

# Success for Children & Cost Savings for New Jersey



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## CASA VOLUNTEERS ARE A GREAT INVESTMENT FOR NEW JERSEY

THE FOLLOWING STORIES DEMONSTRATE HOW CASA SAVED NEW JERSEY OVER \$3.8 MILLION IN JUST FIVE CASES. WHILE IDENTIFYING INFORMATION HAS BEEN CHANGED, THE HEART OF THE STORY AND CERTAINLY THE COST SAVINGS ARE TRUE.

### **Malcolm and Sarah's Story of Adoption (Burlington County)**

Malcolm's Residential Care (2 yrs. @ \$ 117,601/yr.)	235,202
Malcolm's Group Home Care (6 yrs. @ \$83,184/yr.)	499,104
Sarah's Foster Home Care (2 yrs. @ \$11,774/yr.)	23,548
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$757,854</b>

### **Kendra's Story of Adoption (Morris County)**

Kendra's Group Home Care (5 yrs. @ \$ 83,184/yr.)	<b>Total: \$415,920</b>
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### **Emily and Lily's Story of Reunification (Cumberland County)**

Emily's Group Home Placement (5 yrs. @ \$83,184/yr.)	415,920
Lily's Group Home Placement (6 yrs. @ \$83,184/yr.)	499,104
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$915,024</b>

### **Ned's Story of Adoption (Warren County)**

Ned's Treatment Home Care (2 yrs. @ \$48,787/yr.)	<b>Total: \$97,574</b>
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### **N Family Children's Story of Adoption (Essex County)**

Karl's Residential Care (1 yr. @ \$ 117,601/yr.)	117,601
Karl's Treatment Home Care (1 yr. @ \$ 48,787/yr.)	48,787
Karl's Group Home Care (4 yrs. @ \$83,184/yr.)	332,736
Carla's Group Home Care (6 yrs. @ \$83,184/yr.)	499,104
Kelly's Group Home Care (6 yrs. @ \$83,184/yr.)	499,104
Kevin's Residential Care (.5 yrs. @ \$117,601/yr.)	58,800
Kevin's Treatment Home Care (2 yrs. @ \$48,787/yr.)	97,574
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$1,653,706</b>

**FINAL TOTAL \$3,840,078**



# Success for Children and Cost Savings for New Jersey

## **Burlington County – Malcolm and Sarah’s Story of Adoption Total Cost Savings: \$757,854**

Malcolm and Sarah are 13-year old twins, removed from their mother at birth by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P). Their mother’s parental rights had been terminated when the twins were three years old, but the twins had yet to find love and acceptance in a permanent home. By the time their CASA volunteer was appointed, the children were 8 years old and had lived in 10 different foster homes and a shelter.

Malcolm was learning disabled and had severe emotional and behavioral issues resulting from the trauma that he had experienced. Both children had been sexually abused in the home of a foster family that was supposed to adopt them. Not surprisingly, both children had difficulty bonding with other people. After two more moves, the twins were finally placed in another home that seemed more stable. It was still two months before their CASA was appointed for them.

Upon being appointed, their CASA volunteer ensured that the twins received trauma-based therapy -- and that Malcolm received even more intensive therapy -- to deal with the sexual abuse they had suffered. She advocated tirelessly for counseling and other resources for the twins’ foster parents, to help them learn how to handle the issues arising from the sexual abuse the children had experienced and how to effectively address Malcolm’s behavioral problems. She also advocated for both twins in the school system, making sure that their significant needs were being met.

Most importantly, when it appeared that the twins might be moved again and separated, with Malcolm going to a residential treatment facility, their CASA volunteer advocated fiercely that the children not be separated and stay where they were – where they had finally begun to trust.

After two years of CASA advocacy to get the children the services they needed to overcome their disabling trauma, and to get the foster family the help they needed to be ready and able to adopt these children, CASA began advocating for DCP&P to move forward with the adoption process.

Unfortunately, once that process was started, a number of significant roadblocks were raised by the foster care agency. Once again their CASA volunteer fought to streamline the adoption process and to push forward so that the twins could have a permanent family. Fortunately, that advocacy paid off. Malcolm and Sarah were adopted just a few weeks after their 12<sup>th</sup> birthdays!

