

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

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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 children, most often abused and neglected children in juvenile court dependency cases. CASAs investigate case information, 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 35 out of 39 counties. CASAs typically are assigned no more than three children or sibling groups at a time. However, because of resource limitations not every child involved in a dependency action is assigned a CASA. There are various models of child representation throughout the state. Some CASA programs employ staff to provide supervision to CASA volunteers while other 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, not by a CASA. Some counties contract with Guardians ad Litem who work independently and may carry caseloads of up to 100 children.

### **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 processes 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 categorized according to the type of child representation they received: CASA, CASA staff, Contract GAL, Mixed Representation (when a case transferred from CASA to CASA staff or vice versa), or No CASA/GAL. Children assigned attorneys were categorized as having No CASA/GAL. 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 school age children had no CASA or GAL representation.

### **Case Outcomes**

The study period was from the date the child's dependency petition was filed to either case resolution or August 31, 2008 if the case was still open. After a period of up to 44-56 months in care (depending upon the petition date in 2004), 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; these children had experienced an average of 5.2 placements. The median length of stay to reunification was 302 days or 10 months and was 819 days or 27 months to adoption.

*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 to 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.

**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.

*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. Because 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.

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

The value of CASA or contract GAL representation was more evident for infants and children ages 1-5 than for school age children. School-age children represented by a CASA or GAL were as likely or more likely to be in the still-open group of unresolved dependencies as school-age children 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 in open cases.

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 children of the same age 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 open cases for all three age groups. These permanency outcomes suggest the possibility that CASA staff have a more balanced approach to permanent planning and give greater priority to the needs 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. It is possible that children assessed as likely to quickly return home were less likely to have representation assigned.

Type of representation had no effect on placement stability or instability, though longer lengths of stay were associated with more placement moves. Children in open cases had been in an average of 5.2 placements, about double the average for adopted or reunified children.

### **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. CASA investigation and monitoring activities on behalf of children were 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 focus of the CASA reports tended to reflect local jurisdictional and CA permanency practices. Furthermore, the format and content of the CASA reports varied considerably across the five programs. The lack of consistency regarding CASA recommendations to the courts limited the scope of this analysis.

## **Conclusion**

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 had a dependency petition filed on their behalf as 6-12 year olds. This age group of children was more likely to be reunified, yet far less likely to be adopted as compared to the younger children in the sample. 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.

It is estimated that up to half of school-age children in foster care display significant behavioral and emotional problems which may or may not have been identified as they entered care (Landsverk et al., 2007). 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 of CASAs 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 because 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.

## I. Introduction

### **CASA Programs in Washington**

In Washington State, there are roughly 7,000 new and ongoing dependency cases each year. CASA programs have developed locally throughout the state over the last three decades based on community needs, court leadership and available resources. Currently, there are CASA programs in 35 counties in the state. Some CASA programs operate as non-profits, while most are managed by the Juvenile Court Administrator at the county level.

The following are the key CASA volunteer activities on behalf of children:

- Case advocacy, including contacts with the child and family, and contacts on behalf of the child (e.g. talking to social worker, foster parent, making referrals).
- Monitoring child safety.
- Writing court reports and testifying in court, making recommendations for placement and permanency plans in the child's best interest.

CASA volunteers typically carry between one and three cases at a time. Each case can include one child or a sibling group. What distinguishes CASA case representation from other types of representation is the CASA's ability to spend time visiting the child in foster placement and communicating with the social worker and others involved in the dependency action. CASAs monitor consistency between court orders and the actual experiences of the child and the birth parents. In this way, they increase the accountability of both parents and social workers involved in a dependency case.

Washington State law requires that every dependent child be assigned an advocate, but the requirement can be waived by a local court if there is "good cause" (RCW 13.34.100). Local jurisdictions interpret and apply the legal mandate quite differently based on local resources

and practice; this has led to several different case representation models. In the large (over 300 cases per year) and midsize (100-300 cases per year) jurisdictions this is especially true. Table 2 illustrates the various methods of handling child representation in Washington.

**Table 2: Child representation assignment in Washington**

County model	Volunteer CASA	CASA Staff	Contract GAL	Lawyer	Wait List	Foster Care Citizen Review Board
Clark, Pierce and Spokane	Younger children	Children up to age 12		Youth 12 and older		
King	Most children			Youth 12 and older	Lower severity latency age children	
Snohomish	Some children					Most children
Many midsize and smaller counties	All or nearly all children and youth		Some or no children			
Skagit, Grays Harbor, Whatcom			All or nearly all children			

King County, which includes the Seattle metro area, hears roughly 15% of the all dependency cases in the state. Youth who are age twelve and older in this jurisdiction are not assigned CASA volunteers. Rather, they are assigned attorneys to represent them in court. These attorneys have little, if any, time to investigate the details of a youth’s case. CASA volunteers represent the majority of children age eleven and younger; however, there has typically been a list of 100 to 200 younger children waiting to be assigned CASA representation.

In Snohomish County there had been, until recently, a Foster Care Citizen Review Board comprised of citizen volunteers who reviewed most cases at three-, six- and nine-month hearings. In this county, CASAs were assigned early only at the request of the juvenile court judge, or, as often happened, several months after filing of the dependency petition as a volunteer became available.

In other large counties, such as Clark, Pierce and Spokane, CASA programs employ staff to carry caseloads and supervise volunteers, in order to cover all or nearly all cases of children from birth to 11 years old at the time of dependency filing.

In some midsize counties, such as Grays Harbor, Skagit and Whatcom, independent contract Guardians ad Litem (GALs) represent all or nearly all dependent children; these individuals are typically professionals with some child welfare and legal knowledge. In these instances, paid GALs may be carrying over 100 cases at a time. Thurston County, another midsize jurisdiction, uses contract GALs to complement their primarily volunteer CASA program.

### **Evaluation of the Washington CASA Programs**

In 2007, the state budget included significant expansion funds totaling \$6.8 million for CASA programs. The Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) contracted with evaluators at the University of Washington School of Social Work (UW-SSW) to conduct a child-focused outcome evaluation of CASA programs. In fiscal year 2007-2008, a feasibility study examined the relative strengths of and costs for several evaluation design approaches. An advisory group was convened to make recommendations for the evaluation. During the following year, the evaluation was conducted, addressing both case processes and permanency outcomes.

The UW-SSW evaluation team, led by Kathy Brennan, consulted with AOC administrators, the Washington State Center for Court Research manager, Washington State CASA (WACASA) staff and CASA program managers regarding the evaluation design. An Advisory Group was convened in fall 2007 and spring 2008 with additional stakeholders representing the judiciary, juvenile court administrators and the state Ombudsman's office. These gatherings helped to set priorities for the study, consider the implications of a child-focused outcome study, identify issues related access to data, and make recommendations regarding the evaluation design.

The approach decided on includes a large quantitative assessment of outcomes for an entry cohort of dependent children and a smaller more descriptive case record review examining representation activities of CASAs. Washington State Center for Court Research, using its data sharing agreement with Children's Administration, agreed to conduct an outcome evaluation of an entry cohort of children for whom dependencies were filed in 2004. This study compared permanency outcomes associated with different types of child representation. Evaluators from the UW-SSW conducted a case review of cases from this same 2004 cohort to examine processes and quality of services in CASA-assigned cases. This report presents the findings from the two studies.

To guide the design of this CASA evaluation, a logic model was developed to describe the theoretical links between CASA program goals, resources, activities and measurable outcomes for children in dependency status. The child/case outcomes were categorized into short term, intermediate and long term (See Appendix A).

This evaluation explores the case outcomes associated with various types of child representation and also provides descriptive information about the similarities and differences among various CASA program models in the five largest county CASA programs in Washington. Our approach to evaluating these case processes and outcomes will be discussed further in the Study Design and Methods section.

## II. Literature Review

### Placement Trends and Permanency Outcomes

Nationally, entry cohorts of children in child welfare systems have been studied to determine patterns of entries and exits from care. As the purpose of this CASA evaluation is to examine permanency outcomes for dependent children in Washington State, it is helpful to understand placement trends and permanency outcomes in the broader national context (Wulczyn et al., 2005, Wulczyn et al., 2007).

- Infants, age 0-1 at entry into care, are adopted at much higher rates than other age groups, even children age 1 -5 when placed out of the home.
- Adoptions, on average, take longer to complete than reunifications; for this reason, infants often have long lengths of stay (LOS) in out-of-home care.
- African American children are adopted out of the child welfare systems at about the same rate as Caucasian children but these adoptions take longer to complete.
- African American children have lower rates of reunification than White children and, on average, longer LOS than White children.
- Children ages 6-11 at entry into care have relatively high rates of reunification, especially compared to infants; but children in this age group who are not reunified with parents in a timely way often become “stuck” in out-of-home care without completed permanent plans.
- There is a strong relationship between longer LOS and multiple placements. Some child welfare experts assert that “long-term foster care” is an oxymoron; even if this claim is exaggerated, children in long term foster care are at a much elevated risk for multiple unplanned placement changes.
- There is also a strong relationship between child behavior problems, especially externalizing behavior problems, and multiple placements.
- There are large in-state regional differences in LOS and permanency outcomes that cannot be explained by parent or child characteristics or by the profile of reported maltreatment or severity of child maltreatment. Urban regions and rural regions within

states frequently have very different placement rates and permanency outcomes. Completion of permanent plans for children in large urban areas tends to occur more slowly than for children in rural regions.

- Kinship care, on average, is more stable than non-kin foster care, but children in kinship care have longer average LOS than children in non-kin care. Children in kinship care have lower rates of adoption than children in non-kin foster care.

In summary, the age of the child at entry into care, the child's race or ethnicity, and administrative region of the state are known to have a powerful influence on permanency outcomes. LOS and children's behavior problems have a large influence on placement histories/moves after controlling for other case characteristics.

### **Key Findings from CASA Research and Evaluation**

CASA programs have been evaluated for their impact on case process and permanency outcomes for dependent children. Research literature and evaluation reports related to CASA programs throughout the U.S. and in Washington State were reviewed. The most comprehensive review of prior research on the case level impact of dependency CASAs was conducted by Youngclarke et al., 2004. The authors' meta-analysis of twenty prior studies of case outcomes associated with CASA representation concluded that CASA assigned cases were:

- More likely to end in adoption,
- Equally likely to result in reunification,
- Equally likely to have a case disposition of guardianship,
- Equally likely to be in long term foster care, and
- Less likely to experience a re-entry into care after reunification.

Based on the adoption and re-entry findings, it appears that there may be a relationship between CASA representation and more lasting permanency outcomes. These same authors also summarized case process findings and concluded that CASA-assigned cases achieved:

- No significant reduction in continuances,
- More court ordered services for the child,

- Improved placement stability (fewer moves in care), and
- No difference in average length of stay (LOS).

These findings suggest that CASA representation may be associated with better stability and improved services for children in foster care (Youngclarke et. al., 2004).

An audit of the National CASA Association conducted by US Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General (2006) used prior studies and available data (data from January 1, 1993 to June 30, 2006) to conclude that:

- Children with a CASA were in foster care longer than those without a CASA, but were substantially less likely to stay in foster care more than 3 years.
- Both children and parents received more services in CASA cases.
- CASA cases were more likely to be permanently closed and less likely to reenter the system.
- Children with CASAs were more likely to be adopted and less likely to be reunified with parents.

This report concluded that the longer average length of stay for CASA assigned cases related to the following case variables: 1) children had already been in care about 5 months prior to the assignment of a CASA to the case, and 2) CASAs are assigned to the more serious cases of maltreatment making it less likely that these children will be reunified with their parents.

In Washington State, the Children's Ombudsman's Office 1999 report found that one-third of children in the state's child abuse and neglect proceedings were not being assigned a CASA or GAL. The report asserted that the highest rates of lack of representation were found in seven counties, including King, Spokane, Snohomish and Clark.

In November 1998, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) issued a report authored by Lucy Berliner and Monica Fitzgerald. The WSIPP report stated that "CASA/GAL programs enjoy widespread support. Professionals who interact regularly with CASA/GAL find that volunteers contribute an independent and valuable perspective on behalf of children



during the case investigation phase. Respondents overwhelmingly prefer that a case have a CASA/GAL and they favor volunteers over paid GALs.” Berliner and Fitzgerald also asserted that “the scientific evidence converges on the conclusion that volunteer CASA/GALs are at least as effective as paid forms of GAL representation.”

Subsequent studies of CASA programs have confirmed the highly positive views of CASAs held by community professionals involved in the dependency system. Judges and attorneys have been found to have the most positive views of CASAs, while caseworkers and parents sometimes express reservations regarding CASAs’ objectivity and understanding of child welfare systems (Litzelfelner, 2008).

### **Conclusions from Research and Evaluation**

There is some limited research evidence that CASA representation may promote a child’s placement stability, improve delivery of services to the child and parent, increase the likelihood of adoption and reduce the likelihood of a child’s re-entry into foster care. The number of studies which show no effect related to CASA representation are not surprising given the complexity of the dependency process, court and child welfare systems and the challenges in conducting research on a subject when experimental and quasi-experimental designs are difficult if not impossible to implement.

