)
13	The volunteer CASA/GAL visits the children regularly. Mean = 2.9	93 (32%)	97 (34%)	38 (13%)	46 (16%)
14	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks good questions. Mean = 2.9	100 (35%)	99 (35%)	39 (14%)	39 (14%)
15	The volunteer CASA/GAL explains their role. Mean = 3.0	108 (38%)	103 (36%)	39 (14%)	30 (11%)
16	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks my opinion. Mean = 3.0	110 (38%)	92 (32%)	30 (11%)	46 (16%)
17	I am treated respectfully by the volunteer CASA/GAL. Mean = 3.1	140 (49%)	82 (29%)	22 (8%)	38 (13%)

End Table #3

Discussion of Table #3

Table #3 presents the findings from just the parent surveys. These findings indicate that parents gave the highest average score to the statement, *I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL* (3.5). The remaining items were all rated between 2.9 and 3.2 by parents and are considered positive.

Table #4:

This table presents the findings from the judges/attorneys surveys (N= 112). Judges/attorneys surveys includes judges (n=48), attorneys for the child (n=34), attorneys for parents (n= 13) and other or unidentified (n= 17). These respondents were asked to rate CASA/GAL volunteers “in general”.

		<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>
1	I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL. Mean = 3.7	81 (72%)	30 (27%)	-----	1 (1%)
2	The volunteer CASA/GAL acts professionally. Mean =3.5	59 (53%)	47 (42%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
3	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the court system. Mean =3.1	34 (30%)	52 (46%)	21 (19%)	1 (1%)
4	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system. Mean = 3.0	23 (21%)	64 (57%)	20 (18%)	-----
5	The volunteer CASA/GAL have an understanding of the needs of child(ren). Mean =3.5	57 (51%)	43 (39%)	7 (6%)	-----
6	The volunteer CASA/GAL respects my opinion. Mean =3.4	55 (49%)	44 (39%)	7 (6%)	2 (2%)
7	Volunteer CASA/GALs are working for the best interest of the child(ren). Mean =3.6	75 (67%)	27 (24%)	4 (4%)	2 (2%)
8	I find volunteer CASA/GALs helpful. Mean =3.5	67 (60%)	31 (28%)	7 (6%)	3 (3%)
9	CASA/GALs make a difference with the children they serve. Mean =3.5	66 (59%)	37 (33%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)
10	I would like to see more children served by the CASA/GAL program. Mean =3.6	75 (67%)	25 (22%)	4 (4%)	3 (3%)
11	Volunteer CASA/GAL provide an objective opinion. Mean =3.2	42 (38%)	52 (46%)	11 (10%)	3 (3%)
12	Volunteer CASA/GALs influence court decisions. Mean =3.2	42 (38%)	52 (46%)	11 (10%)	3 (3%)
13	The volunteer CASA/GALs are prepared for court hearings. Mean =3.5	64 (57%)	38 (34%)	7 (6%)	-----
14	The volunteer CASA/GAL make appropriate recommendations. Mean =3.3	42 (38%)	55 (49%)	9 (8%)	1 (1%)
15	The volunteer CASA/GALs are valuable to the courts. Mean =3.5	69 (62%)	27 (24%)	11 (10%)	2 (2%)

Table #4 continued on next page

Table #4 continued

16	It is important for volunteer CASA/GALs to attend court hearings. Mean = 3.6	75 (67%)	31 (28%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)
17	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a positive reputation in my community. Mean =3.5	67 (60%)	33 (30%)	4 (4%)	3 (3%)
18	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a good working relationship with others involved with the case. Mean =3.3	44 (39%)	59 (53%)	4 (4%)	3 (3%)

End Table #4

Discussion of Table #4

Table #4 presents the results from just the judges/attorneys' surveys. This group of participants includes attorneys for children (n=34), attorneys for parents (n=13), and judges (n= 48). Results from this group show judges/attorneys scoring CASAs quite high (between 3.5 and 3.7) on the majority of the survey items. None of the items scored by the judges/attorneys' group fell below a 3.0. The statement, *The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system* scored the lowest at 3.0.

Table #5:

Table #5 below reports the mean (average) scores on each question for each group of respondents. This allows for a comparison to be made across the groups. The asterisk signifies that the difference is statistically significant. The following table (Table #6) provides a graphic of the differences between the groups.

Table #5: Comparison of Scores Child Welfare, Parents, and Judges/Attorneys

		CWW (N = 343)	Parents (N= 287)	Judges/Attorneys (N= 112)	
1	I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL.	3.6	3.5	3.7	
2	The volunteer CASA/GAL acts professionally.	3.2	3.2	3.5	☞
3	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the court system.	3.0	3.2	3.1	
4	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system.	2.7	3.1	3.0	☞
5	The volunteer CASA/GAL has an understanding of the needs of child(ren).	3.0	2.9	3.5	☞
6	The volunteer CASA/GAL respects my opinion.	3.0	3.0	3.4	☞
7	Volunteer CASA/GALs are working for the best interest of the child(ren).	3.2	3.1	3.6	☞
8	I find volunteer CASA/GALs helpful.	3.1	3.0	3.5	☞
9	CASA/GALs make a difference with the children they serve.	3.1	3.1	3.5	☞
10	I would like to see more children served by the CASA/GAL program.	3.1	3.2	3.6	☞
11	Volunteer CASA/GAL provide an objective opinion.	2.7	2.9	3.2	☞
12	Volunteer CASA/GALs influence court decisions.	3.2	3.1	3.2	
13	The volunteer CASA/GALs visit the children regularly.	2.9	2.9	----	
14	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks good questions.	3.0	2.9	----	
15	The volunteer CASA/GAL explain their role.	2.9	3.0	----	
16	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks my opinion.	3.0	3.0	----	
17	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a positive reputation in my community.	2.9	----	3.5	☞
18	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a good working relationship with others involved in the case.	2.9	----	3.3	☞

