

Citizens Review Board For Children



ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL 2015
(July 1st 2014 - June 30th 2015)

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
State Board Chair	2
.....	.
Executive Summary.....	4
Acknowledgements	6
CRBC Administrator
.....	.
Program Description	7
Mission.....	8
Vision	8
Goals	8
Discrimination	8
Confidentiality	8
.....	.
Legislative Activities	9
.....	.
Out of Home Placement Case Reviews	12
Targeted Review Criteria	12
Review Findings.....	14
Plan Percentages	15
Gender Totals.....	15
Ethnicity Overall.....	16
Case Reviews by Jurisdiction	16
Reunification.....	17
Adoption	21
APPLA	27
Relative Placement	32
Custody and Guardianship.....	36
.....	.
Child Protection Panels	40
Review Findings.....	40
Child Protection Services	41
Montgomery County Panels	42
Worcester County Panels.....	42
.....	.
Recommendations to DSS.....	43
CRBC State Board	44
CRBC Volunteer Board Members	45
CRBC Staff.....	46

Introduction

Maryland's Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) is comprised of volunteer citizens and Department of Human Resources (DHR) 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 §5-539 and § 5-539.1 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 DHR organizational structure, it is an independent entity overseen by its State Board.

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

During fiscal year 2015, there were several changes that may impact child welfare in the future. Governor Larry H. Hogan was elected and Samir Malhotra was appointed to the position of Secretary of DHR. Also, there have been recent additional DHR and SSA leadership changes including Kary James being appointed as the Executive Director of SSA.

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.

The local boards meet at the local Department of Social Services in each Jurisdiction to conduct reviews of children in out-of-home placement. Individual recommendations regarding the permanency, placement, safety and well being are sent to the local Juvenile Courts, the local Department of Social Services and the interested parties involved with the child's care.

CRBC also experienced leadership changes. Denise Wheeler was appointed the Administrator of CRBC by Secretary Samir Malhotra in July 2015, Crystal Young became the Assistant Administrator and Deborah Ramelmeier also joined CRBC as the Director of Child Welfare Policy.

The CRBC FY2015 Annual Report contains CRBC's findings from our case reviews, advocacy efforts, CPS panel activities 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 am proud and happy to present our Fiscal 2015 Annual report.

Sincerely,

Nettie Anderson-Burrs
State Board Chair

Executive Summary

During fiscal 2015, the Citizens Review Board for Children reviewed 1298 cases of youth in Out-of-Home placements which represented 18% of the total number of 7,340 children served in the state of Maryland. Reviews are conducted per a work plan developed in coordination with the DHR/SSA with targeted review criteria based on Out-of-Home placement permanency plans. The majority of the cases reviewed (48%) had a permanency plan of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA).

Health and Education Findings for statewide reviews include:

- The local boards found that the children/youth had a comprehensive health and mental health assessment in 90% of the cases reviewed.
- The local boards found that in only 50% of the total cases reviewed the health needs of the children/youth had been met.
- Approximately 37% children/youth had been prescribed psychotropic medications.
- The local boards agreed that 97% of the children/youth were prepared to meet their educational goals.

Demographic findings for statewide reviews include:

- 62% of the children/youth were African American.
- 31% of the children/youth were Caucasian.
- 49% of the children/youth were male.
- 50% of the children/youth were female.

CRBC conducted 365 Reunification reviews. Findings include:

- 73% had a plan of reunification for 3 or more years.
- The local boards agreed with the placement plan in 94% of cases reviewed.
- The local boards agreed that appropriate services were being offered to children/youth in 99% of the cases reviewed. Appropriate services were being offered to birth families in 67% of cases and to the foster and kin providers in 36% of cases reviewed.
- The local boards found that service agreements were signed in 50% of cases reviewed.
- The local boards also found that local departments made efforts to involve the family in case planning in 97% of cases.

CRBC conducted 220 Adoption reviews. Findings include:

- 39% had a plan of adoption for 3 or more years.
- The local boards agreed with 99% of identified placement plans and of those reviewed, 70% were placed in their home jurisdictions remaining close to their community connections.

