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## Out of County Advocacy for Foster Youth

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Out of County Advocacy for Foster Youth

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### **Abstract**

The capstone project focused on addressing systemic challenges for out-of-county foster children/youth cases and by providing recommendations to CASA of Monterey County leadership for incentives for the Court Appointed Supervisor Advocates (CASAs) that agree to advocate for out of county foster child/youth. CASA of Monterey County currently has about 30 children/youth (24%) on their waitlist who are placed out-of-county. These youth historically do not receive a CASA volunteer due to being out-of-county. Without a CASA the fact that 80% of children in foster care have significant mental health issues reduces the chances of their mental health needs being met. Two surveys and two key informant interviews were conducted as a needs assessment for CASA of Monterey County. Participants included new CASAs, active/on-leave CASAs, a current CASA out-of-county advocate, and a Monterey County Social Services Management Analyst. By doing the needs assessment first, CASAs were able to better understand the need for CASA volunteers to take on out-of-county cases. Second, both CASAs who have not taken on a case and those who had provided out-of-county advocacy demonstrated that out-of-county advocacy is achievable. Third, a variety of incentives were identified that would help support CASA volunteers to provide out-of-county advocacy.

*Keywords:* foster youth, placement, out-of-county, advocate

**Agency and Community Served**

According to Kids Data (2019), as of 2015 there are 450 foster care youth. From ages 0-20 years old; Under 1: 33, Ages 1-2: 64, Ages 3-5: 69, Ages 6-10: 122, Ages 11-15: 90, Ages 16-20: 72. Ethnicities; African American/Black: 21, American Indian/Alaska Native: 1, Asian/Pacific Islander: 1, Hispanic/Latino: 360, White: 66. Types of Placements; Foster Home: 97, Foster Family Agency Home: 117, Group Home: 40, Guardian: 27, Kin-Relatives: 124, Pre-Adoptive: 10, RunAway:1, Other: 20 in Monterey County. Kids Data (2019) states, “Foster care is intended to provide temporary, safe living arrangements and therapeutic services for children who cannot remain safely at home due to child maltreatment or for children whose parents are unable to provide adequate care”.

CASA (court appointed special advocate) of Monterey County is a program who staffs’ advocate supervisors that work with volunteer advocates to serve foster care youth that have been appointed by a judge through the courts. The mission statement of CASA Monterey County is to train and support community volunteers who advocate for abused or neglected children placed in foster care, upholding the children’s rights while pursuing a safe and permanent home. CASA completes its mission through recruiting volunteers that are trained to advocate for children. CASA’s program provides resources for CASA volunteers and staff to better serve the foster youth community who are appointed by the courts. The more volunteer advocates CASA recruits the more foster youth children are served. Before becoming a volunteer there are several tasks to complete. Volunteers must apply to become an advocate, must have an interview, undergo fingerprinting, attend 8-week training, and become a mandated reporter. Once all is completed volunteer advocates are sworn in through the courts. Volunteers than read through several cases to determine which child they would like to advocate for.

Information gathered from CASA tracker, indicates that CASA currently serves 117 youth ages 5-21. Currently there are 140 active CASA volunteer advocates. There is about 103 foster youth that make up the waitlist. From my knowledge, the reason why there are 140 active CASA volunteers and 103 foster youth on the waitlist is due to the changing system of how CASA prioritizes the waitlist cases. There are 3 forms of prioritizing CAP active; 32 foster youth, CAP pending; 35 foster youth, and Waitlist; 36 foster youth giving a combined total of 103 waitlist. CAP active; cases are closer to moving up on the waitlist, CAP pending; cases most likely are closer to aging out of services, reunifying with family, or being adopted and Waitlist cases that fit the higher priority level and will be given to a CASA volunteer upon reading for a case to advocate for. If a cases are placed on the CAP active waitlist they are priorities at a level 3, 4, and 5 which means they will be moved closer to the waitlist which will then be given CASA volunteers when it's time to pick a case. CAP pending waitlist however, are placed at a level 1 or 2, which means they are at a lower chance for their case to be given to a CASA volunteer to advocate for.

