

**Washington State Court Appointed Special Advocate Program Evaluation Report**

**Brief Report to Programs**

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## **Executive Summary**

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a volunteer appointed by the court to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in juvenile court dependency cases. CASAs investigate case information and the child's situation, recommend a course of action to the court, facilitate the resolution of problems and monitor progress towards establishing permanency for the child. CASAs provide juvenile court judges and commissioners with a source of information other than the parties involved in the dependency action and with an independent perspective regarding the best interests of abused and neglected children with open dependencies in the juvenile court.

### **CASA Assignment**

CASA programs in Washington began in 1977 and now serve children in 34 out of 39 counties. On average CASAs are assigned three children or sibling groups at a time. However, due to resource limitations not every child involved in a dependency action is assigned a CASA. There are various models of child representation throughout the state. All CASA programs employ staff to provide supervision to CASA volunteers. Some CASA programs also use paid staff to carry a caseload of legally dependent children. The youngest and most vulnerable children entering care are commonly assigned a CASA. Teens in larger counties are often represented by an attorney, only occasionally by a CASA. Some counties contract with Guardians ad Litem who work independently and may carry caseloads of 100 children or more.

### **Evaluating the Impact of CASA**

The Administrative Offices of the Courts, Center for Court Research, in partnership with evaluators at the University of Washington School of Social Work, conducted an evaluation of CASA case process and outcomes. The purpose of the outcome study was to assess children's permanency outcomes and placement stability associated with different types of representation for children involved in dependency proceedings. The process evaluation examined a variety of CASA investigative and monitoring activities documented in CASA reports to juvenile courts in Washington State.

The outcome study examined case outcomes for a cohort of 3,013 dependent children aged 0-12 at time of the dependency filing in 2004. Case outcomes were followed through August 31, 2008. Children in the sample were grouped according to the type of child representation they received: CASA, CASA staff, Contract GAL, No CASA/GAL, or Mixed Representation (when a case transferred from CASA to CASA staff or vice versa). Teens were not included in the analysis because of the disproportionate number of teens with no CASA or GAL representation.

Additionally, 215 cases were selected from the 2004 sample cohort and reviewed for CASA representation activities throughout the dependency process. The case record review included cases from the five largest county programs in Washington and captured information from CASA reports such as recommendations regarding services to children/parents, parental visitation and permanent placement for the child.

### **Quantitative Study Findings Regarding Child Representation**

#### **Sample Characteristics**

Of the sample of 3,013 children ages 0-12 entering the dependency system in 2004, CASAs represented 47.4% of the children, including 444 infants (0-12 months), 487 children ages 1-5, and 497 children ages 6-12. Staff GALs represented 18% of children, and Contract GALs, Mixed Representation and No Representation each comprised about 11% of the cases. The No Representation group was relatively small for infants and other pre-school children. Only about 15% of infants and other pre-school children lacked CASA or GAL representation; however, approximately one-third of children ages 6-12 had no CASA or GAL representation.

#### **Case Outcomes**

The study period was from the date the child's dependency petition was filed to case resolution or August 31, 2008. After a period of at least 44 months in care, 43% of children had been reunified, 33% had been adopted, 6% had entered into guardianships, and 18% were still in care. Children in these cases had typically experienced between two and three out-of-home placements, except for those still in care in August 2008 who had experienced an average of 5.2

placements. The median length of stay to reunification was 302 days or 10 months and to adoption was 819 days or 27 months.

*Case outcomes vary by the age of the child:* The table below illustrates permanency outcomes by age of the child at entry into care. Infants were far less likely to experience reunification with birth parents and more likely to be adopted as compared to older age groups of children. Guardianships were established for only 2% of infants. Older children were more likely to be reunified, but if 6 to 12-year-olds were not reunified, this age group was more likely to remain in care as compared to younger children. Guardianship was employed as a permanency option for children ages 6-12 almost as often as adoption.

Of concern from a practice and policy standpoint is the number of children remaining in open dependency cases in August 2008. Among 6 to 12-year-olds, 28% were still in care, and these children had experienced out-of-home stays of 44 to 56 months by August 2008.

