CHILD & FAMILY
RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
LYNDON B. JOHNSON SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Child Outcomes and Volunteer Effectiveness:

Examining Youth Who Age Out of Care

Child Outcomes and Volunteer Effectiveness Study Follow-Up Part I

Summary

In the Child Outcomes and Volunteer Effectiveness (COVE) study, the Child and Family Research Partnership (CFRP) compared final child protection case outcomes of children appointed a CASA with children who are not appointed a CASA and found that, specifically among the teenagers, CASA teens are equally likely to reunify, more likely to be adopted, less likely to reach kin guardianship, and more likely to age out of care than no-CASA teens. Texas CASA contracted with CFRP to conduct a follow-up study to better understand differences in case outcomes of teens with and without a CASA, and specifically to learn more about why CASA teens are more likely to age out of care. In the current study, CFRP used a larger sample and more current data to compare CASA and no-CASA teen case outcomes, using a sequential model to analyze the influence of CASA on each case outcome, including reunification, adoption, kin guardianship, aging out, and running away. CFRP also examined the child, family, and case characteristics associated with aging out or running away from care.

We find that compared to similar teens without a CASA volunteer, CASA teens are less likely to reunify, less likely to find permanency through adoption or kin guardianship, and more likely to age out of care. Further, when grouping all of the ways that teens can reach permanency together (reunification, adoption, or kin guardianship), we find that CASA teens are less likely to reach permanency than no-CASA teens. However, two important findings demonstrate the positive influence that CASA can have on teen outcomes. First, among teens who do not reunify but reach permanency through adoption or kin guardianship, CASA teens are more likely to be adopted than non-CASA teens. Adoption is generally preferred over kin guardianship because it is a more permanent legal outcome.[1] Second, among teens who do not reach permanency, teens with a CASA volunteer are more likely to formally age out of the system at 18 years old rather than exit by running away prior to aging out. Running away from care is associated with numerous health and safety risks for teens, notably commercial sexual exploitation, and Texas provides numerous resources and services to teens who are preparing to and recently aged out of the child welfare system, indicating the importance of CASA's influence on supporting teens to age out rather than run away. Several child, family, and case characteristics are associated with case outcomes; most notably, African American and Hispanic teens are less likely to reach permanency than their White counterparts. Similarly, African American teens and female teens are more likely to exit care by running away than White teens and male teens.

CFRP's next steps include exploring the extent to which having a CASA is associated with participating in Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) classes, Extended Foster Care, and other services provided for youth in transition to better understand the influence of CASA volunteers on outcomes for teens in state care.

Background and Purpose

Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children (Texas CASA) contracted with Dr. Cynthia Osborne and the Child and Family Research Partnership (CFRP) at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin to conduct a comprehensive study of the effectiveness of the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) services in Texas. CFRP designed and implemented a multi-phase evaluation project, the Child Outcomes and Volunteer Effectiveness (COVE) study, to determine the extent to which CASA services improve the permanency, safety, and wellbeing of children in state care, and to identify the factors that enhance or limit the effective implementation of CASA services.

The first phase of the COVE evaluation, the Selection Bias study, laid the groundwork for the Child Outcomes study by examining the observed baseline differences between children who were appointed a CASA and similar children who were not. Overall, the Selection Bias study found that children with more complex cases are more likely to receive a CASA. The Child Outcomes study, the second phase, accounted for the factors identified in the Selection Bias study, allowing for a better assessment of the effectiveness of CASA on children's outcomes. For the Child Outcomes study, CFRP examined a cohort of children who entered state care in Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014 and compared the children who were appointed a CASA volunteer advocate to similar children who were not, using a propensity score approach to account for the observed baseline differences between the two groups. CFRP examined outcomes at three points in the lifespan of a case: while the child is in Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC), at the end of TMC, and after the child exits substitute care and reaches a permanent placement. Outcomes are limited to what could be measured in DFPS administrative data and may not reflect the full value of CASA. We found mixed results regarding the effect of CASA on child, family, and case outcomes. Specifically among children who were between 13 and 18 years old at removal, CASA teens were equally likely to reunify, less likely to reach kin guardianship, more likely to be adopted, and more likely to age out of care than their no-CASA counterparts.

Texas CASA wanted to learn more about why CASA teens were more likely to age out of care without reaching permanency than no-CASA teens and thus commissioned this study. Aging out is generally considered the least desirable outcome for children in substitute care; compared to youth who attain other permanency outcomes, youth who age out of foster care are more likely to experience early parenthood, criminal justice system involvement, unemployment, and homelessness.[2]

To combat the risk factors associated with aging out of state care, Child Protective Services (CPS), as well as the state and federal government, provide a variety of services and resources, known as transitional living services, to teenagers in conservatorship to help them prepare for adulthood in case they do not reach a permanent placement before aging out, and to support

the transition to independence when teens do age out. Services include classes to learn about practical life skills and navigating the world as an adult, access to health insurance through Medicaid until age 26 (the same age until which their peers can remain on their parents' health insurance), access to tuition waivers and financial support for education and job training, financial support for living expenses during the transition, and the opportunity to remain in extended foster care until age 21.[3]

Among teens who do not reach permanency and who do not officially age out of the system, the most common outcome is running away. Exiting care by running away leaves teens vulnerable to similar negative outcomes associated with aging out, but with additional risks. Importantly, most transitional living services provided by the agency require that a teen is in care just before they turn 18 years old to be eligible for the service; therefore, teens who exit care by running away, even shortly before their 18th birthday, become ineligible for many supports and benefits for aging-out youth. Specifically, youth who run away prior to reaching 18 become ineligible for healthcare, vouchers that can be used for college classes or trade school, Extended Foster Care, and a provision that requires state agencies to give preference to candidates for employment who aged out of foster care.[4]

Minors who run away from foster care also face serious health and safety risks, including drug and alcohol use, sleeping on the street, interruptions in schooling, and commercial sexual exploitation (sex trafficking).[5] Out of approximately 25,000 runaway youth reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in 2017, one in seven youth were believed to be victims of commercial sexual exploitation.[6] Further, 88 percent of the children believed to be victims of trafficking were in child welfare custody when they ran away.[7] Sometimes, teens run away for a period of time and return to care; other times, teens run away and do not return, and thus exit CPS legal conservatorship by running away. Teens who exit state care by running away are perhaps at the highest risk for poor aftercare outcomes; in addition to the numerous health and safety risks faced while on the run, teens with a runaway outcome likely exit the agency without having taken advantage of as many adulthood preparation services as teens who age out and are not eligible for many aftercare benefits.

In addition to ensuring that, while in substitute care, children are safe, receive needed services, are on track in school, and visit their parents and siblings as appropriate, a primary goal of Texas CASA is to increase the number of children who reach a permanent placement through reunification, adoption, or kin guardianship. Learning that CASA teens in the Child Outcomes study were more likely to age out of care than no-CASA teens led Texas CASA to consider several follow-up questions about the outcomes for teenagers in substitute care, specifically for teens who do not reach permanency. In response to the findings from the Child Outcomes Study, Texas CASA contracted with Dr. Osborne and CFRP to conduct additional analyses to better understand the influence of CASA on outcomes for teenagers in care. Specifically, this follow-up study examines the following three research questions:

1. To what extent does CASA influence permanency outcomes specifically among teenagers in care? What child, case, or family characteristics predict aging out?

2. To what extent does CASA influence the experience of teens preparing for adulthood in care? Specifically, how does CASA influence Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) services received by teens in care?
3. To what extent does CASA influence the wellbeing outcomes for teens who age out of care, including participation in Extended Foster Care?

The current report examines the first research question by comparing the proportion of CASA and no-CASA teens who reach reunification, adoption or kin guardianship, aging out, or running away as a final outcome and exploring the child, family, and case characteristics that are associated with aging out and running away to better understand teen outcomes.

The current report expands the Child Outcomes study in several key ways. First, the sample used for the current study provides a more robust analysis of teen outcomes by extending the timeframe of analysis, including additional teens who were removed prior to age 13, but spent time in care as a teen, and including all siblings from sibling groups rather than randomly selecting one sibling per case. Second, in the current study we analyze case outcomes using a sequential model, at each step removing teens from the sample who reached permanency in a previous step, instead of looking at each case outcome in isolation from all other outcomes. Third, we grouped all permanency outcomes together in an additional model to better understand the extent to which CASA influences whether teens will reach any permanency outcome (reunification, kin guardianship, or adoption) or will not reach a permanency outcome, and exit care by aging out or running away.

