

Fiscal Year 2013



CRBC
FY13
ANNUAL
REPORT

CITIZENS REVIEW BOARD FOR CHILDREN

***“One Unified Volunteer Voice for Safety,
Permanency, and Advocacy”***

Table of Contents

	Page
About Us	2
Program Description	2
Mission, Vision, and Goals	3
Legislative Agenda	4
Summary of Review Criteria	
Case Reviews	6
Out of Home Case Review Findings	6
Adoption	8
APPLA	15
Reunification/Return Home	22
Re-Reviews	27
Child Protection Panel Reviews	29
Child Protection Panel Recommendation/Activities	30
CRBC Recommendations to Department of Human Resources	33
CRBC Members	34
The State Board	35

About Us

Program Description

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

The Citizens Review Board for Children now has two major components – out of home care and child protection. Each component has three major modalities: case review, program monitoring and advocacy.

The Citizens Review Board for Children consists of volunteer representatives from state and local boards in each county. There are currently 54 local review boards throughout the state with 165 number of Governor appointed volunteers serving on local boards in each jurisdiction. CRBC reviews cases of children in out-of-home placement and monitors child welfare programs making recommendations for system improvements.

The 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.

Mission

Volunteer reviewers monitor child welfare systems and review cases, make findings, and recommendations, and advocate improving the administration of the system and the management of individual cases. As a result, children will be safe; be placed in stable, permanent living arrangements without undue delay; enjoy continuity of relations; and have the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

Vision

The child welfare community, General Assembly, other key decision-makers, and the public will look to the Citizens Review Board for Children for objective reports on vital child welfare programs and for consistent monitoring of safeguards for children. The State of Maryland will investigate child maltreatment allegations thoroughly, protect children from abuse and neglect, give families the help they need to stay intact, place children in out-of-home care only when necessary, and provide placements that consider all the child's needs. Casework will combine effective family services with expeditious permanent placement of children.

Legislative Agenda

The children's legislative action committee (CLAC) is the legislative committee under the authority of State Board charged with implementing CRBC's legislative agenda. CLAC's advocacy priorities include a broad range of family services. Maryland's child welfare budget is disproportionately spent on keeping children in high-cost out of home placements while many thousands of children and families do not have access to high quality family services. The Department of Human Resources Secretary sought to change this dynamic with innovative initiatives. Savings from reducing inappropriate placements are reinvested to fund the following:

- Family Engagement and other techniques for involving parents and other family members in planning for safety and permanency
- Intensive family preservation services, which can be cost-effective while protecting children from further abuse or neglect
- Strengthening family support services in order to prevent child abuse and neglect
- Increasing funding for and integration of mental health and substance abuse treatment services with child welfare programs
- Finding ways to identify, locate, notify, and support tens of thousands of grandparents and other relatives who are caring for children so that these children do not require State care
- Support for kinship care providers at the same level as foster parents



FY 2013 Annual Report

Summary

Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC), reviews cases of youth in each of the 23 Counties plus Baltimore City. As with the previous fiscal year and in accordance with DHR's Place Matters criteria, these 24 areas are classified as large, medium, and small jurisdictions based on the caseload size.

Fiscal year 2013 marked the fourth year of CRBC's work plan agreement with the Department of Human Resources (DHR). In accordance with the continued work plan agreement, CRBC reviewed cases of youth with permanency plans of reunification/return home, adoption, and Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA). This focus allowed CRBC to review these vulnerable and often overlooked populations.

Cases were reviewed that met the following criteria:

Adoption:

- Youth with newly established primary permanency plans of adoption (Reviewed three months after the plan has been changed)
- Youth with existing plans of adoption for twelve months or longer (Reviewed three months before next court review date)

APPLA:

- Youth with newly established primary permanency plans of APPLA (Reviewed three months after the plan has been changed)
- Youth age 17 or 20 years old with existing or new cases (Reviewed three to five months after the youth's birthday)
- Youth 16 years old and younger with existing plans of APPLA

Reunification:

- Youth age 10 and older with newly established permanency plans of reunification (Reviewed three months before the youth's 18-month court hearing)
- Youth age 10 and older with established permanency plans of reunification and who have been in care for longer than one year (Reviewed three months before next court review date)

Goals of the adoption reviews were to ensure:

- Youth are receiving the services necessary to prepare them and their pre-adoptive families for adoption
- Barriers are identified and removed so the adoption process progresses in a timely manner
- The local departments are adequately searching for and recruiting adoptive resources

Goals of the APPLA reviews were to ensure:

- That youth are receiving the services necessary to prepare them to live independently
- That the local departments are working alongside the youth to identify a permanent connection for the youth
- That APPLA is not viewed as a “catch-all” without exploring other permanency options
- That youth are made part of the service and case planning processes

Goals of the reunification reviews were to ensure:

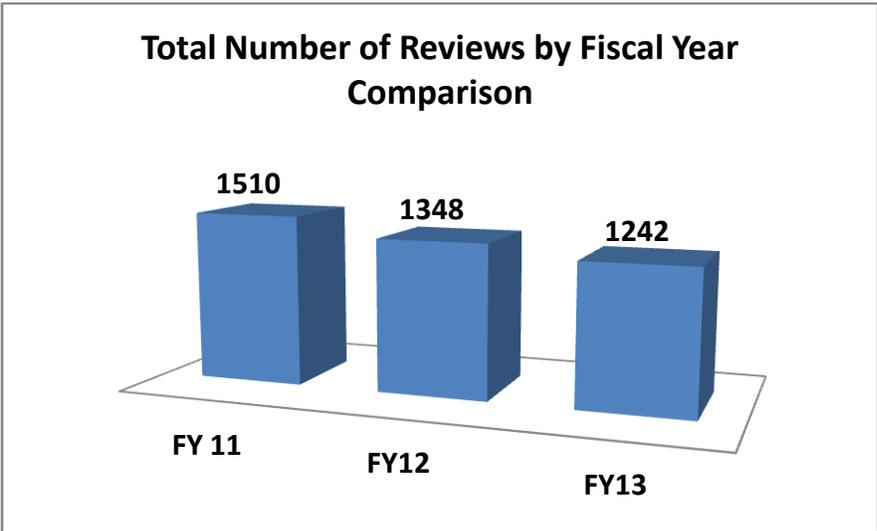
- That youth and their families are receiving necessary services to reunify
- That the local departments have identified and are working towards a concurrent plan that will allow cases to move forward more quickly and lessen the time youth spend in out of home care
- Barriers are identified and removed so youth can reunify with their families
- That the local departments identify and work with all family members (including fictive kin) in an effort to lessen the time youth spend in out of home care



Case Reviews

Out of Home Reviews Overview

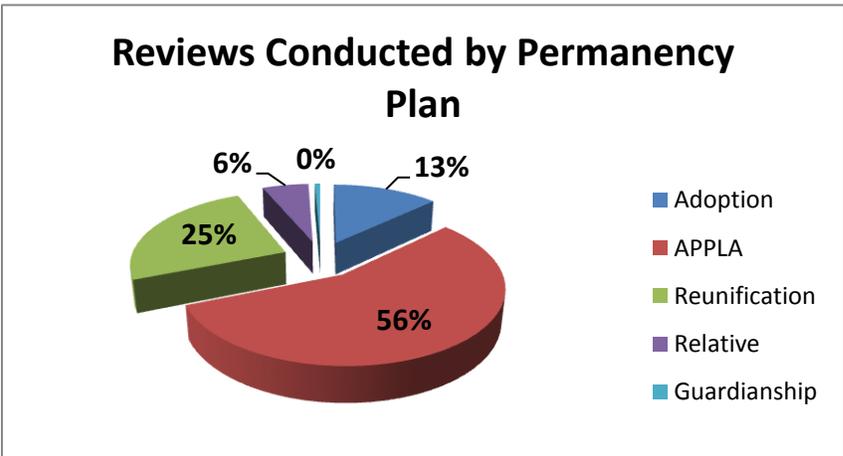
During fiscal year 2013 the Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) reviewed 1242 cases of youth in out of home placements. CRBC also re-reviewed cases designated by local boards during the 4th quarter of the fiscal year to assess if progress has been made or board recommendations implemented by local jurisdictions.



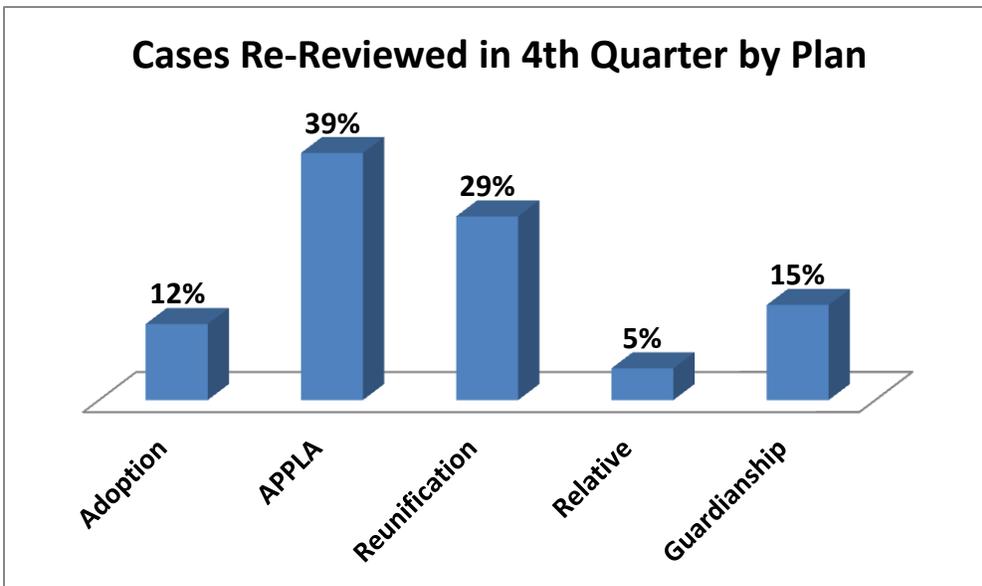
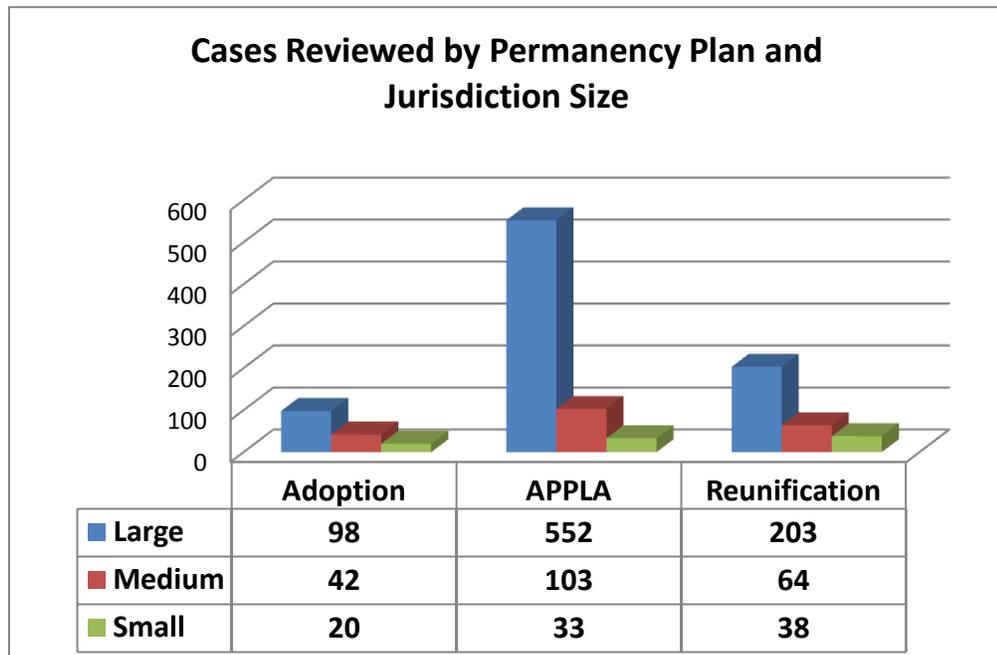
CRBC conducted approximately 89% of its estimated number of out-of-home placement reviews. This unmet benchmark was partly due to the loss of an essential CRBC staff person, vacant staff assistant position, and unforeseen staff shortages, non-receipt of essential case plan materials from LDSS, and inclement weather; resulting in the cancellation of some reviews.

