

## **2001 EVALUATION OF THE ARKANSAS COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA) PROGRAM**

The following evaluation was based upon a survey of the key players who interact with CASA volunteers. The survey instruments were designed to address perceptions of CASA quality and influence in the Arkansas court system.

The following pages offer survey frequencies, visual displays such as charts and graphs, and text-based explanations of data and methodologies. Surveys of each key player are discussed individually and comparatively.

Notable observations from the analysis are as follows:

- Judges and attorneys ad litem as a whole indicated a longer working history with CASA than did DHS employees (OCC attorneys and DCFS workers).
- Overall, the survey information gathered pertaining to the effectiveness and quality of CASA volunteers was positive in nature.
- A majority of all survey groups indicated that they received more information when a CASA volunteer was appointed. Nevertheless, 43.3% of DCFS workers indicated that they did not receive more information when CASA was involved in a case.
- The survey of juvenile judges revealed that most CASA appointments occur early in the process at the Emergency/Probable Cause hearing or at the adjudication stage.
- A majority of judges indicated that CASA volunteers are prepared to present their reports 67% to 100% of the time.

## METHODOLOGY

Surveys were mailed out to the following groups: (1) the 28 juvenile judges who have CASA programs in their jurisdiction, (2) the 75 Attorneys Ad Litem who serve in dependency-neglect cases, (3) the 21 OCC attorneys who serve the Department of Human Services (DHS), and (4) an estimated 300 DCFS Social Service Aides who work for DHS. A follow-up attempt was made the week following the survey deadline to encourage a complete response rate.

The response rates for this survey are displayed in the table below. The response rates are calculated by dividing the number of surveys received by the number of surveys that were sent out.

A goal of the evaluation methodology was to obtain 50% response rates for each group under study. Despite a follow-up attempt, DCFS and Attorneys Ad Litem surveys did not yield a 50% response rate.

### Response Rates & Margins of Error for Each Survey

Survey Group	# Sent Out	# Received	Response Rate	Margin of Error
Attorneys Ad Litem	75	35	47%	12%
Judges	28	23	82%	9%
DCFS Workers	300*	61	20%	11%
OCC Attorneys	21	19	90%	6%

\* Estimate figure.

The margins of error were calculated at a 95% level of statistical confidence and should be read as follows: If this same survey were conducted 100 times, 95 out of the 100 administrations should yield results within the margin of error for the selected group.

An example of margin of error is as follows: 22.2% of OCC attorneys indicated that the quality of service by CASA volunteers was 'Excellent.' With that statistic, the reader can be 95% confident that similar administrations of the survey would yield a number between 16.2% and 28.2% (a  $\pm$  6% margin of error).

Please note margins of error in excess of 10%. For these survey groups, caution should be exercised when extrapolating figures to the entire survey population. Since response rates were lower than 50%, the ability to extrapolate with a margin of error is more prone to inaccuracy.

## GROUP COMPARISONS

The purpose of this section is to compare findings of similar questions among the four survey groups.

Survey Question	Type of Response*	Key Player in CASA in CASA Program			
		Judges	Attorneys Ad Litem	OCC Attorneys	DCFS Worker
Do you think you have a clear understanding of the role of a CASA volunteer?	Yes		94.3%	100%	88.5%
	No	n/a	5.7%	0%	11.5%
How long have you worked with CASA?	< than 1 year	17.4%	20.6%	42.1%	34.4%
	1 – 2 years	21.7%	41.2%	31.6%	29.5%
	2 + years	60.9%	38.2%	26.3%	36.1%
Do you receive more information when a CASA volunteer is appointed to a case?	Yes	100%	93.9%	88.2%	56.7%
	No	0%	6.1%	11.8%	43.3%
How often is a CASA volunteer important to the overall outcome of a case?	Never	0%	3.0%	0%	5.0%
	Occasionally	19.0%	12.1%	17.6%	30.0%
	Often	14.3%	24.2%	58.8%	26.7%
	Usually	33.3%	42.4%	5.9%	21.7%
	Always	33.3%	18.2%	17.6%	16.7%
What has been the nature of your relationship with CASA volunteers?	Poor			0%	6.7%
	Fair			16.7%	18.3%
	Good	n/a	n/a	50.0%	45.0%
	Excellent			33.3%	30.0%

\*The following response scale was defined for the respondents:

Never (0%)

Occasionally (1-33%)

Often (34-66%)

Usually (67-99%)

Always (100%)