

# **Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse, Culturally Responsive Guardian ad Litem Volunteer Pool in Durham County**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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*What steps should the Durham County Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program take to further improve its recruitment and retention of diverse, culturally responsive volunteers?*

The Durham County Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program is part of a larger state system and national network dedicated to ensuring abused and neglected children have advocates in court. In recent years, the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association, a large network of local and state agencies and organizations, has encouraged its members to increase GAL and CASA volunteer diversity. Increasing diversity has become a priority largely because the majority of volunteers nationally are white and female, whereas the majority of children served are African American and male.

National CASA encourages offices to recruit more volunteers that reflect “the makeup of the children in the judicial system as well as the local community.” The Durham County GAL Program has been relatively successful in recruiting volunteers that reflect the demographic of the larger Durham population. This has worked because the Durham office takes a holistic approach to assigning volunteers to children, looking at factors that extend beyond race and gender. Nevertheless, because the overall demographics of the volunteers and children are vastly different, the program acknowledges that its recruitment efforts could always be more targeted. The Durham County GAL Program is limited in its ability to make substantial changes to its recruitment and retention efforts, however, because the office lacks the funding and current full-time staff lack the time.

### Methodology

To address the Durham County GAL Program’s policy question, I researched best practices for recruiting and retaining diverse and culturally competent volunteers. I performed a literature and resource review on the topic. Additionally, I interviewed staff from National CASA, the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program, and local and state programs identified by National CASA as “Inclusion Award” winners.

### Policy Options

My policy options were grouped into two categories: Recruitment and Retention. Altogether, I listed seventeen policy options grouped into different option groups that focused on capacity-building, targeted recruitment, and adopting specific recruitment strategies. Each option group was evaluated against the following three criteria: (1) minimize Durham County GAL Program costs, (2) maximize self-sustainability, and (3) ensure political feasibility.

### Recommendations

Based on my analysis, I recommend the following policy options under each policy group:

Recruitment Option Group #1: Target specific groups

- Focus recruitment on a particular group(s) of underrepresented advocate volunteers—i.e. African Americans, Hispanics, males

Recruitment Option Group #2: Capacity-building

- Create a volunteer recruitment committee
- Recruit more non-advocate volunteers

Recruitment Option Group #3: Specific recruitment strategies

- If a volunteer recruitment committee is created or if non-advocate volunteers are recruited: any combination of the policy options could be adopted (other than “do nothing”)
- If no volunteer recruitment committee is created or if non-advocate volunteers are not recruited: do nothing/retain current strategies

Retention Option Group #4: Capacity-building

- Use non-advocate volunteers to assist with retention efforts

## I. INTRODUCTION

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### *Policy Question*

What steps should the Durham County Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program take to further improve its recruitment and retention of diverse, culturally responsive volunteers?

### *Overview of Guardian ad Litem Program*

In 1983, North Carolina implemented a statewide Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program.<sup>1</sup> A GAL is appointed by the court whenever a petition is filed alleging that a youth has been abused or neglected. The primary responsibility of the GAL is to advocate for the “best interests” of the child.<sup>2</sup> In so doing, the GAL must conduct investigations to gather facts about the child’s needs, which often involve reviewing records and interviewing parties relevant to the case.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the GAL must participate in adjudicatory and dispositional hearings on the child’s behalf and make recommendations to the court about how the child’s needs should be met. Finally, the GAL must perform “follow-up investigations” to ensure that the court’s orders are being followed and update the court on any changes.

The process of becoming a GAL in Durham County—and other counties in North Carolina—is multi-faceted. Potential volunteers must complete a written application, participate in an interview, submit to a background check, and provide references.<sup>4</sup> The most important qualification is “a sincere concern for the well being of children and a continuing commitment to advocate for a child until a safe and permanent home is obtained.”<sup>5</sup> The GAL Program also looks for well-rounded individuals who possess the ability to, among other qualities, “interact with people of various educational, economic, and ethnic backgrounds.”<sup>6</sup> Once selected, GAL volunteers must participate in approximately thirty hours of training before being sworn in by a district court judge. Although the number frequently changes, as of February 2011, the Durham County GAL Program had approximately 117 volunteers assigned to 275 children.<sup>7</sup> The state as a whole has 4,805 GAL volunteers serving 15,866 children.<sup>8</sup>

The GAL Program is not limited to North Carolina—volunteer advocates represent abused and neglected children in courts nationwide. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (CAPTA) conditioned federal funding on states’ appointment of a GAL “in every case involving an abused or neglected child which results in a judicial proceeding.”<sup>9</sup> After CAPTA was enacted, several states began to use community volunteers as GALs, a concept modeled after a 1977 pilot project in Seattle, Washington.<sup>10</sup> The National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association emerged from this backdrop as a central source of support to these programs. National CASA presently boasts a membership of 1,055 local and state agencies located in forty-nine states, including North Carolina.<sup>11</sup> In 2009 alone, these organizations and state agencies were responsible for providing approximately 70,900 GAL and CASA volunteers for 237,000 children.<sup>12</sup>

### *National Focus on Diverse and Culturally Responsive Volunteers*

National CASA has made increasing the “diversity and cultural competency” of its volunteers an organizational priority.<sup>13</sup> The guiding principle behind this initiative is that “a child can be best served by a CASA/GAL volunteer who is culturally competent and who has personal

experience and work experience in the child's own culture(s).”<sup>14</sup> Any individual, in theory, could become culturally competent by developing an “understanding of and appreciation for the uniqueness of each child and an awareness of and respect for the cultural norms, values, traditions, and parenting styles of each family.”<sup>15</sup> However, the organization encourages local and state programs to make a concerted effort to recruit culturally competent volunteers from diverse backgrounds. National CASA defines “diversity” broadly to include “race, gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and the presence of a sensory, mental, or physical disability.”<sup>16</sup> The organization also “value(s) diversity of viewpoints, life experiences, talents, and ideas.”<sup>17</sup>

Although National CASA embraces an all-inclusive definition of diversity, its most recent focus has been on race and gender because of the vast differences in volunteer representation. At the national level, it was estimated that around 90% of GAL and CASA volunteers were White, while more than 60% of the youth represented were of minority backgrounds.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, local programs tend to have a predominantly female volunteer pool, although nearly half of the children served are male.<sup>19</sup>

Is there any evidence that National CASA's focus on diversity has improved or will improve children's outcomes? National CASA has commissioned a study examining volunteer effectiveness, which will take into account the demographics of the volunteer population and the children being served.<sup>20</sup> The results, however, are not final at this time. Chanin Kelly-Rae, National CASA's Senior Director of Inclusion and Equity, noted that, in the absence of such data, the organization has relied primarily on anecdotal evidence as well as research from other fields, such as healthcare and education.<sup>21</sup> One study that she highlighted was a recent reanalysis of the Tennessee Project STAR Program data that tracked 6,000 elementary school students over four years.<sup>22</sup> Among other things, the study showed that students in classes with a same-race teacher demonstrated small yet significant gains on standardized tests compared to students with teachers of a different race. Although the actual study cautioned against extrapolating this data into other contexts given the uncertainty behind “why” having a same-race teacher made a difference,<sup>23</sup> Kelly-Rae still found that the results confirmed observations that National CASA has made over the years.<sup>24</sup> With that said, Kelly-Rae acknowledges that, at the end of the day, if a child has a specific need, programs should strive to find an advocate who best meets that need regardless of race or gender.

