

Collaborative Agency Survey
Conducted by CASA of Southwest Missouri
Project Leader – Lori Summers
August 2007

The purpose of the Collaborative Agency Survey was to obtain feedback from agencies and individuals regarding their perceptions of the performance and effectiveness of the CASA of Southwest Missouri program. The survey was based on the sample Collaborative Agency Survey contained in the National CASA Measuring Child Outcomes: A Guide to Determining CASA Effectiveness. (See attached survey and cover letter.)

Procedure and Demographics:

On August 1, 2007, a copy of the survey, a cover letter and a self-addressed stamped envelope was mailed to a total of 192 individuals in collaborating agencies involved in frontline contact with CASA volunteers in daily case management of child abuse and neglect cases. The agencies participating were Greene County Children's Division, Greene County Juvenile Court Personnel, attorneys to include Guardians ad Litem and Legal Services attorneys.

- 139 were mailed to individuals employed with the Greene County Children's Division and included, but not limited to, individuals from Alternative Care units, Adoption Unit, Administrative Supervisors and Secretaries.
- 38 were mailed to attorneys/guardians ad litem as listed on the current guardian ad litem roster in the CASA office as well as court appointed attorneys from Legal Services.
- 12 were mailed to juvenile office personnel and included judges, bailiff, clerical support, and juvenile officers and supervisor.
- 3 were mailed to the executive directors of community partners who have regular contact with the CASA organization such as Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Child Advocacy Center, and Family Violence Center.

On August 7, postcard reminders/response thank you was mailed to the 192 individuals. (See attached postcard)

August 15, 2007, was the postmark submission deadline and August 18, 2007, was the closing deadline for receiving surveys to be included in the data responses. On or before the deadline of August 18, 2007, 54 responses were received.

Individuals were instructed to respond by circling the response that best describes their experience as follows: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. If a response was not given or if two responses were given for the question, then a 0 was tallied for the response for that question and a designation of N/A assigned.

The return rate for the survey was 28%.

Percentages for total survey responses to individual questions

Question 1: Average response:

CASAs are prepared and ask good questions.

- 20.4% strongly agree
- 61.1% agree
- 11.1% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 2: Average response:

CASAs explain their role.

- 18.5% strongly agree
- 55.6% agree
- 9.2% disagree
- 5.6% strongly disagree

Question 3: Average response:

CASAs conduct themselves professionally.

- 33.3% strongly agree
- 48.1% agree
- 7.4% disagree
- 5.6% strongly disagree

Question 4: Average response:

I believe CASAs have a positive reputation in the community.

- 37.0% strongly agree
- 50.0% agree
- 7.4% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 5: Average response:

I believe CASAs influence decisions made for the children they serve.

- 31.5% strongly agree
- 48.1% agree
- 9.2% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 6: Average score:

CASAs seem to understand the court system.

- 13.0% strongly agree
- 48.1% agree
- 25.9% disagree
- 3.7% strongly disagree

Question 7: Average response:

CASAs seem to understand the child welfare system.

- 11.1% strongly agree
- 42.6% agree
- 29.6% disagree
- 9.2% strongly disagree

Question 8: Average response:
CASAs have a good understanding of the needs of children.

- 20.4% strongly agree
- 59.2% agree
- 14.8% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 9: Average response:
I respect the opinions of CASAs.

- 25.9% strongly agree
- 57.4% agree
- 14.8% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 10: Average response:
I think CASAs make a difference with the children they serve.

- 27.8% strongly agree
- 51.8% agree
- 14.8% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 11: Average response:
I would like to see more children served by the CASA program.

- 40.7% strongly agree
- 37.0% agree
- 9.2% disagree
- 3.7% strongly disagree

Question 12: Average response:
I believe CASAs are working for the best interest of the child.

- 44.4% strongly agree
- 40.7% agree
- 5.6% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Do you think you have a clear understanding of the role of a CASA volunteer?

- 85.2% yes
- 7.4% no

Have you worked with a CASA volunteer?

