

Dependency-Neglect Attorney Ad Litem (AAL) Program

1995

AR Supreme Court contracted with Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families for an Assessment of how courts could improve child abuse and neglect cases

1997

Report recommended a statewide AAL program with qualifications and standards for attorneys representing children

The Legislature created the Division of Dependency-Neglect (DN) Representation within the Administrative Office of the Courts

1999

The Supreme Court adopted Administrative Order #15 establishing standards and qualifications for AALs

The Legislature provided initial funding for AAL contracts

2001

14 full-time and 70 part-time AALs represented 4,504 children in 2,953 cases

2005

Report found children are better represented since implementation of AAL & CASA Programs

2010

Adopted DN AAL Standards for Best Practice in Child Representation based on standards established by the National Quality Improvement Center on the Representation of Children in the Child Welfare System

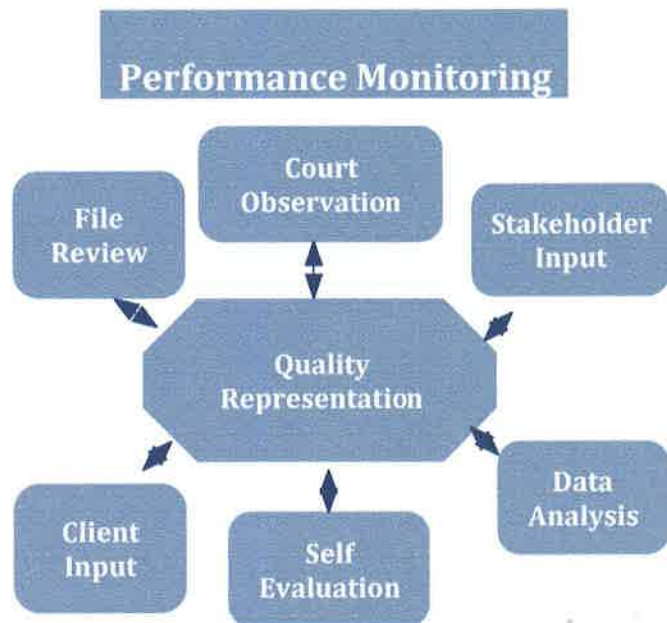
Implemented the most comprehensive statewide children's attorney evaluation process in the country

2013

AAL Director and Assistant Director invited to present at the American Bar Association on Children and the Law and National Association for Children's Counsel on their comprehensive work on AAL Performance Monitoring

FY 2014

32 full-time and 33 part-time AALs represented 8,981 children in 5,604 cases



Key AAL Responsibilities

- Independent representative for child's best interest
- Independent investigation
- Maintain ongoing age appropriate contact with the client or their caregiver, including keeping client informed about court
- Ensuring child's wishes are made known to the court if different from recommendation by AAL
- Actively participate in all hearings, case plan staffings and other case activities
- Advocate for timely hearings and speedy permanency for the child
- Identify and advocate for appropriate services and monitor progress of the child's case

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AAL Program Director

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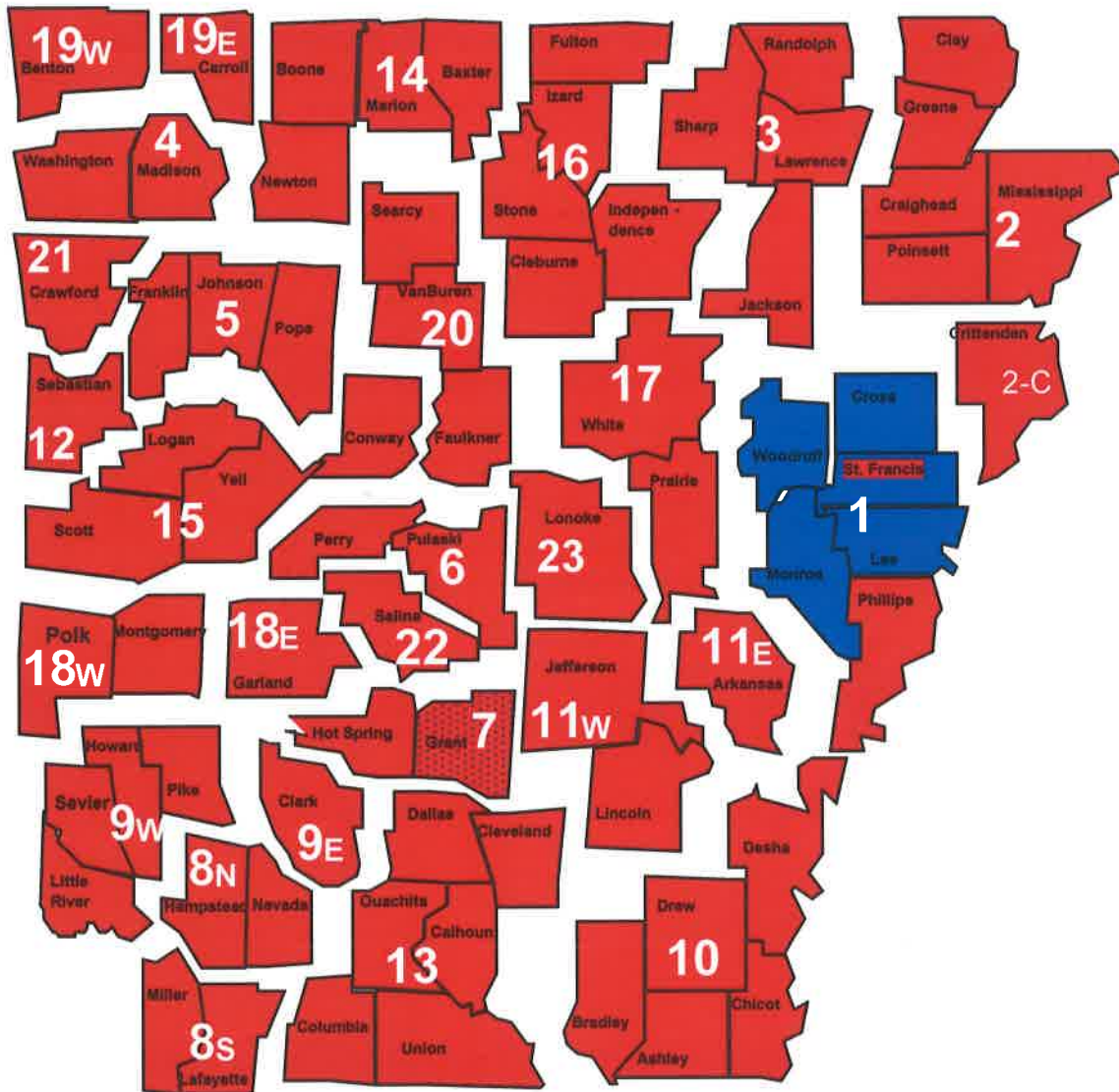
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2014 Arkansas CASA Programs