### *National and State Diversity Standards*

National CASA has adopted standards that encourage state and local affiliates to expand their diversity recruitment efforts. The relevant standards are as follows:

1. The CASA/GAL program is inclusive and has a written plan for recruiting and selecting volunteers who reflect the children served.
2. The recruitment plan demonstrates that inclusiveness and diversity are essential components of quality advocacy and includes targeted strategies to attract volunteers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and from a variety of age groups and socio-economic levels.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, the diversity policy calls for programs to increase the recruitment of volunteers who reflect “the makeup of the children in the judicial system as well as the local

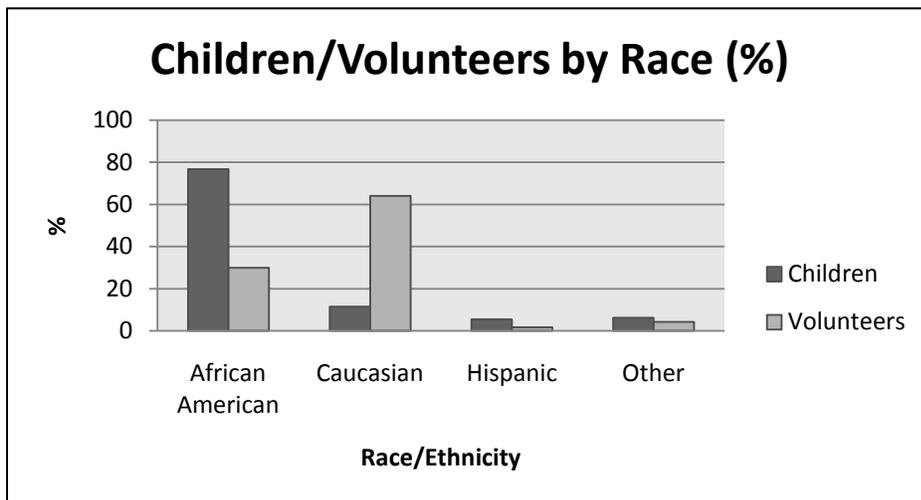
community.”<sup>26</sup> Kelly-Rae acknowledges that the demographic of the children in the system may look very different from that of the overall community.<sup>27</sup> As a result, she explained that it may be unrealistic, for example, to expect every program to recruit enough African American volunteers to serve all the African American children in the system. This is particularly true given that many potential volunteers may not be a good fit after taking into account factors like age, economic limitations, the inability to pass a background check, or even just a lack of interest. Nevertheless, National CASA does encourage programs to be ambitious in their outreach.

Because North Carolina is formally affiliated with National CASA, the state office expects local districts to adhere to National CASA’s standards for diversity and inclusion.<sup>28</sup> The local offices should have “written plans with goals and activities to increase the diversity of their volunteer pool and the cultural awareness of their volunteers.”<sup>29</sup> At the same time, they have flexibility to define their own goals given that each district may have different needs and may serve different populations.

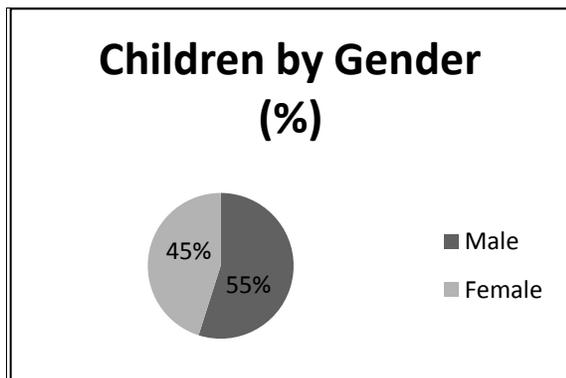
*Need for Diverse and Culturally Responsive GAL Volunteers in Durham County*

In February 2011, the Durham County GAL Program had approximately 275 children assigned to 117 volunteers.<sup>30</sup> The demographics of those children and volunteers are displayed below in Figures 1 through 3.

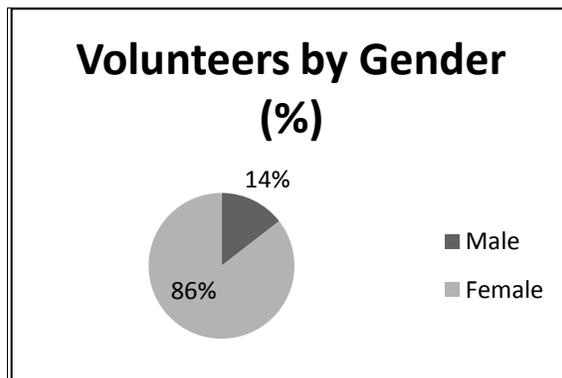
**Figure 1. Race of Children and Volunteers**



**Figure 2. Gender of Children**



**Figure 3. Gender of Volunteers**



With regard to both race and gender there was a significant difference between the backgrounds of the children served and the volunteers. Of the total number of children, 76.7% were African American, 11.6% were Caucasian, 5.5% were Hispanic, and 6.2% identified with a different racial group or as mixed-race. In contrast, of the 117 volunteers, 29.9% were African American, 64.1% were Caucasian, 1.7% were Hispanic, and 4.3% were of another race or of mixed-race heritage.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, with regard to gender, the majority of the children served were male, but the majority of volunteers were female.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast, the racial makeup of volunteers is more closely aligned to that of the larger Durham County population. In 2009, 45% of residents were Caucasian, 37% African American, 12% Hispanic, and 6% other races and mixed-race individuals.<sup>33</sup> Taking into account these figures, the district has done considerably well in its overall outreach to the community. In fact, Durham's District Administrator explained that one of her primary goals has been to ensure that the volunteer pool "diversity match[ed] the community as a whole."<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, because the program does not match volunteers solely on the basis of race or gender, a perfect one to one correlation between the background of volunteers and children is not completely necessary. The Durham County GAL Program prides itself on taking a holistic approach to volunteer assignments and making determinations on a case-by-case basis. Any number of factors may be considered, including but not limited to schedule flexibility,<sup>35</sup> race, gender, age, life circumstances, GAL preference, child's preference (if old enough), and type of case.<sup>36</sup> Rarely, will one of these factors be exclusive, and the most important factor that may trump all others is simply whether someone is passionate about being an advocate—again, returning to the fact that the program has faith that its current volunteers will have the training and support from staff to take on most cases.<sup>37</sup>

With that said, the staff recognizes that in some situations specific factors may play a dominant role in the volunteer assignment process. For example, if a particular child or her family only speaks Spanish, it would be useful to assign a volunteer with Spanish language skills.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, a teenager in need of a positive role model—or who requests a volunteer of a certain background—may be assigned someone from the same race or gender.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, a male volunteer may not be assigned to a female child if he is concerned about how it may be perceived or about false allegations being made against him.<sup>40</sup> Finally, a volunteer with a particular professional background such as a teacher or nurse—may be assigned to a child with a particular need in one of these areas.<sup>41</sup>

The Durham County GAL Program acknowledges that if the office had the time and resources to recruit volunteers to better reflect the demographics of the children served, the top three priorities would include increasing the number of (1) male volunteers, particularly African American males, (2) volunteers with Spanish language skills, and (3) people of color more generally, particularly African Americans and Hispanics.