- The local boards identified the following barriers preventing the adoption process or preventing progress in the children/youth's case:
 - Pre-Adoptive Resources not identified for the child
 - Incomplete submission of the interstate compact packets and,
 - Home study not approved.

CRBC conducted 624 APPLA reviews. Findings include:

- 61% had a plan of APPLA for 3 or more years.
- The local boards agreed 94% of the time with the permanency plan of APPLA statewide.
- Barriers identified that could preclude the youth in care from being adopted, reunified with their families or moving into an independent living situation included failure of youth to consent to adoption (42%) and lack of family resources (32%).
- 72% of youth had received the skills necessary to begin to live on their own. Across all jurisdictions, the reviewers agreed that 76% (476) of the time that the youth were being appropriately prepared.
- Only 20% of youth transitioning out of care had housing specified.
- 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 that adulthood can bring about on a regular basis. The local boards agreed in 65% of cases that a permanent connection had been identified for the youth by the local department. The boards also agreed that the identified permanent connection was appropriate in 65% of those cases.

CRBC recommendations to the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) include:

- Increase efforts to ensure that health and mental health needs of children and youth are met.
- Increase the number of relative/kin placement and permanency resources.
- Explore adoption counseling for children and youth that have not consented to adoption.
- Explore other permanency options at least every 6 months for children and youth with a permanency plan of APPLA.
- Ensure that a viable housing plan is identified for older youth transitioning out of care at least 6 months prior to anticipated date of discharge or youth's 21st birthday.
- Ensure that older youth transitioning out of care are engaged in opportunities to use independent living skills obtained.

Sincerely,
Denise E. Wheeler
CRBC Administrator

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
- ★ The Department of Human Resources (DHR)
- ★ The Social Services Administration (SSA)
- ★ The Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) and (DHHS) Montgomery County
- ★ The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children(CPMC)
- ★ The State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN)
- ★ The State Child Fatality Review Team (SCFRT)
- ★ The Local Juvenile Courts of Maryland
- ★ All community partners

Program Description

The Citizen Review Board for Children is rooted in a number of core values, which relate to society's responsibility to children and the unique developmental needs of children.

We have a strong value of believing that children need permanence 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 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 are not able to 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 case 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. There are currently 41 local review boards representing 23 counties and Baltimore City. There are 140 appointed volunteers serving on local boards. 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 permanence 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 case reviews, 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 in order 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 Article 88A, § 6, 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 Legislative Activities

During the 2015 Legislative Session CRBC continued its legislative child welfare advocacy efforts by being an active organizational member of the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children (CPMC). The State Board's Children's Legislative Advocacy Committee (CLAC) voted for CPMC to take a position on the following 2015 proposed legislation.

- SB150/HB171 Courts–Child Abuse and Neglect–Waiver of Reunification Efforts. *(SB150 Passed in both Chambers, but HB171 was vetoed by the Governor)*

Altering the circumstances under which a local department of social services may ask the court in a child in need of assistance proceeding to find that reasonable efforts to reunify the child with the child's parent or guardian are not required.

- SB157/HB662 Consultation, Diagnosis, & Treatment of Mental and Emotional Disorders–Consent by Minors *(CPMC did not have enough votes to take a position)*

Altering the health care providers who provide consultation, diagnosis, and treatment of a mental or emotional disorder to which minors who are 16 years old and older have the same capacity as an adult to consent; providing that the capacity to consent does not include the capacity to refuse consultation, diagnosis, or treatment for a mental or emotional disorder by health care providers for which a specified individual has given consent .

- SB225/HB029 Higher Education–Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Tuition Exemption–Modification *(Passed in both Chambers)*

Altering the definition of unaccompanied homeless youth by requiring specified documentation that establishes that the child or youth has had a consistent presence in the State for at least 1 year before enrollment in a public institution of higher education that is documented by school, employment, or other records; requiring a determination of homelessness by a specified individual; and requiring a financial aid administrator to annually make a specified verification.

