

CASA Kane County

2009 Outcome Measurement Plan



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA KANE COUNTY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CASA Kane County uses the CASA Outcomes, Management & Evaluation Tool (COMET) database, developed by the National CASA Association, to track 14 outcome measurements. Data is collected from volunteer and staff reports on a weekly basis. The following report defines each outcome goal, explains the program's influence on each goal, describes how each goal is calculated, and illustrates the program's historical performance since 2002. Outcome reports are generated on a quarterly basis, and can be found online at www.casakanecounty.org. It is our hope that this report will clearly demonstrate the value of Court Appointed Special Advocate volunteers (volunteer advocates) and the impact that is made in the lives of abused and neglected children.

CASA Kane County's Outcome Measurement Plan is divided into three sections: Child Goals, Volunteer Advocate Goals, and Program Goals.

CHILD GOALS

No Abuse/Neglect Recurrence

99.5% of the children served will not experience a substantiated recurrence of abuse/neglect during the year.

Volunteer Advocate Stability

90% of the children served by the CASA program will remain with the same volunteer advocate this year.

Least Restrictive Placement

99% of children will reside in volunteer advocate approved placements this year.

VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE GOALS

Contact

The average number of volunteer advocate to child contacts will be 1.1 times per month.

Court Attendance

95% of court hearings will be attended by volunteer advocates.

ACR Attendance

85% of ACRs will be attended by volunteer advocates.

Timely Court Reports

95% of reports will be submitted to the court on time.

Recommendations

97% of recommendations will be accepted by the court.

Training

75% of volunteer advocates will meet their ongoing training requirements.

PROGRAM GOALS

Coverage

On average, 10 trained and available volunteer advocates will be maintained throughout the year.

Experience

Volunteer advocate turnover rate will remain under 20%.

Diversity

Volunteer advocates will consist of 25% male and 10% minority.

In-Service Training

CASA will provide 36 hours of unique in-service training.

Supervision

95 % of volunteer advocates will be contacted monthly and provided with an annual evaluation.

CHILD GOALS

Child goals reflect what the program hopes to achieve for the children they are serving. These goals are considered, in general, to be what is in “the best interest of the child.”

Child goals focus on:

- No Abuse/Neglect Recurrence,
- Volunteer Advocate Stability, and
- Least Restrictive Placement.

No Abuse/Neglect Recurrence

Children should not experience recurrence of abuse or neglect while under court jurisdiction. No recurrence of abuse or neglect:

- ✓ Ensures previously abused and neglected children remain safe going forward.

Goal

While additional monitoring reduces the risk of recurrence of abuse and neglect, it does not eliminate this risk. CASA will continue to help ensure that virtually all of the children served do not experience a substantiated recurrence of abuse/neglect during the year, setting this year's goal at 99.5%, consistent with the prior years' performance.

Definition

Safety is defined as no recurrence of abuse or neglect while in placement. Abuse or neglect is defined as confirmed or substantiated (DCFS indicated) cases.

CASA Influence

Additional monitoring of the child by a volunteer advocate reduces the risk of recurrence of abuse/neglect.

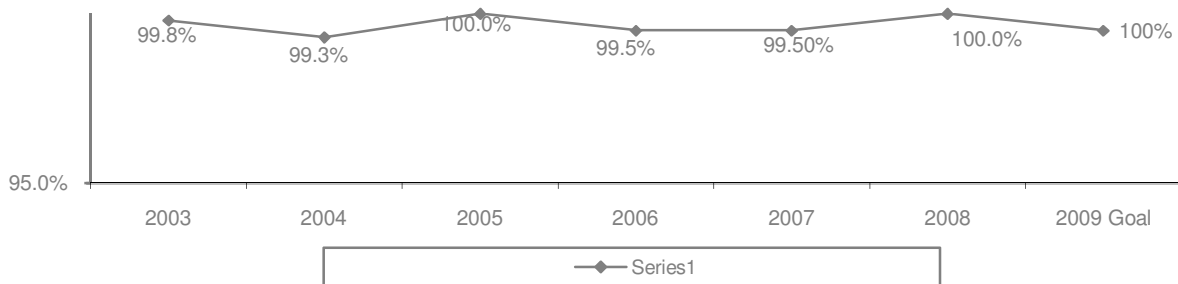
Measure

Percent of children served during the year that did not experience recurrence of abuse or neglect during the year.