**Table 1: Permanency outcome trends by age at entry into care**

	Among infants		Among 6 to 12-year-olds
<b>Rate of reunification</b>	32%	increases to	50%
<b>Rate of adoption</b>	56%	decreases to	12%
<b>Rate of guardianship</b>	2%	increases to	10%
<b>Rate of still-open</b>	11%	increases to	28%

*Case outcomes vary by race and ethnicity:* African American and Native American children were less often reunified and more often placed in guardianships as compared to Caucasian and Latino children. Native American and Latino children were less often adopted than African American or Caucasian children. Native American children were in still-open cases at nearly twice the rate of Caucasian children. African American children and Latino children also had elevated rates of still-open cases as compared to Caucasian children. See Table 2.

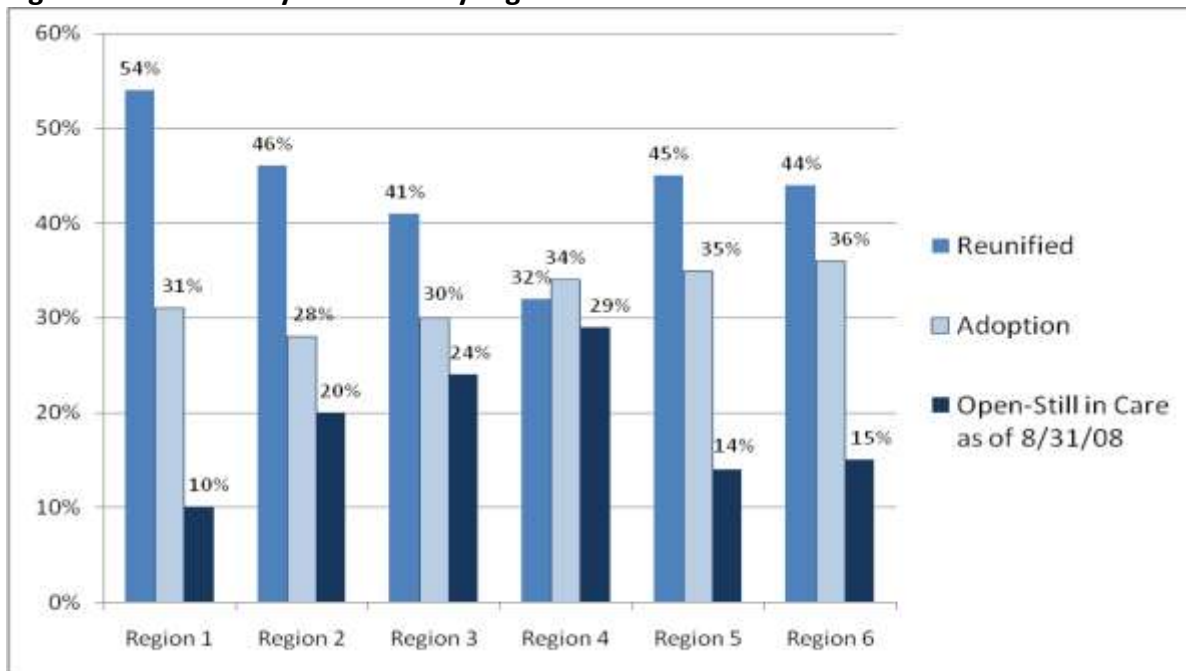
**Table 2: Race/ethnicity by case outcome**

Race/Ethnicity*	n	Reunified	Adopted	Guardianship	Open
Native American	337	40%	21%	10%	29%
African American	365	34	37%	8%	23%
Latino	412	45	29%	4%	22%
Caucasian	1,755	45	35%	4%	15%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,869</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>19%</b>

\*Does not include Asian/Pacific Islander and children with unreported race.

*Local Influences on Case Outcomes:* CASA programs have developed and operate within local child welfare and judicial frameworks across the state. Juvenile courts are responsible for permanency decisions in dependency cases, and their caseloads, judicial rotations and court practices vary considerably at the county level. Practice variations across Children’s Administration’s six regions almost certainly also influence child outcomes. Finally, regional differences, such as rates of poverty and urban density may influence the caseload mix and case outcomes of children in dependency cases (see Figure 2). Since these intervening variables could not be accounted for in this analysis, regional and county level findings from this study are perhaps most instructive to CASA programs and other stakeholders. These data provide a baseline for examining outcomes at the local level. See Appendices B-E.

**Figure 1: Permanency outcomes by region**



### **Case Outcomes by Age and Type of Representation**

The value of CASA or contract GAL representation was more evident for children 0-5 than for 6 to 11-year-olds. School-age children 6-11 represented by a CASA or GAL were as likely or more likely to be in the still-open group of unresolved dependencies 44-54 months after filing of dependency as 6 to 11-year-olds with no representation. Infants and 1 to 5-year-old children with either CASA or contract GAL representation were significantly less likely than children with no representation to be still open in August 2008.