Prior research also suggests the importance of addressing case variables such as severity of abuse and neglect, age of children at entry into care and the assignment of a CASA at a particular point in the history of the legal case.

### III. Study Design and Methods

While past CASA research studies have examined key case outcomes (e.g. permanency dispositions and re-entry rates), and process measures (e.g. services ordered, court continuances and placement stability), no single study has reviewed all of these indicators. An experimental design with random assignment was not possible for this CASA evaluation for a variety of reasons. It is expensive and intrusive to programs to conduct this type of study. There are also ethical concerns as a randomized trial requires that some children be denied available representation. In practice, CASA programs prioritize the most severe cases for assignment. Finally, a prospective study would take a long time to assess case outcomes as a significant portion of children who enter care remain in care for two or more years.

A retrospective study design was chosen as it was considered less intrusive, less expensive, and timelier. In this design, the CASA assigned cases were placed into the intervention group, and the remaining cases (those assigned to a CASA staff member, to a contract GAL, mixed representation, or those with no representation) became the comparison groups. A large entry cohort sample of dependency cases was chosen to mitigate the effect of intervening variables. Case outcomes such as type of permanency outcome, length of stay, and number of out-of-home placements were examined by linking administrative data from the courts (SCOMIS) to records from the child welfare agency (CAMIS) and to case assignment data provided by CASA programs. Facilitated by its data sharing agreement with Children's Administration, the Center for Court Research agreed to conduct this analysis in partnership with the UW-SSW evaluators.

Paired with this outcome study, a subset of CASA-assigned cases from this same entry cohort was selected from the five largest CASA programs for an in-depth case review of CASA activities related to investigation and advocacy on behalf of the dependent child. These data were only available within CASA reports to the court and the CA social worker's Individual Social Service Plan (ISSP) which becomes part of the dependency court record. The UW-SSW evaluators

worked with local CASA programs and court staff to access court records and conduct this review. In King and Pierce Counties hard copies of the files were reviewed, and in Clark, Snohomish, and Spokane counties, records were accessed through electronic archives. The data extraction form was developed in consult with CASA program managers and WACASA staff. The template of the form is included as Appendix F.

The evaluation addressed the following research questions:

*Cohort analysis*

- A) For an entry cohort of dependent children less than 12 years old, to what extent does having a volunteer CASA, as compared to CASA staff or contract GAL representation or no representation, contribute to the following positive case outcomes such as:
- 1) Increased placement stability?
  - 2) Shorter timeline to case resolution?
  - 3) More permanent case outcomes within closed cases?
  - 4) The proportion of open cases?

*Case Record Review*

- B) Among CASA-assigned cases what type of investigation, monitoring and advocacy activities are evidenced over the life of the case?
- 1) How many reports to the court per case are typically completed by a CASA?
  - 2) How many and what type of services are recommended for the parents and the child?
  - 3) How many and what type of persons are contacted by CASAs as they prepare reports to the court?
  - 4) How do CASA recommendations regarding visitation, child placement, and permanent plan compare to those of the CA social worker?
  - 5) How often does the judge agree or disagree with the CASA's permanency recommendation?
- C) How do CASA stability and social worker stability compare?

### **2004 Cohort Study Sample**

The sample was drawn from AOC's SCOMIS and included all dependency cases filed in Washington in 2004. The SCOMIS sample included 4,017 cases. SCOMIS records were matched with Children Administration's CAMIS records and with information from the CASA programs on the type of child representation for each case. Since the majority of youth aged 13 and older at the time of filing are not assigned a CASA or GAL, 516 teen cases were excluded from the dataset. CASA programs and Washington State CASA provided case representation data for 31 out of the 39 counties in Washington; the missing counties, Asotin, Douglas, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Pend Oreille, Stevens, and Walla Walla, accounted for 238 dependency filings. Among CASA programs that provided data, 113 cases had missing representation assignment data. In addition, 137 cases were excluded in which the child was transferred to other authorities, the child died, the record could not be matched across SCOMIS to CAMIS, or the case had no case outcome listed. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 3,013 dependent children aged 0-12 at time of the dependency filing in 2004 who were followed through August 31, 2008. This sample includes 86% of children aged 0-12 for whom dependencies were filed in 2004, and the cases were followed to resolution or for at least 44 months in care, whichever came first.

As detailed in Table 3, statewide, 48% of the children in this sample were assigned a CASA, 19% were assigned a CASA staff, 11% to a contracted GAL, 11% had mixed representation, and 11% had no CASA/GAL representation.

### **Child Age**

Child age groups were chosen based on entry patterns and similar trajectories in care. As shown in Table 4, infants comprised 29% of the sample, children ages 1-2 comprised 18%, children ages 3-5 comprised 21% and children ages 6-12 comprised 32%. Of note in this child age distribution by region is that Region 2 has the lowest proportion of infants, while Region 3 has the highest proportion of children ages 6-12.

**Table 3: Percent of WA cases in 2004 represented by CASAs in regions and in large counties**

Cohort analysis				Case record review
Dependencies in region in 2004, 0-12 year-olds	Percent of cases in region represented by CASAs	Dependencies by largest county in region, 0-12 year-olds	Percent of cases within county represented by CASAs	Percent of CASA-assigned cases reviewed
Region 1 (n=504)	47% (n=237)	Spokane (n=369)	44% (n=163)	(n=41)
Region 2 (n=290)	24% (n=70)			
Region 3 (n=606)	28% (n=167)	Snohomish (n=415)	30% (n=126)	(n=37)
Region 4 (n=485)	91% (n=441)	King (n=485)	91% (n=441)	(n=46)
Region 5 (n=489)	29% (n=143)	Pierce (n=354)	30% (n=106)	(n=45)
Region 6 (n=639)	58% (n=373)	Clark (n=167)	85% (n=142)	(n=46)
<b>State Total (n=3,013)</b>	<b>48% (n=1,431)</b> of children ages 0-12 in this sample were assigned a CASA	<b>Large County Total (n=1,790)</b>	<b>55% (n=978)</b> of cases in large counties were assigned a CASA	<b>22% (n=215)</b> of CASA-assigned cases were reviewed

**Table 4: Age of child at dependency petition by region**

	<1	1-2	3-5	6-12
Region 1 (n=504)	32%	18%	21%	28%
Region 2 (n=290)	24	19	22	35
Region 3 (n=606)	26	18	19	38
Region 4 (n=485)	32	16	24	29
Region 5 (n=489)	30	19	19	31
Region 6 (n=639)	30	17	23	30
<b>Total (n=3,013)</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>32%</b>

**Table 5: Race/Ethnicity by region**

	<b>Native American</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>Latino</b>	<b>Caucasian</b>
Region 1 (n=504)	16%	9%	13%	60%
Region 2 (n=290)	10%	4%	35%	47%
Region 3 (n=606)	9%	6%	10%	71%
Region 4 (n=485)	13%	26%	13%	41%
Region 5 (n=489)	10%	24%	9%	50%
Region 6 (n=639)	9%	5%	12%	70%
<b>Total (n=3,013)</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>59%</b>

*\*Table does not include Asian and other race/ethnicities*

### **Age and Race/Ethnicity Characteristics by Region**

The race/ethnicity variable selected from CAMIS uses a particular algorithm to categorize children of more than one race into a single race category to highlight issues related to racial disparity and disproportionality in the system. This analysis includes only Native American, African American, Latino and Caucasian children (see Table 5).

*Region 1:* Compared to the full statewide sample, the Region 1 cohort has proportionately more infants and fewer 6-12 year olds. Compared to other regions, this region also has proportionately the most Native American children and fewer African American children.

*Region 2:* Compared to the statewide sample, the Region 2 cohort had proportionately fewer infants and more 6-12 year olds. Compared to other regions, this region also had proportionately the most Latino, the fewest African American and fewer Caucasian children.

*Region 3:* As compared to the statewide sample, this region has proportionately fewer infants and the most 6-12 year olds of all regions. This region has the highest proportion of Caucasian children and a smaller percentage of all other races.

*Region 4:* This region, which encompasses the Seattle metro area/King County, has proportionately more infants and 3-5 year olds, and fewer 1-2 year olds and 6-12 year olds as compared to the statewide sample. There are more than twice as many African American children as compared to the statewide sample and proportionately more Native American and fewer Caucasian children.

*Region 5:* This region mirrored the statewide age distribution. There was double the proportion of African American children, the lowest proportion of Latino and somewhat fewer Caucasian children in this region as compared to the statewide distribution.

*Region 6:* The age distribution in this region included proportionately more 3-5 and 6-12 year olds as compared to the statewide sample. There were less than half the proportion of African American children, more Caucasian, and slightly lower proportions of Native American & Latino children as compared to the state.

**Table 6: Percent of children by type of representation, age, and region**

		Age of Dependent Child at Filing					
Region	(N)	< 1 (%)	1-2 (%)	3-5 (%)	6-12 (%)	All Ages (0-12) (%)	
<b>Region 1</b>							
CASA	(237)	15	9	9	15	47	
CASA staff	(157)	11	6	7	8	31	
Contract GAL	(16)	1	0	1	1	3	
Mixed Representation	(81)	5	3	4	4	16	
No CASA/GAL	(13)	1	0	0	1	3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>(504)</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Region 2</b>							
CASA	(70)	5	5	7	7	24	
CASA staff	(87)	8	7	6	9	30	
Contract GAL	(15)	0	1	2	2	5	
Mixed Representation	(88)	10	7	7	6	30	
No CASA/GAL	(30)	0	0	0	10	10	
<b>Total</b>	<b>(290)</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Region 3</b>							
CASA	(167)	9	6	5	9	28	
CASA staff	(2)	0	0	0	0	0	
Contract GAL	(205)	9	6	6	12	34	
Mixed Representation	(1)	0	0	0	0	0	
No CASA/GAL	(231)	8	5	8	17	38	
<b>Total</b>	<b>(606)</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>	

Region 4	(N)	< 1 (%)	1-2 (%)	3-5 (%)	6-12 (%)	All Ages (0-12) (%)
CASA	(441)	28	13	22	28	91
CASA staff	(0)	0	0	0	0	0
Contract GAL	(0)	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed Representation	(0)	0	0	0	0	0
No CASA/GAL	(44)	4	3	1	1	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>(485)</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>
Region 5	(N)	< 1 (%)	1-2 (%)	3-5 (%)	6-12 (%)	All Ages (0-12) (%)
CASA	(143)	12	5	5	7	29
CASA staff	(220)	13	10	7	16	45
Contract GAL	(0)	na	na	na	na	0
Mixed Representation	(124)	6	5	6	8	25
No CASA/GAL	(2)	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>(489)</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>
Region 6	(N)	< 1 (%)	1-2 (%)	3-5 (%)	6-12 (%)	All Ages (0-12) (%)
CASA	(373)	18	10	14	17	58
CASA staff	(106)	5	2	4	6	17
Contract GAL	(108)	6	4	4	3	17
Mixed Representation	(32)	1	1	1	1	5
No CASA/GAL	(20)	0	0	0	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>(639)</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>
All Regions	(N)	< 1 (%)	1-2 (%)	3-5 (%)	6-12 (%)	All Ages (0-12) (%)
CASA	(1,431)	15	8	10	14	48
CASA staff	(572)	6	4	4	6	19
Contract GAL	(344)	3	2	2	4	11
Mixed Representation	(326)	3	2	3	3	11
No CASA/GAL	(340)	3	2	2	5	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>(3,013)</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Fewer than 10 cases

### Representation by Region

The total number of cases was approximately equal across the six DSHS regions, with the exception of Region 2, which provided 10% of the cases. Regions 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 each provided 16-21% of the cases.

As described in the introduction, CASA programs use different models of case representation. For this sample, the type of child representation differed significantly across regions. See Table 6. As examples:



- Assignment of a CASA ranged from 24% in Region 2 to 91% in Region 4.
- No CASA/GAL representation ranged from less than 1% in Region 5 to 38% in Region 3.
- Contract GALs were not used at all in Regions 4 and 5.
- Mixed representation was not used at all in Regions 3 and 4.
- 60% of the contract GAL cases statewide were in Region 3.
- 75% of the cases with no representation statewide were Region 3 cases.

### **Sample Selection for Case Record Review**

The case record review was conducted between March and May 2009. A pilot sample of four cases was reviewed in King County. The data extraction instrument was revised based on the pilot. The pilot cases were reviewed again using the new instrument and included in the study. A random sample of 54 cases was drawn from each of the five study counties, namely, Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Spokane. The sample of 270 cases was stratified by three age categories based on the age of the child at the time of the petition: infants, children ages 1-5, and children ages 6-11. The sample for analysis of 215 cases was smaller for several reasons:

- 1) Twenty-eight cases of siblings were not reviewed if the CASA was the same. To avoid duplication, one sibling per family was selected as an index child for the family. Selection of an index sibling reduced the sample size in all but King County.
- 2) Twenty-four cases reviewed were found to have no CASA reports and were removed from the analysis. This impacted the sample size in all counties.
- 3) Seven records from King County were missing or unavailable to the reviewers.