Out of Home Review Findings

The Citizens Review Board for Children reviewed 1242 cases of youth in out of home placements that met the identified permanency plan criteria of adoption, reunification, or APPLA. The majority (56%) of youth had primary permanency plans of APPLA. In addition to these cases, CRBC reviewed advocacy cases; which consist of cases in which the local boards, courts, or other interested parties requested that the case be reviewed.



Large jurisdictions accounted for 811 reviews (75%) of the total number of reviews conducted in the first, second, and third quarters.



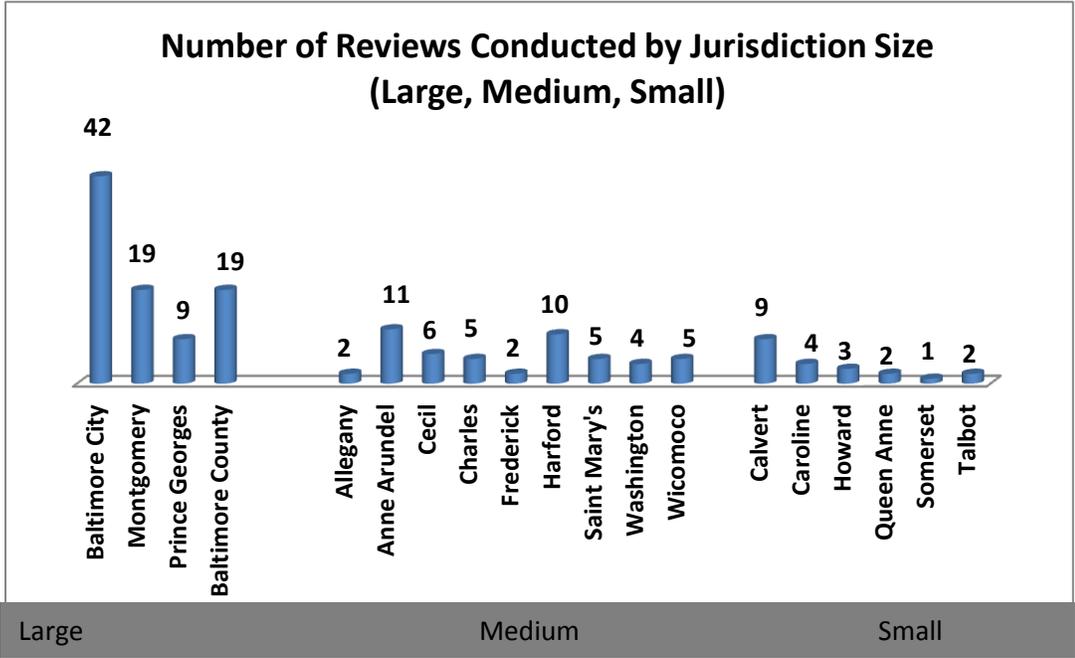
Demographics of Children and Youth Reviewed Statewide¹

Of the majority of children and youth reviewed males represented 54% of the population. African-Americans continued to represent the highest percentage of youth reviewed representing 62% of their cohort. The average age reviewed by plan was: Adoption 9 years; APPLA 18 years; and Reunification 12 years.

¹ Does not include data from cases that were re-reviewed in 4th quarter. Demographic information was not captured for

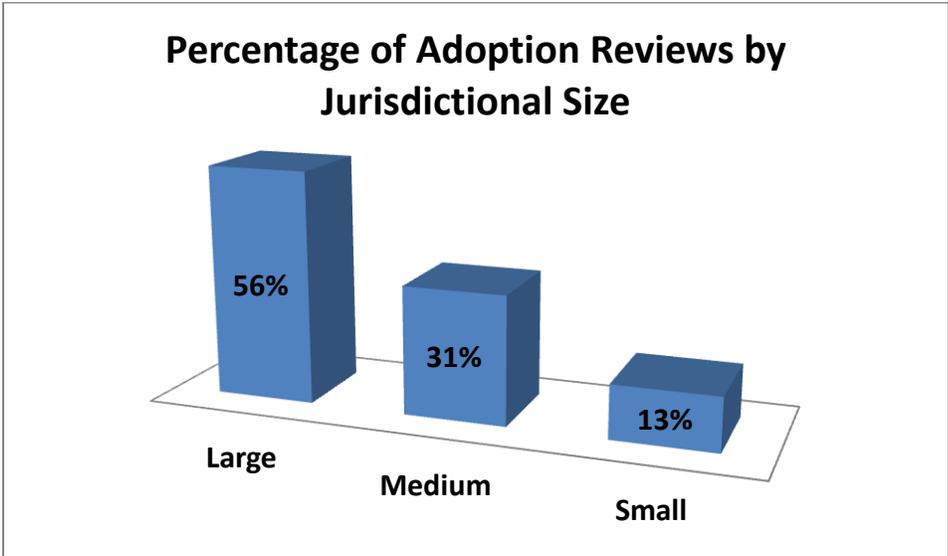
Adoption Reviews

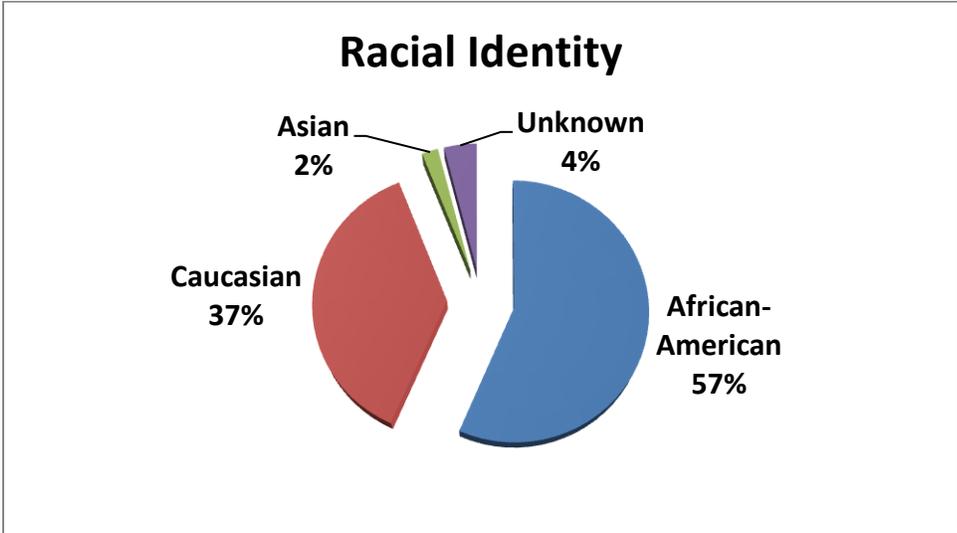
Citizen Review Board for Children local boards reviewed 160 adoption cases statewide during fiscal year 2013. Ten percent of those cases met the re-review criteria and were reviewed during the 4th quarter of FY13.



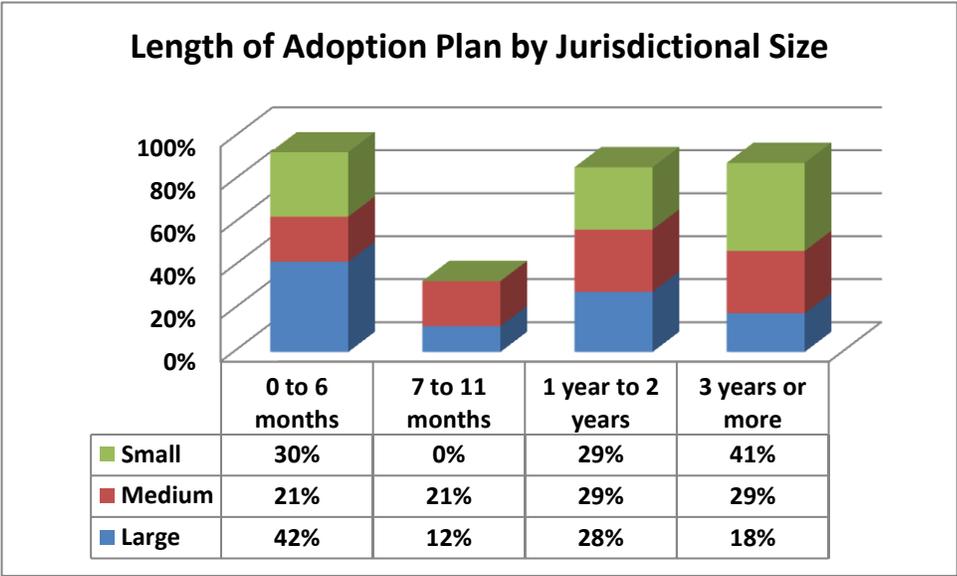
Jurisdictional Overview and Demographics

Large jurisdictions accounted for eighty-nine (n=89) adoption reviews in FY13, with medium size jurisdictions reviewing fifty (n=50), and small jurisdiction reviewing twenty (n=20). The average age of a child reviewed was 9 years of age. African-Americans continued to outnumber their cohorts and accounted for 56% of the population reviewed. There were (8%) more males (54%) reviewed than females (46 %).



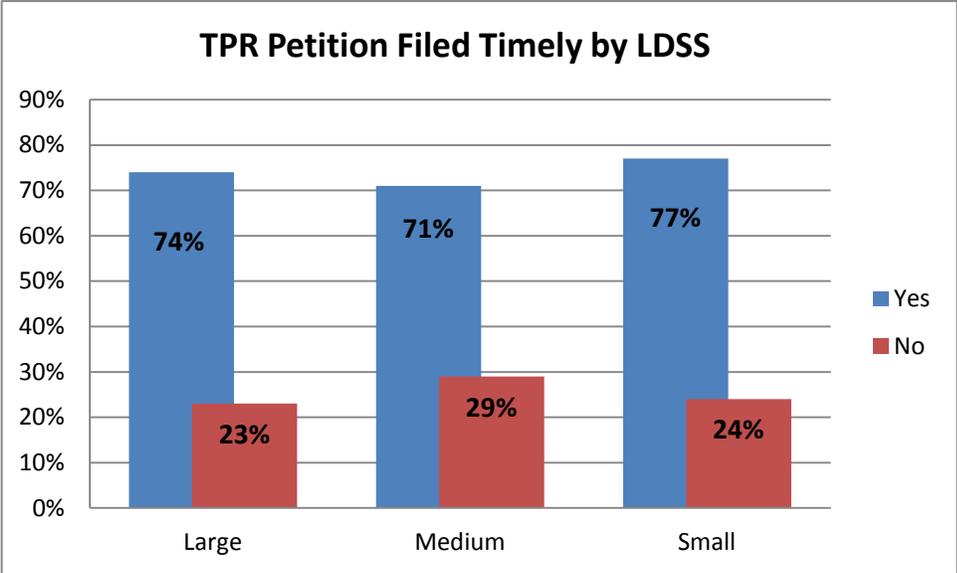


Plan Establishment. Fifty-three percent of adoption cases reviewed statewide; children and youth had an existing plan of adoption for 12 months or longer. Twenty-two percent of children and youth identified were reviewed because they had a recent permanency plan change to adoption.

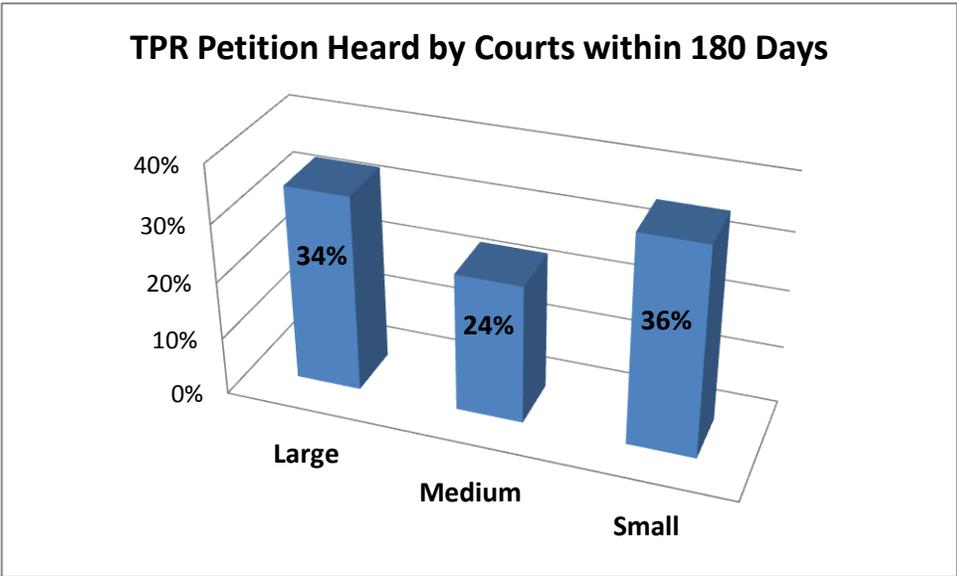


Local boards found that local departments established the child’s permanency plan timely in 83% of cases reviewed in FY13 as compared to 72% in FY12. The local boards agreed that concurrent planning took place in 87% of cases compared to 75% in FY12 statewide.