☞ indicates statistically significant difference between groups at $p < .01$

End Table #5

Discussion of Table #5

This table compares the results of like survey questions between child welfare workers, parents and judges/attorneys. In examining these results, judges/attorneys consistently scored the items higher than the other two groups. The difference is statistically significant at the .01 level of significance for eleven of the fourteen questions. There were few differences between the responses from child welfare workers and parents with the average scores of their responses on most items around 3.0, which is good. Findings do indicate, however, that child welfare workers scored CASAs lower than parents or judges/attorneys in the areas of understanding the child welfare system. This difference is also statistically significant at the .01 level of significance.

Table #6:

This table provides a visual of where the differences are between the three groups (as reported in Table #5 above). The “ + “ indicates that the group scored the question statistically higher than the other two groups whereas a “ – “ indicates the group scored the item statistically lower than the other two groups.

Table #6: Significant Differences Between Groups [Child Welfare Workers, Parents and Judges/Attorneys]

		CWW	Parents	Judges/ Attorneys
1	I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL.			
2	The volunteer CASA/GAL acts professionally.			+
3	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the court system.			

Table #6 continued on next page

Table #6 continued

		CWW	Parents	Judges/ Attorneys
4	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system.	—		
5	The volunteer CASA/GAL has an understanding of the needs of child(ren).			+
6	The volunteer CASA/GAL respects my opinion.			+
7	Volunteer CASA/GALs are working for the best interest of the child(ren)			+
8	I find volunteer CASA/GALs helpful.			+
9	CASA/GALs make a difference with the children they serve.			+
10	I would like to see more children served by the CASA/GAL program.			+
11	Volunteer CASA/GAL provide an objective opinion.			+
12	Volunteer CASA/GALs influence court decisions.			
13	The volunteer CASA/GALs visit the children regularly.			
14	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks good questions.			
15	The volunteer CASA/GAL explain their role.			
16	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks my opinion.			
17	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a positive reputation in my community.			+
18	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a good working relationship with others involved in the case.			+

+ indicates this group scored the question significantly higher than the other groups

- indicates this group scored the question significantly lower than the other groups

End Table #6

Table #7:

Table #7 below reports the mean (average) scores on each question for front line workers (n= 261) and supervisors (n= 53) within the child welfare worker group of respondents. The asterisk signifies that the difference is statistically significant.

Table #7 Comparison of Front Line Workers and Supervisors Front Line (n= 261) Supervisor (n= 53)

		Front Line (n= 261)	Supervisor (n= 53)	
1	I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL.	3.54	3.64	
2	The volunteer CASA/GAL acts professionally.	3.20	2.98	*
3	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the court system.	2.96	3.02	
4	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system.	2.68	2.63	
5	The volunteer CASA/GAL has an understanding of the needs of child(ren).	3.07	3.94	
6	The volunteer CASA/GAL respects my opinion.	2.96	2.92	
7	Volunteer CASA/GALs are working for the best interest of the child(ren).	3.24	3.15	
8	I find volunteer CASA/GALs helpful.	3.05	2.98	
9	CASA/GALs make a difference with the children they serve.	3.08	3.12	
10	I would like to see more children served by the CASA/GAL program.	3.09	3.08	
11	Volunteer CASA/GAL provide an objective opinion.	2.71	2.63	
12	Volunteer CASA/GALs influence court decisions.	3.19	3.30	
13	The volunteer CASA/GALs visit the children regularly.	2.90	2.90	
14	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks good questions.	3.04	3.00	

Table #7 continued on next page

Table #7 continued

15	The volunteer CASA/GAL explains their role.	2.94	2.91	
16	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks my opinion.	3.02	2.83	
17	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a positive reputation in my community.	2.90	2.98	
18	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a good working relationship with others involved in the case.	2.86	2.71	

☞ indicates statistically significant difference between groups at $p < .01$

End Table #7

Discussion of Table #7

This table examines the findings of front line child welfare workers and child welfare supervisors for differences. The supervisors rated CASA higher on about half of the items whereas the front line supervisors rated them higher on the other half. The only finding that was statistically significant was regarding the statement, *The volunteer CASA/GAL acts professionally*, with supervisors scoring the item significantly lower than front line workers.

Table #8:

This table allows for a comparison of the average (mean) scores of the parent group. For comparison purposes this group of respondents was divided into two groups such that one group represents the opinions of biological parents and relatives of children while the other group represents the opinions of foster and adoptive parents. There were no statistically significant differences between these groups on any of the survey items. This may be partially due to the smaller sample size.