### **Problem Description**

#### **Problem definition/description**

Too many out of county foster youth appointed to CASA are disproportionately represented on the waitlist. The out of county foster youth are directly impacted when they do not have an advocate. Currently, there are 32 Monterey County appointed foster youth that are out-of-county on the CASA waitlist. Out-of-county consist of foster youth being placed more than two hours one-way distance outside of the county. Stated by Pham (2017), 13,313 foster youth in California are considered “out-of-county,” meaning that they have been placed in a different county than the one where they first entered the foster care system. Out-of-county cases occur for several reasons; children may be placed with relatives who live out of county or

children may be transferred to available foster or group homes. It becomes a problem for the agency to serve children out of county because they may be placed at a distance that makes visits with the child less likely. Out of county foster youth face challenges receiving a CASA advocate for many reasons.

### **Contributing Factors**

Factors that contribute to the problem are not enough resource homes for foster youth in the county. According to Monterey Department of Social Services, there are approximately 115 licensed foster homes (*Monterey County, Child and Family Services Review, 2007, P. 63*) but 450 foster youth. In California the number of children the licensed foster home can provide care for will be determined upon the application process however, if a foster home is considered specialized than no more than two children with or without special healthcare needs can reside in the home even if it is temporary if the specialized foster care home can provide licensed capacity, determined by a licensed agency and specific conditions are being met than they may provide residence to a second or third child. (*National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning, 2007, p. 2*) California's regulations seems very board when it comes to applying someone home to become a foster home. In some way it might benefit to not put an exact number but instead look at the circumstances of the homes and then determining the amount of care a foster home can provide.

Another contributing factor is the lack of volunteers... Currently there are 140 CASA volunteer advocates, stated previously in 2015, there are 450 foster youth in Monterey county. Based off those statistics there are more foster youth who need to be served and not enough volunteers to serve them. There are clearly not enough volunteers for in county foster youth. To explore the interest in volunteers for out of county foster youth, a survey was recently given to

22 CASA volunteer trainees. The results showed that 17 of the CASA volunteers did not want to take on an out of county case as their first case. Foster children placed out of county are less likely to have an advocate for this reason.

Becoming a CASA volunteer means volunteers committed to interact and advocate for the children without getting paid. CASA are required to have two in-person outings with their CASA youth every month, these outings can consist of going to the movies, shopping, parks, beaches, or amusement parks. CASA's are required to spend a total of 8 hours each month. These volunteers are also required to write court reports, these reports are due monthly by the 5<sup>th</sup> of every month. The reports consist of current status/updates, observations, peer relationships, personal assessment, and recommendations for the youth.

Other contributing factor is funding. Funding can potentially be an issue for those volunteers taking on an in-county case with the different activities that cost money and time, but with an out-of-county case that investment could be an even greater burden on the advocate. This is another potential contributing factor as to why volunteers may not want to advocate for a youth placed out-of-county. The fact is out of county children need just as much advocacy as those that are in the county, not only are they going through a chaotic process but it is happening in surroundings where they may be unfamiliar.

### **Consequences**

Consequences of the problem are; fewer children are served and less children gain the advocacy from an adult who is serving in their best interest. When not receiving an adult advocate foster child may lead to making poor choices such as criminal acts. Men who were placed in foster care as children are 10 percentage points (23%) more likely to be convicted of a crime as adults than their investigated but never-placed counterparts. For females, the point

estimates are not statistically different from zero. In the United States, roughly 20% of the prison population under age 30, and 25% of all prisoners with prior convictions, spent part of their youth in foster care. (Lindquist, M. & Stanavirta, T. 2014). Those percentages are extremely high for society to understand that this is a consequence for foster youth. It puts the youth at a disadvantage for receiving an education and contributing to society.

Youth in group homes are 2.5 times more likely to become involved in the justice system than youth placed with foster families. Moreover, frequent placement changes increase the likelihood of incarceration. 90% of youth placed in five or more homes will enter the juvenile system. (*Juvenile Law Center, 2018*) With this data it proves that foster youth who are placed wherever there is space and not necessarily where the child would benefit from is unfortunate. This is why having a CASA provide advocacy for the children/youth placed out-of-county is extremely important. It will ensure that even though they may be taken away yet again from their familiar surroundings at least the children/youth can have an advocate who is still advocating for their best interest.