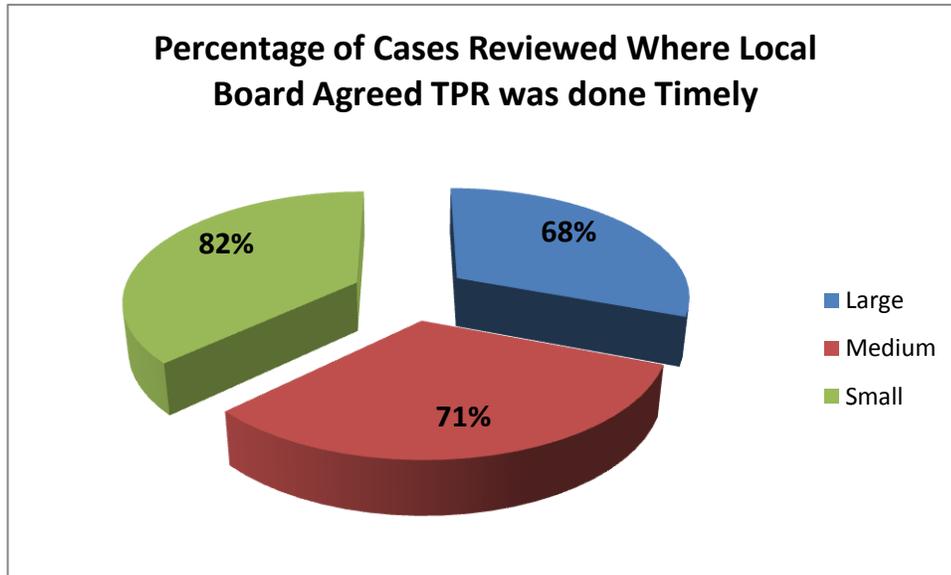
Termination of Parental Rights. In cases reviewed, local boards found that the petition for termination of parental rights (TPR) was filed timely by local jurisdictions in 73% of cases which serves as an increase from 66% from the prior fiscal year.



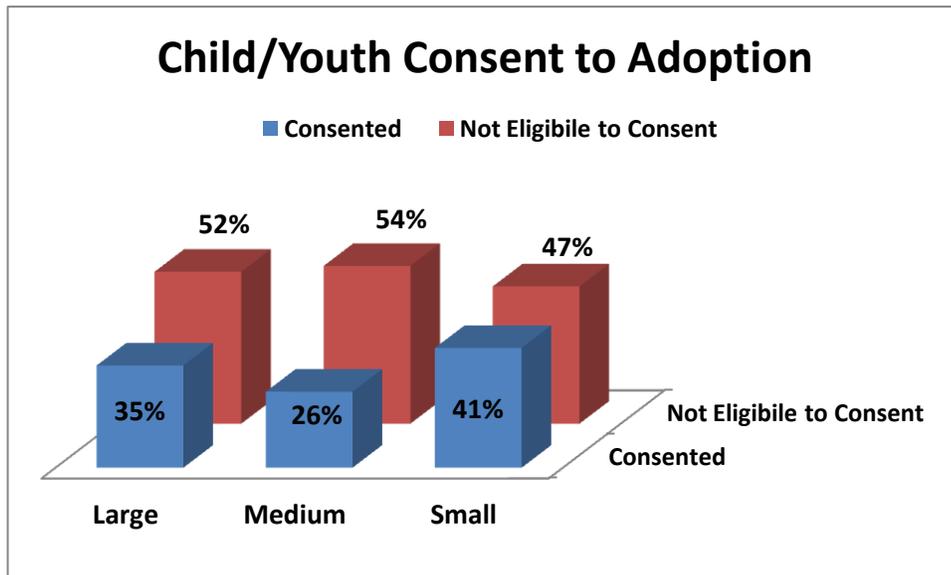
Local boards also found that 31% of TPR petitions were heard by the Courts within 180 days which is a decrease by 5% from the previous fiscal year. In 27% of cases one or more parent filed a notice of objection to the TPR.



Fourteen percent of parents either filed or had an appeal pending. The appeal was found to have delayed the termination in 13% of cases. In 60% of cases TPR was granted which is a 20% increase as compared to the previous fiscal year. Local boards also found that TPR was granted timely in 67% of cases reviewed.



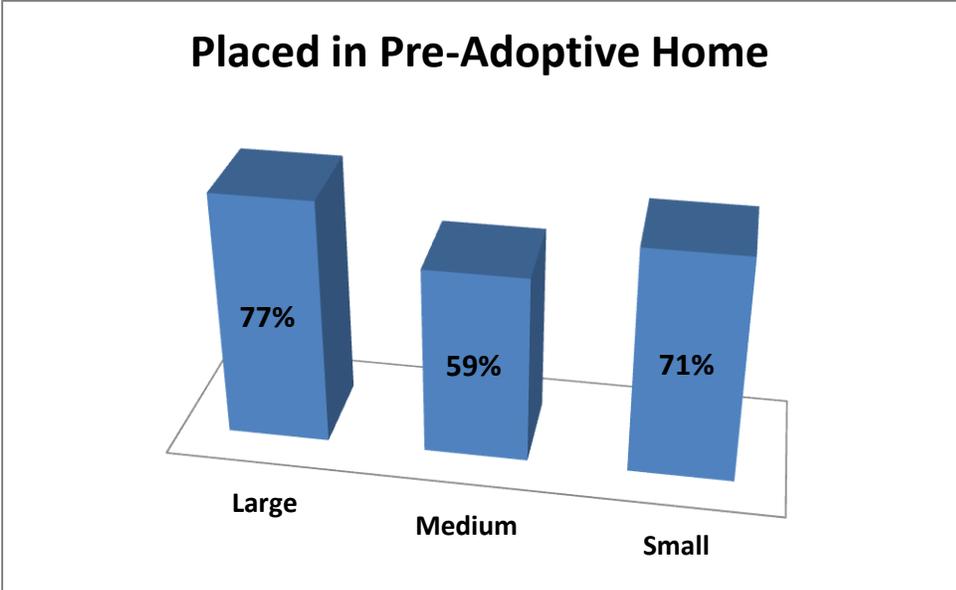
Consent. Of youth ten years and older eligible to consent to adoption 37% consented showing a 17% increase over the twenty percent (20%) that consented in FY12. With the average age of a child reviewed at 9 years old, the percentage of youth not able to consent at 50% was consistent with findings.



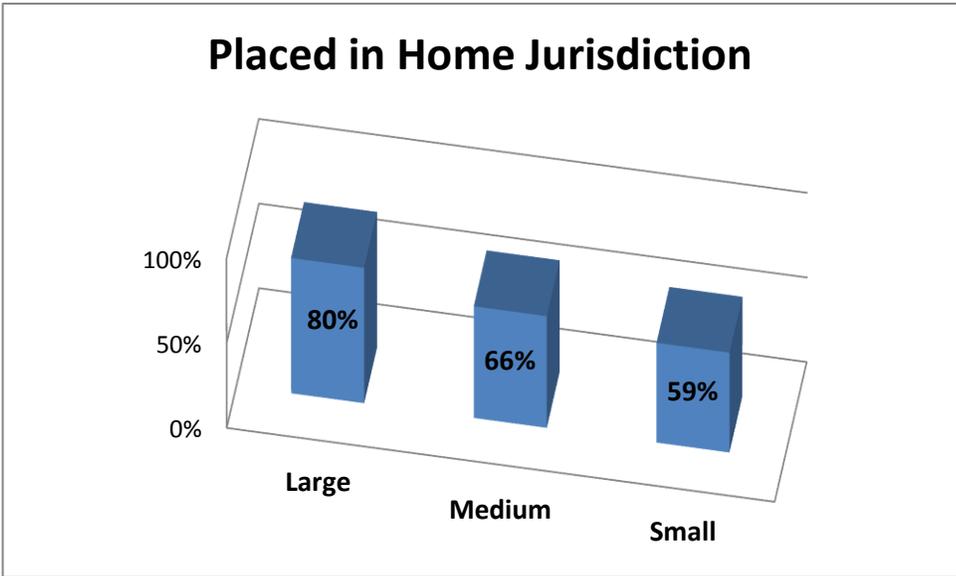
Twenty-nine percent of eligible children and youth able to consent received adoption counseling; however 45% were not considered eligible due to age or medical or mental health condition.

Placement². Local Boards agreed with 93% of identified placement plans and 67% of pre-adoptive placements identified by LDSS during case reviews. Of the majority of children and youth reviewed; 69% resided in a pre-adoptive home. Other types of placements comprised Regular Foster care (19%), Relative foster care (8%), Treatment foster care (4%), Private Treatment Foster Care (30%), Group home care (4%), and Residential Treatment Centers (3%). Local boards agreed with the child’s pre-adoptive placement in 67% of cases reviewed.

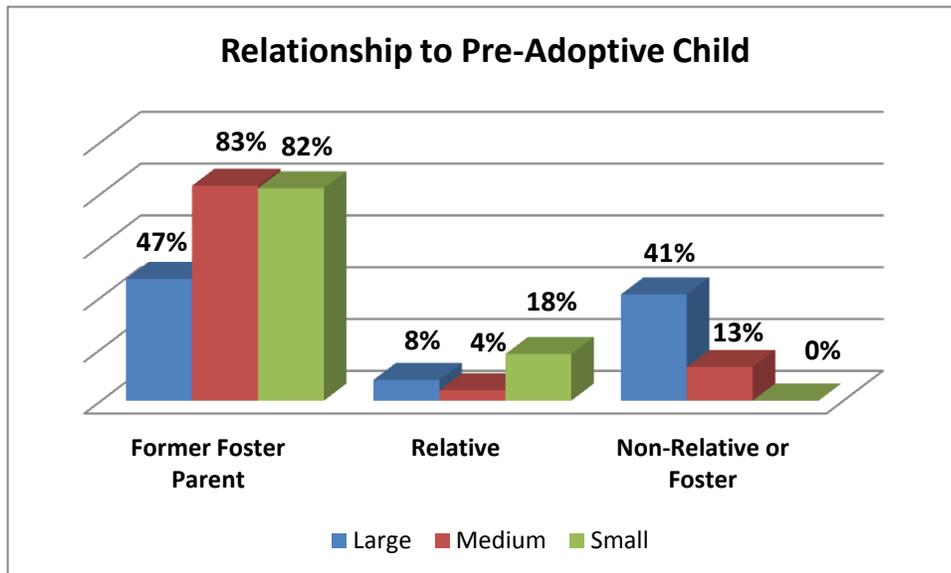
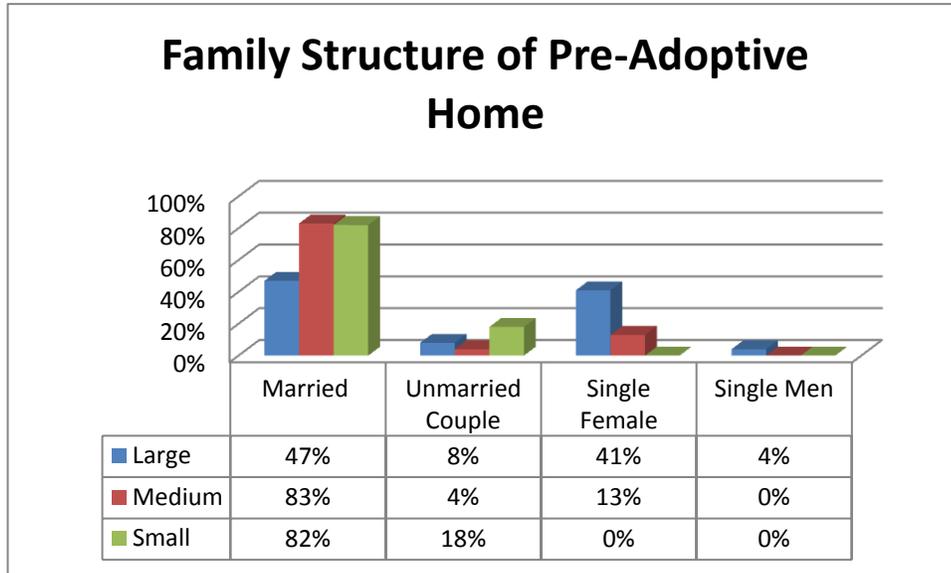
² Pre-adoptive homes may include other types of placements in percentage



The average number of placements for a child or youth with a plan of adoption was 1 placement within each jurisdiction. Seventy-one percent of children and youth were placed with their home jurisdiction.