- SB525/HB1146 Child Abuse and Neglect–Failure to Report *(NO VOTE in the House Judiciary Committee, passed the Senate)*

Requiring an agency that is participating in a child abuse or neglect investigation and that has reasonable grounds to believe that a person has failed to report child abuse as required under a specified provision of law to file a specified complaint with a specified board, agency, institution, or facility.

- SB567/HB643 Department of Human Resources–State Child Welfare System–Report

(Passed in both Chambers)

Requiring the Department of Human Resources, on or before December 1 of each year, to report to the General Assembly specified information regarding children and foster youth in the State child welfare system; requiring the Department to maintain the confidentiality of specified information and disaggregate the information by county, age, gender, race, and ethnicity; requiring the Department to publish specified reports on the Department's Web site within 30 days of submission of the report to the General Assembly .

- SB609/HB1022 State Government–Office of the Child Welfare Ombudsman–Pilot Program

Establishing the Office of the Child Welfare Ombudsman Pilot Program in the Office of the Attorney General; providing that the purpose of the Pilot Program is to investigate in specified counties whether the needs of children and families are being met by local departments, the rights of children and families are being upheld, and children under the jurisdiction of local departments are being protected from abuse and neglect; requiring the Governor to provide funds in the State budget for the Office to employ specified staff .

- SB668/HB725 Civil Actions–Child Sexual Abuse–Statute of Limitations
Extending from 7 to 20 years the statute of limitations in specified civil actions relating to child sexual abuse.
- SB669/HB788 Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Orphans and Foster Care Recipients

Establishing the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Orphans and Foster Care Recipients; requiring that to be eligible for participation in the Program an applicant must be employed full-time by the State, have received a graduate, professional, or undergraduate degree from an institution of higher education in the State and meet other requirements as specified; providing for the amount, duration, renewal, and uses of specified awards; providing for the retroactive application of the Act.

- SB685/HB439 Family Law Information and Services for Foster Children and Former Foster Children *(Approved by Governor)*

Requiring the juvenile court to determine whether a local department made a reasonable effort, for a child at least 18 years of age, to enroll the child in health insurance that will continue after the child is emancipated, screen and assist the child with eligibility for public assistance, and establish a plan for stable housing for at least 12 months and sufficient income after emancipation; requiring a local department to advise a child

before emancipation of the right to reenter care and procedures for reentering care; etc. (Effective OCTOBER 1, 2015)

- HB347 Courts–Child Abuse and Neglect–Waiver of Reunification Efforts *(Withdrawn due to an unfavorable report)*

Altering the circumstances under which a local department of social services may ask the court in a child in need of assistance proceeding to find that reasonable efforts to reunify the child with the child's parent or guardian are not required.

- HB955 Child Protection–Reporting Requirements–Threat of Harm

Requiring a specified individual acting in a professional capacity to notify the local department of social services or the appropriate law enforcement agency if the individual has reason to believe that a verbal threat of a substantial risk of imminent harm to a child has been made; prohibiting a person from preventing or interfering with the making of a report under the Act; providing specified immunity to a person who participates in specified activities relating to a report made under the Act

Out-of-Home Placement Reviews

Targeted Review Criteria

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 of Reunification for youth 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 the 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 youth that are 17 and 20 years of age. The primary purpose of the review is to assess if services were provided to prepare the