Methodology

Sample

The sample for the current study included children from the Child Outcomes population who entered substitute care between September 1, 2012 and August 31, 2014, but there are several differences between the analytic sample for the current study and the sample for the Child Outcomes study. Specifically, for this study, we defined teens as children who spent time in care as a teen (age 13 to 18), rather than just limiting the sample to children who were 13 or older at removal. We included all children from the COVE population who: A) turned 18 on or before April 30, 2018, or B) were 13 or older at the start of the study period and have a permanency outcome recorded in the CPS data system (IMPACT). Next, we included all siblings from the same case rather than randomly selecting only one sibling for inclusion. We used a statistical method to account for any similarities between siblings in their case characteristics and permanency outcomes. Finally, we included additional IMPACT data current through April 30, 2018; data from the Child Outcomes study was current through June 30, 2017. The expanded data allow for additional teens to reach final outcomes in IMPACT.

Changes to the original Child Outcomes sample increased the overall sample size and provided a more robust sample to more fully capture the experience of teens in care. The final analytic sample included 4,056 teens (56.3% with a CASA), which is an increase of approximately 1,500 children compared to the teens from the Child Outcomes sample (Child Outcomes teen n=2,509).

Similar to the original Child Outcomes sample, Table 1 demonstrates that CASA teens tend to have more complex cases than no-CASA teens; specifically, CASA teens tend to have more siblings associated with their case, more caregiver risk factors, more reasons for removal, and are more likely to have one or more prior removal. CASA teens are also more likely to be from a rural county, are more likely to be White, and are less likely to be Hispanic than no-CASA teens. We controlled for each relevant child, family, and case characteristic in the analyses. For a more detailed description of the sample and analytic strategy, see the Technical Note in Appendix A.

Table 1: Child, Family, and Case Characteristics of the Analytic Sample

Characteristic	Category	No CASA (*n* = 1,771)	CASA (*n* = 2,285)
Child Characteristics			
Gender	**Female**	55.8%	56.2%
Race/ethnicity	**White*** **	25.9%	39.3%
	African American	20.9%	18.8%
	Hispanic* **	48.2%	36.7%
	Other	5.0%	5.2%
Rural or urban county of removal	**Percent rural*** **	9.4%	19.2%
Border county of removal[a]	**Percent border*** **	16.6%	6.0%
Family Characteristics			
Domestic violence[b]	**Domestic violence indicated**	57.0%	60.0%
Number of siblings removed	**0 siblings*** **	44.4%	37.0%
	1 sibling*	18.4%	21.1%
	2 or more siblings**	37.2%	41.9%
Number of caregiver risk factors	**0 risk factors****	32.9%	29.0%
	1 risk factor	48.3%	46.4%
	2 or more risk factors* **	18.7%	24.6%
Case Characteristics			
Any prior CPS investigations	**One or more prior investigation**	43.1%	46.1%
Any prior CPS removals	**One or more prior removal*** **	2.1%	4.4%
Number of reasons for removal	**2 or more reasons***	28.2%	31.7%
Type of placement after removal	**Kinship*** **	23.7%	28.5%
	Foster	18.7%	17.5%
	Congregate	37.7%	38.2%
	Other* **	19.9%	15.7%

*Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=4,056. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. [a]Border indicator was not used in the propensity score generation, but was included as a control in the final analytic models. [b]Domestic Violence was used in the propensity score generation, but was not included as a control in the final analytic models.*

Analytic Strategy

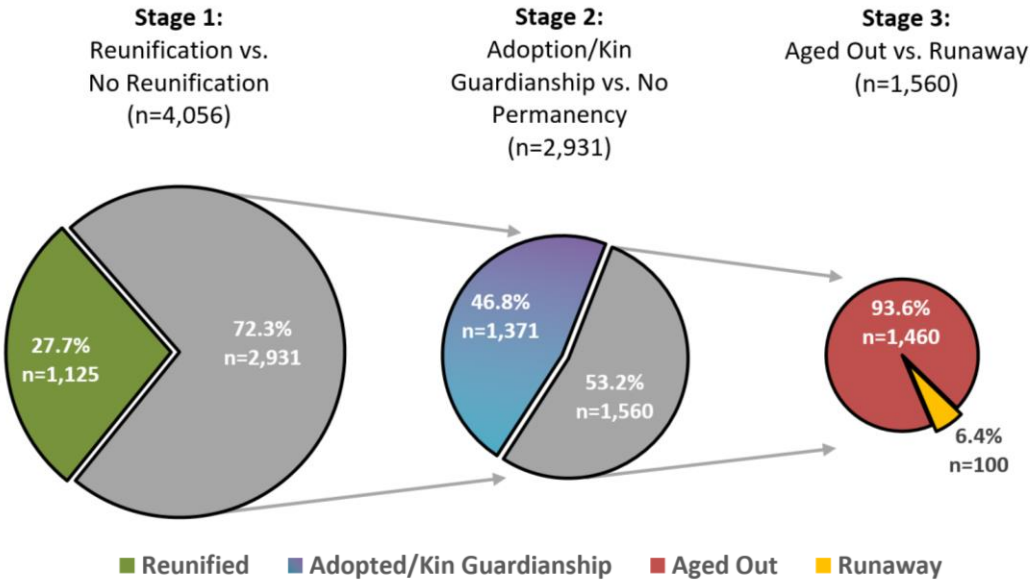
The primary aim of this analysis is to measure the effect of having a CASA on four final case outcomes: two associated with permanency (reunification and adoption/kin guardianship), and two final outcomes that teens reach when they do not reach permanency (aging out and running away). Based on legal guidelines and the Texas CASA logic model, the preferred outcome is reunification followed by adoption or permanent kin guardianship. Generally, child welfare practitioners prefer adoption over kin guardianship because adoption is a more permanent legal status that gives adoptive parents and adopted children the same rights as biological children and parents.[8] As a note, kin guardians may also choose to adopt the child in their custody at a later point in time, but this is outside the scope of the study because once a child enters kin guardianship they are no longer in DFPS custody. Aging out and running away are less preferred outcomes, but it is important to model them separately because children who age out are eligible for healthcare, educational vouchers, Extended Foster Care, and employment assistance. In contrast, children who run away are not eligible for most services provided to teens who age out and likely are less prepared for adulthood, and thus runaways may be the most vulnerable.

To model the four final case outcomes, we used a sequential logistic regression. This approach estimates the likelihood of each final outcome, limiting the sample for each outcome to children who did not reach a more preferred outcome at a previous step of the model. For example, all children were included in the model that predicts reunification compared to no reunification; the next model predicting permanency (kin guardianship and adoption) versus a non-permanency outcome was limited to the sample of children who did not reunify; and the stage of the model predicting aging out versus running away was limited to the sample of children who did not reach a permanency outcome (Figure 1). The sequential model controlled for child, family, and case characteristics in each phase (Table 1). These controls isolate the effect of CASA's influence on the final outcomes, to the largest extent possible. It is still possible that other unmeasured factors influenced CASA appointment and the final case outcomes.

Similar to the Child Outcomes study methodology, we developed a propensity score for each individual in the sample, representing his or her likelihood of being appointed a CASA based on the family, case, and child characteristics identified in the Selection Bias study (Table 1). This propensity score was then used in analyses to adjust for preexisting differences between teens in the CASA and no-CASA group using a method referred to as Inverse Probability Weighting (IPW). Results are presented as predicted probabilities, adjusting for child, family, and case characteristics.

In addition to examining running away as a final case outcome, CFRP examined the extent to which CASA appointment was associated with runaway episodes among teens in state care. Specifically, CFRP used logistic and linear regressions to examine the likelihood of ever running away, the total length of time teens spent in a runaway placement (on runaway status), and the number of runaway episodes.

Figure 1: Diagram of Three-Stage Model



Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=4,056.