**Rationale for Cost Savings:** Had it not been for their CASA volunteer’s tireless advocacy, Malcolm and Sarah’s foster family would not have adopted them. Malcolm would not have received the specialized therapeutic and educational services he needed to overcome the trauma of his abuse; given the severity of his emotional and behavioral issues, he most likely would have aged out of the child welfare system after living in residential treatment facilities and group homes. We estimate that CASA saved the state \$734,306 in the cost of placement for Malcolm for 8 years (up to the age of 21 as provided by State and Federal law). While Sarah also suffered severe trauma, her behavioral issues were not as severe and, optimistically, she might have been adopted within two years of being placed separately from her brother. We estimate that CASA saved the state \$23,548 in the cost of foster care for Sarah for two years.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FY2012 State Budget, p. D-31 shows an annual cost per client of \$117,601 for the least expensive type of Residential Placement, and \$83,184 for Group Home placement. Malcolm would have required both types of placement, based on his history. If we assume two years in residential and six in a Group Home, that would come to \$734,306. The cost of one year of foster care for a child is \$11,774 based on the FY2013 State Budget, p.D-31. For two years, that would have come to \$23,548.



# Success for Children and Cost Savings for New Jersey

## **Morris County -- Kendra's Story of Adoption and Family Total Cost Savings: \$415,920**

Kendra was born in October of 1998 and was removed from her mother before she was one year old. Kendra's mother had grown up in foster care; she was a substance abuser, and each of her 5 children were removed by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) for severe neglect before they were toddlers – one was found wandering the streets at night alone at the age of two. Some were taken into custody at birth.

Kendra is 16 years old now and has lived in a total of 15 different foster homes, group homes, juvenile shelters, and residential facilities. She has attended schools in 9 different towns, leaving behind friends, belongings, and connections with each move. Kendra is in a special education therapeutic school to address her learning disabilities and educational gaps. She has medical problems that include depressive mood swings and seizures.

Kendra's case was transferred to Morris County in May, 2013 and she was immediately assigned a CASA volunteer, Leslie. Other than the CASA volunteer, Kendra had no stable, reliable adults in her life; her CASA became the person who Kendra trusted and reached out to when she was upset and needed someone to listen to her. Kendra became very comfortable with Leslie and expressed her concerns regarding her foster placement, her educational struggles, her emotional issues, and even her sexual identity.

When Kendra suffered a seizure in her foster home, she confided in her CASA that her foster mother was not giving her the medication she needed. CASA advocated to ensure that Kendra receive her appropriate medication regardless of her placement. Ultimately, DCP&P removed Kendra from this home. She was placed in a group home.

Leslie knew that Kendra needed a family, a place where she belonged -- so she teamed up with another CASA volunteer and they spent days combing Kendra's old DCP&P files until they found mention of an Aunt Lucy. DCP&P had not considered Aunt Lucy as a caregiver for Kendra or her siblings because of a prior arrest involving drugs. However, that was 15 years ago – CASA knew it was worth circling back to this relative whom no one had contacted for so long. As it turned out, Aunt Lucy had been off drugs, and a working, reliable adult for years. She was devastated to learn that her niece had been in care, without a family for so long but was concerned with taking in a teenager with so many issues. CASA worked closely with Aunt Lucy to address her fears and her concerns, and to ensure a strong bond between Lucy and Kendra.

Because of CASA's tireless efforts and strong advocacy, Aunt Lucy became Kendra's 16th placement – and her final home. Kendra has been living with Aunt Lucy since July, 2014 and will be adopted by Aunt Lucy this spring! CASA broke the cycle for this 16 year old girl – unlike her mother, she will not age out of foster care; instead she will be able to grow into adulthood with the love and support of her birth family and extended relatives.