#### *Current Recruitment and Retention Methods in Durham County*

The Durham County GAL Program does not have a formal recruitment system, nor does it have a full- or part-time recruiter on staff. At one point, the program did have an Americorps volunteer who assisted with many tasks, including gathering resources and planning events in the community to recruit volunteers.<sup>42</sup> However, when funding sources dried up, this was no longer an option.<sup>43</sup> The state does not have a line item in its budget to allocate money for recruitment, but it encourages local districts to apply for time-limited grants for specific projects through National CASA.<sup>44</sup>

Recruiting new volunteers is a team effort for the Durham County Program staff. All staff members noted that the program receives a steady stream of volunteers and are fortunate that volunteers often find them, as opposed to the other way around. Of the volunteers actively recruited, one of the most successful recruitment tools has simply been through word of mouth. Volunteers who have had positive experiences are more likely to bring in new volunteers. Another successful recruitment tool has been recruiting students at local universities. Although volunteers are often both undergraduate and graduate students, the program consistently attracts a large number of law students each year. The staff noted that they also rely on a hodgepodge of informal recruitment methods, such as having current volunteers post fliers,<sup>45</sup> listing volunteer opportunities through online services like Volunteer Match,<sup>46</sup> and having staff speak at their local churches.<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, staff members have found that, while many pastors may be receptive to their message, very few volunteers come directly from these appeals.<sup>48</sup> Finally, volunteers sometimes learn about the program through National CASA public service announcements and spokespersons like Dr. Phil. Those individuals will then contact the National CASA office, which connects them to the local Durham program.<sup>49</sup>

With regard to training, the Durham County GAL Program follows a pretty standard approach. The program utilizes the National CASA training curriculum to provide a thirty-three hour training program to its volunteers. One of the training nights focuses specifically on cultural awareness and offers volunteers an opportunity to engage in role plays and other activities that challenge them to stand in the shoes of others.<sup>50</sup> The sessions are typically led by the District Administrator and at least one other staff person. Most of the staff stated that, in an ideal world, they would love to have an actual facilitator come in to lead the training sessions. Also, if there was more time, the cultural awareness component could always be further enhanced.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, as it pertains to retention, the District Administrator estimated that the program loses approximately twenty-five to thirty volunteers a year.<sup>52</sup> The primary reason for student volunteers is that they eventually graduate and relocate to different cities.<sup>53</sup> For non-student volunteers, the main reason is that their life circumstances have changed. Some move away or experience job changes; others may develop health problems.<sup>54</sup> Rarely does a volunteer just disappear.<sup>55</sup>

The Durham County GAL Program does not have a formal retention plan. However, the program hosts an annual volunteer appreciation meal and offers opportunities for in-service

training throughout the year.<sup>56</sup> The program staff also strive to maintain regular communication with their volunteers and offer words of praise when volunteers do something well. When the office had an Americorps volunteer, the volunteer not only assisted with recruitment but also retention, performing tasks such as drafting a regular volunteer newsletter that highlighted volunteers' birthdays and that provided news updates and resource links for volunteers.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the office received a time-limited grant a few years ago to hire an adolescent program coordinator. Among other responsibilities, she led in-service trainings relevant to volunteers with teenage youth.<sup>58</sup> As is true for all time-limited grants, however, when the grant ended, the position ended.<sup>59</sup> Providing many of these "extras" to volunteers is not possible with the current constraints on staff, and grantwriting is an extremely time-intensive solution.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

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In order to recommend steps that the Durham County GAL Program could take to improve upon its recruitment and retention plan, particularly as it relates to diversity, I researched best practices in the field. First, I conducted a literature and resource review. I focused primarily on sources that had been compiled over the years by National CASA, which has made it a priority to ensure local programs have the resources necessary to increase diversity within their volunteer pools.

Second, I conducted interviews with state and local CASA and GAL programs, as well as National CASA, to discover what best practices have been successful. I selected programs that were identified by National CASA as previous winners of the organization's "Inclusion Award." The award is given annually to programs that use "creative and sustainable" methods to "expand[ ] and enhanc[e] the diversity and cultural competency of volunteers, staff, and board members."<sup>60</sup>

The offices interviewed included CASA New Orleans (2010 winner), the Miami Guardian ad Litem Program, Eleventh Circuit (2009 winner), and the Richland County, South Carolina CASA Program (2007 winner). Interviews were conducted by phone and lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes. During each interview, I obtained both quantitative and qualitative information about each program's diversity plan and goals, community demographics, and recruitment and retention strategies. Additionally, I contacted the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program to learn more about statewide efforts to increase diversity among volunteers in their district offices. Finally, I contacted National CASA's Senior Director of Inclusion and Equity to gather information that would complement what I had learned through National CASA's publications.

Using the information gained from both the literature review and the interviews, I developed policy options for recruitment and retention specific to the Durham County GAL Program. I then analyzed each of these options using the program's criteria.

### III. FINDINGS

#### *Best Practices for Recruitment*

National CASA recommends a number of systems that can be put in place to improve GAL recruitment, especially as it pertains to recruiting diverse volunteers. The following list is a compilation of recruitment strategies that utilize different mediums and can assist GAL and CASA programs in expanding their outreach.<sup>61</sup>

**Table 1. Recruitment Strategies Recommended by National CASA**

Type of Outreach	Examples
Attend community events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute materials or speak at “street fairs, music festivals, block parties, and historical celebrations”</li> <li>Take part in “cultural, fraternal, or faith-based events”</li> </ul>
Reach out to civic organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reach out to faith-based organizations and churches</li> <li>Reach out to community groups that serve specific populations</li> </ul>
Use the media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create public service announcements for specific audiences through television or radio</li> <li>Put ads in newspapers and local magazines targeted at a specific demographic</li> <li>Inquire if local newspaper would be willing to feature a CASA volunteer in a story*</li> <li>Utilize “NCASAA marketing tools, public services announcements, public relations materials, and information developed for specific audiences”</li> <li>Use social media*</li> </ul>
Get business/retail community involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reach out to “barbershops, beauty shops, and doctor’s and dentist’s offices” to leave information</li> <li>Ask if “local utility company, bank, car dealership, etc. [would be willing] to donate space at the bottom of their monthly statement for a volunteer recruitment ad”*</li> <li>Put up posters in “delicatessens, convenience stores, drugstores, dry cleaners, and fast-food restaurants”</li> <li>See if a florist would be willing to include a CASA brochure with all Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day flower deliveries*</li> </ul>
Encourage public figures to get involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request local celebrities (i.e. newscasters, business leaders, sports stars) to speak on behalf of CASA</li> </ul>
Utilize other community resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicize through volunteer centers</li> </ul>
Build capacity from within	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire a volunteer manager or trainer who also focuses on diversity recruitment</li> <li>Create a “diversity advisory committee”</li> </ul>

To really determine which strategies will be most effective, National CASA recommends that each office have a diversity plan that begins with a needs assessment.<sup>62</sup> The needs assessment should evaluate what groups the office is trying to reach and determine why those groups have been difficult to recruit in the past. The general trend nationally for volunteering (not specific to CASA) is that women volunteer at a higher rate than men across all age groups, educational levels, and other major demographics.”<sup>63</sup> In 2010, women volunteered at a rate of 29.3% compared to men at 23.2%. Moreover, when men volunteered they were most likely to volunteer in “general labor” positions, coaching with sports teams, and fundraising. Women, in contrast, were most likely to volunteer in positions that involved fundraising, working with youth, and serving food.<sup>64</sup>

