

# **Citizens Review Board For Children**



**ANNUAL REPORT**

**FISCAL 2025**

**(July 1<sup>st</sup> 2024 - June 30<sup>th</sup> 2025)**

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## **Introduction**

Maryland's Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) is comprised of volunteer citizens and Department of Human Services (DHS) staff that provide child welfare expertise, guidance and support to the State and Local Boards.

CRBC is charged with examining the policies, practices and procedures of Maryland's child protective services, evaluating and making recommendations for systemic improvement in accordance with Family Law Article § 5-539.1(g) (MSAR # 12783), Family Law Article § 5-539(b)(5) (MSAR # 12782) and the Federal Child Abuse and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (Section 106 (c)).

CRBC reviews cases of children and youth in Out-of-Home Placement, monitors child welfare programs and makes recommendations for system improvements. Although CRBC is housed within the DHS organizational structure, it is an independent entity overseen by its State Board.

There is a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Social Services Administration (SSA) and CRBC that guides the work parameters by which CRBC and DHS function regarding CRBC review of cases.

The CRBC State Board reviews and coordinates the activities of the local review boards. The board also examines policy issues, procedures, legislation, resources and barriers relating to Out-of-Home Placement and the permanency of children. The State Board makes recommendations to the General Assembly around ways of improving Maryland's child welfare system.

Since January 2021, the local Boards have conducted virtual instead of in person case reviews of children in Out-of-Home Placement for all Local Department of Social Services and in every jurisdiction. Individual recommendations regarding permanency, placement, safety and well-being are sent to the Local Juvenile Courts, the LDSS and interested parties involved with the child's care.

This CRBC FY2025 Annual Report contains CRBC's findings from our case reviews, advocacy efforts and recommendations for systemic improvements.

On behalf of the State Board of the Maryland Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC), it's staff and citizen volunteer board members, I present our Fiscal 2025 Annual Report.

Sincerely,

Nettie Anderson-Burrs  
State Board Chair

## **Executive Summary**

Child welfare serving agencies are charged with meeting the demand while addressing the need for additional resources including services, placement resources and child welfare staff throughout most of the state. Lingering effects continued to impact systems and highlight others including the need for appropriate placements, and a capable child welfare workforce that is supported with the necessary resources including data, data access, shareability of relevant information and staff training to ensure appropriate oversight of Maryland's most vulnerable children and families' needs.

Demographic changes continued due to child welfare staff turnover. In some cases, without the opportunity for preparation and transfer of knowledge. Trends that were highlighted by the COVID-19 Pandemic, hiring delays, salary, advancement opportunities, childcare, employment and work flexibility impacted the workforce. These changes ultimately impact on the delivery and quality of services, safety, well-being and permanency for children in out of home placement.

Older youth aging out of care present with persistent complexities for child welfare staff. Expanding and investing in strategies for workforce recruitment, development and retention is necessary to support the challenging and necessary work of child welfare staff. Similarly, exploring new and innovative strategies and ways to engage and work with older youth would support improved outcomes and preparedness for transitioning youth or emerging adults.

During fiscal year 2025, the Citizens Review Board for Children reviewed 703 cases of children and youth in Out-of-Home Placements. Reviews are conducted through a work plan developed in coordination with DHS and SSA with targeted review criteria based on Out-of-Home Placement permanency plans.

This report includes Out-of-Home Placement review findings for health, education and older youth, CRBC activities including legislative advocacy and recommendations for system improvement for fiscal FY2025.

### Health and Education Findings for statewide reviews include:

CRBC conducted virtual reviews of local department of social services cases statewide. Reviews included Google Meet interviews with local department staff and interested parties identified by the local department of social services such as parents, youth, caregivers, providers, CASA Volunteers, therapists, and other relevant parties to individual cases. At the time of the review local review boards requested information and documentation regarding education and health including preventive physical, dental and vision exams. Reviewers also considered medication reviews, treatment recommendations, health and mental health follow up appointments and referrals recommended by medical providers.

- Approximately 303 (43%) of the children/youths were prescribed medication.
- Approximately 243 (35%) of the children/youths were prescribed psychotropic medication.
- The local boards found that there were complete medical records for 269 (38%) of the total cases reviewed.
- The local boards found that for 269 (38%) of the 703 total cases reviewed, the health needs of the children/youth had been met.
- 283 (54%) out of the 465 youths enrolled in school had a 504 or IEP plan.
- 57 (25%) out of 229 youth that were disabled and exiting school were aware of and engaged with community supports.
- The local boards agreed that 449 (64%) of the children/youth were being appropriately prepared to meet educational goals.

### Demographic findings for statewide reviews include:

- 466 (66%) of the children/youth were African American.
- 183 (26%) of the children/youth were Caucasian.
- 48 (7%) of the children/youth were Other.
- 6 (1%) of the children/youths were Asian.
- 366 (52%) of the children/youth were Male.
- 337 (48%) of the children/youth were Female.

### CRBC conducted 264 Reunification reviews. Findings include:

- 48 cases (18%) had a plan of reunification for 3 or more years.
- The local boards agreed with the placement plan for 131 (50%) of the cases reviewed.
- The local boards found that service agreements were signed for 85 (32%) of the eligible cases reviewed.
- The local boards agreed that the signed service agreements were appropriate to meet the needs of 79 (93%) of the 85 the children/youths.

### CRBC conducted 121 Adoption reviews. Findings include:

- 22 (20%) of the 111 non-relative placements for adoption cases had a plan of adoption for 3 or more years.

- The local boards agreed with the placement plan for 110 (99%) of the 111 cases reviewed
- 4 (40%) of the 10 relative placement for adoption cases had a plan of adoption for 3 or more years.
- The local boards agreed with the placement plan for 9 (90%) of the 10 cases reviewed

Barriers that typically prevent the adoption process or that prevent progress in the child's case include:

- Pre-Adoptive resources not identified.
- Child in pre-adoptive home, but adoption not finalized.
- Efforts not made to move towards finalization.
- Child does not consent.
- Appeal by birth parents.
- Other court related barrier.

#### CRBC conducted 219 (APPLA) reviews - Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

APPLA is the least desired permanency plan and should only be considered when all other permanency options have been thoroughly explored and ruled out. APPLA is often synonymous with long term foster care. Many youths with a permanency plan goal of APPLA remain in care until their case is closed when they age out of the foster care system at 21. Findings include:

- 58 (26%) of the cases had a plan of APPLA for 3 or more years.
- The local boards agreed with the permanency plan of APPLA for 217 (99%) of the 219 cases statewide. 210 of the cases reviewed with a permanency plan of APPLA were youth between the ages of 17-20.
- A permanent connection is an identified person that a youth can rely on for assistance with support, advice and guidance as they deal with the day-to-day life circumstances that adulthood can bring about on a regular basis. The local boards agreed that for 217 (99%) of the 219 cases of youth with a permanency planning goal of APPLA that a permanent connection had been identified, and the local boards agreed that the identified permanent connections were appropriate for 217 (100%) of the 217 cases.

## Barriers/Issues

A total of 1,029 barriers were identified for all four quarters in FY2025. Below is a breakdown of the total number barriers for each quarter:

### Total Barriers (1029)

First Quarter	Second Quarter	Third Quarter	Fourth Quarter
250	232	252	295

Listed below are the types of barriers to permanency/issues reported and most frequently repeated in FY2025:

- Other Child/Youth Related Barrier.
- Vision Not Current.
- Dentals Not Current.
- Annual Physicals Not Current.
- No Follow Up On Medical Referrals.
- Youth Placed Outside Of Home Jurisdiction.
- Other Education Barrier.
- Youth Not Enrolled In School.
- No Service Agreement With Youth.
- No Service Agreement With Parents.
- Missing Or Lack Of Documentation.
- Other Independence Barrier.
- Inadequate Preparation For Independence (General).
- Youth Has Not Been Assessed For Mental Health Concerns.
- Youth Refuses Mental Health Treatment Including Therapy.
- Other Mental Health Barrier.
- Board Does Not Agree With Current Permanency Plan.
- No Concurrent Plan By Court
- No Current Safe-C/G.
- Youth Engages In Risky Behavior.
- No Service Agreement With Parents.

## Ready By 21 (Transitioning Youth)

Age of Youth (14 years and older all permanency plans = 387 cases)

- 123 (32%) of the 387 youths reviewed were between 14-16 years old.

- 200 (52%) of the 387 youths reviewed were between 17-19 years old.
- 64 (17%) of the 387 youths reviewed were 20 years old.

### Independent Living skills

The local boards agreed that 201 (52%) of the eligible youths were receiving appropriate services to prepare for independent living.

### Employment

The local boards found that 140 (36%) of the eligible youths were employed or participating in paid or unpaid work experience.

The local boards agreed that 157 (41%) of the eligible youths were being appropriately prepared to meet employment goals.

### Housing (56 cases)

Transitioning Youth (20 and over with a permanency plan of APPLA or exiting care to independence within a year of the date of review).

- The local boards found that 47 (84%) of the 56 youths had a housing plan specified.
- The local boards agreed that 46 of 47 (98%) youths were being appropriately prepared for transitioning out of care, 9 were not being appropriately prepared. 2 youths were not transitioning out.

### Concurrent Planning

Concurrent planning is an approach that seeks to eliminate delays in attaining permanent families for children in foster care. In concurrent planning, an alternative permanency plan or goal is pursued at the same time rather than being pursued after reunification has been ruled out. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 provided for legal sanctioning of concurrent planning in states by requiring that agencies make reasonable efforts to find permanent families for children in foster care should reunification fail and stating that efforts could be made concurrently with reunification attempts.

At least 21 states have linked concurrent planning to positive results including reduced time to permanency and establishing appropriate permanency goals, enhanced reunification or adoption efforts by engaging parents and reduced time to adoption finalization over the course of two review cycles of the Federal Child and Family Services Review (Child Welfare Information Gateway, Issue Brief 2012, Children's Bureau/ACYF). DHS/SSA Policy Directive#13-2, dated October 12, 2012 was developed because of Maryland reviewing case planning policy including best practices and concurrent planning as part of Maryland's performance improvement plan.



CRBC supports concurrent planning when used in accordance with state policy to achieve goals of promoting safety, well-being, and permanency for children in out-of-home placement, reducing the number of placements in foster care and maintaining continuity of relationships with family, friends and community resources for children in out-of-home care.

According to SSA Policy Directive #13-2 a concurrent plan is required when the plan is reunification with parent or legal guardian, placement with a relative for adoption or custody and guardianship, and guardianship or adoption by a non-relative (prior to termination of parental rights).

The local boards found the following in statewide reviews:

- A total of 150 (41%) of the 362 eligible cases had a concurrent permanency plan identified by the Local Juvenile Courts.
- The Local Departments (LDSS) were implementing the concurrent permanency plans identified by the Local Juvenile Courts for 136 (91%) of the 150 cases.
- The local boards found that for 212 (59%) of the eligible cases the Local Departments (LDSS) were engaged in concurrent planning.

### **Child Welfare Barriers**

There has been an increasing number of children and youth without a placement option due to challenging behaviors. In some instances, children and youth with challenging behaviors have remained in hospitals or emergency rooms for extended periods of time due to a lack of placement or while waiting for placement. Additionally, youth have been placed in hotels as an additional alternative. As a result, children and youth are deprived of services that they have a right to include education, recreation and socialization. In other instances, when these stays or overstays are not deemed medically necessary they put children and youth at further risk of anxiety, depression and possibly harm due to the trauma.

Last year, on March 4, 2024, according to the Civil Rights Division, the Department of Justice filed a statement of interest explaining how the integration mandate of Title II of the American Disabilities Act applies to children who have been medically cleared for discharge from psychiatric institutions but who remain institutionalized because of the lack of available community placements. A lawsuit was filed, T.G. v. Maryland Department of Human Services, on behalf of children in the foster care system with mental health disabilities that have been cleared up for discharge but are not due to the lack of resources. It is further noted that the Administrators of both the Department of Human Services and the Maryland Department of Health have failed to reasonably modify the programs to prevent prolonged overstays in segregated facilities. Ultimately, as a result, children/youth similarly in a lawsuit filed in May 2023 illustrates prolonging stays for children in the foster care system.

## **CRBC Recommendations to the Department of Human Services**

1. Review and develop policies and practices to ensure that all policies and practices are trauma informed.
2. Ensure consistency in the availability and delivery of services to children and youth involved with child welfare statewide by identifying resource needs and gaps to address lack of access.
3. Develop a system to track and monitor health including mental health of children and youth in out-of-home placement for improved oversight. During this fiscal year, there have been several discussions about potential platforms that could be utilized to capture the data and monitor progress of health/mental health outcomes.
4. Coordinate services across Public Agencies such as Primary Care, Behavioral Health, Medicaid, Juvenile Criminal Systems, Education, and Public Assistance to improve health needs being met and outcomes for children in Out-of-Home Placement. With plans to produce a platform for the coordination of services, it is the expectation that these plans will be implemented within the next fiscal year.
5. Ensure adequate state resources to provide services to children and youth with intensive needs. Children with serious behavioral, emotional, and medical needs that require additional structure not provided in family or other group settings in state, should receive appropriate services and level of support for their own safety and the safety of others and to help improve outcomes.
6. Since rate reform has begun, it continues to be expected that there will be an increase in additional resources for children in foster care and the increase in resources should be monitored and validated illustrating the increase of resources.
7. There have been efforts to identify gaps and areas needing improvement in the child welfare workforce. Increase efforts to improve workforce development to attain and maintain a highly experienced and skilled workforce to include transfer of knowledge. Develop and implement measures to retain child welfare staff by considering cases and workloads, staff development and training, quality of supervision and competitive compensation have been implemented.
8. Ensure that concurrent planning occurs to increase the likelihood of establishing the appropriate permanency plan or goal and achieve permanency without undue delay.

9. Explore other permanency options at least every 6 months for children and youth with a permanency plan of APPLA.
10. There has been considerable amount of effort to place children/youth with relative/kin by blood or by choice to ensure stable permanency resources statewide, but the consistent focus should not waver overtime and should continue to be a priority.
11. Explore adoption counseling for children and youth that have not consented to adoption.
12. Increasing efforts to begin transitional planning should begin for youth at 14 to include housing, education, employment, and mentoring. Plans should be developed by the youth with the assistance of the Department of Social Services Case Managers and others identified by the youth for support. Engagement of the youth and individuals identified by the youth is important. The plan should build on the youth's strengths and support their needs. While it is important to understand and meet legislative requirements for youth transitional plans, it is crucial that child welfare professionals work with youth view transitional planning as a process that unfolds over time and through close youth engagement rather than as a checklist of items to accomplish. <sup>1</sup>
13. Ensure that youth 14 and older begin to prepare for self-sufficiency by providing resources and opportunities for consistent independent living skills for youth statewide and provide the Benchmarks Brochure from the Ready By 21 program. This brochure will illustrate where the youth should be and how they should progress along the milestones according to their age.
14. Identify housing resources and funding to address the lack of affordable housing options available for aging out youth. Resources are limited; however, this should be paramount to locate appropriate housing resources.
15. Ensure that a specific housing plan is identified for older youth transitioning out of care at least 6 months prior to the anticipated date of discharge or youth's 21st birthday.
16. Increase opportunities for community partnerships to connect, to use life/independent skills, to gain employment experience and to improve affordable housing options for older youth exiting care. It is evident that many resources are limited due to funding availability, but connecting with community partners will assist in this process.

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<sup>1</sup>Child Welfare Information Gateway <https://www.childwelfare.gov>

## **Acknowledgements**

CRBC would like to acknowledge the commitment, dedication, passion, and service of all stakeholders on behalf of Maryland's most vulnerable children including:

- CRBC Governor Appointed Volunteers for their tireless efforts on behalf of Maryland's most vulnerable children and youth. CRBC volunteers have been dedicated and committed to the mission, vision and goals of CRBC, successfully transitioning from conducting in person to virtual case reviews and interviews, providing individual case advocacy and systemic improvement advocacy.
- The Department of Human Services (DHS)
- The Social Services Administration (SSA)
- The Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS), Baltimore County & Montgomery County (DHHS)
- The State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN)
- The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children (CPMC)
- Maryland CASA Association
- The Local Juvenile Courts of Maryland
- All Community Partners who strive to improve outcomes for children and youth involved with child welfare



Wes Moore, Governor • Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor • Rafael López, Secretary

May 30, 2025

Nettie Anderson-Burrs, State Chairperson

Citizen Review Board for Children

Delivered electronically to: [crystal.young@maryland.gov](mailto:crystal.young@maryland.gov)

RE: SSA Response to Citizen Review Board for Children FY2024 Annual Report (sent

Dear Members of the Citizen Review Board for Children:

We sincerely appreciate your FY2024 Annual Report and thank you for your dedicated advocacy for Maryland's children. Your recommendations are vital to our mission and align with the Moore-Miller Administration's trauma-informed and family-centered values, as outlined in our 2024-2029 Child and Family Service Plan.

In response to your key findings, we are taking the following steps:

- **Safety Assessments:** To address the need for consistent safety assessments and follow-up, we are reinforcing documentation expectations through updated guidance and direct support during Family Team Decision Making meetings.
- **Permanency:** We agree that every child needs a permanent family. To support this, we are advancing a "kin-first" culture through streamlined licensing and a new Kinship Navigator Program. We are also expanding prevention services under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) and partnering with other agencies to improve outcomes for youth with complex needs.
- **Documentation:** Recognizing the inconsistencies you noted, we are redesigning our quality assurance processes to ensure documentation accurately reflects family engagement and progress. We will continue to stress the importance of timely and thorough documentation through training and supervision.
- **Service Accessibility:** We are actively working to expand the array of available and accessible services for families by strengthening interagency partnerships to increase access to behavioral health, educational, and housing supports.
- **Youth Transition:** To better prepare youth for adulthood, we are enhancing our Youth Transition Planning process, increasing access to housing assistance, and strengthening partnerships with educational and workforce development agencies.