Calculation

Number of children who did not experience recurrence of abuse or neglect during the year
DIVIDED BY
Number of children served during the year

Historical Performance



Volunteer Advocate Stability

Children should experience stability in CASA assignment while under court jurisdiction. Stability in CASA assignment:

- ✓ Provides a sense of security for the child, especially for those who may change placements on occasion or more frequently. A familiar volunteer advocate assigned to the child provides that child with a sense of security; the child learns to trust that the volunteer advocate will be there and to feel confident knowing someone knows where they are, no matter how often they change placement.
- ✓ Keeps from compounding the losses the child has already experienced: primarily the loss of a family.
- ✓ Ensures the volunteer advocate has the understanding of what has previously happened to the child allowing the volunteer advocate to help make upcoming changes smoother by informing other parties of this history and its impact on the present, as opposed to only understanding the child's current situation.
- ✓ Is vital in order for the volunteer advocate to advocate for the best interest of the child. A volunteer advocate must fully understand why the child came under court jurisdiction and what has happened to the child while under court jurisdiction.
- ✓ Provides the individual volunteer advocate with a true sense of confidence in performing his or her duties because they know the history of the child.

Goal

90% of the children served by the CASA program will remain with the same volunteer advocate this year. This rate will be compared to the percent of children served by the same DCFS Agency caseworker during the year. The current year goal is set at a level consistent with last year's goal.

Definition

Stability refers to minimal changes in volunteer advocate assignment.

CASA Influence

The CASA program actively focuses on volunteer advocate retention efforts to ensure minimal changes in volunteer advocate assignment by:

- Completing thorough applicant screenings,
- Offering new volunteer advocates the help of an experienced volunteer mentor,
- Providing new and existing volunteer advocates with internal CASA case manager support on a regular basis, as well as additional support in times of crisis,
- Attempting to match case specifics (location, child demographics, etc) to specific volunteer advocates, and
- Recognizing, in various ways, the time and effort volunteer advocates put forth.

Measure

Percentage of children who had no change in volunteer advocate during the year compared to percentage of children who had no change in DCFS Agency caseworker during the year.

Calculation

Number of children who had no change in volunteer advocate during the year

DIVIDED BY

Total number of children served during the year

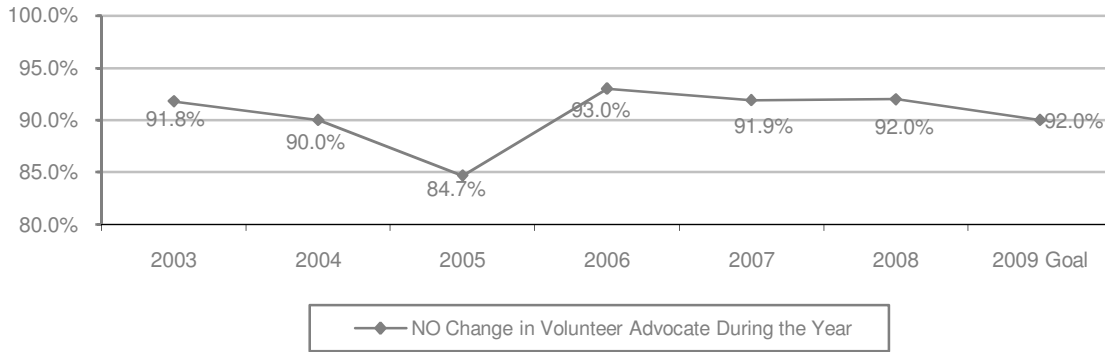
COMPARED TO

Number of children who had no change in DCFS Agency caseworker during the year



DIVIDED BY
Total number of children served during the year

Historical Performance



Least Restrictive Placement

While under court jurisdiction, if possible, without jeopardizing the safety of the child, children should remain in the home of their birth parents. When this is not possible, children should be in the least restrictive placement consistent with their needs. Least restrictive placement:

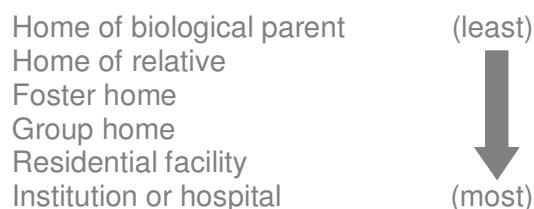
- ✓ Allows the child to live in as normal a placement as possible.
- ✓ Provides the child with the experience to function in a family environment.
- ✓ Ensures that those children who cannot cope in a normalized placement receive the benefit of a more therapeutic living environment.

Goal

99% of children will reside in volunteer advocate-approved placements during the year, consistent with prior years' performance.

Definition

Where a child is placed while under court jurisdiction has a significant impact on whether or not his or her needs are met. As such, volunteer advocates recommend placements that are in the best interest of the child while being as unrestrictive as possible. Least restrictive placement to most restrictive placement is considered to be as follows:



CASA Influence

Volunteer advocates influence the court's decision via reports to the court. These reports are based on investigations and include recommendations as to the best placement for the child while under court jurisdiction.

Measure

Percent of active children residing in volunteer advocate approved placements.