Another general trend is that Caucasians volunteer more than people of color. In 2010, Caucasians volunteered at a rate of 27.8%, compared to African Americans at 19.4% and Hispanics at 14.7%.<sup>65</sup> National CASA used the following results from a United Way survey about why people of color do not volunteer to inform its membership about strategic outreach. Some of those reasons included:<sup>66</sup>

- Lack of knowledge
- Concern about being singled out as the “token” minority volunteer
- Lack of connection with the agency or “mainstream community”
- Lack of time
- Economic reasons
- A particular culture’s emphasis on serving one’s family rather than community at large
- Never being asked to volunteer

Targeted recruitment for certain groups may be challenging, but it is not impossible. The 2007 National CASA Inclusion Award winner, Richland County, South Carolina CASA, experienced difficulty for several years recruiting and retaining male volunteers. When the program launched its diversity initiative six years ago, it had approximately thirteen active male guardians;<sup>67</sup> yet approximately 60% of the estimated 400 children served were male.<sup>68</sup> The office now boasts over 130 male volunteers, 40 of whom are African American. What contributed to the program’s success? Richland County CASA launched a recruitment initiative called “CASA Quarterbacks.” The theory behind the initiative was to use current male volunteers to reach new volunteers—referred to as the “power of one”—and to re-envision recruitment with the interests of the typical man in mind. The first CASA Quarterbacks event in 2007 involved ten current volunteers who each invited a male friend. The event was held during football season at a sports bar, and offered attendees an opportunity to bond, eat, and then learn briefly about CASA by hearing the firsthand experiences of their friend and other volunteers. The event lasted approximately 1.5 hours.

The event planners also tried to incorporate feedback provided by male volunteers about concerns they initially had when they joined, both in terms of the actual recruitment events as well as information they wish they had known when they started, which included:<sup>69</sup>

- No long speeches.
- Don’t make them wear silly nametags.
- Don’t ask for money.
- Provide food.
- Explain to men that they will have a strong support network at the office. Some men have never actually gone up to their own child’s school to speak to a guidance counselor or

teacher, so this may be a different experience for them. Let them know that they are not on their own.

- Explain that effective advocacy may take time. Some men expect instant results and are disenchanted when they find that their phone calls are not returned by agencies and that the child welfare system does not always operate efficiently.
- Follow-up as soon as possible after the event with training. Pre-service training should follow within two weeks after the recruitment event. Many men may also need a reminder phone call.

When the first CASA Quarterback event proved successful, the program continued to replicate the event each year.

Motivated by the success of Richland County CASA, the CASA state director in Arkansas launched a similar recruitment initiative for males called “100 men in 100 days.”<sup>70</sup> An African American male staff member in the state office reached out to various civic organizations, such as the 100 Black Men, to coordinate a focus group. Through the group, the state office learned that many of the attendees were actually familiar with CASA either because of friends or spouses. However, many of the men had concerns that prevented them from volunteering. The biggest concerns revolved around stereotypes (volunteering is “women’s work”); concerns about false allegations being made against them (“once you get that on you, you can never get it off”); and general time concerns. Additionally, from current volunteers, the office received feedback that “touchy-feely” stories were less effective for some men as opposed to women. Finally, the office learned that some men were initially put off by the idea of having to write court reports. Ultimately, all of these ideas were compiled and shared with local offices that could then be proactive in addressing these issues when reaching out to men in their communities.

Finally, 2010 National CASA “Inclusion Award” winner, CASA New Orleans, performed a needs assessment and discovered that its program could also benefit from having more African American male volunteers.<sup>71</sup> Over the course of a few years, the program increased the number of volunteers from six to approximately twenty-seven. Yet the Executive Director stated that her program did not do anything special. On the contrary, she explained that many potential volunteers said they “just hadn’t been asked.” She said that beyond the normal venues, her staff and volunteers reached out to African American males in non-traditional places. They had current volunteers reach out to co-workers at bus terminals, train stations, and post offices. They also reached out to fraternities. The one place where they did not experience much success was in churches. The Executive Director concluded that people in churches were often hesitant to volunteer because they were already committed to serving within their church and did not have a lot of extra time.

All of the award-winning CASA programs interviewed used strategies from Table 1 to enlarge their minority and male volunteer pools. Their specific approaches are summarized in Table 2. For example, Richland County CASA directed its efforts toward recruiting at city events, such as the Black Expo, as well as reaching out to civic organizations and churches.<sup>72</sup> The 2009 National CASA “Inclusion Award” winner—the Miami GAL Program in Florida’s Eleventh Judicial Circuit—started by reaching out to one demographic, one medium at a time.<sup>73</sup> It began by reaching out to African Americans through the print medium, including newspapers and newsletters. The office was fortunate enough to have a small budget to work with. Office staff also attended community events for recruitment purposes including a Haitian Women of

Miami event and a local health fair. Finally, the staff found that one of the most effective recruitment tools in the Miami community was radio. They reached out to an African-American radio station that let them have a morning spot to broadcast a public service announcement. Similarly, a Hispanic radio station did the same.

**Table 2. Summary of Strategies Used by National CASA Inclusion Award Winners**

<b>GAL/CASA Program</b>	<b>Strategies to increase male &amp; minority volunteers</b>
CASA New Orleans (2010 winner)	<u>Men</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach in non-traditional locations (i.e. bus stations, train terminals, post offices)</li> <li>• Fraternities</li> </ul>
Miami Guardian ad Litem Program, 11 <sup>th</sup> Circuit (2009 winner)	<u>Minorities (generally)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting at community events (i.e. Haitian Women of Miami event, local health fair)</li> <li>• Minority radio stations</li> </ul>
Richland County, South Carolina CASA Program (2007 winner)	<u>Men</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CASA Quarterback events</li> <li>• Sadie Hawkins event</li> </ul> <u>Minorities (generally)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City events (i.e. Black Expo)</li> <li>• Outreach to civic organizations and churches</li> </ul>

How does an organization plan and implement all of these strategies? There are many ways that an organization could go about planning these events, but the answer really revolves around capacity-building. National CASA recommends that, if an office has the resources, it should hire a volunteer manager or trainer to focus on diversity recruitment.<sup>74</sup> While each of the offices interviewed had a paid staff member in this capacity, many other offices do not.

An alternative would be to create a volunteer recruitment committee. In developing the group, it is recommended that the committee be made up of passionate GAL volunteers who reflect the demographic of the population served.<sup>75</sup> The committee's role would be to help brainstorm and implement new ways to recruit volunteers of diverse backgrounds given their own experiences. For example, the Miami GAL Program, 11th Circuit, created a volunteer recruitment team as a way to be more proactive in meeting their state office's goals in recruiting more diverse volunteers.<sup>76</sup> The program selected five of its best volunteers to serve on the initial committee. The demographic of the group itself reflects the diversity of the Miami community and, among others, includes individuals who are Haitian, African American, and Hispanic. The group meets every other month and provides input for general recruitment ideas and helps to carry out the recruitment plan.

