



Maryland's Human Services Agency

PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST



PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW

MARYLAND CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN 1ST QUARTERLY REPORT

NARRATIVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Maryland Department of Human Resources received approval of its Program Improvement Plan (PIP) on March 25, 2005. The PIP was designed to address the areas of need identified in the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) report. These areas included a lack of; practice consistencies, information system requirements and capabilities, qualitative measures and tools, and access to services.

The PIP outlines priorities, initiatives and strategies for change to move Maryland closer to the standards set in the CFSR. The five priority areas identified in the PIP are Comprehensive Assessment, Legal and Court Practices, Quality Assurance, Service Access, and MD CHESSIE (Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System). To implement the initiatives and strategies outlined in the PIP five committees were developed, one to address each priority area. The PIP serves as a road map for moving toward improving outcomes for Maryland's children and families.

During this first quarter Maryland has worked aggressively to redesign its Quality Assurance system. The system was developed in collaboration with community partners from the Citizens Review Board and there was broad representation on the Workgroup from various parts of the organization. The revised system integrates three stages/levels of assessing and improving child welfare practice both on the frontline and system-wide. The system incorporates the federal Child and Family Services Reviews outcomes, Council on Accreditation, LJ Consent Decree, and State Laws and Regulations. The three stages/levels build upon each other to create comprehensive evaluation of each local department of Social Services.

The Department has also made efforts to improve its Independent Living Services through a series of trainings and other events. Working with Casey Family Services and the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Youth Development staff has received training to strengthen skills in assessment and service delivery to improve the outcomes for youth transitioning to adulthood. Training was provided on the Casey Ansell Life Skills Assessment instrument and process as well as on maximizing the use of Chafee funds and developing creative ways to engage youth in receiving services.

In partnership with The Maryland Judiciary's Foster Care Court Improvement Project (FCCIP), progress has been in implementing recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the juvenile court in child-in-need-of-assistance (CINA) and related cases. This is evidenced in the enactment of a new Termination of Parental Rights Law as well as, significant progress in advancing the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution/mediation through out Maryland.

Maryland is excited that the early release module of its Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System, MD CHESSIE, is operating in Baltimore City and 10 county local departments of social services, which is 11 of 24 jurisdictions. The system

MARYLAND CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN 1ST QUARTERLY REPORT

will improve Maryland's ability to track and monitor performance outcomes based on data.

Maryland's efforts during the second quarter will be focused on establishing baseline data through the completion of quality assurance reviews in three jurisdictions, development of a comprehensive assessment model, conducting a service array assessment, beginning the implementation of Family-to-Family in four pilot sites, and continued roll-out of MD CHESSIE.

IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

To implement the Program Improvement Plan (PIP), Maryland has organized five committees, one for each of the identified priority areas. Action steps and benchmarks have been assigned to each committee. The committees are responsible for developing strategies and tasks to accomplish to assigned action steps according to the established time frames.

Since Maryland is a state supervised, locally administered system, the implementation of the PIP provides another opportunity to partner with the local departments of social services; therefore, each committee is co-chaired by central and local staff. The committee membership consists of cross-functional, local and central staff as well as stakeholders.

An oversight steering committee responsible for providing support and ensuring appropriate linkages and communication throughout the implementation process is being established. The Executive Director of the Social Services Administration (SSA) will chair the oversight committee. Each of the committee co-chairs, key stakeholders, and other key staff will be members of the committee.

The members of these committees have a responsibility to keep their colleagues informed of PIP activities. Other communication strategies include regular PIP updates at the Local Directors of Social Services' monthly meetings, the Service Affiliates (Assistant Directors of Services) monthly meetings and the weekly Central Executive Staff meeting. During the next quarter, Maryland will begin working on a monthly Social Service newsletter for staff, in which PIP activities will be a regular topic.

COMMITTEE PROGRESS

Comprehensive Assessment

The comprehensive assessment team is charged with developing strategies to improve Maryland's case assessment and service delivery practices. This will involve developing and implementing a comprehensive, family-center, neighborhood-based assessment and case planning process as well as strategies for and working with the local departments of social services to implement the Family-to-Family model. The team will also examine

MARYLAND CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN 1ST QUARTERLY REPORT

policy and practice on other components of service delivery as well as recommend and implement changes.

During the first quarter steps were taken to develop a comprehensive, family-centered, neighborhood-based assessment and case planning process. In November 2004, a meeting with Casey Family Services was held to begin discussions about expanding and revitalizing the Family to Family model in Maryland. Four jurisdictions (Baltimore City, Calvert, Cecil and Wicomico counties) agreed to be the first local departments to implement Phase II of Family to Family. The Department submitted a grant proposal to Casey Family Programs, which would fund some of this initiative.

