



Virginia Department of Social Services

people helping people

CWAC Diversion Input Session

10/31/2019

Division of Family Services

Welcome and Introductions

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➤ **NAME**

➤ **ROLE AND ORGANIZATION**



Diversion Data Pilot

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- **2016 General Assembly Session – Budget Amendment, Item 343(c)**
 - Directed VDSS to conduct a pilot project on data collection and reporting for local departments of social services (LDSS) regarding facilitated care arrangements (i.e., foster care diversion)
- **Project intent**
 - Collect baseline data regarding “diversion cases” (CPS, CPS Ongoing, and Prevention), that will assist in exploring the barriers to achieving safety and stability for children with kin or alternative caregivers



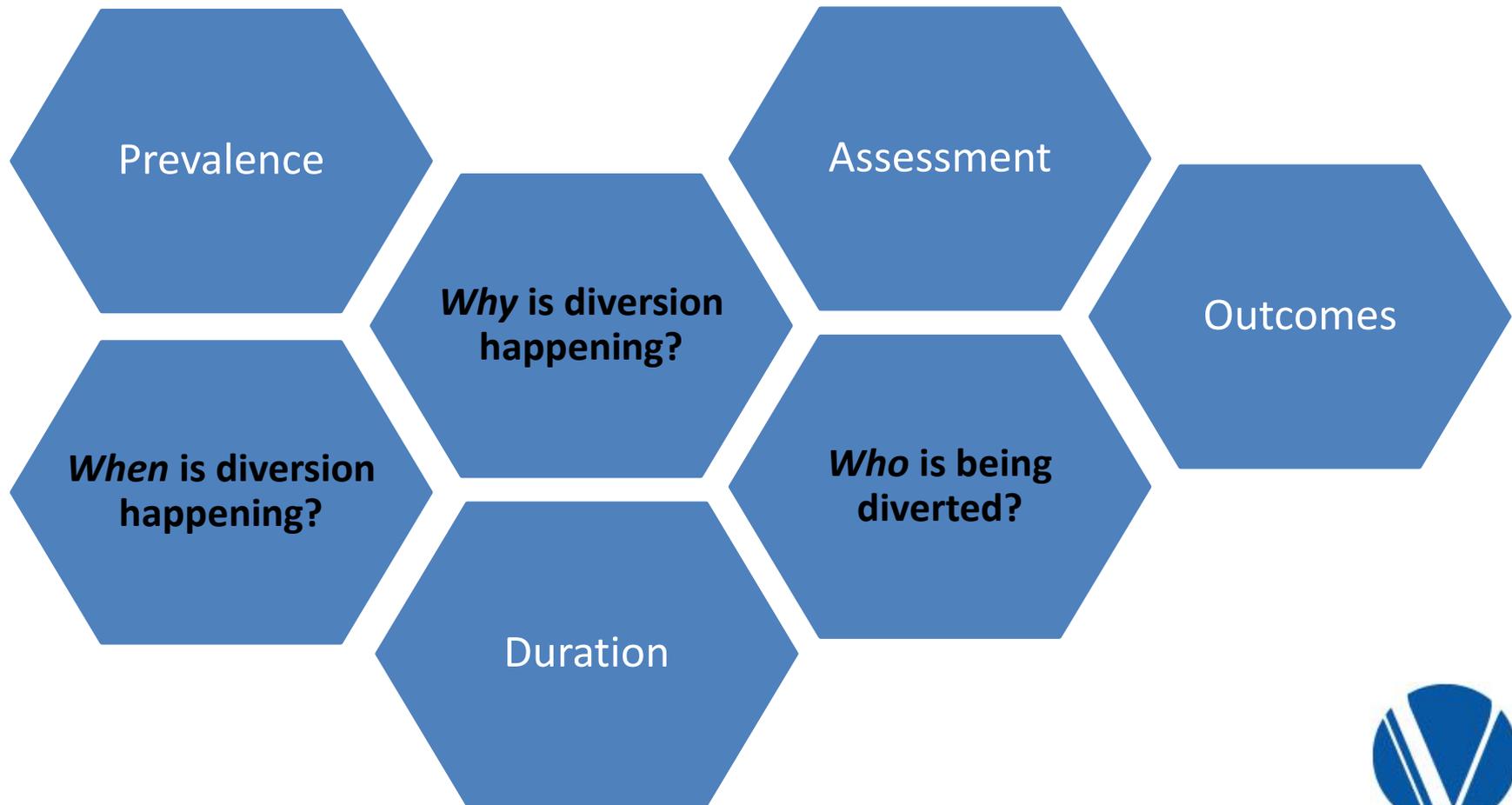
- **32 total pilot agencies**
 - 22 from Western region
 - 10 volunteer pilot agencies (Fairfax, Prince William, Arlington, Alexandria, Middlesex, New Kent, King William, Campbell, Albemarle, James City)
- Quarterly data collected for a period of 18 months (**July 2016 – December 2017**)
- Administrative data received from two (2) other unnamed states
- Partnership with Child Trends and AECF