Table #8 Comparison of Biological Parents/Relatives and Foster/Adoptive parents

		Bio/Relatives (n = 97)	Foster/Adopt (N= 157)
1	I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL.	3.35	3.52
2	The volunteer CASA/GAL acts professionally.	3.12	3.20
3	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the court system.	3.16	3.22
4	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system.	3.02	3.14
5	The volunteer CASA/GAL has an understanding of the needs of child(ren).	2.81	2.97
6	The volunteer CASA/GAL respects my opinion.	2.91	3.05
7	Volunteer CASA/GALs are working for the best interest of the child(ren)	2.96	3.08
8	I find volunteer CASA/GALs helpful.	2.88	3.05
9	CASA/GALs make a difference with the children they serve.	2.98	3.10
10	I would like to see more children served by the CASA/GAL program.	2.96	3.30
11	Volunteer CASA/GAL provide an objective opinion.	2.87	2.97
12	Volunteer CASA/GALs influence court decisions.	3.17	3.08
13	The volunteer CASA/GALs visit the children regularly.	2.80	2.87
14	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks good questions.	2.87	2.96
15	The volunteer CASA/GAL explain their role.	2.98	3.04
16	The volunteer CASA/GAL asks my opinion.	2.86	3.01
17	I am treated respectfully by the volunteer CASA/GAL.	3.01	3.21

End Table #8

Discussion of Table #8

This table examines the data for differences between two groups of parents. One group includes biological parents and relatives and the other group includes non-relative foster parents and adoptive parents. Findings indicate no statistically significant differences between these two groups on any of the survey items. In other words, biological parents/relatives and foster/adoptive parents all rated CASA workers about the same. Most all of the scores ranged between 2.8 and 3.1 which indicates positive responses to the each of the items. A somewhat higher rating was given to the statement, *I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL.* (3.3 biological/relatives and 3.5 foster/adoptive). This indicates that in general parents have a good understanding of the role of the CASA volunteer.

Table #9:

Table #9 below reports the mean (average) scores on each question for the judges/attorneys' surveys. For comparison purposes this group of respondents was divided into three groups such that one group represents the opinions of judges/attorneys (n=48), one group represents the opinion of the attorneys for the children (n= 34), and one group represents the opinion of the attorneys for the parents (n=13). The asterisk signifies that the difference is statistically significant. The following table (Table #10) provides a graphic of the differences between these groups.

Table #9 Three Group Comparison of Judges/Attorneys, Child Attorneys, and Parents Attorneys

		Judges (n=48)	Att. Child (n= 34)	Att. Parent (n= 13)	
1	I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL.	3.75	3.74	3.38	
2	The volunteer CASA/GAL acts professionally.	3.67	3.50	3.08	👍
3	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the court system.	3.30	3.12	2.58	👍
4	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system.	3.16	3.03	2.67	
5	The volunteer CASA/GAL has an understanding of the needs of child(ren).	3.62	3.53	2.80	👍
6	The volunteer CASA/GAL respects my opinion.	3.51	3.61	2.50	👍
7	Volunteer CASA/GALs are working for the best interest of the child(ren).	3.76	3.65	3.09	👍
8	I find volunteer CASA/GALs helpful.	3.77	3.50	3.64	👍
9	CASA/GALs make a difference with the children they serve.	3.70	3.58	2.91	👍
10	I would like to see more children served by the CASA/GAL program.	3.83	3.64	2.92	👍
11	Volunteer CASA/GALs influence court decisions.	3.48	3.29	2.64	
12	Volunteer CASA/GAL provide an objective opinion.	3.33	3.18	3.33	
13	The volunteer CASA/GALs are prepared for court hearings.	3.57	3.53	3.17	
14	The volunteer CASA/GAL make appropriate recommendations.	3.48	3.32	2.80	👍
15	The volunteer CASA/GALs are valuable to the courts.	3.77	3.44	2.82	👍
16	It is important for volunteer CASA/GALs to attend court hearings	3.77	3.68	3.00	👍
17	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a positive reputation in my community.	3.80	3.38	3.00	👍
18	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a good working relationship with others involved in the case.	3.51	3.32	2.83	

#9

Discussion of Table #9

As indicated in Part 5 of this report, judges surveys were sent to judges as well as attorneys for the children and attorneys for the parents. When participating programs made available names and mailing addresses for attorneys, these persons were sent a survey. Table #9 provides a comparison of the ratings for judges, attorneys for children and attorneys for parents. There were statistically significant differences between these groups on twelve of the eighteen survey items. Table #10 below provides a graphic illustration of where these differences lie. As indicated, judges rated CASAs higher on ten of the survey items in comparison to both groups of attorneys. Attorneys for parents rated CASAs significantly lower on nine of the items compared to judges or attorneys for the children.

Table #10:

This table provides a visual of where the differences are between the judges, attorneys for children and attorneys for parents (as reported in Table #9 above). The “ + “ indicates that the group scored the question statistically higher than the other two groups whereas a “ – “ indicates the group scored the item statistically lower than the other two groups.

Table #10: Significant Differences between Judges, Child Attorneys, and Parents Attorneys

		Judges	Att. Child	Att. Parent
1	I understand the role of the volunteer CASA/GAL.			