Infants with CASA representation had a modestly elevated adoption rate compared to infants represented by CASA staff or contract GALs; but 1 to 5-year-olds represented by CASAs had slightly lower rates of adoption than pre-school children represented by CASA staff or contract GALs.

Adopted children represented by CASAs had much shorter lengths of stay (LOS) in out-of-home care (by 150 days) than contract GALs, a large difference suggesting that CASAs actively seek to reduce the time required to complete adoptions.

CASA staff had higher rates of reunification and lower rates of still-open cases for all three age groups. These permanency outcomes suggest the possibility that CASA staff have a more balanced approach to permanency planning and give greater priority to the need of school-age children for permanent families than either CASAs or contract GALs.

The effects of type of representation on permanency outcomes were highly varied from region to region, an indication of the differences among CASA programs and of the influence of varying decision-making cultures in judicial systems and child welfare offices around the state.

Children without representation had shorter LOS (by 70 days or more) to reunification than children with CASA staff, CASA or contract GAL representation. On average the children without

representation were older at entry, and it is possible that some of these children were assessed as likely to return home quickly, and therefore were not assigned representation.

Type of representation had no effect on placement stability or instability which was strongly associated with length of stay, i.e, longer lengths of stay led to more placements. Children in still-open cases had been in an average of 5.2 placements, about double the average for adopted or reunified children. Table 3 below details case outcomes for children by slightly different age groupings and by type of representation. Children ages 6-11 were far more likely than younger children to be in still-open cases in August 2008. The risk that dependent school-age children who are not reunified with birth parents in a timely way will be left without a permanent family years after being placed in out-of-home care stands out in this study.

**Table 3: Age at entry into care and child representation**

		n	Reunified %	Adopted %	Guardianship %	Open %
<b>Infants</b>	CASA	444	29	59	2	10
	CASA Staff	170	38	53	3	6
	Contract GAL	101	36	50	4	11
	Mixed Representation	94	32	54	3	11
	No CASA/GAL	74	26	51	0	23
	<b>Total</b>	<b>883</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Ages 1-5</b>	CASA	487	44	32	5	19
	CASA staff	189	50	36	5	10
	Contract GAL	117	47	38	2	14
	Mixed Representation	116	45	41	3	11
	No CASA/GAL	84	50	19	2	29
	<b>Total</b>	<b>993</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Ages 6-11</b>	CASA	461	48	16	9	26
	CASA Staff	189	57	16	8	18
	Contract GAL	115	53	10	4	32
	Mixed Representation	107	47	24	11	18
	No CASA/GAL	152	47	10	16	27
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,024</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>25%</b>

### **Case Record Review Findings**

A random sample of CASA-assigned cases, stratified by three child age groupings, was drawn from dependency cases filed in 2004 in Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish and Spokane Counties. The cases reviewed represented over one-fifth of the CASA-assigned cases in these counties in 2004 and about one-eighth of all 2004 dependencies filed in these counties for children ages birth to 12 years. This review found much higher rates of CASA stability on cases as compared to assigned Children's Administration (CA) social workers. Two out of three cases had just one CASA over the life of the dependency, whereas in King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties, two-thirds of cases had three or more social workers. Though not examined in this study, issues such as judicial rotation, court calendars, and attorney caseloads may limit case continuity provided by judges and attorneys. In this context, CASAs often hold the child's case history over the course of the dependency.

CASA investigation and monitoring activities on behalf of children was evident in the range and number of persons contacted by CASAs to prepare their reports. These included contact with the CA social worker, the child, her/his parents, foster parents, siblings and relatives as well as service providers involved in the case. The median number of persons contacted by the CASA throughout the life of the case was nine, and frequently CASAs had multiple contacts with these individuals. The format and content of the CASA reports varied across the five programs, thus cross-site comparison was limited, particularly for service recommendations and contacts.

Regarding child placement and permanency planning, CASAs mainly agreed with the case plans of the social workers at court hearings. However, in one sixth of cases, the CASA's report showed evidence of disagreement with the child's current placement or with the social worker's permanent plan. In 92% of the cases, the judge concurred with the CASA's permanency recommendations. The focus of the CASA reports tended to reflect local jurisdictional and CA permanency practices. That is, the CASA reports were more decisive regarding permanency in jurisdictions where cases tended to be resolved in a timely manner.