Underage drinking is another consequence, 54% of youth in foster family homes had used alcohol at least once in their life. Such results could stem from differences in initiation of substance use, as the foster care sample tended to begin using alcohol and marijuana an average of 1.5 years before their peers (Braciszewskia, J & Stouta, R. 2012). Wiltshire Council, provides some practice tools when dealing with alcohol for foster youth; Foster Cares should take openly with youth about alcohol and give guidance or help youth access information about alcohol, foster cares should have behavior management skills to control youth not consuming alcohol, foster cares should set boundaries, and foster careers should be aware trauma, abuse, and violence negative experience alcohol brings. Those practices are all beneficial for foster care



providers, however not beneficial to those youth who have no advocacy. Youth being placed out-of-county stripped away from their surroundings is traumatic and can possibly influence alcohol consumption due to the lack of support and guidance that a CASA can provide if there is willing CASA volunteers to sever youth placed out-of-county.

Teen pregnancy is another consequence foster youth my encounter. According to Boonstra, (2011) young women in foster care are more than twice as likely as their peers not in foster care to become pregnant by age 19. There is some evidence that foster youth, on average, first have sex at a younger age than other adolescents.

Foster child/youth mental health needs are not being met. Up to 80% of children in foster care have significant mental health issues, compared to approximately 18-22 percent of the general population. (National Conference of State Legislature. 2019) According to, County of San Bernardino out-of-county placements may occur based on not having enough availability for specific treatment programs not available in the county. (2018) Which explains the consequence foster child/youth may face when being placed out-of-county and their needs are lacking at being met.

**Problem Model**

<b>Contributing Factors</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Consequences</b>
Lack of resource homes: Foster/ Group homes	Too many out of county, foster youth appointed to CASA who are disproportionately represented on the waitlist.	Children resorting to criminal acts
Lack of volunteers		Alcohol abuse

Lack of incentive funding (traveling long distance)		Teenage pregnancy
		Foster youth mental health needs not being met

**Capstone Project Description and Justification**

**Capstone Project**

Out-of-county advocacy, this project will generate a blueprint for CASA of Monterey County, to better serve child/youth placed out-of-county. The project will consist of two surveys and two key informant interviews, the surveys will be completed by CASA volunteers. There will be two forms of surveys one will be an in-person survey and the second one will be online. The interviewees will be a staff member of the Monterey County Department of Social Service and an experienced CASA volunteer who has already taken on an out-of-county case. The purpose for the different forms of responses is to help guide the knowledge of the children/youth who are placed out-of-county and how their placements brings awareness of a child/youth not receiving the advocacy they need, in order to create stability in their lives.

**Project Implementation**

Currently the agency does not have an existing plan or process for advocating for out-of-county cases. According to CASA supervisor advocates, there have been cases that moved out of county where a CASA was required to stay on the case but there was no formalized path to support the advocate . The goal of the project is to support advocates when they take on an out-

of-county assignment. Typically, cases that are out-of-county are placed on a lower priority on the waitlist because of the lack of a plan or process for support. So, when it comes time for advocates to read cases, those out-of-county cases are not given to potential CASAs.

The project's components consist of creating survey questions to be distributed to newly trained CASAs (Appendix B), creating questions for active and on leave CASAs about out of county foster child/youth using survey monkey (Appendix C), creating questions and interviewing one active CASA that served an out of county child/youth (Appendix D), creating questions and interviewing a Management Analyst from the department of social services to get more of an insight of how out-of-county cases are handled on their end (Appendix E). The surveys were delivered in-person, paper form survey and online survey (Survey Monkey). Twenty-two new CASAs completed the in-person, paper form survey. The online survey was sent to approximately 200 active and on leave CASAs. The interviews were conducted via in-person and via telephone.

Before the surveys were implemented, they were approved by a Supervisor Advocate and Educational Director. The intern recognized the importance for the surveys to take no more than 5 minutes, to ask a variety of styles of questions, and for the online survey to be formatted and accessible whether participants were using computers, laptops, or phones. Participants involved consisted of CASA volunteers, new CASA trainees, and members from Department of Social Services. Their roles in this capstone project is to provide evidence that advocacy can be possible for children/youth who are placed out-of-county with recommendations for plans/policies that would be implemented by the executive director and the organization, CASA of Monterey County.