EXISTING PROGRAMS

PLANNING PROGRAMS



Arkansas CASA Growth

YEAR	NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN SERVED
2000	262	781
2001	359	1217
2002	504	1566
2003	568	1953
2004	608	2308
2005	628	2421
2006	696	2661
2007	863	3024
2008	1016	3082
2009	959	3484
2010	1185	3144
2011	1307	3443
2012	1113	3398
2013	1057	3482

The Arkansas State CASA Association consists of twenty-five local programs that train and support volunteers to speak and act as advocates for the best interests of abused and neglected children. They are trained to work within the child welfare and juvenile court systems and are appointed by judges to individual cases. With the help of a CASA volunteer, a child is half as likely to languish in the foster care system, and that much more likely to find a safe and permanent home.

Arkansas Parent Counsel Program Overview

Current Program Statistics

- There are currently 59 attorneys on contract to provide representation to indigent parents and custodians
- In FY14, the attorneys reported that they represented a total monthly state average of 2,259 parents or custodians in Dependency-Neglect cases.
- Attorneys are assigned cases via year-to-year contracts awarded by Judicial District and approved by the legislature.

Key Responsibilities

- Provide legal representation in the areas, counties, and judicial districts assigned by the Parent Counsel Director.
- Represent the clients in accordance with the Arkansas Model Rules of Professional Conduct and all applicable laws.
- Meet all requirements and the Qualifications for Parent Counsel in Administrative Order Number 15.
- Adhere to the Dependency-Neglect Parent Counsel Standards for Best Practice in Parent Representation.
- Maintain ongoing contact with his/her client.
- File appropriate motions with the Circuit Court.
- Attend and participate in all dependency-neglect proceedings involving his/her client.
- Prepare for hearings.
- Monitor the case plan and court orders to ensure that services are actually provided.

Attorney Evaluation

- ▶ Data Comparison to State Averages
- ▶ File Review
- ▶ Survey and/or Interviews of Stakeholders
- ▶ Client Interviews/ Surveys/Focus Groups
- ▶ Courtroom Observation
- ▶ Attorney Self-Evaluation

Brian Welch
Parent Counsel Program Director

Brief History

- AR Supreme Court authorized a 1995 assessment of how courts could improve child abuse and neglect cases. In 1997 that report recommended minimum qualifications and a statewide parent counsel program.
- Act 1267 of 2001 established authority for the appointment and payment of attorneys to represent indigent parents in dependency-neglect cases.
- The Arkansas Supreme Court amended Administrative Order 15 to include qualifications and standards for parent counsel in dependency neglect cases on September 21, 2001.
- State funding was made available in August 2001 and parent counsel appointments begin pursuant to the Arkansas Supreme Court Order in January 2002.
- A *per curiam* opinion dated June 27, 2007 by the Court of Appeals transferred dependency-neglect appeals from the appellate court to the Public Defender Commission effective July 1, 2007.
- In the fall of 2007, the AOC transitioned from attorney appointments to contracts so all parent counsel attorneys would provide representation with equity, uniformity and to ensure compliance with the standards set forth in Administrative Order No. 15.

Dependency-Neglect Stages Requiring Parent Counsel Representation

- Probable Cause
Adjudication
Disposition
Review
- No Reunification Services
Permanency Planning
Permanent Custody or Guardianship
Termination of Parental Rights

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