Calculation

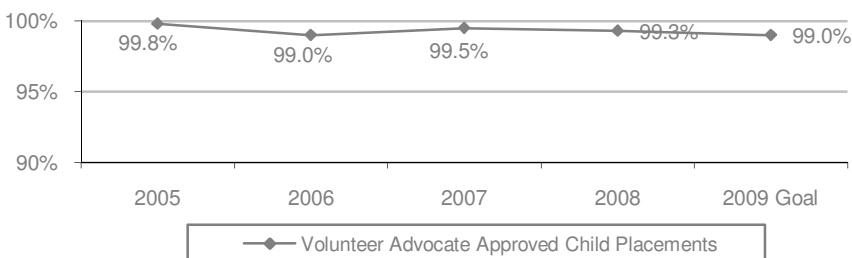
SUM QUARTERLY AVERAGES ...

(Number of active children residing in volunteer advocate approved placements at the end of the quarter
DIVIDED BY

Total number of active children at the end of the quarter)

DIVIDED BY: Four Quarters

Historical Performance



VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE GOALS

Volunteer advocate goals are related to the activities engaged in to serve children.

Volunteer advocate goals focus on:

- Contact,
- Court Attendance,
- ACR Attendance,
- Timely Court Reports,
- Recommendations, and
- Training.

Contact

Volunteer advocates should have frequent contact with the child(ren) and families, foster and biological, involved in the case. Frequent contact:

- ✓ Ensures that the individual volunteer advocate gets to know the child.
- ✓ Allows the volunteer advocate to monitor the child's living environment.
- ✓ Provides the volunteer advocate with the opportunity to ensure the child is receiving the services needed.
- ✓ Provides the volunteer advocate with the opportunity to identify any potential new needs of the child since the last contact.
- ✓ Gives the child a sense of trust – that there is a person there just for them.

Goal

The average number of volunteer advocate to child contacts will be 1.1 times per month. In general, CASA Kane County requires that each child be contacted once each month. However, two contacts per month are mandated for those children remaining in the biological home. Children placed a significant distance outside of Kane County may be contacted less frequently than once a month. Therefore the goal is set at an average of 1.1 contacts per month.

Definition

Contacts are defined as in-person visits with the child. For children placed outside the local area, phone contact is acceptable when pre-approved by the CASA case manager.

CASA Influence

The CASA program emphasizes the importance of child contact by:

- Mandating volunteer advocates visit each child to whom they are assigned at least once a month if the child is placed outside the biological home and at least two times a month if the child remains in the biological home, and
- CASA case managers review the number of visits the volunteer advocate has made to each child to whom they are assigned each time the case is heard in court.

Measure

Average number of monthly child contacts.

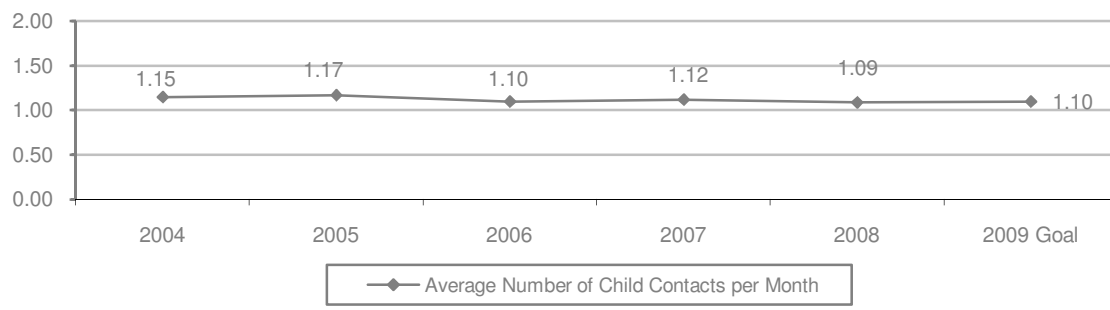
Calculation

Average number of contacts per month since the last court hearing for each child with a court hearing in the current period

DIVIDED BY

Number of children with a court hearing in the current period

Historical Performance



Court Attendance

Volunteer advocates should attend court hearings to advocate effectively for the health, safety and best interests of the child. Attendance at court hearings:

- ✓ Gives the judge the opportunity to ask additional questions of the volunteer advocate.
- ✓ Allows the volunteer advocate to incorporate into the hearing new information that developed since the writing of the reports but prior to the hearing date.
- ✓ Provides the opportunity for the volunteer advocate to speak with all parties to the case to provide additional information and clarification.
- ✓ Enhances the representation for the child by allowing the volunteer advocate to add to the report verbally during collaboration with the CASA attorney.

Goal

95% of court hearings during the year (excluding those hearings for which volunteer advocates have been specifically excused by a CASA case manager) will be attended by volunteer advocates. It is imperative that volunteer advocates attend each hearing. Therefore, the current year goal has been set at a level consistent with the last year's performance.

Definition

The Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) appointment order mandates that the GAL will attend all court hearings.