We understand the critical role that service accessibility plays in achieving safety and permanency for children and families. Goal 4 of the [2024-2029 Child and Family Service Plan](#), is to strengthen and expand the service array with a focus on availability, accessibility, and intensity to meet the individual and cultural needs of children, youth, and families. SSA is working collaboratively with state and community partners to increase access to behavioral health, educational, and housing supports through interagency agreements and shared data systems as well as maximize federal and state resources.

We are grateful to CRBC for its partnership in identifying areas of concern and opportunity. Your work helps guide our agency's strategic focus and reinforces our shared commitment to the safety, stability, and success of Maryland's children. SSA will continue to use CRBC's recommendations to inform policy, practice, and quality improvement efforts. We look forward to our continued collaboration as we work to build a responsive and resilient child welfare system that supports families and empowers communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Alger Studstill, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Alger Studstill, Jr., Executive Director Social Services  
Administration  
Maryland Department of Human Services

## **CRBC Program Description**

The Citizens Review Board for Children is rooted in a few core values, which relate to society's responsibility to children and the unique developmental needs of children. We have a strong value in believing that children need permanency within a family, and that their significant emotional attachments should be maintained. We know children develop through a series of nurturing interactions with their parents, siblings and other family members, as well as their own culture and environment. Therefore, a child's identity or sense of selfhood grows from these relationships.

In addition, we believe children grow and are best protected in the context of a family. If parents or kin cannot provide care and protection for their children, then children should be placed temporarily in a family setting, which will maintain the child's significant emotional bonds and promote the child's cultural ties.

The CRBC review process upholds the moral responsibility of the State and citizenry to ensure a safe passage to healthy adulthood for our children, and to respect the importance of family and culture.

As reviewers, CRBC values independence and objectivity, and we are committed to reporting accurately what we observe to make recommendations with no other interest in mind but what is best for children. In addition, CRBC provides an opportunity to identify barriers that can be eradicated and can improve the lives of children and their families: and improve the services of the child welfare system (CRBC, 2013).

The Citizens Review Board for Children consists of Governor appointed volunteers from state and local boards. Currently, there are 35 local review boards representing all 24 jurisdictions (23 counties and Baltimore City). There are currently 144 volunteers serving on local boards, 2 pending appointments by the Governor, 1 applicant pending submission for appointment and 1 pending selection. CRBC reviews cases of children in Out-of-Home Placement, monitors child welfare programs and makes recommendations for system improvements.

The State Board reviews and coordinates the activities of the local review boards. The State Board also examines policy issues, procedures, legislation, resources, and barriers relating to Out-of-Home Placement and the permanency of children. The State Board makes recommendations to the General Assembly around ways of improving Maryland's child welfare system.

The Citizens Review Board for Children supports all efforts to provide permanency for children in foster care. The State Board provides oversight to Maryland's child protection agencies and trains volunteer citizen panels to aid in child protection efforts.

## **Mission Statement**

To conduct case reviews of children in out-of-home care, make timely individual case and systemic child welfare recommendations; and advocate for legislative and systematic child welfare improvements to promote safety and permanency.

## **Vision Statement**

We envision the protection of all children from abuse and neglect, only placing children in out-of-home care when necessary; and providing families with the help they need to stay intact; children will be safe in a permanent living arrangement.

## **Goals**

Volunteer citizens review cases to gather information about how effectively the child welfare system discharges its responsibilities and to advocate, as necessary for each child reviewed in out-of-home care.

The Citizens Review Board for Children provides useful and timely information about the adequacy and effectiveness of efforts to promote child safety and well-being, to achieve or maintain permanency for children and about plans and efforts to improve services.

The Citizens Review Board for Children makes recommendations for improving case management and the child welfare system and effectively communicates the recommendations to decision makers and the public.

## **Discrimination Statement**

The Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) renounces any policy or practice of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, national origin, ethnicity, religion, disability, or sexual orientation that is or would be applicable to its citizen reviewers or staff or to the children, families, and employees involved in the child welfare system (CRBC, 2013).

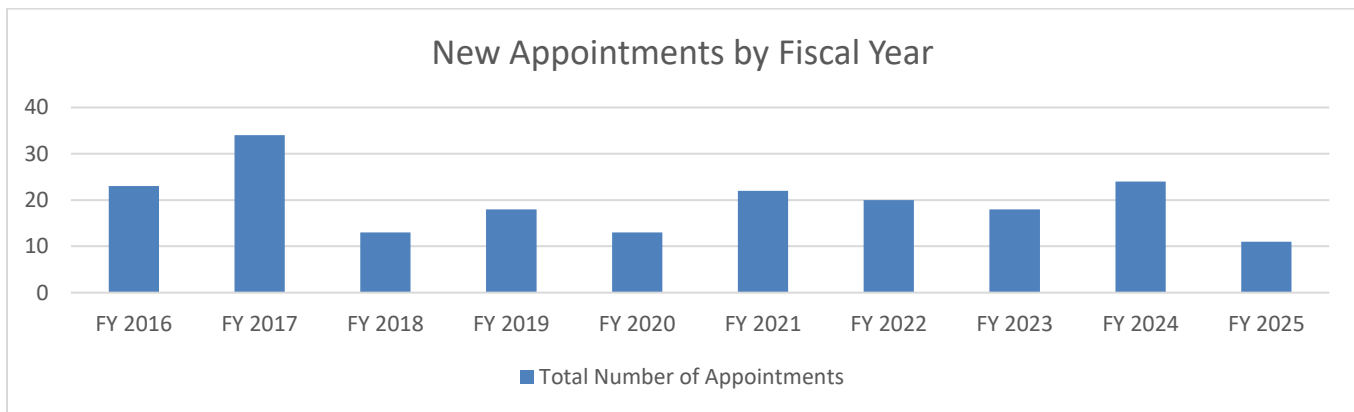
## **Confidentiality**

CRBC local board members are bound by strict confidentiality requirements. Under Maryland Human Services Code § 1-201 (2013), all records concerning out-of-home care are confidential and unauthorized disclosure is a criminal offense subject to a fine not exceeding \$500 or imprisonment not exceeding 90 days, or both. Each local board member shall be presented with the statutory language on confidentiality, including the penalty for breach thereof, and sign a confidentiality statement prior to having access to any confidential information.



## **CRBC Appointments and FY2025 Activities**

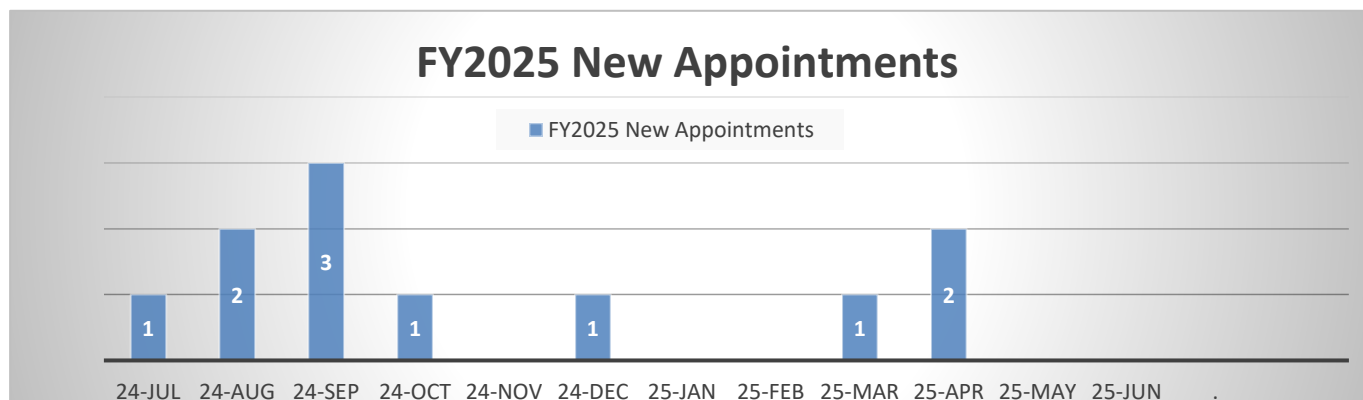
### **Appointments breakdown By Fiscal Year**



There were 23 new members appointed by the Governor to Local Out of Home Placement Review Boards in fiscal year 2016. Thirty-four members were appointed in fiscal year 2017, 13 were appointed in fiscal year 2018, 18 were appointed in fiscal year 2019, 13 were appointed in fiscal year 2020, 22 were appointed in fiscal year 2021, 20 in 2022 and 18 in 2023. In FY2024, 24 members were appointed.

### **FY2025 New Appointments**

During FY2025, CRBC continued to utilize recruitment and retention strategies to ensure membership and facilitation of reviews in all 23 counties and Baltimore City. Many of CRBC members have been dedicated and committed to serving on behalf of Maryland's most vulnerable children and youth for numerous years. Ongoing recruitment is necessary to account for some expected reduction due to attrition. Recruitment efforts continued to support CRBC's mission, vision and goals. The chart below shows appointments in FY2025.



In FY2025, 11 members were selected by selection committees and appointed by the Governor to local out-of-home placement review boards in jurisdictions where they reside. Members were appointed to the following local boards: Anne Arundel County (1), Baltimore County #1 (1), Charles County (2), Frederick County (1), Harford County (1), Montgomery County #1 (1), Prince George's

County (1), St. Mary's County (1), Washington County (1), and Worcester County (1). CRBC provided orientation, pre-service training and ongoing training, child welfare expertise and guidance for newly appointed members who served in FY2025.

### **Educational Advocacy**

Education is crucial to the well-being of children/youth. It increases opportunities and choices in life due to the skills and confidence gained when appropriate educational services, including emotional and mental health services, are provided to support a child reaching their full potential.

Educational concerns consequent to COVID that had arisen during the CRBC review process prompted the establishment of an Educational Advocacy Committee (EAC) in fiscal year 2021. The committee is a sub-committee of CRBC's State Board, and its purpose is to support CRBC's efforts with advocacy around improvement in educational services for children in foster care. The committee makes recommendations to the State Board. The goal is that all Maryland's children will have access to safe, equitable and sustainable education to support the well-being and success of all of Maryland's children. This prompted plans for a deeper look at cases including those with Individual Education Plans (IEP) and those cases where a child may need special education services but, yet have not been referred to. Also, consideration regarding whether there were sufficient examination and review of these cases. Additional considerations include the following:

- The need for data on the number of children within foster care who qualify for special education services.
- The need for every foster child who has been identified as in need of special education to have a parent or person who can function as the parent in an IEP meeting.
- Procedures within Department of Human Services (DHS) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) regarding children in foster care.
- Residential placement resources for a child who qualifies for special education services.
- Practices and policies of DHS regarding oversight of IEP development and implementation.

Previously, the committee was engaged in information gathering and a series of meetings with individuals with expertise in education and education advocacy. As the result of the above-mentioned meetings, it was determined that the committee would create a special education tip sheet to assist the Departments with a clearer understanding of the process. Although it is in draft form and requires final approval, it is the intent to finalize it and begin to utilize it in the next fiscal year. Along with providing resources statewide. Although EAC has been in hiatus due to staff shortages, it will be revived in the coming fiscal year.

## **Training**

During this fiscal year, the annual mandatory In-Service training was provided to all board members statewide along with the Volunteer Appreciation Activities to thank board members for their dedication and commitment to Maryland's vulnerable children/youth. This year's training was "Keeping Healthy Outcomes Through Positive Experiences (HOPE) In Your Work". There was a total of 90 Board Members that were in attendance for the training. The presenters/trainers were from the Maryland Department of Health/ Maryland Behavioral Health Administration within the Primary Behavioral Health & Early Intervention Division. The presenters were Adam Johnson LCPC, Behavioral Health Coordinator for Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education), Chalarra A. Sessoms, LCSW-C, Program Administrator with the Maryland Behavioral Health Administration within the Primary Behavioral Health & Early Intervention Division D'Lisa Worthy, M.Ed., Special Educator with 30 years of experience serving young children and their families. The primary objectives for the training were as follows:

- Receive a background and overview of the HOPE Framework
- Identify Type 1 and Type 2 Thinking and how to navigate implicit bias
- Review background of HOPE research and outcomes
- Receive an overview of The ACE study
- Apply Positive Childhood Experiences (PCES) through the 4 building blocks of HOPE
- Receive information on how to integrate Hopeful Nuggets into their work
- Receive resources for building resilience

During the review process, there are designated Chair and Co-Chairs elected/assigned to facilitate the review. When newly elected Chairs and Co-Chairs are included, it is vital to provide training to fully equip them with the necessary tools to lead the reviews. It's also a plus to have current Chairs to complete a refresher training on the process, expectations and roles. This was a newly created training session offered to new and seasoned Chairs/Co-Chairs.

All training sessions offered this fiscal year have been uploaded to the newly created Learning Hub designed to allow board members; local department of social services case workers, community partners and the public to have the opportunity to review and go back for a point of reference. Other training sessions are also available on the Learning Hub as well through the Department of Human Services website under the Citizens Review Board for Children's link.

One of CRBC's main goals is to support and advocate for children/youth in out-of-home care but also provides support to the staff of the local departments. Planning is underway for additional training sessions for local department staff focusing on special education resources and services to provide information on various referral processes and knowledge on how to navigate other agencies as they seek out resources for children/youth in care.

## **Promoting Safety, Well-Being and Permanency**

CRBC's priorities remain the safety and well-being of Maryland's most vulnerable children and youth. In FY2025, CRBC facilitated virtual meetings with local department of social services administrators in Baltimore City, Queen Anne's, Kent, Prince George's, Washington, St. Mary's, Talbot, Somerset, Anne Arundel, Montgomery and Worcester Counties for individual and jurisdictional advocacy. CRBC advocated for resources and support for children and youth, child welfare staff, caregivers and providers. Further discussions elaborated on the lack of shared health and education information and documentation, the potential impact on case management, planning, decision making, placement stability and permanency. Advocacy efforts included safety, well-being, placement resources for youth with intensive needs, child welfare workforce, DHS policy and practices in addition to vacant child welfare positions and workforce development.

**Meetings and Advocacy** – The Director's meetings are focused on updates from the Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) and the Local Department of Social Services (DSS), highlighting progress, challenges, and future initiatives for children in care. Other partnership collaborations occur consistently throughout the year to ensure that CRBC advocacy for children/youth and local department staff to provide input and expertise when appropriate.

### **5/10/2024 – Kent County Director's Meeting**

#### **Key Discussion Points:**

- **Acknowledgement of Social Workers' Strengths:** The Board expressed appreciation for the Department's staff, noting their exceptional work, preparedness, punctuality, and receptiveness to feedback despite statewide staffing shortages.
- **Updates from the Department:** Updates from the last two years covering investigations, in-home/out-of-home placements, planned goals and present initiatives, and challenges impacting reviews (like large sibling groups or staffing).
- **Expectations for Review (Pro-Active Approach):** The discussion moved to the need for caseworkers to be prepared to present the child/youth case to the board using CJAMS for electronic case records, with some jurisdictions finding it helpful for the supervisor to present the CJAMS documentation while the caseworker provides the update.
- **Required Documentation for Review:** The minutes list extensive documentation required for the review, including but not limited to:
  - The Permanency Plan and the date it was established.
  - The Concurrent Plan (if required).
  - Most recent Court Order.
  - Service Agreement or Maryland Youth Transition Plan for youth 14 and over.
  - Placement Plan and date of placement.
  - Termination of Parental Rights and Adoption details (if applicable).
  - Education documentation (signed IEP/504 Plan, current report cards, etc.).
  - Health documentation (physical, dental, vision, mental health, medication reviews, follow-up medical exams—not bills/prescriptions).
  - Employment history, Life Skill Classes/Assessment, and Independent Living Skills documentation for youth 14 and older.

- Permanent connection details for youth with an APPLA plan.
- Visitation plan and details.
- Documentation of Family Involvement Meetings/Family Team Decision Meetings occurring every six months.
- Infants and Toddler documentation indicating progress/treatment plan.
- **CRBC Case Review Worksheet:** Caseworkers should familiarize themselves with the CRBC Case Review Worksheet, which is used by staff and the board and can be found on the CRBC website.
- **New Education Policy (SSA/CW #23-04):** Board Member introduced the updated Education Stability policy, effective December 15, 2023. This policy supersedes prior policies and establishes guidelines to ensure the educational stability of children in the care of a local department. Measures include:
  - Ensuring the best interest determinations are made within 5 business days of every new or change in placement.
  - Ensuring appropriate transportation plans for children attending their schools of origin.
  - Ensuring adherence to permanency case plan requirements with every new placement.
  - Ensuring proper documentation of a child's educational information is entered into the electronic system.
  - A resource folder, practice guidance, and training were created to assist staff with implementation.

## **10/24/24 - Wicomico County Director's Meeting**

### **Key Discussion Points:**

- **CRBC Updates:**
  - An overview of October immigration training was provided, focusing on supporting undocumented youth, with Prince George's and Montgomery counties noted as most impacted.
  - Efforts are ongoing to advocate for Independent Living (IL) services for youth and staff, particularly on the resource-limited Eastern Shore.
- **Trends and Challenges (Wicomico County DSS):**
  - **Children in Care:** The department has 23 children in care, a significant portion of whom are age 14 and older with high-intensity needs, including behavioral issues, substance use, refusal of placement (leading to hotel stays), and aggression toward staff.
  - **Staffing:** The foster care unit faces severe staffing shortages, high turnover, and low tenure among current staff. Retention efforts include monthly team building, a hybrid work schedule, and discussion of a Wellness/Staff Development Day.
  - **DJS Referrals:** An increasing percentage of referrals originate from Juvenile Services (DJS), with many youths having serious mental health, behavioral, and criminal components. Courts are increasingly using DSS and DJS co-commitments as a last resort.
  - **Placement:** There is an ongoing challenge with limited therapeutic and specialized placement resources for youth with intensive needs.