2	The volunteer CASA/GAL acts professionally.	+		
3	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the court system.	+		
4	The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system.			
5	The volunteer CASA/GAL has an understanding of the needs of child(ren).			---
6	The volunteer CASA/GAL respects my opinion.			---
7	Volunteer CASA/GALs are working for the best interest of the child(ren).	+		---
8	I find volunteer CASA/GALs helpful.	+		
9	CASA/GALs make a difference with the children they serve.	+		---
10	I would like to see more children served by the CASA/GAL program.	+		
11	Volunteer CASA/GALs influence court decisions.			
12	Volunteer CASA/GAL provide an objective opinion.			
13	The volunteer CASA/GALs are prepared for court hearings.			
14	The volunteer CASA/GAL make appropriate recommendations.	+		---
15	The volunteer CASA/GALs are valuable to the courts.	+		---
16	It is important for volunteer CASA/GALs to attend court hearings	+		---
17	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a positive reputation in my community.	+		---
18	Volunteer CASA/GALs have a good working relationship with others involved in the case.			---

+ indicates this group scored the question significantly higher than the other groups
- indicates this group scored the question significantly lower than the other groups

End Table #10

B. Findings on Open-ended Questions

Almost every participant gave written responses to the open-ended questions at the end of the surveys. Because there were 742 surveys returned this resulted in a very large quantity of written comments. A summation of participant responses to the open-ended questions began with a thematic analysis. The researcher looked at all written comments from all participants on each question and then developed common “themes”. As is common in this type of data analysis, the themes for each open-ended question was given a code and then the text that corresponded with the theme was coded accordingly. The number of people who gave similar responses, according to the themes, was then tallied to gain an understanding of the most common responses to each open-ended question.

Provided below are the open-ended questions and associated themes. This is followed by a summation of respondent comments for each identified theme. Although the themes were selected based on ALL the responses, the summaries are reported according to the most common responses from each GROUP of participants (i.e., judges/attorneys, child welfare workers and parents). However, open-ended question #3 (*Please give an example of something a CASA volunteer did that you found helpful.*) lends itself best to specific examples. Therefore, following the thematic analysis for question #3, verbatim responses from the various participants are given. The specific comments chosen are believed to represent a wide variety of examples.

Thematic Analysis- Open-Ended Question #1:

In what ways could volunteer CASAs better serve children?

There were three prominent themes (#1-#3 below) that surfaced from all respondents regarding this question. In addition, three less prominent themes (#4-#6 below) also emerged from the comments of the respondents. What follows is an explanation of the themes and then specific thematic findings for each participant group (Judges/Attorneys, Child Welfare Workers and Parents).

Theme #1: CASA could spend more time on case. This theme included the subcategories of 1) spending more time with the children, 2) spending more time with others involved in the case and 3) spending more time investigating/fact finding.

Theme #2: CASAs need more knowledge. Theme #2 included the subcategories of 1) knowledge of child development, 2) knowledge of the child welfare system, 3) knowledge of the court system and 4) knowledge of community resources.

Theme #3: CASAs need more training and supervision. Specifically, training regarding child welfare and court policies and procedures and supervision to oversee the activities of “new” volunteers.

Theme #4: CASA volunteers should not let their personal, often middle-class values interfere with their objectivity on a case. There are also cultural issues and personal biases that may interfere with the work of the CASA volunteer.

Theme #5: Theme #5 had to do with the primary role of the CASA being to advocate for the CHILD, not the PARENT.

Theme #6: This theme consisted of just overall general positive comments that respondents made regarding their experiences with CASAs volunteers (i.e., “We need more CASAs” and “I am very satisfied with CASAs”).

Specific Findings on Open-Ended Question #1:

In what ways could volunteer CASAs better serve children?

A. Judges/Attorneys

Fifty-one or 45% of the surveys returned by judges had a written comment under open-ended question #1 (*In what ways could volunteer CASAs better serve children?*) Of those, about half (24) made only very positive comments [as indicated in Theme #6 above]. Examples of these comments include “*CASAs are invaluable to the courts*”; “*We need more CASAs*”; and “*I wish I had one for every case*”.

The second most prominent comments made by judges and/or attorneys made had to do with Theme #3 above and the need for CASAs to have more training. More specifically, the judges and attorneys felt that CASAs needed more training in the area of court procedures. In addition, several of the respondents made similar comments but phrased it as needing more knowledge of the court system as indicated in Theme #2 above. Several also noted the need for CASAs to have more training and knowledge of the child welfare system policies and procedures.

A small number of the judges and attorney respondents (5 total) commented on the need for CASAs to spend more time on the case as indicated in Theme #1 above.

B. Child Welfare Workers

About three-fourths of the child welfare workers made comments under the first open-ended question: *In what ways could volunteer CASAs better serve children?* Of those that commented the most frequent response from child welfare personnel had to do with Theme #1 and the need for CASAs to spend more time on the case either with the children, others, or investigating.

The second most common theme that emerged from child welfare personnel had to do with Theme #6: general positive comments regarding individual CASAs and CASA programs. Several respondents reported the many positive experiences they had regarding specific volunteers. This was followed closely by a number of comments from child welfare personnel that indicated that CASAs should not let their personal values interfere with their objectivity on the case, Theme #4 above. More specifically, there were comments from child welfare personnel that indicated CASAs often have middle-class values and do not appreciate the different value and cultural systems of clients. However, others reported somewhat the opposite by stating that the objectivity of the CASA worker was perhaps their greatest strength or asset.