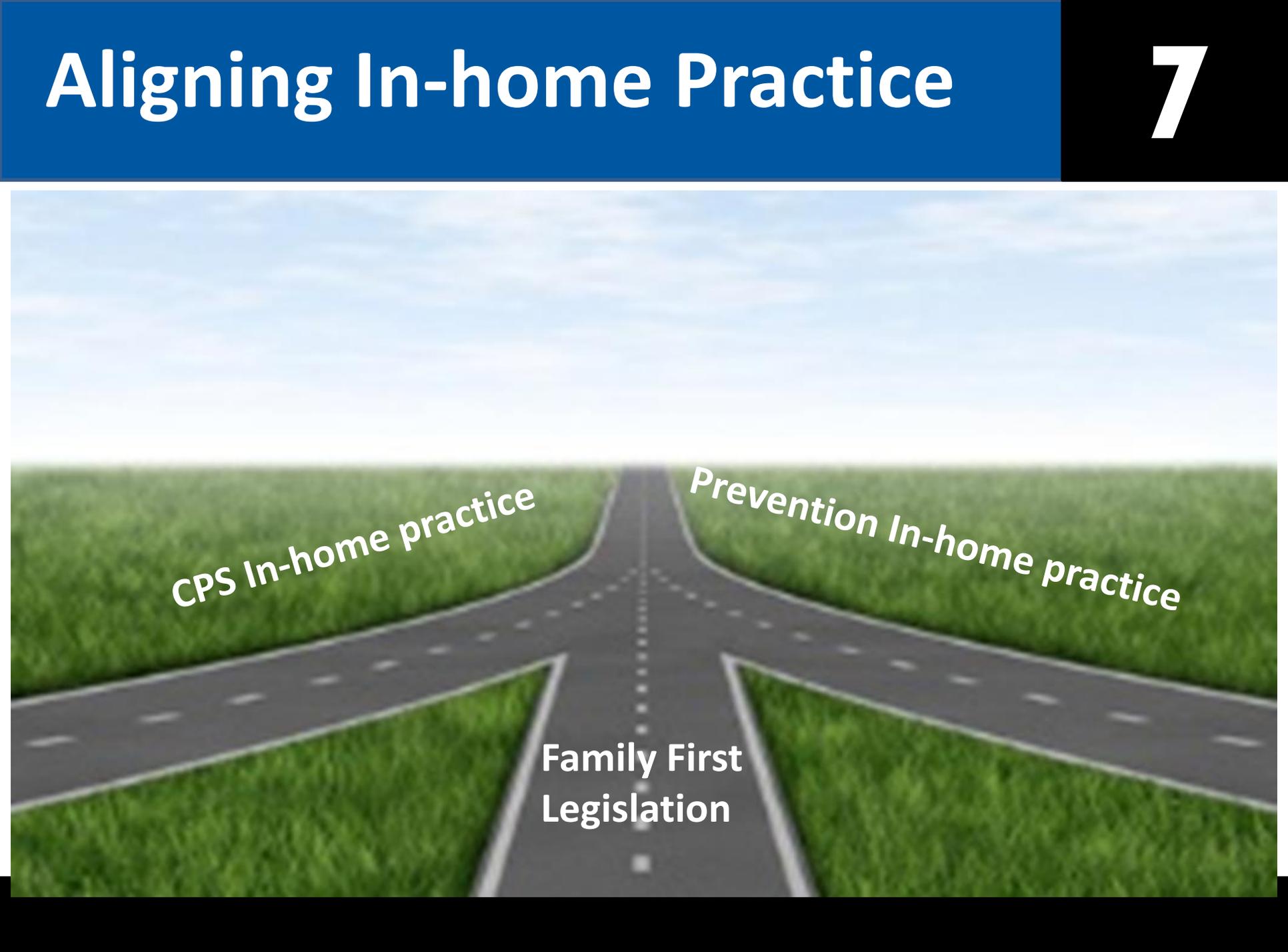
Exploration of Findings

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Aligning In-home Practice

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A conceptual image of a road splitting into three paths, representing different in-home practice models. The road is paved and has a dashed white line down the center. The paths lead to a bright horizon under a blue sky with light clouds. The surrounding area is a lush green field.

CPS In-home practice

Prevention In-home practice

Family First
Legislation

What is In-home

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1. Ensuring children's safety,
2. Strengthening families,
3. Engaging families, including kin,
4. Addressing the needs of individual family members and the family unit,
5. Preventing child abuse and neglect, and
6. Reducing the risk of children being removed from the home.





1. Children in their own home with parents/caregivers
2. Children temporarily with relatives/fictive kin
3. Children permanently with relatives/fictive kin