Married couples were more likely identified as an adoptive resource for the child. Single fathers continued to be identified at lower rates than their counterparts' single women. Pre-adoptive parents were identified as either a non-relative or non-foster parent to the child.



Local review boards found 26% of children and youth resided in their pre-adoptive placement for 21 months or longer.

Placement Stability. In 65% percent of cases there was no change in the child/youth’s placement. In the 35% were a placement change took place:

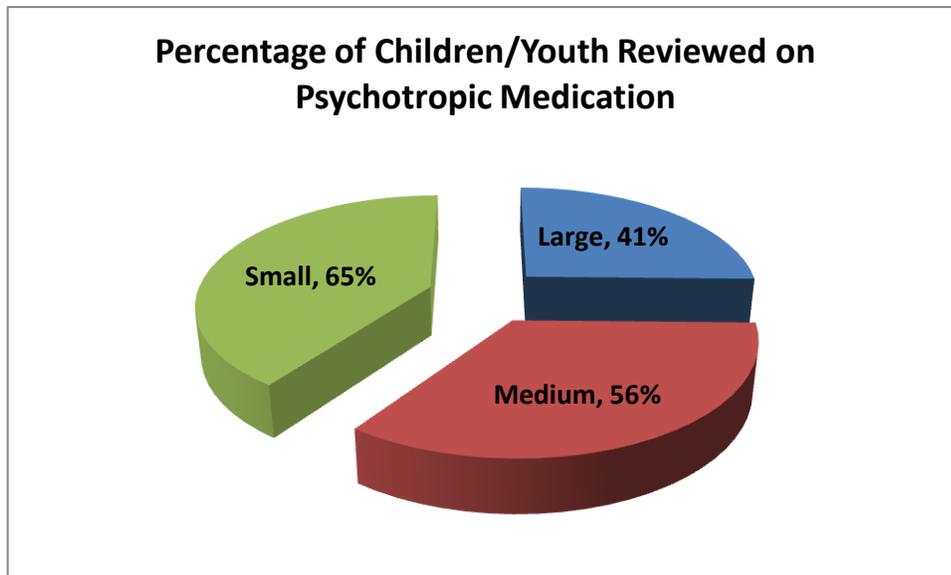
- 19% had a *family involvement meeting* at change;
- 14% had the same level of care; with 13% in less restrictive placements;
- 6% a change took place due to transition towards permanency goal; and
- 71% had appropriate support in place for provider to meet child’s needs.

Post-Adoptive Services. Local boards identified that the top three types of post-adoptive services needed for children, youth, and families are: Medical, Mental Health, and Educational Services. Services least needed were identified as services with the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), Respite, and Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS).

Open Adoption and Efforts to Find Adoptive Resource: Local Departments reported that in 33% of cases reviewed, families chose to have open adoption agreement with the birth parents or family. It was identified that local departments made effort to find an adoptive resource for children and youth in 84% of cases an increase from 58% of cases reviewed in previous fiscal year.

Health/Mental health. Local Departments met the child/youth’s health needs in 94% of cases reviewed. When health needs were not met it was due to related issues of lack of timely dental visits (4%) and physical exams (1.3%). Thirty-five percent of children and youth were on *prescription non-psychotropic* and 47% on *psychotropic* medication. Ninety-eight percent of children and youth had no illegal substance issue reported.

Education. Local Department met the child/youth’s educational needs in 99% of cases reviewed.



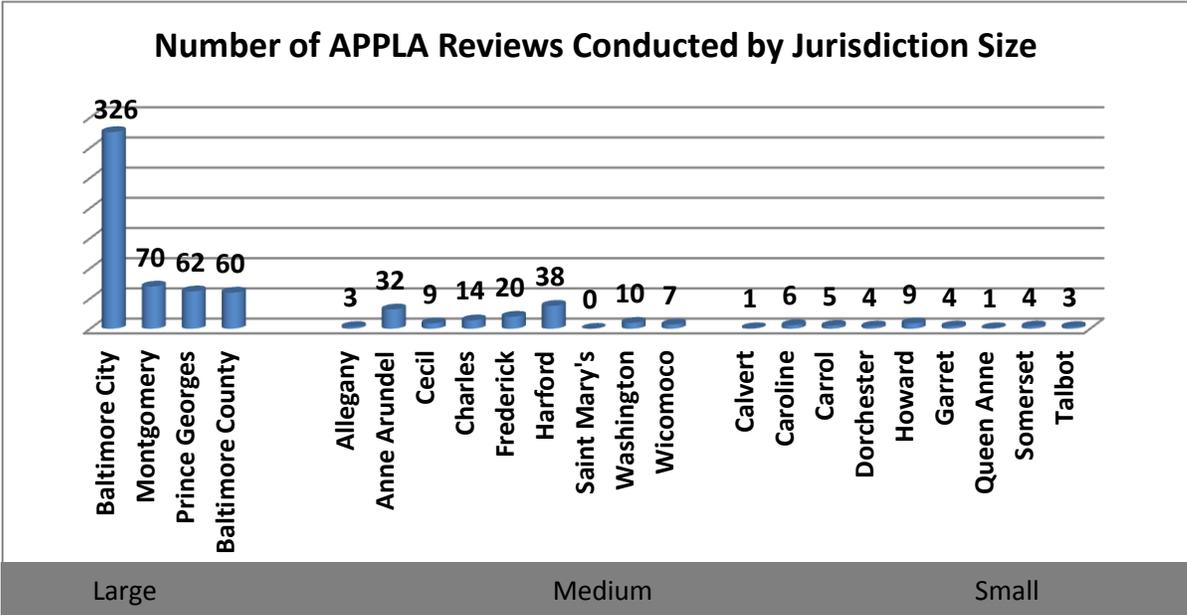
Barriers

Local boards identified the following Barriers preventing the adoption process or preventing progress in child/youth’s case

- Pre-Adoptive Resources not identified for child;
- Denial of termination of parental rights;
- Appeals by Birth parents; and
- Child Behavior issues in the home.

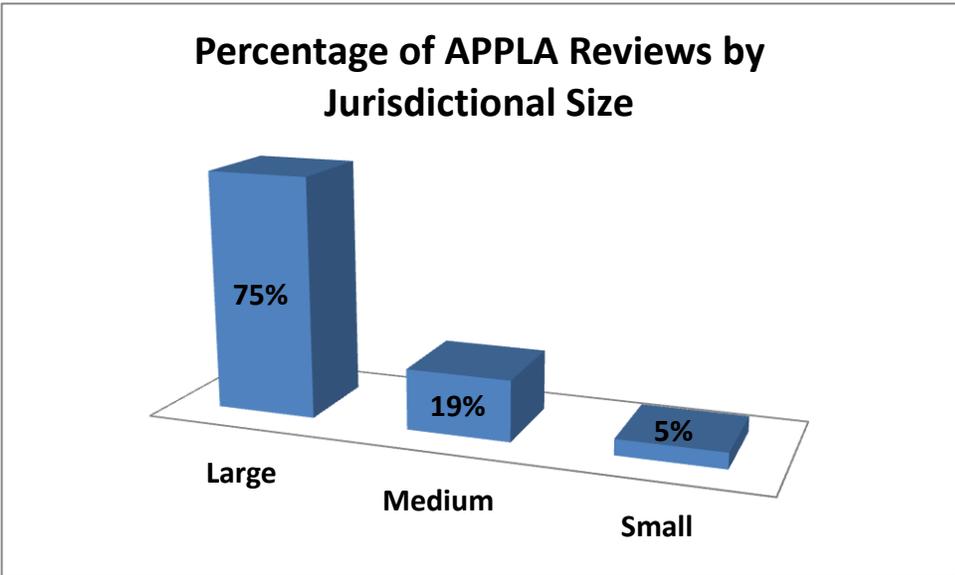
Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) Reviews

Citizen Review Board for Children local boards reviewed six-hundred and eighty-eight (n=688) APPLA cases statewide during fiscal year 2013. Fifty-five percent of those cases met the re-review criteria during the 4th quarter of FY13. This section will address cases that were reviewed in the first three quarters of the fiscal year.

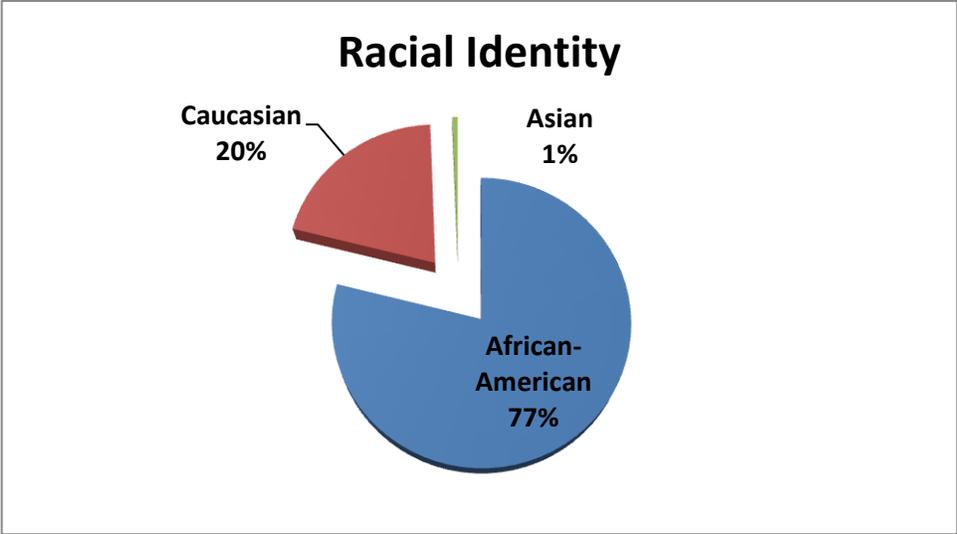


Jurisdictional Overview

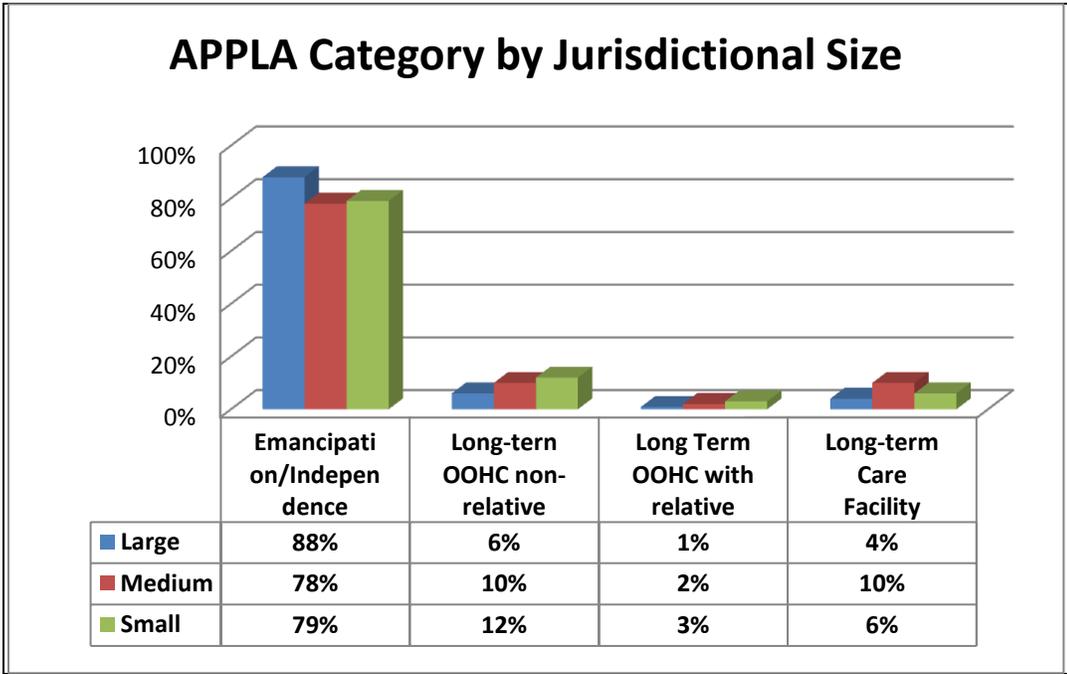
Large jurisdictions accounted for six-hundred and eighty-eight (n=688) APPLA reviews in FY13, with medium size jurisdictions reviewing ninety-eight (n=98) and small jurisdiction reviewing twenty (n=20) cases.



