



Dependent Children's Services Division

FY 2007 Annual Report

July 1, 2006–June 30, 2007



*Administrative Office of the Courts
1501 W. Washington Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85007*

The Dependent Children's Services Division of the Administrative Office of the Courts advocates, on a statewide level, for appropriate services and safe, permanent homes for children in foster care and works to ensure timely permanency for these children by:

- Evaluating and improving dependency case processing in the juvenile court.
- Recruiting and training community-based volunteers who advocate for the best interests of abused, neglected, and abandoned children.
- Acting as a referral source to the community for information regarding foster care, adoption, parent assistance, volunteer opportunities, volunteer training, and the child welfare and juvenile court processes.

This mission is accomplished through the work of four distinct programs.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA):

The Court Appointed Special Advocate Program was established by Arizona statute to provide specially trained community volunteers to advocate for children who are wards of the court. The Arizona CASA Program administers fifteen county CASA programs throughout Arizona. The county programs recruit, train, and supervise the CASA volunteers. A CASA gathers and provides independent, factual information about a child's dependency case to aid the court in making decisions about the child.

CASA Duties and Responsibilities are defined in A.R.S. § 8-522, which state that the CASA is to:

- Meet with the child.
- Advocate for the child's safety as the first priority.
- Gather and provide independent, factual information to aid the court in making its decision regarding what is in the child's best interest and in determining if reasonable efforts have been made to prevent removal of the child from the child's home or to reunite the child with the child's family.

In the performance of these duties, the CASA must maintain the confidentiality of the case, develop and maintain a relationship with the child, fully document all case activity, participate as a member of the case management team and participate in all agreements or case plans, monitor the child's placement, ensure that educational needs are met, attend court hearings and provide written court reports to the judge for all Report and Review and Permanency hearings, and attend Foster Care Review Board meetings to update them on the progress of the case.

Court Improvement (CI):

The Court Improvement program was established federally to evaluate and improve dependency case processing in the juvenile courts throughout the nation.

Arizona CI is responsible for providing technical assistance and training to county courts as they revise local dependency practices, providing oversight of mandated introductory training for judicial officers new to the dependency bench, as well as ongoing dependency-related training to all juvenile judicial officers to enhance their knowledge of the process and the child welfare system. CI also assists in developing and modifying the juvenile rules to reflect any changes to federal

and/or state statutes regarding dependencies, and implements the Operational Review process which evaluates the dependency process in each county and their compliance with governing statutes.

Foster Care Review Board (FCRB):

The Foster Care Review Board was established by Arizona statute to review at least every six months the case of each child in foster care. The purpose of these reviews is to determine and advise the juvenile court of the adequacy of efforts and progress toward placement of the child in a permanent home; to encourage and facilitate the return of each dependent child to his/her family whenever possible; to promote and encourage stability in the child's placement; and to assist in informing parents and others of their rights and responsibilities regarding a dependent child in foster care.

Parent Assistance Hotline (PAH):

The Parent Assistance Hotline provides current information, education, and referrals to callers seeking information regarding the dependency process.

While the PAH staff is prohibited from giving legal advice, they address several topics with callers including:

- The legal rights of parents and guardians, including the right to attend court and foster care review board hearings.
- The child's legal rights.
- The procedures for attorney assignment.
- The means for accessing personnel who can provide information on a variety of topics including the well-being of a child in-care and various community resources that may be of benefit.

HIGHLIGHTS AND COLLABORATIONS

The DCSD Northern Region Collaborative Summit was held in Flagstaff on May 5, 2007. The objectives for the summit were twofold. First, to provide an excellent educational opportunity for both presenters and participants. Secondly, to provide an open arena for salient discussion on topics critical to participants' work with dependent children. Recognized leaders in their fields presented on an array of topics that included attorney practices, the

responsibilities of educators, focus on Zero to Three population, and challenges facing children aging out of the foster care system.

The summit facilitated collaboration among the various agencies involved with foster care. The nearly 200 participants at the May summit came from Apache, Coconino, Mohave, Navajo, and Yavapai counties and included professionals from the court, CPS, behavioral

health, juvenile probation, Indian Tribes, as well as educators, foster parents, and community volunteers. The DCSD Central and Southern Arizona Regional Collaborative Summits will be held in August and November and promise to bring more of the same energy and opportunity to those volunteers and professionals who work so hard for Arizona's foster children.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

The CASA Program had an active year, both at the state and local program levels.