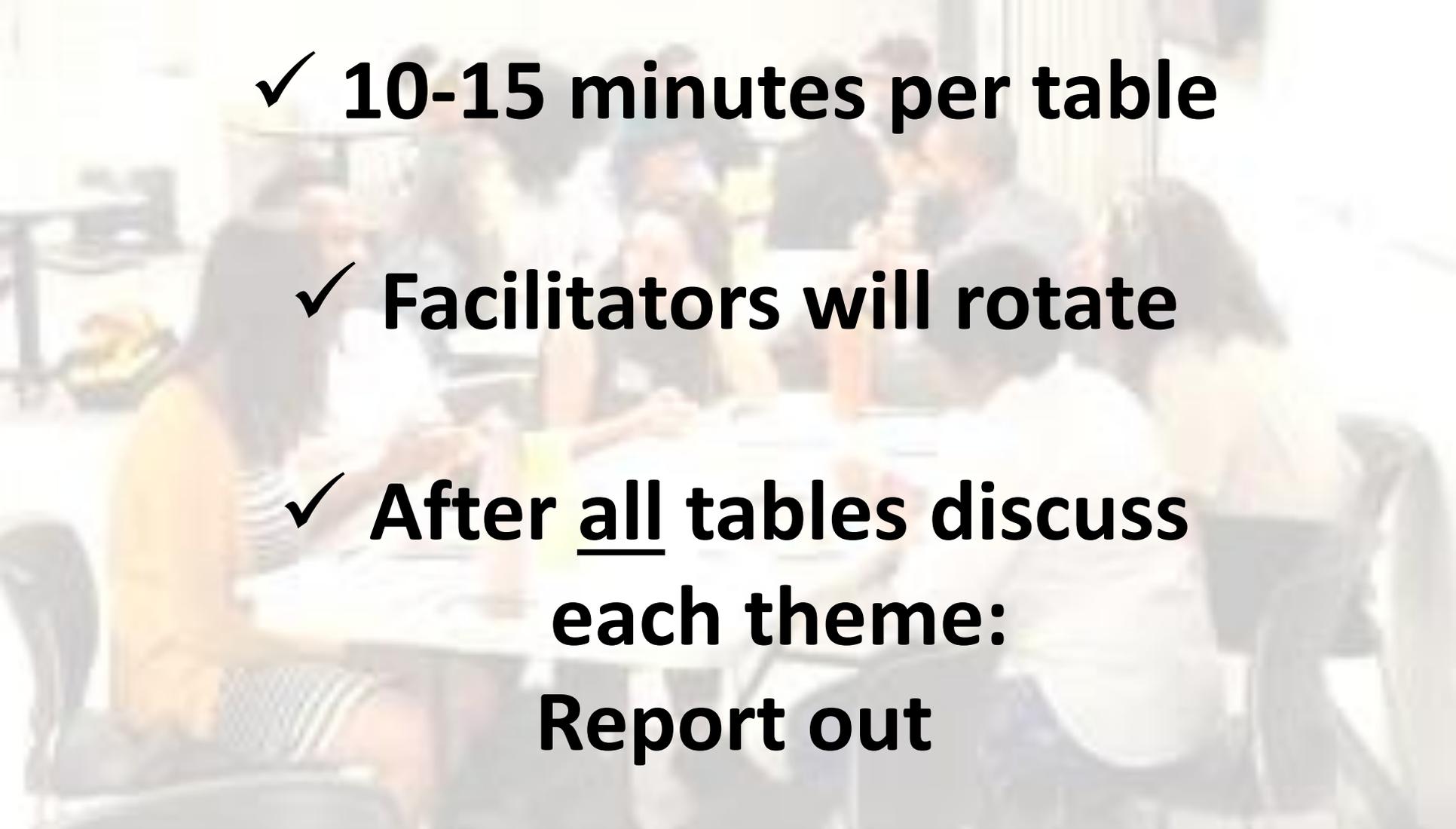


- Striking a balance between family autonomy and child welfare system intervention
- Helping families to assess accurate information about their legal options and available resources and supports
- Variance in the types and duration of services provided to the triad (child/parent/kin caregiver)
- Safely facilitating reunification (when possible) to ensure a “pathway back home” for the child



**How does your role
influence these themes?**



- 
- ✓ **10-15 minutes per table**
 - ✓ **Facilitators will rotate**
 - ✓ **After all tables discuss each theme:
Report out**