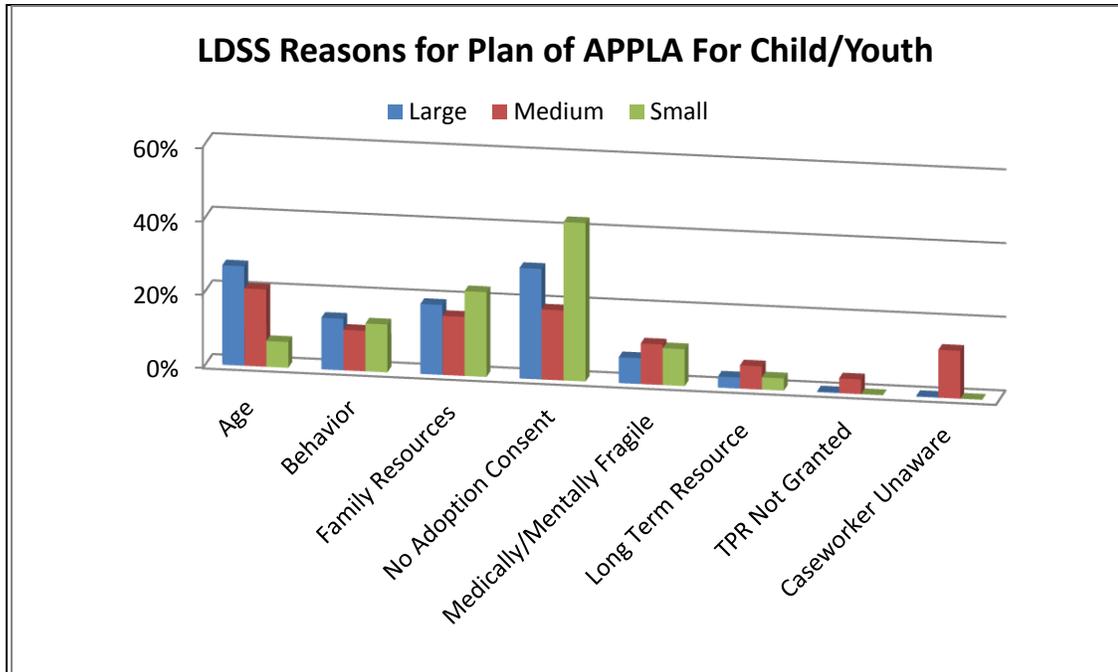
The average age of a child reviewed was eighteen (18) years of age. African-Americans continued to outnumber their cohorts and accounted for 77% of the population reviewed. Females represented 51% of children and youth reviewed.



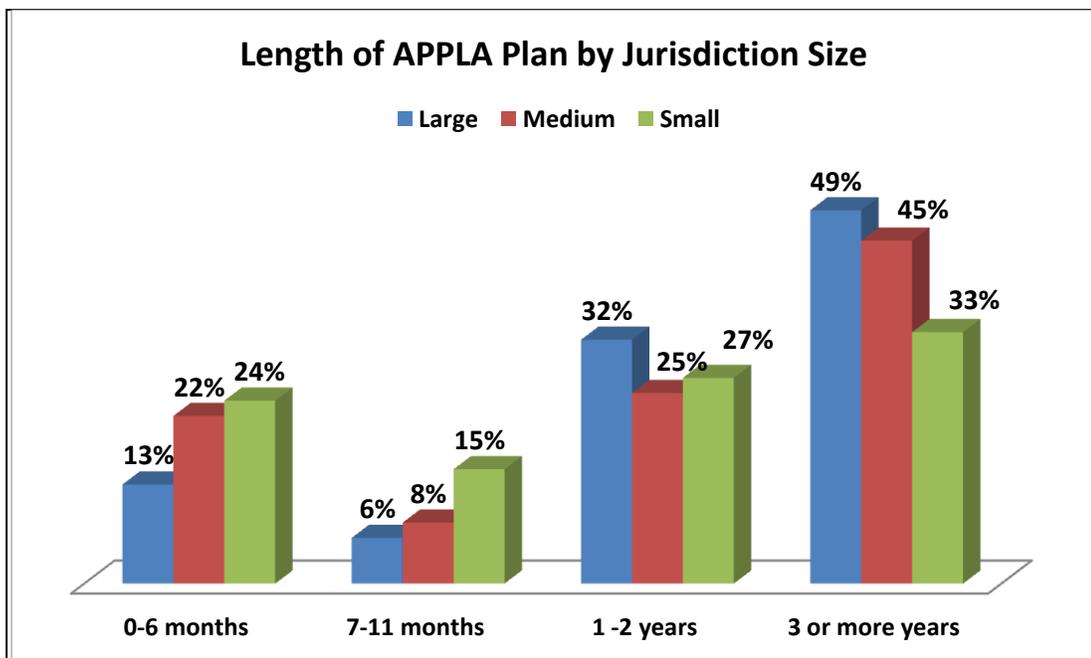
Forty-six percent of youth reviewed had existing plans of APPLA. Thirty-eight percent of youth were 20 years of age. Eighty-five percent of youth had goals of Emancipation/Independence which is an increase from sixty-eight percent in previous fiscal year. In 88% of cases the local departments considered other permanency plan options such as adoption, reunification, or relative placements prior to applying a plan of APPLA.



Local department caseworkers cited various reasons why a child/youth had a plan of APPLA, such as child’s age as a barrier, child’s behavior, lack of adoption consent and lack of family resources being the most prominent reasoning.



Consent and Length of Plan. In 91% of youth did not want to be adopted. However 98% of those youth reviewed had not received adoption counseling in the last 6 months prior to the review. Sixty-two percent had parental rights that had not been terminated. Forty-five percent (45%) of youth reviewed had plans of APPLA for 3 years or more and 29% had APPLA plans for 1 to 2 years.

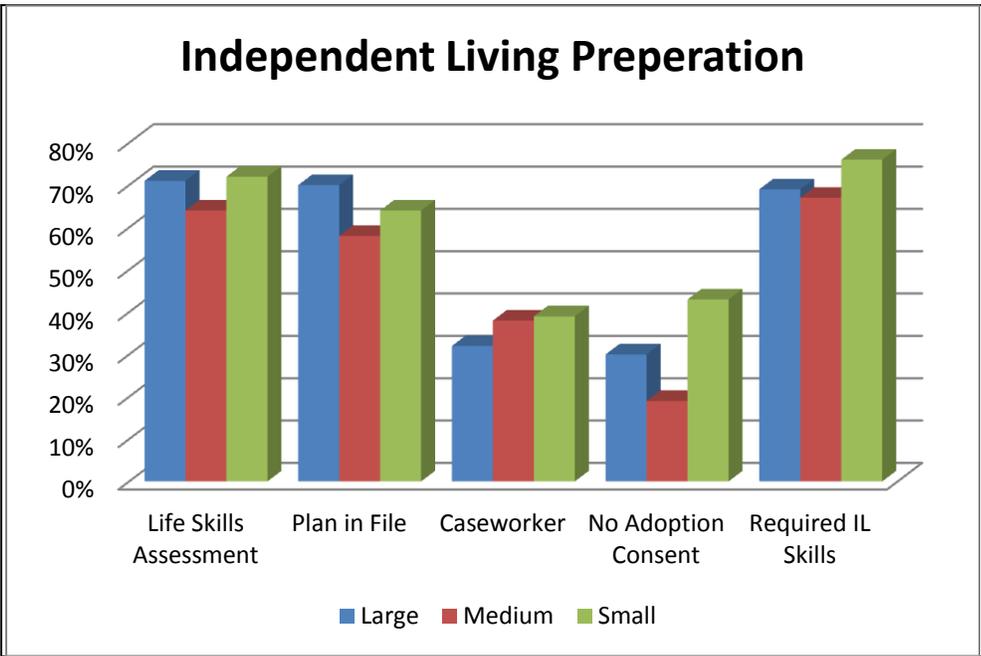


Independent Living Preparation

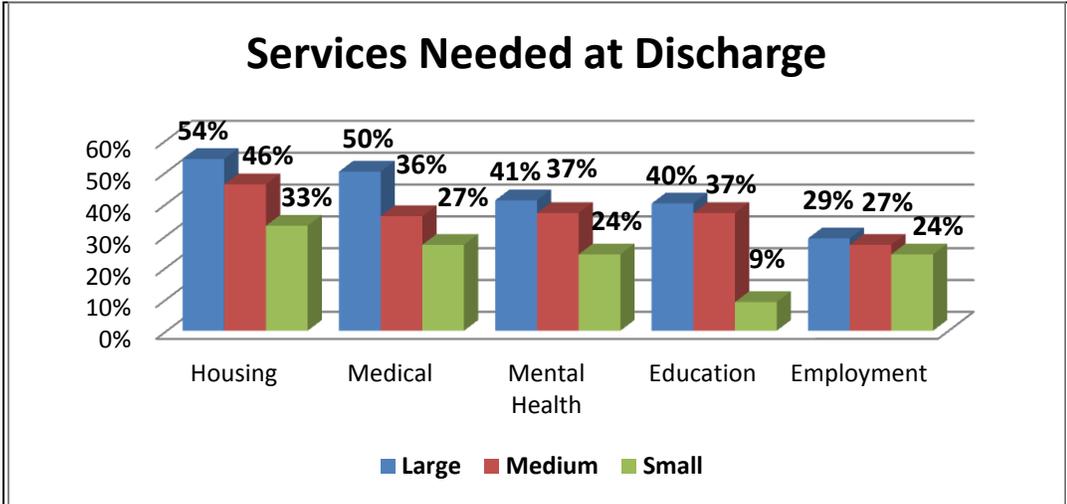
Eighty-five percent of the youth reviewed have APPLA plans with a goal of emancipation/independence. Sixty percent of youth were receiving appropriate services to prepare them for independent living when they exited care. Sixty-six percent were receiving required independent living skills.

While Statewide:

- 70% of youth have completed an independent living skills assessment;
- 67% of youth reviewed have an independent living plan in their file;
- 33% of youth have been assigned an Independent Living Case Worker; and
- 68% are receiving required independent living skills preparation.



It was determined that 60% of youth reviewed needed additional services at discharge to be successful. Housing, medical, mental health, educational, and employment services were identified as top services needed when exiting care.