Two programs celebrated major anniversaries: The Pima Program has served Arizona's dependent children for 25 years, and the Coconino Program for 20 years.

Child Abuse Prevention Month Commemoration

The Arizona CASA Program collaborated with the Arizona Lottery to highlight the issue of child abuse during Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness month in April 2007. To portray a child's journey in foster care through the eyes of a child, life-sized silhouettes of children were crafted which displayed written narratives about the path through foster care. The public was invited to read different scenarios along the walk.

The silhouettes narrated the child's thoughts about what they were experiencing—from removal from a biological home to living in a foster home, having visits with parents, or living in a group home. The silhouettes

were displayed during the month of April at various venues throughout the state, beginning at Wesley Bolin Plaza and traveling as far as Sierra Vista and Flagstaff. The display attempted to focus the public's attention on the plight of abused and neglected children, and offer ways for citizens to be a part of a child's journey.

National CASA Self Assessment

The Arizona CASA Program participated in a self-assessment process required by the National CASA Association (NCASAA). This year-long process required both the state CASA office and the county CASA programs to undergo an intensive compliance assessment to be certified by NCASAA. Each county achieved certification, as did the state office. No program received less than a 92% compliance with the assessment.

Strategic Plan

The Arizona CASA Program implemented a three-year strategic plan which seeks to:

- Increase the capacity of the Arizona CASA Program to serve, as closely as

possible to the demographic of our state, Arizona's dependent children.

- Support the county CASA Programs.
- Build and maintain stakeholder relationships.

Training

The CASA Program expanded the initial Orientation Training for new CASAs. The state office had been providing this centrally located, two-day initial training for CASAs in Phoenix every two months. The training was expanded to be offered monthly, alternating between Phoenix and Tucson, thus serving new CASA applicants in the southern region more effectively.

New training modules were added to the CASA website's On-line Training Center. This is part of the continuing effort of the CASA program to offer new and updated training topics to CASAs, FCRB members, and other community partners. The On-line Training Center has been nationally recognized by the NCASAA and other child welfare agencies in the country.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) *Continued*

Operations Manual

The CASA program revised and redesigned the Operations Manual that sets consistent procedures for the fifteen county CASA programs. The manual is available on the CASA website.

CASA Website

The CASA website, www.azcasa.org, was improved and expanded. Pages were added for each county program to highlight county CASA staff, and post a calendar of events, special event notices, and newsletters. Each county page also offers a “Meet the Judge” video in which the Presiding Juvenile Court Judge talks specifically about the CASA program and its importance to the juvenile court.

Awards and Recognition

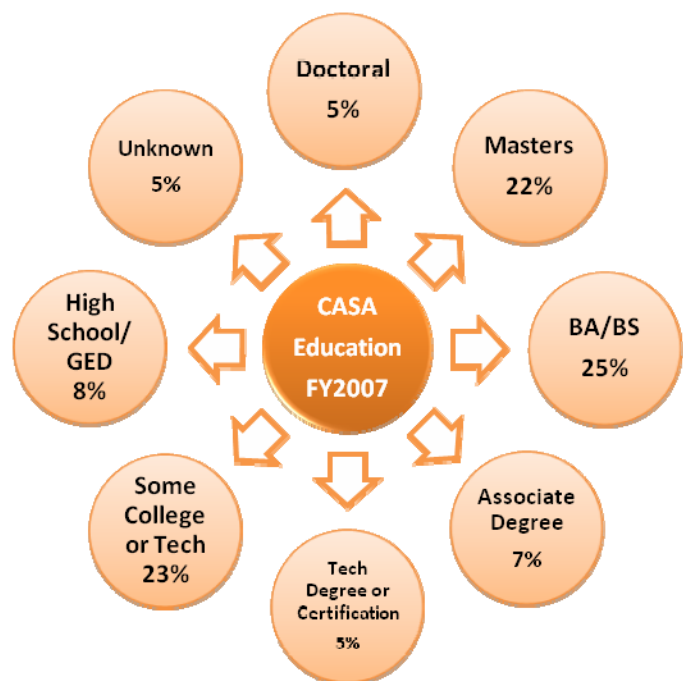
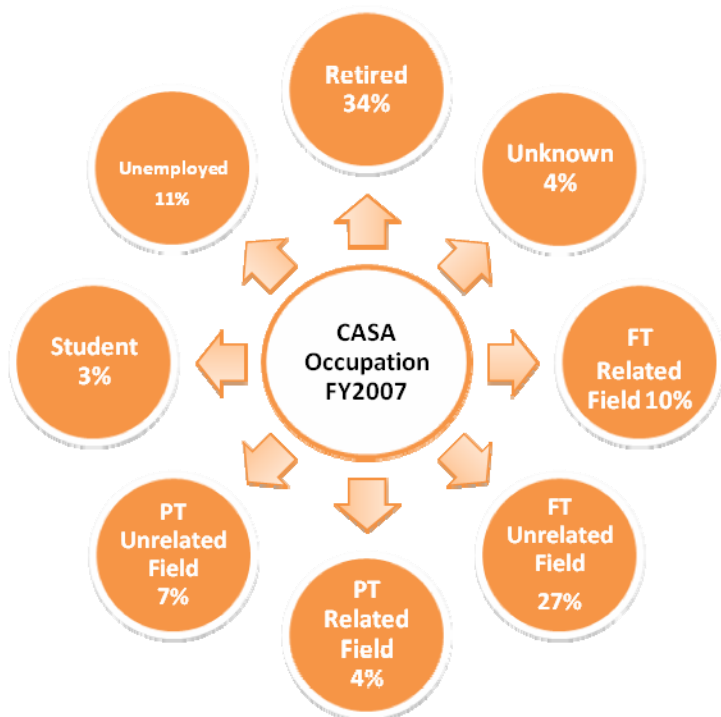
CASA programs and staff throughout Arizona received several awards this year,