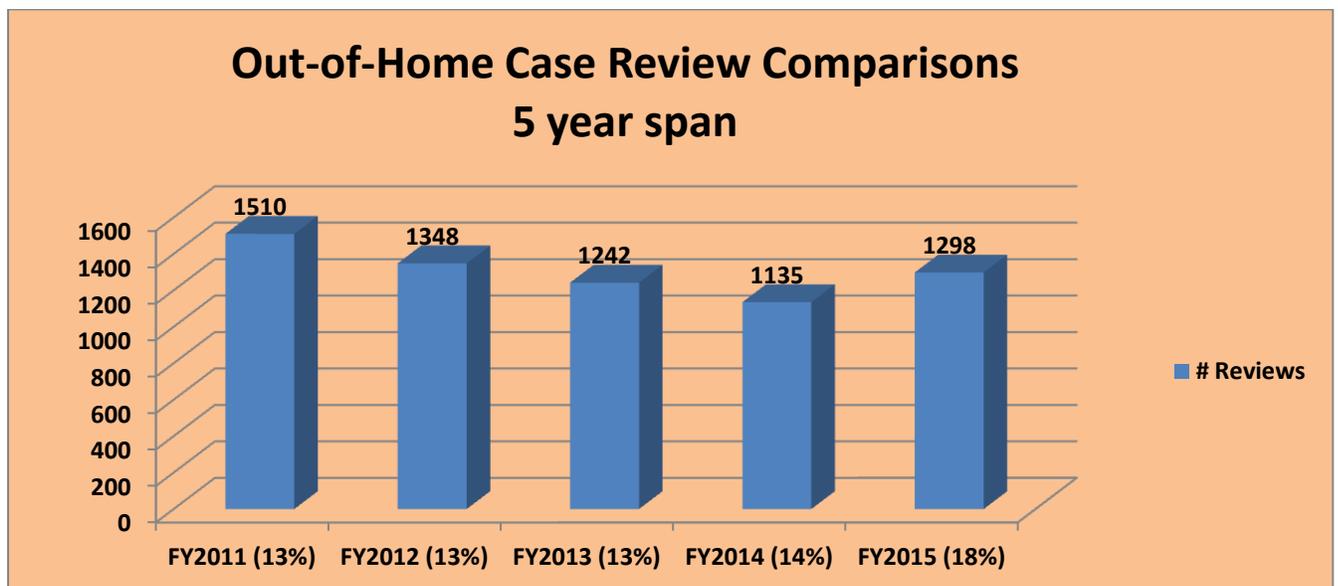
youth to transition to adulthood.

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.

Review Findings

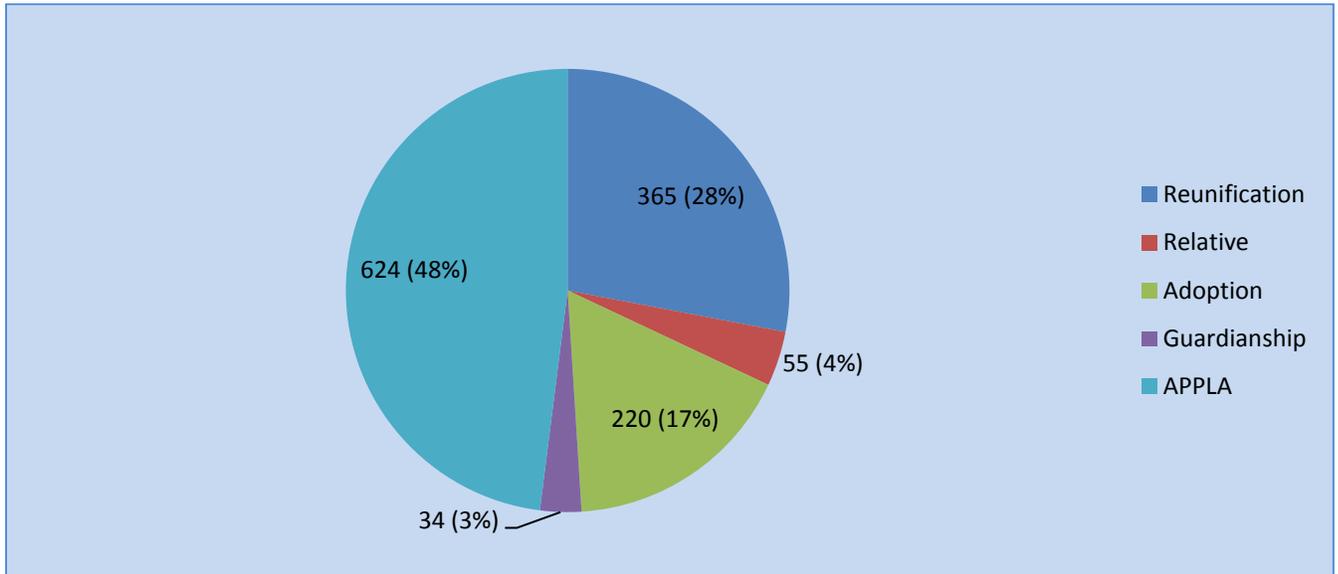
For FY2015 CRBC reviewed 1298 cases of children in out of home placements which represented 18% of the total number of 7,340 children served. CRBC consistently reviewed 13% of the total number of children served from FY 2011 through 2013. The total number of children served decreased from 2011 (11,337) to 2015 (7,340); however, the percent of the reviews increased in FY2014 (14%) and in FY2015 (18%). CRBC also re-reviewed cases designated by local boards during the 4th quarter of the fiscal year to assess if progress had been made or board recommendations had been implemented by local departments.