Resources that were required for the project are; internet access (online survey), compatible devices, CASA training room, paper materials, and CASA conference rooms. In order for the online survey to reach CASAs they would have to have internet access on their devices, whether it be computer desktop, laptop, or smartphones. Paper materials were needed to print out the paper form survey along with the CASA training room to deliver the survey to the new trainees. The CASA conference room was used for the CASA key informant interview. Please see detailed plan and timeline in the Scope of Work in Appendix A.

### **Project Purpose**

According to Pham (2017), about 22 percent of all foster youth in the state are in out-of-county placements. Pham (2017) notes, out-of-county foster youth have long struggled to receive adequate mental health services, with counties failing to appropriately transfer responsibility and funding for those services. This struggle is why it is important for CASA to provide an advocate for out-of-county youth. Situations like youth not receiving the appropriate resources while they are placed out-of-county is something that would be addressed when a CASA is assigned to that out-of-county case. CASA advocates provide more than just a face to face interaction, CASAs provide a child placed out-of-county the guidance and support that can allow for a smooth process while they are transitioning into their new placement. Mentioned by Pham, 13, 313 foster youth suffer from being placed out-of-county. The 32 out of county youth in Monterey, that have been moved away from the surroundings they have been raised, away from what is familiar is too high. For this reason, a plan and process for advocacy needs to be provided for the out-of-county cases on CASA Monterey County's waitlist.

The needs assessment capstone project is necessary because it looks into barriers and solutions for advocates to meet the important need of advocating for out-of-county placements.

Asking CASA volunteers questions like, what the barriers volunteers are facing when taking on an out-of-county case. Once the organization understands the barriers, than the agency can look to meeting the needs for accommodating volunteers. Thus, volunteers would be able to advocate for youth placed out-of-county. Gathering the data from the surveys and interviews provided the organization with enough information to demonstrate that advocacy for a child/youth placed out-of-county is possible.

### **Project Justification**

It was important to survey and interview CASA volunteers about out-of-county cases in order to figure out who would be the best source to advocate for those cases. Receiving the perspective from all participants provided a better understanding of how advocating for children/youth is valued by volunteers. Looking into how many cases are placed out-of-county, it has to come to mind of how many children are not given the opportunity to express their desires.

According to San Bernardino County, in-county placements are not always possible for several reasons; such as available beds at the time a placement is needed, need for specific treatment programs not available in the County, and need for placements closer to guardians/relatives who live outside of San Bernardino County (Human Services Administration Research, Outcomes, and Quality Support. 2017). Placement Criteria within the San Bernardino County are determined by meeting two requirements; the child, youth, or young adult does not require inpatient care in a licensed health facility and the child, youth, or young adult needs have been assessed as requiring the level of services provided in an STRTP (short term residential therapeutic program) in order to maintain the safety and well-being of the child, youth, or young adult. Another criteria that has to be met in San Bernardino County is at one of the four criteria; the child, youth, or young adult needs medically necessity criteria for Medi-Cal Specialty Mental

Health Services at the level provided by the STRTP, the child, youth, or young adult is assessed as seriously emotionally disturbed, the child, youth, or young adult assessed by a licensed mental health professional pursuant as requiring the level of services provided by the STRTP in order to meet his or her behavioral or therapeutic needs, the child, youth, or young adults meets the criteria under an emergency placement. Which speaks to the methodology and needs of assessment of how placements are acquired in another county.

The methodology for Monterey County according to Chelsea Chacon, MSW Management Analyst II MCDSS Family & Children's Services, Monterey County does not have a set methodology way of placing children out-of-county. Chacon mentions that out-of-county placements typically happen in three ways; one the child or youth will be placed with a relative, two the child/youth will be placed in an STRTP or group home, and third follows under other placement that is authorized by the courts but it not considered a relative home or STRTP. Chacon verifies that, Child Welfare Services (CWS) focuses on permanency within 12 months for children entering foster care (personal communication, November 20.2019).