including: Kirk Grugel, CASA Coordinator in Navajo County named Superior Court Employee of the Year; Donna Kosmider, CASA Coordinator in Cochise County named Supervisor of the Year; and the Coconino County CASA Program named the Organization of the Year by the Daily Sun newspaper.

The CASA Program participated in many collaborative efforts, including:

- County program participation in Adoption Day celebrations. Many CASA programs were active participants in planning and implementing these special days honoring adoptive families.
- County program participation in Best for Babies projects (see Court Improvement section).

- State office participation on National CASA Standards Committee, reviewing and revising standards for CASA programs nationwide.
- Assisting with the Arizona Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents Blue Ribbon event.
- Arizona Lottery 25th Anniversary Celebrations—speaking engagements and statewide stakeholder meetings, both state and local program participation.
- Participation at the Arizona Bar Association Roundtable discussion on children in care.
- Participation on the State Child Fatality Review Team.



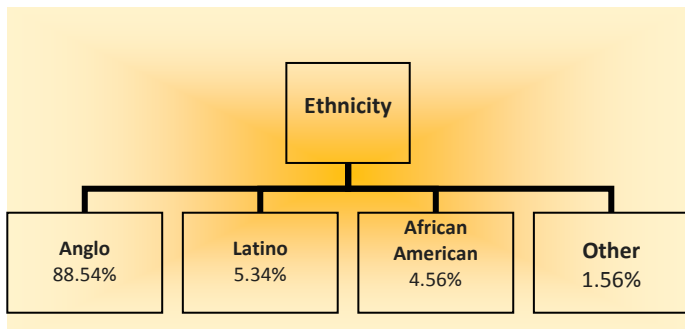
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) *Continued*