In May 2005, staff attended a Family Team Conferencing conference provided by the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group. Staff was able to gain a better understanding of the importance of family team meetings and when in the case planning process team meetings are most helpful as well as develop skills in facilitating team meetings.

The Department has also made efforts to improve its Independent Living Services through a series of trainings and other events. Casey Family Services provided training to local departments of social services' independent living coordinators. The training was an introduction to the Casey Ansell Life Skills Assessment instrument and process. The use of this assessment tool will provide staff with the information to assess the youth's strengths and work with youth to develop needed life skills. The National Child Welfare Resource Center on Youth Development provided train-the-trainers training for independent living coordinators and supervisors on how to use Chafee funds and creative ways to engage youth in receiving services. Knowledge gained from this training will assist Maryland in maximizing Chafee funds to gain the best results for youth in care.

In July 2005, the 11th Annual Teen Conference was held which provided life skills training for Maryland's foster and kinship care children. National and local speakers participated in the conference covering topics from financial management to relationship building. This conference is part of the State's effort to prepare youth who are transitioning to adulthood. Approximately 100 youth attended this event.

The Department submitted a Youth Handbook written by the Maryland Youth Advisory Board to attorneys who represent children and youth throughout the State for their review. The Youth Handbook is scheduled to be published and disseminated to all local departments by late August 2005.

Court Practices

The Legal and Court Practice Committee is charged with collaborating with the Foster Care Court Improvement Project (FCCIP) to improve court practices that have a significant impact of service delivery such as Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) exceptions, concurrent planning, Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), Child In Need of Assistance (CINA) and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR). The FCCIP has worked to improve the court processes indicated in the final

MARYLAND CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN 1ST QUARTERLY REPORT

report by incorporating areas into existing subcommittees and subsequently establishing a Best Practices subcommittee. The committees include Judges, Masters, a representative from the Citizen's Review Board, staff from the Social Services Administration as well as children's and parent's attorneys and FCCIP staff.

Between November 2004 and January 2005 regional meetings were held for participation by the 24 jurisdictions addressing such topics as the CFSR findings and best practices. Best Practices included the notification of caregivers, APPLA, Concurrent Permanency Planning and the early identification of fathers. The meetings included DHR local and central staff, agency counsel and counsel for parents and children, judges, masters, permanency planning liaisons, Citizen Review Board members, and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) persons. The Biennial Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Conference, which focused on evaluating, sustaining and cultivating CINA/TPR and ADR programs was held in May 2005.

The FCCIP subcommittee is working with the Clerk of the Court of Special Appeals on the following initiatives to decrease delays in the appellate process:

- Issuing a memo from the Chief Judge to the clerks in all jurisdictions regarding the priority of transcript preparation for cases involving CINA & TPR;
- Including the Maryland Legal Services Program on the distribution list of the monthly generated spreadsheet of statewide appeals in order to better assist children's counsel in notification that an appeal has been filed;
- Exploring the use of the civil information sheet in CINA cases, as opposed to TPR cases;
- Court of Special Appeals streamlining internal procedures in order to help shorten the typical timeline for child access appellate cases;
- Court of Special Appeals being less lenient in granting extensions for the record to be prepared in CINA and TPR matters;
- Representation Subcommittee to generate a specialized notice of appeal for CINA/TPR cases with references to all parties needing notice and the expedited timeline for child access cases;
- Reviewing data to assess the level of participation by parties and the CINA/TPR expedited timelines in general (intern item); and
- The various agencies reviewing and refining their internal processes as they relate to CINA/TPR appellate process.

Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance (QA) committee was charged with designing a QA system that evaluates the quality of services and measures the outcomes for the children and families receiving services in Maryland. The larger committee was subdivided into three work groups, which were chaired by members of the larger committee. The participants included community partners, the Citizens Review Board, local and central staff.

MARYLAND CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN 1ST QUARTERLY REPORT

As a result of the of these committees an integrated three stage/level system which focuses on assessing and improving child welfare practice both on the frontline and system-wide was designed. The system incorporates the federal Child and Family Services Reviews outcomes, Council on Accreditation, LJ Consent Decree, and State Laws and Regulations. The three stages/levels build upon each other to create a comprehensive evaluation of each local department of social services. Local departments will develop a Program Improvement Plan based on their individual evaluations. The local PIP will be monitored by DHR. Evaluations from each jurisdiction will be used to create a statewide report that identifies trends, strengths, and areas needing improvement as well as recommendations for improvement. DHR will create a report to document the recommendations, the actions taken based on those recommendations, and any available results of those actions.

Three Levels of Comprehensive QA

- Local Self-Assessment
- Supervisory & Peer Review (Record review and limited interviews of caseworkers)
- Local on-site Review

During the second quarter the revised system will be piloted in 3 jurisdictions. The data gathered during these pilots will be used to set the PIP baselines. The QA Workgroup will also review and refine the evaluation and feedback systems to ensure that decisions are based on results, and that the system for monitoring the program improvement plans is effective.