Findings

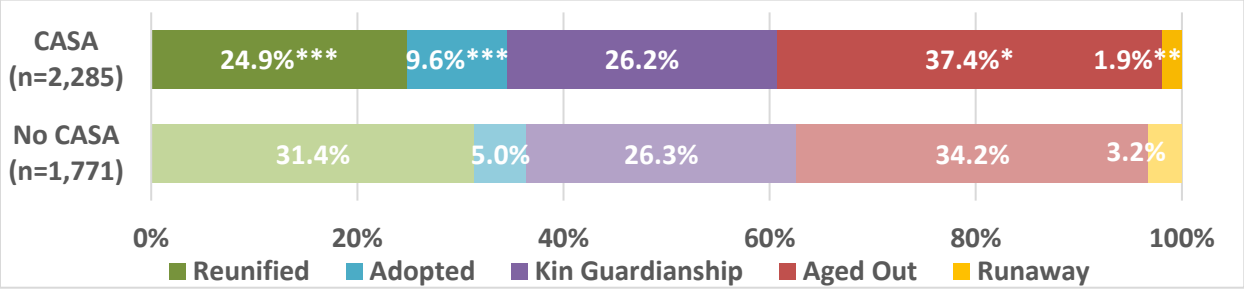
Similar to the findings for teens in the Child Outcomes study, we find that CASA teens are less likely to reunify, less likely to find permanency through adoption or kin guardianship, and more likely to age out of care compared to no-CASA teens. Further, when grouping all of the ways that teens can reach permanency together (reunification, adoption, or kin guardianship), we find that CASA teens have 31 percent lower odds of reaching permanency than no-CASA teens. However, two important findings demonstrate the positive influence that CASA can have on teen outcomes. First, among teens who do not reunify but reach permanency through adoption or kin guardianship, CASA teens are more likely to be adopted than non-CASA teens. Adoption is generally preferred over kin guardianship because it is a more permanent legal outcome.[9] Second, among teens who do not reach permanency, teens with a CASA volunteer are more likely to formally age out of the system at 18 years old rather than exit by running away prior to aging out, which is important because teens who age out have more opportunities to receive classes and services to prepare them to live independently and to support the transition process.

The following section describes the influence of CASA volunteers on each case outcome for teens in state conservatorship in more detail, including reunification, adoption, kin guardianship, aging out, and running away, and discusses child, family, and case level characteristics that influence whether a teen will find permanency or age out or run away. Generally, findings are similar across DFPS regions, though we note a few important regional trends throughout.

Overall, approximately 60 percent of teens reach a permanency outcome and 40 percent do not, as shown in Figure 2, which presents the case outcomes for teens with and without a CASA

without controlling for differences in case or child characteristics between the CASA and no-CASA group. Subsequent analyses present the predicted probability of each case outcome controlling for numerous child, family, and case characteristics that influence case outcomes, such as race/ethnicity, number of siblings on the case, and number of prior investigations the teen was involved in; the complete list of control variables is listed in Table 1.

Figure 2: Observed Final Case Outcomes for Teens, by CASA Status (n=4,056; no controls)

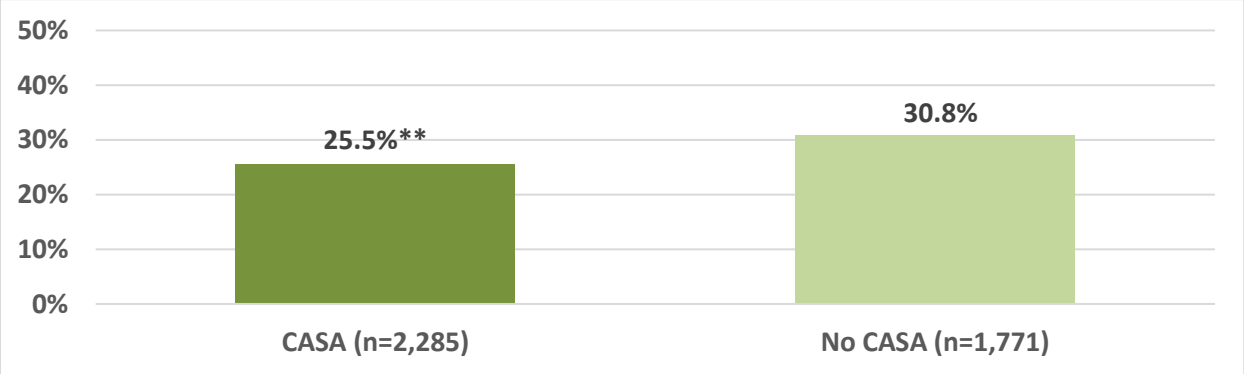


*Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=4,056. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.*

CASA teens are less likely to reunify than no-CASA teens.

Under both federal and Texas DFPS policy, the preferred permanency option for children who are removed is reunification.[10] After controlling for child, family, and case characteristic differences between CASA and no-CASA teens, we find that CASA teens are significantly less likely to reunify than no-CASA teens, as shown in Figure 3. Approximately 25 percent of CASA teens reunify, compared to 30 percent of no-CASA teens, when controlling for child, family, and case characteristics. Results are similar across regions, though the trend of lower reunification among CASA teens is most pronounced in Region 3.

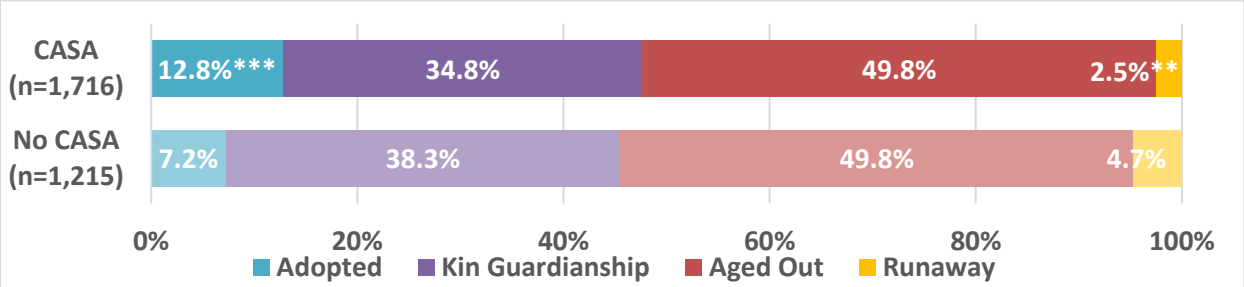
Figure 3: Predicted Probability of Reunification, by CASA Status (n=4,056)



*Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=4,056. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Results are presented as predicted probabilities using inverse probability weighting and controlling for gender, ethnic/racial group, rural indicator, border indicator, prior CPS investigation, prior removal, number of siblings in care, caregiver risk factors, reasons for removal, first substitute care placement type, and age at removal.*

The next section of the report examines outcomes among teens who do not reunify. Figure 4 displays the raw, unadjusted outcomes of teens who do not reunify by CASA status, and subsequent figures present predicted probabilities of each case outcome step-by-step, removing teens who reach permanency in a previous step, and incorporating controls for baseline characteristic differences between the CASA and no-CASA groups.

Figure 4: Observed Final Case Outcomes for Teens who Do Not Reunify, by CASA Status (n=2,931; no controls)

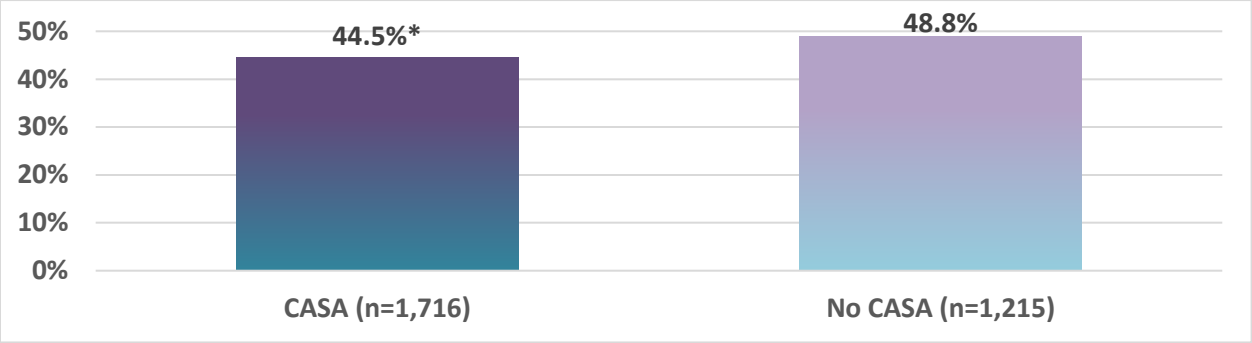


*Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=2,931. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. This sample does not include the 24.9% of CASA and 31.4% of No-CASA teens who reunified.*

CASA teens are less likely to reach permanency through kin guardianship or adoption than no-CASA teens.

In the next step of the analysis, we examine teens who do not reunify and compare the proportion of teens who find permanency through adoption or kin guardianship among CASA teens and no-CASA teens. Just under half of teens who do not reunify find a permanency outcome (including adoption and kin guardianship). We find that, overall, CASA teens are less likely to find permanency through adoption or kin guardianship than no-CASA teens, as shown in Figure 5. Importantly, both adoption and kin guardianship can occur with a relative or non-relative; among all teens in the sample who were adopted, 63.5 percent were adopted by a relative and 36.5 percent by a non-relative, and 87.7 percent of teens who reached kin guardianship were placed permanently in the care of a relative, compared to 12.4 percent who were placed with a non-relative. Results are similar in the CASA and no-CASA groups. We grouped adoption and kin guardianship together in this analysis because they happen at a similar time in the case (after reunification is ruled out as the permanency plan) and both can occur with relatives or non-relatives.

