CWAC notes 2-17-12

Participants: Jack Ledden, Phyl Parrish, Dottie Wells, Lelia Hopper, Lori Battin, Deborah Eves, Dorothy Hollahan, Cathy Pemberton, Emily Gambill, Christie Marra, Anna Dimitri, Rita Katzman, Denise, Gallop, Kathy Sauter, Melissa O'Neill, Michael Metz, Dawn Caldwell, Elizabeth Hutchens, Carol Wilson, Heather Jones, Kathy McElroy, Mattie Satterfield, Courtenay Brooks, Lisa Pearson, Christine Craig, Allison McDowell, Misty Carlyle, Alex Kamberis, Em Parente, Suzanne Fountain, Martha Kurgans, Jennifer Behrens, Allison Lowry, Phyllis Savides, Therese Wolf, Tamara Temoney

Jack Ledden called the meeting to order and the group provided introductions. Several new VDSS Family Services staff were introduced to the group; including Alex Kamberis, the new Family Services Assistant Director, Em Parente, the new program manager for Resource Families and Jennifer Behrens, the new program manager for Outcome Based Reporting and Analysis (OBRA). There was a review of the agenda and an invitation to attend the 2012 Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Conference. The conference is sponsored by the Virginia Department of Social Services and Prevent Child Abuse Virginia and is co-sponsored by The Family and Children's Trust Fund, the Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, and the Virginia Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention. This will take place Monday, April 2, 2012 at the Holiday Inn Koger Conference Center. The theme of this years' conference is "*Every Child Counts ~ Know Them. Nurture Them. Protect Them."* For more information please contact Ann Childress (ann.childress@dss.virginia.gov).

The first agenda item was a review of Family Services legislation as of 2-17-12. Currently VDSS is tracking 91 bills, of those about 50 were assigned to DFS. Two areas received a large number of bills: CPS and Adult Services. There were 11 bills concerning who should be a mandated reporter, penalties associated with failure to report, and timeframes for reporting down from 72 hours to 24 hours. Most of the CPS bills were rolled together and now about five remain. There are also two bills on substance abused infants. The two bills do not align on timeframes but do include Fetal Alcohol Spectrum to comply with the new CAPTA requirements

The adult services legislation centered around financial exploitation of elderly or incapacitated adults - creating new or increased penalties. Discussions led to dropping the term elderly and focusing on incapacitated adults. The one agency sponsored bill related to financial exploitation was laid on the table once it got to appropriations. There is also legislation to allow assisted living facilities and adult foster care providers to accept third party payments made on behalf of an auxiliary grant recipient. These payments should not cover services already covered under the auxiliary grant rate. The money must be documented as to what it is used for. Legislation to consolidate several state agencies continues to move along. Those agencies include Department of Rehabilitative Services, Virginia Department for Aging, and the DSS adult services program (including AS, APS and Auxiliary grant). There is still debate on whether Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Blind and Visually Impaired will be joining the new agency. Implementation of this process will be worked on over the next year and the adult services programs will join the agency in 2013.

Bills impacting foster care include: HB 507 requiring credit checks on foster kids 16 and over – and procedures to protect their credit; SB 84 allowing youth up to 180 days to return to receive IL services (there is a fiscal impact with no budget line); SB299 which addresses variances for children placed with relatives and some exemptions to certain barrier crimes (some drug offenses and arson) and provided 10 years have elapsed for approving relative homes. There are also several adoption bills; one with a "conscious clause" allowing religions organizations to not place children for adoption with families that

are not deemed suitable, and another helping to clarify birth certificate requirements for international adoptions. There are three bills that have been carried over to next year about restoration of parental rights to allow the Commission on Youth to study this issue.

There are two bills related to ICPC, HB744 and SB 366, which are still moving but actually will have no direct impact. They prohibit us from putting language in regulations which require prior ICPC approval for private pay placement of children in residential facilities. We do not have ICPC regulations at this time. The bill does not change current practice but may cause confusion. DFS is preparing to send out clarifying information as questions arise.

HB 217 on the Government Data Collection and Dissemination Act appears to be moving forward. This is a VDSS bill and it will keep VDSS from having to provide redacted records to individuals from data bases where the ldss are the custodians of the records.