CASA Influence

The CASA program emphasizes the importance of volunteer advocate attendance at court hearings by:

- Ensuring all volunteer advocates selected for training have flexibility before they are sworn in,
- Receiving court orders of the next hearing date, and
- Tracking whether volunteer advocates attend (except when specifically excused by a CASA case manager).

Measure

Percent of court hearings attended by volunteer advocates (excluding those hearings for which volunteer advocates have been specifically excused by a CASA case manager).

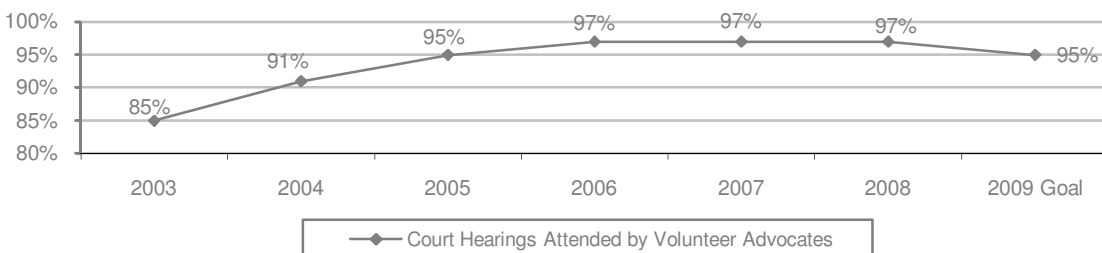
Calculation

Number of court hearings attended by volunteer advocates (excluding those hearings for which volunteer advocates have been specifically excused by a CASA case manager)

DIVIDED BY

Total number of court hearings (excluding those hearings for which volunteer advocates have been specifically excused by a CASA case manager)

Historical Performance



ACR Attendance

Volunteer advocates should attend DCFS Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs) to advocate effectively for the health, safety and best interests of the child. ACR attendance:

- ✓ Gives the volunteer advocate the opportunity to provide input to the tasks and services required to be completed by all parties involved that impact the child.
- ✓ Facilitates a more efficient process by providing a situation where all parties involved in the case are together to focus on steps to achieve permanency.

Goal

85% of ACRs during the year (excluding those ACRs for which volunteer advocates have been specifically excused by a CASA case manager) will be attended by volunteer advocates. During the ACR, Client Service Plans are developed and modified. Volunteer advocate attendance at ACRs ensures CASA input into the Client Service Plan to truly affect the case itself. Because of this, emphasis is being placed on the importance of ACRs. However, because advocates are not always informed of ACR meeting dates in a timely fashion, it is sometimes not possible for them to attend. With improvements in the notification and tracking process for ACR's, the current year goal has been set at a level consistent with the performance of the previous year.

Definition

DCFS Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs) are the meetings held by the child welfare agency for families with children in foster care. These meetings identify tasks and services required to be completed by all parties involved with the ultimate goal of a safe, permanent home for the child. These meetings should occur every six months.

CASA Influence

The CASA program emphasizes the importance of volunteer advocate attendance at ACRs by:

- Mailing all ACR notices to the volunteer advocates, and
- Tracking whether volunteer advocates attend (except when specifically excused by a CASA case manager).

Measure

Percent of ACRs attended by volunteer advocates (excluding those ACRs for which volunteer advocates have been specifically excused by a CASA case manager).

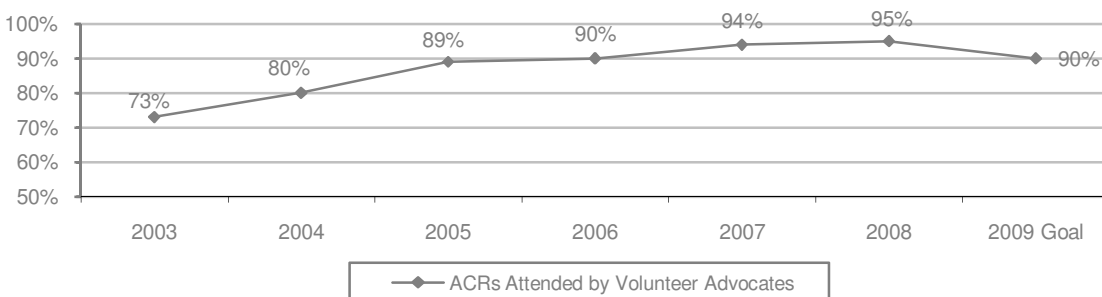
Calculation

Number of ACRs attended by volunteer advocates (excluding those ACRs for which volunteer advocates have been specifically excused by a CASA case manager)

DIVIDED BY

Total number of ACRs (excluding those ACRs for which volunteer advocates have been specifically excused by a CASA case manager)

Historical Performance



Timely Court Reports

Volunteer advocates should submit court reports in a timely manner. Timely court reports:

- ✓ Allow the judge (and other recipients) the time to absorb the report's information and provide all parties with the information necessary to make proper decisions.
- ✓ Provide a reminder of different parties' tasks to be accomplished by the court date, helping to ensure tasks are completed in a timely manner.