## Conclusions

Together, the large cohort analysis and the case record review indicate that CASAs, along with the courts and Children's Administration, have prioritized timely permanency for the youngest children in care. Yet, in this sample, the children at greatest risk for remaining in care for four or more years entered as 6-12 year olds. This group of children was more likely to reunify as compared to younger children in the dependency system yet far less likely to be adopted. A sizable portion of these children were in the care of relatives. Decision-making around permanency options which allow these children to become legally stabilized in the homes of relatives is critical.

Previous research has estimated that up to half of school-age children in foster care may have begun to display significant behavioral and emotional problems which may or may not have been identified as they entered care.<sup>1</sup> Over time, these children often experience multiple moves in care, group care placements, and a lack of continuity in nearly every familial and adult relationship in their life. CASA programs should consider making an increased commitment to stable case assignment and timely permanency for school age dependent children, especially children of color who are at elevated risk for lengthy stays in out-of-home care and a lack of permanency by virtue of their race / ethnicity as well as their age.

A challenge to the dependency system in our state and to CASA programs is to reduce the rate of unresolved dependency at three or more years. Findings from this study may serve as baseline comparisons for current and future program improvement efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> Landsverk J, Hurlburt M, Leslie L. (2007). Systems Integration and Access to Mental Health Care. In *Child Protection: Using Research to Improve Policy and Practice*. Haskins R, Wulszyn F and Bruce Webb M, eds. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

## Appendix A: Washington State CASA Program Logic Model

RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	PROGRAM GOALS	
Staff	Recruit CASA volunteers	Provide a CASA for every child in dependency in WA state	<i>See following pages for details on:  Objectives, Indicators, and Data Sources</i>
CASA Volunteers	Train and support CASA Volunteers	Improve immediate outcomes for kids: minimize trauma, pain, and attachment problems; maximize access to services and continuity with school, birth family.	
Funding County New State Investment	Receive case referrals		
	Assign and track cases		
Partnerships	CASA volunteer contact hours with children	Improve intermediate child outcomes: timely permanency, access to needed services, child safety- best interests of child, attachment to family/sibs, no re-abuse in care or re-entry	
	CASA volunteer contact hours with families		
	CASA volunteer contact hours with other parties to the case		
	CASA makes referrals and advocates for services for the child	Contribute to long term positive outcomes for the child/youth/young adult	
	CASA writes court reports, recommending placement and permanency plans		
	CASA testifies in court as to child's best interests		

CASA Logic Model

PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS	Data Source		
		CASA	CAMIS	COURT
<b>1.0 Provide a CASA for every child in dependency in WA</b>				
1.1 Increase number of volunteer coordinators (program managers)	Total Staff Count and Staff FTE's	X		
1.2 Decrease staff case loads	Staff Case Load Size	X		
1.3 Increase number of CASA volunteers recruited	Volunteers who are assigned at least one case.	X		
1.4 Increase number of CASA volunteer retained	Length of service beginning with first case. <i>(currently WACASA measures turnover-number at beginning of year vs number lost)</i>	X		
1.5 Increase proportion and number of volunteers of color	Ethnic/Racial composition of CASA volunteers	X		
1.6 Increase cultural competency among all CASA volunteers	Completion of training by CASA staff	X		
<b>2.0 Improve immediate outcomes for kids (investigate, advocate, &amp; monitor, maximize access to services and continuity with school, birth family)</b>				
2.1 Contribute to speedy resolution of case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decrease 'time out-of-home' or 'time without permanent plan'</li> <li>- Fewer continuances in court proceedings</li> <li>- More permanent case plans (reunification &amp; adoption, vs. guardianships &amp; long term foster care)</li> </ul>		X	X
2.2 Increase Placement Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of Out-of-home Placements</li> </ul>		X	
2.3 Contribute to the maximization of continuity of services (school, health, mental health, ...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of school changes</li> <li>- Child's needed services ordered and provided (Health, Mental health services, dental care, psychological/educational assessments, educational services)</li> </ul>		ISSP, CHET Fiscal & Medicaid records	Court reviews
2.4 Assess best interests of the child through continuous, positive relationship with child/ family & communication with key parties in the case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More contact with child</li> <li>- More contact with family (mother to court)</li> <li>- Attend court hearings</li> <li>- Written reports and testimony/oral reports to court</li> </ul>	X X X X		X
2.5 Contribute to placement in least restrictive setting (appropriate setting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Placement Type                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Kinship- Unlicensed or licensed</li> <li>2) Family Foster Care</li> <li>3) Therapeutic Foster Care</li> <li>4) BRS-Group Home/Residential</li> </ol> </li> <li>- Placement with sibs</li> <li>- Less time out-of-home</li> </ul>		payment screen: rate determination Level 1-4 & BRS	