The sex offender registry bill, HB 624, was created to comply with the Adam Walsh Law. If a youth committed any of three specific acts and is 13 years or older, that youth can be placed on the sexual offender registry. This legislation has already raised questions about placements related to certain group home settings that also have schools, or where a child could live after exiting juvenile detention. There is some talk about this registry being different than the adult version, but this is not certain yet.

Christie Mara with the Poverty Law Center informed the group about two other pieces of legislation that are of interest. SB 299 proposes providing variances for some barrier crimes on approving foster homes. This issue was studied by the Commission on Youth and the Crime Commission. SB 217 is an attempt to help families that are in an informal kinship situation register children in the local public school without having to obtain legal custody. This bill seeks to allow the child to attend public school for free but also requires the parent and relative have official paperwork to cut out the potential of families school shopping.

The group recognized both the Poverty Law Center and FACES for the work they have done during this legislative session posting information and as well as providing advocacy.

Dottie Wells, Director for Child Care and Development at VDSS, presented Automation Initiatives to the group. In 2005, VDSS undertook a business project reengineering (BPR) effort to see what is the experience of the customer and how can we improve that as a system and partner with the community. From this process, a “what we want to be” model was envisioned. Questions arose like: how can we automate? How can we get LDSS work beyond the strict 8 -5 hours? How can we get self-service access that is simple and user friendly? Through research, VDSS found that most LDSS were already trying to update technology and be more available. The state was lagging behind the local departments. While the state sets the expectations, the local departments have to identify resources

Some federal money had been made available to automate child care through the Child Care & Development Fund block grant. Before this time, all child care cases were paper driven. The only technology used was VACIS but this did not automate to benefits. The Virginia Case Management System (VaCMS) was created to automate the child care subsidy program. This system allows on line applications with automated eligibility. It also allows parents to receive swipe cards and calculates payments that are then made electronically. VaCMS was piloted in Aug 2011 and is currently rolling in statewide in all localities except Fairfax, which is scheduled to roll out in June. There have been four

releases since August to modify the system. Some local departments have struggled with the switch to an automated system but a large issue has been the functionality of the swipe cards.

One of the tenants of BPR is to leverage the technology that we already have. Enterprise development system program (EDSP) is a jointly-sponsored Business and IT program intended to address modernization opportunities to improve information sharing and increase worker efficiency and effectiveness across the Virginia Social Services System (VSSS). EDSP supports the enterprise business model that was proposed in the BPR project. The EDSP has created Commonhelp, a customer portal using the child care system that has the ability to take applications for other eligibility programs (TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, energy assistance, and state health insurance program. Clients will be able to do screening for eligibility and file applications online. Once they are a recipient they can report changes, reapply, and check benefits. Phase 1of this project is being able to apply on line. Workers will be able to review applications and then be able to pull it into ADAPT, eliminating dual entry. Phase 2 will include the ability to reapply, check benefits, and report a change.

There is an oversight committee for this project. The League's technology committee and state staff comprise the customer portal oversight committee. There are several work groups: Citizens/Customer Involvement; Core Business Model; Program/Policy Considerations; Public Relations; and Model Testing and Review. The portal is in user acceptance testing now. It is anticipated that the roll out for the Commonhelp will be mid-March for screening and applying online. This is a soft roll out, meaning there is a control group that will be looking at available technology, walking through the process with a customer and getting feedback. If there are questions about Commonhelp, please contact Deborah Vaughn, Enterprise Change Management Office Director, VDSS (804)726-7793 (office), email deborah.vaughn@dss.virginia.gov

The remainder of the meeting was dedicated to providing an update on the Program Improvement Plan (PIP). Virginia is more than halfway through the PIP and our federal partners were present at this meeting to hear from the group. The program managers associated with each of the four primary strategies presented successes and challenges and representatives from local departments provided feedback.

The first primary strategy in the PIP is focusing on permanency for children and includes the use of family partnership meetings, increasing timeliness and discharges to permanency, collaboration with the Court Improvement Program, and Custody Assistance. Dr. Tamara Temoney, assistant director Hanover County – former program manager for Resource Families - made the presentation on family partnership meetings and highlighted accomplishments and collaborations with CIP and Poverty Law Center as well as with local departments. In addition to policy and tools created and posted, there have been several trainings, which included the legal community, around engaging families and family engagement meetings. Both foster care and CPS policy has been updated to include the use of family engagement strategies and the use of family partnership meetings to help facilitate permanency for children. Over all, feedback from local representatives was positive. There was a very quick discovery that the local communities needed to embrace this process which has been a difficult thing to bring to life. Many social workers feel like this is a return to basic social work practice and, over all, staff has embraced it more quickly than other initiatives. In some localities there has been a decline in foster care cases and those workers have been diverted to other things like CPS intake or ongoing and in at least one case a worker became the FEM project manager. In one locality there is a parent support group where parents are talking to each other about the family engagement process and the feedback has been very positive.