CASAs Who Attended Initial Training and Were Assigned

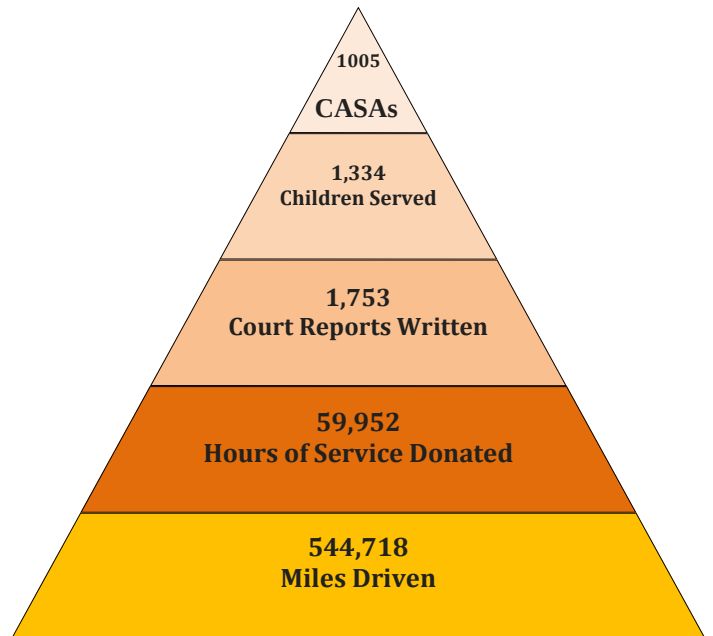
COUNTY	TRAINED	ASSIGNED
Apache	8	8
Cochise	7	7
Coconino	6	4
Gila	10	7
Graham	1	1
Greenlee	0	0
La Paz	0	0
Maricopa	64	52
Mohave	14	14
Navajo	5	5
Pima	45	29
Pinal	7	6
Santa Cruz	4	4
Yavapai	22	20
Yuma	9	7
TOTAL	202	164

CASAs and Children Served

COUNTY	CASAs	CHILDREN SERVED
Apache	14	37
Cochise	49	111
Coconino	22	34
Gila	38	19
Graham	12	17
Greenlee	8	10
La Paz	5	9
Maricopa	329	359
Mohave	63	69
Navajo	24	42
Pima	252	315
Pinal	45	38
Santa Cruz	10	33
Yavapai	98	163
Yuma	36	78
Total	1005	1334



CASA Ethnicity



Number of CASAs, Children Served, Reports, Service Hours, and Miles Driven

Foster Care Review Board (FCRB)

Pursuant to its statutory obligations, the Foster Care Review Board continues to review the cases of all dependent children placed in out-of-home care. Through more than 100 local boards statewide, over 500 volunteers, and a centralized state advisory board, the FCRB makes determinations about the safety and appropriateness of placements, assesses the appropriateness and viability of the case plan, and advises the local Juvenile Court Judge regarding progress toward a permanent home.

In addition to complying with mandated reviews, the program staff worked together to realize many other accomplishments to ensure the program is at the forefront for children. Some of the highlights include:

- New job descriptions for Local and State Board members, chairpersons, Removal Review members, and a revised attendance policy.
- The design of a Diversity Plan to increase minority representation on boards.
- Revision and re-design of notices to contain more pertinent information.
- Twenty training sessions held across the state for volunteers on the revisions to the Findings and Elements addressed at each board review.
- Gaining access to the DES database (CHILDS) for all staff members. This helps provide quick access to case information and progress reports.

- The ability of foster youth who cannot attend a review to provide statements on-line. Brochures explaining how to access the website were sent to the placements of age-appropriate children.
- Finding 10: In 2003, Governor Napolitano developed a reform plan for Arizona's Child Protective Services (CPS). In this plan, the Governor directed the Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) to advise CPS of the major service gaps and system problems that may be delaying permanency for children in Arizona's foster care system. In order to meet this obligation, the FCRB began working with a variety of stakeholders from agencies such as CPS and the Department of Behavioral Health Services, as well as FCRB volunteers and staff, to develop Finding 10. Additionally, the team developed 27 elements that FCRB volunteers could select that identify specific problem areas in every case being reviewed. In every review, the Boards are asked to select elements for each of ten Findings when necessary and appropriate. Finding 10 is unique because it helps identify how service gaps (lack of or no service available) or system problems (someone not doing something) can impact an individual case. The elements identify concerns regarding the educational, behavioral, social,

and case management systems that are involved in every case.

The information collected from the Findings can be compiled into data to be shared with child welfare stakeholders. Information that is collected from Finding 10 will be shared with stakeholders in an effort to identify areas of improvement throughout the state. It is expected that the data obtained from Finding 10 will assist policymakers, service providers, and child welfare professionals in rectifying the system problems and service gaps that delay permanency for foster children.