- 88.9% yes
- 9.2% no

If so, how many

- 1 = 2.0 %
- 2-4 = 36.0%
- 5 or more = 58.0%

Percentages by specific audience response

Children's Division

(50.0% of total returned surveys: 27 responses out of a total of 54 responses)

(19.4% response return in this category: 27 responses out of a possible 139 mailed)

Question 1:

CASAs are prepared and ask good questions.

- 5.6% strongly agree
- 35.2% agree
- 5.6% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 2:

CASAs explain their role.

- 9.2% strongly agree
- 27.8% agree
- 5.6% disagree
- 3.7% strongly disagree

Question 3:

CASAs conduct themselves professionally.

- 18.5% strongly agree
- 18.5% agree
- 7.4% disagree
- 3.7% strongly disagree

Question 4:

I believe CASAs have a positive reputation in the community.

- 16.7% strongly agree
- 25.9% agree
- 3.7% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 5:

I believe CASAs influence decisions made for the children they serve.

- 13.0% strongly agree
- 27.8% agree
- 5.6% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 6:

CASAs seem to understand the court system.

- 5.6% strongly agree
- 25.9% agree
- 11.1% disagree
- 3.7% strongly disagree

Question 7:

CASAs seem to understand the child welfare system.

- 3.7% strongly agree
- 16.7% agree
- 20.4% disagree

5.6% strongly disagree

Question 8:

CASAs have a good understanding of the needs of children.

9.2% strongly agree

27.8% agree

9.2% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 9:

I respect the opinions of CASAs.

13.0% strongly agree

27.8% agree

0.0% disagree

1.8% strongly disagree

Question 10:

I think CASAs make a difference with the children they serve.

11.1% strongly agree

25.9% agree

9.2% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 11:

I would like to see more children served by the CASA program.

16.7% strongly agree

20.4% agree

7.4% disagree

1.8% strongly disagree

Question 12:

I believe CASAs are working for the best interest of the child.

16.7% strongly agree

27.8% agree

3.7% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Attorneys/Guardians ad Litem

(22.2% of total returned surveys: 12 responses out of a total 54 responses)

(31.6% response return in this category: 12 responses out of a possible 38 mailed)

Question 1:

CASAs are prepared and ask good questions.

9.2% strongly agree

7.4% agree

3.7% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 2:

CASAs explain their role.

7.4% strongly agree

9.2% agree

1.8% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 3:

CASAs conduct themselves professionally.

9.2% strongly agree

11.1% agree

0.0% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 4:

I believe CASAs have a positive reputation in the community.

11.1% strongly agree

9.2% agree

1.8% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 5:

I believe CASAs influence decisions made for the children they serve.

11.1% strongly agree

7.4% agree

0.0% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 6:

CASAs seem to understand the court system.

3.7% strongly agree

11.1% agree

7.4% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 7:

CASAs seem to understand the child welfare system.

- 3.7% strongly agree
- 13.0% agree
- 5.6% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 8:

CASAs have a good understanding of the needs of children.

- 7.4% strongly agree
- 14.8% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 9:

I respect the opinions of CASAs.

- 7.4% strongly agree
- 11.1% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 10:

I think CASAs make a difference with the children they serve.

- 11.1% strongly agree
- 9.2% agree
- 1.8% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 11:

I would like to see more children served by the CASA program.

- 14.8% strongly agree
- 3.7% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 12:

I believe CASAs are working for the best interest of the child.

- 14.8% strongly agree
- 3.7% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Juvenile Court Personnel:

(16.7% of total returned surveys)

(75.0% response return in this category: 9 responses of a possible 12 mailed)

Question 1:

CASAs are prepared and ask good questions.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 14.8% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 2:

CASAs explain their role.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 13.0% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 3:

CASAs conduct themselves professionally.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 16.7% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 4:

I believe CASAs have a positive reputation in the community.

- 3.7% strongly agree
- 13.0% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 5:

I believe CASAs influence decisions made for the children they serve.