Richland County CASA uses seasoned volunteers in a similar capacity, though without a formal committee title.<sup>77</sup> For example, because the program was so female-dominated at the

outset, the staff decided to host a Sadie Hawkins event. Every woman was expected to invite one male volunteer to a CASA-sponsored “meet and greet” to learn more about the organization. The event was organized primarily by volunteers—one provided event planning services; another donated space at a club that he owned; another volunteer donated money; and a fourth volunteer at a local sorority reached out to her fraternity friends. Ultimately, the event brought in fifteen new male volunteers.

Even in the absence of a formal committee, National CASA still encourages programs to use current volunteers as a primary recruitment source. Building upon the concept of “concentric circles recruitment,” the idea is that volunteers are most likely to volunteer for an agency when they already know someone who volunteers there who has had a positive experience.<sup>78</sup> National CASA suggest that programs start with current volunteers and then expand outwards to other individuals, including “friends and relatives of volunteers,” employees, and donors.

Finally, National CASA recommends that local offices make better use of non-advocate volunteers.<sup>79</sup> Often individuals may support the mission of CASA, but lack the time, interest, or ability to serve directly on behalf of a child. These individuals can still contribute to CASA programs in a number of ways. They can assist with volunteer recruitment by planning and speaking at events, and creating and distributing recruitment materials in the community. Beyond recruitment, non-advocate volunteers can also be used to assist with fundraising, such as soliciting for community donations, organizing fundraisers, or reaching out to potential donors and foundations for money. Finally, non-advocate volunteers can also assist with retention efforts, such as organizing and serving at recognition events, writing a newsletter, or even simply writing thank you notes.

### *Best Practices for Pre-Service Training*

As part of the recruitment process, most, if not all, programs associated with National CASA utilize some variation of the organization’s pre-service training curriculum. All of the programs interviewed stated that they used the National CASA materials. These materials include a section that is particularly focused on cultural awareness. Some programs may supplement these materials if they have staff with particular areas of expertise who can share on those topics; some programs also invite in volunteers to share about their experiences.<sup>80</sup> All of the offices interviewed actually had an individual on staff responsible solely for recruiting and training.

### *Best Practices for Retention*

Volunteer retention is a challenge for many organizations; GAL programs are no exception. Each of the CASA and GAL programs interviewed expressed that they have encountered their own challenges with retention. One common theme from the literature review is that volunteers in their early twenties are difficult to retain due to them experiencing constant life changes.<sup>81</sup>

Volunteer retention is an important component of having an effective GAL program. A study by the Urban Institute revealed volunteer retention is a process that begins the day volunteers are recruited. The study shows that volunteer agencies that use current volunteers to recruit new volunteers through one-on-one interactions have better retention rates.<sup>82</sup> Among other reasons, using current volunteers in this capacity is effective because it “implies a level of

trust in these participants, evidence of both a supportive organizational culture and confidence that the charity provides a worthwhile experience to volunteers.”<sup>83</sup> The study also identified four key management practices that seemed to have the greatest impact on retention: selecting appropriate individuals and matching them with assignments best matched to their abilities, providing pre-service training, offering future opportunities for professional development, and holding volunteer recognition events.<sup>84</sup> A National CASA training webinar emphasizes the following factors for volunteer retention: ensure “the work they are doing is meaningful; they feel appreciated for their service; they continue to grow; and they enjoy it. (And if circumstances they can’t control don’t overtake them.)”<sup>85</sup>

One consistent theme from National CASA, the “Inclusion Award” winners, and the literature review is that volunteers need to feel recognized and have a “positive sense of connection.” This can be done in a number of ways. One source recommended steps such as giving volunteers ownership in their assignments and the organization’s mission, offering “sincere and consistent” recognition, holding social events, and seeking feedback. Non-advocate volunteers can also assist with planning these efforts.<sup>86</sup> Different offices take different approaches to accomplishing this goal. The Miami GAL Program hosts a volunteer holiday party and a spring recognition event. They also send out a newsletter to keep volunteers informed on recent happenings and GAL volunteer news. Finally, they hold a support group meeting for volunteers interested in receiving additional assistance as well as regular in-service sessions to provide constant training to volunteers. Similarly, New Orleans CASA provides informal mentors.<sup>87</sup> Richland County CASA really emphasizes the model of breaking down the traditional roles of staff and volunteers so that volunteers really feel that they can turn to staff members at any time for help.<sup>88</sup> Finally, sometimes it is the simplest things that make all the difference. National CASA recommends “ongoing, daily appreciation—and smiling.”<sup>89</sup>

#### **IV. EXPLANATION AND EVALUATION OF POLICY OPTIONS**

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##### *Criteria*

My evaluation of the policy options for improving recruitment and retention in the Durham County GAL Program office, especially of diverse and culturally competent volunteers, will be guided by three criteria. One unstated criterion, which should nonetheless inform all the others, is to ultimately improve outcomes for children.

- Criterion #1: Minimize Durham County GAL Program costs

This is the most important criterion and essentially serves as a threshold. The Durham County GAL Program does not have a budget allocation for volunteer recruitment or retention. Therefore, any strategies will either need to be of little or no cost. Donated items or services would be welcomed.

- Criterion #2: Maximize self-sustainability

This is also a key criterion. The Durham County GAL Program does not have a staff person who can devote all of her time and energy to volunteer recruitment, training, and retention. Therefore,

because all suggestions would have to be first implemented by a staff person with other full-time duties and responsibilities, the policy options selected must be sustainable with minimal staff oversight.

- Criterion #3: Ensure political feasibility

The policy options should be acceptable to the general public as well as the state GAL office.

### *Policy Options*

My policy options are grouped into two categories: Recruitment and Retention. Altogether, I have listed seventeen policy options grouped into four different options groups. The policy options come from many of the “best practices” detailed in the previous section. Each policy option is evaluated in light of the three stated criteria.

#### Recruitment

Option Group #1: Target specific groups

1. Focus recruitment on a particular group(s) of underrepresented advocate volunteers—  
i.e. African Americans, Hispanics, males
2. Do nothing/Retain current focus

Option Group #2: Capacity-building

3. Hire a volunteer recruiter/pre-service trainer
4. Create a volunteer recruitment committee
5. Recruit more non-advocate volunteers
6. Do nothing/Continue having regular staff run recruitment

Option Group #3: Specific recruitment strategies

7. Attend more community events
8. Reach out to more civic organizations
9. Use media
10. Get more business/civic involvement
11. Encourage more public figures to get involved
12. Host events catered towards specific populations (i.e. CASA Quarterback event)
13. Utilize more community resources
14. Do nothing/Retain current strategies

#### Retention

Option Group #4: Capacity-building

15. Hire a person to run retention efforts
16. Use non-advocate volunteers to assist with retention efforts
17. Do nothing/use current staff members

## *Evaluation of Policy Options for Recruitment*

### Option Group #1: Target specific groups

1. Focus recruitment on a particular group(s) of underrepresented advocate volunteers—i.e. African Americans, Hispanics, males

The office currently does not target recruitment to any specific demographic. As a result, many of the volunteers have backgrounds that are vastly different from the children being served. The office staff is of mixed opinion on whether the returns of targeting specific groups would be worth the devotion of extra resources. This is especially true given that the office's current recruitment strategies do tend to bring in volunteers whose backgrounds reflect the larger Durham community, and those volunteers are generally effective in advocating for children in the system. Yet National CASA strongly believes that having volunteers who share the same background as the children, while not essential, is beneficial.