Table 3 at the beginning of this section details the regional and county level comparison of the number of dependency cases for children ages 0-12 filed in 2004, the number of cases assigned to CASAs, and the number of CASA-assigned records reviewed for this study.<sup>1</sup> In all, the cases reviewed represent over one fifth of the CASA-assigned cases in these counties, and about one-eighth of all dependencies filed in 2004 for children 0-12 in these counties.

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<sup>1</sup> The dependency sample included 12 year olds, but in these counties, youths 12 and older are not assigned CASAs, so the numbers of CASA cases and records reviewed include children only up to age 11.99 at the time of petition.

## IV. Results

### 2004 Cohort Outcomes Analysis Overview

The foster care outcomes examined in this report included the frequency of children achieving different permanency outcomes (i.e., reunification, adoption, guardianship, or no permanent outcome), the number of days children spent in foster care and the number of out-of-home placements. The permanency outcomes are presented first for the total sample, then broken down by child age group, child race/ethnicity, and by region and type of representation. Statistical analyses were performed by the Center for Court Research for many of these results and statistical significance is indicated in the results tables accordingly. However, certain analyses (e.g. permanency outcomes by race and by child age and representation type) were conducted by the University of Washington evaluators. These findings should be considered descriptive only.

### 2004 Cohort Outcomes

#### Case Outcomes

**Table 7: Summary of case outcomes and mean number of placements**

	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Cases Still Open
<b>Case Outcomes over review period (ending 8/31/2008)</b>	43%	33%	6%	18%
<b>Mean number of placements</b>	2.1	2.6	2.4	5.2

**Table 8: Median number of out-of-home days by outcome**

	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
<b>Median number of out-of-home days</b>	302 days	819 days	691 days

Tables 7 and 8 summarize the case outcomes of the total sample. The study period was from the date of the child's dependency petition to case resolution or August 31, 2008. Thus after a

period of 44 to 56 months, 43% of children had been reunified, 33% had been adopted, 6% had entered into guardianships, and 18% were still in care. The children typically had experienced between two and three out-of-home placements, except for those still in care 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.

### Permanency Outcomes by Child Age

As shown in Table 9, the age of the child at the time of the dependency filing was related to reunification, with children under the age of one significantly less likely to be reunified (32%) than the older age groups (45%, 48%, and 50%, respectively). Rates of adoption were also strongly related to age. Fifty-six percent (56%) of dependent infants were adopted during the study period, compared to 36% of 1 to 2-year-olds, 29% of 3 to 5-year-olds, and just 12% of 6 to 12-year-olds. Though the rate of guardianships is generally low, it was significantly higher for children ages 6-12 (10%) than the rate for infants (2%) and 1 to 2-year-olds (4%). Finally, the older the child at the time of the dependency filing, the more likely he or she would still be in care four years later. While 11% of infants were still in care, fully 28% of cases involving 6 to 12-year-olds were still open at the end of the study. The rate of open cases is inversely related to the rate of adoption.

**Table 9: Permanency outcomes by child age**

Child Age	n	Reunified %	Adoption %	Guardianship %	Open %
Infants	873	32 <sup>a</sup>	56 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>a</sup>	11 <sup>a</sup>
1-2 years	542	45 <sup>b</sup>	36 <sup>b</sup>	4 <sup>a</sup>	15 <sup>a,b</sup>
3-5 years	633	48 <sup>b</sup>	29 <sup>b</sup>	5	17 <sup>b</sup>
6-12 years	965	50 <sup>b</sup>	12 <sup>c</sup>	10 <sup>b</sup>	28 <sup>c</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,013</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>18%</b>

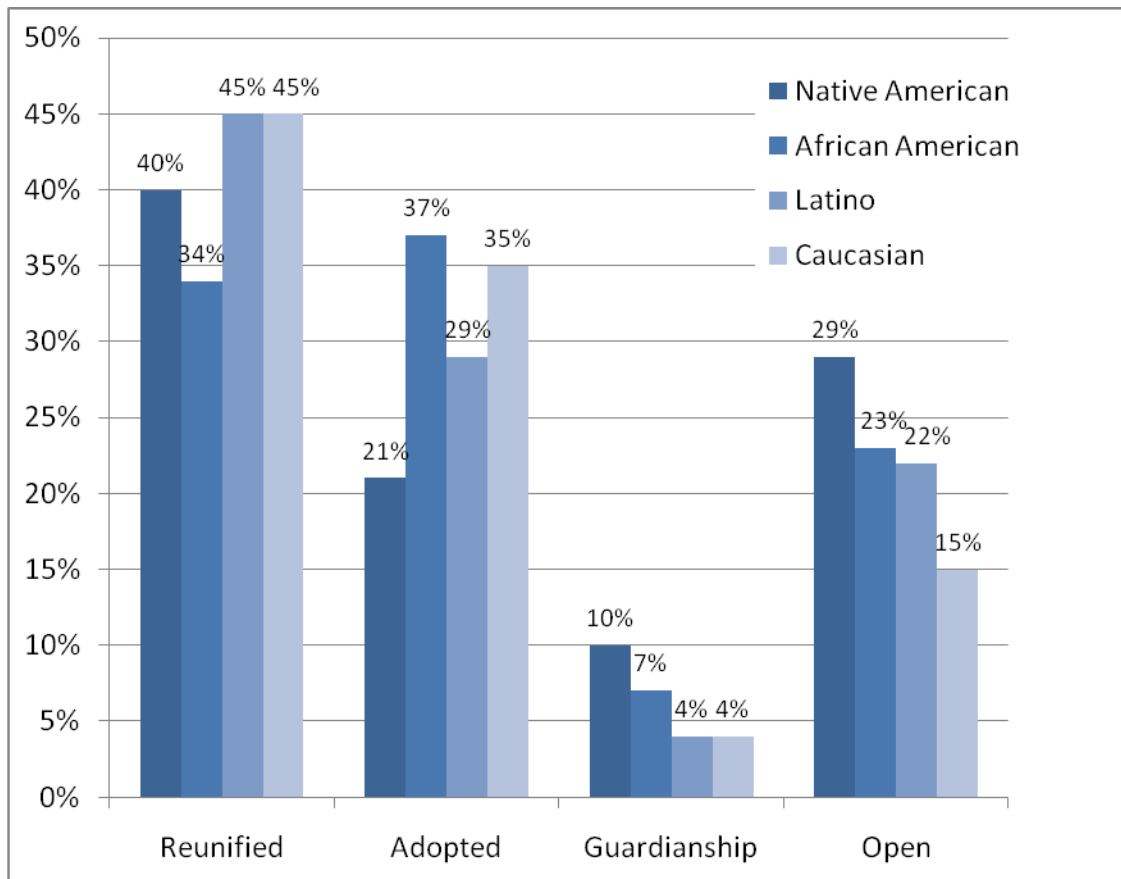
p<.001

### Permanency outcomes by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 1 illustrates the variation on permanency outcomes by race. While there was an overall statistically significant effect for race/ethnicity, significant differences within each child

outcome category were not analyzed. These outcomes are descriptive. 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 as compared to Caucasian children who, in turn, were adopted slightly less often than African American children. Of concern is the fact that Native American children were in open cases at almost twice the rate of Caucasian children. African American children and Latino children also had elevated rates of open cases as compared to Caucasian children.

**Figure 1: Permanency outcomes by race/ethnicity (n=2,869)**



### Permanency Outcomes by Region

*Reunification:* With respect to regions, the probability of reunification was significantly higher in Region 1 (54%) than Regions 2, 3, 5, and 6 (41-46%), which, in turn, were significantly higher than Region 4 (32%).

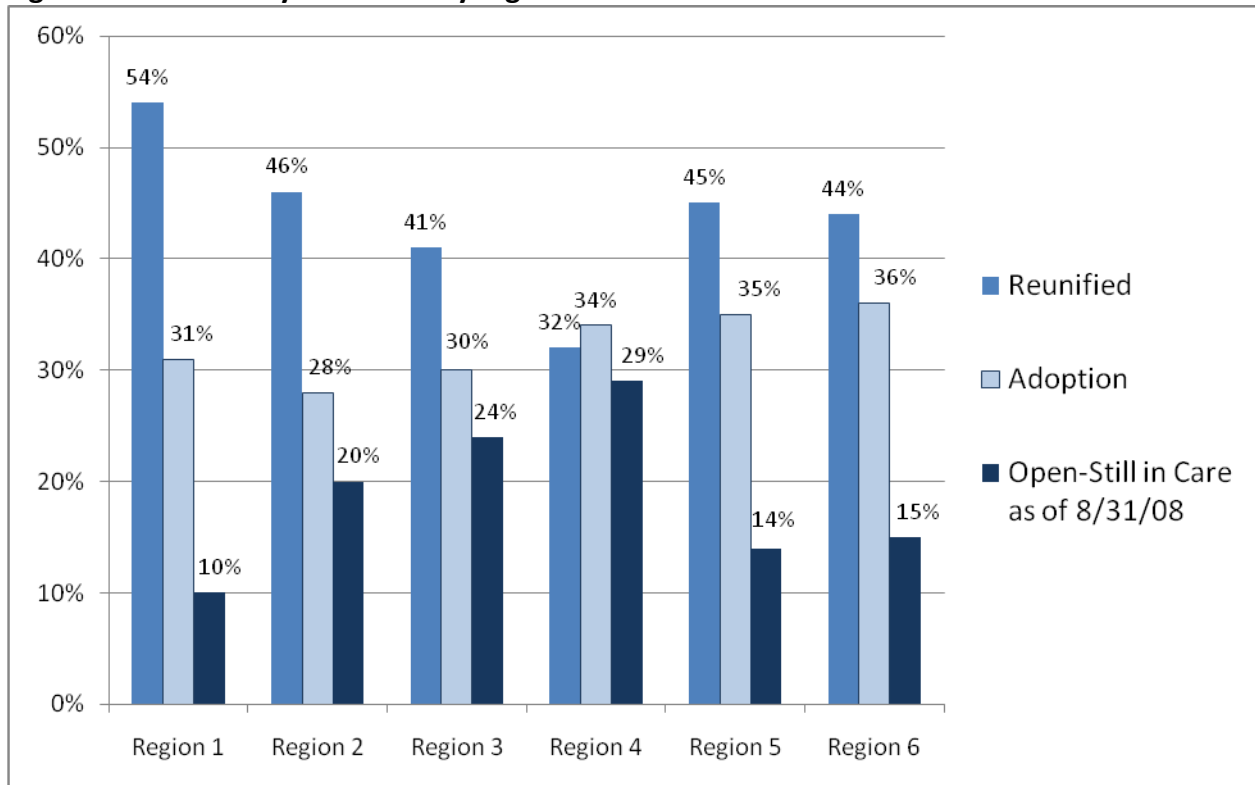
*Adoptions:* The rate of adoption varied from 28% in Region 2 to 36% in Region 6, but these differences were not found to be statistically significant.

*Guardianships:* No statistically significant differences were found in the rate of guardianships across regions.

*Open as of 8/31/08:* The probability of a child still being in care at the end of the study period varied significantly by region (p values < .005), ranging from 10% in Region 1 to 29% in Region 4.

County specific outcomes were generated for Clark, Pierce, Snohomish, and Spokane. These are included as Appendices B-E.

**Figure 2: Permanency outcomes by region**



## **Permanency Outcomes by Type of Representation**

*Reunification:* Statewide, the probability of reunification differed significantly across types of representation (see Table 10). With respect to type of representation, children assigned to CASA staff had the highest rate of reunifications (48%), followed by contract GALs (46%), no CASA/GAL (44%), mixed representation (42%), and those assigned a CASA (41%). Follow-up tests indicated that children assigned to CASA staff were significantly more likely to be reunified than children assigned to CASAs. No other representation group comparisons were statistically significant for reunification.

Rates of reunification were examined by type of representation within regions. No clear pattern of results from this analysis emerged. The only statistically significant differences were in Region 1, where children assigned a CASA, staff GAL, or contract GAL had higher rates of reunification than children with mixed representation.

*Adoption:* Similar analyses were conducted to determine if the type of representation was related to the probability of being adopted within the study period. Statewide, 39% of children with mixed representation were adopted, followed by those with a CASA (35%), a CASA staff (34%), a contract GAL (31%), and no CASA/GAL (20%; see Table 10). Follow-up tests indicated that all representation groups had higher rates of adoptions than the no CASA/GAL group.

Additional analyses indicated that the lower rate of adoptions found for children within the no CASA/GAL group was due to the fact that older children were much more likely to have no representation.