GOAL

95% of reports will be submitted to the court on time during the year. CASA's general order from the court requests reports to be submitted to the court no less than two business days prior to the hearing. Because of this, emphasis is being placed on the importance of timely reports. The current year goal has been set at a level consistent with last year's performance.

Definition

Court reports, a volunteer advocate's primary input to the judge, are due into the court no less than two business days prior to the hearing.

CASA Influence

The CASA program helps to ensure that reports are submitted to the court in a timely manner by:

- Requiring all reports to be reviewed by a CASA case manager, therefore requiring the report to be completed in advance of the date due to the court, and
- Contacting volunteer advocates to request the report if the due date is near and the report has not yet been submitted.

Measure

Percent of reports submitted to the court on time.

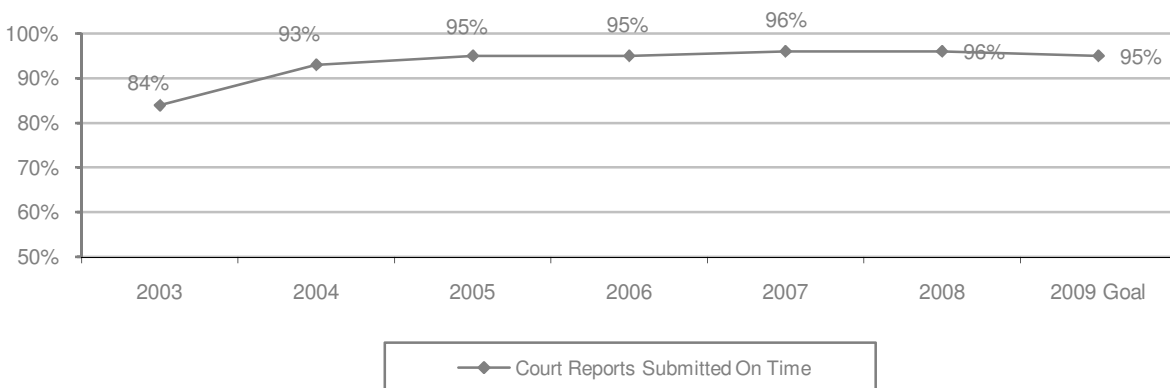
Calculation

Number of reports submitted to the court on time

DIVIDED BY

Total number of reports due to the court

Historical Performance



Recommendations

Volunteer advocates should make recommendations to the court that serve the child's best interest.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Provide an objective third-party perspective based upon a thorough understanding of the child not limited by legal constraints and social service policies.

GOAL

97% of recommendations will be accepted by the court during the year. The current year goal has been set at a level consistent with last year's performance.

Definition

Volunteer advocates make recommendations to the court, via the court report, regarding placement, visitation, health, education, and any other services needed.

CASA Influence

The CASA program helps to ensure that recommendations are adopted by the court by:

- Clearly stating recommendations in a report to the court, including all supporting rationale for those recommendations,
- Requiring all reports, and therefore all recommendations, to be reviewed by a CASA case manager,
- Submitting court reports to the court in a timely manner in order to provide adequate time for the court to review all recommendations.

Measure

Percent of recommendations accepted by the court.

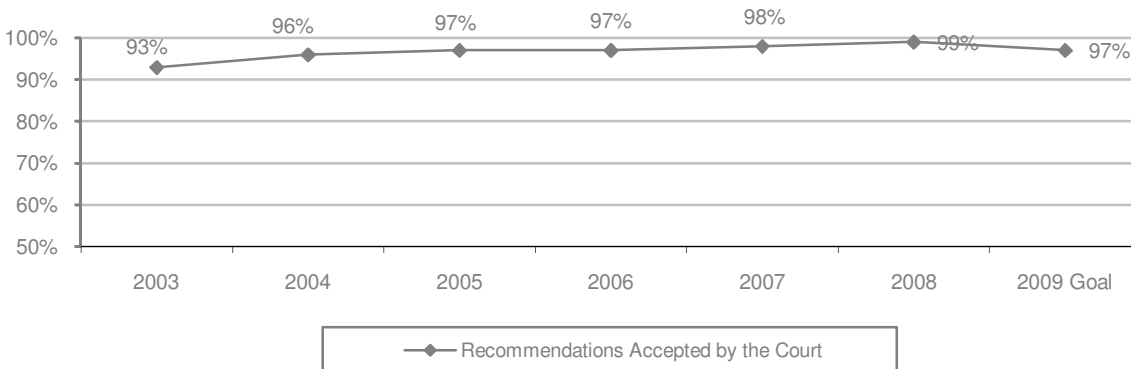
Calculation

Number of recommendations accepted by the court

DIVIDED BY

Total number of recommendations made to the court

Historical Performance



Training

Volunteer advocates should meet their training requirements each year. Ongoing training:

- ✓ Ensures volunteer advocates have the knowledge base in order to collaborate effectively with all other professional parties involved in the case.
- ✓ Ensures volunteer advocates are effective child advocates by educating them about the current research in the field as well as making them aware of the many services that exist to serve this population.
- ✓ Is required by National CASA.