The cost of focusing recruitment on any of these groups could be high if it involved engaging in costly recruitment measures; however, it does not have to be. Many strategies are available that would be of little to no cost as will be described below. As for self-sustainability, devising a diversity plan may take time upfront, but once the plan is established, the recruitment efforts should be self-sustainable. Finally, this option should be politically feasible. There may be some opposition if the general public, or even staff, has concerns about the efficacy of matching children to volunteers based solely on race or gender. However, that does not need to be the end goal of this recruitment effort. On the contrary, having a more diverse volunteer pool will provide the staff with more options when assigning children to volunteers, even taking into account the office's holistic approach. This is particularly true given the high percentage of African American and male children, as well as the growing number of Hispanic children, in the Durham County child welfare system. Finally, shifting the focus to recruit more volunteers who reflect the backgrounds of the child population would be aligned with an important National CASA and North Carolina GAL Program goal, which is believed to have a positive effect on children's outcomes.

2. Do nothing/Retain current focus

As the status quo, this option would create no financial cost and it would be self-sustainable. Given the national focus on increasing the diversity of GAL volunteers, it could raise slight political concerns. However, given that the Durham County office does have a volunteer pool that reflects the overall demographics of Durham County, it is unlikely that there would be any major problems.

### Option Group 2: Capacity-building

3. Hire a volunteer recruiter/pre-service trainer

The Durham County GAL Program does not currently have a part-time or full-time person who can focus solely on recruitment and pre-service training. Instead, the current staff—the district administrator, the attorney advocate, and the two program supervisors—are

responsible for both of these tasks. In fact, no office in North Carolina has anyone in a similar position. Given that the Durham County office does not have any money in its budget to hire someone for this position, cost would be extremely prohibitive, making this essentially a non-option. At least as it pertains to issues of diversity, National CASA does offer grants to assist with providing trainers for specific events, and the North Carolina office encourages its district offices to apply for funding. However, the grantwriting process would require additional time and effort that the current staff cannot devote at this time. Moreover, it would not be a sustainable option as the trainer would only be able to offer her services for a limited time period.

If cost was not a barrier, having a staff person in this capacity would be self-sustainable because that person would be able to develop a recruitment plan and training plan and implement the necessary steps. Additionally, this option would raise minimal political issues. Perhaps the only issue that might arise would be if community members were opposed to state resources being devoted to a GAL diversity initiative. This would be particularly true if a vocal sector of the public believed that anyone could serve as a GAL volunteer and that expending resources to recruit people by focusing on diversity would be a waste of taxpayer money.

#### 4. Create a volunteer recruitment committee

The Durham County GAL Program does not currently have a volunteer recruitment committee. However, this is becoming a popular method that can assist with volunteer recruitment. This option would be cost-effective. Because the committee would be made up of volunteers, no additional cost inherently follows. Additionally, the group, once established, could be self-sustainable. The goal would be to find a small group of individuals from diverse backgrounds who are active and experienced GAL volunteers. The current staff could each recommend a small number of individuals who might be interested in serving on the committee. The committee could then brainstorm ways to reach out to any underrepresented groups as well as use any networks that they personally have to increase outreach efforts to those groups. By delegating tasks and having regular meetings, the committee could be primarily volunteer-run with minimal staff oversight. The committee could also reach out to other GAL volunteers to get assistance in implementing some of the ideas. A process could be instated that would allow newly appointed volunteers to join the committee each year. Finally, politically, there is no reason this option would not be accepted by the general public or the state GAL office. In fact, the state office would probably support the idea of giving volunteers more ownership in the program.

#### 5. Recruit more non-advocate volunteers

The Durham County GAL Program does not actually have a system in place for recruiting non-advocate volunteers. The program does benefit from the assistance of the Friends of the GAL, a non-profit that provides funding to volunteers who have made monetary requests on behalf of specific children. The program also occasionally has a law student intern during the school year who typically works as an advocate for children and assists with some administrative tasks in the office. The office could potentially benefit from having non-advocate volunteers who would assist with the program and not be limited for time due to an advocacy commitment. These individuals could be used to carry out a number of tasks: in particular, they could assist

with planning and carrying out recruitment efforts. Additionally, because there are many university students and professionals in Durham County, the office could also utilize volunteer services from either of these populations to assist with grantwriting.

Utilizing the services of non-advocate volunteers would have no cost. Additionally, by establishing relationships in the community with university programs or business groups interested in offering these services, it could be established that these groups would provide assistance on an annual basis or on an on-call basis. Therefore, it could easily be self-sustainable. Finally, there is no reason why this would not be politically feasible assuming the individual or group providing the services is not doing it for a political reason that is contrary to the mission of the GAL program.

6. Do nothing/Continue having regular staff run recruitment

Because this option is the status quo, it does not create any additional costs and would not raise any political concerns. However, sustainability may be a concern. The current staff is extremely dedicated and have all been with the program for many years. They have been able to balance recruitment and training with all of the many other responsibilities of their individual jobs. However, organizational capacity would be greatly increased—and would be more sustainable over the long term—if the office had another individual or a volunteer team to assist with these efforts.

Option Group #3: Specific recruitment strategies

The next group of policy options are examples of specific recruitment strategies recommended by National CASA, as well as other literature review sources and interviews, that have been successful in different environments. The matrix in Table 3 evaluates each strategy against the program’s criteria using “+” (indicating it meets the criteria) or “-” (indicating it does not meet the criteria).

**Table 3. Matrix of Specific Recruitment Strategies**

Policy options	With current staff			If staff capacity is increased (through either a new staff person, a volunteer recruitment committee, or a non-advocate volunteer)		
	Low cost	Self-sustainability	Political feasibility	Low cost	Self-sustainability	Political feasibility
7. Attend more community events	-	-	+	+	+	+
8. Reach out to more civic organizations	-	-	+	+	+	+

9. Use media	- (unless all media assistance is donated)	-	+	- (unless all media assistance is donated)	-/+	+
10. Get more business/civic involvement	-	-	+	+	+	+
11. Encourage more public figures to get involved	-	-	+	+	+	+
12. Host events catered towards specific populations	-	-	+	- (unless all services and costs are covered by donations)	+	+
13. Utilize more community resources	-	-	+	+	+	+
14. Do nothing	+	+	+	+	+	+

This matrix reveals an interesting trend. Under the current structure where the staff is solely responsible for recruitment, most of these strategies prove to be difficult in terms of cost and self-sustainability. The current staff does not have a budget allocation to increase recruitment efforts. Moreover, they do not have the time to initiate or continue running these recruitment efforts, which means that the efforts will not be self-sustainable. These options are all politically feasible, but realistically will only make the staff’s jobs more difficult. This is especially true given that the current recruitment methods already provide a steady stream of volunteers; the only challenge would be ensuring that stream is always diverse. All things considered, the best option would be “do nothing.”