*Guardianship:* The probability of being placed in a guardianship also varied across representation groups. Statewide, 9% of children with no CASA or GAL were placed in guardianships, followed by those with mixed representation (6%), a CASA or staff GAL (5%), and a contract GAL (3%). Follow-up tests indicated that no two groups were significantly different.

*Open Cases:* There was a statistically significant difference in the probability of still being in care across the types of representation. Children with no CASA or GAL were most likely to still be in care (27%), followed by those with a contract GAL (20%), a CASA (19%), mixed representation (14%) and a CASA staff (13%). Follow-up tests indicated that children with no CASA/GAL were significantly more likely to still be in care than those with a CASA, who, in turn, were more likely to be in care than those with a CASA staff or mixed representation.

Follow-up analyses of within region differences in the type of representation indicated statistically significant differences in the rate of open cases in two out of six regions. In Region 4, children with no CASA/GAL were more likely to be in an open case as compared to children with a CASA. In Region 2, children with a CASA staff were more likely to be in an open case than children with mixed representation.

**Table 10: Percent of children aged 0-12 at filing with different foster care outcomes**

Region 1	(N)	Reunification (%)	Adoption (%)	Guardianship (%)	Case Still Open (%)
CASA	(237)	55 <sup>a</sup>	30	4	11
CASA staff	(157)	59 <sup>a</sup>	28	5	8
Contract GAL	(16)	75 <sup>a</sup>	25	0	0
Mixed Representation	(81)	37 <sup>b</sup>	41	10	12
No CASA/GAL	(13)	54	31	0	15
TOTAL	(504)	54	31	5	10
Region 2	(N)	Reunification (%)	Adoption (%)	Guardianship (%)	Case Still Open (%)
CASA	(70)	54	23	6	17
CASA staff	(87)	36	31	5	29 <sup>a</sup>
Contract GAL	(15)	47	27	13	13
Mixed Representation	(88)	47	40	1	13 <sup>b</sup>
No CASA/GAL	(30)	57	0	20	23
TOTAL	(290)	46	28	6	20

Region 3	(N)	Reunification (%)	Adoption (%)	Guardianship (%)	Case Still Open (%)
CASA	(167)	35	43	2	20
CASA staff	*	na	na	na	na
Contract GAL	(205)	42	30	3	24
Mixed Representation	*	na	na	na	na
No CASA/GAL	(231)	44	21	10	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(606)</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>24</b>
Region 4	(N)	Reunification (%)	Adoption (%)	Guardianship (%)	Case Still Open (%)
CASA	(441)	33	34	7	27 <sup>b</sup>
CASA staff	*	na	na	na	na
Contract GAL	*	na	na	na	na
Mixed Representation	*	na	na	na	na
No CASA/GAL	(44)	21	34	0	46 <sup>a</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(485)</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>29</b>
Region 5	(N)	Reunification (%)	Adoption (%)	Guardianship (%)	Case Still Open (%)
CASA	(143)	46	36	4	14
CASA staff	(220)	46	36	7	12
Contract GAL	*	na	na	na	na
Mixed Representation	(124)	42	35	7	16
No CASA/GAL	*	na	na	na	na
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(489)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>
Region 6	(N)	Reunification (%)	Adoption (%)	Guardianship (%)	Case Still Open (%)
CASA	(373)	40	36	6	17
CASA staff	(106)	48	41	3	9
Contract GAL	(108)	49	33	2	16
Mixed Representation	(32)	44	47	3	6
No CASA/GAL	(20)	60	10	5	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(639)</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>
All Regions	(N)	Reunification (%)	Adoption (%)	Guardianship (%)	Case Still Open (%)
CASA	(1,431)	41 <sup>b</sup>	35 <sup>a</sup>	5	19 <sup>b</sup>
CASA staff	(572)	48 <sup>a</sup>	34 <sup>a</sup>	5	13 <sup>c</sup>
Contract GAL	(344)	46	31 <sup>a</sup>	3	20
Mixed Representation	(326)	42	39 <sup>a</sup>	6	14 <sup>c</sup>
No CASA/GAL	(340)	44	20 <sup>b</sup>	9	27 <sup>a</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(3,013)</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>18</b>

Notes: Within each region, representation groups with different superscripts were significantly different at  $p < .005$ .

\* Fewer than 10 cases.



## **Permanency Outcomes by Child Age and Type of Representation**

Table 11 summarizes permanency outcomes by child age groups and type of representation. Two child age groups have been collapsed for this analysis into one category, namely children ages 1-5. Twelve year olds were also excluded from this analysis since they typically are not provided representation in the largest counties, so the oldest age group is children ages 6-11. Overall analyses by age showed statistically significant differences, but significance was not analyzed by type of representation within each age group or by case outcome. Children's age at entry into care is a proxy for case severity in that the youngest children are the most physically vulnerable and difficult to reunify with birth parents. These findings are descriptive of the permanency outcomes of this adjusted sample.

The following results regarding case representation by age are mixed. Infants represented by CASAs were less often reunified and more often adopted than those with other types of representation. Infants with no CASA/GAL were least often reunified and most often in open cases as compared to children with any type of representation.

Among children ages 1-5, reunification rates were highest among CASA staff and no CASA/GAL cases, and lowest for CASA-assigned and mixed representation cases. No CASA/GAL cases had the lowest rate of adoption, while mixed representation cases had the highest rate of adoption for this age group. With regard to open cases, CASA staff and mixed representation cases were less often open than contract GAL, CASA, and no CASA/GAL cases, respectively.

Among children ages 6-11, cases assigned to CASA staff and contract GAL cases were more often reunified than CASA, mixed representation and no CASA cases. The rate of adoption was highest for mixed representation cases and lowest for contract GAL and no CASA/GAL cases, while CASA and CASA staff cases resolved to adoption at the average rate for this age group. Of concern is that more than a quarter of 6 to 11-year-old children assigned to a CASA, or to a contract GAL, or with no representation, were still in open cases 44-56 months after filing of

dependency. CASA staff and mixed representation cases, on the other hand, had much lower rates of still-open cases for this age group.

**Table 11: Permanency Outcomes by child age and type of representation**

Infants	n	Reunified %	Adopted %	Guardianship %	Open %
CASA	444	29	59	2	10
Staff GAL	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>
Ages 1-5	n	Reunified %	Adopted %	Guardianship %	Open %
CASA	487	44	32	5	19
Staff GAL	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>
Ages 6-11	n	Reunified %	Adopted %	Guardianship %	Open %
CASA	461	48	16	9	26
Staff GAL	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>

### Length of Stay in Foster Care

To examine the length of time children spent in out-of-home care, the number of out-of-home days was calculated from the date of the dependency filing to the end date of the child's final placement episode. If a child was still in care, the number of days was calculated through August 31, 2008. Statistical analyses (ANOVAs) were conducted on the number of out-of-home days across representation groups and regions with age as a covariate.

*Reunification:* With respect to reunifications, the median number of out-of-home days from filing to reunification was 302 (see Table 14) or about 10 months. A statistically significant difference existed across representation groups as well as a significant representation group x

region interaction. Therefore, each region was examined separately. In Regions 1, 3 and 4 there were no statistically significant differences among the groups. In Region 2, children with mixed representation spent less time in foster care prior to reunification than children with a CASA staff. In Region 5, children with a CASA spent significantly less time in care than children with a CASA staff or with mixed representation. And in Region 6, children with no representation or a CASA staff spent less time in care than the other groups.

When averaged across all regions, children with no CASA/ GAL who were reunified spent less time in care than children with a CASA staff, CASA, or mixed representation.

*Adoption:* For children who were adopted, the median number of out-of-home days from the filing of the dependency petition to the end date of the final placement episode was 819 days or about 2.3 years (see Table 12). A statistically significant main effect existed across representation groups and regions. For representation groups, children with mixed representation spent more time in care than children assigned a CASA or a staff GAL. Though not statistically significant, CASA represented cases took about five months less time to adoption finalization as compared to cases represented by contract GALs or those with no representation. With respect to regions, children in Region 3 spent more time in foster care from filing to adoption than children in other regions.

*All Cases:* The length of time in foster care was also examined for all cases in the study sample. An ANOVA indicated statistically significant main effects and an interaction. Therefore, representation groups were examined separately for each region. There were no statistically significant differences between representation groups in Regions 1 and 3. In Region 2, children with a contract GAL or no CASA/GAL spent fewer days in foster care than those with a staff GAL. In Region 4, children with a CASA spent less time in care than children with no CASA/GAL. In Region 5, children with a CASA or staff GAL spent less time in care than children with mixed representation. And in Region 6, children with no CASA/GAL or a staff GAL spent less time in care than those with a contracted GAL.

### **Number of Out-of-Home Placements**

To examine the stability of children's out-of-home placements, the number of placements a child lived in from the time of the dependency petition to the permanency date (or the end of the study period for open cases) was counted for each child (See Table 13). Statewide, the average number of foster homes was 2.1 for reunified children, 2.4 for children placed in guardianships, 2.6 for adopted children, and 5.2 for children still in out-of-home care since 2004. Statistical analyses conducted on the number of foster care homes across representation groups and regions revealed no statistically significant main effects or interactions for reunifications, adoptions, guardianships or open cases.

**Table 12: Median number of out-of-home days from dependency petition to reunification, adoption, and for all cases for children aged 0-12 at filing**

Region 1	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
CASA	244	752	491
CASA staff	198	798	443
Contract GAL	*	*	226
Mixed Representation	249	870	705
No CASA/GAL	*	*	621
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>504</b>
Region 2	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
CASA	344	738	633
CASA staff	359 <sup>b</sup>	718	775 <sup>b</sup>
Contract GAL	*	*	413 <sup>a</sup>
Mixed Representation	253 <sup>a</sup>	961	545
No CASA/GAL	228	*	454 <sup>a</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>633</b>
Region 3	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
CASA	337	962	866
CASA staff	*	*	*
Contract GAL	250	952	809
Mixed Representation	*	*	*
No CASA/GAL	241	1022	823
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>967</b>	<b>829</b>
Region 4	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
CASA	330	812	779 <sup>a</sup>
CASA staff	*	*	*
Contract GAL	*	*	*
Mixed Representation	*	*	*
No CASA/GAL	*	689	1203 <sup>b</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>789</b>
Region 5	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
CASA	280 <sup>a</sup>	823	589 <sup>a</sup>
CASA staff	361 <sup>b</sup>	757	729 <sup>a</sup>
Contract GAL	*	*	*
Mixed Representation	489 <sup>b</sup>	1040	785 <sup>b</sup>
No CASA/GAL	*	*	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>716</b>
Region 6	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
CASA	359 <sup>b</sup>	689	610
CASA staff	217 <sup>a</sup>	724	542 <sup>a</sup>
Contract GAL	343 <sup>b</sup>	1027	739 <sup>b</sup>
Mixed Representation	493 <sup>b</sup>	833	713
No CASA/GAL	52 <sup>a</sup>	*	386 <sup>a</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>740</b>	<b>618</b>
All Regions	Reunification	Adoption	All Cases
CASA	313 <sup>b</sup>	775 <sup>b</sup>	670
CASA staff	277 <sup>b</sup>	757 <sup>b</sup>	642
Contract GAL	302	955	757
Mixed Representation	405 <sup>b</sup>	918 <sup>a</sup>	711
No CASA/GAL	207 <sup>a</sup>	930	764
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>819</b>	<b>691</b>

**Table 13: Mean number of foster homes for children aged 0-12 by type of outcome**

Region 1	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still Open
CASA	2.0	2.3	3.5	4.5
CASA staff	1.9	2.3	*	3.2
Contract GAL	0.9	*	*	*
Mixed Representation	2.4	3.2	*	4.3
No CASA/GAL	*	*	*	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>4.2</b>
Region 2	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still Open
CASA	1.8	3.1	*	5.4
CASA staff	1.3	1.9	*	5.3
Contract GAL	*	*	*	*
Mixed Representation	2.0	2.5	*	3.6
No CASA/GAL	2.7	*	*	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>5.3</b>
Region 3	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still Open
CASA	2.4	2.5	*	5.4
CASA staff	*	*	*	*
Contract GAL	1.8	2.4	*	5.4
Mixed Representation	*	*	*	*
No CASA/GAL	2.0	2.9	1.8	6.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>5.7</b>
Region 4	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still Open
CASA	1.8	2.5	2.0	4.1
CASA staff	*	*	*	*
Contract GAL	*	*	*	*
Mixed Representation	*	*	*	*
No CASA/GAL	1.8	2.1	*	4.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>4.1</b>
Region 5	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still Open
CASA	2.2	2.4	*	6.4
CASA staff	2.4	2.8	1.9	8.0
Contract GAL	*	*	*	*
Mixed Representation	2.3	2.9	*	7.5
No CASA/GAL	*	*	*	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>7.3</b>
Region 6	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still Open
CASA	2.3	2.7	2.9	5.1
CASA staff	1.8	2.7	*	*
Contract GAL	2.0	3.1	*	4.3
Mixed Representation	3.3	2.6	*	*
No CASA/GAL	1.5	*	*	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>5.2</b>
All Regions	Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	Case Still Open
CASA	2.1	2.5	2.6	4.8
CASA staff	2.0	2.5	2.1	5.9
Contract GAL	1.8	2.7	1.9	5.1
Mixed Representation	2.3	2.8	3.0	5.5
No CASA/GAL	2.1	2.7	2.1	5.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>5.2</b>

\* Fewer than 10 cases

## **2004 Case Record Review**

### **CASA Assignment and Number of Reports**

As part of this evaluation, CASA programs were asked to classify each of the cases in the 2004 sample by the type of representation it received, and to specify the date of case assignment. If the case was not assigned to a CASA within the first two years (730 days) it was reclassified for this study as having no representation. The timeliness of CASA assignment and the number of reports per case were analyzed as indicators of the case monitoring provided by CASAs over the length of the open dependency.