- **Workforce Pipeline:** The department struggles to secure interns from Salisbury University (SU) due to competitive wages for bachelor's-level graduates outside of DSS.
- **Crossover Youth and Education:**
  - Crossover Youth meetings occur monthly. The Local Coordinating Team (LCT), which includes the Board of Education, is used for interagency coordination.
  - A challenge arises when Wicomico County Public Schools decline Level V schools, potentially making DSS responsible for educational costs through a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA). Mediation or due process hearings were recommended for insufficient educational services.
- **Case Review Guidance:**
  - **Interested Parties:** It was stressed that all relevant interested parties (youth age 10+, CASA, agencies) must participate in reviews and complete forms accurately.
  - **Education Documentation:** New legislation requires a Best Interest Determination (BID) meeting for any school change. Required records for reviews include report cards/progress reports and current, signed Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Workers were strongly advised to obtain a draft IEP in advance.
  - **Virtual Reviews:** Caseworkers must be prepared to present cases and required documentation, which includes the Permanency Plan, Court Orders, Service Agreements (for youth 14+), Placement Plan, education and health records, and Life Skills documentation. The CRBC Case Review Worksheet is available for reference.

## **10/24/2024 - Allegany County Director's Meeting**

### **Key Discussion Points:**

- **Current Challenges in Child Welfare:**
  - 38 children are currently in care.
  - 46% of youth are placed out of county in higher levels of care.
  - There is a lack of local resources, including group homes, RTCs, and assessment facilities.
  - Significant travel demands are placed on social workers.
  - A **Case Example** detailed a youth who has been in a Baltimore hotel with 1:1 support for two months due to a lack of stable placement.
- **Local Initiatives:**
  - **Recruitment and Retention Team** is working to rebuild the foster parent base (currently 20 foster parents).
  - **Crisis Team** is collaborating with youth and in-home services to preserve family placements.
  - **Transition Team** is focused on bringing youth back to or closer to Allegany County.
  - The department is utilizing a peer support worker and crisis team to aid staff and youth.
- **Future Vision:**
  - The goal is to **Create an Independent Living Facility** with wrap-around services for youth under 18 to ensure safety, stability, and connection to their community.
  - Discussions have been held with a local landlord/developer to explore housing options.
- **CRBC Updates:**
  - Focus on **Older Youth Engagement** to address the lack of permanent connections for youth aging out of care.

- Process of **Barrier Identification** to analyze jurisdictional issues and local/statewide trends.
- Upcoming **Training Initiatives** include Immigration Training, a Training HUB for existing resources, a Virtual In-Service in April, and an in-person statewide In-Service in 2026.

## **10/30/2024 - Queen Anne's County Director's Meeting**

### **CRBC Updates:**

- **Role and Mandate:** CRBC, mandated for over 40 years, provides oversight for the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in care, positioning itself as a collaborative partner to strengthen services, not criticize the Department.
- **Partnership Examples:** CRBC has developed statewide immigration training and facilitated FAFSA training for staff, acting as a hub for information and legislative advocacy.
- **Key Focus Area (Independent Living):** A major concern is the lack of Independent Living (IL) coordinators and consistent programming for older youth (ages 17–20) on the Eastern Shore. CRBC is exploring regional/virtual IL models, including Baltimore City's *Ready by 21* programs, in collaboration with SSA.

### **Department Updates & Challenges (Susan Coppage & Alex Sweetak)**

- **Staffing Status:** The Department is technically fully staffed for the first time in a while, though temporary coverage gaps exist due to multiple staff preparing for or on maternity leave.
- **Current Placement Trends:** The county currently has 7 children in care. The recent trend involves older youths with significant behavioral challenges (not mental health diagnoses) who enter care because families cannot manage their behavior.
- **Systemic Placement Issues:** Placement limitations are a statewide issue. Foster homes are not equipped for youth with aggressive or fire-setting behaviors, leaving few safe options. The closure of the RTC in Cambridge further reduced available resources.
- **Hotel Stays:** Queen Anne County has so far avoided placing youth in hotels but acknowledged how close they have come. This is a statewide issue where some youth, with court support, manipulate refusals to remain in costly, supervised hotel settings, creating inequities and safety concerns.
- **Advocacy:** DSS leadership emphasized the need to advocate for more behavioral and therapeutic placements, especially for youth aged 14 and older.

### **Collaboration and Resources**

- **Foster Care Supervisor Involvement:** The group agreed that including Foster Care Supervisors in future meetings is essential to gain valuable frontline insight and improve communication.
- **CRBC's Supportive Role:** CRBC offered to hold orientations for new DSS staff to clarify its non-punitive, supportive role and build trust.
- **Chesapeake College Resources:** The college is a key partner, offering programs beneficial to youth in care, including:

- **TRIO Student Support Services** (tutoring, mentoring, food bank)
- **Upward Bound** (college preparation for youth age 14+)
- **Trade programs** and **FAFSA assistance**

**Interested Parties:** I was reported about the importance of ensuring accurate contact information for all Interested Parties to ensure their participation in reviews.

**Education:** Educational mandates, including the importance of signed IEPs and report cards/progress reports for youth in foster care, and board members offered themselves as resources for educational challenges.

## **Next Steps**

- Both CRBC and DSS leadership committed to **ongoing dialogue** and strengthening partnerships to share resources and ensure the well-being of children in care.

## **11/26/2024 - Washington County Director's Meeting**

### **Key Discussion Points:**

#### **Citizens Review Board Updates:**

- Training: FAFSA updates, ongoing immigration training series, free CEUs offered.
- Immigration Cases: Rising in Montgomery & Prince George's Counties; expected increase in Washington County.
- Placements: Statewide instability, especially for immigrant youth.
- Adoption Concerns: Failed adoption due to miscommunication in immigrant youth case; systemic issue flagged.
- Partnership Needs: Strengthen collaboration on immigration, placements, training, and adoption processes.

### **Department Updates**

- New Initiatives:
- Modernized foster parent training curriculum (replacing PRIDE).
- Kin First Initiative: Expanded definition of "kin" to include godparents, family friends, neighbors, babysitters, and community members.
- Children in Care: 135 children currently in care; 56 require higher-level placements.

### **Case Trends:**

- Neglect = 71% of removals.
- Caregiver drug use = 46% (fentanyl major factor).
- Housing instability is present in 59% of cases.
- Challenges: Staffing shortages, hiring delays, limited local treatment resources.
- Complex Needs: Families present with layered issues (mental health, disabilities); community support often exhausted before removal.



## **Independent Living (IL) Program**

- Baltimore City IL Program strong; expansion underway statewide.
- Significant gaps in Eastern Shore counties (no IL programs).
- Efforts are ongoing to expand access to underserved regions.

## **Board & Review Process**

- Acknowledgements: Praised social workers' professionalism and dedication.
- Interested Parties: Emphasis on accurate, complete forms to avoid delays.
- Virtual Reviews: Caseworkers must use CJAMS via Google Meet; required documentation includes permanency plans, court orders, education/health records, IL skills, CASA reports.

## **Strategic Takeaways**

- Immigration-related cases and adoption processes require urgent systemic fixes.
- Placement stability and resource limitations remain critical challenges.
- Kinship care expansion and modernized training are promising initiatives.
- Independent Living services need statewide equity, especially in underserved counties.
- Accurate documentation and collaboration are essential for effective reviews.

## **1/17/2025 – St. Mary's County Director's Meeting**

### **Key discussion points:**

- **Kinship Initiatives:** The county is implementing the new Kinship Law (effective October) and Kinship Licensing Regulations, which broaden the definition of kin and allow kin providers to receive a stipend. St. Mary's County is noted as ranking second in the state for the highest rate of kin placement.
- **Foster Care and Permanency:**
  - St. Mary's County achieved a 20-year high with 14 adoptions in 2024.
  - The current statistics show 54 children/youth in foster care, with **68%** placed out of county due to the lack of local resources (TFC foster homes, group homes, RTCs).
  - Foster Supervisor emphasized permanency, including developing strong court relationships and using the length of time a youth has been in care to encourage judicial advocacy.
- **Education Focus:** The department is collaborating with the school system and county executives to secure resources and funding for an **Education Liaison** to address educational barriers. It was noted that 85% of youth are not proficient in reading, writing, and math.
- **CRBC Updates:** CRBC Administrator provided updates, including hosting FASFA and Immigration training and planning to coordinate the **Maryland Department of Health – HOPE (Healthy Opportunities Program for Environment)** training statewide later in the year. CRBC aims to be a source of resources and support and requested review of the Annual Report.

## **2/13/2025 - Talbot County Director's Meeting**

### **Key Discussion Points:**

- **CRBC Updates:**
  - **Training:** Staff received FASFA and Immigration Training, with ongoing consultation with Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) for international adoption cases.
  - **HOPE Framework:** An upcoming CRBC training (April 18th, no cost) was announced for the Healthy Outcomes from Positive Environments (HOPE) concept, which complements Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) by focusing on resilience and positive experiences.
  - **Case Review Barriers:** The first-quarter review identified issues such as youth placement outside their home jurisdiction, refusal of school/therapy/medication, and a need for more complete medical/dental documentation.
- **Department Updates:**
  - **Transition-Age Youth (TAY):** There are currently 12 TAY in care. The Enhanced Youth Transition Planning (YTP) process is being implemented using the "Achieve My Plan AMP" model, with internal structures being developed to maintain the program after the federal grant ends in March.
  - **Permanency Plans (TAY):** Data was shared: 4 youth with APPLA, 5 with Guardianship, 2 with Adoption, and 1 with Reunification. There are no dual commitments.
  - **Immigration:** The county is proactively coordinating with community agencies like the Multicultural Center to prepare families for potential immigration impacts, though widespread separations have not yet been reported.
- **Independent Living (IL) Programs:** IL services are limited across the Eastern Shore, and there is **no dedicated IL coordinator** in many counties. Both the CRBC and DSS acknowledged the need for a standardized curriculum and consistent delivery of IL skills to prepare youth for adulthood.

## **4/1/2025 - Worcester County Director's Meeting**

### **Key Updates and Discussion Points:**

- **Foster Care Program:**
  - **Youth in Care:** There are currently 20 children in foster care placements (including adoption, custody, and guardianship).
  - **Adoption:** A recent adoption was finalized for a child in Pennsylvania who had been in care for three years.
  - **Trends:** Recent entries primarily involve sibling groups and re-entry cases. The most common contributing factors are parent substance use and untreated mental health concerns.
- **Staffing:**
  - New Foster Care workers will be onboarding soon.
  - The current intern will join as a full-time staff member, and an In-Home Services worker is transitioning to the Foster Care Home Licensing position.
  - Recruitment for a Foster Care Supervisor is active, but there are currently no applicants.

- **Supports for Foster Parents:**
  - The Department provides **respite care and training opportunities**, especially for those caring for youth with significant behavioral challenges.
  - Access to mental health treatment for youth is limited due to recent funding cuts, with referrals being made to Salisbury, though transportation is a barrier.
  - The Department is exploring a partnership with the Family Support Center for prevention services.
- **Statewide Funding Impact:**
  - Funding cuts to sister agencies are raising concerns about services for youth with developmental disabilities.
  - Mental health programming across the state may be negatively impacted, limiting access to specialized 1:1 treatment.
  - Worcester County lacks specialized programming and relies on collaboration with neighboring counties and the Department of Human Services (DHS).
  - Worcester's ARPA funds are designated for the Child Advocacy Center.
- **Independent Living:**
  - The Department is advised to use the **Independent Living Ready by 21 Plan** and the **Casey life skills assessment** to cover critical points for youth transitioning out of care.
  - Monthly youth advisory board meetings are held with other local counties.
- **Other Discussion Points:**
  - **CJAMS Navigation:** Many workers lack competence in navigating CJAMS compliance requirements.
  - **Turnover:** High turnover is attributed to non-regular hours (up to 7 days a week), limited resources, increased scope to support youth beyond neglect/abuse cases, and vicarious trauma.
  - **Upcoming Event:** The Worcester County Fair was mentioned as an event the Board members can assist with.

## **4/11/2025 – Somerset County Director's Meeting**

### **Key Updates and Discussion Points:**

- **CRBC Updates:**
  - Developing a **Learning Hub** on the CRBC website for training materials and resources, including documents from the recent Immigration Crisis Training.
  - CRBC clarified that inquiries about their membership and processes should be directed to the Governor's Appointments Office, not DSS.
  - Noted a gap in CRBC-specific details on local office volunteer application pages.
- **Current Status of Youth in Care (DSS):**
  - Currently, **20 children** are in care in Somerset County.
  - Several children are expected to enter care within the next 30 days via Child Protective Services.
  - The **Family Matters Initiative** prioritizes kin placement, with 20% of children currently placed with kin.
- **Adoption and Placement:**
  - A sibling group of three children is scheduled for adoption soon.

- The department remains committed to continually exploring family placements for stability and long-term permanency.
- **Staffing and Turnover:**
  - The services division, including the out-of-home unit, is fully staffed.
  - The Department acknowledged the exceptional work of its dedicated staff, including long-standing members.
- **Community Engagement and Events:**
  - Upcoming events include a **Mental Health Awareness Event** (mid-May), a **Healthy Families Lower Shore Event** (summer), and participation in the **Somerset County Fair** (early August).
- **Challenges and Barriers:**
  - Limited availability of placement resources on the Eastern Shore, such as Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs) and group homes, often necessitating out-of-state placements.
  - Significant challenges managing youth with complex behavioral and mental health needs.
  - Primary factors for recent entries into care are parental substance use and mental health issues (like personality disorders).
  - Not all youth, particularly older youth placed out of the area, currently have a **CASA** assigned due to volunteer availability.
- **Independent Living:**
  - DSS supports youth transition with essential document preparation (ID, driver's education), education support (diploma/GED), and monthly life skills discussions (budgeting, financial literacy).
  - Older youth participate in a regional **Youth Advisory Board (YAB)** for training and peer connection.
  - The Department uses **transition-facilitated meetings** to formalize youth support.
  - Marta Shea serves as an informal Independent Living Lead.
  - A request was made to obtain an updated version of the "**Ready by 21**" **framework** and a consistent statewide curriculum for independent living services from SSA.
- **Scheduling and Planning:**
  - The group agreed to leave the current review date as is and look at **rescheduling for 2026**.
- **Virtual Reviews/Board Expectation:**
  - Legislation requires inviting all relevant interested parties (youth age 10+, CASA, agencies, therapists) and emphasizes the need for accurate information on the Interested Party Form for proper notification.

## **5/7/2025 – Baltimore County’s Director’s Meeting**

### **Key Discussion Points:**

#### **Department Updates:**

- The Department has implemented a new initiative, Cuddle Shuttle, which is an opportunity for staff and customers to pet and cuddle with dogs to relieve stress during the day.
- An Oasis Room has been created for staff with soft lighting and comfortable massage chairs to allow staff to relax.
- A walking group has been created to release stress for staff and provide a positive outlet for those who wish to participate.
- Camp Connect has been in existence for 25 years bringing families together to connect with their siblings and have fun at camp maintaining lifetime links.
- KinFirst- The Department has 3 full-time social workers devoted to enhancing the services for building and rebuilding kin relationships. While also assisting in the process of selecting Family by Choice.

#### **CRBC Updates:**

- **Training:** Staff received FASFA and Immigration Training, with ongoing consultation with Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) for international adoption cases.
- **HOPE Framework:** An upcoming CRBC training (April 18th, no cost) was announced for the Healthy Outcomes from Positive Environments (HOPE) concept, which complements Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) by focusing on resilience and positive experiences.
- **Case Review Barriers:** Issues such as youth placement outside their home jurisdiction, refusal of school/therapy/medication, and a need for more complete medical/dental documentation. It has been requested to add case managers work cell phones to interested party sheets so Child Welfare Specialist can have an alternative number to reach staff instead of just having their desk phone numbers. Changes of staff for case reviews are oftentimes not available until the actual day of the review.

## **5/8/2025 - Anne Arundel County Director’s Meeting**

### **Key points from the meeting:**

- **Anne Arundel County Child Welfare Snapshot:** The department oversees 125 foster children in AA County, with 36 placed in other counties, and currently has 60 foster families, noting a need for additional families.
- **CRBC’s Role:** CRBC's mandate under CAPTA is to provide oversight for children in out-of-home care and child protection, verifying documentation related to child safety, well-being, and permanency planning.
- **Improvements/Pros Noticed by CRBC:**
  - Caseworkers are receptive to and implementing CRBC's resources and recommendations.

- Increased supervisor presence is helping to expedite the review process.
- Flexibility of case workers regarding scheduling changes.
- More foster parents, children, and interested parties are attending Review Board meetings.

- **Challenges Noticed by CRBC:**

- **Court Reports:** Initial court reports with history are often incomplete; a recommendation was made to submit both initial and subsequent court reports to CRBC.
- **Document Location:** Difficulty in locating documents, with a suggestion to email documents ahead of time or use a shared folder instead of relying solely on CJAMS.
- **Missing Signatures:** Lack of signed Service Plan Agreements and MD Youth Transitional Plans.
- **Case Transfers:** Insufficient knowledge transfer between outgoing and new caseworkers, suggesting the supervisor or previous caseworker (if possible) and the new caseworker participate in reviews occurring within 30 days of the case transfer.
- **Quiet Location:** Caseworkers have called into reviews from their vehicles, prompting a request for them to find a safe, confidential, and quiet location for reviews.
- **Stale Information:** Information provided is sometimes outdated or incomplete, despite CRBC providing a checklist beforehand.