However, if the program has the option to hire a new staff person, create a volunteer recruitment committee, or find a non-advocate volunteer, the analysis would look very different. Particularly if it involved a volunteer recruitment committee, the committee would begin by brainstorming ways that “they” could go out in the community or motivate their fellow volunteers to reach out to their networks to support these initiatives. By surveying people’s personal connections, the committee could narrow down which recruitment strategies would be most feasible for the Durham County GAL Program. For example, if volunteers are interested in reaching out to civic organizations that they are involved in, that would be a good policy option. The key would be tapping into the networks that current GAL volunteers already possess and recruiting volunteers through these connections. Similarly, a non-advocate volunteer could assist with many of these tasks.

One option that might be prohibitive on the basis of cost is increasing outreach through media outlets, particularly if the GAL office has to expend money to place ads or run its own

public service announcements. The only way that this would be recommended as a policy option would be if a volunteer had ties to a radio station or local newspaper that would be willing to donate ad space or air time. Similarly, hosting targeted events could also be costly unless volunteers are connected with organizations or businesses willing to underwrite any associated costs.

As for self-sustainability, almost all of these options would meet this criterion. If the recruitment plan is run by self-motivated volunteers—including perhaps even some non-advocate volunteers who may have more time to devote to these efforts—these initiatives would require minimal effort from current staff (other than perhaps general oversight). Utilizing the media as a recruitment tool may be less sustainable, however, given that few media outlets are willing to provide advertising for little or no cost for infinite periods of time.

Finally, all of these options would be politically feasible, and if anything, increase volunteer investment and ownership, which would be a positive for the general public as well as the state GAL office.

### *Evaluation of Policy Options for Retention*

#### Option Group #4: Capacity-building

Overall, the Durham County program is satisfied with its current retention efforts. For the most part, volunteers who leave do so because their life circumstances have changed, such as graduation, job loss, health problems, or moving. None of those situations are within the control of the office. Moreover, the office generally is able to find new volunteers in time for each new pre-service training. Therefore, any policy options in this area would need to focus on building capacity so that the staff would be able to do “more” to celebrate its volunteers and expend less effort individually. For example, by building capacity, the office would be able to reinstate the volunteer newsletter and offer even more small tokens of appreciation to its volunteers.

#### 15. Hire a person to run retention efforts

As noted before with recruitment, this option would be cost-prohibitive, making it essentially a non-option. This is especially true given that the current retention efforts are not ineffective in their current form. Yet if the program could hire a staff person, assuming funding is available, this person would be able to ensure that initiatives undertaken are greater in number and self-sustainable.

#### 16. Use non-advocate volunteers to assist with retention efforts

This option would be similar to having a full- or part-time staff person assisting with retention efforts and would have the same benefits. However, it would also have the additional benefit of not having a monetary cost. The program would have to put forth the time to recruit the non-advocate volunteers, but once found, these individuals could assist staff with carrying out current activities, including planning the annual volunteer appreciation event. Also, if the non-advocate volunteers have the appropriate training and background, they could assist with grantwriting to bring in additional funding for retention efforts.

## 17. Do nothing/use current staff members

This option is the status quo. The primary difference between Option #17 and the other two options is that this option is less efficient, but, at the end of the day, all of the criteria would still be met.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Based on my analysis, I recommend the following policy options under each policy group:

### Policy Options (Recruitment)

Option Group #1: Target specific groups

- **Focus recruitment on a particular group(s) of underrepresented advocate volunteers—i.e. African Americans, Hispanics, males**

Although the Durham County GAL volunteer demographic closely mirrors the larger Durham County population, the program should still try to increase the number of traditionally underrepresented volunteers when recruiting. As noted earlier, having volunteers whose backgrounds reflect those of the children may have positive benefits, and it certainly would not be harmful. Moreover, this option would be politically feasible and—assuming the organization is also focused on capacity-building—would be both low cost and self-sustainable.

Option Group #2: Capacity-building

- **Create a volunteer recruitment committee**
- **Recruit more non-advocate volunteers**

Creating a volunteer recruitment committee will enable the Durham County GAL program to increase its recruitment efforts at little to no cost. Also, by selecting committed volunteers to serve on the panel and rotating membership annually, the program can ensure the committee's efforts are sustainable. Finally, this option is likely to be politically feasible because it fosters greater volunteer investment and ownership.

Similarly, recruiting more non-advocate volunteers would ensure that more individuals are available to assist the full-time staff in recruitment efforts.

Option Group #3: Specific recruitment strategies

- **If a volunteer recruitment committee is created or non-advocate volunteers are recruited: any combination of the policy options could be adopted (other than “do nothing”)**
- **If no volunteer recruitment committee is created or non-advocate volunteers are not recruited: do nothing/retain current strategies**

If the program adopts at least one of the recommended policy options from Option Group #2, then the staff should work with those individuals to determine which recruitment strategies are most appropriate for the Durham County GAL Program. With this additional support, most

of the options would likely meet the program's criteria. However, if the program decides not to pursue any of the recommended options from Option Group #2, then the program would be better off retaining its current strategies because these new strategies would require staff to expend more time, energy, and money than it has available.

#### Policy Options (Retention)

##### Option Group #4: Capacity-building

- **Use non-advocate volunteers to assist with retention efforts**

In the same way that the Durham County GAL Program could focus on using non-advocate volunteers to assist with recruitment efforts, those same individuals could also assist with retention efforts. This recommendation meets all of the program's criteria.

## APPENDIX A

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### Interview Questions – CASA Inclusion Award Winners

#### *Parties interviewed:*

- *Dellona Davis, Executive Director, CASA New Orleans*
- *Issa Hosein, Community Outreach Liaison, Miami GAL Program, 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit*
- *James Washington, Program Manager (Training), Richland County CASA*

1. Recruitment:
  - a. What were your goals when you began creating a diversity plan?
  - b. What problems did you identify with previous recruitment methods?
  - c. What were the top 3 most effective strategies that you implemented? Why do you think they worked?
  - d. What strategies did not work? Why do you think they did not work?
  - e. What was the ultimate result?
  - f. Have the results been sustainable?
2. Training:
  - a. Do you use the National CASA curriculum? Is it effective?
  - b. Do you supplement the materials on cultural awareness in any way?
3. Retention:
  - a. How successful is your program at retaining volunteers?
  - b. What strategies do you use for volunteer retention?
4. Is there any other advice that you would like to offer or resource that you would like to recommend?

## APPENDIX B

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### Interview Questions – Durham County GAL Program staff

#### *Parties interviewed:*

- *Shirley Harley-Smith, District Administrator*
- *Christy Hamilton Malott, Attorney Advocate*
- *Melissa Love, Program Supervisor*
- *Denine Nicholson, Program Supervisor*

1. Background Information:
  - a. What is your current position?
  - b. How long have you worked with the Durham County GAL program?
  - c. How many children and volunteers do you currently supervise?
  - d. What are the demographics of the children you work with and the volunteers that you supervise?
2. Recruitment:
  - a. What would your ideal volunteer pool look like?
  - b. What are your views on matching volunteers on the basis of characteristics such as race or gender?
  - c. How do you go about assigning children to particular volunteers?
  - d. Do you feel the current volunteer pool adequately reflects the demographics of the children served? Why or why not?
  - e. What are the program's current recruitment methods?
  - f. What has worked? What has not worked?
  - g. If you could prioritize the recruitment of volunteers from specific backgrounds, what would you consider to be the top three priorities?
  - h. What constraints prevent you from doing all that you want to do in regards to recruitment?
3. Training
  - a. What sort of training do volunteers currently receive?
  - b. What, if anything, could be improved about the training, particularly as it relates to the cultural awareness component?
4. Retention
  - a. How many volunteers do you lose each year, on average?
  - b. What are their reasons for leaving?
  - c. What efforts do you currently take to retain volunteers?
  - d. Have any methods been more effective than others?
5. How could my research best assist you in your work?

