

CWAC minutes January 22, 2010

Members present: Nancy Fowler, Deborah Eves, Therese Wolf, Gary Cullen, Janine Tondrowski, Betty McCrary, Denise Dickerson, Charlotte McNulty, Vernon Simmons, Kathy Froyd, Pamela Cooper, BJ Zarris, Lori Battin, Allison Lowery, Catherine Hancock, Phyllis Groomes-Gordon, Sharon Harris, Matt Wade, Kim McGaughey, Cheryl Lewis, Susan Taylor, Lisa Linthicum, Dorothy Hollahan, Lyndell Lewis, Martha Kurgans, Pamela Cooper, Jane Crawly, Nanette Bowler, Wilhelmina Davis, Allison Lowry, Virginia Powell, Tamara Temoney, Denise Gallop, Nelson Durden, Allison McDowell, Christine Craig, Misty Carlyle, Peyton McCoy, Hayley Brooks, Anne Kisor, Rita Katzman, Brenda Macklin, Paul McWhinney

Paul McWhinney called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda. The group provided individual introductions. Mr. McWhinney welcomed Christine Craig – from the Region III office, Misty Carlyle - from the Children’s Bureau, and Allison McDowell – with JBS International, to the group. The purpose of their visit is to help VDSS staff continue the process of drafting the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and share information with the CWAC. On January 21 they met with the co-chairs of the Primary Strategies of the PIP and provided feedback.

Mr. McWhinney presented the group with the Division of Family Services Children’s Services Transformation Leadership Script. This document highlights some of the Transformation’s successes, including Transformation Outcomes Measure Success, foster care entry and discharge information for departments that are utilizing Family Partnership meetings, and CSA spending data. (The document is attached to these minutes.) Mr. McWhinney highlighted the absence of prevention activities captured by data. He recognized that local departments are doing prevention activities on a regular basis. There has been discussion with the Family Services Operations Group about updating OASIS to capture prevention data. It is a possibility these updates could occur in one of the releases scheduled for the fall of 2010.

Kim McGaughey presented information on the Health Plan Advisory Committee. This group was formed in response to the Fostering Connections Act which requires a plan for ongoing oversight and coordination of health care services for children in foster care. It also requires a coordinated strategy for identifying and responding to health care needs of children in care. VDSS is required to collaborate with the state Medicaid agency, pediatricians, and other experts and recipients of child welfare services. The committee’s membership is comprised of VDSS staff, resource families, representatives from other state agencies including DMAS, DJJ, DBHDS, and OCS, and members of the health system.

The Act includes several federal requirements including establishing a schedule for health screenings, ensuring a continuity of health care services, oversight of prescription medications, and sharing medical information. To address these requirements, the health plan advisory committee has established several action strategies: 1) Identifying children’s health needs in timely and comprehensive manner, 2) Ensuring children have access to providers for ongoing, comprehensive, coordinated care, 3) Improving health outcomes using data, 4) Identifying priority areas for action using data, and 5) Managing systems change. The committee has accomplished several actions to date. They are currently working on developing best practice guidelines on mental health assessments for children. The group is developing a plan for

implementing management reports to track child health outcomes and services utilization by matching VDSS, CSA and DMAS data. By using data, the group has developed a profile of children in foster care and compared geographic locations of children and Medicaid dental providers with geomapping by zip code.

Peyton McCoy presented information on the Fostering Connections to Success Educational Workgroup. The workgroup, through work streams, is examining several issues specifically. A child's case plan must contain assurances that the placement of the child in foster care takes into account the *appropriateness* of the current educational setting and the *proximity* to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement. There is a work stream that will be working on developing policy, a training curriculum, and a screening tool around the appropriateness of the educational setting. There is another work stream that is exploring ways to recruit and retain families in local school divisions including policies that encourage a local department of social service and a local educational area to work together on the recruitment.

A child's case plan must include an assurance that the state [or local child welfare agency] has coordinated with appropriate local education agencies to ensure that the child remains enrolled in the school in which the child was enrolled prior to placement unless moving is in the child's best interest. A work stream is identifying ways to collect data on attendance to document stability, developing a definition of school stability, and identifying strategies for coordination between schools and local departments. If remaining in same school is not in the best interest of child, the child's case plan must include assurances to provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school, with all of the education records of the child provided to the school. The group is working towards standardizing a timeframe, reviewing current DOE and DSS policies around enrollment, identifying contact persons in schools to handle questions that arise around enrollment, determining changes needed in record transfers, and identifying youth in foster care in the DOE data system.