Figure 5: Predicted Probability of Adoption or Kin Guardianship for Teens who do not Reunify, by CASA Status (n=2,931)

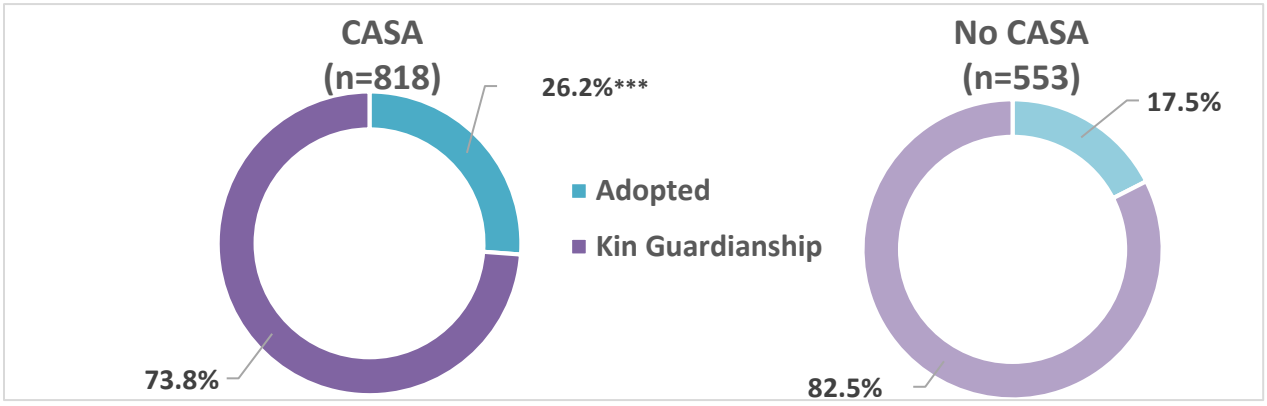


*Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=2,931. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Results are presented as predicted probabilities using inverse probability weighting and controlling for gender, ethnic/racial group, rural indicator, border indicator, prior CPS investigation, prior removal, number of siblings in care, caregiver risk factors, reasons for removal, first substitute care placement type, and age at removal.*

Among teens who reach permanency through adoption or kin guardianship, CASA teens are more likely to be adopted than no-CASA teens.

Limiting the sample to teens with a final outcome of kin guardianship or adoption, we find that teens with a CASA have 71 percent higher odds than teens without a CASA to be adopted. Though both kin guardianship and adoption can occur with a relative or non-relative, and both represent a permanent exit from the child welfare system, child welfare practitioners generally prefer adoption over kin guardianship because it is a more permanent legal status that gives adoptive parents the same legal rights as birth parents, and, in turn, gives the child the same legal and inheritance rights as biological children.[11]

Figure 6: Predicted Probability of Adoption or Kin Guardianship for Teens who Reach Non-Reunification Permanency, by CASA Status (n=1,371)



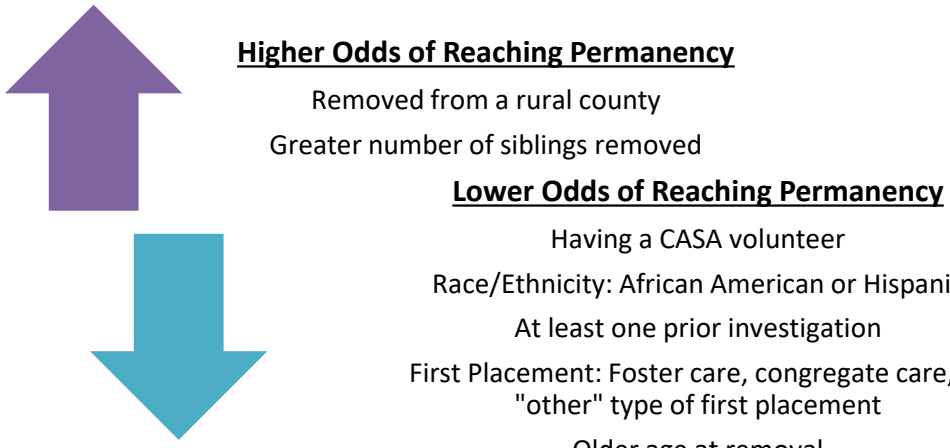
*Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=1,371. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.* Results are presented as predicted probabilities using inverse probability weighting and controlling for gender, ethnic/racial group, rural indicator, border indicator, prior CPS investigation, prior removal, number of siblings in care, caregiver risk factors, reasons for removal, first substitute care placement type, and age at removal.

Overall, CASA teens are less likely to reach permanency than no-CASA teens.

We combined the three case outcomes in which a teen reaches permanency (reunification, adoption, and kin guardianship) to assess the influence of CASA on whether teens reach a permanency outcome prior to aging out or running away. We find that CASA teens have 31 percent lower odds of reaching permanency than no-CASA teens, controlling for differences in child, family, and case characteristics between the CASA and no-CASA group.

Child, family, and case level factors also influence a teen's odds of reaching permanency. Importantly, African American and Hispanic teens are significantly *less* likely to reach permanency. Teens with a prior investigation for abuse or neglect are also *less* likely to reach permanency, and teens with a first placement in foster care or congregate care are *less* likely to reach permanency than teens first placed in kinship care. However, teenagers removed from rural counties and teenagers with more siblings removed at the same time are *more* likely to reach permanency, as shown in Figure 7. Full model results are presented in Appendix C.

Figure 7: Factors that Influence Odds of Reaching Permanency



Note: "Reaching permanency" is defined as reaching a final case outcome of reunification, adoption, or kin guardianship. Teens who do not reach permanency have a case outcome of aged out or ran away.

In addition to race and ethnicity, age at removal is an important factor to consider when assessing who ages out of care. Teens who are older when they are removed from home are *less* likely to reach permanency than teens removed at a younger age. Teenagers who reached permanency (through reunification, adoption, or kin guardianship) were typically 14 or 15 years old at removal, and teens who did not reach permanency (teens who aged out or ran away) were near their 16th birthday, on average, when removed.[a] Considering that it typically takes 12 to 18 months to determine whether reunification will occur, CPS and CASA have little time to

[a] The mean age at removal of teens who find permanency is significantly lower than the age at removal of teens who do not reach permanency (p<.001).

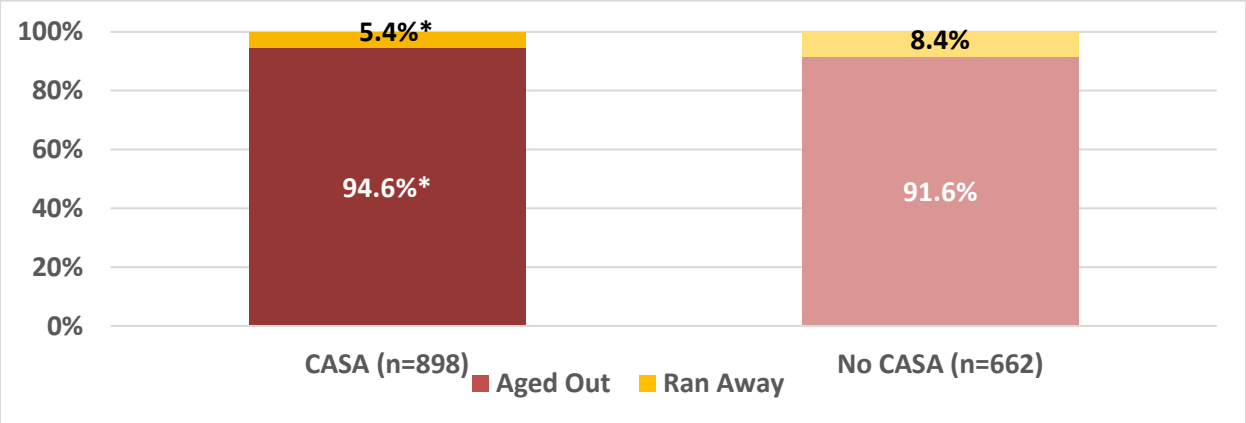
find permanency for teens who are removed well into their teens, highlighting the importance of services and classes for teens in care, regardless of their expected case outcome, to help them prepare for adulthood in case they age out.