CRBC reviewed cases of youth in out-of-home placements that met the identified permanency plan criteria of reunification, adoption and APPLA. CRBC also reviewed cases in out-of-home placements with permanency plans of relative placements for custody and guardianship or adoption, and permanency plans of guardianship to a non relative.

The majority of the cases reviewed had a permanency plan of APPLA (48%). In addition, CRBC also reviewed advocacy cases where the juvenile courts had determined that reasonable efforts were not made, cases requested by interested parties, and cases requested by the local boards.

Percentages by Permanency Plan



Gender Totals (1298)

Male	Female
644 (49%)	654 (51%)

Male (644):

Reunification	Relative Placement	Adoption	Guardianship	APPLA
191 (30%)	12 (2%)	125 (19%)	24 (4%)	292 (45%)

Female (654):

Reunification	Relative Placement	Adoption	Guardianship	APPLA
174 (27%)	22 (3%)	95 (14%)	31 (5%)	332 (51%)

Ethnicity Overall (1298)

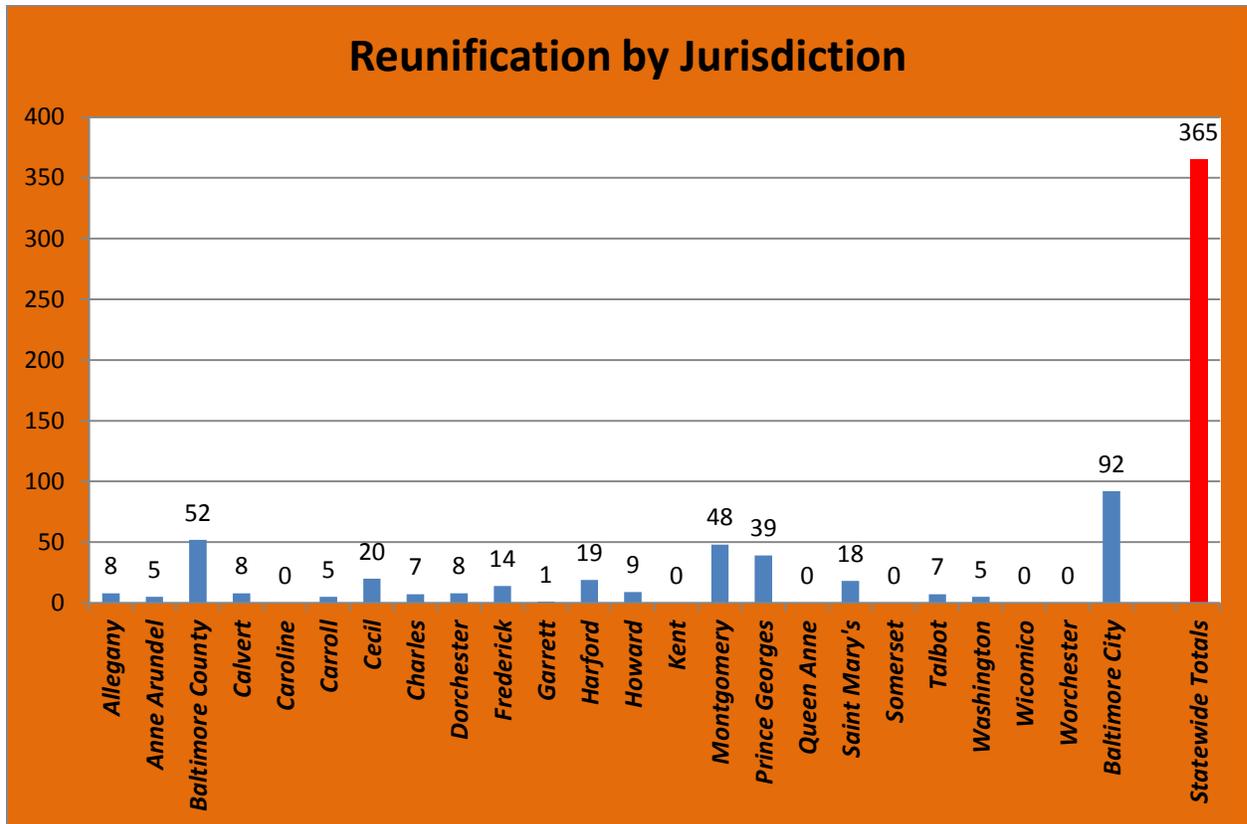
African American	Caucasian	Asian	Native American	Other	Unknown
813 (63%)	400 (31%)	9 (< 1%)	2 (< 1%)	18 (1%)	56 (4%)