GOAL

75% of volunteer advocates will meet their training requirements for the year. CASA recognizes the importance of maintaining a volunteer advocate base that is well trained, and has been emphasizing the importance of continuing education throughout its existence. CASA will continue to experiment with offering training sessions at a variety of times and locations to enable volunteers to more conveniently attain their 12 hours of training.

CASA program requires all volunteer advocates to attend 12 hours of training each year. The training requirement for volunteer advocates sworn in the current year are prorated based on the time of year that the initial training took place.

CASA Influence

The CASA program emphasizes training by:

- Providing a sufficient number of training opportunities,
- Including the number of hours of continuous training attended by the volunteer advocate on their annual performance evaluation,
- Publicizing training opportunities via the newsletter, e-mail, and postings, and
- Ensuring the CASA web site information and resource library materials are varied and up-to-date.

Measure

Percent of volunteer advocates attending 12 or more hours of training during the year.

Calculation

Number of volunteer advocates, active more than 12 months, at the end of the year who attended 12 or more hours of training during the year

DIVIDED BY

Total number of volunteer advocates, active more than 12 months, at the end of the year.

Historical Performance



PROGRAM GOALS

Program goals relate to the activities that the program engages in to serve more children and better meet the needs of volunteer advocates.

Program goals focus on:

- Coverage,
- Experience,
- Diversity,
- Initial Training,
- In-Service Training, and
- Supervision.

Coverage

The number of volunteer advocates available to serve cases should be sufficient to handle all cases assigned by the court. Sufficient coverage:

- ✓ Ensures that every child has a dedicated volunteer advocate to advocate for their individual best interest.

GOAL

Maintaining 10 trained and available volunteer advocates in the past has enabled CASA to assign all new cases to a volunteer advocate. Therefore CASA will keep its goal level at 10 for the current year.

Definition

All cases assigned to CASA receive a volunteer advocate.

CASA Influence

The CASA program manages the number of volunteer advocates available by:

- Providing a steady number of new volunteer advocates through continuous, year-round training, and
- Having a flexible training schedule that is able to expand or contract to accommodate fluctuations in case levels.

Measure

Average number of volunteer advocates trained and available to take new cases during the year.

Calculation

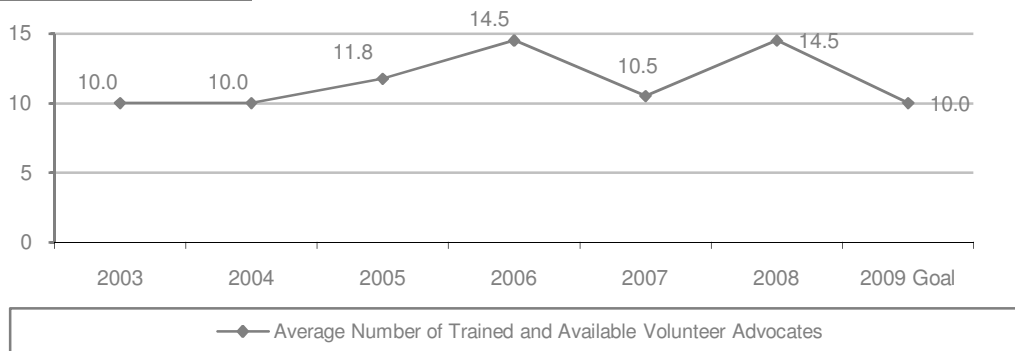
SUM OF

The number of available volunteer advocates at the end of each quarter

DIVIDED BY

Four Quarters

Historical Performance



Experience

The experience level of volunteer advocates should be sufficient to handle all levels of case complexity assigned by the Court. Sufficient experience:

- ✓ Ensures that each child receives a volunteer advocate with the necessary experience and training in order to handle the complexities of their case in a competent and professional manner.

GOAL

Volunteer advocate turnover rate will remain under 20% for the year. Sociological studies show that volunteers today are remaining with the same organization for less and less time. In addition, volunteers who helped establish a program typically remain with the organization longer than successive volunteers. Given the age of the program, CASA is experiencing a natural turnover of volunteer advocates who began early on and have remained with the organization beyond typical volunteer commitment (**approximately 35% have been active for 5 – 9 years and 10% have been active for 10 or more years**). These volunteer advocates are being replaced with volunteer advocates who are expected to remain with the organization for a shorter period of time. Therefore the current year goal has been set at a maximum level that is slightly higher than past performance.

Definition

Highly experienced volunteer advocates are maintained via low volunteer advocate turnover rates.