The methodology for permanency in 12 months continues to be a challenge for Monterey County, the county recognizes that the factors that contribute to Permanency include; the safety concerns that initially brought the child into care, court related delays in the dependency process and the parent with who the child is reunited (Monterey County Child and Family Services Review. 2018). Chacon states that currently Monterey County only has two STRTP homes that can serve boys and girls foster youth with higher needs that cannot be met by other foster care resource placements and because there are only two there is limited availability, which means if availability is located out of out-of-county then that is where the child will be placed. Chacon agrees with the need of a CASA volunteer for a child/youth placed out-of-county, stating "those

child/youth placed out of county are the ones who need a good support network.” (personal communication. November 20.2019) From the conversation with Chacon it gives the understanding that every county works different when it comes to placements. Each case works different depending on the individual needs but overall, making sure the placements are safe is of the utmost importance.

### **Expected Outcomes**

The project provided data to the organization on CASA volunteers responses to whether or not out-of-county advocacy is achievable. A total of 209 online surveys to on-leave and active CASA volunteers and 22 in-person surveys have been implemented. It provided awareness to CASA’s and the organization on how many out-of-county waitlist children are not receiving advocacy and which accommodations volunteers are interested in, in order to provide advocacy. By creating online surveys, it allowed the volunteers to honestly provide their responses without the pressure of what they believed the organization might want them to answer. By creating the in-person survey it still allowed the volunteer advocates to respond honestly because the CASA supervisor allowed them to take the survey without the supervisor being present. The surveys gave the volunteers a voice on how they believe advocacy could be provided for out-of-county cases with the surveys. Upon the responses from the surveys two profiles have been created, who is more fitting to take on an out-county case; Employment Status Profile and the Gender Profile. The Employment Status Profile has been created due to the about of employed and retired volunteers who would be willing or unwilling to take on an out-of-county case. The Gender Profile Status has been created based off the number of female volunteers and male volunteers who would take on an out-of-county case. The hope is with the responses from the surveys the organization will implement ways to provide out-of-county cases CASAs and provide

accommodations to the CASA volunteers taking on an out-of-county case. The expected outcome from the presentation is the staff will present an out-of-county case to a CASA that matches the profile created and at least one incentive is adopted to be used.

### **Assessment Plan**

The findings from the surveys were presented to the CASA of Monterey County Staff. The data collected from both the Survey Monkey and in-person survey were presented. From the findings it is hopeful the organization will consider what funding the organization needs to consider for out-of-county advocacy. Based off information presented it is hopeful CASA of Monterey County will accept that, in order to make an out-of-county case appealing for volunteer advocates the accommodations of gas assistants, hotel discounts, finding other professionals on the case to ride along with, finding cases near a CASAs family or friends should be considered. The other part of the assessment plan is that a CASA Supervisor Advocate has applied the CASA profile; Employment Status Profile or Gender Profile to match who would be fitting for an out-of-county case. A recommendation for applying that profile for all Supervisor Advocates to use will be presented.

### **Project Results**

The activities conducted created questions and distributing surveys to gather volunteers' responses regarding out-of-county cases currently on CASA of Monterey County waitlist. These questions had to be asked in a way that would not confuse volunteers about what was being asked of them for out-of-county cases. It was important for the volunteers to understand that cases placed out-of-county are cases that do not have advocates. The surveys brought focus on



the importance of how children/youth appointed to CASA of Monterey County are not being served.

It was also important for the volunteers to understand the accommodations given to them is an example of what the organization should consider when giving a volunteer an out-of-county case not necessarily what they will be given. The overall implementation was giving the volunteers either the online survey or the in-person survey. The online survey was given to those volunteers who are on leave or active, in other words those volunteers have already had one or more cases that they provided advocacy for.

The first survey was given to 22 new trainees in-person, these volunteers just went through training and have not advocated for a case, it is important to understand how these volunteers felt about advocating for a case out-of-county possibly as their first case. Also expected were those who had not yet taken on a case; new trainee volunteers, would not want to take an out-of-county case as their first case. The expectation was that new CASAs would want more of an in-person interaction with their child/youth. The assumption was that new CASAs would not be familiar with the process and would have the desire to build rapport with their child/youth. When asked if eventually they would take on an out-of-county case, it was promising to know that eventually they would, 16 volunteers out of 22 (72.2%), were open to the idea of providing advocacy to those cases

The second survey was given to 209 active and on-leave CASAs. Fifty-two responses were received. Questions in the second survey focused on demographics, experience, and accommodations necessary, in order to serve out-of-county cases. When given the option to leave their contact information for further information regarding out-of-county cases only 4 volunteers provide their information. The expectation was that most CASAs would need some

form of financial assistance. Results showed that; 48% would like gas assistants, 29% would like riding with another professional on the case, 37% would like hotel discounts, 35% would like to find a case near CASA volunteer’s family or friends, and 48% would like all of the above accommodations. Based on the results, any one of the accommodations would be helpful when taking on an out-of-county case. When this information was presented to the staff, they believed gas assistants would be most likely achievable.