Case Reviews by Jurisdiction

Jurn #	County	Reunification	Relative Placement	Adoption	Guardianship	APPLA	TOTAL
01	Allegany	8	1	1	0	5	15
02	Anne Arundel	5	7	15	0	22	49
03	Baltimore County	52	0	23	4	60	139
04	Calvert	8	0	15	0	9	32
05	Caroline	0	0	0	0	0	0
06	Carroll	5	1	1	0	8	15
07	Cecil	20	3	10	1	5	39
08	Charles	7	0	6	6	9	28
09	Dorchester	8	0	0	0	0	8
10	Frederick	14	0	9	0	24	47
11	Garrett	1	0	1	1	3	6
12	Harford	19	5	9	0	34	67
13	Howard	9	1	5	0	8	23
14	Kent	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	Montgomery	48	4	12	0	72	136
16	Prince Georges	39	0	12	6	75	132
17	Queen Anne	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	Saint Mary's	18	0	5	0	6	29
19	Somerset	0	0	8	0	2	10
20	Talbot	7	0	3	1	0	11
21	Washington	5	0	11	0	23	39
22	Wicomico	0	0	5	0	6	11
23	Worcester	0	0	2	0	3	5
49	Baltimore City	92	33	67	15	250	457
	Statewide Totals	365	55	220	34	624	1298
	Percentages	28%	4%	17%	3%	48%	100%

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 as important to make sure that reasonable efforts have been made with the identified parent or caregiver to promote reunification without undue delay.