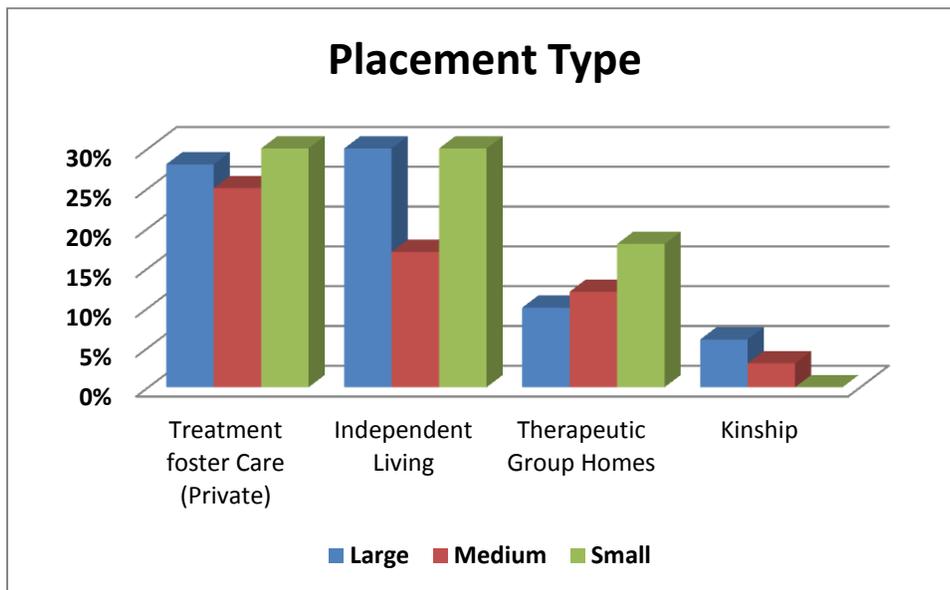


Case Planning

Caseworkers reported:

- Youth had signed service agreements in 53% of the cases reviewed where the youth were eligible to sign services agreement;
- Efforts were made to involve youth in case planning in 67% of cases; and
- 68% had Family Involvement Meetings.

Placement and Stability. Local boards agreed with the placement plan presented in 90% of cases reviewed. Independent living programs accounted for 26% of youth placements and Private Treatment foster care 25%. Thirty-seven percent of youth had one placement. Twenty-one percent had three or more placements. Youth were placed in their home jurisdiction in 67% percent of cases reviewed. Of youth not placed in home jurisdiction they were often placed in Baltimore (n=64) and Prince George’s (n=26) Counties, or Baltimore City (n=23). The local Board agreed with the youth’s placement plan in 90% of cases.



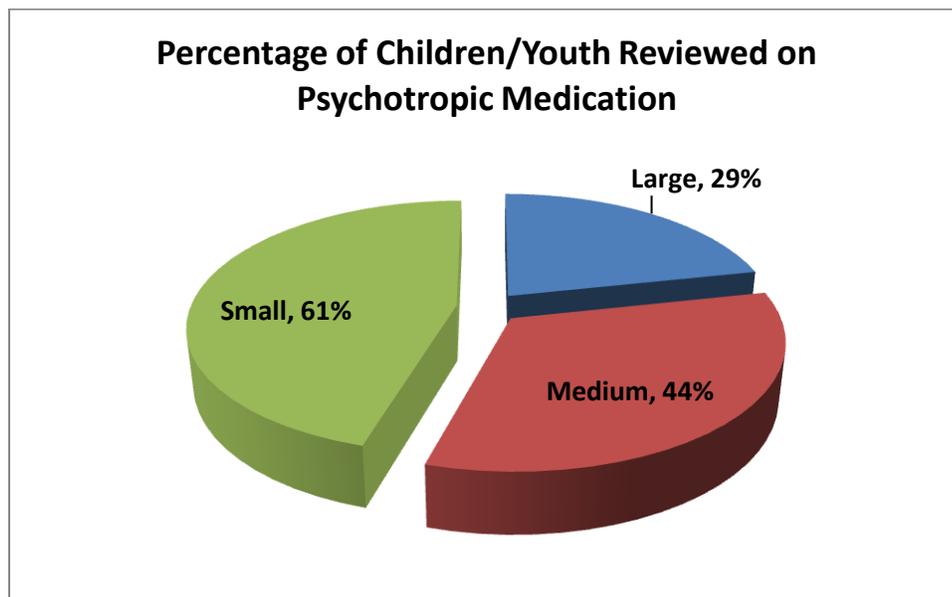
Placement Stability. In 47% percent of cases there was no change in the child/youth’s placement. In the 53% were a placement change took place:

- 30% had a *family involvement meeting* at change;
- 25% were changed to less restrictive placements;
- 16% a change took place due to transition towards permanency goal;
- 4% were changed due to FOUNDED incident of provider abuse/neglect;
- 20% change due to child related health issues; and
- 51% had appropriate support in place for provider to meet child’s needs.

Health/ Mental Health. The local boards agreed that 72% of youth were having their health and mental needs met by local departments. It was found that 85% of children/youth received comprehensive health assessments; including mental health and quality service in a timely manner to address their needs. Youth had completed medical records in 72% of cases reviewed.

Additionally local boards found:

- 23% were prescribed non-psychotropic medication;
- 33% percent of youth were taking psychotropic medication to address mental health issues. In 23% of those cases a plan was identified for youth to obtain services in adult mental health system upon discharge; and
- 18% of youth had a substance issue reported by local departments.



Education/Employment/Housing. Local boards found that 80% youth were being prepared to meet educational goals. It was determined that 40% of youth were prepared to meet employment goals and 33% had a transitional housing plan identified.

Additionally local boards found;

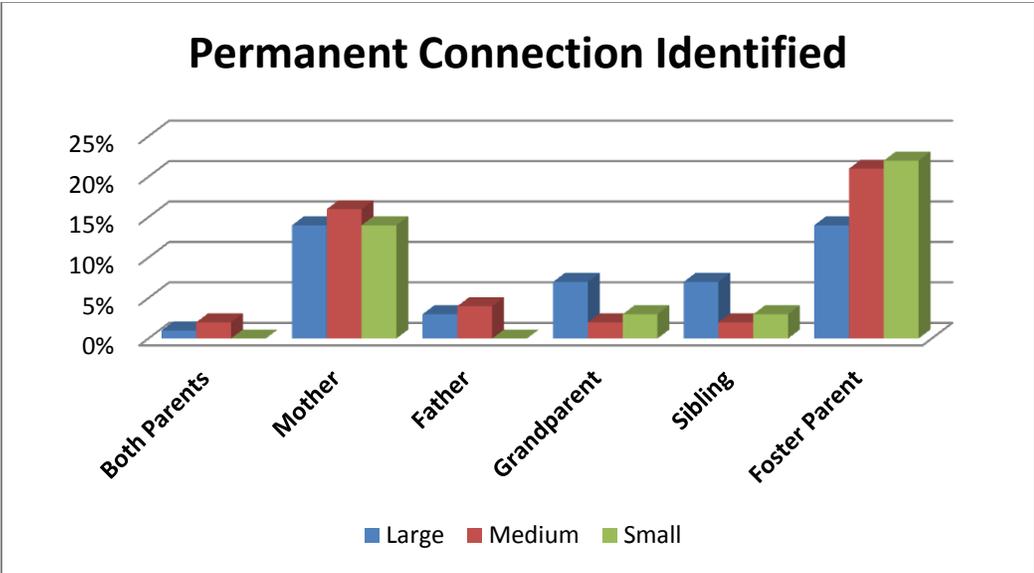
- 3% of youth reviewed were attending college;
- 53% of youth had a plan to complete high-school/GED; with 28% having a plan for post-secondary education;
- 29% had a plan for specific educational and financial goals;
- 41% had identified post secondary support services;
- 63% of eligible youth were employed with 13% working in a relevant career field of choice. Of youth that were employed 9% were earning a living wage with 8% being referred to MD Rise; and
- 28% had a transitional housing plan identified with 30% provided with alternative housing option.

Permanent Connection

A permanent connection is someone a youth can depend on for financial and emotional support long after they have reached adulthood. Although identifying a permanent connection is important for all youth, it is especially crucial for those about to exit out of home care, as they will no longer have the State and their social workers to depend upon. The local boards agreed in 57% of cases with the permanent connection identified by the local department.

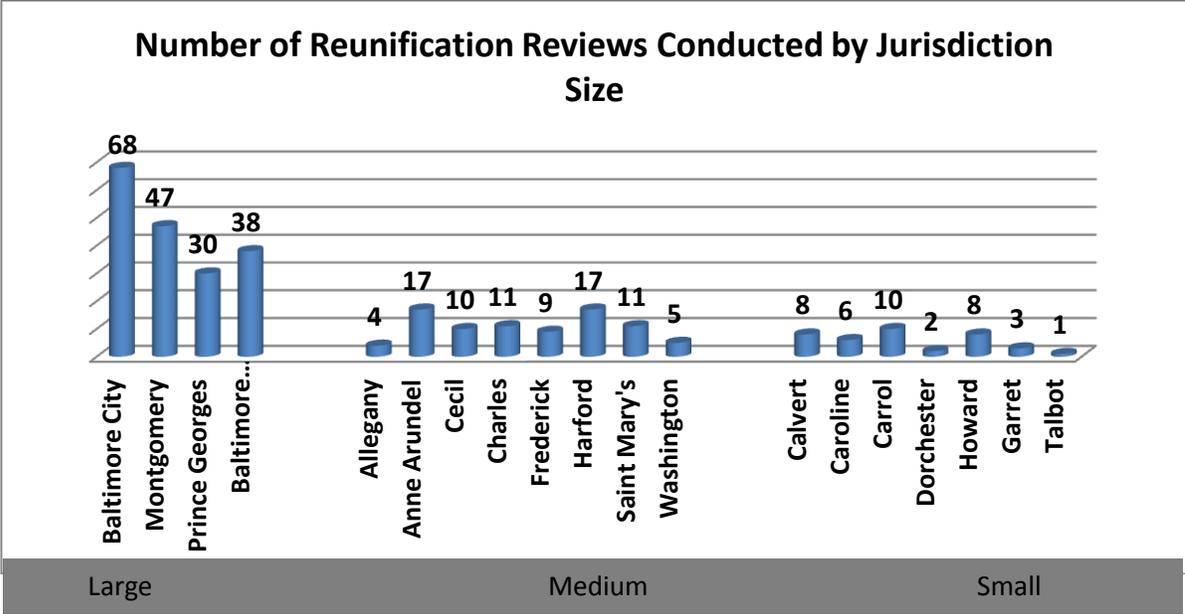
Additionally local boards found;

- In 60% of the cases reviewed, youth had a permanent connection identified.
- In 36% of the cases, the permanent connection identified was a family member



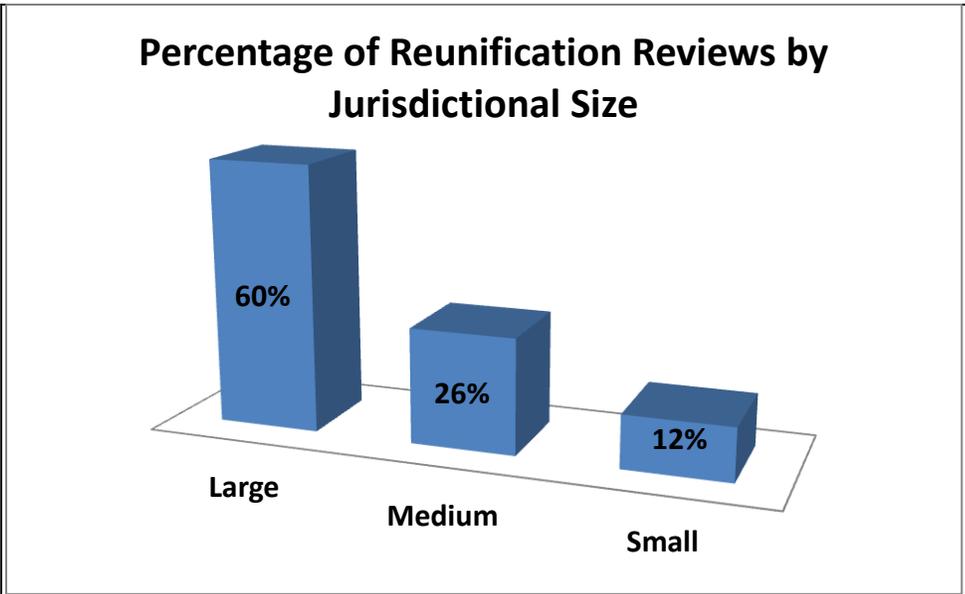
Reunification Reviews

Citizen Review Board for Children local boards reviewed three-hundred and five (n=305) Reunification cases statewide during fiscal year 2013. Twenty-five percent met the re-review criteria the 4th quarter of FY13. This section will address cases that were reviewed in the first three quarters of the fiscal year.