CASA Logic Model

PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS	Data Source		
		CASA	CAMIS	COURT
<b>3.0 Improve intermediate child outcomes: timely permanency, access to needed services, child safety (best interests of child), attachment to family/sibs, no re-abuse in care or re-entry</b>				
3.1 Increase permanent case dispositions (reunification, adoption) and decrease less permanent case dispositions (Guardianship- kinship or other, long term foster care, Aged Out, 3rd party Custody, None)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dependency Petition File Date</li> <li>- Return Home Date</li> <li>- In home Dependency Dismissal</li> <li>- TPR Date- Voluntary or by Trial</li> <li>- Adoption finalization Date</li> <li>- Guardianship disposition,</li> <li>- Aged Out Dismissal</li> <li>- 3rd Party Custody Agreement,</li> <li>- No Permanent Plan established</li> </ul>		X legal placement screen	X
3.2 Increase follow-through on needed services	Services sustained over time in care (health & dental care, mental health services, psychological/educational assessments, educational services)		X	
3.3 Increase visitation (contact) with birth family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequency and % visits attended by mother/father</li> <li>- Sibling contact</li> <li>- Other relative contact</li> </ul>		ISSP ISSP SERS	
3.4 Decrease repeated abuse/neglect	No new accepted/founded CPS reports		X	
3.5 Incidence of abuse and or neglect in foster care	No accepted/founded reports of children experiencing maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff.		X	
3.6 Decrease re-entry into judicial system (re-abuse)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Return Home Date</li> <li>- Re-Entry Date within 12 months</li> </ul>		X	X
<b>4.0 Contribute to long term positive outcomes for the child/youth/young adult</b>	Linked to the research literature on foster care alumni			
4.1 Fewer mental health problems				
4.2 Educational attainment- High School completion				
4.3 Less substance abuse				
4.4 Housing stability				
4.5 Employment				
4.6 Less criminal activity- Less involvement in juvenile justice system				

**CASA Logic Model**

<b>Intervening Variables</b>	<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>CASA</b>	<b>CAMIS</b>	<b>COURT</b>
Presenting Risk Characteristics of the Case	Parental Substance Abuse Mental Health Issues Homelessness Neglect Evidence of Injury Multiple forms of neglect Physical Abuse Sexual Abuse New Episode of CA/N			Dependency Petition Findings in Legal Orders
# CASAs on case	Case assignment	X		
# Social Workers on case	CA Case Assignment		X	
# CASA Contacts w/ child		X		
CASA Training and Experience	Number of months as a CASA Number of cases handled	X		
Timing of CASA assignment	Stage of Case (i.e. shelter care, fact finding, 6 month hearing)	X		
Judge Assignment/ Jurisdiction				X
Judicial Interventions (e.g. drug court, parenting classes)			X	X
Availability of Services and Funding for Services				
<b>Case Descriptive Characteristics</b>				
Child Age	Date of Birth		X	Dependency Petition
Child Gender	Male / Female		X	Dependency Petition
Mother Status	Primary Caregiver Not Involved, Deceased, Incarcerated, Whereabouts Unknown		X	Dependency Petition
Father Status	Primary Caregiver Not Involved, Deceased, Incarcerated, Whereabouts Unknown		X	Dependency Petition
Other Caregiver	Primary Caregiver Not Involved, Deceased, Incarcerated, Whereabouts Unknown		X	Dependency Petition
Case Numbers	Unique to each system	X	X	X

## Appendix B: Clark County Outcomes

**Table 1. Percent of Children by Type of Representation and Age**

	(N)	Age of Dependent Child at Filing				All Ages (0-12)
		< 1	1-2	3-5	6-12	
CASA	(142)	26%	16%	19%	25%	85%
Staff GAL	(25)	4	1	4	7	15
	(167)	29	16	23	32	100