CASA Influence

The CASA program helps to maintain high experience levels by reducing turnover of volunteer advocates through:

- Recognition,
- Case support, and
- Access to additional resources.

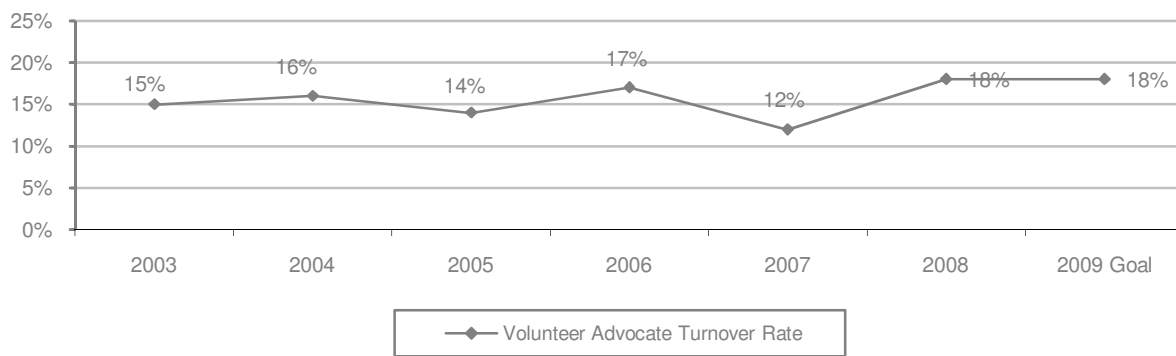
Measure

Volunteer advocate turnover rate.

Calculation

Number of volunteer advocates resigned during the current year
DIVIDED BY
Number of volunteer advocates at the beginning of the year
PLUS
Number of volunteer advocates at the end of the year
DIVIDED BY
Two

Historical Performance



Diversity

The diversity of volunteer advocates should reflect the diversity of children assigned to CASA. Volunteer advocate diversity:

- ✓ Improves connections made with parties to the case through cultural understanding.
- ✓ Increases the volunteer advocate's ability to relate to the child and other parties to the case.
- ✓ Expands the expertise and experiences of the volunteer advocate base.

GOAL

Goal for the percentage of male volunteer advocates will remain at 25% and the goal for the percentage of minority volunteer advocates will remain at 10%. The children assigned to the CASA program are much more diverse (in both race and gender) than the volunteer advocates who serve them. Emphasis is being placed on the importance of creating a more diverse volunteer advocate population in order to better meet the needs of the children being served.

Definition

Diversity refers to gender and race.

CASA Influence

The CASA program attempts to recruit diverse volunteer advocates by:

- Targeting locations (Elgin and Aurora) where more diversity exists,
- Using current volunteer advocates and their connections, and
- Holding Men's Breakfasts.

Measure

Percent of volunteer advocates who are male or of a minority race.

Calculation

SUM QUARTERLY AVERAGES ...

Number of male volunteer advocates at the end of the period

DIVIDED BY

Total number of volunteer advocates at the end of the period

DIVIDED BY

Four Quarters

SUM QUARTERLY AVERAGES ...

Number of minority volunteer advocates at the end of the period

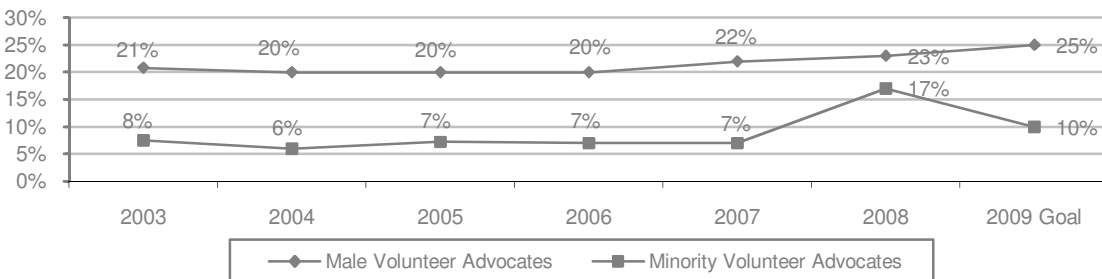
DIVIDED BY

Total number of volunteer advocates at the end of the period

DIVIDED BY

Four Quarters

Historical Performance



In-Service Training

In-service training should meet the needs of existing volunteer advocates and pro bono attorneys by providing additional information useful to them in their advocacy role. In-service training:

- ✓ Supplements the volunteer advocate's initial training.
- ✓ Creates the opportunity for the volunteer advocate to network with other volunteer advocates to learn from one another by sharing experiences.
- ✓ Provides the opportunity for volunteer advocates, who are under strict confidentiality requirements, to discuss the factual details of their case, as well as find support for the emotional aspect of their case, with other volunteer advocates.
- ✓ Creates opportunities for the volunteer advocate to network with other professionals involved in the case, providing an understanding of each party's role, and therefore fostering better working relationships.