A large number (38) of the child welfare workers also made comments that fit into Themes # 2 and #3. Most of these comments had to do with CASAs needing more training in the area of child welfare policy, procedure, and understanding of the limitations and the roles of child welfare workers. There were also several comments from child welfare personnel about the need for CASAs to have more knowledge and training in regard to court procedures.

A very small number (six) of the child welfare workers made comments as indicated in Theme # 5 in that their experience with CASAs was that the CASA was advocating for the parents when they should recognize their roles as advocates for the child. A few child welfare workers reported that CASAs were over involved in the case.

C. Parents

About 70% of the parents who responded to the survey commented on this question whereas about 30% left it blank. The most common response from parents when asked *In what ways could volunteer CASAs better serve children?* had to do with Theme # 1 and the need for CASAs to spend more time on the case. More specifically, parents suggested that CASAs spend more time with the children. About fifty (18%) of the parents who wrote in comments under this question mentioned that they would like for CASAs to spend more time “*getting to know*” the children.

The second most frequent comments from parents was in regard to Theme # 6 which was general positive comments about CASAs volunteers. About forty-five

parents commented on how “valuable” or “great” a particular CASA worker was and that the biggest strength of the volunteers was their one-on-one involvement with the children.

Thematic Analysis- Open-Ended Question #2:

In what ways could volunteer CASAs work better with YOU?

The researcher identified six basic themes from the responses given by participants to this question. These themes are identified below.

Theme #1: This theme had to do with the issue of communication. It usually referred to communication between the CASA and the Child Welfare worker and between the CASA and parents (both biological and foster/adoptive). In addition, theme #1 included comments from respondents about CASAs being more a part of the “team” and their willingness to share their information with child welfare workers and/or parents.

Theme #2: Primarily a theme based on the comments from child welfare workers, theme #2 had to do with the CASA volunteer respecting and understanding the role of social workers/child welfare workers. In addition, comments such as CASAs being “less critical” of social workers/child welfare workers and showing “better understanding of the limitations” of child welfare workers were included in this theme.

Theme #3: Theme #3 elicited the belief that CASA volunteers could benefit from more training and education (i.e. of the child welfare system, policies and procedures, laws, and the legal system).

Theme #4: To have more contact with the children.

Theme #5: Theme #5 emerged around the topic of CASAs being able to formulate their own opinions, thus relying less on child welfare workers for information.

Theme #6: Again, under this question, theme #6 involved overall positive comments about CASA volunteers (i.e. “*CASA is Great*” and, “*I am very satisfied with CASAs*”).

Specific Findings on Open-Ended Question #2:

In what ways could volunteer CASAs work better with YOU?

A. Judges/Attorneys

The most frequent response to this question from judges and attorneys was around Theme #6 above. Of those who commented, the majority just made basic supportive statements of CASA volunteers and the CASA program (i.e. “*keep up the good work*”, and “*our local CASA program is great*”. A small number of respondents (four) suggested again that CASA volunteers could benefit from more training regarding court processes and procedures.

B. Child Welfare Workers

Twenty percent of the child welfare workers that responded to this question mentioned improved communication as a way for CASA volunteers to work better with them (as in Theme #1 above). In general, the child welfare workers believed

CASAs could work more effectively with them if they shared their ideas and information and thus became “*part of the team*”.

The next more frequent comments from child welfare workers were around Theme #2 above (i.e. respect and understanding for the child welfare worker). Forty-five respondents (13% of those who replied) made comments around the theme of respect for the child welfare worker and understanding their roles and limitations. Several commented on the need for CASA volunteers to work with them versus against them.

Finally, 14 workers made comments that had to do with the need for CASA volunteers to formulate their own opinions and collect their own information about the case rather than relying on the child welfare worker for information.

It should also be noted that several child welfare personnel reported that there was nothing CASA could do to improve their relationships with child welfare personnel.

C. Parents

Very few parents in the survey wrote comments regarding this question (about 30% of the parent sample). Of those that did respond the most common response had to do with communication as in Theme # 1 above. A small number of parents stated that it would be helpful if CASA volunteers spent more time getting to know the children (Theme # 4). And a few of the parents commented that the CASA volunteer should spend more time getting to know them (the parent). There were also

a couple of parents who reported that CASA volunteers have unrealistic expectations of families.

Some verbatim responses from parents regarding CASAs are provided in the following section.

Thematic Analysis- Open-Ended Question #3:

Please give an example of something a CASA volunteer did that you found helpful.

[This question was excluded from the judges/ attorneys survey]

[Note: Some of these practices are not sanctioned by the National CASA Association.

Theme #1: Helpful in supervising visits – is a second set of eyes and ears for visits between children and family members.

[According to National CASA Associations’ standards, although a CASA/GAL volunteer’s observation of family visitation is encouraged, supervision of visits is not. It is the role of the social services department, not the CASA/GAL program to supervise family visits.]

Theme #2: Helpful in assisting with transportation (i.e. to doctors and therapy appointments, to visits with family members).

[Although many CASA/GAL programs allow their volunteers to transport children, many other programs do not. If a CASA/GAL program allows their volunteers to transport children, programs will want to consult the National CASA Association standards regarding recommended policies.