**Rationale for Cost Savings:** Had it not been for Leslie's tireless advocacy, Kendra would not be living with her Aunt and looking forward to being adopted. Instead, because of her age and her educational, emotional, and medical issues, Kendra most likely would have aged out of the child welfare system at the age of 21 after having lived in various group homes or possibly even residential treatment facilities. We estimate that CASA saved the state \$415,920 in the cost of placement for Kendra for 5 years (up to the age of 21 as provided by State and Federal law).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> FY2012 State Budget, p. D-31 shows an annual cost per client of \$83,184 for Group Home placement. Five years in this type of placement would have cost \$415,920.



# Success for Children and Cost Savings for New Jersey

## **Cumberland County – Lily and Emily’s Story of Reunification** **Total Cost Savings: \$915,024**

Lily, Emily, and Sarah, aged, 13, 14, and 17, were removed from their mother’s care on June 6, 2013 by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) due to allegations of physical abuse and their mother’s abuse of prescription medication. Lily and Emily were placed in a foster home while Sarah moved to Atlantic City to live with her father. The girls’ mother was ordered to attend substance abuse treatment and was allowed supervised visitation with the girls for two hours a week.

On November 3, 2013, Christian was appointed by the Family Court and assigned to advocate for Lily and Emily as their CASA volunteer. After visiting the girls, Christian became concerned about their emotional well-being. He was troubled by their behavioral issues – they were getting into trouble in school and at home because of aggressive, even violent behaviors. Christian took the time to really get to know Lily and Emily and to understand the feelings and emotions driving their actions. He learned that the girls wanted nothing more than to return to their mother; but they suffered disappointment and trauma after each court hearing; their mother would promise that they’d be returning home after the hearing, only to fail the required drug tests. After each disappointment, their behavior escalated.

Christian understood the girls’ deep desires to be returned to their mother, but he also knew that, until their mother addressed her drug abuse, the girls needed to remain with their foster parent who was able to provide them with stability despite their behaviors. However, if the girls’ behavior did not change, the foster mother was going to have them removed. Christian advocated strongly for therapy to help Lily and Emily work through their emotions and aggressions. He advocated for the girls to receive educational services needed to keep them from falling behind a grade level. Because of his advocacy, the girls received both the therapy and educational services they needed.

Christian spent time with the girls’ mother too; he constantly reminded her of the need to get drug treatment so that she could get her girls back. He told her repeatedly how important she was to her girls and how much they needed her and wanted to be with her. He helped ensure that she had continued opportunities for treatment as well as psychological services to help her see the importance of her family and to improve her parenting. He helped mom find the motivation she needed to take care of her drug abuse, and finally make the treatment stick.

Because of Christian’s candid communication and solid advocacy, Lily and Emily returned home in December, 2014 and have been doing exceptionally well. With the hard-fought therapy, their behaviors subsided. One of the girls has completed her home instruction in accordance with a plan to return to regular school, while the other girl has drastically improved her grades and is in good standing.

**Rationale for Cost Savings:** If not for Christian’s advocacy for the girls and communications with their mother, Lily and Emily would likely not have been reunified with her. They would have continued to act out in aggressive ways and would have been removed from their foster home. Given their behavioral issues and their ages (15 and 16), they most likely would have ended up in Group Home placements. And, if their mother had not had Christian to give her the motivation she needed, the girls may have ended up aging out of the system at age 21. We estimate that CASA saved the state \$915,024 in the cost of placement for Lily for 6 years, and Emily for 5 years.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> FY2012 State Budget, p. D-31 shows an annual cost per client of \$83,184 for Group Home placement. A combined 11 years in this type of placement would have cost \$915,024.



# Success for Children and Cost Savings for New Jersey

## Warren County – Ned’s Story of Adoption and Family

**Total Cost Savings: \$97,574**

Ned was born on 2/6/09 with severe birth defects. He had to be fed through a NasoGastric tube and was on multiple medications. His birth parents were 15 and 16 years old, with developmental issues – his father could neither read nor write, and his mother’s IQ was that of a 4th grader. DCP&P took custody of Ned in March, 2010 after Ned was diagnosed with severe failure to thrive. Ned was hospitalized; he remained there while his parents received training on how to appropriately care for him. Unfortunately, the hospital could not release Ned to his parents; they could not take care of him, meet his basic needs, or make medical decisions for him. At 15 months old, Ned was placed in a special foster home trained in caring for children with medical needs.