- **Department Updates:**

- The Department has 6 caseworker and 1 supervisor vacancy in foster care.
- New case workers undergo a 6-week shadowing period, pre-service training, and must pass a competency test before being assigned cases.
- The **Kinship Policy** took effect in December 2024 to support families through kinship, and a **kinship navigator** will start on May 15th.
- There are approximately 55 foster parents, down from 80-90.
- Child age breakdown: 42 (0-5 years), 44 (14-20 years), and 39 (remaining age group).

- **CRBC Updates:**

- Working on providing shared knowledge and resources for **emerging adults** due to inconsistencies across jurisdictions, noting they are eligible for independent living programs if any program receives federal funding.
- Creating a **Learning Hub** on the CRBC website for training information.
- Seeking new, diverse Board members.
- **10 Housing vouchers** are available through AA County's Housing Commission for emerging adults, along with **\$10,000** in the budget for new furniture.
- Review data (Oct-Dec 2024): 11 cases reviewed; 18% had a concurrent plan; 91% had met educational needs. Issues included lack of follow-up, educational/mental health barriers, and outdated medical/dental/vision documentation.

## **5/16/2025 – Prince George’s County Director’s Meeting**

### **Key Discussion Points:**

- **Updates from Department:** Discussion on improvements, accomplishments, and areas needing adjustment related to Child Welfare in Prince George's County, including the appointment of a FE specialist.
  - Kinship Care Conference w/ Progressive Life sponsored by PG County DSS
  - Family Matters Concept has been revisited by the Department
  - Family Find to be redefined and who is important to them
  - Youth Advisory Board to include 4-5 youth are involved
  - Recommendation reports to be added to the court report
- **Review Board Improvements and Review Board Challenges/Case Concerns & Follow-Up**
  - Specific case concerns for review boards on 3/20/2025, 4/7/2025, and 5/5/2025 are detailed, involving youth with issues such as self-placement, neglect, pregnancy, education/behavioral issues, undocumented status, a bench warrant, missed hearings, and challenges with childcare and placement. A notable issue mentioned is the lack of interpreter notification for a board review.
- **Prince George’s County Review Barriers and CRBC Updates**
  - Lack of concurrent planning
  - Worker did not submit referral for needed resources/service
  - Lack of follow-up (General)
  - No service agreement with parents
  - No service agreement with youth
  - Other independence barrier
  - Board does not agree with current permanency plan
  - No current safe custody & guardianship
  - Annual physicals not current
  - Dentals not current
  - Vision not current
- **New Resources:** An announcement was made about the launch of a new CRBC learning hub on their website, which includes past training on topics like immigration and mandated reporting.
- **Recommendation Tracking:** Board members expressed concern about the lack of formal feedback on CRBC recommendations. It was acknowledged that this is a statewide issue focused on accountability.
- **Vehicles for Change:** The Vehicles for Change program for emerging youth transportation, noting low utilization and the need to clarify challenging eligibility criteria (income for insurance, small loan for credit building).

## **6/5/2025 – Baltimore City Director’s Meeting**

### **Key Discussion Points:**

- **Accolades & improvements from staff on reviews:**
  - Highlights include an increase in supervisor presence during reviews, naming model workers/supervisors, improved Individualized Plan (IP) attendance, and new workers being fluent with CJAMS.
- **Areas for Growth:**
  - Siblings not included in reviews.
  - Supervisors/staff changes without timely notification.
  - Staff showing up late to reviews and calling in from non-confidential areas.
  - Treatment Homes not being included on IP Sheets for invitations to reviews (with some improvements noted).
  - Inadequate follow-up on advocacy efforts between reviews.
  - Concerns about the professional etiquette of Supervisors/Workers.
- **Updates from the Department:**
  - There are about 1, 400 children/youth in care.
  - 41% placed with kin either by blood or by choice
  - Fatherhood Group has begun to provide support for fathers
  - Family Navigator Program has been implemented to assist families with navigating all the various systems that they may have to interact with which sometimes can leave families overwhelmed.
  - Partnerships have been formed with the University of Maryland and Morgan State University to enhance the work of Child Welfare
- **CRBC Updates:** CRBC Administrator provided updates, including hosting FASFA and Immigration training and planning to coordinate the **Maryland Department of Health – HOPE (Healthy Opportunities Program for Environment)** training statewide later in the year. CRBC aims to be a source of resources and support and requested review of the Annual Report.
  - Creating a **Learning Hub** on the CRBC website for training information.
  - Seeking new, diverse Board members.

## **6/30/2025 - Montgomery County Director’s Meeting**

### **Key Discussion Points:**

#### **Departmental Operations and Casework**

- **Praise for Staff:** Acknowledgement of the department's hard work, specifically noting improvements in social worker professionalism, transparency, and increased supervisor presence during reviews.
- **Youth Transition Plans:** Highlights were made illustrating a major initiative to ensure all Emerging youth have transition plans starting as early as age 14.



- **Documentation Concerns:** Concerns about missing medical documentation (physical, vision, dental exams) and incomplete 631E forms. Leadership agreed to address the 631E form challenges with supervisors and agreed to include child photos in reviews.

## Support for Undocumented Youth

- **Legal & Services:** Discussions centered on the need for additional legal resources due to long waitlists for pro bono counsel and challenges with organizations like Kids in Need of Defense. Services for aging-out undocumented youth were confirmed, including eligibility for in-state tuition, though medical care access remains a major concern.
- **Healthcare Partnerships:** It has been determined that partnerships with organizations like the Latin American Youth Center to connect aged-out youth with healthcare and support services.

## Placements and Trends

- **Placement Data:** It was reported that an average of 331 youth in foster care in April and May. There was a decrease in in-home family preservation cases, but this work still involves significant contact hours.
- **Kinship Care:** Kinship placements increased by 215% compared to the previous year, with as many youths in kinship homes as licensed foster homes. The continuing need for resource parents for groups like teenagers and sibling groups was emphasized.
- **Challenges:** Out-of-county placements were noted to impact contact hours due to transportation. Primary drivers for child welfare involvement were identified as mental health (a recent significant factor), substance use, and domestic violence.

## CRBC Collaboration Updates

- **New Resources:** An announcement was made about the launch of a new CRBC learning hub on their website, which includes past training on topics like immigration and mandated reporting.
- **Recommendation Tracking:** Board members expressed concern about the lack of formal feedback on CRBC recommendations. It was acknowledged that this is a statewide issue focused on accountability.
- **Vehicles for Change:** The Vehicles for Change program for emerging youth transportation, noting low utilization and the need to clarify challenging eligibility criteria (income for insurance, small loan for credit building).

CRBC has consistently worked to enhance service delivery for children/youth in care by participating in various meetings, advocacy opportunities and partnership building to be well informed. As a partner with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, along with other members from the Department of Human Services (DHS) welcomed the opportunity to participate in a 9-month cohort entitled the SOUL Family Network. In short, SOUL is the Support, Opportunity, Unity, and Legal Relationships to improve permanency outcomes for older youth. This cohort was inclusive of six states, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Tennessee, Connecticut, Oklahoma and lastly Maryland. According to the guidelines set forth for the cohort, the sole purpose was to be an innovative framework aimed at helping young

people establish legal relationships with one or more caregivers, maintain their legal relationship with existing family connections, and prioritize access to critical benefits and services to ensure they will thrive into adulthood and beyond. Ultimately, the final outcome would be which states will have the bandwidth to incorporate the SOUL framework within their own state.

## **Children’s Legislative Action Committee (CLAC)**

### **Bills Reviewed for the 2025 Maryland General Assembly**

#### **Legislative Session**

#### **Criteria for Reviews: Protection of Children to include but not limited to the following:**

- Child neglect and abuse
- Out of home placement, foster care, guardianship
- Institutions/facilities that house children
- Child exploitation and trafficking
- Behavioral health and treatment (counseling/therapy)
- Child welfare workforce
- Older youth placement
- Health - physical and mental
- Social services
- Education/curriculum/assessments
- Domestic violence
- Sexual harassment or other types of harassment
- In care Juveniles –disciplinary, punishment, penal system
- Reports, records, privacy

#### **Bills Reviewed:**

**HB0120** - Favorable/Supported - Failed to Pass- Age should have little impact on a minor that is already a mother, and she should be allowed to file for child support without necessarily engaging her parents or guardians.

Synopsis: Authorizing a minor who is the legal and custodial parent of a child to file an action for child support.

**SB0333/HB0442** – Favorable/Supported – Passed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading

Synopsis: Expanding the evidentiary rule on the admissibility of out of court statements made by child victims or witnesses to make admissible an out of court statement made by a child to a forensic interviewer.

**SB0274/HB0293** - Favorable/Supported – Passed on 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading - This greatly eliminates the embarrassment, intimidation, and trauma that an abused child might feel providing testimony inside a court room. This bill further protects a child victim from being in the same court room as the accused when a video of an interview with the child is shown in court.

Synopsis: Altering a certain requirement under which a court is authorized to order that the testimony of a child victim be taken outside a courtroom and shown in the courtroom by closed circuit television in certain child abuse cases.

**SB0174** - Favorable/Supported - Passed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading

Synopsis: Entering into the Social Work Licensure Compact for the purpose of authorizing regulated social workers who hold multistate licenses to practice social work in member states; establishing requirements for multistate licensure; establishing the Social Work Licensure Compact Commission; and providing for withdrawal from the Compact.

**HB0185/ SB0359** – Abstained - Passed - Fiscal concerns for already established programs are outside of the purview of CLAC.

Synopsis: Altering the fiscal years to include fiscal year 2027 and each fiscal year thereafter, during which the Governor is required to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$3,700,000 to the Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program. The purpose of the Program is to provide grants to providers that specialize in providing childcare and early childhood education to children under the age 9 of 6 years who have developmental delays, physical disabilities, or delays in social, emotional, or behavioral functioning.

**SB0343** - Abstained – Passed - Outside of CLAC's purview.

Synopsis: "Establishing the State's Attorney Case Management System Grant Fund; reconstituting the Task Force to Study Transparency Standards for State's Attorneys; and requiring the Task Force to develop processes by which prosecutors can collect information and determine what information should be made public and what information may be kept private, and examine existing policies of State's Attorneys' offices across the State relating to transparency of data, the charging of crimes, and sentencing."

**SB0379** – Favorable/Supported - Failed to Pass- Given the scarcity and burn-out factor for social workers, the requirements should be reduced thereby allowing more individuals to enter the field faster. However, recommending more mentoring and on the job, training should be provided. This should be a standard program that ensures that new social workers have the resources and practical training available to them. Perhaps consider layers of training such as certificates, bachelor's degree, and master's levels with each being engaged but at varying levels of proficiency and experience. For

example, the more seasoned master's level social workers could manage more complex cases that require more independence in judgment and actions.

Synopsis: Repealing the examination requirements for bachelor and master social worker licenses; and altering the number of consumer members on the State Board of Social Work Examiners

**SB0367** - Favorable/Supported – Failed to Pass - Living with stable housing coupled with assistive services can drastically improve an individual's health and mental illness improving recovery from substance abuse and physical health conditions. This program may improve the lives of many Marylanders.

Synopsis: For the purpose of requiring the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide supportive housing and health services to certain Program recipients; establishing requirements for professionals seeking certification as a certified supportive housing and health services professional and entities that employ or contract with supportive housing and health services professionals; requiring the Maryland Department of Health to establish a stakeholder advisory committee to advise the Department on the development of certain regulations and procedures; requiring the Department to apply for a waiver from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to provide supportive housing and health services under the Program; and generally relating to the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and supportive housing and health services. By repealing and reenacting, without amendments. Requiring the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, beginning July 1, 2026.

**SB0411** – Favorable/Supported - Failed to Pass - This legislation will improve the mental health not only of the mother but will have a positive impact on the viability of the newborn and the emotional and mental health of the rest of the family.

Synopsis: Requiring certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to provide coverage for postpartum depression screening; authorizing the insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to subject a copayment, coinsurance, or deductible requirement on coverage for postpartum depression screening; and applying the Act to all policies, contracts, and health benefit plans issued, delivered, or renewed in the State on or after January 1, 2026.

**HB0456** – Abstained - Outside of CLAC's purview. Failed to Pass

Synopsis: Establishing a certain statute of limitations in certain civil actions relating to child nonsexual abuse and neglect; establishing a limitation of \$1,500,000 on noneconomic damages that may be awarded under the Act; providing that a certain party may appeal an interlocutory order under certain circumstances; applying the Act prospectively and retroactively to certain actions barred by a certain statute of limitations; etc.

**HB0649** – Favorable/Supported – Failed to Pass - Foster parents' access to this information might prevent children from being moved so many times from one home to another. Foster parents would be better prepared to manage and support the child. If the child's situation was beyond their training

or capacity, then they would know early enough not to accept the foster child, and the child would not have to deal with another failed placement.

Synopsis: Requiring a child placement agency to provide a background report concerning a child to a foster parent before the foster parent may consent to the placement of the child with the foster parent; and requiring the report to indicate whether the child has had any interaction with a law enforcement agency, including any arrests, been charged with or found guilty of a crime, been a member of or associated with a criminal gang, or been suspended or expelled from school.

**HB0223** – Unfavorable/Opposed -- formerly HB0644 (2024)—See notes below from 2024 about this bill – Failed to Pass

Synopsis: Requiring a local department of social services or a law enforcement agency to provide oral and written notice of certain rights to a parent or caretaker of a child at the time of initial contact during an investigation of suspected child abuse or neglect; and excluding evidence obtained in violation of the Act from being used in certain judicial or administrative proceedings.

Notes from last year's review of this bill (2024)

HB0644 -- Unfavorable/Opposed – Reviewed before. CPMC and NASW wrote opposing testimony. Requiring a local department of social services or a law enforcement agency to provide a certain notice to a parent or caretaker of a child at a certain time during an investigation of suspected child abuse or neglect; and excluding evidence obtained in violation of the Act from being used in certain judicial or administrative proceedings.

**SB0191** – Unfavorable/Opposed – Bill Withdrawn - Rationale: Concern for the safety of the child and lack of adequate training for the caregiver.

Synopsis: Prohibiting a child in need of assistance from being placed in an unlicensed setting except under certain circumstances; and generally relating to children in need of assistance.

**HB0152/SB0025** – Favorable/Supported – Failed to Pass – Bill Not Submitted

Synopsis: Specifying certain qualifications for an individual to be appointed by a court as a custody evaluator; and generally relating to child custody and visitation.

**HB0334/SB0156** – Favorable/Supported – Passed - In Maryland in 2022, 415 infants died before reaching their first birthday, an infant mortality rate of 6.0 per 1,000 live births. This program would support mothers and provide them with more training in how to care for their newborn babies.

Synopsis: Requiring the Maryland Department of Health to establish a program to provide universal newborn nurse home visiting services to all families with newborns residing in the State; requiring insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations that provide certain health benefits under certain insurance policies or contracts to provide certain coverage and

reimbursement for universal newborn nurse home visiting services; requiring a report on the status of newborn nurse home visiting services by December 1, 2026; etc.

***SB0833/HB1057*** – Favorable/Supported - Passed

Synopsis: Requiring, beginning in fiscal year 2026, the Secretary of Human Services to review and reallocate a portion of the Department of Human Services' annual budget to be used to provide child care stipends to certain private treatment foster care homes to cover child care expenses in a manner similar to public treatment foster care homes; requiring, beginning in fiscal year 2027, the Secretary to include in the Department's annual budget proposal certain funding for child care stipends for private treatment foster care homes; etc.

***HB0649*** – Favorable/Supported – Failed to Pass This bill was also reviewed last year.

Comment: This bill is favored because it might eliminate the need to have children deal with multiple placements because a foster parent was not equipped or able to manage certain behaviors or history of a child. This would also help prevent more psychological trauma to the particularly feeling abandoned again after forming attachments to the foster parent(s).

Synopsis: Requiring a child placement agency to provide a background report concerning a child to a foster parent before the foster parent may consent to the placement of the child with the foster parent; and requiring the report to indicate whether the child has had any interaction with a law enforcement agency, including any arrests, been charged with or found guilty of a crime, been a member of or associated with a criminal gang, or been suspended or expelled from school.

***HB0944*** - Unfavorable – Failed to Pass

Synopsis: Repealing a provision that authorizes a local department of social services to ask the juvenile court to find that reasonable efforts to reunify a child with the child's parent or guardian are not required if the local department concludes that a parent or guardian has involuntarily lost parental rights to a sibling of the child, etc.

***HB0950*** - Favorable/Supported – Failed to Pass

Synopsis: Expanding the circumstances under which a report or record concerning child abuse or neglect may be disclosed by the Department of Human Services to include the administrator of a certain child care center, the coach, team administrator, or manager of a youth sports program, and the administrator or other appropriate personnel of any organization that provides adult supervision or care and control of children.

***HB1205*** – Favorable/Supported - Failed to Pass

Synopsis: Requiring a local department of social services to provide non-confidential information to a prospective foster care parent on the medical, educational, and behavioral history of a child as it

directly relates to the care of a child in an out-of-home placement; and authorizing a local department of social services to place up to four foster children in an out-of-home placement.

***SB0755*** – Favorable/Supported – Failed to Pass

Synopsis: Requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission to consider students who are in informal care relationships as independent for the purpose of qualifying for certain student financial assistance.

***SB0770*** crossed filed with ***HB1105*** - Favorable with caveat – W&M Hearing- Failed to Pass

Comment: A similar bill was introduced last year. However, it focused on adult employees having contact with children. CLAC's concern was that there are minors hired for some position, e.g., summer aides, volunteers, interns, etc. that might not be adult age but will still have contact with minor children in childcare centers and youth-serving organizations. We would like to ensure that this version does not specifically only apply to adult applicants and employees. This bill should be inclusive of ALL individuals having contact with children in these centers and organizations. We know that abused children are often abused by other minors and this is of grave concern. This is a very lengthy bill, and it outlines the process for review and approval. Perhaps some steps might need to be modified for minors, but it's still critical that they have some type of review before allowing them to work with children in these settings.