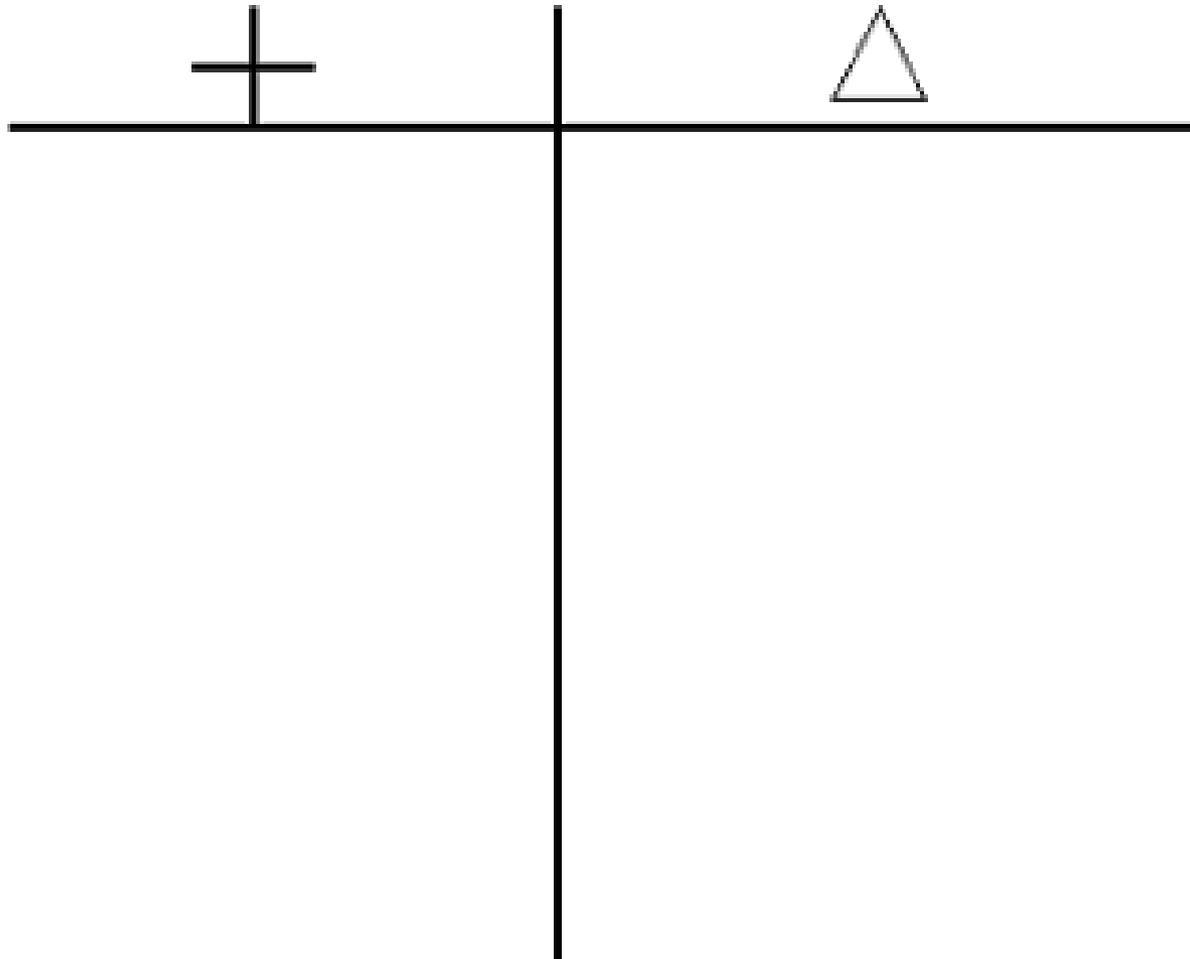
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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES



Division of
Family Services



CWAC Diversion Input Session – October 31, 2019

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 - 32 total pilot agencies; 22 from Western region; 10 volunteer pilot agencies (Fairfax, Prince William, Arlington, Alexandria, Middlesex, New Kent, King William, Campbell, Albemarle, James City)
- Project intent
 - Collect baseline data regarding “diversion cases” (CPS, CPS Ongoing, and Prevention), that will assist in exploring the barriers to achieving safety and stability for children with kin or alternative caregivers
- Data collection
 - Quarterly data collected for a period of 18 months (July 2016 – December 2017)
 - Administrative data received from two (2) other unnamed states
 - Partnership with Child Trends and Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Exploratory research questions
 - **Description of Population**
 - What is the prevalence of kinship diversion in the state?
 - What are the characteristics of the children and families in kinship diversion arrangements?
 - **Description of Practices**
 - What types of workers divert children?
 - What is the experience of children in kinship diversion arrangements?
 - **Description of Child and Family Outcomes**
 - What are the outcomes for children and families in kinship diversion arrangements?
 - Do outcomes (safety, permanency, and well-being) differ depending on the characteristics of the children and families and/or case-level practices (open vs. closed cases; type of worker)?
 - Do outcomes (safety, permanency, and well-being) differ for children in diversion kinship arrangements versus children in other placement options (e.g., differential response, in-home services, foster care)?
 - **Description of Policies**
 - What, if any, are the policies and/or guidelines associated with diversion?
 - **Exploration of How Findings Might Inform Future State Kinship Diversion Policies and Practices**
 - What are we learning about what is working well or not so well with regard to kinship diversion?
- Analysis and interpretation
 - Quantify and identify the extent of diversion practice
 - Examine assumptions about current diversion practice