The data collection used to gather the responses for the surveys came from generating the data manually and using online data source. For the manually data collection gathered all the in-person survey and separated all the responses. Once a pattern was seen, it was possible to start stacking same responses with each other forming the overall responses for each question. For the online survey, Survey Monkey generated the responses individually and as a group and provided the overall percentage. Both surveys achieved an unexpected outcome of creating a profile for the type of volunteer that would be interested in an out-of-county case. When this profile was presented the staff believed the Employment Status Profile can be adopted.

**Table 1. New Trainee In-person Class Survey Results**

	<b>Total Surveyed: 22</b>	<b>Male: 4 (18.1%)</b>	<b>Female: 18 (81.8%)</b>
<b>Age Groups:</b>	<b>20’s-30’s: 12 (54.5%)</b>	<b>40’s-50’s: 3 (13.6%)</b>	<b>60’s-70’s: 7 (31.8%)</b>
<b>Employment Status:</b>	<b>Work: 10 (45.4%)</b>	<b>Retried/ Don’t work: 12 (54.5%)</b>	

<b>Scale of in-person interaction:</b>	<b>Not important: 1 (4%)</b>	<b>Very important: 8 (36.3%)</b>	<b>Extremely important: 13 (59%)</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> case out-of-county</b>	<b>Yes: 4 (18.1%)</b>	<b>No: 17 ((77.2%)</b>	<b>Maybe: 1 (4%)</b>
<b>Eventually take an out-of-county case</b>	<b>Yes: 9 (40.9%)</b>	<b>No: 4 (18.1%)</b>	<b>Maybe: 9 (40.9%)</b>

**Table 2.1. On-Line Survey. How long have you been a CASA**

<b>1 year</b>	<b>2-4 years</b>	<b>5-8 years</b>	<b>9 years &amp; more</b>
<b>18 (34.6%)</b>	<b>19 (36.5%)</b>	<b>7 (13.4%)</b>	<b>8 (15.3%)</b>

**Table 2.2. On-Line Survey. How many children/youth have you advocated for**

<b>1 child</b>	<b>2-6 children/youth</b>	<b>7 or more children/youth</b>
<b>29 (55.7%)</b>	<b>21 (40.3%)</b>	<b>2 (3.8%)</b>

**Table 2.3. On-Line Survey. Is it achievable to have one in-person visit 6-8 weeks when going out-of-county**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>46 (88.4%)</b>	<b>6 (11.5%)</b>

**Table 2.4. On-Line Survey. Is advocacy achievable without in-person interactions**

<b>Not achievable</b>	<b>Somewhat achievable</b>	<b>Achievable</b>	<b>Very achievable</b>
<b>8 (15.3%)</b>	<b>31 (59.6%)</b>	<b>11 (21.1%)</b>	<b>2 (3.8%)</b>

**Table 2.5. On-Line Survey. Which accommodation/s would be helpful to an advocate for out-of-county cases**

<b>Gas assistants</b>	<b>Riding with another professional on the team</b>	<b>Hotel discounts</b>	<b>Cases near volunteers friends or family</b>	<b>All of the above</b>
<b>25 (48%)</b>	<b>15 (28.8%)</b>	<b>19 (36.5%)</b>	<b>18 (34.6%)</b>	<b>25 (48%)</b>

### **Conclusion & Recommendations**

Based on the results the conclusion is that CASA of Monterey County; first, is able to better understand the need for CASA volunteers to take on out-of-county cases. Second, both CASAs who have not taken on a case and those who had provided out-of-county advocacy demonstrated that out-of-county advocacy is achievable. Third, a variety of incentives were identified that would help support CASA volunteers to provide out-of-county advocacy. CASA of Monterey County Supervisor Advocates agreed that the Employment Status Profile can be adopted and gas assistants is one of the incentives that the organization can consider for CASAs.