Synopsis: Requiring child care centers and youth-serving organizations to require applicants for positions involving direct contact with minors to submit certain information; requiring county boards of education, nonpublic schools, and contracting agencies to require applicants for positions involving direct contact with minors to submit certain information relating to certain boundary-violating behavior; requiring child care centers and youth-serving organizations to follow certain procedures when hiring certain applicants; etc.

***HB1006*** - Outside of CLAC's purview – Failed to Pass

Synopsis: Requiring the Attorney General to develop guidelines relating to immigration enforcement at certain sensitive locations; and requiring State agencies that operate at sensitive locations to adopt policies consistent with the guidelines or provide certain written notice of a decision not to adopt policies consistent with the guidelines.

***HB1480*** - Abstained – Failed to Pass

Synopsis: Requiring that the standards established by the Maryland Statewide Organization for Child Advocacy Centers require an individual providing medical or mental health services in a child advocacy center to be licensed or certified and provide services within the scope of the license or certification and require each child advocacy center to establish a certain continuity of care plan;

requiring each child advocacy center to report certain violations to a certain health occupations board or the Department of Human Services; etc.

***HB1121*** – Favorable/Supported - Passed

Synopsis: Establishing the Youth Transitioning From Foster Placement to Successful Adulthood Pilot Program in the Child Care Scholarship Program to assist foster youth in applying for and accessing subsidies in the Program; establishing that the duration of the program is from January 1, 2026, until December 31, 2028; and requiring the State Department of Education to report on the status and an evaluation of the Pilot Program's goals to the General Assembly on or before December 1 each year of the Pilot Program.

***HB0824*** - Favorable but outside of CLAC's purview- Abstained – Failed to Pass

Synopsis: Altering the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program to provide benefits, beginning July 1, 2027, to alternatively qualified individuals who care for or bond with a child under certain circumstances; altering the date that the Secretary of Labor is required to begin conducting certain cost analyses of the Program; and requiring that an employer allow an alternatively qualified individual who is receiving benefits under the Program to take certain unpaid leave from employment.

***HB0962/SB0696*** - Favorable/Supported - Passed

Synopsis: Specifying that the scope of the Maryland Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Registry and Referral System includes both private and State inpatient and outpatient mental health and substance use services; requiring the Maryland Department of Health, in coordination with the Department of Human Services, to ensure pediatric hospital overstay patients are placed in the least restrictive setting possible; etc. This bill requires mandated appropriation in the annual budget bill. authorizing a hospital to concurrently explore in-State and out-of-state placements for pediatric hospital overstay patients; establishing the Pediatric Hospital Overstay Coordinator within the Governor's Office for Children; requiring the Maryland Department of Health to conduct a certain study and review of residential treatment center and respite facility rates; and generally relating to pediatric hospital overstay patients.

***HB0837*** – Favorable/Supported - Failed to Pass

Synopsis: "Establishing the Task Force to Study Forced Infant Separation from Incarcerated Individuals to study and make recommendations regarding methods to reduce forced infant separation in the State and facilitate bonds between postpartum incarcerated individuals and their children; and requiring the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly on or before December 1, 2025."



**HB1399** – Favorable/Supported - Failed to Pass- This might be more controversial as it relates to dispensing or administering a cross-sex hormone treatment of certain mental health diagnosis to a minor. The concern is age (a minor) without parental consent.

#### Health Occupations - Cross-Sex Hormone Therapy for Minors - Prohibition (Protect the Kids Act)

Synopsis: Prohibiting a licensed health care practitioner from prescribing, dispensing, or administering a cross-sex hormone or otherwise providing cross-sex hormone therapy for the treatment of certain mental health diagnoses to an individual who is a minor. A person who violates this section is guilty of a felony and conviction is subject to imprisonment not exceeding life.

**HB1429** – Favorable/Supported – Failed to Pass - This bill supports authorizing youth services bureaus to request a criminal history records check for employees, volunteers, and interns. Addressing volunteers and interns has been a concern as this group of individuals were not included in similar bills. They mainly addressed adult employees. However, as stated previously, often some of children’s first experience with sexual abuse and violent behavior is from a minor. Granted, all volunteers and interns are not minors, but this bill goes further in including these positions that are often occupied by minors.

This bill clearly states “authorizes” youth services to request criminal history records check. It is recommended that this criminal history check be mandatory.

Synopsis: authorizing youth services bureaus to request criminal history records check from the Criminal Justice Information System Central Repository for employees, volunteers, and interns; and generally relating to criminal history records checks by a youth services bureau.

**HB0652** – Favorable/Supported – Failed to Pass

Synopsis: Prohibiting the Department of Juvenile Services from hiring or retaining an individual convicted of certain crimes. The crimes listed are abductions, murder, rape, sexual offenses, child abuse, and other felonies.

#### Department of Juvenile Services - Employees - Prohibited Convictions -

**HB0809/SB0765** – Favorable/Supported – Passed - This bill does not provide information on the maximum number of children that are allowed in an out of home placement. It provides an exception for a child enrolled in an accredited institution of higher education to be in the home if they cannot remain on the campus due to a scheduled break, temporary closure of the institution or leave of absence. However, there must be agreement between the child, the out-of-home provider and the agency.

Synopsis: Requiring the Department of Human Services to adopt regulations setting the maximum number of children that may be placed with an out-of-home placement provider; and establishing an exemption from the limitation on the number of children that may be placed with an out-of-home placement provider under certain circumstances.

**HB0302** – Favorable/Supported – Passed - This bill adds adult protective services worker, child welfare caseworker to a law allowing statements of charges against certain personnel alleging an offense committed while executing the professional’s duties.

Synopsis: This bill expands statutory requirements that are applicable when an application for a statement of charges is filed against certain professionals alleging an offense committed while executing the professional’s duties to include “adult protective services workers” and “child welfare caseworkers.”

## **CRBC Out-of-Home Placement Case Reviews**

### Targeted Review Criteria

The Department of Human Services (DHS), formerly the Department of Human Resources (DHR), Social Services Administration (SSA) and the Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) together have created a review work plan for targeted reviews of children in out-of-home-placement. This work plan contains targeted review criteria based on out-of-home-placement permanency plans.

### Reunification:

- Already established plans for Reunification for children 10 years of age and older. CRBC will conduct a review for a child 10 years of age and older who has an established primary permanency plan of Reunification and has been in care 12 months or longer.

### Adoption:

- Existing plans of Adoption. CRBC will conduct a review of a child that has had a plan of Adoption for over 12 months. The purpose of the review is to assess the appropriateness of the plan and identify barriers to achieve the plan.
- Newly changed plans of Adoption. CRBC will conduct a review of a child within 5 months after the establishment of Adoption as a primary permanency plan. The purpose is to ensure that there is adequate and appropriate movement by the local departments to promote and achieve Adoption.

### Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA):

- Already established plans of APPLA for youth 16 years of age and younger. CRBC will conduct a full review of a child 16 years of age and younger who has an established primary permanency plan of APPLA. The primary purpose of the review is to assess appropriateness of the plan and review documentation of the Federal APPLA requirements.

- Newly established plans of APPLA. CRBC will conduct a review of a child within 5 months after the establishment of APPLA as the primary permanency plan. Local Boards will review cases to ensure that local departments have made adequate and appropriate efforts to assess if a plan of APPLA was the most appropriate recourse for the child.

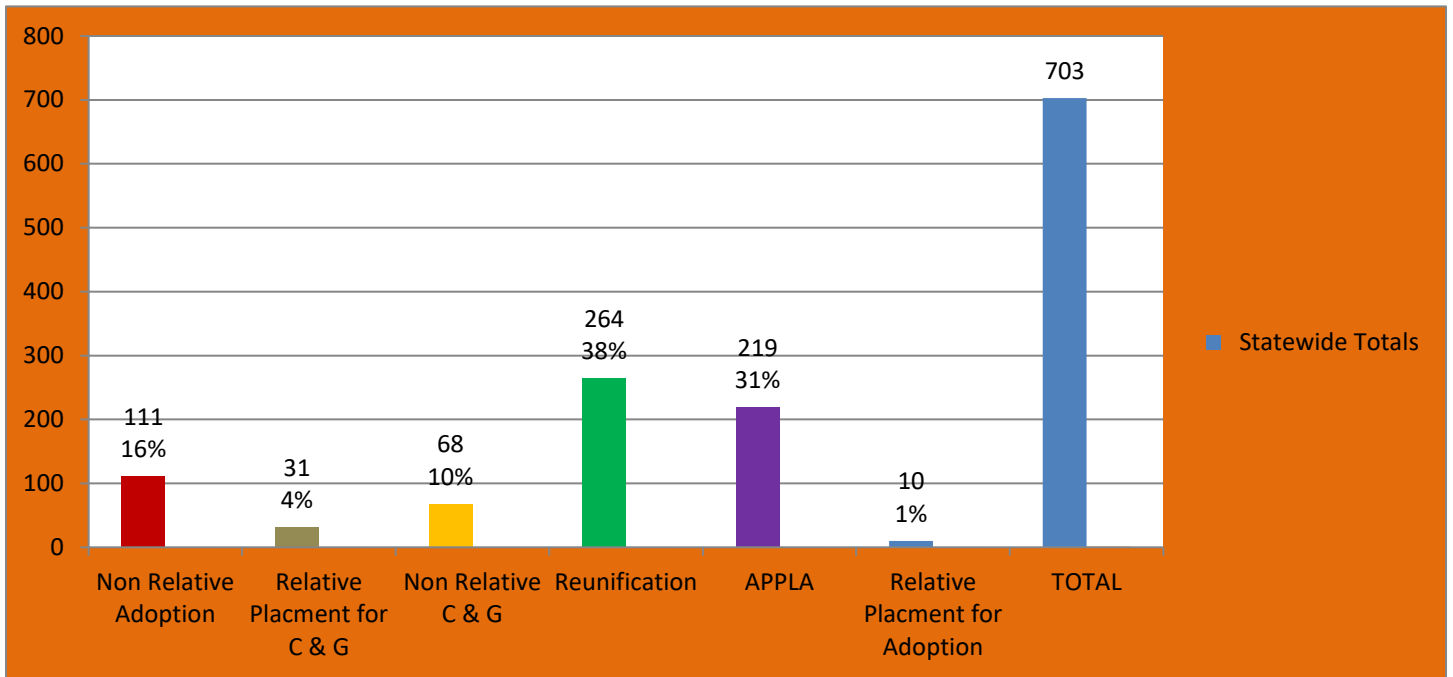
#### Older Youth Aging Out

- Older youth aging-out or remaining in the care of the State at age 17 and 20 years old. CRBC will conduct a review of young people who are 17 and 20 years of age. The primary purpose of the review is to assess if services were provided to prepare the youth to transition to successful adulthood.

#### Re-Review Cases:

- Assessment of progress made by LDSS. CRBC will conduct follow-up reviews during the fourth quarter of the current fiscal year of any cases wherein the local board identified barriers that may impede adequate progress. The purpose of the review is to assess the status of the child and any progress made by LDSS to determine if identified barriers have been removed.

## CRBC FY2025 Case Review Findings by Permanency Plan



### Gender Totals (703)

Male	Female
366 (52%)	337 (48%)

#### Male

Non-Relative Adoption	Relative Placement for C & G	Non-Relative C & G	Reunification	APPLA	Relative Placement for Adoption
59 (8%)	16 (2%)	41 (6%)	140 (20%)	104 (15%)	6 (1%)

#### Female

Non-Relative Adoption	Relative Placement for C & G	Non-Relative C & G	Reunification	APPLA	Relative Placement for Adoption
52 (7%)	15 (2%)	27 (4%)	124 (18%)	115 (16%)	4 (1%)

### Ethnicity Overall (703)

African American	Caucasian	Asian	Other
466 (66%)	183 (26%)	6 (1%)	48 (7%)

### Age Range by Permanency Plan

[RE] = Reunification  
 [RA] = Relative Placement for Adoption  
 [RG] = Relative Placement for Custody & Guardianship  
 [AD] = Non-Relative Adoption  
 [CG] = Non-Relative Custody & Guardianship  
 [AP] = Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)

AGE RANGE	RE	RA	RG	AD	CG	AP	Totals
age 1 thru 5	17	4	7	47	8	0	83
age 6 thru 10	75	3	11	34	16	0	139
age 11 thru 13	56	1	1	16	20	0	94
age 14 thru 16	76	1	8	9	20	9	123
age 17 thru 19	37	1	3	5	4	150	200
age 20	3	0	1	0	0	60	64
Totals	264	10	31	111	68	219	703

## **CRBC FY2025 Case Reviews by Jurisdiction & Permanency Plans**

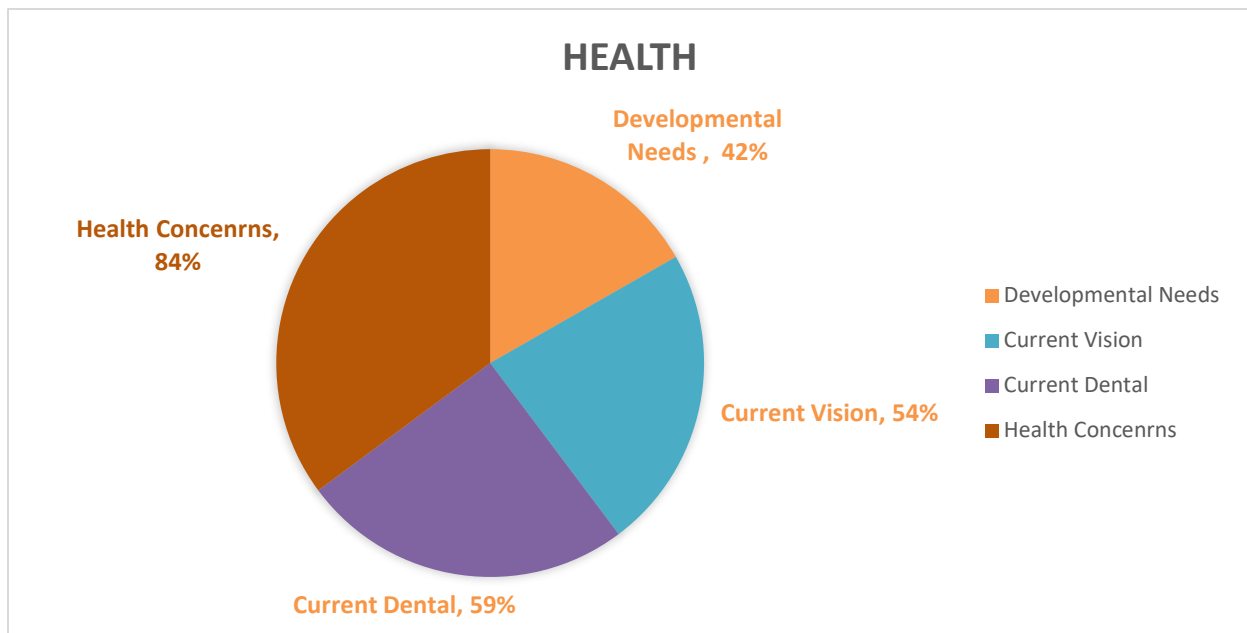
Jurn #	County	Non Relative Adoption	Relative Placement for C & G	Non Relative C & G	Reunification	APPLA	Relative Placement for Adoption	TOTAL	Boards held
01	Allegany	6	0	0	2	3	0	11	3
02	Anne Arundel	5	1	2	8	13	0	29	8
03	Baltimore County	22	3	2	32	33		92	24
04	Calvert	0	0	0	2	6	0	8	2
05	Caroline	2	0	0	2	0	0	4	1
06	Carroll	1	0	0	5	2	0	8	2
07	Cecil	3	1	2	3	10	0	19	5
08	Charles	1	0	2	2	3	0	8	2
09	Dorchester	1	0	3	4	0	0	8	2
10	Frederick	5	1	2	5	6	0	19	5
11	Garrett	0	0	0	2	2	0	4	1
12	Harford	6	2	2	13	6	0	29	8
13	Howard	0	1	1	3	7	0	12	3
14	Kent	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	1
15	Montgomery	20	0	7	35	28	1	91	22
16	Prince George's	11	2	8	18	35	4	78	20
17	Queen Anne	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	1
18	Saint Mary's	5	2	2	7	0	0	16	4
19	Somerset	1	0	0	0	3	0	4	1
20	Talbot	0	1	0	2	1	0	4	1
21	Washington	5	0	0	9	8	0	22	6
22	Wicomico	0	1	0	1	5	0	7	2
23	Worcester	1	0	1	2	0	0	4	60
49	Baltimore City	15	15	34	106	47	5	222	185
	<b>Statewide Totals</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>703</b>	
	<b>Percentages</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

CRBC conducted a total of 703 individual out-of-home case reviews (each case reviewed represents 1 child/youth) in 24 jurisdictions on 185 board that held reviews during fiscal year 2025.

- The local Boards agreed with the permanency plan for 559 (80%) of 703 cases reviewed.

## **Health/Mental Health**

- Current Physical: 507 (72%) out of the 703 children/youth had current physical.
- Developmental Needs: 297 (42%) out of 703 children/youth had developmental needs.
- Current Vision: 379 (54%) out of 703 children/youth had current vision.
- Current Dental: 413 (59%) out of 703 children/youth were current on Dental Exams.
- Health Concerns: The local department ensured that appropriate follow-up occurred on 331 (84%) out of the 419 children/youth.