Anecdotally, one mother who has a past history with social services reported she is seeing a different experience this time around. The process is moving faster and she feels more engaged.

There are still areas of concern across the state. There is an issue about not having the ability to pay for services for children that are placed informally with relatives who live in other counties. In some cases, the schools are not as open to registering children in school if they are informally placed with families. There has been some resistance from legal community but training has been provided to help with those issues. Small localities that do not have their own facilitators continue to struggle with resources and having support. The three most needed things are: support from the community, financial support from the state, and family buy in.

Therese Wolf, program manager for permanency provided a report on the changes to the adoption contracts. As part of the contract negotiations, local departments and adoption contractors sat down with state staff. It was found that there was a lot of confusion around what the contractors were expected to do by the state as well as the locality they were working with. There was no clear understanding of each other's role. Several steps have been taken to clear up that confusion as well as set expectations. The contracts and reports from the contracts were "cleaned up" to provide clear information, especially to clarify how many children actually received a finalized adoption. There are three groups were targeted when rewriting the contracts: in care less than 15 months with TPR, children where adoptions were not final but in an adoptive placement, and children with TPR who are older youth and not in adoptive home. The contracts have changed to be more performance based and now report on eight milestones that lead to adoption. The contractors have had some resistance to these changes. Those contractors that are successful have created open working relationships with the local department. This year, the contracts are focused on 358 children, which is above our 25% increase that is in the PIP.

Ms. Wolf also reported on the VDSS/CIP partnership. One of the areas that Virginia failed during the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) is concerning notification and right to be heard in courts for foster parents. CIP has conducted trainings for judges and attorneys around notice and right to be heard. Additionally, the court forms include the information and notice and right to be heard. Ms. Wolf pointed out that CIP does a good job of keeping DFS in the loop on their trainings.

Finally, Ms. Wolf spoke to the group around Custody Assistance (CA). Originally, it was hoped that CA would be implemented in April but there have been some delays and implementation is being pushed back to July 1, 2012. CA will be implemented as a two year pilot around the state. There has been a lot of progress related to CA and the delay in implementation is due to other training needs. Progress to date includes development of guidance, clarification of how to use the VEMAT, development of a process to address post custody reviews, and OASIS updates are complete but not rolled out. The evaluation of CA is in the beginning stages. There have been conversations with the Office of Comprehensive Services to work out a way to support CA for children who are not IV-E eligible. Training will be provided in May and June 2012. There was feedback from the group on potential issues concerning custody assistance. The general consensus is that CSA funding is going to be an issue. Since CSA money will have local match, localities may balk at paying for a child to stay with relatives if they move to another county. The evaluation will examine the cost of implementation. There remains the issue of did children come into foster care as a way for families to get a subsidy payment.

The second primary strategy examines issues of safety and risk. Rita Katzman, program manager for Child Protective services, presented information on what has been accomplished. SDM has been

implemented statewide. Work was done through the OASIS workgroup and CPS policy committee. There was a training for trainers that partnered state and local staff followed by 52 two sessions in May and June 2011. Then in July and August, 15 more sessions were held for on call workers. There were a total of 1,500 workers trained! SDM tools were incorporated into guidance by July 2011. Implementation of the OASIS screens lagged behind some but is up and working now. Regional consultants are meeting every other month with supervisors and retraining to keep the momentum going and reinforce practice. There is peer review incorporated into these sessions. A social worker from a local department made the comment that because of the training, they found out they were not using the SDM tools correctly. Now there has been training, there is more confidence in practice. Local departments are using the tools for intake, for prevention activities, and for ongoing services (specifically the reassessment tools). Some localities are requesting the reunification tools for foster care. The general consensus is that some localities will show a higher number of cases opening to ongoing CPS case management. One locality is looking at developing a practice model for ongoing services. Overall, the tools are viewed as very good for young/new workers because they are reinforcing the need for good assessments.