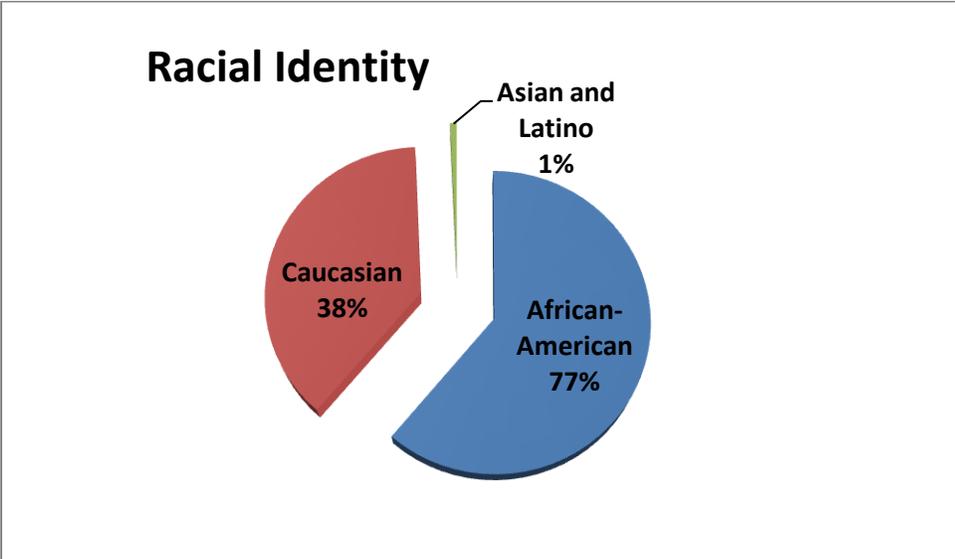


Jurisdictional Overview

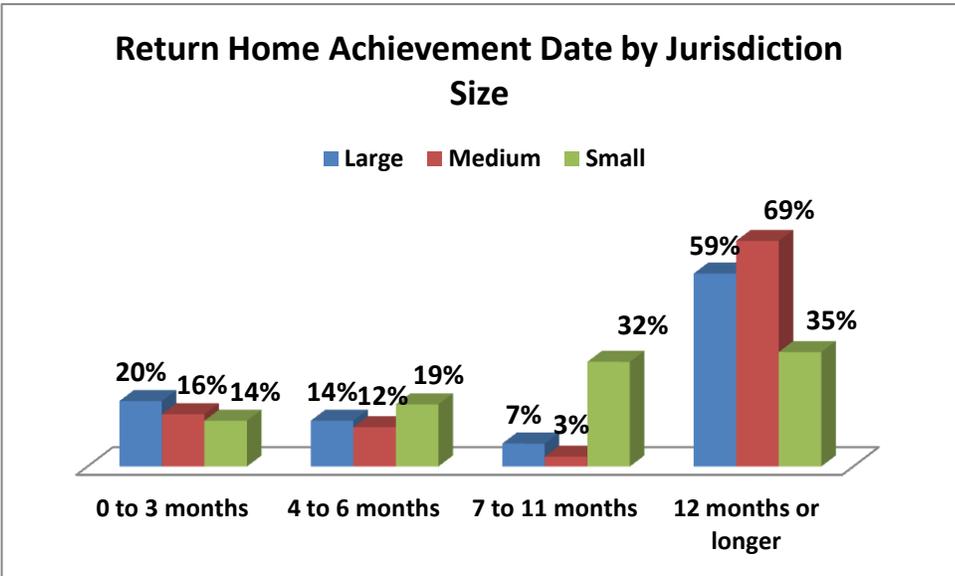
Large jurisdictions accounted for one-hundred and eighty-three (n=183) reunification reviews in FY13, with medium size jurisdictions reviewing eighty-four (n=84), and small jurisdiction reviewing thirty-eight (n=38) cases. The average age of a child reviewed was twelve (12) years of age.



African-Americans continued to outnumber their cohorts and accounted for 63% of the population reviewed. Male’s outnumbered females by accounting for 57% of reviews.



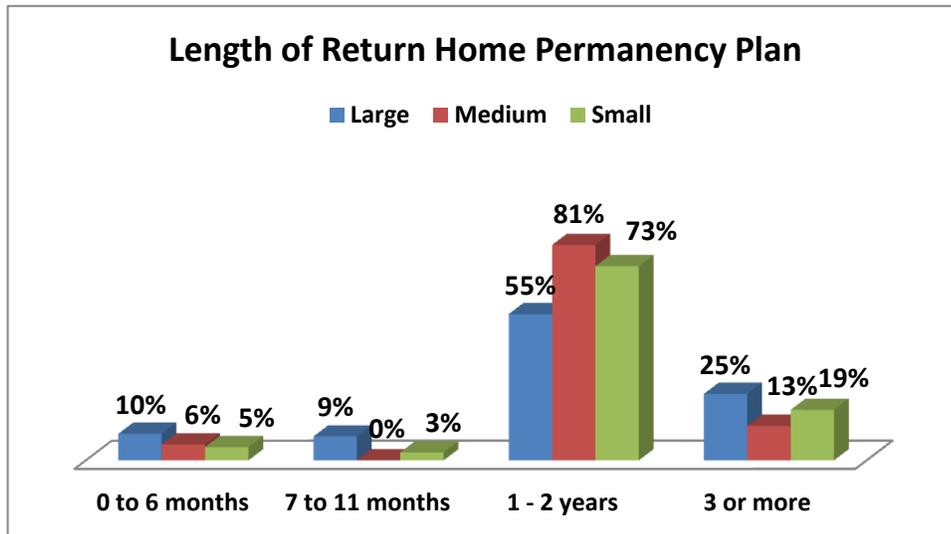
Permanency Plan. Local Boards agreed with the permanency plan in 66% of cases. Ninety-one percent of youth reviewed had existing plans of reunification that met the review criteria. Children and youth were identified to return home to their mothers in 71% of cases. Fifty-five percent had a return home achievement date of 12 months or longer.



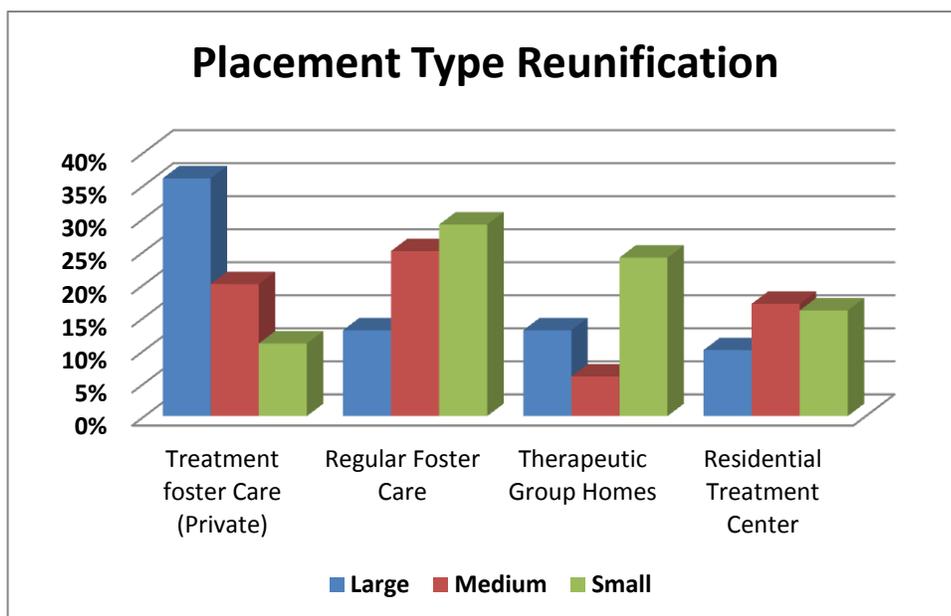
Local Boards found that 17% of cases had a *concurrent* plan identified by the Courts. Of the 17% with an identified concurrent plan 12% had a concurrent plan of Relative placement. Local departments were found to not be implementing the concurrent plan designated by the Court in 82% cases. In cases where the local department was not implementing the concurrent plan set forth by the courts they were pursuing concurrent

plans of APPLA (12%) and Relative Placement (13%) mainly. Twenty percent were identified as re-entry cases; with 5% having been previously adopted.

Sixty-three percent of youth have had a plan of reunification/return home for 1 to 2 years. Twenty-one percent of youth had plans for 3 or more years.



Placement and Stability. Local boards agreed with the child’s placement plan in 97% of cases reviewed. The majority of youth reviewed resided in Private Treatment Foster Care (29%), with other majorities residing in Regular Foster Care (18%), Residential Treatment Center (12%), and Therapeutic Group Homes (12%). Notably 8% of youth resided in a Formal Kinship Care placement.

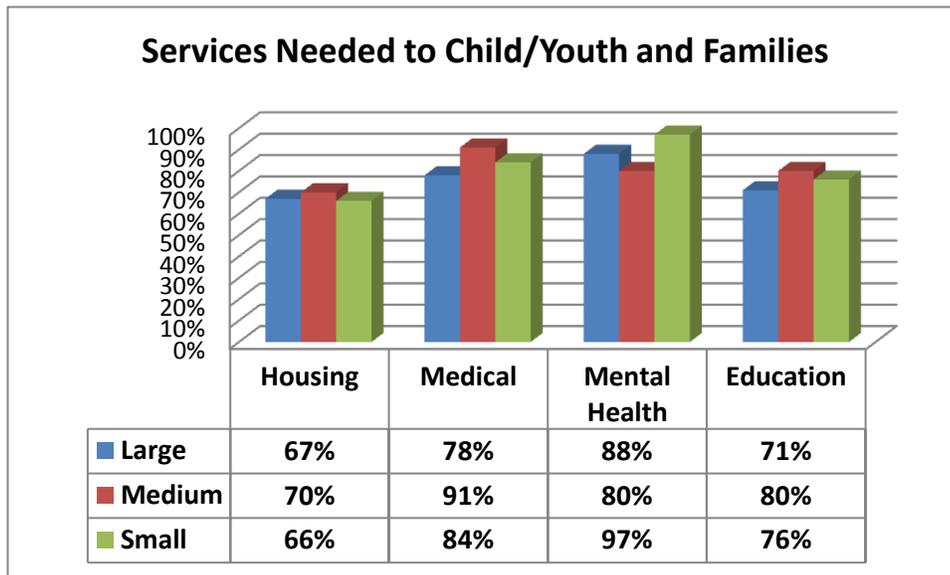


Thirty-five percent of youth had one placement in the last 12 months prior to being reviewed. Sixty-nine percent of youth were placed in their identified home jurisdictions. Local departments reported that they had visited with the child less than twice a month but at least once a month in 91% of cases.

Placement Stability. In 51% percent of cases there was no change in the child/youth’s placement. In the 49% were a placement change took place:

- 32% had a *family involvement meeting* at change;
- 16% were changed to less restrictive placements or was the same level of care;
- 8% a change took place due to transition towards permanency goal;
- 5.7% were changed due to founded incident of provider abuse/neglect;
- 19% change due to child behavioral issues; and
- 54% had appropriate support in place for provider to meet child’s needs

Services. Local boards agreed appropriate services were being offered overall in 97% of cases. Appropriate services were being offered to birth families in 90% of cases and to the provider in 63% of cases reviewed. It was found that children and families needed services related to housing (67%), medical (81%), mental health (87%), and educational services (73%), and employment (10%) services.

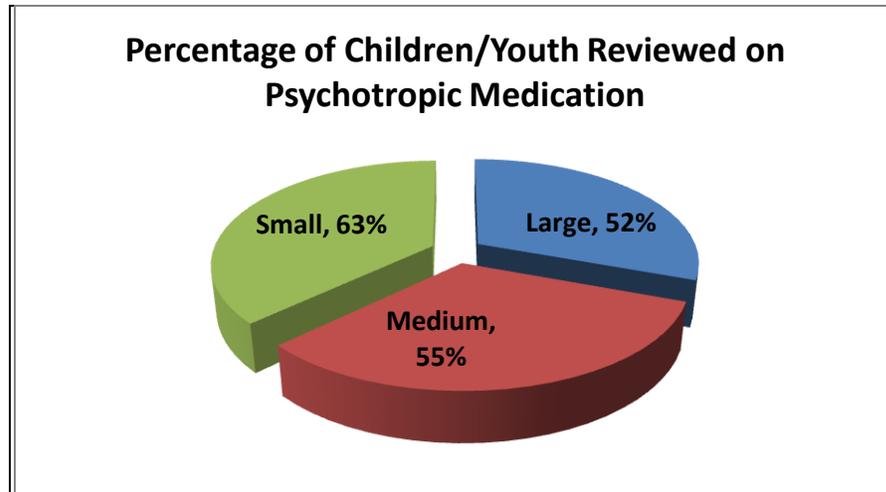


Service and Case Planning. Local boards found that birth parents signed service agreements in 52% of cases while 10% of cases the local departments reported that the agreement had been signed but could not provide the documentation to confirm. While service agreements were only signed in 52% of cases local boards still found that local departments made efforts to involve the family in case planning in 93% of cases. Fifty-nine youth were provided with a FIM prior to entry.