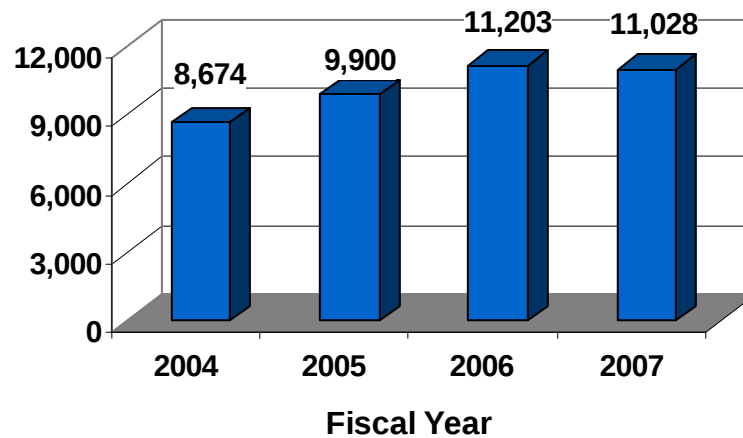
Additionally, the FCRB participated in a variety of collaborative efforts, including:

- Information gathering and exchange meetings with individuals and organizations such as the DES Assistant Director, the Manager of the Office of Legislative Advocacy, and the Foster Angels of Arizona.
- Participation in the establishment of the National Foster Care Review Coalition through meetings and teleconferences designed to share foster care review data and best practices.
- Child Protective Services Case Reviews in District I. FCRB volunteers were invited to participate on a cross-disciplinary panel to assess progress toward permanency in ongoing cases.

Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) *Continued*

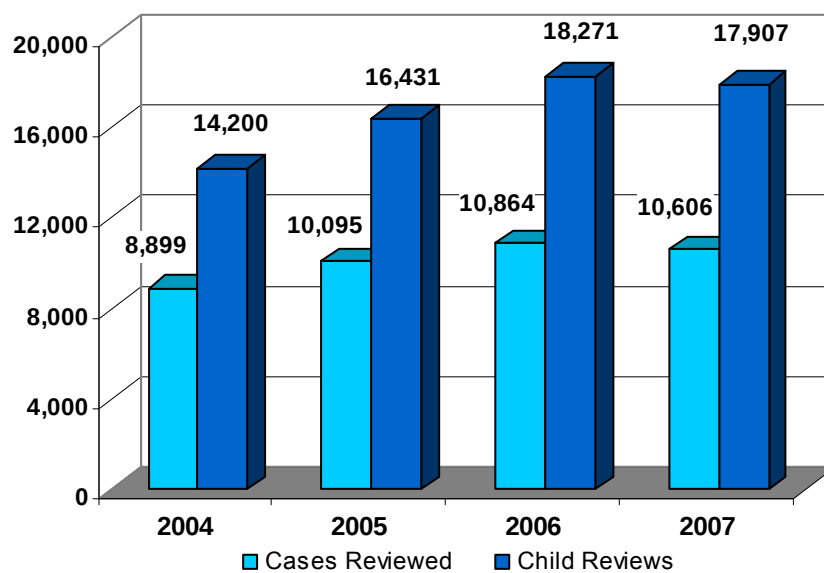
- Ongoing discussions with DES staff around the state concerning case manager attendance at reviews, Removal Review concerns, adoptions issues, etc.
- Participation in the Arizona Children's Executive Committee, a statewide link of local, county, tribal, and regional entities that supports an integrated system of care among Arizona's child-serving agencies according to the Arizona Vision and 12 Principles.
- Participation in Regional Behavioral Health Authority Systems Collaboration Training.

Individual Children Under Review



Shown above is the number of individual children whose cases were reviewed, or scheduled to be reviewed, by the FCRB sometime during a given fiscal year.

