



Study: Children with Court-Appointed Special Advocates do WORSE Than Children Without Them

By Brian Shilhavy | October 28, 2019



Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). [Image source.](#)

A new study has just been published in the journal *Child Maltreatment*: [The Effect of CASA on Child Welfare Permanency Outcomes.](#)

The present study is the largest and most rigorous study to date on the effects of being appointed a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) on permanency outcomes of children in foster care. The intent-to-treat study accounts for selection bias by applying inverse probability weighting to logistic and sequential logistic regressions in a large sample of children in foster care in the state of Texas (N = 31,754).

Overall, children appointed a CASA have significantly lower odds than children without a CASA of achieving permanency. They have lower odds of being reunified, greater odds of being adopted (if not reunified), and lower odds of being placed in permanent kin guardianship (if not reunified or adopted) than children who are not appointed CASA. ([Source.](#))

Richard Wexler of the [National Coalition for Child Protection Reform](#) writes that this is the second large-scale study done on the effectiveness of CASAs, the first one being published back in 2004:

Back in 2004, *Youth Today* [revealed the results](#) of the most comprehensive study done to that point concerning the most sacred cow in child welfare: Court-Appointed Special Advocates.

CASAs are overwhelmingly white overwhelmingly middle-class amateurs sent into the homes of people who are overwhelmingly poor and disproportionately of color. The amateurs then tell judges what decisions to make and, to a frightening degree, the judges rubber-stamp the recommendations. Though CASAs almost always mean well, their only real “qualification” typically is their white, middle-class status.

What could possibly go wrong?

Plenty, according to that 2004 study. The study was commissioned by the National CASA Association itself, which thought it would show the world how successful the program is.

But it didn't. Instead, the study found that having a CASA assigned to a case prolonged the time children were trapped in foster care, and made it less likely that children would be placed with relatives instead of strangers – even though [multiple studies have found](#) kinship foster care to be far less harmful to children than what should properly be called stranger care. ([Source.](#))

Not getting the results they expected, the national CASA organization did not conduct another study, but Texas CASA did, 15 years later. And according to Wexler, “Those results are even worse than the results from the 2004 study.”

Wexler goes on to say that it is time to defund the CASA program.

CASA might have a useful role to play in child welfare – if it were converted into strictly a mentoring program for foster children, without allowing these usually white, middle-class amateurs to tell judges where those children should grow up.

But in its current form, CASA should be pulled off the market.

It's time for Congress, which helps to fund CASA, for the judges who appoint CASAs and for the well-meaning people in the programs themselves to stop.

Stop denying children the chance to live safely in their own homes.

Stop denying children the chance to live with their extended families.

Stop denying children permanency. ([Source.](#))

Read the [full article here](#).