



Carlos and Miguel's CASA Story

Carlos (11) and Miguel (12) came to New Jersey with their mother and, for the next three years, lived in seven different motels, a shelter, and many other places. They had no consistent education and made no lasting friendships; they went from place to place with everything they owned in a suitcase. The boys often missed school because their Mom couldn't get them there or may be moved the night before. When they attended school, they sometimes arrived smelling of urine and feces or wearing clothes that didn't fit. After one school reported that one of the boys was found looking for food in the garbage can, DYFS removed the boys from their mother, placed them in a temporary shelter, and awaited a Judge's decision as to where they would go next. In the meantime, their mother disappeared. At the first hearing, the Judge appointed Jim as their CASA volunteer. By this time, the boys had lived in the shelter for three months. Jim visited the boys at the shelter a week later, and each week thereafter. After being assigned, Jim discovered a reference by the mother, in the boys' case file, to the boys' father. He then found the father's address and sent a letter to him in Florida. Dad had been paying child support via Western Union but had no idea of the conditions under which his sons were living. And, he had no idea that the boys had been removed from their mother and placed in the state's care. When the boys' father received Jim's letter, he called the CASA office right away. He was distraught – he wanted his children and was willing to fly up to New Jersey and do whatever it took to gain custody. CASA referred him to the boys' DYFS worker who was thrilled and immediately began the process necessary for the father to regain custody of his boys. Significantly, DYFS had not known about the father's existence or whereabouts. Jim followed up with the father, helping to expedite the process of getting his children back. Jim also worked to remove hurdles that arose in getting the needed custody paperwork and relaying messages between the father and his sons. Because of Jim's work, father and sons were reunified within three months and are now living together as a family out of state.

Rationale for Cost Savings: With no CASA, the boys would likely have stayed in shelter/group home care given their ages. Based on a projection of two years in this type of care for the two boys, Jim's work saved the state \$329,944 (\$82,486/yr./child) in hard costs. Projecting a best case scenario (an adoptive home), the family would have received an adoption subsidy of \$8,500 a year for four and five years per boy, equaling \$76,000. Thus, the total savings of two years in shelter care for each boy, then potential adoption subsidy, comes to \$406,444 in hard costs.¹

**Shelter Care to Return to Biological Parent
Total Cost Savings: \$406,444**

¹ FY2010 Proposed State Budget, pp. D-35 to D-36 show annual cost per client for Group Home Placements (\$82,486) and Adoption Subsidies (\$8,498).