Additional work is focused on transportation issues which includes clarifying how Title IV-E funds can be used. Another group is focused on attendance issues. That group is working to identify mechanisms for sharing DOE enrollment and attendance data with DSS. Yet another is focused on older youth and is examining the National Youth in Transition Database to see what information can be used for this workgroup as well. The workgroup is working on developing a MOU between DOE and DSS to establish collaborative policy and standardize practices including revising foster care case plans and some standardized school forms.

Three questions came from the group after the presentation. One person questioned what changes were being considered to the foster care plans. The answer is that the current foster care plan does not include information about transitional living plans or other educational goals. The group is exploring the possibility of combining several of these needs into one document. The second question was about tracking children's educational progress after adoption. The answer is that you have to continue to track those children who receive an adoption subsidy. The third question was who is "at the table" from education that can help with the progress made through the Children's Services System's Transformation. The answer is that there are Dept. of Educational representatives on the committee who are committed to working with DSS.

Vernon Simmons shared with the group about a new training that is being offered. Andy Block, with “Just Children,” is offering ten sessions of “Educational Law and Advocacy.” There will be two sessions per region. Information about the training can be found in Broadcast 5959. Foster families are welcome to attend the training. They need to work through Cate Newbanks and Vernon Simmons to get registered for the session.

VDSS is taking a serious look at the issue of kinship care in Virginia. There were two presentations related to that examination.

Matt Wade presented information around a diversion study that the Outcomes Based Reporting and Analysis (OBRA) unit conducted. Mr. Wade began the discussion with an admission – he was wrong. This study was initiated by a discussion around kinship placements and diversion from foster care. The OBRA unit examined all referrals from August 2009 that were open between one and forty five days. If the referral did not have a disposition, it was removed from the sample. The cases were stratified across all regions so that one region or locality was not over represented. 326 referrals were reviewed in the study. The study questions include: “Did the child come into DSS custody?” “Was this child placed in another home on an informal basis?” “What was the caregiver’s relationship to the child?” “Was the placement expressly arranged as an alternative to placing the child into foster care?” “Did (or does) the child receive any ongoing monitoring from DSS?” “Did (or does) the child receive any ongoing services from DSS?” There was an 88% response rate with 49 departments responding.

There is a range in the percent of children diverted from foster care. If only blood kin was included, 8.3% of children were diverted. If fictive kin, or non-blood related adults with close ties to the child, were included the percent jumped up to 11.6%. 76% of the placements with kin were to avoid foster care. Mr. Wade cautioned the group about the study results. The information represented by the study is to be examined at the statewide level only. A person cannot look at the results of this study and make an assumption about the success or failure of a local department’s diversion from foster care because of the limited sample size. OBRA will write up the study results in the next few months and share it with the field. This may be a first of its kind study conducted by a department of social services.

The second kinship presentation was from Lyndell Lewis presenting the findings and recommendations of the subsidized custody work group. This workgroup, like the Health Advisory Group and the Educational Group, was formed in response to Fostering Connections legislation. The Fostering Connections Act allows states to claim federal funds to provide assistance for children to leave foster care and live permanently with relatives who become their legal guardians. Specifically, the Act creates a new plan option for states to use federal Title IV-E funds for kinship guardianship assistance payments (GAP) for relatives who take legal guardianship of children in foster care. The relatives must be approved foster homes and the child must have resided with that relative as a foster child for at least six months prior to exiting care. The workgroup’s recommendations are to support Subsidized Custody as a permanency option for children in foster care who cannot be reunified with the family from which they were removed and when adoption has been ruled out. The work group supports this option for all children regardless of their funding source [i.e., federal Title IV-E or Comprehensive Service Act (CSA) state and local funds].

The workgroup examined several issues that have arisen around Subsidized Custody. There was a concern that localities could determine that children in the Subsidized Custody option are not a mandated foster care group and funds for maintenance and services will not be available to these families. The Attorney General's opinion is that as long as these children are otherwise eligible for CSA funding, subsidized payments to grandparents or other relatives who obtain custody of the child and agree to care for him or her on a permanent basis may be made from the state pool of funds. Another issue is that Virginia does not have a standardized definition for relative. The workgroup recommends the following definition: "A relative includes anyone related to the child by blood, marriage, adoption or anyone with a significant existing relationship with the child." The Act does not require that states pass legislation to take advantage of the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program, but it is recognized that some states may need to enact new legislation or amend existing laws. It was determined by the policy team in consultation with the Attorney General that legislation is not required, since Subsidized Custody is not a foster care goal or a new program. Rather, it is a way to assist (subsidize) the placement with a relative foster parent who qualifies to take custody of the foster child.