Each county in the study has its own staffing model and intake process for case assignment. For instance, in 2004, Snohomish County's Foster Care Citizen Review Board routinely reviewed dependency cases every three months in the first nine months, and CASAs were only assigned at the special request of the judge. In King County, the program is wholly volunteer-focused and paid staff do not carry cases. In Clark, Pierce, and Spokane counties, CASA programs utilize staff both to carry caseloads and to provide volunteer coordination for CASAs. Table 14 shows the median number of days to CASA assignment as reported by the programs for the cases reviewed. From the time of the dependency petition, the median number of days to CASA assignment across all counties was 26 days, though the median ranged from two days in Pierce County to 161 days in Snohomish County. The range in days to CASA assignment was 0 days to 724 days.

**Table 14: Days to CASA assignment**

<b>County</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Median days to CASA assignment after petition</b>
<b>Clark</b>	46	49
<b>King</b>	46	46
<b>Pierce</b>	45	1*
<b>Snohomish</b>	37	161
<b>Spokane</b>	41	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	215	26

*\* In Pierce County the program staff generally takes on a case at the time of shelter care hearing and then transitions it to a CASA. Case assignment data does not reflect the transition to the CASA.*

Figure 3 shows the distribution of reports submitted by CASAs. CASAs sometimes provided declarations or testimony to the court, and if there was a written record of these in the file, the reviewers also captured and counted these documents as CASA reports. CASAs are generally dismissed from cases either after reunification or termination of parental rights, so the cases with a high number of reports often reflect cases in which the child was in care for a long time and/or not yet in a permanent placement.

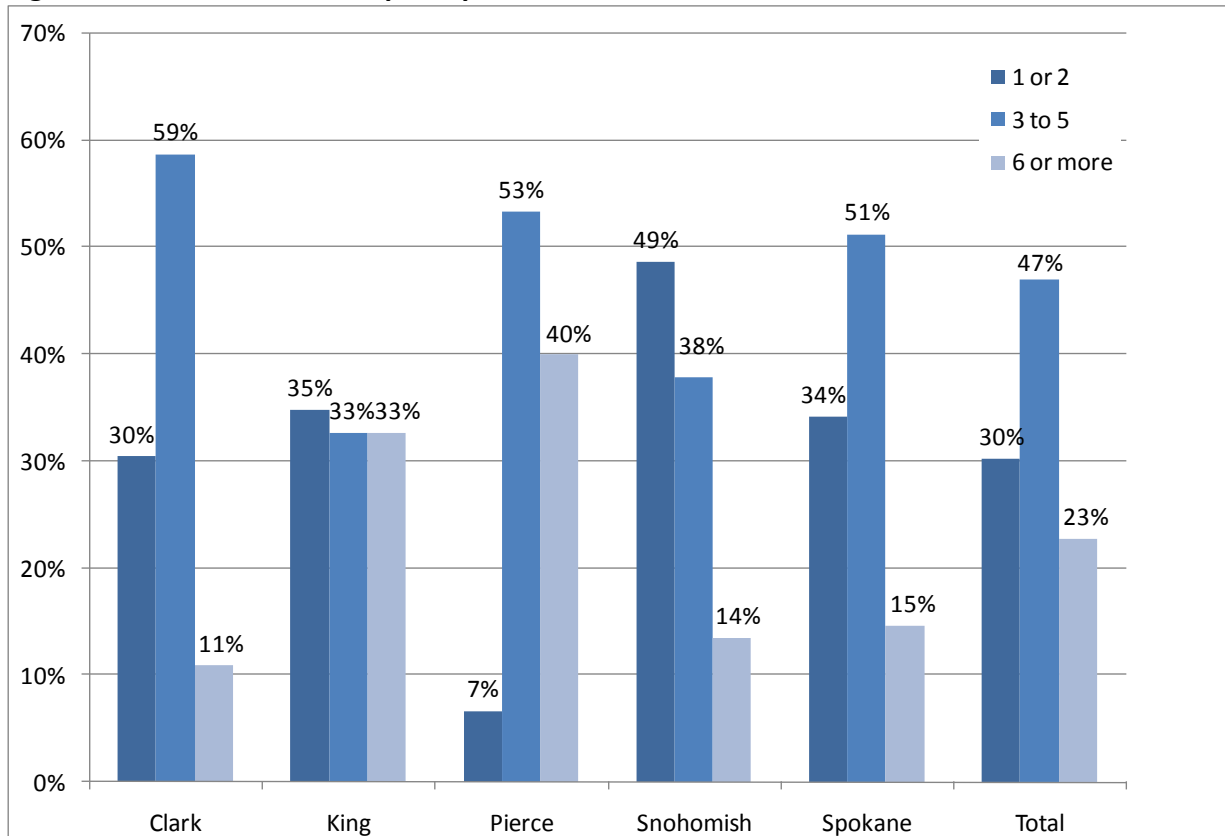
The mean number of reports across counties was 4.2 per case. Pierce County had the highest mean number of reports with 5.7 and Snohomish had the lowest number with 3.1 (Table 15). In Pierce County, where 40% of cases had six or more reports, CASAs were assigned to cases early and some children had long stays in care (see Figure 3), thus CASAs prepared more reports for court. In Clark and Spokane Counties, where the majority of cases had three to five CASA reports, CASAs were assigned within the first few months, and children’s lengths of stay tended to be shorter (see Figure 3). In Snohomish County, though children tended to have longer stays in care, CASAs tended to be assigned later in the cases, and this is reflected in the relatively lower number of reports per case here.

**Table 15: Mean number of CASA reports per case**

	Clark	King	Pierce	Snohomish	Spokane	Total
Mean # of reports/case	3.6	4.4	5.7	3.1	3.7	4.2



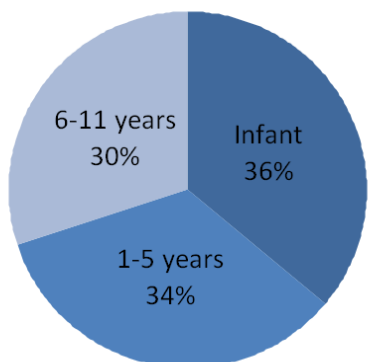
**Figure 3: Number of CASA reports per case**



**Child Demographics**

The sample was 54.5% male and 45.5% female. While the total sample was stratified for equal numbers of children in the three age categories, the analysis of the 215 cases included proportionately more infants and children ages 1-5, and fewer children ages 6-11. See Figure 4. This is mainly attributed to the fact that older children more often entered care in sibling

**Figure 4: Child's age at dependency petition**



groups, and only one sibling per family was included in this analysis.

The review form did not capture the racial/ethnic identity of all the children. The form included a question regarding the child's Native American heritage, in order to determine whether the provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act were applicable. The

children in 7% of the study cases were identified as Native American, and roughly half of these cases were in Spokane County. This is lower than the statewide percentage of Native American children (11%) identified in the dependency cases from 2004. In some instances, the cases of children with Native American heritage may have been transferred to tribal jurisdictions, precluding the assignment of a CASA from these county programs. Missing information and reviewer error may also account for the difference.

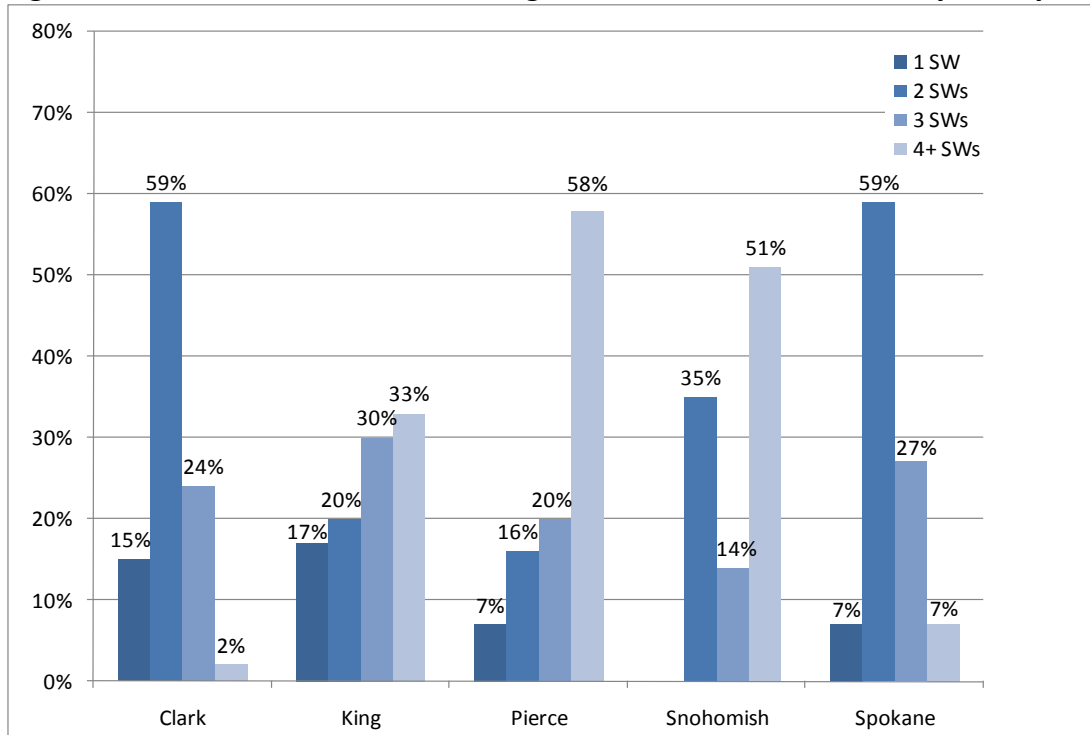
### **Social Worker and CASA Stability on Cases**

The stability of social workers and CASAs on cases was analyzed by recording the names and counting individuals assigned during the life of a case. CASAs and social workers have different roles and expected tenures on their assigned cases. CASAs are usually assigned within the first couple of months of a dependency and are asked to commit to follow a case through to reunification or to termination of parental rights, or other permanent outcome. Within Children's Administration, a typical case flows from a Child Protective Services social worker to a Child Welfare Services social worker prior to the time most CASAs are assigned. Cases moving to adoption are transferred from Child Welfare Services to an adoption social worker once parental rights have been terminated. With these limitations in mind, a straight count of assigned workers and CASAs is still somewhat indicative of stability on a case. From the perspective of a child in the system, each new assignment reflects a lack of continuity, a new relationship to be formed, and a potential delay in the resolution of the dependency.