Recommendations is that CASA of Monterey County should look for funding to support out of county cases. They apply the Employment Status Profile that they have agreed with. They address assumptions/biases about whether out-of-county cases are accepted. Continue to survey advocates about what would support them in delivering services. As for accommodations are concerned the organization is aware of the financial need volunteers may inquire but that does not necessarily mean they are going to provide it. However, my results does provide a platform for the organization to work off of and provides realistic data when taking on a case that requires more time on the volunteer's end.

In making the case for why out-of-county advocates are needed it would be helpful to interview and share the results of an out-of-county youth. Being able to receive their perspective on the issue would touch base on why advocates are necessary for children/youth placed out-of-county. Since the youth has already gone through this experience it would be useful to know what could have or has been achieved when receiving advocacy.

### **Personal Reflection**

What I learned about the problem with cases placed out-of-county is that there are foster children/youth who are not receiving advocacy and are potentially placed away from their familiar surroundings. These foster children/youth also may be going through this process feeling alone and unsure. Unsure of what is going to be happening next simply because they are not familiar with how the court system works when it comes to reunification and placements. Some of these foster children/youth are not old enough to understand what decisions are being made for themselves. I also learned how CASA of Monterey County works as an organization when it comes to cases being placed out-of-county. The organization does their best to provide every court appointed case a CASA who can help guide the foster child/youth to understand the process of removal and try bringing normality to the chaotic process the foster child/youth is facing.

Strengths my project designed, it allowed the organizations to understand how volunteers felt about advocating whether it is how important in-person interactions are, acknowledging that advocating long-distance without in-person interactions is achievable, and what type of accommodations CASAs needed in order to provide advocacy to children/youth placed out-of-county. Limitations my project faced would be the expectations I had about volunteers being introduced to the problem and jumping to the idea of advocacy for those foster children/youth

who currently are not being severed and how CASAs would find it important to start figuring out how they could be a part of the resolution to the problem.

The broader social problem my project relates to would be providing all foster youth appointed to CASA an advocate who can provide advocacy. Therefore, the child/youth can continue their life without dealing with stressors that can affected their long-term mental health due from the chaotic pressure of what they are experiencing in their lives from the point of removal. What could be done by the Supervisor Advocates is focusing on which CASAs have the capacity to take on cases placed out-of-county. Move forward with providing CASAs gas assistances. When Supervisor Advocates are interviewing potential CASAs questioning how they feel about out-of-county cases in the beginning may provide the organization a better understanding of which type of CASA will provide strong advocacy.

Advice I would give to a future capstone project for someone in CASA of Monterey County, would to look into a grant that could found out-of-county advocacy. If the organization is unable to fund gas assistance like accepted than finding a grant to do so would help open the opportunity to provide those funds. Collaborating with the Development Director of CASA of Monterey would help build knowledge of grants and can possibly be a continuing flow of financial resources for out-of-county cases.

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**Appendix A**

**Scope of Work**

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadlines	Supporting Staff
Create and Gain approval new trainee survey	Completed: Paper form Survey. Winter Session 2018. 22 surveyed.	Completed	Dana Prelisnik (Mentor) & Edna Chin (Educator Director)
Create and Gain approval active and on leave CASA survey	1. Completed: Online Survey Monkey. Need to send out survey link. Sent out 209 survey link received 52 responses.	Sent out July. Resend September 23, 2019 Completed	Dana Prelisnik (Mentor) & Edna Chin (Educator Director)
Create and Gain approval: Questions for 1 active CASA	One in-person interview completed: Transferred interview into a word doc.	Completed: one interview	Dana Prelisnik (Mentor) & Edna Chin (Educator Director)
Create and Gain approval: Monterey County Social Services Department Staff member interview to understand how out-of-county cases are	In person, telephone, or email. Transfer interview into word doc	Completed: 1 interviews	Dana Prelisnik (Mentor) & Edna Chin (Educator Director)

<p>handled by the Department.</p>			
<p>Create and Gain approval: Email another CASA program regarding their out-of-county cases.</p>	<p>Emails, telephone. Note conversation. Transfer to word doc</p>	<p>Completed 1 email conversation CASA of Santa Cruz</p>	<p>Dana PrelsNIK (Mentor) &amp; Edna Chin (Educator Director)</p>

**Appendix B**

**CASA New Trainee Advocate Survey**

This survey is to determine which individuals would be interested in accepting an out-of-county case. As a program, we are always looking for ways to serve our children once they are placed out-of-county. About half of the children on our waitlist are currently out of the area, and therefore don't typically receive CASAs because of the distance. We want to find ways that we can serve these children, even when the CASA knows from the beginning of the assignment that the child will be out of the area.