Among teenagers who do not reach permanency, CASA teens are more likely to formally age out of CPS conservatorship and less likely to run away from care compared to no-CASA teens.

Nearly half of teens who do not reunify also do not reach a permanency outcome (see Figure 4). Among teens who do not find permanency through reunification, adoption, or kin guardianship, the most common case outcome is aging out at age 18. However, there is a relatively small but important group of teenagers with the final case outcome of "ran away from care," indicating that the teen ran away from a substitute care placement and was not found by caseworkers, foster parents, residential treatment center staff, or law enforcement. Running away from care is associated with numerous dangers and behavioral risks for teens in state conservatorship.

Among teenagers who do not reach permanency, CASA teens are less likely to run away from care and more likely to age out when they turn 18 years old, when controlling for child, family, and case characteristics, as shown in Figure 8. The CASA influence on aging out is particularly strong in Region 6, although the pattern is similar in most regions. Teens who formally age out of care have the opportunity to participate in classes to prepare for adulthood, attend meetings with family or adult mentors to plan for independence, and receive services and benefits to support their transition to adulthood, including potentially remaining in a foster placement until age 21.

Figure 8: Predicted Probability of Aging Out or Running Away for Teens who do not Reach Permanency, by CASA Status (n=1,560)



*Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=1,560. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. Results are presented as predicted probabilities using inverse probability weighting and controlling for gender, ethnic/racial group, rural indicator, border indicator, prior CPS investigation, prior removal, number of siblings in care, caregiver risk factors, reasons for removal, first substitute care placement type, and age at removal. Findings are similar when controlling for runaway episodes.*

In contrast, when a teen exits care by running away, she is ineligible for most transitional living services and becomes vulnerable to numerous health and safety risks, including commercial sexual exploitation, sleeping on the street, substance abuse, and interruptions in schooling.[12] Though aging out of care is also associated with a number of poor outcomes, the influence of CASA in supporting teens to age out of care formally rather than exit by running away is important because teens in care have opportunities to learn about adult life, qualify for and learn how to access numerous financial benefits, including living stipends and educational or vocational training vouchers, and potentially even remain in a foster placement during the transition to adulthood after the teen turns 18.

Among the group of teens with a final case outcome of "ran away," several child characteristics are associated with an increased risk of exiting care by running away. Female and African American teens are significantly more likely to exit care by running away than other teens. Though females comprise just over half (56%) of the overall sample, 70 percent of teens who exit care by running away are female. African American teens without a permanency outcome have 51 percent lower odds of aging out compared to running away than White teens.

Though CASA teens are less likely to have a final case outcome of "ran away," CASA teens and no-CASA teens are equally likely to ever run away from care.

Approximately 2.5 percent of teens in the sample exited care by running away, but nearly one in four teens in the sample have at least one runaway episode documented in their CPS placement records. In addition to examining running away as a final case outcome, CFRP examined the extent to which CASA influences runaway episodes among teens in state care. We find that having a CASA volunteer does not significantly influence whether a teen ever ran away. In other words, CASA teens and no-CASA teens are equally likely to run away from care at least once, and additionally, CASA status is not associated with length of runaway time or the number of runaway episodes documented in CPS placement records. However, several child characteristics influence the likelihood that teens run away. African American and Hispanic teens are more likely than White teens to ever run away, and teens removed at an older age are more likely to run away at least once. Similarly, African American teens and older teens who run away at least once are the most likely to have a runaway outcome.

To better understand how runaway episodes relate to final case outcomes, we explored runaway episodes that occur near the time of a teen's final outcome (specifically, near a teen's 18th birthday, when he will age out). Among the group of teens who have at least one runaway episode documented in CPS placement records, a subset of teens were on runaway status up until the day that they received the outcome of "aged out." In other words, a group of teens who aged out of care were not in a legitimate substitute care placement just before aging out, but instead were on runaway status. The group of teens who aged out while on runaway status was bigger than the group of teens who received a runaway outcome; 100 teens in the sample (2.5%) received a final case outcome of "ran away" and 121 (3%) teens in the sample aged out, but have a runaway placement as their last documented placement before aging out. On average, teens who aged out on runaway status were on runaway status for nearly seven

months when they reached 18 years old and aged out. We did not find any clear pattern in how aged out or runaway outcomes were assigned, such as by region or placement type.

Importantly, the finding that CASA teens are more likely to formally age out and less likely to run away holds true when teens who aged out while on runaway status are grouped with the runaway teens. Ongoing analysis, and specifically qualitative data collection with CASA and CPS staff, will provide CFRP with the opportunity to learn more about teen age out and runaway case outcomes, and we will work to better understand when and how runaway outcomes are assigned.

Conclusion

Similar to the findings from the Child Outcomes study, when controlling for baseline group differences, we find that CASA teens are less likely to reunify and less likely to reach adoption or kin guardianship than no-CASA teens, and therefore, overall, CASA teens are less likely to reach permanency than no-CASA teens, when controlling for child, family, and case characteristics. Among teens who do not reunify, but reach permanency, CASA teens are more likely to be adopted, rather than reach kin guardianship, however, compared to no-CASA teens. In the current study, we took a closer look at teens who do not find permanency to better understand the difference between aging out and other non-permanency outcomes, specifically running away (because it is the most common non-permanency outcome after aging out). We learned that CASA teens are more likely to formally age out rather than run away from care. Overall, CASA could be doing more to support teens to find permanent homes, however, for teens who do not reach permanency, CASA supports teens to age out formally rather than run away, providing teens the opportunity to receive classes and services to prepare for adult life, receive financial benefits upon aging out to support their transition, and avoid the numerous dangers associated with running away from care.

In the next phase of the research, CFRP will explore the services available to teens who are preparing for adult life while in care and who age out of care to better understand the extent to which CASA status is associated with participation in services to prepare for adulthood and resources to facilitate a successful transition to adulthood, including PAL classes, Extended Foster Care, and tuition and expense waivers for education and job training. We will also learn more, through interviews and focus groups with CPS staff, about the experiences of teens who run away from care and about how CPS staff assign runaway outcomes to teens who are on runaway status.

Appendix A: Technical Note

Sample

The sample for the current study is comprised of all children from the original Child Outcomes and Volunteer Effectiveness (COVE) population who either turned 18 on or before April 30, 2018 or were 13 or older at the start of the study period and have a recorded permanency outcome in IMPACT. The COVE population included children who entered substitute care between September 1, 2012 and August 31, 2014 in jurisdictions covered by one of the 68 CASA programs in Texas that provided a usable roster of the children they served during the study time frame. Three programs did not provide usable rosters.

We excluded children from the population who had unexplained gaps in Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC) status (n=8), who transitioned from Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) to TMC (n=2), whose recorded date of birth and date of removal suggested they were over 18 years of age at the time of removal (n=4), whose start date of their first placement was over a month after their recorded date of removal (n=11), and who were missing data necessary for analysis (i.e. gender, court jurisdiction, or final case outcome; n=23). Finally, we excluded all teens with final outcomes of "transfer to other agency" (n=26) or "death" (n=7). A review of the cases with the outcome of death or transfer revealed unique circumstances leading to these outcomes; therefore, grouping these cases with other case outcomes would not be appropriate for this study and would make results difficult to interpret. Because deaths and transfers were uncommon, the outcomes were too infrequent to analyze on their own.

Unlike previous phases of the evaluation, we maintained children who had no records of being in TMC in the state of Texas (n=27), because the focus for this phase was on the long-term experiences of older youth in substitute care and having a TMC period was not relevant to the research questions. Finally, we included all siblings from the same case rather than randomly selecting only one sibling for inclusion. We clustered by case ID to account for dependency resulting from similarities between siblings in their case characteristics and permanency outcomes.

Analytic Strategy

The primary aim of this analysis was to measure the effect of having a CASA on four final case outcomes: two associated with permanency (reunification and kin guardianship/adoption), and two final outcomes that children reach when they do not find permanency (aging out and running away). To complete the analysis, we used an analytic method referred to as a sequential logistic regression. A sequential logistic regression estimates a series of logistic regressions for each transition of a sequentially-staged process in which the sample at risk of subsequent outcome events decreases with each transition. For example, all children are included in the model that predicts reunification versus not reunified; the next model predicting permanency (kin guardianship and adoption) versus a non-permanency outcome is limited to the remaining sample of children who were not reunified; and the model predicting

aging out versus running away is limited to the sample of children who did not reach a permanency outcome.