## APPENDIX C

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### Interview Questions – National CASA Association

*Party interviewed: Chanin Kelly-Rae, Senior Director of Inclusion and Equity*

1. How does National CASA define “diversity”?
2. From a practical standpoint, what is the greater priority – recruiting volunteers who reflect the backgrounds of the children served or recruiting volunteers who reflect the larger community?
3. Has National CASA conducted any studies to examine volunteer effectiveness, particularly whether a volunteer’s race or gender makes a difference in his or her ability to be an effective advocate? If so, what were the results? If not, what evidence does National CASA rely upon to support its recent diversity initiative?
4. Does National CASA recommend that local programs weigh certain characteristics more heavily than others when assigning volunteers to specific children?
5. What resources would you recommend that I look at to learn more about best practices for GAL recruitment and retention?

## APPENDIX D

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### Interview Questions – North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program

*Party Interviewed: Kurt Stephenson, Assistant to the Administrator*

Questions asked by email:

1. What is the relationship between the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program and the National CASA Association? If there is a formal relationship between the two, what benefits does the North Carolina program receive by being affiliated with National CASA (i.e. funding, resources, etc)?
2. What guidance does the state office provide to local districts with regard to general recruitment, training, and retention?
3. How much autonomy do local districts have to employ their own recruitment strategies?
4. Do local districts receive a budget allocation for recruitment?
5. Do any local offices have a full- or part-time staff person devoted solely to recruitment and training?
6. At one time, I know that Americorps volunteers were placed at various GAL offices, and one of their tasks was to assist with recruitment. Did local offices find that helpful? Is there any chance that a similar program would ever be reinstated?
7. Specifically as it relates to diversity, I am aware that National CASA has prioritized increasing diversity within CASA and GAL-affiliated volunteer pools to better reflect the demographics of the children being served. In North Carolina, does the state have any goals or priorities for its local offices as it pertains to recruiting diverse volunteers? If so, are you aware of any particular steps on the state level that have been taken to reach these goals? Have they been successful?
8. Are there any district offices in North Carolina that you would recommend I contact because they have modeled best practices in the area of recruiting diverse volunteers (or have been successful generally at recruiting and retaining a diverse volunteer pool that reflects the children being served)?

As a side note, I realize that many groups define "diversity" differently (and National CASA's definition is all-inclusive). Just from speaking with offices in other states, it appears that the greatest priority is often recruiting people of color (particularly African Americans and Latinos) and males. Yet I am aware that this would change depending on the demographics of the community and population of children being served. For the purposes of the questions above, please feel free to interpret the term as is most relevant to the focus here in North Carolina.

## APPENDIX E

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### North Carolina General Statutes

#### **§ 7B-601. Appointment and duties of guardian ad litem.**

(a) When in a petition a juvenile is alleged to be abused or neglected, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem to represent the juvenile. When a juvenile is alleged to be dependent, the court may appoint a guardian ad litem to represent the juvenile. The juvenile is a party in all actions under this Subchapter. The guardian ad litem and attorney advocate have standing to represent the juvenile in all actions under this Subchapter where they have been appointed. The appointment shall be made pursuant to the program established by Article 12 of this Chapter unless representation is otherwise provided pursuant to G.S. 7B-1202 or G.S. 7B-1203. The appointment shall terminate when the permanent plan has been achieved for the juvenile and approved by the court. The court may reappoint the guardian ad litem pursuant to a showing of good cause upon motion of any party, including the guardian ad litem, or of the court. In every case where a nonattorney is appointed as a guardian ad litem, an attorney shall be appointed in the case in order to assure protection of the juvenile's legal rights throughout the proceeding. The duties of the guardian ad litem program shall be to make an investigation to determine the facts, the needs of the juvenile, and the available resources within the family and community to meet those needs; to facilitate, when appropriate, the settlement of disputed issues; to offer evidence and examine witnesses at adjudication; to explore options with the court at the dispositional hearing; to conduct follow-up investigations to insure that the orders of the court are being properly executed; to report to the court when the needs of the juvenile are not being met; and to protect and promote the best interests of the juvenile until formally relieved of the responsibility by the court.

(b) The court may authorize the guardian ad litem to accompany the juvenile to court in any criminal action wherein the juvenile may be called on to testify in a matter relating to abuse.

(c) The guardian ad litem has the authority to obtain any information or reports, whether or not confidential, that may in the guardian ad litem's opinion be relevant to the case. No privilege other than the attorney-client privilege may be invoked to prevent the guardian ad litem and the court from obtaining such information. The confidentiality of the information or reports shall be respected by the guardian ad litem, and no disclosure of any information or reports shall be made to anyone except by order of the court or unless otherwise provided by law. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1981, c. 528; 1983, c. 761, s. 159; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1090, s. 5; 1993, c. 537, s. 1; 1995, c. 324, s. 21.13; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-432, s. 1; 1999-456, s. 60.)

## APPENDIX F

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### Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)

TITLE 42 - THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE  
CHAPTER 67 - CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT AND ADOPTION  
REFORM  
SUBCHAPTER I - GENERAL PROGRAM

Sec. 5106a. Grants to States for child abuse and neglect prevention  
and treatment programs

. . .

- (1) State Plan
  - (b) Eligibility requirements
    - (1) State plan
      - (A) In general

To be eligible to receive a grant under this section, a State shall, at the time of the initial grant application and every 5 years thereafter, prepare and submit to the Secretary a State plan that specifies the areas of the child protective services system described in subsection (a) of this section that the State intends to address with amounts received under the grant.

. . .

- (2) Coordination

A State plan submitted under paragraph (1) shall, to the maximum extent practicable, be coordinated with the State plan under part B of title IV of the Social Security Act [42 U.S.C. 620 et seq.] relating to child welfare services and family preservation and family support services, and shall contain an outline of the activities that the State intends to carry out using amounts received under the grant to achieve the purposes of this subchapter, including -

- (A) an assurance in the form of a certification by the chief executive officer of the State that the State has in effect and is enforcing a State law, or has in effect and is operating a Statewide program, relating to child abuse and neglect that includes-

. . .

- (xiii) provisions and procedures requiring that in every case involving an abused or neglected child which results in a judicial proceeding, a guardian ad litem, who has received training appropriate to the role, and who may be an attorney or a court appointed special advocate who has received training appropriate to that role (or both), shall be appointed to represent the child in such proceedings -
  - (I) to obtain first-hand, a clear understanding of the situation and needs of the child; and
  - (II) to make recommendations to the court concerning the best interests of the child; . . .

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- <sup>32</sup> Ibid. Other interesting facts include: The average and median child age was 9. The average volunteer age was 35.7, but the median age was 27. This makes sense given that a large number of volunteers are college and graduate students, which would skew the numbers downward. With regard to educational background, 27.4% of volunteers have a postgraduate degree (including individuals with law degrees), 63.2% have at least a college degree, and the remaining volunteers graduated from at least high school.

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