Theme #3: Helpful in finding “extra’s” for the children or finds additional resources (i.e. extra curricular activities, Christmas gifts, summer camps, college scholarships).

[Although CASA/GAL volunteers often facilitate resources for children, National CASA Association standards prohibit volunteers from giving money or expensive gifts to the child or family.]

Theme #4: Helpful when they attend school meetings and visit foster homes and then share the information with the child welfare/social worker.

Theme #5: CASAs are most helpful because they have a long-term relationship with the child (i.e., social workers change, CASA remain the same; “*CASAs know the child versus know about the child*”).

Theme #6: Provides parents and children with information about the court process and answers questions about the process.

Theme #7: NOTHING. (It seems relevant and important to note that a number of respondents replied to this question by stating “nothing”.)

Verbatim responses from participants on open-ended question #3

Please give an example of something a CASA volunteer did that you found helpful.

As noted above, this question also lends itself to specific examples. Therefore, verbatim responses from the various participants are given below. These comments were chosen because they are believed to represent a variety of examples. In addition, only positive responses are provided because it is believed that more can be learned from positive versus negative examples.

A. Child Welfare Workers

Please give an example of something a CASA volunteer did that you found helpful?

“Because of a very involved African American CASA, I was able to get connected to an [African American] family more than I ever could have on my own. She visited regularly and participated actively in all meetings.” Front line worker

“[The CASA] used her expertise to navigate the special education system to get a child identified and in special classes quickly and helped caseworkers understand that process.” Front line worker

“CASA went out of her way to adopt a child for Christmas. The gifts were wonderful – the child would not have had any gifts if it weren’t for this CASA volunteer.”
Front line worker

“[The CASA] Went out with me to try and find a child.” Front line worker

“[The CASA] Spoke with 17 parties involved with the case and was able to share important information I had not had time to locate.” Front line worker

“Most recently I received a case that had several workers assigned over the two years it was open. Since the CASA had served the case the entire time, I was able to search valuable information that had been lost due to staff turnover.” Front line worker

“She [the CASA] was a consistent presence in my clients’ lives (4 children/siblings) when everything else around them was quickly changing. She volunteered an incredible amount of time to the children we worked with and it really helped in stabilizing their behavior and placement.” Front line worker

“CASA- child ran from foster care. CASA kept her at her home until we could provide another placement.” Front line worker

“A CASA advocated for a child to receive better special education services. Her background was in education so she had insight into how to solve the problem.”
Front line worker

“One CASA in particular stands out in my mind. He facilitated 6 siblings who are placed in 3 states, to visit each other 2 times a year for more than 5 years, so the siblings who were divided, could at least have contact. This CASA found local resources to pay for airfare and motel rooms and has been an outstanding support for the child and foster/adopt family.” Front line worker

“CASA has done a lot of digging for background info and that is very helpful!”
Front line worker

“She was the most consistent person on the case. When I was new to the case she put forth the extra effort to help me catch up. She has the most knowledge in re the case and really is the information person.” Front line worker

“[One CASA] submitted photos of the kids (recent photos) with every report to the court. She also sort of “tag-teamed” the case with me – as far as helping to dig up more information about the parents and the kids. That was great because my caseload is so big, and she only had that one case.” Front line worker

One CASA volunteer even assisted in gathering clothing for four children and purchased some items for these children with her own money, then drove the 130 mile round trip to deliver them!” Front line worker

“Working with an autistic child/minor that needed one on one time. This child did not like the CASA at first, but quickly warmed up to the CASA when that CASA gave the 11 year old child the time and space he needed to get familiar with her.” Front line worker

“I worked with one CASA who took the initiative in getting the teens she was working with involved in extra-curricular activities and exposing them to their options for college, life after 18, etc. She was able to do this without stepping on my toes as the social worker, and kept me informed of what they were doing. Truthfully, the best experiences I have had with CASAs are those that have regular contact with their child, keep me informed of good and bad issues, know how to respectfully disagree with my assessments and recommendations, and work collaboratively with me.” Front line worker

“Persistently checked that children’s rights were observed in foster home – really “trained” [Foster Parents] and held them accountable, passing observations along to [Social Worker]. Yes, even filing complaints with the foster care licensing office.”
Foster Parent Recruiter/Trainer

“Some CASAs have really tried to be helpful to the social workers. They’ll ask them what they can do for the case, who they can call and check on or verify. This has saved the worker time and sometimes the info the CASA gets is more than the worker may have because people may be less intimidated by their title.” Supervisor

“Provided her home as a neutral setting in which a prospective adoptive parents could meet and interact with a child without the child being aware that this was a prospective adoptive parent to reduce his emotional stress. The end result was a successful adoption!” Supervisor

“A child became very upset during their hearing. She would not calm down. However, the CASA volunteer was able to get the child to settle down and to listen.” Supervisor

“I cannot pick one example- Every time a CASA appears for court, his /her report is the first one I read because I know it will be the most thorough and informative. A CASA knows a child better than anyone else.” Deputy Juvenile Officer

“Was willing to stick with a difficult pre-teen through ups and downs, acting out, tantrums and was supportive and not excusing of the child. Lots of hard work – on her part – which has paid off for the child in the end.” Court Officer

“CASA talked to child about problems at home. Child confided abuse – neglect – abandonment – extreme physical hardships. CASA reported to juvenile court – CASA accompanied juvenile court and sheriff’s deputies to home to remove children. Child familiar with CASA – saw friendly face- removal easier on child especially and in general went smoothly with info from child.” Front line worker

B. Parents

Please give an example of something a CASA volunteer did that you found helpful?