- Inform future data collection
- Determine the impact of diversion on child safety, permanence, and well-being
- Caveats and considerations
 - Manual data collection process
 - Limitations in administrative data retrieved from OASIS
 - Pilot duration
- High level preliminary findings
 - **When is diversion happening?** – Timing of diversion arrangements varied, but generally occurred during the investigation phase
 - **Why is diversion happening?** – Primary reason for agency involvement: Parental substance abuse (44%), Physical neglect (28%), Physical abuse (10%), Domestic violence (5%), Sexual abuse (3%)
 - **How prevalent is kinship diversion?** – 2,203 children diverted to kinship care from 1,262 families in 31 agencies (duration of 18 mo. pilot (July 2016 – Dec. 2017))
 - **Who is being diverted?** – Race: White (83%), Black (10%), Multiracial (7%); Gender: Male (49.93%) and Female (49.80%); Age: 0-1 yrs. (19%), 2-5 yrs. (31%), 6-9 yrs. (22%), 10-13 yrs. (16%), 14-17 yrs. (12%)
 - Relationship to caregiver – Grandparent (48%), Aunt/Uncle (18%), No relation (11%), Other relative (9%), Parent (8%), Missing (6%)
 - Court involvement – None (56%), Custody, (12%), Preliminary Protective Order (10%), Other/Unknown (3%), Emergency Removal Order (1.6%), Preliminary Removal Order (1%), Relief of Custody (0.6%), CHINS/Services or Supervision (0.5%), Delinquency (0.3%), Missing (15%)
 - Duration of diversion arrangement (if complete) – Less than 1 month (28%), 1 to 3 months (50%), 3 months to 1 year (21%), More than 1 year (1%)
 - Diversion the result of Family Partnership Meeting (FPM)? – Yes (66%), No (26%), Unknown/Missing (8%)
 - Service provision – Variance; highlighted the need for consistent protocols; triad (child/parent/kin caregiver) considerations; ongoing support; children and families are not monolithic; capturing child- and family-level data could help identify and concretize disparities

CWAC Diversion Input Session Meeting Minutes

Small Group Discussion

October 31, 2019

Challenge/Theme: Helping families to assess accurate information about their legal options and available resources and supports.

Feedback/discussion from group:

Imminent risk v. legal rights

- Always filing court petitions on diversion
 - As soon as diversion happens, parents' constitutional rights are impacted.
- Codified diversion practice with legislation
 - When is judicial oversight needed or appropriate?
Not role of DSS to tell legal options.
 - What are legal options of relatives?
- Why are we diverting the current court process—if there's truly imminent risk
- Create Virginia to allow the use of pre-petition court appointed counsel
 - Pilot program in Washington County
- Could CSA funding be used to pay for the legal consults for parents?
- Special considerations and a possible modified timeline for kinship foster care outside of the traditional foster care court trajectory – possible custody options.
- Increased FPM meetings on the front end by CPS
- Develop prevention or in-home brochures or FULL continuum brochure
- Funding for options to support kin and child outside of the traditional foster care funding
- Adaptive
- Specialized training for staff, community partners, courts, and attorneys on this work.

Challenge/Theme: Striking a balance between family autonomy and child welfare system intervention

Feedback/discussion from group:

- Navigating the "family-driven vs. agency-facilitated" dynamic
- Emphasizing the importance of maintaining family and cultural connections
- Grappling with the notion that it is the family's moral obligation and responsibility to care for kin
- Disparities in resources/supports for kin caregivers (financial support, transitional expenses, emotional support); education (coping w/ behavior and trauma)
- More work needs to be done on the front end; training opportunities; philosophical shift – sustaining the family unit; supervision/coaching/mentoring can improve the skill sets of staff
- Robust approach to address family needs; families are the experts; transparency; teaming structures ongoing and diligent search
- From an investigative perspective – engagement, interventions, practice, meaningful service connections; what input is the family offering?; power dynamics – elements of coercion; best practice around family autonomy
- Robust approach to addressing family needs; families are the experts; transparency; teaming structures ongoing and diligent search