**Out-of-County: traveling beyond two hours (one-way) to interact in-person with your child  
In-county consists of the tri-county area (Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz County)**

Questions:

1) Expectations for in county cases Advocates are to have in-person visits twice a month. For out-of-county children, CASA expects Advocate's to have one in-person visit every six to eight weeks. Would you be able to achieve this expectation? If not, please explain and how far would you be willing to drive to be able to keep up this frequency of visits?

2) When taking on your first case, how important is it to have frequent in-person interaction with your child

Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Extremely important
1	2	3	4	5

3) Would you be interested in taking on an out-of-county case as your first CASA case?  
Explain why or why not.

4) Would you eventually be interested in taking an out-of-county (second or third CASA case)? Explain why or why not.

Thank you for your time in taking this survey. Just a reminder, you can always be faced with your child moving out-of-county. This survey will help serve those children who at this time are already living out of county

**Appendix C**

**Survey Monkey Link:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9ZGDWY>

**Appendix D****In-take CASA volunteer interview****How long have you been a CASA?**

16 years

**How many kids have you advocated for?**

Many kids. Did not give a specific amount.

**What was your experience like taking on an out of county case, you knew was out of county from the beginning?**

Julie's case was sent out of county due to specific reasons. Julie was familiar with the case and work with the child while the child was seeking treatment at the hospital Julie worked for. Julie stated that she did not meet her child face to face while she was placed out of county. Instead, Julie build relationships with the team members working with the child. Due to the child's circumstances it was probably best to not add another face while the child was seeking treatment out of county.

**What was your reasoning behind taking on a case you knew was out of county?**

Based off Julie's conversation, I believe she felt a personal connection and a drive to advocate for this child. This child endured severe trauma. Based off of those findings, I sensed Julie was determined to take on this case.

**What would be some ways to accommodate CASA volunteers to take on out of county cases? Ie. Gas card, mileage reimbursement, hotel discounts, finding cases where kids are placed in counties CASA have family at?**

Julie understood the financial aspect of being a volunteer. She to believe if accommodations could be made it would help the volunteer. Possibly made it more appealing to advocates. The

idea of the iPad or form of technology being given to children and advocates is a great idea, however the legal aspect of that should be questioned. (i.e. How would foster homes monitor the tablet usage? Why would children need to keep the iPad? Research if Group Homes in a higher level allow such access.)

## Appendix E

### In-Take Interview, Chelsea Chacon, MSW Management Analyst II MCDSS Family &

#### Children's Services

**What are the methods does Monterey County Department of Social Services implement for out-of-county placements?**

Chacon stated, there is nothing around methodology regarding out-of-county placements. Each case has a particular need which can they determine the case to be placed out-of-county.

However, there are three forms of placements when a case is going out-of-county; 1 the child/youth is being placed with a relative, 2 the child/youth is being placed in an STRTP/Group home, or 3 is other (any that doesn't fall into the two other categorize). Chacon verified, the 12 month in-care goal is one form of methodology however that is not always met. Again, every case is different and can require more needs than others.

**What are considered the needs assessment for an out-of-county case?**

Chacon explained, in Monterey County the needs would be for more STRTP (short term residential therapeutic placement). Currently there are only two STRTP homes in Monterey County, Peacock Acres & Santa Lucia. When a higher level of care is necessary and there is no availability then placement out-of-county is than considered. When a higher level of care is needed and the STRTPs in Monterey County cannot meet those needs then placement out-of-county is considered. Mainly identifying the needs for the case and involving the proper network support is basically how the assessment process is

**Do you have any suggestions for CASA of Monterey County regarding out-of-county cases?**

Chacon suggested that CASAs create a rapport with the assigned Social Worker, being able to ride along with the Social Worker when scheduling a visit with the child/youth. It was also

suggested that foster children/youth may qualify for a free cell phone which is a form of communication for CASAs to have when working with a case out-of-county.