**Table 2. Percent of Children Aged 0-12 at Filing with Different Foster Care Outcomes**

	(N)	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still Open
CASA	(142)	52 <sup>a</sup>	28 <sup>a</sup>	6	15
Staff GAL	(25)	84 <sup>b</sup>	4 <sup>b</sup>	0	12
	(167)	57	24	5	14

**Table 3. Median Number of Out-of-Home Days from Dependency Petition to Reunification, Adoption, and for All Cases for Children Aged 0-12 at Filing**

	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
CASA	419 <sup>a</sup>	652	590 <sup>a</sup>
Staff GAL	69 <sup>b</sup>	*	227 <sup>b</sup>
	322	800	535

**Table 4. Mean Number of Foster Homes for Children Aged 0-12 by Type of Outcome**

	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still Open
CASA	2.5	2.4	3.0	5.1
Staff GAL	1.4	*	*	4.7
	2.2	2.5	3.1	5.0

\*Fewer than 5 cases

Different superscripts within a column represent statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ )

## Appendix C: Pierce County Outcomes

**Table 1. Percent of Children by Type of Representation and Age**

	(N)	Age of Dependent Child at Filing				All Ages (0-12)
		< 1	1-2	3-5	6-12	
CASA	(106)	13%	5%	5%	7%	30%
Staff GAL	(125)	11	8	6	11	35
Mixed Representation	(121)	8	7	9	11	34
	(354)	32	20	20	28	100

**Table 2. Percent of Children Aged 0-12 at Filing with Different Foster Care Outcomes**

	(N)	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still
					Open
CASA	(106)	39%	37%	6%	19%
Staff GAL	(125)	50	30	10	10
Mixed Representation	(121)	42	34	7	17
	(354)	44%	33	8	15

**Table 3. Median Number of Out-of-Home Days from Dependency Petition to Reunification, Adoption, and for All Cases for Children Aged 0-12 at Filing**

	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
CASA	334 <sup>a</sup>	820	677
Staff GAL	475 <sup>b</sup>	801	727
Mixed Representation	487	1044	774
	424	897	727

**Table 4. Mean Number of Foster Homes for Children Aged 0-12 by Type of Outcome**

	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still Open
CASA	2.3	2.4	1.7	6.4
Staff GAL	2.4	2.9	1.9	10.0
Mixed Representation	2.3	2.9	3.0	7.5
	2.3	2.7	2.2	7.7

Different superscripts within a column represent statistically significant differences (p < .05)

## Appendix D: Snohomish County Outcomes

**Table 1. Percent of Children by Type of Representation and Age**

	(N)	Age of Dependent Child at Filing				All Ages (0-12)
		< 1	1-2	3-5	6-12	
CASA	(126)	10%	6%	5%	9%	30%
Contract GAL	(59)	3	3	4	4	14
No CASA/GAL	(230)	12	8	11	25	55
	(415)	26	17	20	37	100

**Table 2. Percent of Children Aged 0-12 at Filing with Different Foster Care Outcomes**

	(N)	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still
					Open
CASA	(126)	25 <sup>b</sup>	48 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	24 <sup>a</sup>
Contract GAL	(59)	31	61 <sup>a</sup>	2	7 <sup>b</sup>
No CASA/GAL	(230)	44 <sup>a</sup>	21 <sup>b</sup>	10 <sup>a</sup>	25 <sup>a</sup>
	(415)	36	35	7	22

**Table 3. Median Number of Out-of-Home Days from Dependency Petition to Reunification, Adoption, and for All Cases for Children Aged 0-12 at Filing**

	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
CASA	336	961	921
Contract GAL	494	864	809
No CASA/GAL	218	1022	786
	273	925	844

**Table 4. Mean Number of Foster Homes for Children Aged 0-12 by Type of Outcome**

	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still
				Open
CASA	2.3	2.5	*	4.4
Contract GAL	1.8	2.8	*	*
No CASA/GAL	2.0	2.9	1.8	6.1
	2.0	2.7	2.0	5.5

\*Fewer than 5 cases

Different superscripts within a column represent statistically significant differences (p < .05)

## Appendix E: Spokane County Outcomes

**Table 1. Percent of Children by Type of Representation and Age**

	(N)	Age of Dependent Child at Filing				All Ages (0-12)
		< 1	1-2	3-5	6-12	
CASA	(163)	16%	10%	7%	12%	44%
Staff GAL	(123)	12	6	8	7	33
Mixed Representation	(71)	7	3	5	5	19
No CASA/GAL	(12)	1	1	1	1	3
	(369)	36	19	20	25	100