- At the point of a CPS response - offering legal assistance to families is a basic right; legal protections and due process considerations; knowledge of legal rights and options; collaboration between local agencies and Legal Aid to focus on problem solving
- Differential response – how we work with families; old fashioned social work tenants; system coordination and collaboration
- Does ongoing system involvement leave children worse off?; trauma of being removed; needed services aren't always provided; impact on broader well-being outcomes
- LDSS liability issues if child is harmed in kin caregivers home; need for court oversight
- Acknowledging the history of keeping foster care entry numbers low
- Examining existing data and research; insights from other states; Family First implementation - what is included in everyone's Prevention Plan

Challenge/Theme: Safety facilitating reunification (when possible) to ensure a “pathway back home” for the child

Feedback/discussion from group:

- Gather information on how local agencies respond to diversion cases in relation to Protective Orders, Emergency Removal Orders, Child Protective Orders, CHINS Orders, Custody Orders
 - It may be helpful to reach out to LDSS and request any written protocols and processes around diversion (there is some information that we currently have but it would benefit to information all LDSS of the diversion work and see if any would share)
- Explore how to link CASA to LDSS when CASA has been appointed without any DSS involvement
- Utilize and analyze available data to support policy needs and decisions around diversion practice
- Explore how to modify legal standards, options, requirements, parent rights to support safe and fair practice of diversion
- Promote a culture that ensures that the non-custodial parent is contacted and included whenever there is the potential need for diversion
- Ensure that there is an array of services to fit all families in relation to need to support diversion practice and focus on safe pathways home
- Utilize housing supports, view family needs through a multi-generational approach, for example, utilize family to satisfy/address safety concerns to prevent entrance into foster care while focusing on the parent/family safe arrangement and planning
- As professionals, each of us can work with CPS to identify ways to “make the situation safe, acceptable and free of entering children into foster” through training around how we approach and support diversion practice
- LDSS (staff and supervisors) and GALs if involved, can engage in monthly collateral contacts to ensure that services are in place, all parties are actively engaged in needed services and the child and family situation is stable before finalizing case closure; utilization of a teaming approach could be a requirement to close any diversion cases
- Creation of a diversion Case Closure form could capture a post diversion plan, this should include how to manage child development, trauma and behavior, list of resources, list of who the family identifies as family and community supports, contract/action plan of how to remain intact post LDSS involvement

- Support a practice of “meeting families where they are” to empower families to provide input regarding decisions, plan of care for children involved in diversion; engage families with a solution-focused, strength-based approach
- Require that professionals support parents in recognizing where they are in the reunification process and mentoring them with navigation through systems to achieve a safe return of children (this could be a short or long-term track of diversion as an intervention)
- LDSS supervisors should enhance the supervision of staff to support reunification efforts
- Create a short brochure that provides an overview of options specific to diversion
- There could be a diversion toolkit for staff, parents and relatives
- Development of a diversion Timeline that includes critical decision making points such as 24-72 hours, 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, 3-6mths, requires that certain decisions are made within a specific time to move the child to permanency and or reunification
- Clarify Safety Plan and diversion (what each is and what each is not)
- Generate listening/input sessions with judges to create a culture reflective of consistent practice
- It is imperative to provide support to LDSS who have court liaisons as those staff could be more involved with managing diversion cases and assisting in linking families to service, supports and resources
- We could build new polices around joint guidance/policy with Benefits and Family Services Programs, specific to diversion (some agencies used to have a Child-Only Unit) that was designed to support children when living with/in the custody of relatives
- Look for ways to align diversion policy to Family First

PARKING LOT ITEMS:

- Send PPT and high level data summary from Child Trends Brief
- % of children diverted age 0-1
- Explore ways to get additional feedback from LDSS
- Kin assessment was created in the past – let’s examine it again
- Decision tree around diversion was created in the past (i.e. when to do background checks)
- Jurisdiction issue (who has case ownership and funding responsibility → create some guidelines)
- How do we track outcomes data for these diversion cases?

PLUS	DELTA
Small groups	
Rotating topics/themes (everyone got to address all of the themes)	
Presentations were helpful	
Help to have the questions presented (prime the conversation)	