The work group concluded that the Subsidized Custody option has the potential to achieve the following outcomes statewide:

- Increase the number of children who exit foster care and enter permanent placement arrangements;
- Decrease the number of children who age out of foster care without connections to a permanent family;
- Protect children from subsequent abuse or neglect.

Misty Carlyle and Christine Craig presented information to the group on the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Final Report and on Program Improvement Plan (PIP) development. Virginia had several areas rated as a strength including: repeat maltreatment, foster care reentry, proximity of children's placement to parents and placement with siblings. Virginia is not in conformity with several outcomes including Permanency 1, Safety 1, and Wellbeing 1. Of specific concern is Item 9 which refers to the timeliness of adoptions and Item 17 which refers to assessing and addressing service needs of children, parents and foster parents. Virginia is required to write a PIP and focus on Safety item 1, 3, 4; Permanency items 6,7,8,9 and 10, and Wellbeing items 17, 18, 19 and 20. Penalties can be assessed to Virginia if action steps in the PIP are not accomplished or if we do not meet a measured level of improvement. If nothing is done around the PIP, Virginia's potential penalty is over two million dollars.

The presentation included an examination of other states' CFSR results. For the most part, Virginia is trending the same way as most states. There have been 19 PIPs accepted by the Children's Bureau to date, out of approximately 40 states reviewed. The average time to approve a PIP is over 200 hundred days. Of the PIPs that have been approved, there are several trends. States with approved PIPs have developed and implemented practice models. They have implemented processes like family team meetings to facilitate engagement, assessment and service provision and have enhanced supervision and QA/CQI processes. States have improved or developed safety assessments and developed and/or implemented differential or alternative responses. They have developed processes for closer review of children with goals of OPPLA,

or children who have been in care for long periods of time and strengthened recruitment/retention activities and initiatives.

Ms. Carlyle pointed out several challenges for states with PIP development. State child welfare agencies need to revisit round one CFSR PIP strategies that have not been effective. Activities in PIPs are still driven by State child welfare agency vs. shared responsibility with external entities; e.g., mental health, court, Medicaid, etc. T/TA efforts can still be piecemeal and neither comprehensive nor integrated into other initiatives. The impact of the current economic crisis on State child welfare budgets plays a major role in activities that are implemented. Program improvement, in general, needs to be driven by agency leadership and must be integrated with a larger vision and plan. A question was raised about Virginia's structure of state supervised, local administration and if that structure caused more difficulty with PIP implementation. Ms. Carlyle reported that states that are state supervised, state administered may have more leverage when implementing the PIP, but states that are locally administered have greater capacity to work with partner agencies at that local level.

Deborah Eves shared with the group that Ms. Carlyle, Ms. Craig, and Ms. McDowell had been meeting with the co-chairs of the PIP strategies. The draft PIP that was shared with the feds is currently 83 pages long. It is too long and not focused enough on activities that can be measured and will show improvement in a two year time period. The good news is within the 83 pages are the activities that will allow the state to create a more focused PIP that will be accepted by the Children's Bureau. There was a suggestion to restructure the draft PIP around several themes. There needs to be internal discussion, but the strategies may be focused around implementing a competency based training system, implementing family partnership meetings, managing by data, and utilizing assessment across the life of the case. Once the decision has been made, the framework of the PIP will be sent out to the CWAC group for feedback and input. In particular, local department input is requested. There is a short time frame for turn around, however, since the draft PIP is due on February 26, 2010. The next CWAC meeting will be used as a second PIP working session.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm. The next meeting will be held on February 19, 2010 from 10:00 – 1:00 at the Tuckahoe Library.

Any power point presentations referenced in these minutes can be requested from Deborah Eves. Please email at Deborah.eves@dss.virginia.gov.