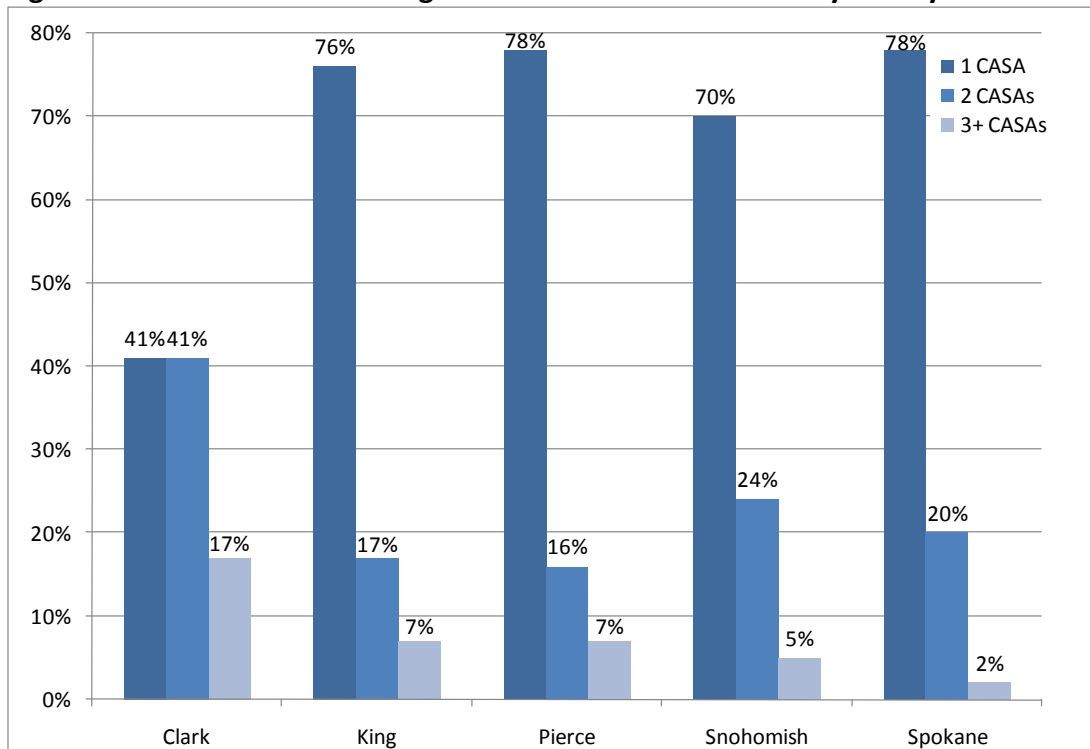
Once assigned to a CASA, the majority (68%) of the study cases had just one CASA, whereas only 10% of the cases had the same social worker for the entire dependency. Figures 5 and 6 below shows the number of social workers and CASAs assigned per case as a percentage of the number of cases in the county. In King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties, roughly two thirds of cases had three or more social workers. In Clark and Spokane Counties, only about one third of cases had three or four social workers, and no cases had more than four social workers. In four counties, over 70% of cases had only one CASA assigned over the life of the case. The exception

is Clark County, where 41% of cases had one CASA and another 41% had two CASAs assigned over the life of the case.

**Figure 5: Number of social workers assigned over the life of the case by county**

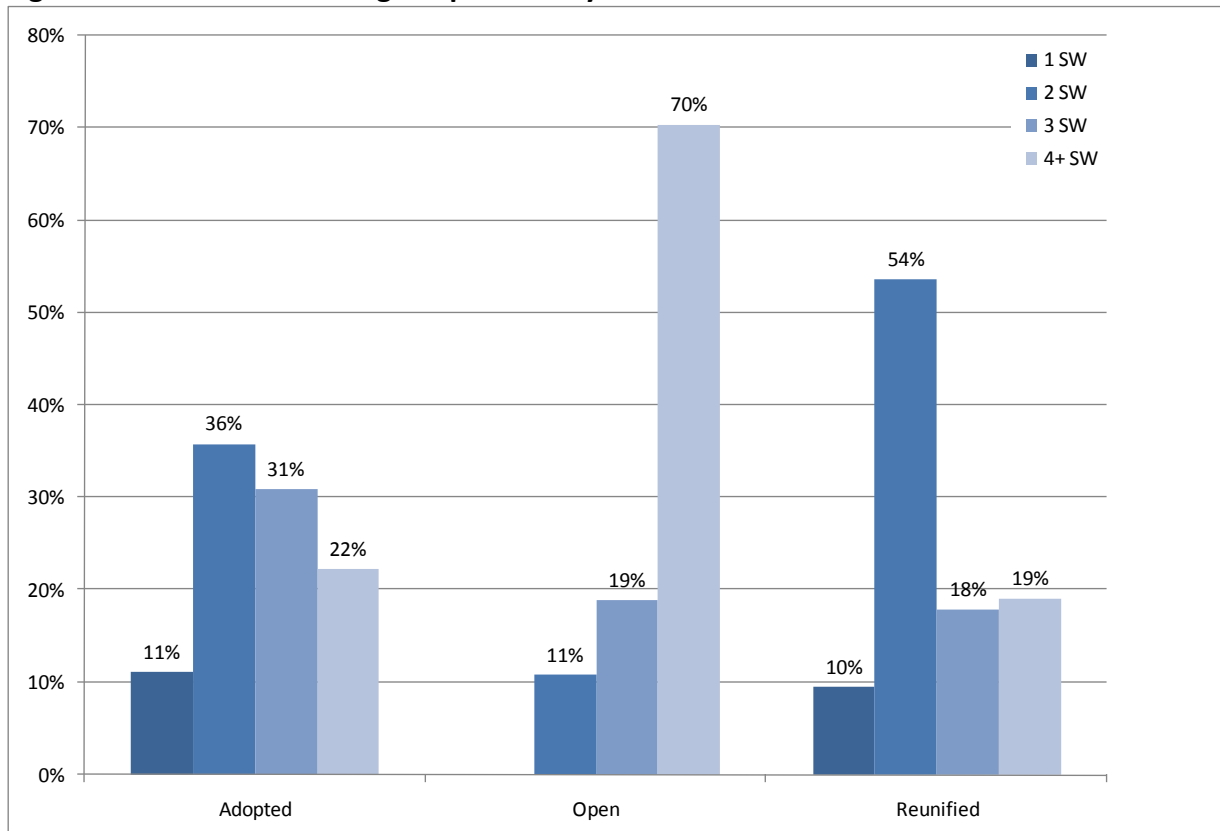


**Figure 6: Number of CASAs assigned over the life of the case by county**

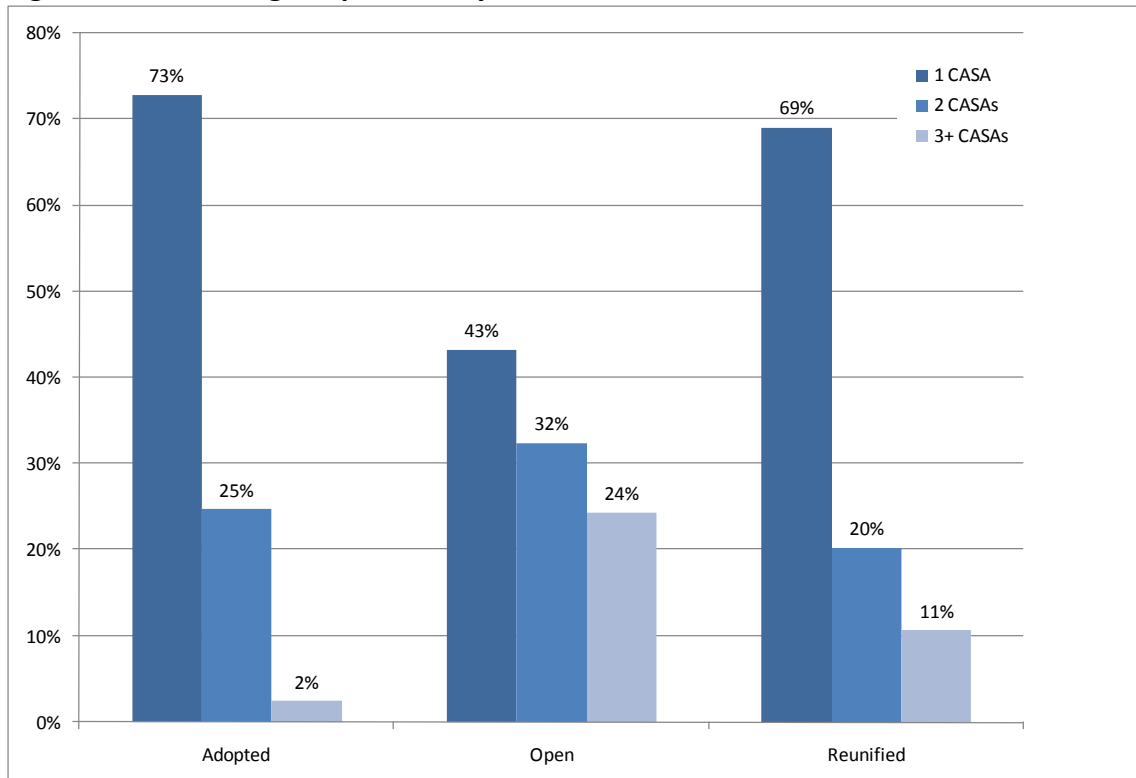


The numbers of social workers and CASAs were also analyzed by case outcome. Case outcomes associated with shorter lengths of stay were associated with lower numbers of social workers and CASAs, and vice versa. As shown in Figures 7 and 8, among those children who were reunified, 70% had no more than two social workers and one CASA. Alternately, of the cases that remained open at the end of the study period, 70% had four or more assigned social workers, and one-fourth had three or more CASAs.

**Figure 7: Social workers assigned per case by case outcome**



**Figure 8: CASAs assigned per case by case outcome**



**CASA Contacts**

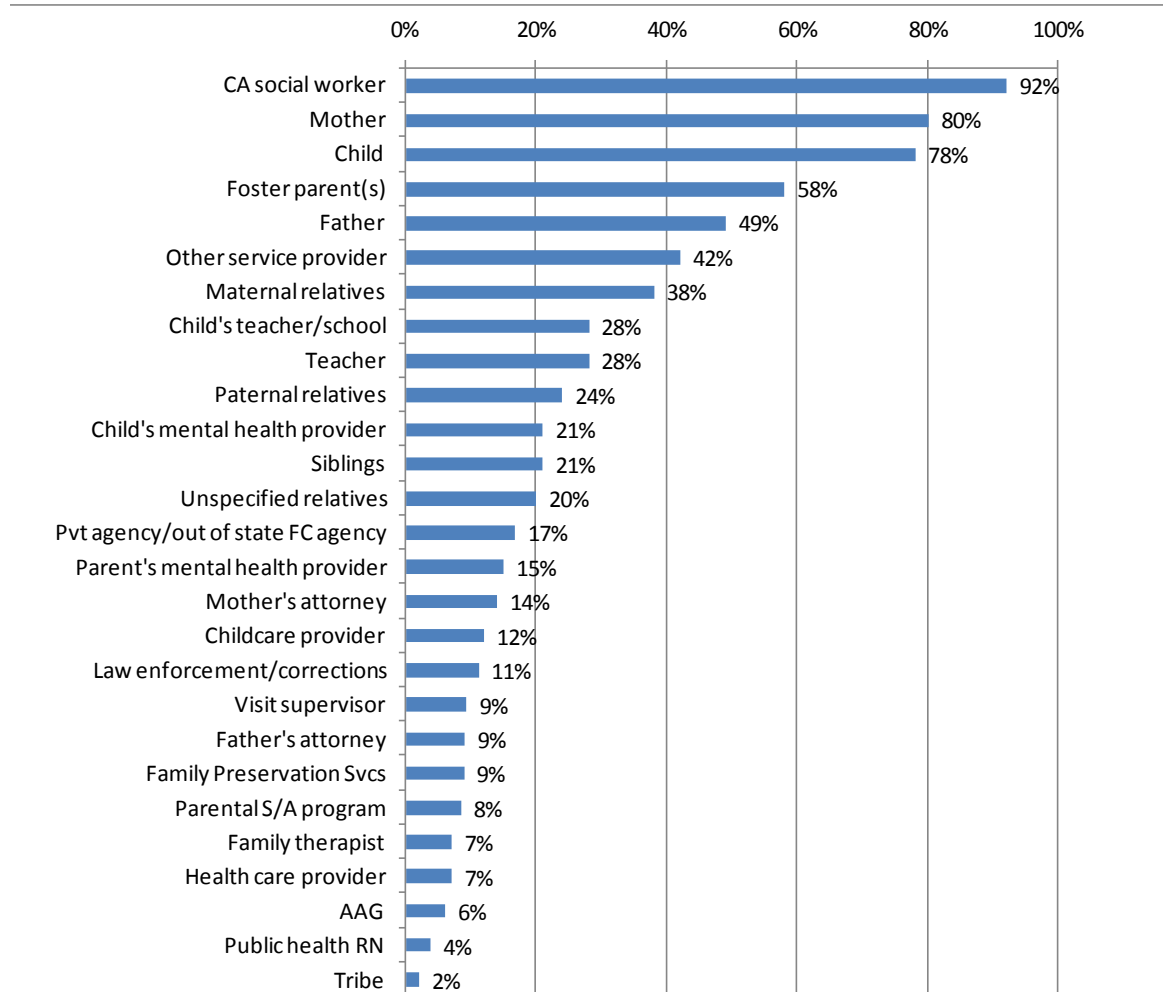
As measures of CASA investigation and monitoring on behalf of the child, the numbers of people contacted by CASAs to prepare their reports were counted and categorized over the duration of the case. Table 16 shows the mean and median cumulative contacts made by CASAs over the length of the case. The average number of persons contacted by CASAs was 10.5 with a range of 0 to 41 contacts listed per case.

**Table 16: Number of Persons Contacted by CASA over the life of the case**

County	Mean number of people contacted per case	Median number of people contacted per case
Clark	7.7	8.00
King	11.4	7.00
Pierce	10.8	10.00
Snohomish	12.4	11.00
Spokane	10.7	9.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>9.00</b>

CASA contacts were analyzed across the history of the case according to the various persons involved in the legal case and those individuals involved in the care of the child and those providing services to the parents. Figure 9 shows the percent of cases that included contact with the parties involved throughout the life of the case. CA social workers, mothers, the child, foster parents, the father and other service providers were the most frequently contacted people involved in the case.