Similar to the methodology of the Child Outcomes study, we developed a propensity score for each individual in the sample, representing their likelihood of being appointed a CASA based on family, case, and child characteristics (see Child Outcomes report for an explanation of propensity score generation), and used this to account for baseline differences between the CASA and no-CASA teens. We made a few small adjustments to the model used to generate the propensity scores compared to the Child Outcomes study because not all child, family, and case characteristics included in the original model were necessary to account for selection bias in the teen sample. Specifically, we removed the indicator of whether a child was from a border county and the interaction between the border indicator and the child's race/ethnicity from the propensity score generation model.

For this study, we used these propensity scores to generate inverse probability weights for each individual in the sample. Inverse probability weighting is one of many propensity score methods which can be used to adjust for selection bias in a sample. Inverse probability weighting uses the propensity score to create a pseudo-population that simulates randomized assignment to treatment, a pseudo-population in which there is no association between the explanatory variables of interest and treatment itself. The pseudo-population is created by assigning greater weight to individuals in the *treatment* group with a propensity score indicating that they were *less likely* to receive treatment and *control* individuals with propensity scores that showed a *greater likelihood* of treatment. We used stabilized inverse probability weights to normalize the weights, limiting the influence of outlier individuals. We further controlled for the effect of extreme outliers by assigning children with weights below and above the 5^{th} and 95^{th} percentiles the weight values at the respective trimmed percentile. The final weights ranged from 0.48 to 1.82. The weights were applied to the sequential logistic regression models, along with the controls listed in Table 2, to account for the influence of child, family, and case characteristics on CASA appointment and to isolate the effects CASA appointment on outcomes. Results are presented as predicted probabilities, which are the estimated probabilities of the outcomes occurring accounting for their values on the child, family, and case characteristic controls.

Table 2: Child, Family, and Cases Characteristic Measures

Control Variable	Definition
Gender	Child's gender (Male or Female)
Race/ethnicity	Child's race/ethnicity ("White," "African-American," "Hispanic," or "Other").
Rural or urban county of removal	Status of county that child was removed from according to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (urban, rural).
Border	Status of county that child was removed from according to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (non-border, border).

Control Variable	Definition
Any prior investigations	There was at least one investigation by CPS involving the child prior to investigation(s) leading to removal (no prior investigations, one or more prior investigation).
Any prior removals	Child was previously removed from their home and entered DFPS custody.
Number of siblings removed	Number of siblings removed at the time the child was removed (0, 1, 2 or more).
Number of caregiver risk factors	Number of caregiver risk factors indicated (0, 1, 2 or more).
Reasons for removal	Total number of reasons for removal (1, 2 or more).
Type of placement after removal	The type of child's first placement after removal ("kinship," "foster," "congregate care," "other").

Additional Analysis on Runaway Episodes

In addition to examining running away as a final case outcome, CFRP examined the extent to which CASA influences runaway episodes among teens in state care. Specifically, CFRP examined the likelihood of ever running away, the total length of time teens spent in a runaway placement (on runaway status), and the number of runaway episodes. CFRP measured runaway episodes by looking at CPS placement data. To measure the number of runaway episodes, CFRP identified each time that a youth went from a legitimate placement (e.g., foster care, RTC) into a runaway placement, and then back into a legitimate placement (if the youth returned to care). To calculate total length on runaway status, CFRP added up the total number of days for which a youth's placement was "runaway." Caseworkers are instructed to change a teen's placement information to indicate that the teen ran away when the teen has been gone for 14 days or when the teen will not be able to return to the placement that she ran from.[13] The runaway episodes recorded in IMPACT placement data, therefore, likely undercount the true number of runaway episodes, specifically runaway episodes that last less than two weeks.

The weighted logistic regression model predicting the odds of running away and linear regression models predicting the total length and number of runaway episodes included controls for child gender, race/ethnicity, and child age at removal and utilized the inverse probability weights discussed above.

Appendix B

Table 3: Sequential Logistic Regression Model of Teen Case Outcomes

	Reunify vs. Did Not Reunify (*n*=4,056)	Adoption/Kin Guardianship vs. No Permanency (if Not Reunified) (*n*=2,931)	Aged Out vs. Runaway (if Not Reunified, Adopted, or Kin Guardianship) (*n*=1,560)
CASA status (CASA = 1)	**0.76****	**0.78***	**1.64***
Gender (Female = 1)	1.00	1.16	**0.59***
Race/ethnicity	--	--	--
White	Referent	Referent	Referent
African American	0.84	**0.72***	**0.49***
Hispanic	0.87	**0.74***	0.73
Other	0.92	1.13	0.84
Rural county	1.07	**1.41***	1.51
Border county	**1.35***	1.04	0.86
Any prior CPS investigations	**0.70*****	0.93	0.79
Any prior CPS removals	0.84	0.78	0.73
Number of siblings removed	**1.17****	**1.27*****	1.23
Number of caregiver risk factors	0.89	**1.21***	1.15
Number of reasons for removal	**0.75****	1.00	1.08
Type of placement after removal	--	--	--
Kinship	Referent	Referent	Referent
Foster	**1.78*****	**0.29*****	0.49
Congregate	**1.66*****	**0.25*****	0.68
Other	**1.78*****	**0.35*****	0.54
Age at Removal	**0.75*****	**0.43*****	0.98

*Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=4,056. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.* Results are presented as odds ratios.

Appendix C

Table 4: Logistic Regression Model Predicting Permanency

	Permanency vs. No Permanency (Permanency = 1) (*n*=4,056)
CASA status (CASA = 1)	**0.70*** **
Gender (Female = 1)	1.12
Race/ethnicity	--
White	Referent
African American	**0.72** **
Hispanic	**0.73** **
Other	1.02
Rural county	**1.34***
Border county	1.25
Any prior CPS investigations	**0.79** **
Any prior CPS removals	0.79
Number of siblings removed	**1.27*** **
Number of caregiver risk factors	1.08
Number of reasons for removal	0.84
Type of placement after removal	--
Kinship	Referent
Foster	**0.46*** **
Congregate	**0.42*** **
Other	**0.54*** **
Age at Removal	**0.47*** **

*Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=4,056. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.* Results are presented as odds ratios.

Appendix D

Table 5: Sequential Logistic Regression Model of Adoption vs. Kin Guardianship

	Adoption vs. Kin Guardianship (if Not Reunified) (*n*=1,371)
CASA status (CASA = 1)	**1.71****
Gender (Female = 1)	1.08
Race/ethnicity	--
White	Referent
African American	0.80
Hispanic	1.17
Other	0.77
Rural county	**0.60***
Border county	**0.42***
Any prior CPS investigations	0.99
Any prior CPS removals	1.89
Number of siblings removed	0.93
Number of caregiver risk factors	1.05
Number of reasons for removal	1.11
Type of placement after removal	--
Kinship	Referent
Foster	0.77
Congregate	1.02
Other	**0.48****
Age at Removal	**0.76*****

*Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=2,496. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.* Results are presented as odds ratios. The first stage of the sequential logit predicting reunification vs no reunification is not shown; after teens who reunify exit the model in the first stage, the remaining sample has 1,371 teens.

Appendix E

Table 6: Descriptive Characteristics of Teens by Case Outcome

Characteristic	Category	Reunified		Adopted		Kin Guardianship	
		No CASA (*n*=556)	CASA (*n*=569)	No CASA (*n*=88)	CASA (*n*=220)	No CASA (*n*=465)	CASA (*n*=598)
Gender	**Female**	53.4%	55.9%	61.4%	58.6%	56.3%	55.7%
Race/ethnicity	**White**	24.8%	38.7%	25.0%	44.5%	29.7%	40.1%
	African American	19.4%	17.0%	14.8%	13.6%	19.8%	17.2%
	Hispanic	50.9%	39.0%	58.0%	37.3%	45.4%	36.8%
	Other	4.9%	5.3%	2.3%	4.5%	5.2%	5.9%
Rural or urban county of removal	**Percent rural**	10.4%	19.5%	14.8%	14.5%	11.6%	23.6%
Border county of removal	**Percent border**	21.6%	7.7%	15.5%	6.0%	5.7%	4.1%
Domestic violence	**Domestic violence indicated**	54.7%	59.9%	67.0%	64.5%	63.4%	61.7%
Number of siblings removed	**0 siblings**	37.6%	34.4%	26.1%	27.7%	32.0%	26.9%
	1 sibling	15.1%	19.0%	23.9%	24.5%	23.4%	25.9%
	2 or more siblings	47.3%	46.6%	50.0%	47.7%	44.5%	47.2%
Number of caregiver risk factors	**0 risk factors**	33.5%	32.0%	26.1%	17.7%	26.5%	21.4%
	1 risk factor	47.8%	45.3%	58.0%	52.7%	52.7%	48.8%
	2 or more risk factors	18.7%	22.7%	15.9%	29.5%	20.9%	29.8%
Any prior CPS investigations	**One or more prior investigation**	38.3%	39.5%	36.4%	48.6%	38.7%	47.3%
Any prior CPS removals	**One or more prior removal**	2.3%	3.0%	2.3%	5.5%	1.1%	3.0%
Reasons for removal	**1 reason**	73.2%	72.1%	69.3%	63.6%	71.2%	65.2%
	2 or more reasons	26.8%	27.9%	30.7%	36.4%	28.8%	34.8%
Type of placement after removal	**Kinship**	18.5%	25.1%	54.5%	43.2%	38.3%	42.3%
	Foster	23.6%	18.1%	12.5%	15.5%	17.8%	14.9%
	Congregate	38.8%	39.4%	27.3%	31.4%	25.4%	29.3%
	Other	19.1%	17.4%	5.7%	10.0%	18.5%	13.5%

Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=4,056.