“The CASA kept me from falling apart in court.” Biological Parent

“[The CASA] met me for dinner in a casual environment and talked in general to get to know me.” Biological Parent

“She would meet me places --treated me like a real person.” Biological Parent

“They [CASAs] have given me more hope.” Biological Parent

“[The CASA] helped to express the wants and desires of myself to the courts.”
Biological Parent

“They got me custody of my great nephew, and got him out of a bad situation.”
Great Aunt

“Social worker would not return phone calls, would not listen to us – simply ignored every member of the children’s paternal family – Not the case with the GALs. They always returned phone calls, listened to every member of our family, double checked everything we told them.” Relative

“She listens to me.” Relative

“Aiding me as a foster parent navigate the court systems. Helping me understand my and the children’s rights” Foster Parent

“Our CASA helped bridge the gap between [the children’s] different social workers on our case. As in many instances the CASA is the one constant in our foster child’s life.”
Foster Parent

“I needed help getting our foster child into her adoptive home sooner than the (state) agency was willing to do, and the CASA made some phone calls for me and we got her into her new home a great deal sooner than the state originally thought! They [CASAs] were very helpful!” Foster Parent

“Sometimes she kept me more informed about our case than the [Social Worker] did. I was never in the dark about what was going on.” Foster Parent

“She went with me to Headstart to help get services for the child.” Foster Parent

“[The CASA] helped us to reunite a sibling group.” Foster Parent

“[The CASA] advocated for our children to be reunited under one roof after years of separation.” Foster Parent

“Believed us. Did not make snap judgments.” Foster Parent

“After weeks/months of no visits, the parents surfaced and requested a visit. The CASA made sure she [The CASA] was present at the visit to provide a familiar face to the 14 mos. old child.” Foster Parent

“Just by showing up she [the CASA] made the child/teen feel cared about I think.”
Foster Parent

“She [the CASA] came to my house and stayed with my child while my husband took me to the hospital.” Foster Parent

“[The CASA] gave good advice to me as to how to handle complicated issues in the child protective services and court systems.” Foster Parent

“A child needed to see its biological brother. My CASA/GAL put out an all point bulleting on this case and the child was found another state. They were united.”
Foster Parent

“The current GAL/CASA calls me back and makes sure I know what is going on in court.” Foster Parent

“She came every 2 weeks. She became a friend to me and my child. She was very concerned with how the child was doing and with how the whole family was doing. . . I saw her more than the caseworker.” Foster/Adoptive Parent

“In one case it was the CASA/GAL input and visit with the biological family that was the deciding factor for the child to be put up for adoption.” Foster/Adoptive Parent

“Obtained needed history on the children.” Foster/Adoptive Parent

“She never gave up after she met us knowing we were the best choice for these kids and their lives would be better if they were with us. She gave the biological relatives their chances to prove themselves first and they couldn't and wouldn't comply to the laws.”
Foster/Adoptive Parent

“Keeping the children in our home to be adopted.” Adoptive Parent

“Anytime before a court appearance she would call me and let me know what to expect to happen. I valued that information since any decisions made impacted my grandson.”
Relative

Found a resource for financial assistance for the child to take an ACT preparation course; took personal interest in the child by celebrating her birthday; interpreted changes in court dates to me; explored other resources for child's summer school tuition” Residential Social Worker

Part 7: Summary and Recommendations

Study Limitations

The study sample is considered a convenient sample. Names and addresses for the sample were provided by CASA programs throughout the CASA ‘network’. The participating programs self-selected to be included in the study. The use of a convenient sample and of a self-selected group of participants poses many problems in regard to the generalizability of the findings to other programs. First, it is possible that programs that elected to be part of the study had above average positive reputations in their communities with judges/attorneys, child welfare offices and parents. This possibility leads to bias in the sample, in that the findings may in fact be unusually high. In other words, given a different sample, the findings may in fact be much different than those presented in this study. Generalizability of these findings to other CASA programs is cautioned.

The premise presented in this report is that the survey items represent “satisfaction” with CASA when in fact several of the items in the survey do not necessarily reflect satisfaction. For example, Question #1 *I understand the role of the CASA/GAL* does not really address “satisfaction” per se. In addition, the items do not add up in a cumulative score of satisfaction. Each survey item should be examined and considered individually.

Summary

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate very positive findings for volunteer CASA/GAL programs. When considering the average score on each survey item, nowhere did the respondents rate the questions below the ranking of “agree”. Although individuals certainly ranked some of the items lower (“disagree” or “strongly disagree”), the mean scores remained high. The one survey item that consistently scored high by all three groups was *I understand the role of the CASA/GAL volunteer*. Indicating that, in general, consumers have a good understanding of the role of the CASA volunteer. The two survey questions that consistently scored low were: *The CASA/GAL understands the court system* and *The CASA/GAL provides an objective opinion*. The low responses to these two questions have implications for volunteer CASA programs as discussed in the section below.