**Figure 9: Persons contacted by CASAs (percent of cases with contact)**



## **Reports Reviewed by CASAs**

In a little less than half the study cases, CASAs documented reviewing reports in order to prepare their own report to the court. The CASA report templates in Clark and Pierce Counties did not have an explicit section for “reports reviewed,” so reviewers documented far fewer reports reviewed by CASAs in these counties. The most frequently reviewed reports were:

- 1) Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) social file or Individualized Social Service Plan (ISSP);
- 2) parents’ psychological evaluations, treatment progress reports, etc. ;
- 3) court records, discovery, police reports, etc. and
- 4) child records, such as Foster Care Assessment Program (FCAP) assessments, school, medical and mental health records.

## **Visitation Recommendations**

Parental, sibling and relative visitation with the child was explored in this review as a measure of CASA advocacy on behalf of the dependent child’s continuing contact with family members. To examine these activities, the visitations plans of the social worker were recorded and analyzed alongside of the CASA recommendations. The social worker case plans almost always recommended mother-child visits. Father-child visits were recommended less frequently, and this was often tied to a lack of established paternity or a lack of involvement by the father. Parental incarceration and safety concerns sometimes impacted social worker visitation recommendations. In a small number of cases visitation was not possible because a parent was deceased. CASAs generally concurred with social worker visit recommendations. When CASAs were assigned later in the case, parents may have been less involved in visitation. Thus, CASA reports may not have addressed parental visitation directly.

At the outset of the case, parent child visitation was recommended by the social worker for 81% of the mothers, and not recommended for 8% of mothers, and in 11% of cases it was unknown if visitation was recommended. CASAs disagreed with the initial visitation plan in 2% of cases.

Paternity was established at the outset of the case in 44% of cases. Parent child visitation with the father or presumed/alleged father was recommended by the social worker at the beginning of the case in 53% of cases, not recommended in 22% of cases and the recommendation was unknown in 25% of cases. The CASA disagreed with the initial visitation plan for fathers, advocating either for or against visits, in 2% of cases.

Over the life of case, CASAs disagreed with the social worker's parental visitation recommendations in only 6% of cases.

The majority of children (80%) in the cases reviewed had siblings. In the three counties (Pierce, Snohomish and Spokane) where issues of siblings and placement were examined more closely, almost half of those children with siblings (n=89) were placed with their sibling(s) at some point during the life of the case (45%). When siblings didn't all live together, CASAs explicitly advocated in 24% of the cases for sibling visits at some point in the life of the case.

In at least one-third of cases reviewed, children lived with relatives at some point in the case. Thirteen percent of cases included a report where the CASA explicitly recommended visits with relative/relatives.

### **Social Worker and CASA Agreement on Case Plans**

As an indicator of the CASAs advocacy regarding placement and permanency planning, CASA reports and social workers' ISSPs were reviewed for agreement and disagreement between the CASA and the social worker regarding the child's current placement and recommended permanent plan.

CASAs mainly agreed with social workers regarding placement and permanency. There was evidence in the case record that CASAs disagreed with social workers regarding the child's current placement in 7% of cases. These cases were in Clark, King, and Pierce counties only.



There was evidence in the case record that CASAs disagreed with social workers regarding the child’s permanency plan in 11% of cases and these cases happened across all five counties. Combined, there was evidence of CASA disagreement with social workers in 17% of cases either regarding the child’s current placement or permanent plan.

**Court Decisions and CASA Recommendations on Permanent Plans**

In the large majority of cases this review found that CASA recommendations were aligned with the court’s decisions regarding permanency planning. There was evidence in the file that the CASA recommendation did not concur with the judicial decision regarding the permanent plan in 8% of cases.

**Services Recommended by CASAs**

As a key indicator of monitoring and advocacy for the child’s best interests, CASA reports were reviewed for their recommendations regarding services and supports to promote the child’s well being while in care. In general the CASAs’ services recommendations mirrored the social worker service recommendations, though these were not evaluated alongside the social workers’ ISSPs.

**Services for the Child**

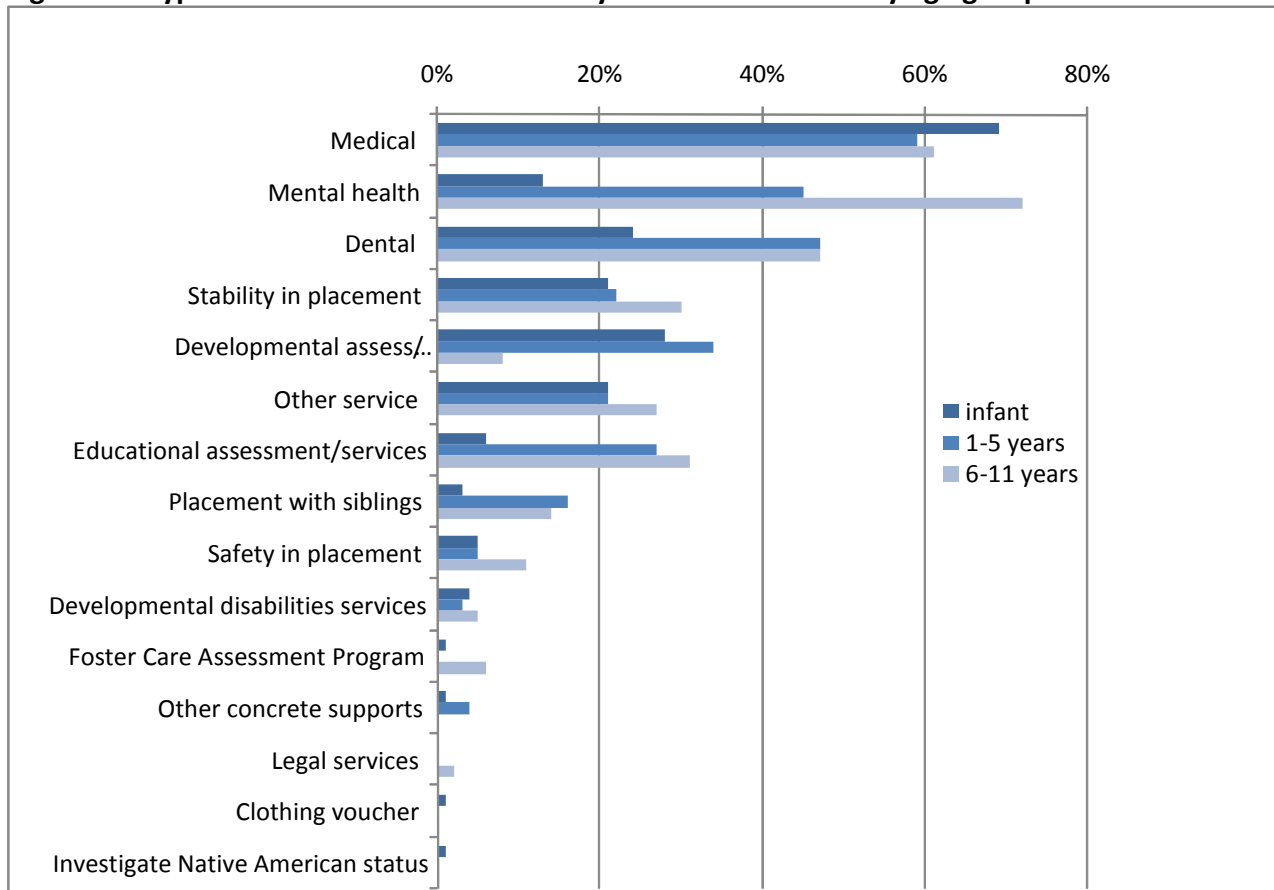
Services were recommended for the child in 87% of cases. The average number of services recommended for each child in all cases was 2.6. The range was 1 to 11 services per case. As Table 17 shows, children’s services recommendations were not consistently documented in Snohomish or Spokane County.

**Table 17: Services recommended by CASAs for children**

<b>County</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>% of cases with child service recommendations</b>
<b>Clark</b>	46	98%
<b>King</b>	46	91%
<b>Pierce</b>	45	98%
<b>Snohomish</b>	37	65%
<b>Spokane</b>	41	81%

Service recommendations varied according to child age. More infants were recommended to receive medical care, whereas mental health care was more often recommended for 6-11 year-olds than for younger children. Developmental assessments were most often recommended for 1-5 year-olds. See Figure 10 for more details.

**Figure 10: Types of services recommended by CASAs for children by age group**



### Services for Parents

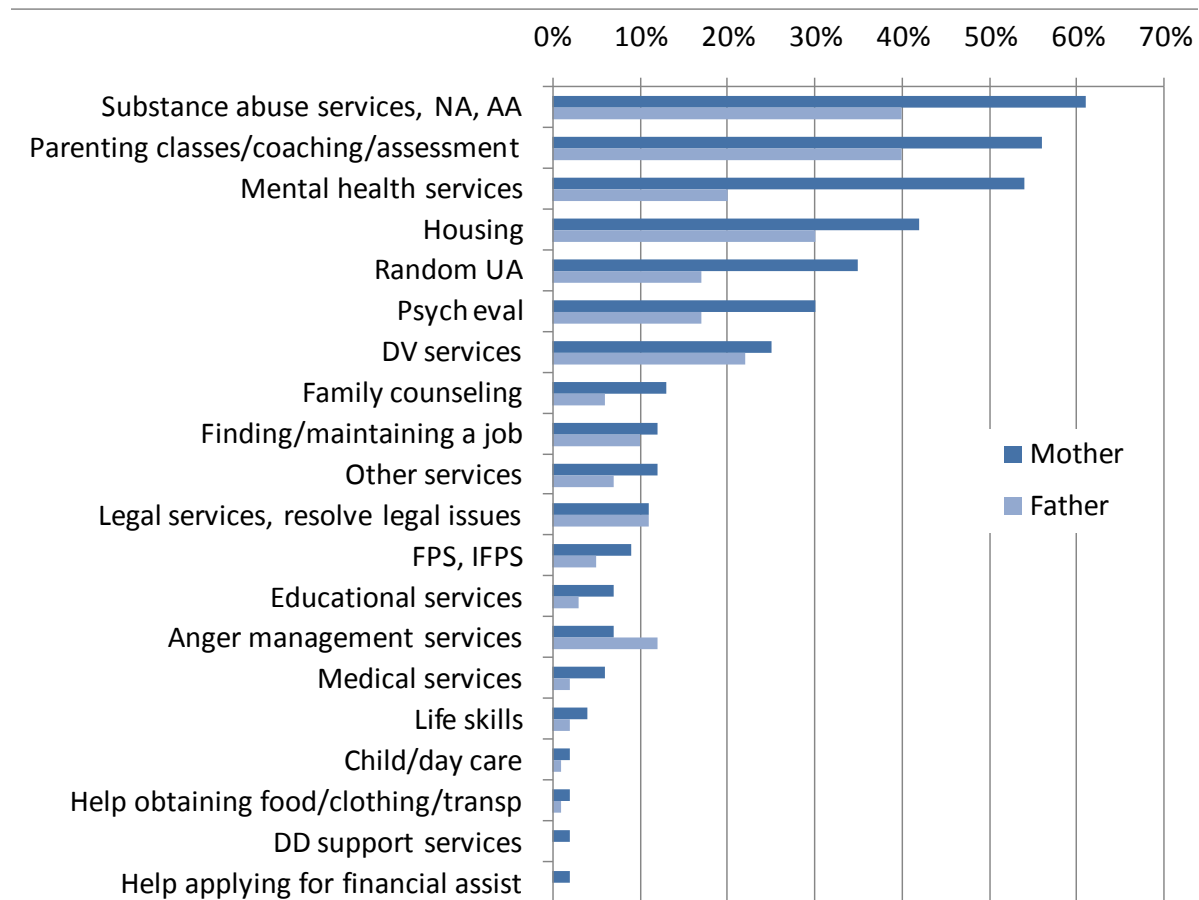
In addition to children’s services, other key indicators of the CASAs’ advocacy and monitoring of the case were the services and supports recommended for parents of the dependent child. CASAs recommended services for mothers in 89% of study cases. The average number of services recommended for the mother was 4.4 per case. Services were recommended for fathers in 60% of study cases. The average number of services recommended for the father was 4.1 per case. Table 18 shows the percent of cases that contained services recommendations by CASAs for either parent. Figure 11 displays the services that were recommended for mothers

and fathers by CASAs. Substance abuse services, parenting classes/coaching/assessments, mental health services, housing and random UAs were the most commonly recommended services for parents.