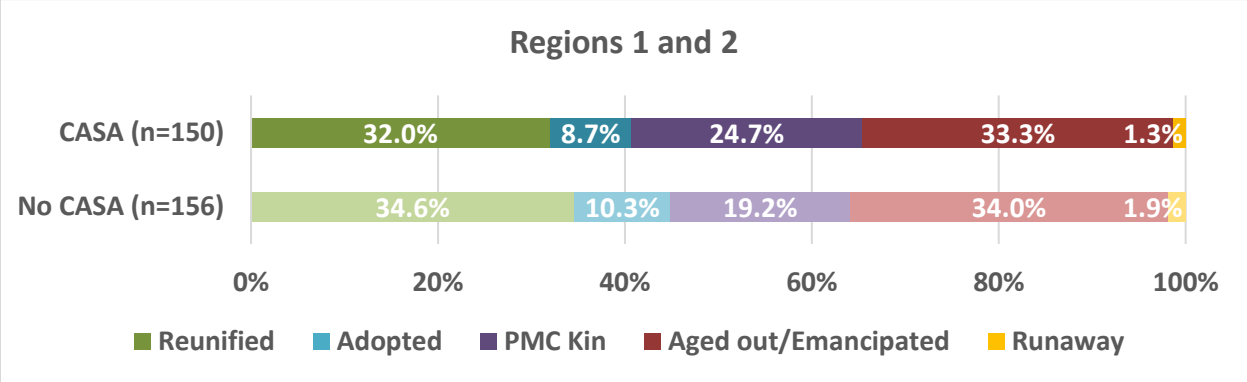
Table 6: Descriptive Characteristics of Teens by Case Outcome (Continued)

Characteristic	Category	Aged Out		Runaway	
		No CASA (*n*=605)	CASA (*n*=855)	No CASA (*n*=57)	CASA (*n*=43)
Gender	Female	55.2%	55.6%	71.6%	69.8%
Race/ethnicity	White	24.0%	38.9%	26.3%	16.3%
	African American	24.0%	21.3%	22.8%	39.5%
	Hispanic	46.4%	34.9%	47.4%	39.5%
	Other	5.6%	4.9%	3.5%	4.7%
Rural or urban county of removal	Percent rural	6.4%	17.4%	3.5%	11.6%
Border county of removal	Percent border	13.7%	5.4%	24.6%	2.3%
Domestic violence	Domestic violence indicated	54.2%	57.4%	42.1%	62.8%
Number of siblings removed	0 siblings	60.2%	47.1%	71.9%	58.1%
	1 sibling	17.0%	18.6%	15.8%	11.6%
	2 or more siblings	22.8%	34.3%	12.3%	30.2%
Number of caregiver risk factors	0 risk factors	37.9%	34.0%	38.6%	51.2%
	1 risk factor	44.3%	44.4%	45.6%	32.6%
	2 or more risk factors	17.9%	21.5%	15.8%	16.3%
Any prior CPS investigations	One or more prior investigation	51.2%	48.4%	50.9%	55.8%
Any prior CPS removals	One or more prior removal	2.6%	5.7%	3.5%	11.6%
Reasons for removal	1 reason	71.7%	68.9%	66.7%	72.1%
	2 or more reasons	28.3%	31.1%	33.3%	27.9%
Type of placement after removal	Kinship	14.2%	18.4%	8.8%	9.3%
	Foster	15.7%	19.1%	21.1%	27.9%
	Congregate	46.3%	45.4%	50.9%	41.9%
	Other	23.8%	17.2%	19.3%	20.9%

Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=4,056.

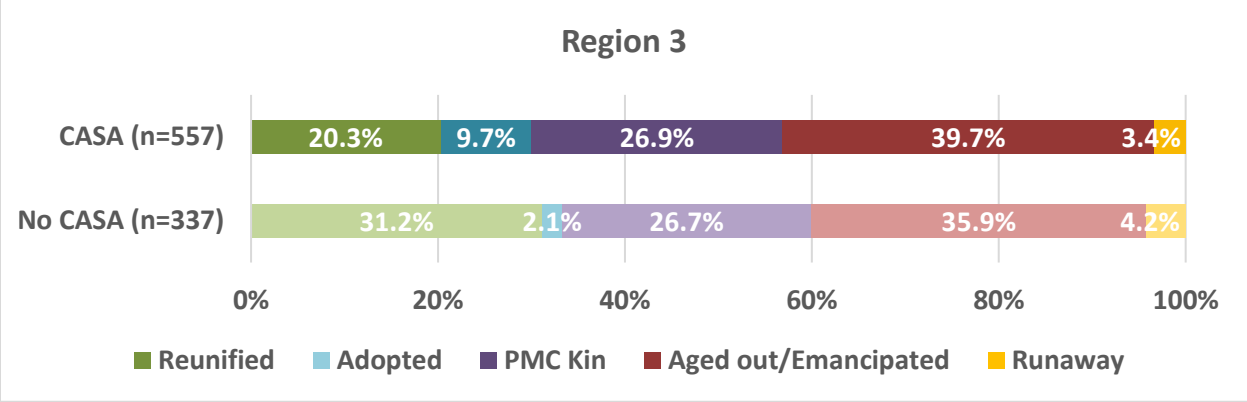
Appendix F: Case Outcomes by Region

Figure 9: Final Case Outcomes for Teens, by CASA Status (Regions 1 & 2)



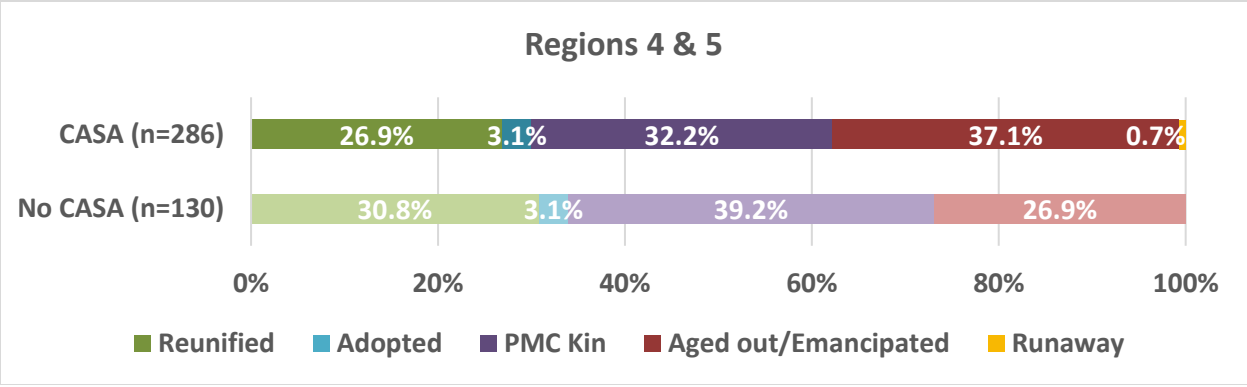
Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=306.