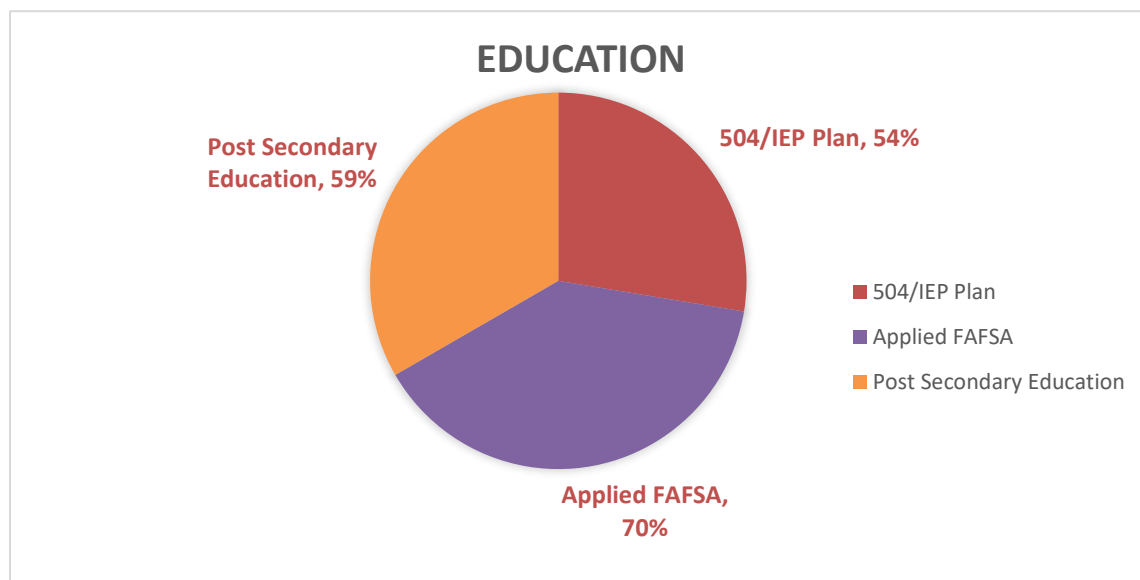
- Prescription Medication: 303 (43%) out of 703 children/youth were on Prescription Medication.
- Prescription Medication Monitored: Prescription Medication was regularly monitored for 299 (99%) out of 303 children/youth.
- Psychotropic Medication: 243 (35%) out of 703 children/youth were on Psychotropic medication.
- Psychotropic Medication Monitored: Psychotropic Medication was monitored at least on a quarterly basis for 235 (97%) out of the 243 children/youth.
- Prescribed Medication: 73 (31%) out of 225 children/youth refused Prescribed Medication.
- Mental Health: 499 (71%) out of the 703 youth/children had mental health issues.
- Mental Health Diagnosis: 511 (73%) out of the 703 youth/children had a mental health diagnosis.

- The Local Boards agree that the Mental Health Issues were addressed for 363 (73%) out of the 499 children/youth.
- 36 (50%) out of the 72 children/youth who were transitioning and were identified as having a Mental Health Issue has an identified plan to obtain services in the adult mental health care system.
- Standard Health Exams: 34 (5%) out of the 703 youth/children refused to have a standard exam.
- Completed Medical Records: 269 (38%) out of the 703 youth/children had completed medical records.

The Local Boards agree that the health needs for 300 (43%) out of the 703 youth/children were met.

## **Education**

- 283 (54%) out of the 520 youths were enrolled in school had a 504 or IEP plan.
- A current progress report card was available to review for 303 of the youth enrolled in school.
- 86 (59%) out of the 145 youths had concrete plans for post-secondary education.
- 30 (70%) of the 43 youths pursuing higher education were found to have applied for FAFSA.
- 57 (25%) out of 229 youth that were disabled and exiting school were aware of and engaged with community supports.

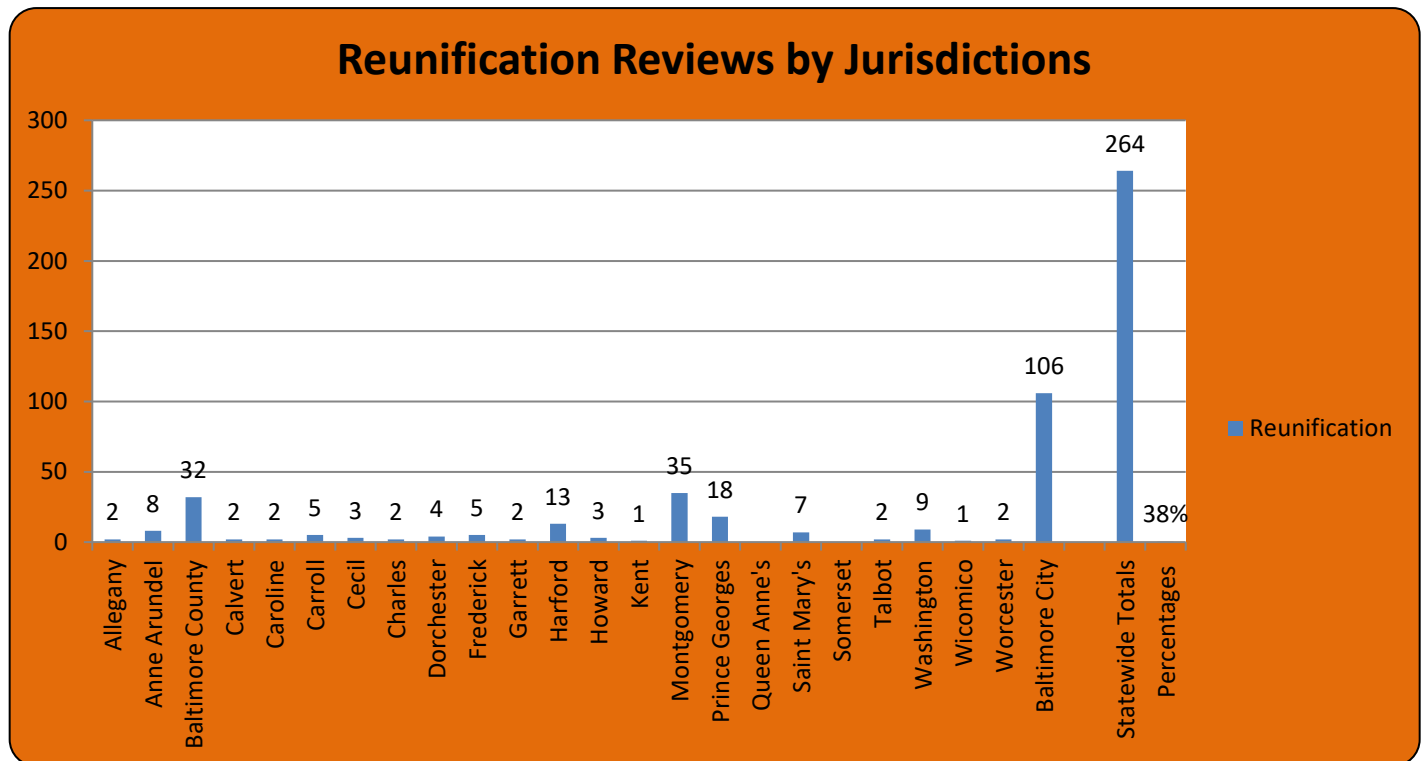


The Local Boards agreed that 449 (78%) out of 576 youths were being appropriately prepared to meet their educational goals.



## Reunification Case Reviews

The permanency plan of Reunification is generally the initial goal for every child that enters out-of-home placement and appropriate efforts should be made to ensure that the child/youth is receiving the services that are necessary to reunite with their family and have permanency. It is equally important to make sure that reasonable efforts have been made with the identified parent or caregiver to promote reunification without undue delay. Forty percent of the cases reviewed had a permanency planning goal of reunification.



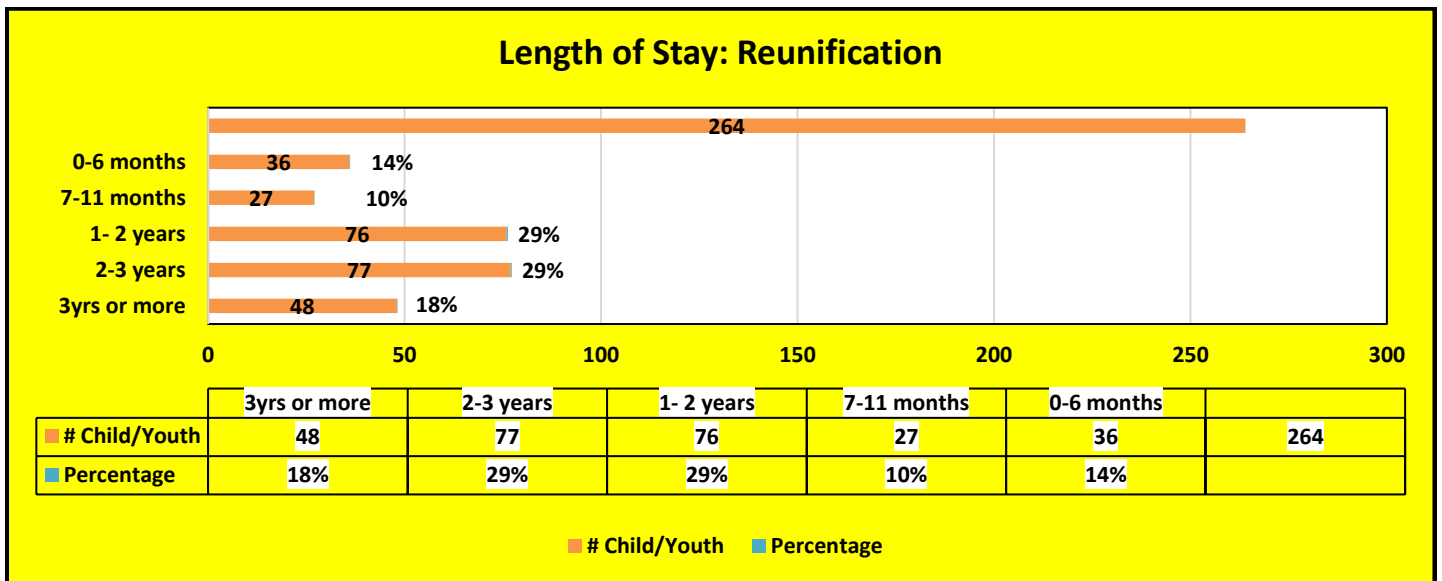
Age Range	Statewide Totals	Reunification	Percentage
Age 1 thru 5	83	17	20%
Age 6 thru 10	139	75	54%
Age 11 thru 13	94	56	60%
Age 14 thru 16	123	76	62%
Age 17 thru 19	200	37	19%
Age 20	64	3	5%
Total	703	264	38%

## Permanency

The local boards agreed with the permanency plan of reunification for 131 (50%) of the 264 cases reviewed.

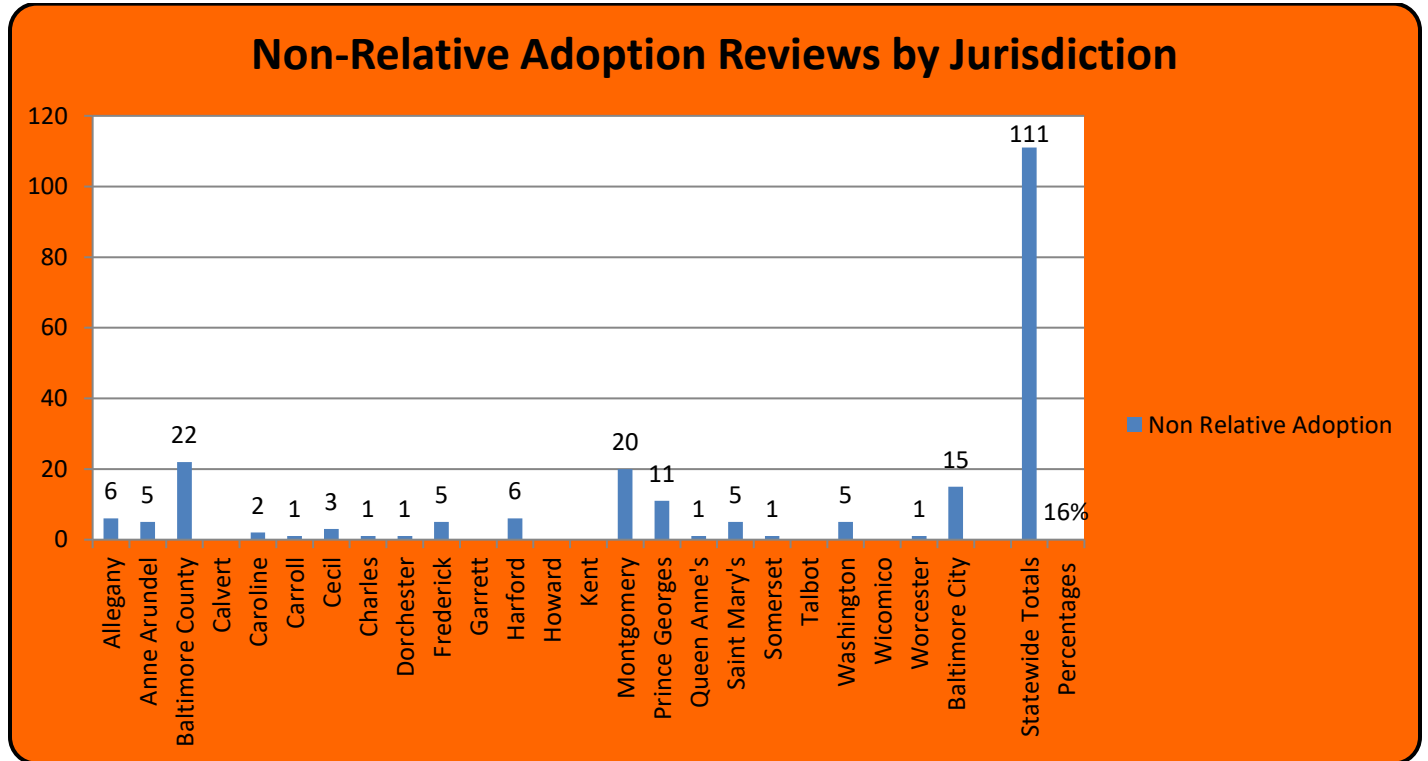
## Length of Stay for Children/Youths with a plan of Reunification

The local boards found that the lengths of stay for the 264 children/youths with a plan of Reunification were as follows:



## **Non-Relative Adoption Case Reviews**

When parental rights are terminated (TPR) Adoption becomes the preferred permanency plan. There are a number of factors to consider when a plan of adoption has been established, ranging from the termination of parental rights to what post adoption services are made available to adoptive families. Reasonable efforts should be made to identify adoptive resources and provide appropriate services identified to remove barriers to adoption and achieve permanency for the child/youth in a timely manner.



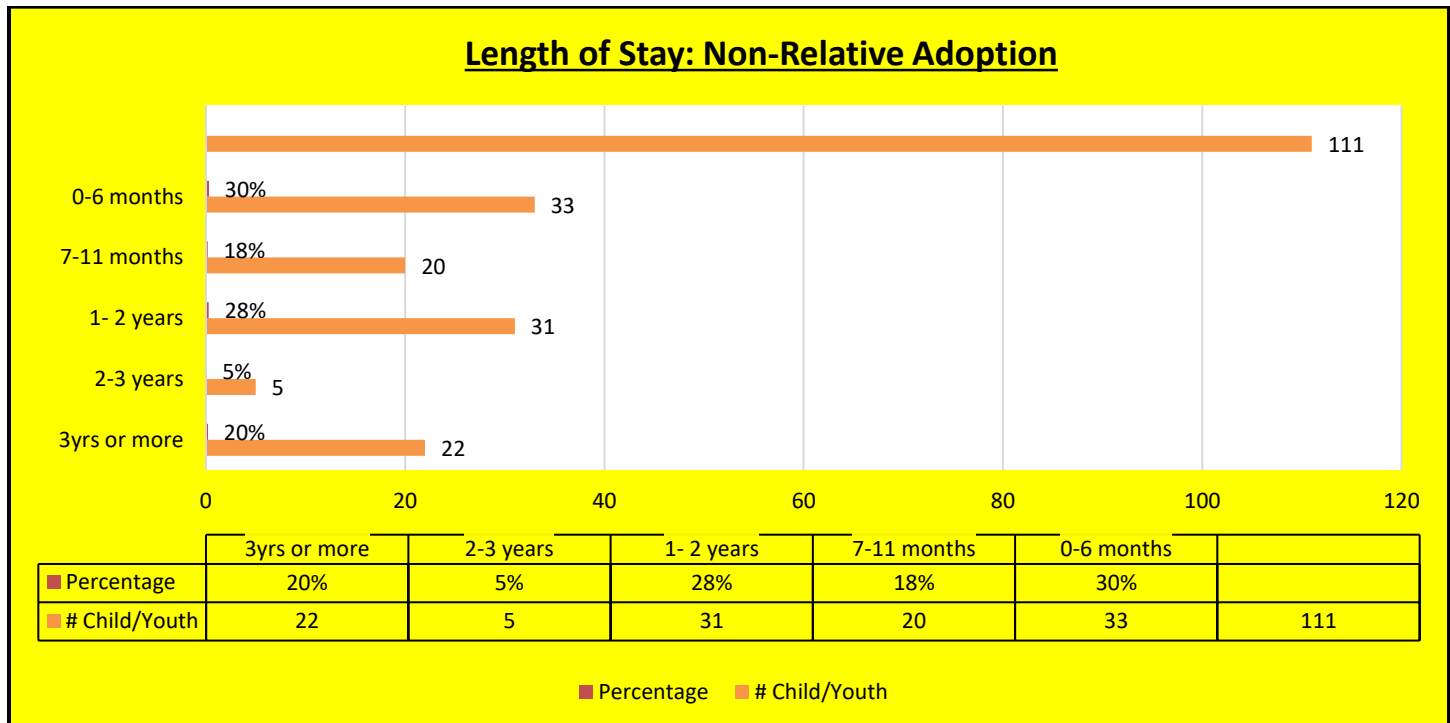
Age Range	Statewide Totals	Non-Rel Adoption	Percentage
Age 1 thru 5	83	47	57%
Age 6 thru 10	139	34	24%
Age 11 thru 13	94	16	17%
Age 14 thru 16	123	9	7%
Age 17 thru 19	200	5	3%
Age 20	64	0	N/A
Total	703	111	16%

## Permanency

The local boards agreed with the permanency plan of Non-Relative Adoption for 110 (99%) of the 111 cases reviewed.

