

Informal Listening Sessions with National CASA CEO Michael Piraino

October 2009 – March 2010



During my travels the last few months, CASA and GAL program staff have shared their perceptions of the many issues in child welfare systems. While this is not a scientific survey, some themes were repeated from place to place. Below are some of the key points.

- Some child welfare systems are moving to either formal or informal policies against bringing children into foster care. Does this adequately balance safety and reunification, or is it just fixing the numbers not the lives?
- Many of you said you are getting more difficult cases. Is this the result of the economy, or child welfare systems screening out all but the most difficult cases?
- There is an increased reliance on home-based services to prevent removal at a time when there are fewer such services available.
- Systems of child protection may only be able to provide generic rather than targeted services.
- Systems may be using less qualified service providers.
- Maltreated children are showing up in other types of court cases; custody, truancy, domestic violence, etc.
- There are many concerns about the quality and availability of legal representation; by providing critical information, CASA/GAL volunteers often help them do their work. Yet this aspect of our work often goes unrecognized.
- Permanency plans for siblings are often inconsistent with each other. How do you maintain sibling contact in these cases?
- Inadequate bilingual services
- Issues with residential care
- There is an increased weight being placed on volunteers' shoulders. Volunteers often have to be the ones who will say what no one wants to hear, or tell the court what other participants are not able to say.
- Increased child welfare emphasis on strength-based service can discourage raising of negative information.
- There is a need for greater judicial education about CASA/GAL advocacy.
- If court proceedings become more adversarial, it increases the risk of potential for disaster in court when proceedings are more adversarial; turf issues, agendas and information being withheld, rather than building consensus, sharing information and problem solving.

Please share your thoughts about issues in child welfare in this [one-question poll](#). Responses are anonymous and will be shared with National CASA Michael Piraino to help inform National CASA's work.