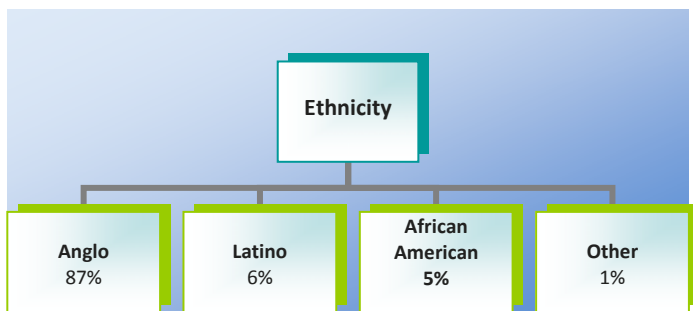
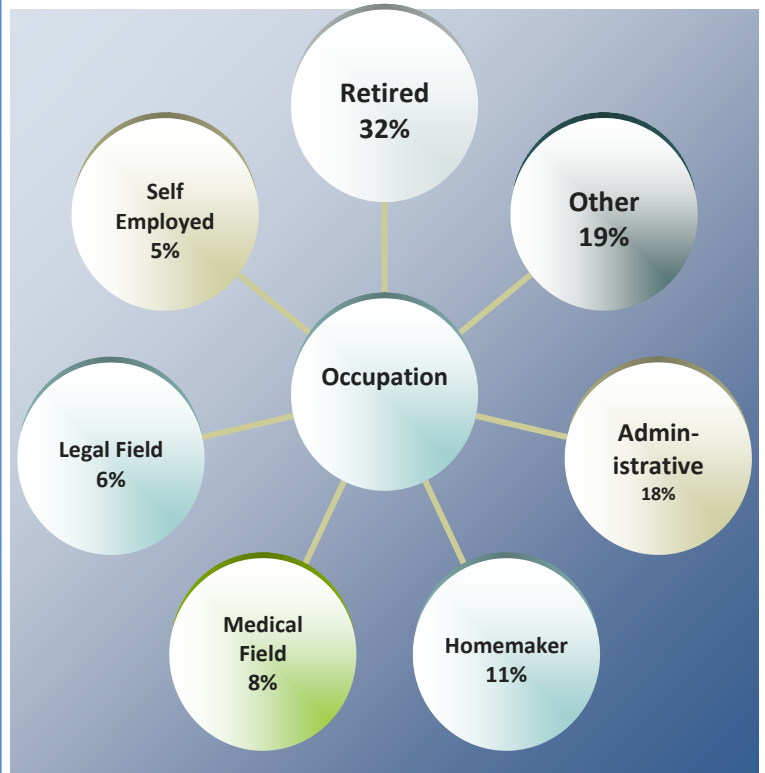
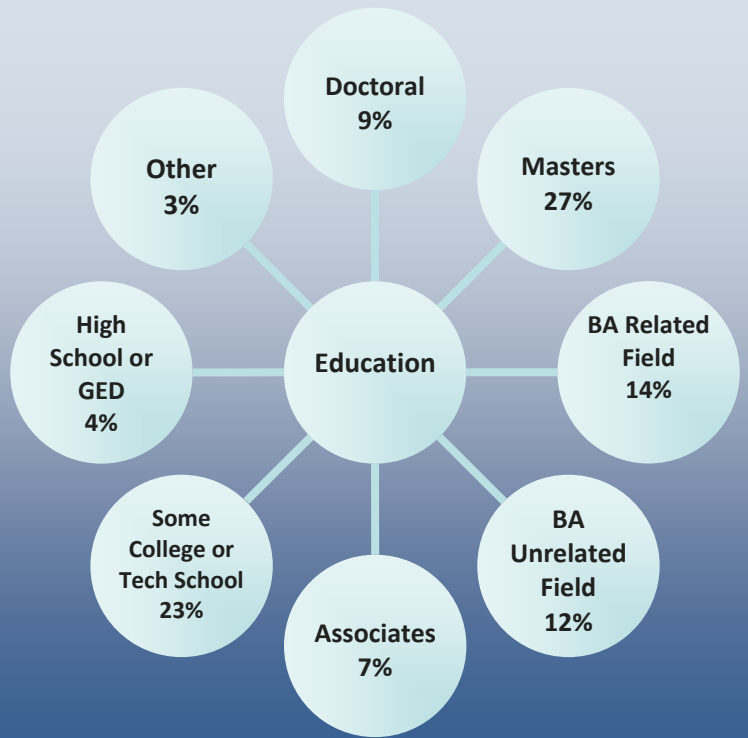
Cases Reviewed and Child Reviews



Shown above is the total number of juvenile dependency cases reviewed in a given fiscal year. Also shown is the total number of reviews scheduled for a given fiscal year (the same child will often be reviewed twice in the same year).

Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) *Continued*

Total Board Members for FY07 = 512



Court Improvement (CI)

Best for Babies

Six Arizona counties have implemented programs to focus on the needs of foster children from zero to three years of age. These programs have proven to be very successful in providing assistance and services to this age group.