- 3.7% strongly agree
- 9.2% agree
- 1.8% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 6:

CASAs seem to understand the court system.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 7.4% agree
- 3.7% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 7:

CASAs seem to understand the child welfare system.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 9.2% agree
- 1.8% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 8:

CASAs have a good understanding of the needs of children.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 13.0% agree
- 1.8% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 9:

I respect the opinions of CASAs.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 14.8% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 10:

I think CASAs make a difference with the children they serve.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 14.8% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 11:

I would like to see more children served by the CASA program.

- 7.4% strongly agree
- 9.2% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 12:

I believe CASAs are working for the best interest of the child.

- 7.4% strongly agree
- 7.4% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Community Partner Agencies

(1.8% of total returned surveys)

(33.3% response return in this category)

Question 1:

CASAs are prepared and ask good questions.

0.0% strongly agree

1.8% agree

0.0% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 2:

CASAs explain their role.

0.0% strongly agree

1.8% agree

0.0% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 3:

CASAs conduct themselves professionally.

0.0% strongly agree

1.8% agree

0.0% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 4:

I believe CASAs have a positive reputation in the community.

1.8% strongly agree

0.0% agree

0.0% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 5:

I believe CASAs influence decisions made for the children they serve.

1.8% strongly agree

0.0% agree

0.0% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 6:

CASAs seem to understand the court system.

1.8% strongly agree

0.0% agree

0.0% disagree

0.0% strongly disagree

Question 7:

CASAs seem to understand the child welfare system.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 0.0% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 8:

CASAs have a good understanding of the needs of children.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 0.0% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 9:

I respect the opinions of CASAs.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 0.0% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 10:

I think CASAs make a difference with the children they serve.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 0.0% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 11:

I would like to see more children served by the CASA program.

- 0.0% strongly agree
- 1.8% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

Question 12:

I believe CASAs are working for the best interest of the child.

- 1.8% strongly agree
- 0.0% agree
- 0.0% disagree
- 0.0% strongly disagree

In what ways could CASAs better serve children?

Overview of 29 Responses

To have an understanding of how children served by CASA may be different or similar to their own children and to have child development knowledge and knowledge of the court process.

Understand the Children's Division better. Write more timely reports. Work closer with the GAL – be an extension of the GAL.

Make contact with the child, foster parents, and bio parents to get a better picture of the situation.

Offer paid resources.

Make sure they stay as impartial as possible. Sometimes a CASA's attitude toward parents seems "personal" and that should never happen.

More volunteers and more communication w/ GAL's;

More time with kids and less with parents and workers and the court;

No specific idea – my experiences have been positive and appears children well served.

I think there work with the children is outstanding;

I have seen a deficit in materials made available to children to help explain the court process in an age appropriate manner;

The two that I worked with were great and the children loved them; there was nothing they could have done differently;

To realize all families are not the same. Children and families can be successful no matter socio-economic status;

Understand that although our foster parents may provide a better home/opportunities for the child, we must honestly and faithfully reunify with the biological parent;

I think they do this well;

We have had recent influx of vol. that insist on case managing the case vs. being a member of a professional team;

Let others on the team serve their role – Also, CASA's do not need to take it upon themselves to thwart/change the opinion of the Children's Division because they have taken the case personally, which is unethical;

By gaining more information about child abuse and neglect and the dynamics; gain understanding of personality types, diverse cultures; Objectivity – don't bring your own baggage in and try to fix a family; focus on "best needs of the child.";

I think all the ones I have do a great job seeing the kids and making sure they voice their ideas and provide stability;

I have only had one case where a CASA worker had been assigned, CASA could better serve children based on the mere increase of workers assigned to protective cases;

By partnering with the team to make decisions and recommendations, instead of working outside of it;

Gaining understanding, knowledge about court and CD, children and families who are not white, middle class;

See children on a regular monthly basis not make recommendations on children without seeing them on a regular basis;

Work w/ GAL more closely; leave their bias @ the door not every family will be "perfect" and children can be returned to a home that isn't "perfect";

Give focus on promoting the presence of a child or children 12+ at Court hearing;

I think they do their best already;

Possibly in court disputes between mom and dad and custody issues. The Court could get an unbiased opinion of what is going on w/ child;

Believe more how people can present better than they are and some are really good liars. Not all relatives are good resources for placement even if they look good on the surface;

Make visits regular; and

Attend mtgs. Keep in touch with team members. Keep in touch w/ Guardian.

