CWAC minutes July 16, 2010

Members present: Heather Jones, Kaylin Howell, Mary Nedell, Deborah Eves, Janine Tondrowski, Denise Dickerson, Vernon Simmons, BJ Zarris, Matt Wade, Dorothy Hollahan, Mary Dunne Stewart, Jo Ann Wilson-Harfst, Allen Saunders, Mattie Satterfield, Jeff Felton, Doris Dodson, Greg Peters, Lisa Linthicum, Sharon Harris, Lelia Hopper, Allison Lowery, Nannette Bowler, Virginia Powell, Elizabeth Hutchens, Celest Williams, Lisa Mathey, Phyl Parrish, Kathy Sauther, Phyllis Grooms Gordon, Wenda Singer, Thomas Pristow, Paul McWhinney

Paul McWhinney welcomed the group and provided a brief review of the agenda. The group provided individual introductions. There was a request from the group to find out more information about the upcoming Title IV-E review. The IV-E review is a case review to be conducted first week in August, looking at 80 cases that were randomly selected. If four cases are not in compliance, Virginia will not pass the review. We may not pass the review this round. There is a financial penalty associated with this review.

Deborah Eves informed the group that the division sent the Annual Progress and Services (APSR) to the Children's Bureau by the deadline of June 30, 2010. There is a link to the 2010 APSR on the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) page on the VDSS site. (http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cfs_plan.cgi) In addition, the latest version of the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) has been posted. (http://www.dss.virginia.gov/geninfo/reports/children/cfsr.cgi) The division is close to submitting a final plan to the Children's Bureau. There are continued talks about the plan between staff and our federal partners to clarify action steps and evidence of completion. Virginia has received a new version of the State Data Profile. This Profile will help set our baseline numbers for measurement of the PIP. The federal data team recognized the State for all of their hard work in cleaning up the data. Missing discharge reasons and "dropped cases" are no longer an issue, and there are no longer significant disparities in adoption counts for the 2008B09A and FY2009 periods. There is one item of concern: Adoption Count Disparity. There is more than a 3% difference in the number of adoptive cases and the number of cases discharged to adoption in the foster care file. Virginia is at 4.3% or a difference of 29 cases. The data team is currently working to clear up this difference, if possible. Because of this, the state data profile will not be posted to the VDSS site until the clean up work is completed. If a person is interested in seeing the data profile, please email deborah.eves@dss.virginia.gov for a copy. In general, the data profile will show that Virginia has improved in most composite scores, but we are still not meeting the national standards in all areas. Virginia continues to meet the Safety standards and has met at least the 75 percentile for the composites dealing with placement stability and the component dealing with re-entries into foster care in less than 12 months of discharge from foster care. While more work is needed to meet all the national standards, it is exciting to report there is positive progress.

Ms. Eves also spoke to the group about the AFCARS Assessment Review (AAR) that took place the week of June 21, 2010. States are required by Federal law and regulation to collect data on children in foster care and those who have been adopted under the auspices of the State child welfare agency. The Federal information system that collects and processes data is known as the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). The Children's Bureau created the AAR process to assure the accuracy and reliability of the foster care and adoption

data. During these reviews, the Federal review team assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of States' data collection, extraction, and reporting processes, and provides intensive technical assistance to State staff responsible for those processes.

The on-site review is conducted over five business days. Day one is an introduction and the federal team follows a case as it is being entered into the system; day two of the on-site review was a case review. A preliminary analysis is conducted by the Federal team onsite and the results are shared with the State team during days three and four. Final analysis of these forms is completed by our federal partners during the post-site visit review phase. Days three and four are devoted to examining foster care and adoption issues that have been identified in the case review and through looking at the extraction codes. Day five is the exit conference. Virginia reviewed approximately 100 cases during the case review. 110 were randomly selected from the 10A AFCARS submission: 80 foster care cases and 30 adoption cases. About 10 cases were dropped from the sample due to size and other issues. Several cases had data errors – for example the cases were actually closed in 2004 but the discharge was improperly recorded in OASIS making it appear open.

There were several significant findings that were discussed at the exit conference. Each area was given a rating: 1 = no capacity, 2 = technical issues, 3 = process issues, 4 = no issues. There were no 1's given to Virginia. For general requirements the state received mostly 4's. For data elements, there were almost equal numbers of 2's and 3's and about half as many 4's. In general, it was determined that OASIS has the basis of a good case management system. The federal team cautioned the state to make sure that OASIS is truly the official case record and suggested we make an attempt to reduce duplicate data entry where possible. Looking at the reporting population, the team determined that we are mostly reporting correctly for foster care and adoptive cases. However, Virginia incorrectly includes children in corrections and children whose only living arrangement or first placement is a hospital in the reporting population and adoptive children are potentially not reported if the adoption is in process at the time of the AFCARS report. These issues will be addressed in several ways. The first is to make sure everyone knows you must discharge children from foster care when they are committed to corrections. The second task is for IT staff to ensure that while a placement, like a hospital, is recorded on the placement screen, that placement is mapped in such a way that it does not get reported incorrectly to AFCARS. To address the adoption issue, IT staff will begin to use a different date (transaction date vs. actual date) to capture cases that may have been entered outside the reporting period.