Judges and attorneys expressed a very high overall satisfaction with CASA programs. When comparing the three groups of respondents (judges/attorneys, child welfare workers, and parents) the judges/attorneys consistently ranked the survey items higher than did the other two groups. When comparing judges to attorneys the judges consistently scored CASA volunteers higher than did attorneys. This is not surprising in that most judges must sanction CASA programs in order for the program exist. CASA volunteers are typically appointed by judges and are thought of as an extra set of eyes and ears for judge. So, it is not surprising that the group to rate them highest would be the judges. The lowest ranking given by judges was in regard

to the volunteer's understanding, not of the court system, but of the child welfare system. Of the judges and attorneys who returned the surveys, many felt CASA volunteers needed more training and understanding of the child welfare process and procedures.

Child Welfare Workers scored the statements, *The volunteer CASA/GAL understands the child welfare system* and *Volunteer CASA/GALs provide an objective opinion* the lowest (mean = 2.7). The child welfare system is complex at best and a thorough understanding of this system by volunteer CASAs and GALs is unlikely. However, this findings may suggest the need for CASA programs to join in joint training sessions with child welfare personnel. In addition, CASA programs may want to consider examining the key elements of the system that are essential for volunteers to understand, such as mandated case review time frames and termination issues. More importantly perhaps is that volunteers understand their role within the complex child welfare and court systems and findings from this survey indicate that, in general, the role is understood.

When examining the comments from child welfare workers on the open-ended questions, it is clear that child welfare workers have very mixed sentiments about CASA volunteers. Perhaps more so than the other groups, the feedback from child welfare workers boils down to there are "effective" CASA volunteers and there are

“ineffective” CASA volunteers. This raised the question, Is an ineffective CASA volunteer better than no CASA volunteer?

Two other themes that consistently emerged in the open ended responses from child welfare workers had to do with 1) improved communications and 2) the need for volunteers to formulate their own opinions versus relying on the opinion of the child welfare worker. These themes have implications for training and supervision as is discussed below.

When asked to identify something a CASA did that was helpful, many child welfare workers reported very positive experiences with CASAs. It was not uncommon for the child welfare worker to report how “helpful” the CASA volunteer was to them.

The ratings from parents should be considered overall very good for CASA programs. There were not statistically significant differences between biological parents and foster parents on any of the survey items which was a bit of a surprising finding. In that one would expect foster parents to perhaps rate their experiences with CASA workers higher than biological parents. The fact that this did not occur speaks highly of the relationship CASA volunteers are able to form with both biological and foster parents. However, many biological parents and relatives made negative comments regarding their specific CASA volunteer in the open-ended question part of the survey. Again, suggesting there are “good” CASAs and “bad” CASAs. This

finding has implications regarding the screening process programs use when looking for more volunteers.

Child welfare personnel and parents scored the survey item, *Volunteer CASA/GALs provide an objective opinion* somewhat low relative to the other items. The implications for this findings are unclear. Programs may want to examine this finding and give it their own meaning. The assumption is that CASA volunteers may be biased toward children and against parents. This was better evidenced in the theme regarding whether the CASA volunteer is a child advocate or parent advocate.

Recommendations

The results from this survey suggest that most parties (especially judges) want more CASA volunteers appointed to cases. Continued funding for CASA programs is essential. The request for more volunteers on cases and the overall positive results from the survey suggests that for the most part CASAs should keep doing what they're doing.

The contradictory experiences with CASAs from child welfare workers and parents suggest that the performance of the volunteer has to do with the specific individual and how he/she carries out the role. The evidence in this study suggests that there CASA volunteer who are capable and effective and there are others who are less capable or effective. Considering that negative experiences with a volunteer may have detrimental effects on a program, this finding indicates a need for further

discussion and research about what to look for when searching for the “good” volunteer. In addition, the screening process used by program may need to be examined. Consider – An “ineffective” volunteer is not necessarily better than no volunteer.

In regard to the many comments made by survey participants about training and supervision, programs should constantly be evaluating their own training programs and assess whether the training is meeting the needs of the volunteers. Programs may want to consider joint trainings with court and child welfare personnel. This would also help improve communication among the parties. Volunteers simply must have frequent contact with their supervisor and given meaningful feedback regarding their performance as a volunteer. Perhaps through improved supervision (versus training) individual volunteers can better learn how to formulate their own opinions, be unbiased, and rely less on child welfare workers for information and ideas. Given limited budgets and time constraints, programs may wish to consider group supervision models. Volunteer supervisors should conduct annual or bi-annual performance evaluations with volunteers and be willing to terminate “bad” volunteers.

The theme regarding whether the CASA is a child advocate or parent advocate is complex at best. When the case plan involves reunification with the child's biological parents the role of the volunteer may in fact be one of a family or parent advocate. In contrast, when children are placed in foster care for lengthy periods of time and when reunification with a biological parent is no longer a viable option, the

role of the CASA is to advocate for a permanent placement for the child. CASA training and subsequent in-services and case discussions should frequently review and discuss the complex issues of child versus parent versus family advocacy.

The implementation of this survey and learnings about the instrument suggest the need for refinement of the survey instrument. The instrument should be standardized and designed for use by local programs. Individual programs can then administer the survey and report their results to the National CASA Association, where the findings can be consolidated.