Figure 10: Final Case Outcomes for Teens, by CASA Status (Region 3)



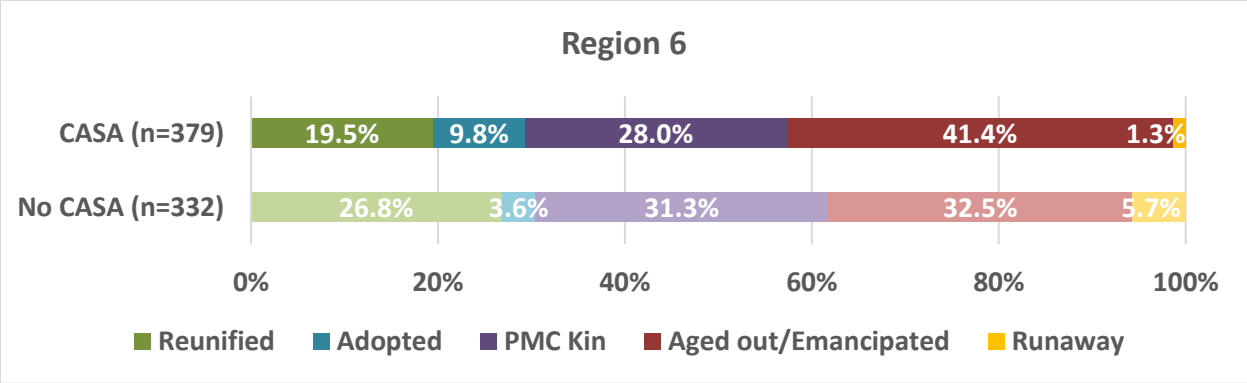
Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=894.

Figure 11: Final Case Outcomes for Teens, by CASA Status (Regions 4 & 5)



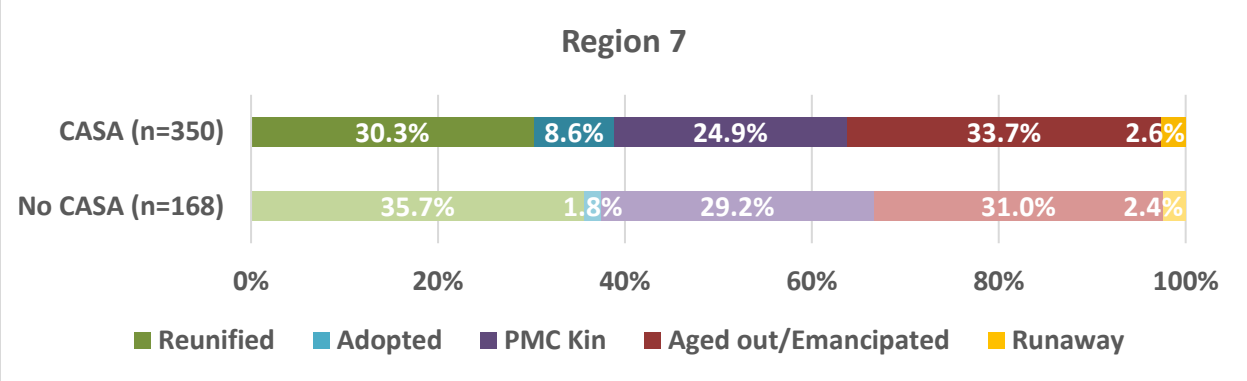
Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=416.

Figure 12: Final Case Outcomes for Teens, by CASA Status (Region 6)



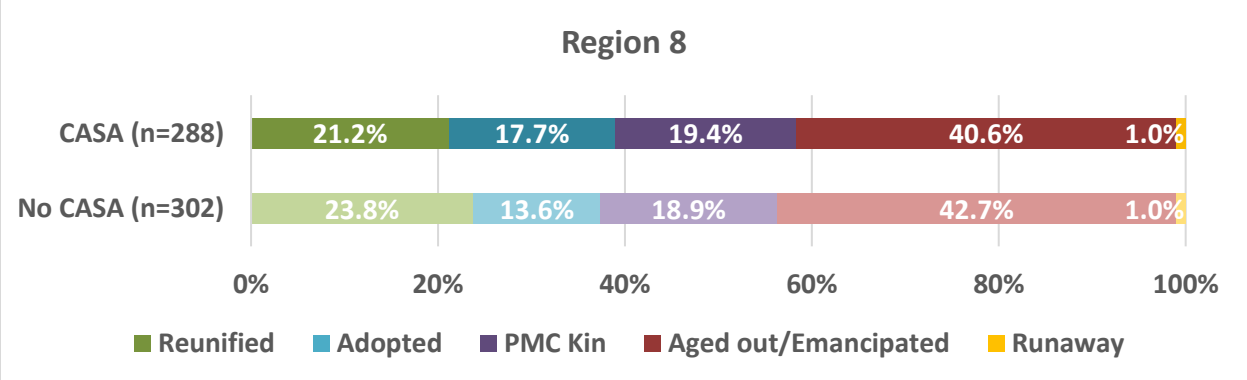
Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=711.

Figure 13: Final Case Outcomes for Teens, by CASA Status (Region 7)



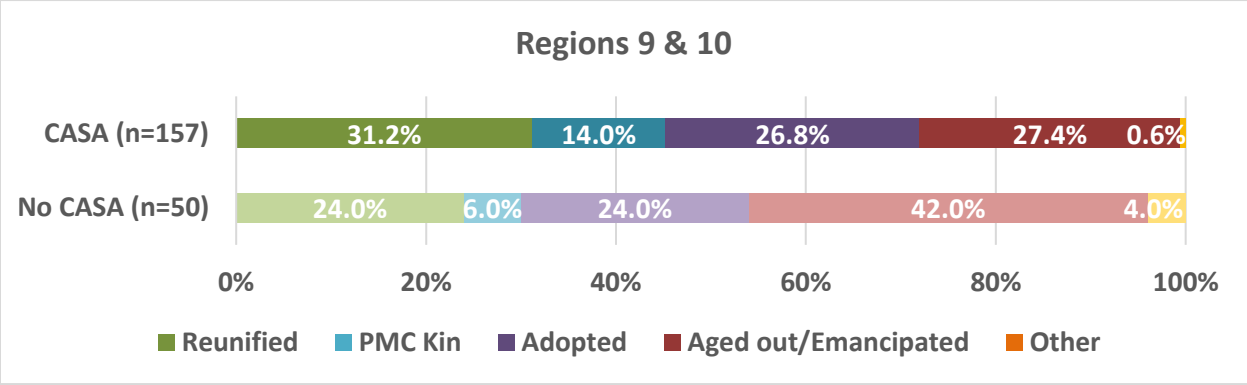
Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=518.

Figure 14: Final Case Outcomes for Teens, by CASA Status (Region 8)



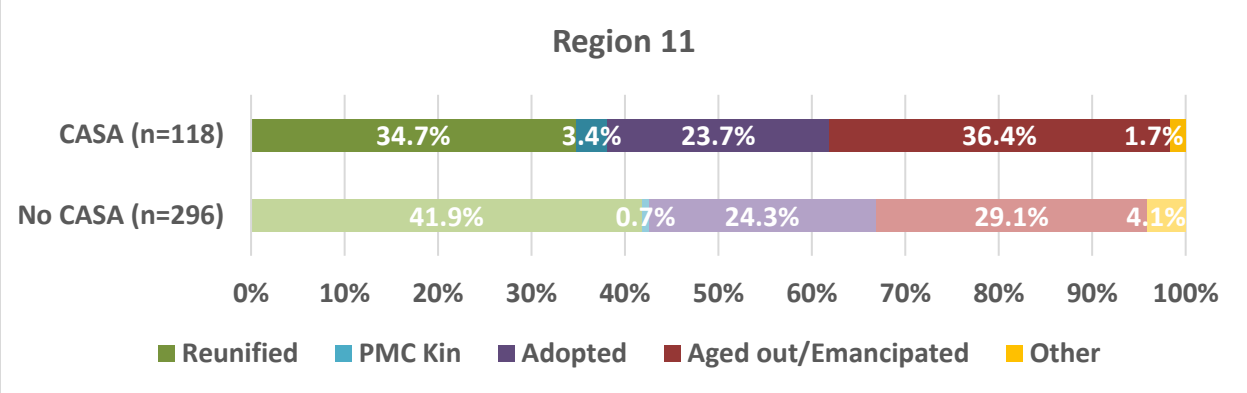
Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=590.

Figure 15: Final Case Outcomes for Teens, by CASA Status (Regions 9 & 10)



Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=207.

Figure 16: Final Case Outcomes for Teens, by CASA Status (Region 11)



Source: DFPS IMPACT Administrative Data and CASA Program Case Management Data. Notes: n=414.

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The Child and Family Research Partnership (CFRP) is an independent, nonpartisan research group at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin, specializing in issues related to young children, teens, and their parents. We engage in rigorous research and evaluation work aimed at strengthening families and enhancing public policy.

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