The review found that Virginia has an issue with duplicate clients that affect the AFCARS reports. Because CPS requires workers to capture what was reported to them about possible abuse or neglect before searching for clients in other referrals, there is a greater potential that there are duplicate clients. Historically, workers have not merged these clients because there was an issue with merge not working properly. In addition, merging duplicates can results in duplicate placements, "dropped" cases, and additional removal that aren't actual removals. To address this issue, IT and the division will create a plan to void the duplicate placements and removals. The voiding will take place at the state office but will have local worker and supervisor approval and a clear process will be documented. As for Data Quality, there are several areas that Virginia must pay attention to or fix technical issues. The review emphasized

that ongoing training and supervisory oversight are critical, as well as timely data entry. IT will focus on mapping in several areas.

The review also highlighted issues related to recording placement and disabilities. Workers need to include all placements on the placement screen. This includes placements like respite stays, acute hospitalizations (less than 14 days), over night summer camp, etc. The placement screen should be an accurate record of where a child is located at all times. In addition, code must be able to only report foster homes or other types of "permanent" placements so that we are only reporting true placements. There are several issues with the way Virginia documents disabilities. The federal team suggested a total overhaul of the disability screen, potentially merging it with the medical screen. The case review indicated that there are children who have been diagnosed with a disability but that information has not been entered into OASIS in either the proper place or in a way that AFCARS can recognize it. In the future, the system should be able to indicate who diagnosed the disability, when it was diagnosed, and if there is an end date for the diagnosis. There is a need to review all the disabilities to make sure they are mapped appropriately and that we have all the AFCARS approved disabilities in our pick list.

Virginia will receive a copy of the final report within 45 business days of the review. We will be able to provide comment on the report and the feds will write a PIP to be completed within 2 years. IT is already working on some of the technical issues. Those changes will be released with all of the upcoming OASIS releases – not in one special release. When the final report is received, it will be posted to the web.

Matt Wade, with the Outcome Based Reporting and Analysis unit (OBRA) led the group through an analysis of alternative foster care goals. Alternative foster care goals are the goals of permanent foster care (PFC), independent living (IL), and Another planned permanent living arrangement (APPLA). The division has created a process improvement team (PIT) to look at how we can improve outcomes for children exiting Foster Care with goals of PFC, IL and APPLA. In addition, the team will explore and seek to understand the experience of kids in foster care with goals of PFC, IL and APPLA in order to make recommendations to improve permanent connections. Using calendar year 2009, OBRA pulled data on all children in care (n=8611). 3069 (35.6%) children were assigned alternative goals: APPLA – 253 (8.2%), PFC – 763 (24.9%), IL – 2053 (66.9%). The goals were compared over the following indicators: legal basis for entry, most recent placement type, current age, age at entry, discharges by type, number of goal changes, child's race, number of placements, re entry status, and length of stay since latest removal.

Children with alternative goals have a higher likelihood of entering care for reasons other than abuse and neglect. CHINS and Relief Request account for most of the difference – but together those legal bases account for less than one-third of kids with an alternative goal. Over 50% of children enter for the reason of abuse or neglect. Children with alternative goals are nearly four times <u>more</u> likely to be placed in a setting that provides the lower odds of exiting to permanency. Those settings are supervised independent living, institutions, and group homes. Age and race are key variables with children with alternative goals. Children with alternative goals comprise 95% of foster youth age 18 and older; about half of foster youth between the ages of 15 and 18; and just 5% of foster youth under age 15. 96% of children who entered care at age 15 or older

have an alternative goal, compared with 55% of children who entered at ages 10 to 15, and just 11% of children who entered younger than age 10. Children with alternative goals are also more likely to be African-American, although not disproportionate to the African-American share of the older foster care population.

Experiences in foster care of children with alternative goals are much more troubled than those of other youth. Their average length of stay in care is 2.5 times longer than a child with a permanent goal. These children experience much more disruption in placements and more goal changes while in care: approximately 62% of children with permanent goals have only one or two placement changes while approximately 23% of children with alternative goals have seven plus placement changes. Once discharged, children with alternative goals are 50% more likely to re-enter care. Children discharged from care with a Permanency goal go to a permanent living arrangement almost 98% of the time – compared with just 10% of those discharged from care with an alternative goal.