On 10/8/2010, Jen was appointed as Ned’s CASA. She visited Ned often in his foster home and spent time with his biological parents to understand their capabilities. Ned was well-cared-for by his foster mother; but having just adopted two children (one with special medical needs) she simply could not keep Ned. Fortunately, she had close friends and neighbors, J and K, who visited often, helped care for Ned, and developed a special bond with Ned. Once they knew that his foster mother would not be able to keep him indefinitely, K and J decided to get trained to be Ned’s foster parents. Ned was moved to their care on 4/26/11. Jen helped smooth the transition.

Despite Ned’s parents’ inabilities, DCP&P continued to work with them toward reunification, providing services to try to enable them to care for Ned. But, by 8/16/11, Ned’s father realized he could not parent Ned and surrendered his parental rights. DCP&P’s plan continued to be to return Ned to his mother.

Jen disagreed. She advocated strongly for the termination so that Ned could be adopted by the parents who could care for him. She brought her work skills to bear and conducted a DILO (Day In the Life Of) study on Ned – a minute-by-minute analysis of what a day was like caring for Ned, listing everything that Ned’s caregivers had to do from the time he awoke at 5:30am each morning (vomiting from his nightly feeding tube and needing to be bathed and have his bedding changed), to the moment he fell asleep. Based on the DILO study, the judge recognized that there was no way Ned’s mother could meet his needs.

Thanks to Jen, the case goal began changing; however, after a change in judge, DCP&P sought one more try – an attempted overnight visit between mother and son. Jen’s concerns about this resulted in a court order that a nurse be there to step in if Ned were in danger. Jen and the nurse remained in communication throughout the night. Within two hours, the nurse had to take over caring for Ned in order to keep him out of danger.

Jen documented each occurrence of the overnight in her CASA report and, as a result, the case goal was changed to termination of Ned’s mother’s parental rights and adoption by J and K. Fortunately, because of the relationship Jen helped forge between Ned’s mother and J and K, they met together with DCP&P and avoided a costly trial. Ned’s mother surrendered her parental rights, with J and K’s assurance that she would be able to play a part in Ned’s life. In June, 2012, Ned was adopted by J and K; his mother still sees him.

**Rationale for Cost Savings:** But for Jen’s reports, Ned would have languished in foster care through more attempts to reunify with his mother; he might never have been adopted. He’d have remained in Treatment Homes until either reunification or termination of his mom’s parental rights. Assuming a best case scenario – reunification or adoption within 2 years – we estimate that CASA’s work saved the state \$97,574 (NOT considering the cost of Ned’s medical care, training his mother would have needed, or the emotional and financial costs had he reunified and then re-entered care).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> FY2012 State Budget, p. D-31 shows an annual cost per client of \$48,787 for a Treatment Home; 2 years here would have cost \$97,574.



# Success for Children and Cost Savings for New Jersey

## Essex County – N Children’s Story of a 5-Sibling Adoption

**Total Cost Savings: \$1,653,706**

The N Family included 5 children – twin girls, Carla and Kelly born in November, 1999, Karl, born in January 2003, Kevin, born in March 2004, and Amy, born in 2013. The oldest four were removed from their parents by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) because of parental substance abuse, failure to provide for the children, and educational neglect.

Karl was removed in 2010, at age 8, after he jumped out of a 3rd floor window to avoid a beating by his father; his mother had no idea he was even missing. A year later, his parents were still not making needed changes so it was determined that his parents’ rights should be terminated and that the other three children should be removed. The girls were 12 years old, and Kevin was 7. All three were placed in the foster home of MK.

Karl remained in the home where he had been, but as parental rights were being terminated, he began to act out violently; his behaviors were so severe as to require psychiatric hospitalization for stabilization, and then placement in a residential treatment facility for 24 months before he was able to return to his foster home. Unfortunately, within a few months of his return, he was removed again to a residential treatment facility after an allegation of sexual abuse of another foster child.