Another focus for this section of the PIP is on CPS "in home" guidance. Ms. Katzman reported staff has begun looking at what is in currently in guidance. To assist with guidance decisions the Policy Advisory Committee has been reconstituted. Ms. Katzman has asked the NRC to review the CPS manuals and as part of their technical assistance has helped created a tool to review cases. The plan is to pull 50 cases (10 per region) to read through cases and have NRC to help determine practice needs. The goal is to have new in home guidance drafted by the end of the year. OASIS changes may need to happen but this is not currently on the list for edits right now. Training is will also be needed and will be scheduled at a later time.

The CIP has trained the Bar Association on child safety issues using the child safety guide. The guardian ad litems have been trained and the curriculum on safety has been provided to attorneys and LDSS directors, many of which shared with their JDR judges. Best practice courts are using the safety guide and it is a tool that is helping the judges hold the ldss accountable.

Deborah Eves provided the update on Primary Strategy three which deals with reengineering training. This Strategy was written so that the majority of strategies would be due later in the PIP period. Many of the strategies have been partially accomplished and work continues on them. VDSS training has undertaken a huge transition within the last year. The training contract with VCU-VISSTA has ended and training has been brought "in-house". There is now a Local Programs Training section with in the Division of Workforce Planning and Development. Family Services staffing for training is complete for now. Vernon Simmons is the manager for Family Services and there are several curriculum developers and trainers. A final assessment of the entire training system for local staff is due in July. The function of the Family Services Training Steering Committee will be absorbed by the Professional Development Committee of the VLSEE.

Vernon Simmons has worked with Institute for Human Services (Ohio) Core Competencies for Child Welfare Caseworkers reviewed by groups of workers and supervisors across the state. The feedback from that was assimilated into a first draft of Virginia's Core Caseworker Competencies and the final review will begin this spring. Curriculum alignment with the Competencies will begin in April. Transfer of Learning activities are currently being incorporated in the updates of mandated courses. Supervisors are being given materials to work on with new staff during their training to help bring the classroom learning to the jobsite. Additionally, an evaluation of curriculum and trainers using Survey Monkey is

being piloted now and will go statewide in April. There is still a significant amount of work to accomplish around training. It is likely there will be some renegotiation around this strategy in order to meet the PIP timeframes.

Deborah Eves continued with updates into Primary Strategy Four. Much of these strategies are ongoing or completed. There has been training on SafeMeasures and the VCWOR around the state. Several reports have been created to help "manage by data" and those reports are sent quarterly along with the PIP report. The second focus area of this strategy is the creation of the Quality Service Review (QSR). Dorothy Hollahan provided the QSR update. VDSS worked with CWPPG and HSO to create the protocol and pilot QSR in Chesterfield County in November 2010. To date, 11 reviews have been completed and there have been 121 cases reviewed. There is still a great need to recruit volunteers to become trained reviewers. After a QSR has been conducted, the next step is for the locality to develop a System Improvement Plan (SIP). Four of the departments that were reviewed in 2011 have completed their SIP. In collaboration with regional consultants, CQI staff monitor the SIPs and checks in with localities quarterly. In August, there will be a report that will identify trends taken from the reviews and may help guide program staff to help facilitate practice change. Overall trends – all agencies have seen high marks in safety. Good physical health but not so much emotional well being. Need action in placement stability and in school stability. Engagement and voice in choice has not scored highly. There is information about the QSR and the protocol on SPARK for those who are interested in learning more and there are plans for the QSR final reports and SIPs to be posted to SPARK. There is a QA network comprised of state and local staff that meets quarterly to share information about quality practice around the state.

Lelia Hopper provided feedback stating that the JDR judges report not feeling involved or informed about QSR. It is up to the localities to invite their local judges as well as attorneys. The concern was noted. Additional feedback from local departments is that the approach the reviewers took with the review was strengths based. This created a much better acceptance of feedback and learning.

At the end of the PIP discussion Lisa Pearson, federal region three program manager, shared with the group her appreciation for the amount of work that has been accomplished. She shared a reminder with the group that if the PIP is not completed within our time frames, there will be a financial penalty assessed against Virginia's administrative IV-E funds. The federal office is more than willing to work with Virginia in any way to ensure successful completion of this PIP.

Jack Ledden concluded the meeting at 1:00. The next meeting will be held on March 16th at the Twin Hickory Library in Henrico County.