Meet with child and parents.

In what ways could CASAs work better with you?

Overview of 30 Responses

I have had CASA's try to make decisions for the children and referrals for children and parents, that have not always been appropriate. I also find CASA's have some unrealistic expectations, ex: that parents aren't appropriate unless they are married or have a 3 bedroom house. They impose their morals.

Get reports to me steadily. Try to be unbiased.

Communication! Take an active role in finding out from the team what needs they can fulfill. Speak up at FSTM's and advocate for the child, especially when the child is present.

Allow case managers to lead the case and FST meetings – CASA needs to be very careful when talking with bio parents and foster parents re: case information. CASA needs to check w/ case mgr prior to discussions.

Show up at all meetings.

More frequent communication regarding their contacts with the child.

Information from schools/teachers on progress/problems

More communication w/ GAL's;

Tell me facts and not expect opinion/recommendation/legal counsel to be their function - - that's mine. I need information on what's happening in the child's life and not what psych treatment CASA worker thinks a parent needs – NOT HIS/HER ROLE;

Use more email to communicate;

More updates – sometimes we only hear of interaction @ the time of hearings;

I am very pleased with my experiences with CASA workers;

?

To not undermine the work we do with families;

Understand that research shows children are better off with their dysfunctional birth family than in a stranger research home;

I think they do this well;

Be part of a team and give professional feedback instead of attempting to case manage;

By not coming in with an adversary attitude; gaining better understanding of roles of the team; objectivity; every person I have met has a gift (so) use that gift or incorporate it as style or techniques are developed;

The CASA volunteers do not seem to know their role. They overstep their boundaries by trying to act as a case manager or attorney. They are often considered a hindrance to any case;

I do not have any complaints right now;

I cannot really provide constructive criticism because I have not had much experience working with CASA. My few opportunities have been nothing but pleasant;

Talk to caseworkers to find out what is going on in case before submitting court report; do not casemanage;

By not trying to run the case not being so pushy;

Get reports in timely (if at all);

Identify who they are instead of expecting us to know they are with CASA/have been appointed; have better understanding of Children's Division and CASA purpose; listen to everyone on the team and try to work more as a team player - - not a dictator or all knowing - - that they are only one that can be right or doing what's best for child; provide more 3rd party information/more investigating would be very beneficial;

My experience working with CASAs has not been a positive one. In one case in which I was GAL, a CASA stated they would visit the children and let me know how things went. If they ever went to the home, I never knew about it. Shortly thereafter, they were not the CASA anymore. In another case I represented a father that had permissive placement of his daughter, and the CASA never came out once. Her reports were incorrect. I am on many different cases representing both parents and the children. I cannot say that I have had a positive experience on any case. Lack of communication with all team members is a big problem. Often I do not receive the CASA report before court. I did not answer questions 3, 5, 9, 11, and 12 because of my experiences. As to 9, I cannot respect the opinion of a person that has not maintained good communication and has not visited the children. In one recent meeting the CASA questioned why someone was at the meeting. If they had been at the meeting prior or kept in touch with the worker they would have know the person was being looked at as a possible kinship/adoptive placement. I am sure there are good CASAs. I cannot say that I have had the opportunity to work with any of them;

I think to have a better understanding of CD and the different roles as workers there would open communication better – and that always benefits all;

Provide brief written report of contacts;

(?) and understand we have many cases not just the one or two they have. Trust experienced social workers instincts!