Services Access

The Services Access committee was charged with developing and implementing strategies to increase the availability of and access to critical services that are vital to successful outcomes for the children in Maryland's child welfare system. This committee will assess the services available in the State of Maryland and collaborate with state and community partners to increase the availability of and access to critical services.

During this first quarter local department of social services staff has been trained to utilize the Maryland Adoption Exchange and AdoptUSKids photo-listing websites to increase placement opportunities for children with a plan for adoption. The Department developed respite care services guidelines, which have been submitted for approval. A draft resource home (foster/adopt) recruitment and retention plan was also developed during this quarter to increase the number of dually licensed resource homes and retain current homes.

During the next quarter this committee will focus on the implementation of the respite care services guidelines and the resource home recruitment plan. The committee will also collaborate with the Local Management Boards, under the guidance of the Governor's Office for Children, regarding the implementation of the Wraparound Services Initiative in Montgomery County and Baltimore City.

MARYLAND CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN 1ST QUARTERLY REPORT

MD CHESSIE

The PIP MD CHESSIE committee works in conjunction with the MD CHESSIE Project an initiative of DHR that began in 1997. MDCHESSIE is designed to provide caseworkers with a comprehensive information system that will enhance their ability to meet current and projected operational requirements. In addition, MDCHESSIE will improve the delivery of child welfare services to children and families.

To effectively manage such a project a number of committees and regularly scheduled meetings have been established to include:

- Project Advisory Committee (3rd Thursday of the Month) – Comprised of senior staff representatives from DHR/SSA, Local Departments of Social Services Directors, Assistant Directors, and representatives from other State agencies, including Department Budget Management, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Technology, and Department of Juvenile Services. This committee provides leadership in promoting support of the MD CHESSIE project. It also provides advisory oversight to the MD CHESSIE Project Manager as to the impact of State or agency policy and/or issues on the project, and makes recommendations for resolution.
- Local DSS Coordinators Meeting (2nd Wednesday of the Month) – Comprised of a representative from each of the 24 local departments, who will help facilitate knowledge transfer of the MD CHESSIE application and data conversion task.
- Local Affiliates Meeting (2nd Tuesday of the Month) – Allows the opportunity for the MD CHESSIE project management staff to share information with the Assistant Directors from the LDSS.
- Operations Meeting (every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) – The Operations Team handles the day-to-day project operations issues pertaining to the design, development and deployment of the system. This team is tasked to make certain decisions and to provide policy, programmatic and management guidance to the MD CHESSIE Project Manager.
- DHR CHESSIE Status Meeting (Weekly on Tuesday) – Consist of MD CHESSIE Project Management Staff. (Project Director, Implementation Manager, PM Support Manager, Technical Application Manager, Representatives of SSA)
- Strategic Project Management Meeting (Weekly on Tuesday) – Is responsible for all aspects of the MD CHESSIE project including, scheduling, work-plan, deliverable reviews and approvals, staff assignments, and communication to stakeholders. The Chief Information Officer of DHR is the ultimate decision maker and arbitrator on the Project Management Team and reports directly to the Secretary on critical

MARYLAND CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN 1ST QUARTERLY REPORT

issues impacting the project.

During this quarter Deloitte Consulting and the Department of Human Resources executed a Contract Amendment, to begin the Early Release of the Referral Module (Intake/Screening). The following 11 Local Departments have volunteered to participate in this initiative: Allegany, Baltimore City, Calvert, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Kent, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, Saint Mary's, and Wicomico.

During the next quarter additional early release counties are being coordinated to 'Go Live' with the Early Release Module. The rollout will begin in September 2005, with completion scheduled by the end of November 2005.

REQUESTED CHANGES

After reviewing the matrix DHR noticed a small number of needed adjustments. Maryland requests that the following be taken into consideration and approved.

- An offset of the benchmarks by two months, with the understanding that the PIP cycle will conclude March 25, 2007.
- On page 4 of the Matrix, Action Step 3.1: Benchmark should reference Item 2- Action Step 3 (page 2)—reason typo
- On page 7 of the Matrix, Action Step 5.1, Benchmark 5.1.4 deleted—reason 5.1.4 cannot occur before 5.2.2
- On page 12 of the Matrix, Action Step 6.9 should be 6.8 therefore bench marks should reflect change as well as Action Step 6.10 changing to 6.9 and those benchmarks corresponding—reason typo.
- On page 25 of the Matrix, Action Step 12.1 Benchmark 12.1.4 correct date typo from March 31, 2005 to March 31, 2006
- On page 25 of the Matrix, Action step 12.2 correct all benchmark dates to the following because 12.2 cannot occur until after 12.1 is completed
 - 12.2.1—March 31, 2006
 - 12.2.3—July 31, 2006
 - 12.2.3---July 31, 2006