**Table 18: Services recommended by CASAs for parents**

County	n	% of cases with service recommendations for either parent
Clark	46	100%
King	46	94%
Pierce	45	100%
Snohomish	37	89%
Spokane	41	90%

**Figure 11: Services recommended for mothers and fathers by CASAs**



## V. Discussion

Children's age at entry into care, race/ethnicity and the differences in the decision making cultures of courts, Children's Administration's offices and CASA programs among the state's six administrative regions loom large in this analysis of permanency outcomes. It is difficult to disentangle the effects of type of representation (CASA, CASA staff, mixed representation, contract GAL) from the influence of these factors which both nationally and in Washington State have very large effects on permanency outcomes. It is also likely that differences in case characteristics such as the type and severity of child maltreatment and the frequency of substance abuse and domestic violence also influence permanency outcomes. Nevertheless, when controlling for children's age at entry into care it becomes possible to arrive at some tentative conclusions regarding the effects of representation on permanency outcomes in Washington State.

In comparing case outcomes by representation type, the analysis is complicated by the fact that among all CA regions, Region 3 accounts for 75% of the cases with no representation and 60% of cases with a contract GAL.

First and foremost, the positive effects of either volunteer CASA or contract GAL representation are much larger for children 0-5 at entry into care than for school-age children ages 6-11. Possibly the single most distressing finding in this study is that more than a quarter of 6 to 11-year-old children assigned to a CASA or to a contract GAL or with no representation were still in open cases 44-56 months after filing of dependency. CASA staff, on the other hand, had much lower rates of still-open cases in this age group.

Adoption rates of infants with CASA representation were modestly higher than infants represented by contract GALs (59% vs. 50%); but one of the largest differences in outcomes between CASA-represented children and contract GALs was in length of stay (LOS) for adopted children. Adopted children with CASA and CASA staff representation were in out-of-home care

150-180 days (or about 5-6 months) less than adopted children represented by contract GALs. This is a very large difference in LOS which suggests that CASAs were more highly invested in achieving timely adoptions than were contract GALs. There is almost certainly some cost efficiency associated with the much shorter lengths of stay for adopted children represented by CASAs and CASA staff.

CASA-represented infants in dependency cases were more often adopted as compared to any other representation type and these adoptions occurred in a timely way. CASA represented cases were less often reunified with birth parents (29% for CASAs vs. 36% for contract GALs and 38% for CASA staff). Children represented by CASAs and contract GALs had similar rates of adoption in the 1-5 and 6 to 11-year-old age groups.

CASA staff had the highest rates of reunification and the lowest rates of still-open cases compared to other types of representation for all three age groups; and the differences in reunification rates between CASAs and CASA staff for infants and children ages 6-11 are moderate to large (infants – 38% CASA staff vs. 29% CASA; 6 to 11-year-olds – 48% CASA vs. 57% CASA staff). It is perhaps not surprising that paid professional staff whose job it is to represent children in dependency actions would have lower rates of still-open cases than volunteer CASAs, but this study also suggests the possibility that CASA staff have a more balanced approach to permanency outcomes and a greater investment in reunification than volunteer CASAs or contract GALs. Unfortunately, it is far from certain that even after controlling for age, CASAs and CASA staff were assigned comparable cases as regards to severity of child maltreatment and the presenting problems of parents. However, children ages 1-5 and 6-11 represented by CASA staff had the same or higher adoption rates compared to CASA-represented children, an indication that CASA staff were assigned their fair share of cases involving severe maltreatment and parents who were difficult to help.

Regional differences in permanency outcomes are striking. Reunification rates for this 2004 cohort of legally dependent children varied from 54% in Region 1 to 32% in Region 4; rates of

still-open cases varied from 10% in Region 1 to 29% in Region 4. It is unlikely in our view that these remarkable differences in permanency outcomes can be accounted for by differences in case characteristics. However, this study did not control for placement characteristics, severity of maltreatment, and other factors that may affect permanency outcomes. It is likely that differences in reunification rates and rates of still-open cases partially reflect system factors, such as regional differences in rates and use of kinship care. This is a subject which deserves careful scrutiny.

Findings from both the quantitative analysis and the case record review from Clark, Pierce, and Spokane Counties suggest that programs utilizing a strong teaming approach to represent *all* children ages 0-12 within the context of a CASA program (with cases carried by CASAs, CASA staff, and mixed representation) tend to have higher rates of cases resolved at the end of the review period. These programs generally assigned CASAs early in the case and over 85% of cases were resolved within the review period.

### **Discussion of Case Record Review**

The case record review provides findings that are mainly descriptive of the CASA programs in these five counties and are best understood in the context of local practices. These results may not be generalized to other CASA programs in Washington. The lack of a shared timeframe and approach for CASA case assignment, and the lack of common content and report templates across programs presented challenges when comparing process measures across the programs. We encourage discussion among CASA programs about the essential purpose of CASA reports and how they are complementary to and distinct from those of social workers. With regard to racial disparity and disproportionality in child welfare, we also would recommend making explicit in the CASA report the racial/ethnic identity of the child, and for the CASA to identify opportunities, barriers, and recommendations for timely permanency.

The typical CASA case reviewed in this study included at least four reports to the court providing detailed information about the child's experience in care, contact with parents and

other family members, and recommendations about service needs and the permanent plan. This review found that CASAs are providing robust investigation on behalf of their assigned children. This is evident in the various number and types of persons typically contacted over the life of the dependency case.

However, in a small number of CASA cases reviewed there was no report to the court found in the file. It is possible that, in some instances, CASAs provided investigation and monitoring of the child's case, but there was no written documentation to reflect their involvement. In many county programs, CASA staff provide supervision to the volunteers, and also cover cases, as needed, to maintain representation for the child. Programs may want to consider these and other strategies to ensure continuous representation if a CASA is inactive for a certain length of time on a case.

This review found that over two-thirds of CASA assigned cases have stable representation over the life of the dependency. This concurs with anecdotal evidence suggesting that CASAs often serve as the case historian as other participants in the case change from the beginning to the end of the dependency. In comparing the number of CASAs and social workers assigned per case, children whose cases were still open at the end of the review period had typically been assigned four or more social workers and two or more CASAs. When considered alongside the quantitative cohort analysis in this report, social worker and CASA turnover could be added to the list of factors, such as child age and racial/ethnic identity or judicial jurisdiction, as relates to the length of the dependency. This study did not track turnover of other key participants in the case including parents' attorneys, assistant attorneys general (AAGs), court commissioners, and judges, yet we know that turnover is a reality among all of these professionals. The impact of turnover in the dependency process is a topic for further study.

## **Conclusion**

This study has shown that among cases that resolved to adoption, CASA and CASA staff cases were finalized 5-6 months sooner than those represented by contract GALs or without any

representation. It is concerning that among all cases sampled 18% were still unresolved at 44-56 months from the dependency petition. Even higher rates of still-open cases were observed for children ages 6-12. The study also found that children in still-open cases have much higher rates of multiple placements than children reunified with birth parents or adopted. Type of representation had no effect on placement stability in this sample. While some children may enter care with behavioral and emotional problems, long stays in foster care are associated with higher rates of placement instability and may exacerbate behavioral and emotional problems for children in care (Rubin et al., 2007).

In this study, Latino, African American and especially Native American children were more likely to still be in open cases as of August 2008 as compared to Caucasian children. School-age children and children of color were at much higher risk of being involved in unresolved dependency actions than younger children or Caucasian children. Similar studies have shown that age and race interact to place children at higher risks for long stays in care (Wulczyn et al., 2005).

CASA programs should redouble efforts to improve permanency outcomes for latency aged children of color whose still-open status increases racial disproportionality in out-of-home care. As highlighted in this report, there appear to be rich opportunities to learn from CA regions, judicial jurisdictions, and CASA programs that are employing successful permanency strategies to the benefit of children and families involved in the dependency system.



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## Appendix A: Washington State CASA Program Logic Model

RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	PROGRAM GOALS	
<p>Staff</p> <p>CASA Volunteers</p> <p>Funding County New State Investment</p> <p>Partnerships</p>	<p>Recruit CASA volunteers</p> <p>Train and support CASA Volunteers</p> <p>Receive case referrals</p> <p>Assign and track cases</p> <p>CASA volunteer contact hours with children</p> <p>CASA volunteer contact hours with families</p> <p>CASA volunteer contact hours with other parties to the case</p> <p>CASA makes referrals and advocates for services for the child</p> <p>CASA writes court reports, recommending placement and permanency plans</p> <p>CASA testifies in court as to child's best interests</p>	<p>Provide a CASA for every child in dependency in WA state</p> <p>Improve immediate outcomes for kids: minimize trauma, pain, and attachment problems; maximize access to services and continuity with school, birth family.</p> <p>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</p> <p>Contribute to long term positive outcomes for the child/youth/young adult</p>	<p><i>See following pages for details on:</i></p> <p><i>Objectives,</i></p> <p><i>Indicators, and</i></p> <p><i>Data Sources</i></p>

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 state</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 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)	<u>Age of Dependent Child at Filing</u>				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**

	Age of Dependent Child at Filing					All Ages (0-12)
	(N)	< 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)	<u>Age of Dependent Child at Filing</u>				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)	Case Still			
		Reunification	Adoption	Guardianship	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

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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.

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.

**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.

## Appendix G: Case Record Review Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer's Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

### A. Descriptive Case Information

Three Digit Zip: 981 984 986 992

Index Child gender M F Index Child age at petition \_\_\_\_\_ *from court order*

Petition Date \_\_\_\_\_

Is the child Native American? Yes No Not yet known  
 ICWA does/does not apply

### B. Case Advocacy, Monitoring, Investigation:

1. On behalf of index child. One mark per service, regardless of number of times mentioned in reports:

	Medical		Clothing Voucher
	Dental		Other Concrete Supports
	Mental health		Legal Services
	Foster Care Assessment Program (FCAP)		Developmental disabilities services
	Educational Assessment/Services		Safety in Placement
	Investigate child's Native American status		Stability in Placement
	Developmental Assessment		Placement with Sibling(s)

2. On behalf of birth parent(s) One mark per service, regardless of number of times mentioned in reports:

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		Parenting classes			Domestic violence services
		Life Skills/Basic home management (e.g., budgeting, housekeeping)			Anger management services
		Substance abuse services			Child/day care
		Family counseling			Housing
		Mental health services			Finding and/or maintaining a job
		Medical services			Help obtaining food / clothing/ transportation
		Developmental disabilities support services			Help applying for financial assistance or income support
		Legal services			Educational Services
		Psych evaluation			

### C. Initial Visitation (ISSP):

Are visits with birth mother recommended by court/SW? Yes No Does the CASA concur? Yes No

Has Paternity been established? Yes No

Are visits with birth father recommended by court/SW? Yes No Does the CASA concur? Yes No

**D. Social Worker Assignment:** Review front page of each court hearing through final disposition under persons present and record first name and last initial of CA Social worker:

Total Number of SW assigned over the case: \_\_\_\_\_

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**E. CASA Assignment:** Review front page of each court hearing through final disposition under persons present and record first name and last initial of CASA:

Total Number of CASAs assigned over the case: \_\_\_\_\_

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**E. Case Process:** Complete this sheet for each CASA report

**CASA report date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Collateral Contacts** List contacts made for this report:

Child	Child's Teacher/School
Mother	Child Care Provider
Father	Mother's Attorney
Foster Parents	Father's Attorney
Siblings	Asst Attorney General
Maternal relatives	Health Care Provider
Paternal relatives	Family Therapist
CA Social Worker	Parents' Mental Health Provider
Child's Therapist/Mental health provider	Tribe(s)
Other Service Provider, specify _____	

Reports reviewed by CASA during this reporting period: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Is there evidence that the CASA and CA SW disagree regarding *the child's current placement*? Yes No Explain:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Is there evidence that the CASA and the social worker disagree regarding the permanency plan? Yes No Explain:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Does the Permanency Planning Court Order concur with the CASA's permanency recommendation? Yes No N/A

Mother	Father	Visitation Status
		Compliant with visits completely
		Partially compliant with visits
		Not at all Compliant with visits
		Unable to determine
		<i>If not compliant do any of the following apply</i>
		Incarcerated
		Whereabouts Unknown
		TPR by default
		TPR Voluntarily Relinquished

VISIT Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Are visits with siblings requested by the CASA? Yes No lives with sibling(s) no siblings

Are visits with other relatives requested by the CASA? Yes No

Reviewer Comments on this report: \_\_\_\_\_

**FINAL PAGE**

**Total Number of CASA reports on this case:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Collateral Contacts:** Tally contacts from all reports; one mark per contact, regardless of number of times contacted.

	Child		Child's Teacher/School
	Mother		Child Care Provider
	Father		Mother's Attorney
	Foster Parents		Father's Attorney
	Siblings		Asst Attorney General
	Maternal relatives		Health Care Provider
	Paternal relatives		Family Therapist
	CA Social Worker		Parents' Mental Health Provider
	Child's Therapist/Mental health provider		Tribe(s)
	Other Service Provider, specify_____		

Did CASA and CA SW disagree regarding the child's current placement at any point in the case? Yes No

Did CASA and CA SW disagree regarding the permanency plan at any point in the case? Yes No

Did CASA and CA SW disagree regarding parental visitation at any point in the case? Yes No