This presentation drew many comments from the group. One comment was that the analysis did not look at disability as a factor for alternative goal selection. There were questions raised about the use of APPLA and if it was being used appropriately in all cases. There was a suggestion to eliminate Independent Living as a goal. That may become one of the recommendations of the PIT but the team is not at that stage of the process yet. Greg Peters pointed out that, for the most part, providers have not been provided incentives to do permanency work with older youth. The group concurred with this point and recognized the need for public and private agencies to work from the same vision.

In addition to the PIT review, Mr. Wade provided several updates. The next release of OASIS is scheduled to come out on September 10, 2010 and will include the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) and CPS Track Change. There will be training on NYTD in August. The Critical Outcomes Reports have been posted to SPARK (http://spark.dss.virginia.gov/divisions/dfs/reporting/critical_outcomes.cgi) Please review the report and check the information in SafeMeasures. If there are any concerns or questions, contact Matt Wade at matthew.wade@dss.virginia.gov. If anyone needs access to SafeMeasures, please contact Tania White at tania.white@dss.virginia.gov.

BJ Zarris provided an update on Family Search and Engagement. (see handouts at end of minutes) The division of family services has several trainings and other activities planned to provide ongoing support of family search and engagement. In June, there were one day trainings provided in each region that focused on search and engagement. The division will receive the Casey curriculum for this training. In addition, family engagement regional teams will be receiving training and will attend a two day retreat that included this topic. The family engagement regional teams are comprised of regional consultants, CSA TA, a representative from CRAFFT and the regional Project Life Independent Living coordinators. The division is in the process of working with existing adoption contracts and contractors to rework the contract and recruiting process. One point of emphasis in the contract is family search and engagement. Those adoption contractors and corresponding localities that need training will be provided training together.

Ms. Zarris posed a question to the group: What does the division need to be doing and how can it support family search and engagement? Mattie Satterfield, Norfolk DHS, presented the challenge of working with families that have long histories of conflict and/or criminal histories. She also stated that there are issues with parents that have mental health and/or substance abuse issues that interfere with relative placements. The issue of criminal history is currently being examined by the Poverty Law Center and the Commission on Youth. The division was asked to provide data on how many homes are denied as placements due to barrier crimes and was unable to provide that data at this time. Ms. Zarris informed the group that there will be a survey coming to local departments asking about this issue. Joann Wilson-Harfst, Mathews County, requested information about how other smaller departments are handling the hiring or contracting of facilitators for Family Partnership meetings. Ms. Zarris promised to provide anecdotal information around Family Partnership meetings. Lelia Hopper reminded the group that the Court Improvement Program (CIP) provided training and funds for facilitation of Family Partnership meetings to five local departments. CIP is considering offering another round of funding and would encourage localities to partner and share a facilitator.

Dorothy Hollahan reported the progress of the development of the Quality Service Review (QSR). Mr. McWhinney gave Ms. Hollahan kudos for her leadership and said she is awesome. Ms. Hollahan reminded the group that the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) unit has been in existence for two years and has been conducting child welfare quality reviews with local departments. There are four quality analysts that conduct the review, one person who is solely dedicated to development and implementation of the QSR and Ms. Hollahan who is the program manager. The QSR will assess the quality of child welfare practice to improve outcomes for children and families in Virginia. Casey Family Programs has provided funding for the development of the QSR and the division is working with two contractors – Human Systems Outcomes (HSO) and Child Welfare Policy & Practice Group (CWPPG).

The practice model is the foundation of the QSR. The focus of the review is how do we operationalize the practice model and how do we measure outcomes not efforts of that operationalization. This Quality assessment will link and operationalize the practice initiatives that have been worked on for several years now and others that are just beginning. Soon, a protocol will be developed that will measure two domains: Child and Family Status Indicators and System Performance Indicators. Both domains are about safety, permanency, and well being. Implementation of a QSR includes several key elements. One is a qualitative case review process utilizing the protocol. Another is trained reviewers that will work in pairs to interview all those involved in a case including family members, the child, the caseworker, service providers, etc. After the case review and interviews, there is a concluding interview with the social worker and supervisor to share and update information and findings. Finally, there will be an outcome meeting with LDSS and stakeholders to report strengths and opportunities for improvement.

The QSR protocol is used to rate the case according to current outcomes – not on efforts. While workers may be giving 110% to a child and family, systemic factors may be hindering permanency for that family. The QSR will bring that information to the forefront and highlight the need for change. When conducted regularly, a QSR will drive continuous improvement and can better engage stakeholders, both internal and external in the improvement process. Once the

QSR has been incorporated in to regular practice, the results can be used to inform CFSR results and be used for PIP measurement. In addition, the QSR's can be utilized as a professional development tool for reviewers, supervisors and social workers.