**Table 2. Percent of Children Aged 0-12 at Filing with Different Foster Care Outcomes**

	(N)	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still
					Open
CASA	(163)	44	39	6	12
Staff GAL	(123)	50	34	6	10
Mixed Representation	(71)	37	41	10	13
No CASA/GAL	(12)	50	33	0	17
	(369)	45	37	6	11

**Table 3. Median Number of Out-of-Home Days from Dependency Petition to Reunification, Adoption, and for All Cases for Children Aged 0-12 at Filing**

	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
CASA	199	757	512
Staff GAL	234	809	475
Mixed Representation	249	870	705
No CASA/GAL	*	*	636
	218	819	586

**Table 4. Mean Number of Foster Homes for Children Aged 0-12 by Type of Outcome**

	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still
				Open
CASA	2.1	2.2	3.7	4.3
Staff GAL	1.8	2.3	2.6	3.2
Mixed Representation	2.5	3.0	3.1	4.0
No CASA/GAL	*	*	*	*
	2.1	2.4	3.2	4.0

\*Fewer than 7 cases

Different superscripts within a column represent statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ )

## Appendix F: A Snapshot of Outcomes in the Five Largest Counties

Clark County: This county comprised 26% of Region 6 dependency cases. Among dependency cases for children ages 0-12, CASAs represented 85%. Clark County had high rates of reunification and low rates of adoption and open cases relative to the statewide sample.<sup>2</sup> The length of stay data in this county was close to the state average, as were the number of placements for children in open cases.

King County: CASAs represent 91% of cases of children ages 0 to 12 in King County. As compared to CASA represented cases, the small number of cases without representation was far more likely (46% vs 27%) to be still open as of August 2008. The length of stay to reunification was better than the statewide average, the length of stay to adoption was about average, but the rate of open cases was the highest in the state. However among the open cases, King County has the lowest average number of placements. Though placement type (kinship care, foster care, group care etc.) is not part of this analysis, these outcomes may be influenced by a high number of stable kinship placements for children in region 4. An area for further study includes improved permanency strategies for children in kinship care in this region.

Pierce County: Approximately 72% of Region 5 cases are in Pierce County and about 30% of cases in this county and in this region were represented by a CASA. The remainder of all children ages 0-12 years are represented in this county and region using program staff and mixed representation.

With relatively strong permanency outcomes and low rates of open cases, the length of stay to reunification and adoption are somewhat longer than the state averages, perhaps suggesting that a number of complex cases were resolved later in the review period between 2004 through August of 2008. Though relatively fewer children were remaining in care, those who did tended to be less stable as reflected in the higher mean number of placements.

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<sup>2</sup> The case record review of 46 cases in Clark County found that among reunified cases about one fifth were exits to legal guardians established through third party custody agreements. It is not possible to distinguish in this larger sample between reunifications to a parent or to a third party.

Snohomish County: This county comprises 68% of cases in the Region 3 sample. The length of stay to reunification was slightly better than the state median, whereas the length of stay to adoption and for all cases was much longer. With a high percentage of older children ages 6-12 in this region, practice around guardianships may need to be explored as a strategy for reducing the rate of still in care cases.

CASAs represented 30% of Snohomish County cases and 55% of cases in this county had no child representation at all (defined in this study as no representation within the first 24 months after filing). CASA assigned cases were associated with a lower rate of reunification and a higher rate of adoption as compared to no CASA cases and these findings were statistically significant. CASA cases also had a low rate of guardianship and a high likelihood to be still in care as compared to the state average. The relatively small number of contract GAL cases in this county had an unusually high rate of adoption. More information about assignment to contract GALs in this county may be needed to interpret this finding.

Spokane County: Cases from Spokane comprise 73% of the Region 1 cohort. This county had slightly higher rates of reunification and adoption and lower rates of open cases as compared to the statewide average. Regarding length of stay, this county had a relatively shorter median LOS to reunification, about the same length of stay to adoption and relatively shorter overall length of stay as compared to the statewide figures.

Though not statistically significant, CASA and CASA staff-represented cases had shorter lengths of stay, while mixed representation cases had longer lengths of stay across all three outcome categories (reunification, adoption and all cases). It is possible that the mixed representation cases were more complex cases to begin with. Regarding placement stability, this county's outcomes look better than the state average and this is likely attributable to the relatively shorter lengths of stay.