While Karl struggled in care, so did his three other siblings – they began exhibiting emotional and behavioral problems of their own.

In July, 2012, Burujah was appointed as the CASA volunteer for the four oldest children. After visiting all four of them at least once a month, Burujah became concerned with the care that the three children in MK’s home were receiving; they had a variety of special needs that were not being met. Kevin was classified for Special Education and had developmental and medical needs. During her visits, Burujah discovered, among other things, that: MK was refusing to give Kevin his needed psychotropic medications, participate in therapy, or attend school meetings; MK was neglecting the twins’ educational needs and refusing to attend school meetings; MK refused to cooperate with CASA, service providers, and the children’s attorney; when Kevin’s behaviors at school became violent and disruptive, MK refused to answer school calls, attend meetings, or pick him up when necessary; and the children were often locked out of MK’s Newark home, even in cold weather and at night.

Burujah, the children’s attorney, and other service providers even called the abuse hotline because of MK’s failure to care for the three kids. This lack of care exacerbated the children’s emotional issues and behavioral problems; they were so traumatized by their negative foster home environment that they were enrolled in costly Partial-Care Day Treatment, and received in-home therapeutic services.

While these 4 children were in placement, their mother had a fifth child, Amy, and immediately surrendered custody of her. After two failed foster placements, Amy was placed in the home of Miss M. Miss M was a loving and caring woman; she forged a relationship with Amy’s mother and discovered that Amy had siblings. Miss M reached out to CASA and, together, they ensured that Amy was included in sibling visits. Miss M transported Amy to these visits and quickly fell in love with all five of the N children.

Burujah’s concerns about the children’s current foster home grew. Despite multiple calls to the abuse hotline by CASA and others, DCP&P refused to move the children out of that home; their plan was kinship guardianship, despite the three children’s deteriorating behaviors.



## Success for Children and Cost Savings for New Jersey

During their placement, over a dozen professionals had been assigned to the N case: 4 judges, 5 law guardians, 4 DCP&P attorneys, and 3 DCP&P case workers. Burujah was the only consistent presence in the children's lives. She advocated aggressively for all of them placed into one home together, reunited as a family, and she managed to persuade both the mother and children's lawyers to join her in these requests. In early 2014, the three children were finally moved into Miss M's home with Amy. In October, 2014, Karl joined them and all were finally together.

Thanks to Burujah's tenacity, four of the five children were adopted by Miss M this November, 2014, and Karl's adoption hearing is scheduled for this spring. Within a month of finally being placed with Miss M, all three of the older siblings were graduated from their Partial-Care Day Treatment programs. The twins were accepted into a prestigious honors high school, the boys received the counseling they need and all the children were under one roof for the holidays.

**Rationale for Cost Savings:** Had it not been for Burujah's tenacity, these five children would not all be living together with Miss M. Karl (age 15) would likely have spent 6 years cycling between treatment homes, residential treatment facilities, and group homes before he aged out of the system, at a cost of \$499,124. Given the twins' negative behaviors and ages (15), they would likely have been moved to group homes until they too aged out of the child welfare system, at an estimated cost of \$499,104 per girl. Given Kevin's volatile behaviors, he may have needed placement in a residential facility and step-down to a treatment home; thereafter, given his age (10), we hope he would have been adopted. If this optimistic prediction came to pass, his placements would have cost the state about \$156,374. All told, had CASA not been on the case, the state would have spent an estimated \$1,653,706<sup>5</sup> in cost of further placements and most of these children would have aged out without ever knowing the security and love of a real family.

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<sup>5</sup> FY2012 State Budget, p. D-31 shows annual cost per client of \$117,601 for the least expensive type of Residential Placement, \$83,184 for Group Home placement, and \$48,787 for Treatment Home placement. Assuming a year in residential, a year in a treatment home, and then four years in a group home, Karl's placement would cost \$499,124. Six years each of group home and independent living placements for the twins would cost \$998,208. Kevin's future being more uncertain, we have estimated 6 months of residential treatment, and then step-down to a treatment home, where hopefully (given his age) he would find permanency within 2 years, costing a total of \$156,374.