## Lengths of Stay for Children/Youths with a plan of Adoption

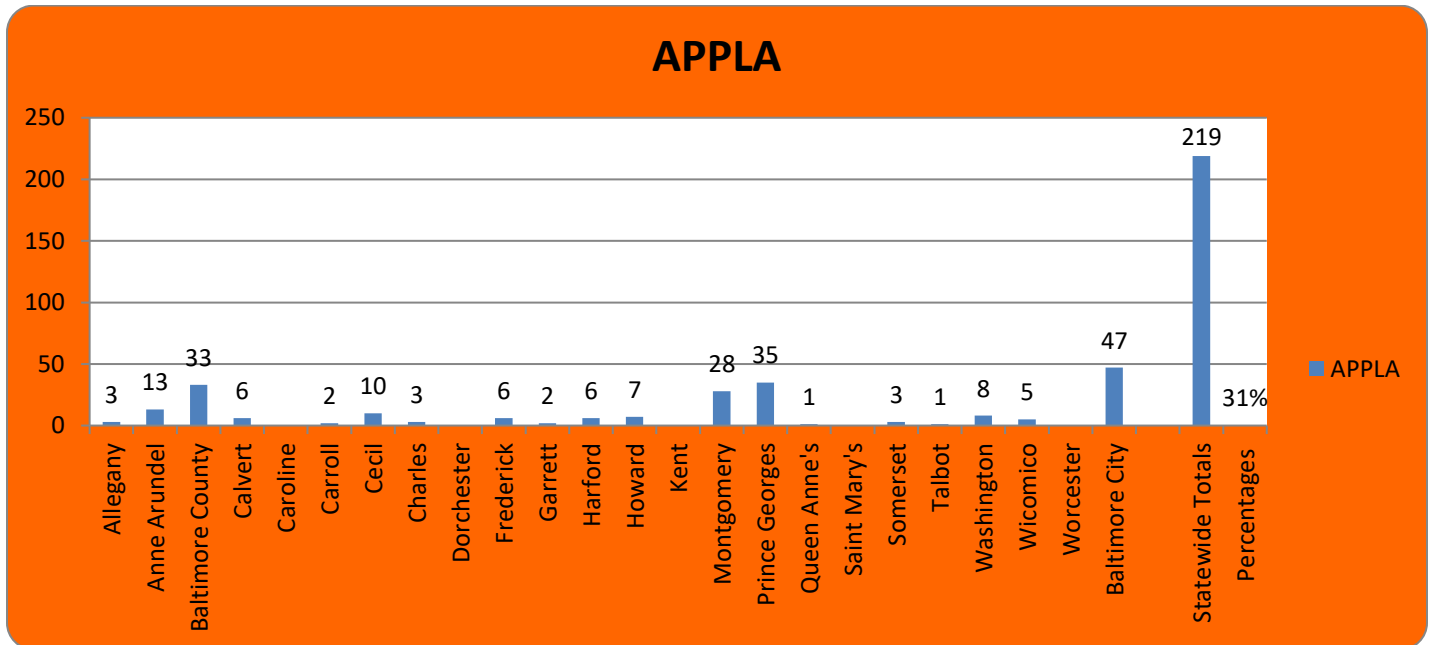
The local boards found that the lengths of stay for the 111 children/youths with a plan of Non-Relative Adoption were as follows:



## **APPLA Reviews** **(Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement)**

APPLA is the least desired permanency plan. All efforts should be made to rule out all other permanency plans including reunification with birth family, relative placement for custody and guardianship or adoption, adoption to a non-relative and guardianship to a non-relative before a child/youth's permanency plan is designated as APPLA.

Out of the total number of 703 cases reviewed, 219 (31%) of the cases had a plan of APPLA. Baltimore City had the most cases at 47 (21%), Prince George's County 35 cases (16%), Baltimore County 33 cases (15%), Montgomery County 28 cases (13%), Anne Arundel County 13 cases (6%), Cecil County 10 cases (5%), Washington County 8 cases (4%), Frederick County 6 cases (3%), Harford County 6 cases (3%), Howard County 7 cases (3%), Calvert County 6 cases (3%), Wicomico County 5 cases (2%), Garrett County 2 cases (1%), Talbot County 1 case (1%), Queen Anne County 1 case (1%), Somerset County 3 cases (1%), Carroll County 2 cases (1%), Charles County 3 cases (1%), and Allegany County 3 cases (1%).



Age Range	Statewide Totals	APPLA	Percentage
Age 1 thru 5	83	0	N/A
Age 6 thru 10	139	0	N/A
Age 11 thru 13	94	0	N/A
Age 14 thru 16	123	9	7%
Age 17 thru 19	200	150	75%
Age 20	64	60	94%
Total	703	219	31%

#### Permanency

The local boards agreed with the permanency plan of APPLA for 217 of the 219 (99%) of the total cases reviewed.

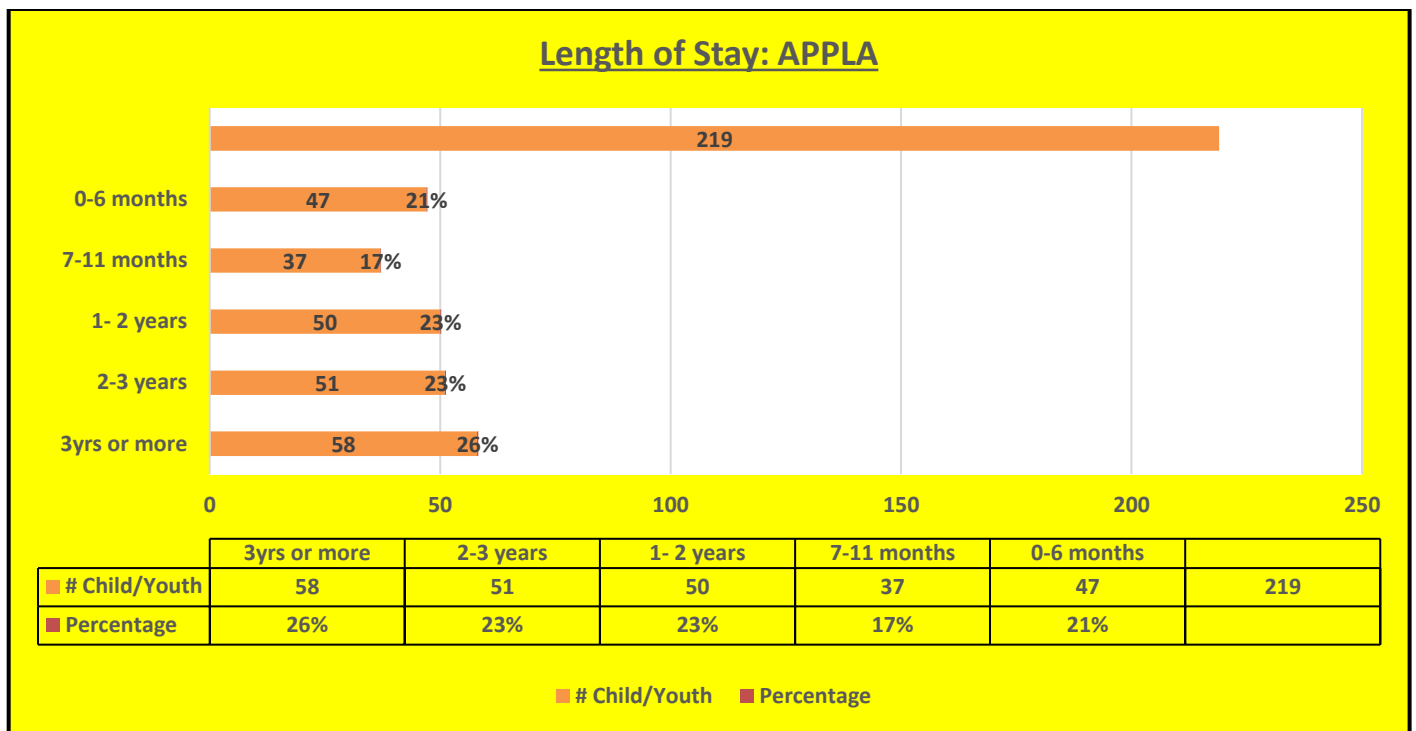
- 9 reviews with the plan of APPLA, the youths were between the ages of 14 thru 16.
- 150 reviews with the plan of APPLA, the youths were between the ages of 17 and 20.
- 60 reviews with the plan of APPLA, the youths were age 20 and above.

#### Length of stay Child/Youth had a plan of APPLA

The local boards found that the lengths of stay for children/youths with a plan of APPLA were as follows:

#### Length of stay Child/Youth had a plan of APPLA

The local boards found that the lengths of stay for children/youths with a plan of APPLA were as follows:



Ready by 21

### Independent Living Services

- 217 (56%) youths received appropriate services to adequately prepare for independent living when they leave out of home care.
- 199 (51%) of the youths completed a Life Skills Assessment.
- 207 (53%) of the youths received required independent living skills.

The Local Boards agreed that 201 (52%) of the 388 cases the youths received appropriate Independent Living Skills to prepare for transition to successful adulthood.

### Employment (Age 14 and Older)

- 140 (36%) of youth participated in paid or unpaid work experience.
- 137 (35%) of 388 youths participated in paid or unpaid work relevant to career field of choice.
- 135 (35%) of youth were referred by caseworkers to summer or year-round training and employment opportunities.
- 41 youths were identified as being 20 years old and earning a living wage.

The Local Boards agreed that in 157 (40%) of the 388 cases that the children/youths were being appropriately prepared to meet employment goals.

### Housing (20 and with APPLA only)

- 47 (84%) out of the 56 youths who were transitioning out of care had specified housing.
- All 47 (84%) of the youths transitioning out of care were provided with alternative housing options.

The Boards agreed with the transitional housing plan for 47 youths.

The Boards agreed that 46 (82%) out of the 56 youths were appropriately prepared for transitioning out of care.

### Permanent Connections (APPLA only)

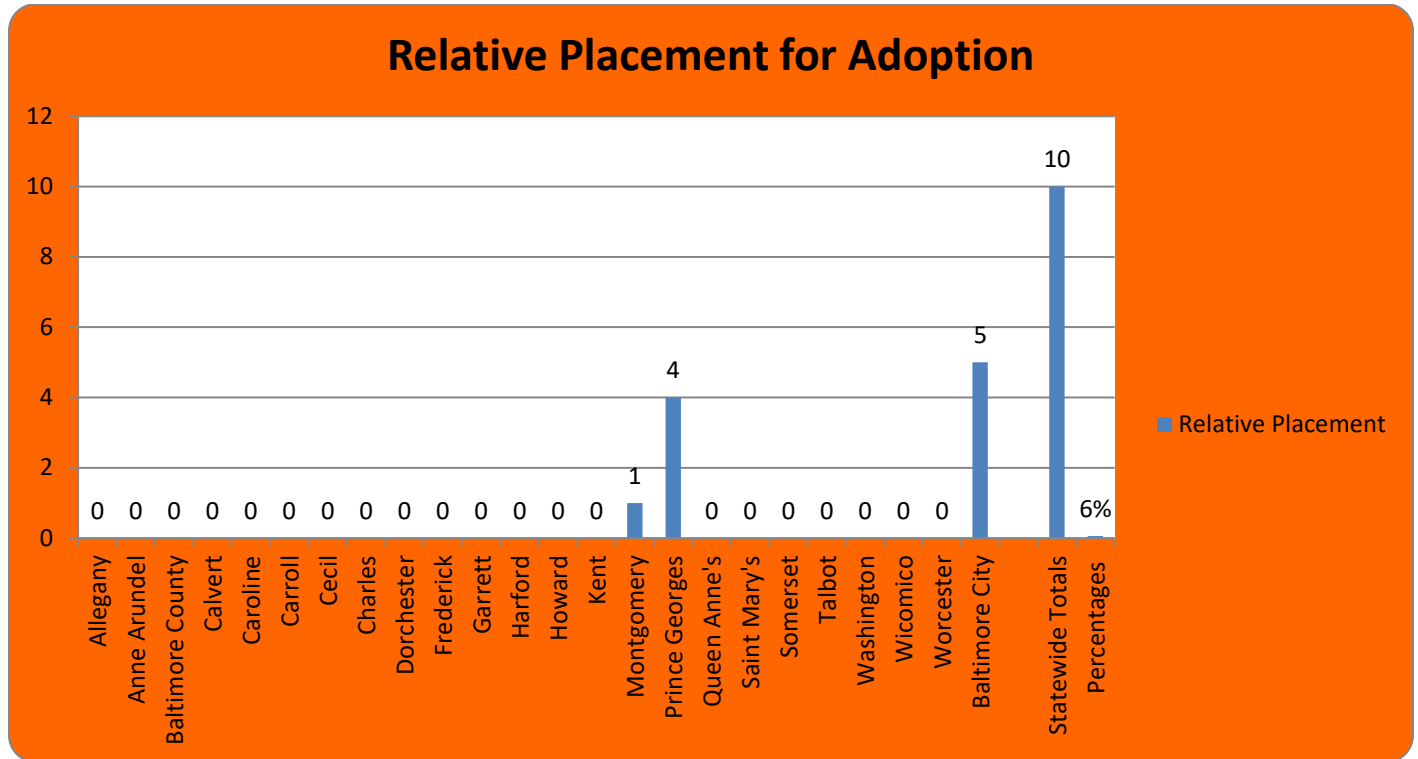
The LDSS identified 205 (94%) out of the 219 cases as a permanent connection being present for the child.

The Local Board found the identified permanent connections were appropriate for 197 (90%) of 219 cases.



## Relative Placement for Adoption Case Reviews

It is the responsibility of the local departments to seek out opportunities for placement with a blood relative or explore other permanency resources including fictive kin when reunification is not possible.



### Category of Relative Placement

- Relative Placement for Adoption: 10 cases

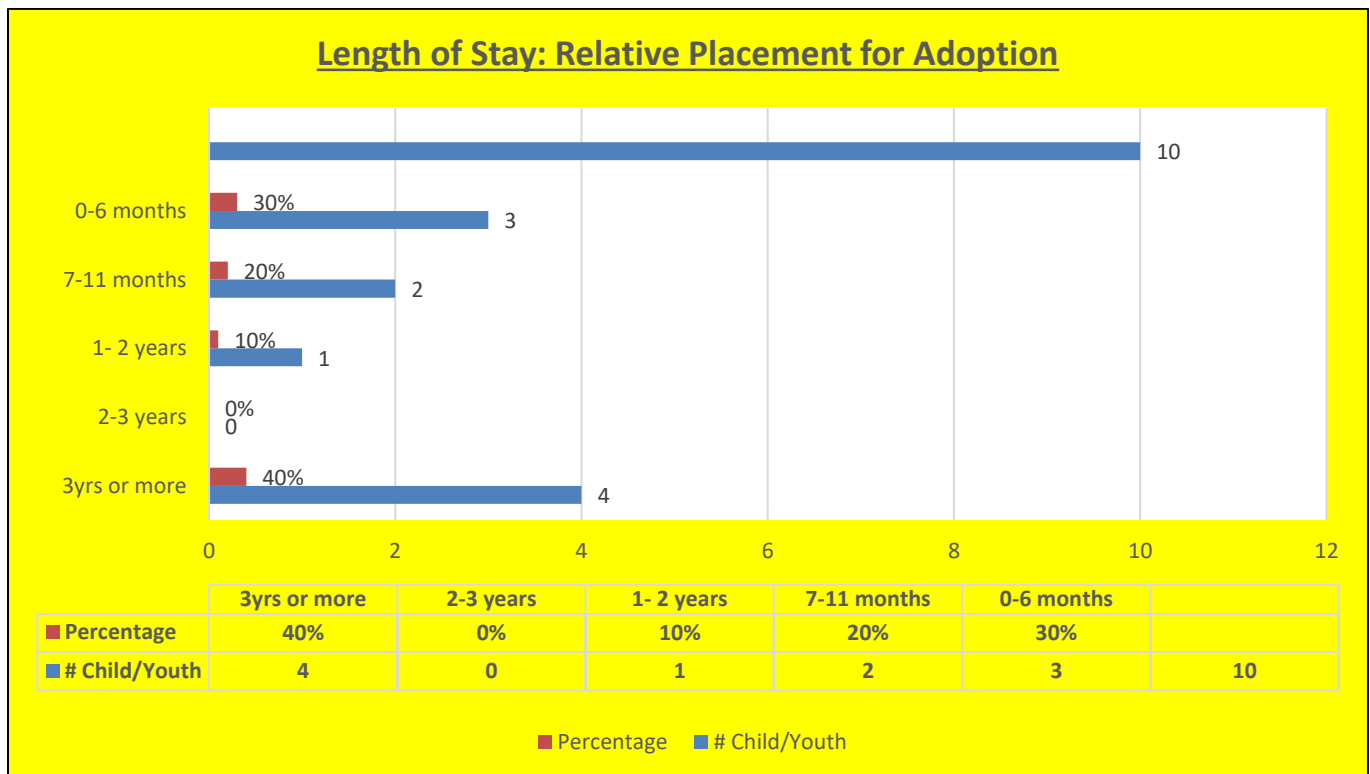
Age Range	Totals	Relative Placement	Percentage
Age 1 thru 5	83	4	5%
Age 6 thru 10	139	3	2%
Age 11 thru 13	94	1	1%
Age 14 thru 16	123	1	1%
Age 17 thru 19	200	1	1%
Age 20	64	0	N/A
Total	703	10	1%

## Permanency

The local boards agreed with the permanency plan of relative placement for 9 of the 10 (90%) cases reviewed.