Division of Family Services Children's Services Transformation Leadership Script

VDSS Transformation Success:

- Garnered legislative support to increase the reimbursement rates for foster parents to move Virginia closer to the national average - foster care reimbursement rates have increased by 34% over the last three years
- Established a Resource Family Specialist Team within VDSS which provides intense, targeted training and technical assistance to local agencies in an effort to improve recruitment, development, and support efforts for foster, adoptive, and resource families
- Acquired and began local implementation of SafeMeasures, a web-based tool that improves local DSS performance management capacity (http://www.nccd-crc.org/crc/c_sfm_about.html)
- Increased focus on collecting outcome data across the Division and with partner agencies
- Improved the ability for local agencies to utilize data through monthly reports (<http://spark.dss.virginia.gov/divisions/dfs/transformation/reports.cgi>)
- Developed Family Partnership Meetings (an adaptation of Team Decision Making) as a recommended model to engage youth, families, community stakeholders, staff, and providers in a deliberate and meaningful way when making placement decisions;
- Adopted a competency based training model based on national best practice that allows for local agency engagement and responsiveness to evolving training needs;
- Received significant additional funding for training of local staff and provided various training opportunities by national experts on child welfare best practices to both state and local staff
- Executed several trainings for state and local staff specific to the building blocks of the Transformation

Transformation Outcome Measure Success *since December 2007

- The total number of youth in foster care in Virginia has decreased by 18% - from 7,557 cases in 2007 and 6,132 in 2010.
- Group care placements have decreased by 44% - from 1,922 cases in 2007 to 1,076 cases in 2010.
- CORE localities have 16.5% of youth in group care placements while the national average is 18%.
- The number of foster care youth placed in family based placements has increased from 71.44% in 2007 to 79.57% in 2010.
- The number of children reunified with their families has increased by 45% - from 447 in 2007 to 811 in 2009.
- There has been a 6% increase in the number of youth who are exiting foster care to permanent placements – in SFY2009, 70% of all discharges from foster care were to permanency, compared to 63% in 2007.
- After years of double digit increases, CSA spending has decreased 4% from SFY 2008.
- Foster care caseloads have not increased since the Transformation began (8.85 in 2007 vs. 8.63 in 2009). For LDSS who are using a formalized family engagement process, most localities have seen a decrease in foster care entries and an increase in discharges.

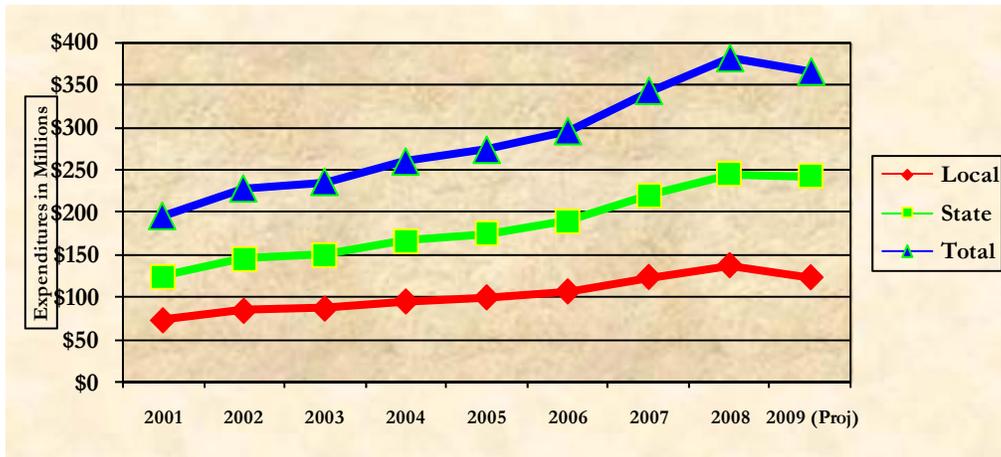
Entry and Discharge Data

* For LDSS using a formalized family engagement process

Local Agency	Entries in SFY2005	Entries in SFY2006	Entries in SFY2007	Entries in SFY2008	Entries in SFY2009
Alexandria	74	55	59	49	40
Arlington	62	80	43	35	42
Fairfax County	141	173	194	104	126
Hampton	61	59	57	26	19
Norfolk	125	117	150	144	98
Prince William	69	87	86	83	53
Richmond City	251	230	248	214	192

Local Agency	Discharges in SFY2005	Discharges in SFY2006	Discharges in SFY2007	Discharges in SFY2008	Discharges in SFY2009
Alexandria	53	40	26	51	53
Arlington	55	43	36	36	38
Fairfax County	120	147	112	134	146
Hampton	68	69	49	50	52
Norfolk	141	118	99	132	107
Prince William	87	91	66	73	76
Richmond City	215	210	151	204	253

CSA Expenditures 2001 - 2009:



CSA Expenditures: Community Based vs. Group Care