During a presentation held prior to the 2007 Statewide Child Abuse Prevention Conference, teams from several of Arizona's fifteen counties met to learn about this special group of children. This session was sponsored jointly by the Administrative Office of the Courts, (Court Improvement) and the Department of Economic Security (DES). County teams, led by Presiding Juvenile Court Judges, included representatives from CPS and the county behavioral health system. Upon completion of the day-long training, county teams were given the opportunity to apply for technical assistance or "Community Development and Training" (CDT), provided through a grant funded by Court Improvement and DES. This assistance was made available to the six county teams who applied.

Through the CDT process, these counties have established plans specific to their own needs. Whether implementing a "Baby CASA" program or developing their own "Infant Checklist" to be used in court proceedings, each county has taken advantage of the CDT and continues to make significant progress. Personnel from the Courts, DES, and behavioral health are working more closely with the common focus of better outcomes for these most vulnerable of Arizona's foster children. Although the counties are in different phases of implementation, the initial changes have raised awareness of the importance of children ages zero through three years receiving appropriate services and getting the attention they need.

Caseflow Management— A Follow-up

Wanting to keep up the momentum, Court Improvement hosted three regional trainings between May and August 2007. County caseflow teams, led by the Presiding Juvenile Judge for the county, consisted of representatives from the Court, CPS, the Attorney General's Office, private counsel and behavioral

health. The one-day meeting offered each county the opportunity to report on their progress since they began meeting in 2006. Participants were then given access to key child welfare data measures as well as information on statewide collaborative efforts for children involved in multiple systems. Finally, participants were given the opportunity to set goals for the upcoming year. Whether incorporating child welfare performance data into their plan or fast tracking identified dependency cases, impressive goals were set by each county. The dependency caseflow management process utilized by the Arizona courts has proven to be effective in bringing together the right people to identify and address issues and barriers to safety, permanency and well being for Arizona's foster children.



Foster Care Review Board Members

Bruce Brannan	Thelma Gray	Connie Koch	Sarah O'Brien	At-Large Members
Joe Barbee	Doris Haak	Mark Lopez	Mitzi Pinsly	Joe Jacober
George Bressler	Shirlee Haines	Thelma Lundy	David Romanski	Beth Rosenberg
Damika Brock	Cece Hall	Laura Magruder	Toni Sabau	Jim Treece
Katie Calvert	Barbara Hanigsberg	Donald Manring	Patricia Schloss	Darryl Williford
Tracy Candelaria	Paul Hanson	Marilyn Miller	Linda Smith	Rachael Oesterle
Jennifer Cortum	Nancy Harrell	Lela Montfort	Tom Tellez	Patricia Trebesch
Francine Dobkin	Michael James	Carole Murphy	Mary Vermeer-Harris	Allyn Watson
Jo Foti	Ann Johnson	Merna Oakley	Molly Woods	

County CASA Programs

Stacey Armstrong	Justine Grabowsky	Karen Kramer	Kelly Pettit
Trish Biddix	Judy Gross	Rita Laird	Vanessa Ponce-Maez
Leslie Blakley	Kirk Grugel	Rene Larson	Diana Ryan
Esther Brohner	Robert Hahn	Nancy McBride	Margaret Stemple
Pam Burke	Joan Hansen	Kathy Meadows	Nicole Stockett
Maggie Fega	Teresa Hermosillo-Horne	Diane Muniz	Judy Sweador
Margie Fish	Sue Hutcheson	Ramona Panas	Judy Turley
Cecilia Gonzales	Amy Kirch	Kristina Parks	

Court Improvement Advisory Workgroup

Eileen Bond	Hon. Darlene Lucario-Nuvamsa	Lynda Taylor
Hon. Robert Brutinel	Lisa Lusk	Sheila Tickle
Colette Chapman	Janice Mickens	Melody Tinsley
James DeJesus	Carol Punske-Brasch	Jackie Traher
Norma Garcia-Torres	Beth Rosenberg	Patricia Trebesch
John Gilmore	Hon. Stephen Rubin	Kara Van Hise
Katherine Guffey	Chris Rufo	James White
Paul Guiffre	Laurie San Angelo	Hon. Eileen Willett
Gary Krcmarik	Linda Smith	Myrtle Young
Jenny Lagunas	Amy Stuart	
Steve Lazere	Chris Swenson-Smith	

Dependent Children's Services Division



Caroline I. Lutt-Owens, Director
Bonnie Marcus, Program Manager—Court Appointed Special Advocate
Robert Shelley, Program Manager—Court Improvement
Bill Callahan, Program Manager—Foster Care Review Board

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