Goal

45 hours of unique in-service training hours will be offered to all volunteer advocates during the year. Due to the fact that there is a bi-annual conference in 2009, as well as the increased availability of training opportunities outside of CASA direct training, the current year goal is set at a level above the previous year's goal. CASA will continue to act as a conduit to provide information on E-learning opportunities, outside agency training, podcasts, etc. to allow all advocates ample opportunities to obtain 12 in-service hours per year.

Definition

In-services are formal group training sessions provided directly by CASA Kane County, covering a variety of topics, provided for continuing education for volunteer advocates. These are in addition to unlimited other opportunities outside of those provided directly by CASA Kane County, including such things as: online training through National CASA, external seminars and conferences, books, and other individual learning experiences, all of which provide in-service credit opportunities.

CASA Influence

The CASA program ensures in-service training meets the needs of existing volunteer advocates and pro bono attorneys by:

- Requiring 12 hours of in-service training each year.
- Providing a sufficient number of training opportunities,
- Attending conferences and seminars to identify potential new topics and/or speakers
- Ensuring the CASA web site information and resource library materials are varied and up-to-date.

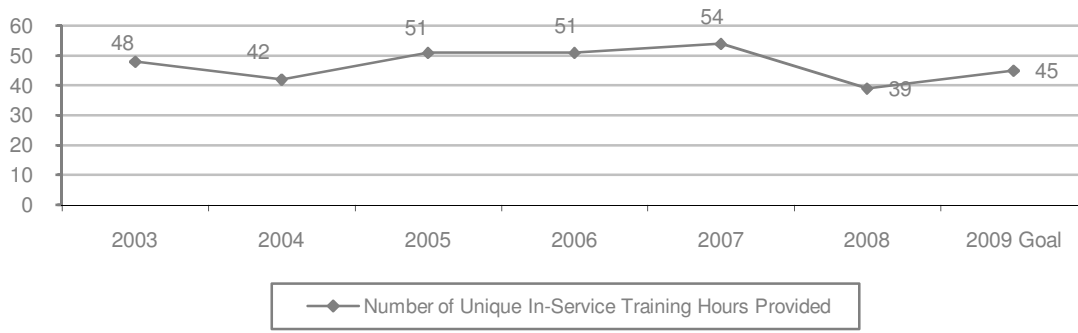
Measure

Number of unduplicated in-service training hours provided.

Calculation

Number of unduplicated in-service training hours provided (not including training hours provided during the course of initial training)

Historical Performance



Supervision

Supervision of volunteer advocates should meet the needs of both the CASA program and individual volunteer advocate. Supervision by CASA staff:

- ✓ Provides volunteer advocates with a resource in the CASA staff to provide them with a wealth of knowledge and experience in the law, the child welfare system, and the court system in order for them to provide effective advocacy for the children.
- ✓ Provides volunteer advocates with encouragement and support during difficult or emotional times.
- ✓ Ensures volunteer advocates are properly handling each child's case by providing oversight to their very independent advocacy work.
- ✓ Helps to raise issues on a timely basis, allowing for quick and effective corrective action.

GOAL

95% of active volunteer advocates will be contacted by their CASA case manager on a monthly basis during the year. The frequency of contact is based on the volunteer advocates' needs and the complexity and type of case. Volunteer advocates who are very experienced or are assigned to cases with little activity will be contacted less frequently. CASA recognizes the importance of advocate contact; therefore the current year goal has been set at a level higher than past performance.

95% of volunteer advocates active 12 months or more will receive an annual performance evaluation during the year. CASA recognizes the importance of formal feedback to volunteer advocates and thus the current year goal remains the same as the prior year.

Definition

Supervision is defined as face-to-face meetings, email, and telephone contact between a CASA case manager and a volunteer advocate.

CASA Influence

The CASA program ensures all volunteer advocates are adequately supervised by:

- Holding weekly meetings where CASA case managers review cases with issues,
- Reviewing all court reports prior to submission,
- Calling for CASA case managers make contact with their volunteer advocates at least monthly,
- Requiring CASA case managers to complete an annual evaluation for volunteer advocates active in the program for at least one year,
- Assigning new volunteer advocates a volunteer mentor.

Measure

Percent of volunteer advocates contacted by their CASA case manager on a monthly basis.

Percent of volunteer advocates active 12 months or more receiving an annual performance evaluation.

Calculation

SUM MONTHLY AVERAGES ...

(Number of active volunteer advocates contacted by their CASA case manager during the current month

DIVIDED BY

Total number of active volunteer advocates at the end of the month)

DIVIDED BY

Twelve months



Of all volunteer advocates sworn in as of the beginning of the year and not discharged as of the end of the year:

Number volunteer advocates receiving an annual performance evaluation

DIVIDED BY

Total number of volunteer advocates

Historical Performance