In the next few months, a lot of work will be conducted to prepare for implementation of the QSR. On September 28th -30th there will be a Protocol Design Meeting to create Virginia's individualized protocol. There will be a pilot of the QSR in Chesterfield County November 15 – 19, 2010. After that review, lessons learned and feedback will be incorporated into the protocol and it will be revised. The first training class on the protocol will be held in January 2011 with the first full review scheduled for February 2011. Local departments will be asked to volunteer for the first 10 reviews and will be allowed to select localities to participate with if there are not enough cases to conduct a review in that locality only. The unit is still working on a method to select localities. One crucial step for the process is to recruit and train reviewers. We are looking for Reviewers with: Knowledge of Virginia's Children's Services System Practice Model, Ability to engage respondents, Ability to employ active listening, Ability to employ basic interviewing skills, Ability to anticipate changing directions in the course of interviews, Ability to use confidentiality appropriately and observe boundaries, and the Ability to accurately summarize a case. Being a QSR reviewer is a professional growth opportunity for LDSS staff and in all states that utilize this process see a direct impact on the internal capacity for improved quality of practice within a local department.

If anyone is interested in volunteering to be a reviewer or would like more information about the QSR, please go to www.vafamilyconnections.com. You can find information on QSR under the "How to Transform" button. You can also contact Dorothy Hollahan at dorothy.hollahan@dss.virginia.gov or at (804) 726-7534.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm. The August meeting scheduled for Friday, August 20th from 10:00 – 1:00 pm and will be held at the Dumbarton Library in Henrico County.

From Case Family Services/ The Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice, 2005

Benefits Connection	
For children/youth: • can maintain their connection to their birth family • allows for access to medical and social histories • stronger send of identity because they have information about their origins • have an opportunity to have a reality – based perception of birth parent instead of a fantasy • receive permission from the birth family to move on and make new attachments • reduces loyalty conflict • can better understand the decision made by the birth parent • minimizes loss and abandonment issues • cuts down on the secrecy of adoption and emotional cut-offs in relationships	For foster/adoptive parents: • provides information regarding the child's background that will help them to answer questions as the child grows up • provides a reality base from which to work versus speculations regarding the birth parent and birth family • reduces fear of birth parent • can reduce symptomatic behavioral problems of the child • provides the opportunity to parent a child with greater emotional health • can feel more entitled as a parent to the child • may experience closer attachment because the child has the permission of the birth parent to be parented by another family
For birth parents: • have an opportunity to know the parent who is caring for their child • ability to follow the progress of the child and receive ongoing information about their development and well being • a reality based versus fantasy of what happened to their child • will feel empowered and dignified because they had a role in the decision making process • provides an opportunity to continually demonstrate their love for the child • feel a sense of relief and closure which allows them to move through the grief process • reduces the punitive effects of litigation and TPR • decreases the effects of an artificial cut off and secrecy	For professionals: • the system is no longer the parent • saves time and money • have an opportunity to provide an alternative to the traditional services that may not have been effective • creates more options for case resolution • builds cooperation among professionals • results in healthier children and family connections • do not have to play "God" • lessens adversarial stance • affords an empowered relationship among all the parties • reach a solution that has the best chance of working because the plan is arrived at by the parties, rather than imposed on parties

Internet Search Resources

The following resources can be useful when searching for individuals. The free websites provide basic information, such as a name, address, and phone number. Most of these websites have an option to obtain more detailed information through a fee-based search.

Case Family Services is not vouching for the accuracy of or promoting any of these websites.

Website	Contents	Details (free sites generally provide links to fee-based sites also)
Google		
Whitepages.com	White pages, reverse lookup, address, map	
Yellowpages.com	Yellow pages, reverse lookup, address, map	
Anyhoo.com	White pages, yellow pages, reverse lookup, address, map	
411.com	White pages, yellow pages, reverse lookup, address, email lookup, map	
Myspace.com	Locations and personal information about known individuals	Social networking site, useful for AWOL youth, sibling reconnection, and those serving in the military
Zabasearch.com		
Blackbookonline.info	Federal and state by state databases, social security number validation, phone and reverse look up	
www.dmdc.osd.mil	Defense manpower datacenter	Recommended for locating military personnel
www.governmentrecords.com	Nationwide voter record	
Obitlinkspage.com	State by state directory of newspaper obituaries and resources	Next of kin and past residences often listed
www.ussearch.com		Fee-based site
www.accurint.com		Fee-based site
www.intelius.com		Fee-based site