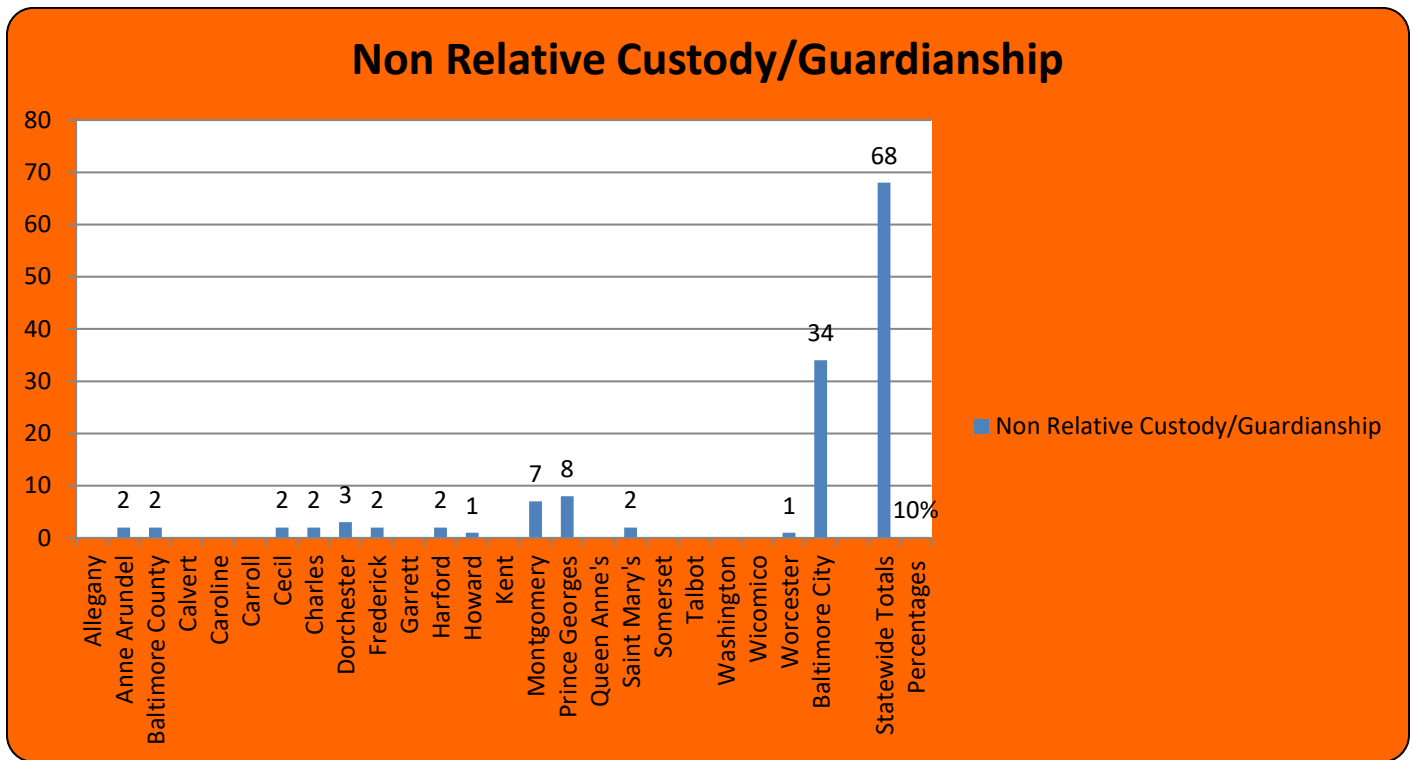
### Lengths of Stay for Children/Youth with a plan of Relative Placement for adoption

The local boards found that the length of stay of the 10 children/youths with a plan of Relative Placement for Adoption was as follows:



## Non-Relative Custody/Guardianship Reviews

Custody and guardianship is another option that local departments can explore for permanency, and that is made available to a caregiver that would like to provide a permanent home for a child/youth, without having the rights of the parents terminated. This plan allows the child/youth to have a connection with their external family members.



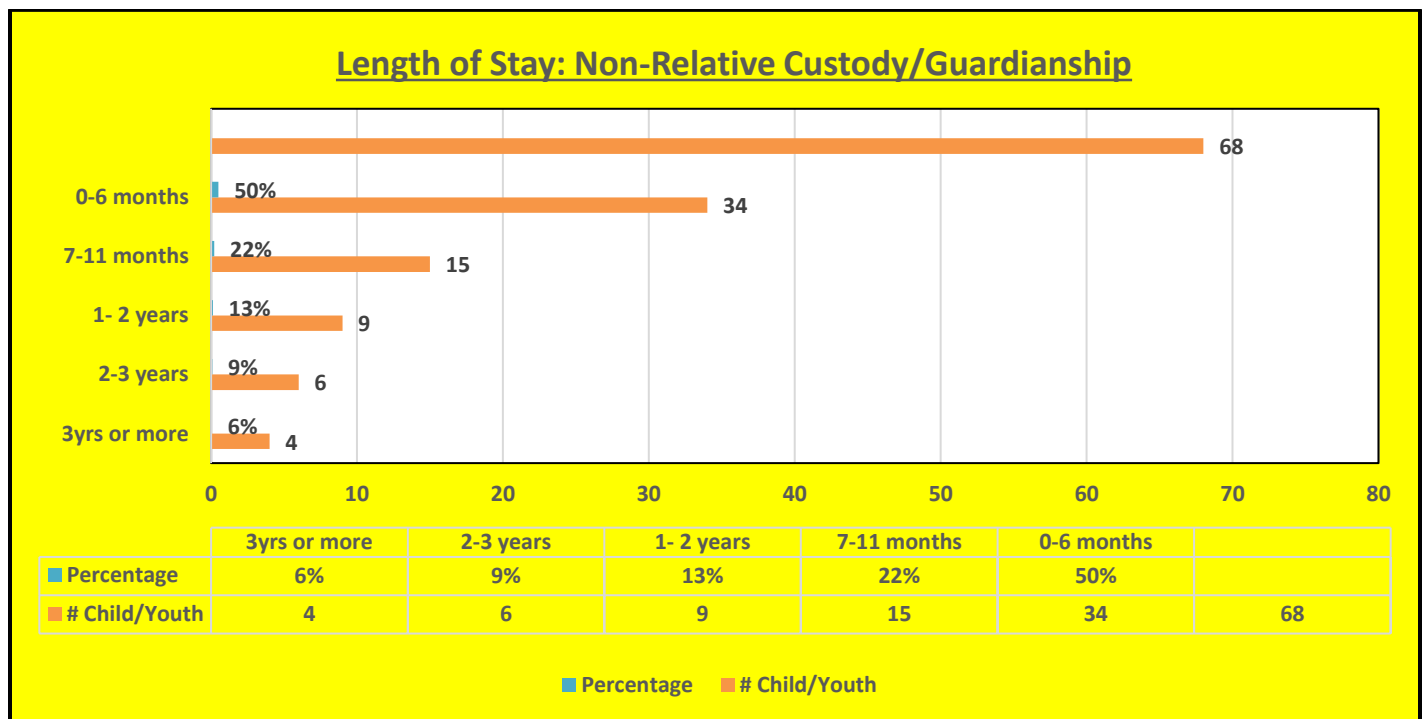
Age Range	Statewide Totals	Custody/Guardian	Percentage
Age 1 thru 5	83	8	10%
Age 6 thru 10	139	16	12%
Age 11 thru 13	94	20	21%
Age 14 thru 16	123	20	16%
Age 17 thru 19	200	4	2%
Age 20	64	0	N/A
Total	703	68	10%

## Permanency

The local boards agreed with the permanency plan of Non-Relative Custody/Guardianship for 63 (93%) of the 68 cases reviewed.

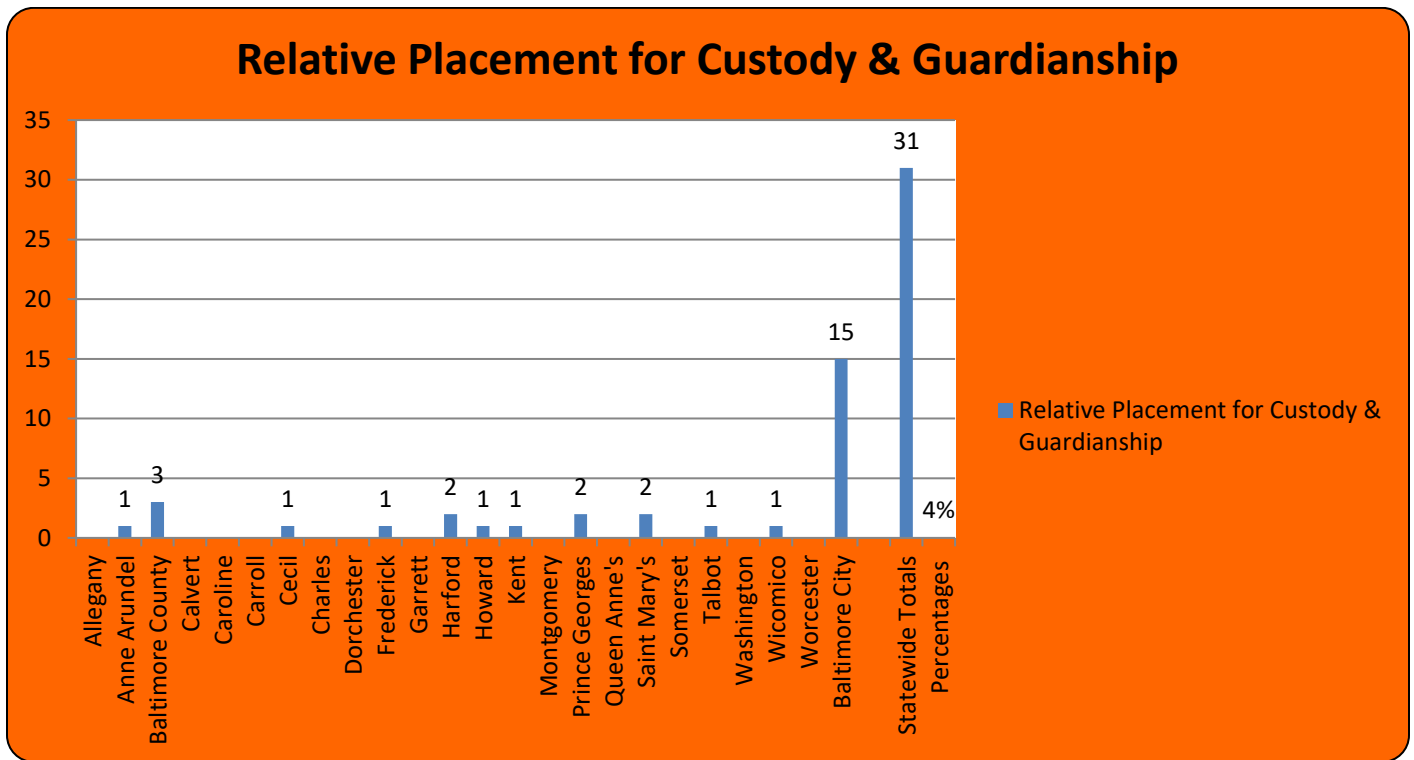
### Lengths of Stay for Children/Youths with a plan of Non-Relative Custody/Guardianship

The local boards found that the lengths of stay of the 68 children/youths with a plan of Non-Relative Custody/Guardianship were as follows:



## **Relative Placement for Custody & Guardianship**

Custody and guardianship is another option that local departments can explore for permanency, and that is made available to a caregiver that would like to provide a permanent home for a child/youth, without having the rights of the parents terminated. This plan allows the child/youth to have a connection with their external family members.



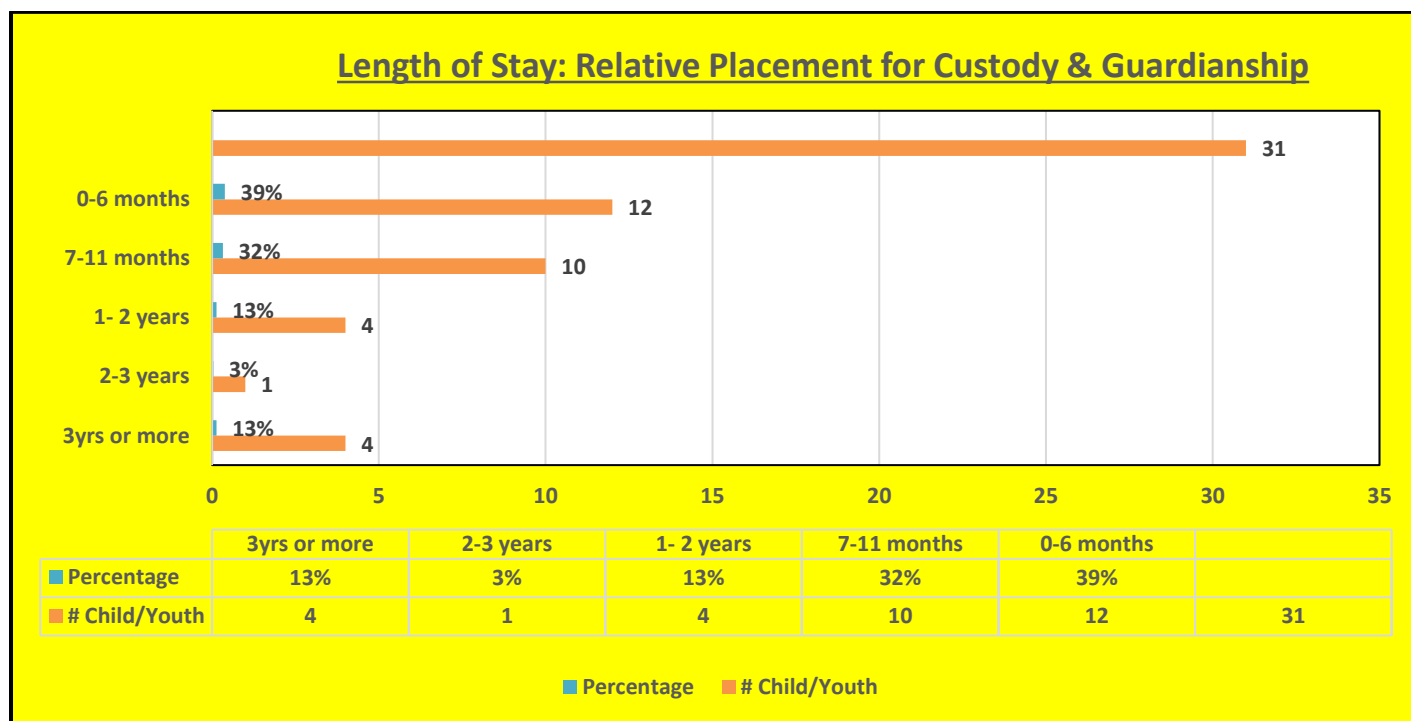
Age Range	Statewide Totals	Relative Placement Custody/Guardian	Percentage
Age 1 thru 5	83	7	8%
Age 6 thru 10	139	11	8%
Age 11 thru 13	94	1	1%
Age 14 thru 16	123	8	7%
Age 17 thru 19	200	3	2%
Age 20	64	1	2%
Total	703	31	4%

## Permanency

The local boards agreed with the permanency plan of Relative Custody/Guardianship for 29 (94%) of the 31 cases reviewed.

### Lengths of Stay for Children/Youths with a plan of Relative Custody/Guardianship

The local boards found that the lengths of stay of the 31 children/youths with a plan of Relative Custody/Guardianship were as follows:



## Summary

Based on the findings of the review, the local boards determined that the local Department of Social Services made adequate progress towards a permanency plan (COMAR – 07.01.06.05 (F)) for 593 (84%) of the 703 total cases reviewed.

**CRBC FY2025 State Board**

Nettie Anderson-Burrs (Chair)

Circuit 4: Representing Allegany, Garrett, and Washington Counties

Delores Alexander (Vice Chair)

Circuit 3: Representing Baltimore and Harford Counties

Amy Potler

Circuit 1: Representing Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties

Dr. Corinne Vinopol

Circuit 2: Representing Caroline, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties

Dr. Elaine Reed

Circuit 5: Representing Anne Arundel, Carroll, and Howard Counties

Sandra "Kay" Farley

Circuit 6: Representing Frederick and Montgomery Counties

Davina Richardson

Circuit 7: Representing Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties

Beatrice Lee

Circuit 8: Representing Baltimore City

Dr. Edwin Green

Circuit 8: Representing Baltimore City

Benia Richardson

Circuit 8: Representing Baltimore City

Crystal Young, MSW  
CRBC Administrator

**CRBC FY2025 Members\***

Deon Littles	Abigail Roddie-Hamlin	Dr. Rainya P. Miller
Dr. Dima Brown	Dr. Lana Early	Wendy Myers
Erica Black	Chontey Copeland	April Cochare

**\*New members appointed by the Governor in FY2025**



### **CRBC Staff Members**

Crystal Young, MSW  
Administrator

Alexis Thomason  
Assistant Administrator

Hassan Aslam  
Information Technology Officer

Hope Smith  
IT Functional Analyst

LeShae Harris  
Office Clerk II

Michele Foster, MSW  
Child Welfare Specialist

Marlo Palmer-Dixon, M.P.A  
Child Welfare Specialist

Nikia Greene  
Child Welfare Specialist

Lakira Whitaker  
Volunteer Activities Coordinator II

Agnes Smith  
Executive Assistant

Cindy Hunter-Gray  
Lead Secretary

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