Be open, honest, and as flexible as possible; and

Communication. Provide reports before Court.

Please describe a situation in which a CASA was helpful?

Overview of 29 Responses

Please describe a situation in which the CASA was helpful.

CASA has been very helpful in a few situations by being knowledgeable about the case and by developing a relationship with the child that allowed the child to disclose information and feel cared for and safe. I also think it would be very helpful to the CASA Child relationship if CASA was able to transport. It is hard for them to build a relationship with the children when they can not do fun things with the children.

Seeing the child consistently and reporting about it.

All CASA's on my cases have always made themselves available to the children @ any time, day or night.

Steve Edney was relentless in contacting all person involved to get a child moved into a kinship home, and was successful. He is a very concerned and involved CASA. Donyta Ball has played an active role in contacts and involvement with the child, foster parents, and biological mother. She has been a very involved and caring CASA.

Another opinion, another way of looking at a situation is always helpful.

A CASA brought to my attention the large number of medications a child was prescribed; and A CASA visited a child who was in a foster home over 150 miles away;

Currently, I have a CASA who has driven by parental home on several occasions to determine vehicles/visitors at house. On another case, CASA keeps in wonderful contact with child and teacher and foster parents. In another, CASA is a friend/visitor to teenager at Bramblewood in disrupted adoption. In 2 closed cases – CASA's were the sole positive adult role models in teenager cases whose parents had been TPR'd and goals were ILP.

..... each case

Only 1? But there are so many! Nora Young obtained important/critical criminal background information pertaining to a father in a case; Sister Cecilia is an excellent advocate for a child with special needs, and visiting resource; Janna Jenkins traveled to Arkansas to visit a family that was going to become a kinship placement. These are just a few items that immediately come to mind.

Called and told me what CASA thought/suspected was a problem in a particular child's placement, and went to bat with me to get team to move child;

The hands on approach. The CASA worker has only one case, so of the team, they are the only one that only has this family to work with. The time spent visiting the children, checking up on the parents and participating with the team is most helpful;

There are too many I will say that CASA provides an essential set of extra ears and eyes to assist in making informed decisions for deciding the child's best interest;

Visiting the child – it seems like some children see CASA's as friends, but they know I'm their worker. I think it's great they can be friends with their casa workers;

CASA worker conducted weekly visits with child to get to know her better; this really assisted the whole team in understanding what the child's wishes were. Another CASA went to a child's school to inquire about grads and their progress;

Visiting child;

We have had some vol. that have gone above and beyond to insure and advocate for child. Others should take note. This individual was supportive to the foster placement, provided important feed back, but recognized that her feed back was valued and not the authority of change;

Children had to be moved quickly; CASA accompanied worker on transport so children had two constants involved in helping settle into new environment;

They brought me up to speed on a case and gave me another side to look at;

In advocating for the residential needs of a child with developmental issues;

The CASA worker attended a very important meeting held for the child, and actively participated by providing input so that the team could come to decision about what needed to happen;

Always helpful in seeing child and making them feel special;

Visits with children; resource to help with child needs/(?), clothes, music, spending time;

As a male whose children are long grown, I count on CASA's observations of children's behavior;

Prior to working with Greene County CD I acted as a casemanager for a local residential facility. There was a CASA volunteer involved who was very proactive in the child's case when the rest of the team was not. This CASA was very helpful in keeping the child connected and hopeful because she came to visit the child regularly and helped fill some of the role missing from the CD worker's lack of involvement. I believe that without the CASA worker being involved this could have been a child who slipped through the cracks;

Finding information out from 3rd party sources: motel management, law enforcement, etc. to bring to team;

At a residential house I used to work at, a CASA came weekly to see a child, one of the only visitors that child got, and it made a big difference. He always looked forward to the visits;

CASA (?) seems very concerned and involved;

Give child lots of attention – 2X mth visits. Child was straved for attetntion and low selfesteem. CASA need to make a LONG term commitment as our kids have too many losses as is and changes; and

They have always been helpful.