Health/Mental Health. The local boards agreed that 87% of youth were having their health and mental needs met by local departments. It was found that 93% of children/youth received comprehensive health assessment, including mental health and quality service in a timely manner to address their needs. Youth had completed medical records in 83% of cases reviewed.

Additionally local boards found:

- 42% were prescribed non-psychotropic medication;
- 54% percent of youth were taking psychotropic medication to address mental health issues; and
- 8% of youth had a substance issue reported by local departments.



Education/Employment/Housing. Local boards found that 95% youth were being prepared to meet educational goals.

Additionally local boards found;

- 88% of youth were enrolled in school;
- 20% of youth's school placement remained the same;
- 42% had developmental needs;
- 46% had IEP identified; with 43% of plans being implemented by schools; and
- 46% had concrete plans detailing graduation or GED goals.

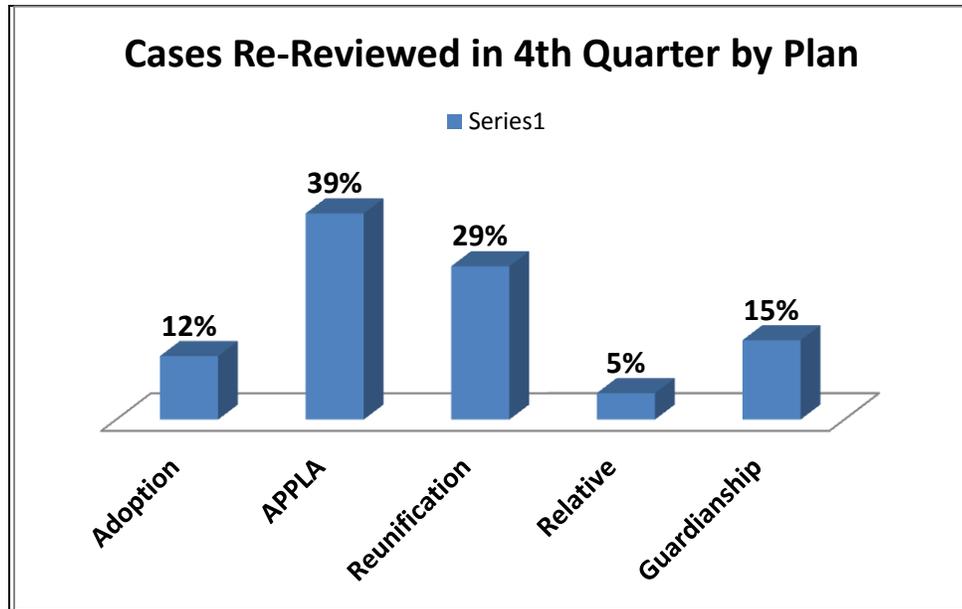
Reasonable Efforts and Safety. Local boards found that reasonable efforts were made by the local departments in 99% of cases. Local boards also agreed that appropriate safety protocols were followed in 88% of cases reviewed.

- 88% of cases reviewed there was either a Safe C or G indicated;
- Local boards found that the used the applicable safety assessment in 85% of cases; and
- There were 93% of cases reviewed with NO risk indicators.

Adoption, APPLA, Reunification Cases Re-Reviewed for Progress

Ninety percent of children and youth cases reviewed were eligible to have their cases re-reviewed by local boards to determine progress in the 4th quarter of FY13. Cases that were re-reviewed accounted for cases that included children and youth with permanency plans of reunification, relative placement, adoption, APPLA, and guardianship which are reflected in percentages.

Cases reviewed in the second quarter of FY13 were more likely to be considered for re-review by local boards accounting for 56% of cases assessed for progress.



Local boards reported concerns in the following areas of cases and requested to re-review those cases to determine if progress had been made and if board recommendations were implemented:

- Permanency (39%)
- Placement (26%)
- Safety (7%)
- Educational (12%)
- Mental Health (12%)
- Physical Health (7%)
- Independent living (7%)
- With Youth's Family (10%)
- Courts (12%)
- Youth (2%)
- DHR/DSS (15%)
- Other (24%)

Local boards found that issues and concerns were **resolved** in the following areas at the following percentages:

- Permanency (29%)
- Placement (17%)

- Safety (5%)
- Educational (12%)
- Mental Health (15%)
- Physical Health (7%)
- Independent living (5%)
- With Youth's Family (10%)
- Courts (5%)
- Youth (2%)
- DHR/DSS (Partially resolved 2%)
- Other (20%)

Local Boards determined that adequate progress was made in 76% of cases re-reviewed. Local department's implemented local board recommendations in 37% of cases were they had previously made recommendations.



Child Protection Panel Reviews

In 1998, CRBC became a Citizen Review Panel in response to the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and State law requiring citizen oversight of the child protection system.

CRBC's reviews emphasize policies, procedures, and cases pertaining to reports of child abuse and neglect. A local panel may be established in each jurisdiction. It reports its findings and recommendations to CRBC's State Board and to the local department of social services.

The reviews address five child welfare outcomes that are aligned with the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). For each review the panels decide if the outcome is substantially achieved, partially achieved, not achieved, or not applicable. During FY12, six jurisdictions jointly completed reviews. The jurisdictions are: Allegany, Anne Arundel, Queen Anne's, Montgomery, Worcester Counties and Baltimore City.

Outcome Area	Measure	Effectiveness Rating by Panel
Safety Outcome 1	Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect	The outcome was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantially achieved in 85% of cases Partially achieved in 7% of cases
Safety Outcome 2	Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate	The outcome was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantially achieved in 70% of cases Partially achieved in 19% of cases Not achieved in 7% of the cases
Well Being Outcome 1	Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their needs	The outcome was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantially achieved in 30% of cases Partially achieved in 11% of the cases Not achieved in 19% of the cases

Outcome Area	Measure	Effectiveness Rating by Panel
Well Being Outcome 2	Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs	The outcome was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantially achieved in 30% of the cases Partially achieved in 11% of the cases Not achieved in 40% of the cases
Well Being Outcome 3	Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs	The outcome was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantially achieved in 37% of cases Partially achieved in 15% of cases Not achieved in 11% of cases

Alternative Response

In 2012 Maryland Legislation was passed to plan and implement an Alternative Response system in the State of Maryland.³ Alternative Response treats low risk cases of child abuse and neglect differently by engaging families instead of investigating them. Alternative Response is a proven way to help keep kids safe and strengthen families in low risk cases. Cases that are not screened out will be assigned to one of two tracks: Investigative Response or Alternative Response. Investigative Responses will be handled the same way they are today, resulting in a formal finding. Low risk reports can be pursued through Alternative Response. Both approaches address the family's needs and put in place appropriate measures to protect the child.

The Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR) was tasked with forming an Advisory Council for Alternative Response that worked diligently in FY13 planning and ultimately implementing this new approach. The Citizens Review Board for Children was invited to serve on the advisory council with other child advocate agencies, stakeholders, and departmental staff. The advisory council consisted of various workgroups including Practice/Community Partner; Evaluation; Policy; and Communications. In addition, specialized training was conducted for all of the Phase I and Phase II counties. The Phase I and II counties reported approximately 33% of new allegations were assigned to Alternative Response.

Local Child Protection Panel's Findings, Recommendations, and Plans:

Allegany County

Stronger laws developed and implemented governing families which encourage parents or caregivers to be more accountable around issues of founded child abuse and neglect.

Baltimore City

- Findings of Incomplete Case Records:
 - LDSS should provide more complete case records to local panel when case has involvement within different programs or units within the LDSS.
 - Found that parents were not thoroughly investigated involving CPS cases or there often was no supporting documentation of investigative process in case records. LDSS should ensure that documentation supporting the investigation be included in case record.
 - Found lack of supporting documentation on CPS and background checks with family and household members in case files. LDSS should ensure that each adult family member in household receives a proper background check to ensure safety of child before returning child home.
 - Lack of services being documented in case records. LDSS should ensure that proper documentation of services is outlined in child's case record.

³ Taken from Department of Human Resources Fact Sheet on Alternative Response 12/2013

- Found that it did not appear that LDSS were pursuing efforts to locate and interact with paternal family of child to assess as resource for child. LDSS should ensure that they properly engage paternal resources for child.
- Lack of follow-up from agency about panels concerns with issues pertaining to high-risk cases. LDSS should ensure that they meet with local panels quarterly or provide documentation on progress of high-risk cases.
- Local panel is receiving more neglect cases that are not being appropriately monitored or appropriately followed up on by local department. Local panel is receiving 4 to 5 egregious safety cases a year. LDSS should ensure that cases are being properly monitored to ensure safety of child.

Montgomery County

Montgomery County local CPS Panel does not conduct cases reviews however conducted the following activities:

- Foster Parent Training manuals—Materials have been updated, reorganized, and expanded information is being provided on the developmental needs of children.
- Communication/Support— A new procedure was introduced to assure that foster parents know how to contact the child’s social worker, supervisor, child’s attorney, and other significant people in the child’s case.
- Foster parent training—Additional topics have been added to the pre-service training sessions as well as to the ongoing training throughout the year. Also, a foster parent co-trainer has been added to all pre-service training sessions.
- Resources—Specific resource needs were identified through foster parent focus groups and meetings with agency personnel. Some of these are clearer information for foster parents on resource availability, foster homes for teenagers, after care services for adoptive families, transportation support for non-licensed kin providers, and fewer caseworkers assigned to a case to provide more continuity for continuing cases.
- In addition to making recommendations for improvement to training, a tracking form, developed by the Panel, was piloted with relatives and foster parents to track health and mental services children in foster care receive. The Panel will continue to support agency efforts to retain foster parents. Most recently the Panel provided feedback to the agency on a survey to obtain information from foster parents who have terminated as foster parents.
- The Panel spent time gathering information on the needs of youth transitioning out of foster care.
- Specifically the Panel’s priorities for this year are:
 - Review basic skills training classes for transitioning youth
 - Develop housing alternatives for transitioning youth

- Outreach to discharged foster care youth to inform them of their eligibility for health care through the Affordable Health Care Act

Tasks to address these priorities are:

- Basic skills training classes begin in January and panel members will be attending classes. Recommendations will then be made to agency about possible enhancements to the training program.
- A plan to identify housing opportunities for youth is being developed. After initial telephone conference with the Commission on Aging future plans include further review of literature, coordination with other Montgomery County commissions and community organizations and faith community interested in this issue, and developing a plan that provides a pilot housing project to pair youth and older adults.
- Currently developing plan for outreach to youth. First step will be to make phone calls to youth who have been discharged. Depending on success of these calls, next steps will be developed.



Recommendations to the Department of Human Resources

The Citizens Review Board for Children **recommends** the following to the Department of Human Resources to improve service delivery to youth and families:

- Local Departments should ensure that all youth with a plan of APPLA are prepared for transition. The local boards found that only 34% of youth were adequately prepared to age out of care.
- Local Department staff should make efforts to allow children and youth to remain in school placement prior to entry or placement change.
- Local Departments should increase efforts to develop plans for youth with mental health issues to seek services as adults when exiting care.
- Local Departments should ensure that youth are receiving ongoing adoption counseling every six months even when the child did not consent to being adopted.
- Local Departments should increase the development of transitional plans for youth exiting care that include transitional housing and viable employment.
- Local Departments should increase exploring the use of relatives/kin as viable placement options for children in care and explore ways to increase those numbers.
- Local Departments should ensure that youth transitioning out of care have identified permanent connections, transitional housing established, and develop plans for older youth in care to obtain relevant employment training in area of interest.



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