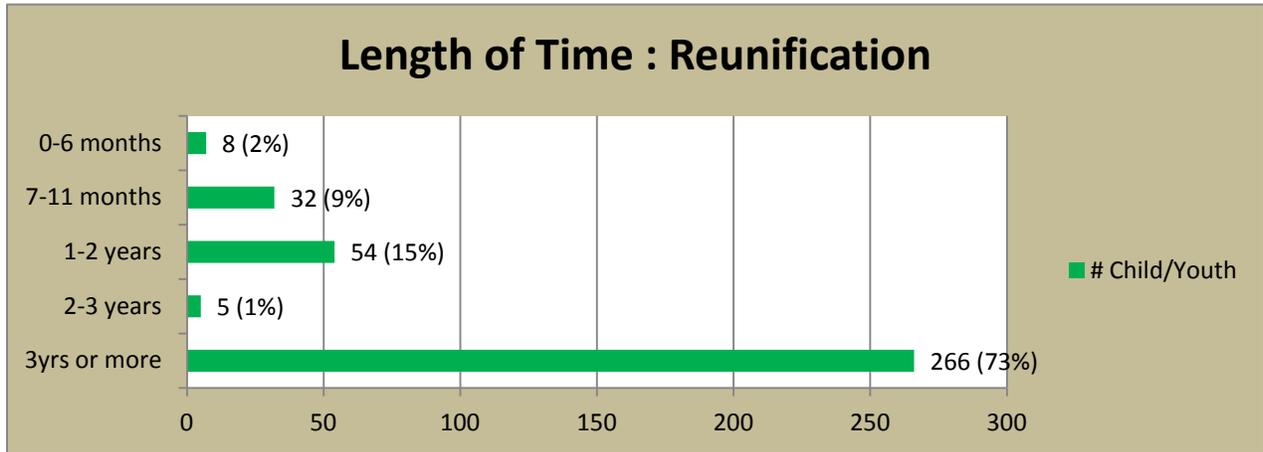
Permanency

The local boards agreed with the permanency plan of reunification in 71% of the 365 cases reviewed and recommended the following alternate plans for the remaining cases:

- APPLA: 8%
- Relative Placement: 5%
- Adoption: 9%
- Custody/Guardianship: 7%

Length of Time a Child/Youth had a plan of Reunification

Of the 365 Reunification cases reviewed the local boards found that the length of time the child/youth had a plan of Reunification were as follows:



Placement

The local boards agreed with the departments' placement plan in 94% of cases reviewed. The majority of placements were in Private Treatment Foster Care (22%), Regular Foster Care (16%), Treatment Foster Care (13%), Therapeutic Group Homes (13%) and Residential Treatment Centers (10%).

Number of Cases	Placement
7	Formal Kinship Care
7	Pre-Finalized Adoption
58	Regular Foster Care
12	Restricted (Relative) Foster Care
48	Treatment Foster Care
79	Treatment Foster Care (Private)
1	Alternative Living Unit
8	Residential Group Home
1	Teen Mother Program
47	Therapeutic Group Home
8	Independent Residential Living Program
37	Residential Treatment Center
0	Relative
0	Non-Relative
0	Own Dwelling
52	Other

Placement Stability

The local boards found that in 68% of the cases reviewed the child/youth were placed in settings that were in close proximity to their communities which allowed for the continuity of services.

The board also found that in 42% of the cases reviewed there was a change in placement within the 12 months prior to the review for the child/youth in regards to level of care.

The following levels of care were found for the most recent placement change:

- 18% had the same level of care
- 18% were in less restrictive placements
- 13% were in more restrictive placements

Services

The local boards looked at services offered to the child/youth, the birth family and the foster/kin family in the following areas:

- Housing
- Medical
- Mental health
- Education
- Employment
- Special needs
- Substance abuse treatment
- Visitation with family or referrals to needed resources

The boards found that appropriate services were offered to the child/youth in 99% of the cases reviewed, to the birth family in 67% of the cases, and to the foster/kin family in 36% of the cases.

Health/Mental Health

The local boards found that in 92% of the cases reviewed the child/youth received comprehensive health and mental health assessments. Medical records were found in the cases records in 69% of the cases and the child/youth had their health and mental health needs met by the local departments in 55% of the cases. In 32% of the cases the child/youth had developmental or special needs. Psychotropic medication was prescribed to address mental health issues in 47% of the cases, and in 10% of the cases reviewed the child/youth had substance abuse issues.

Education and Employment

The local boards found that in 95% of the cases reviewed the child/youth were being prepared to meet educational goals. In 28% of the cases the child/youth had been appropriately prepared to meet employment goals, and 4% were currently participating in paid or unpaid work experience.

Risk and Safety

The local boards found that in 95% of the cases reviewed, there were no indicators of risk. Out of the 5% with risk indicators safety protocols were followed in 94% of the cases.

Case Planning

Service Agreements: The local boards found that in 50% of the cases reviewed a signed service agreement was in place.

Family Involvement: The local boards found that in 97% of the cases reviewed an effort was made to include the family in the case planning process.

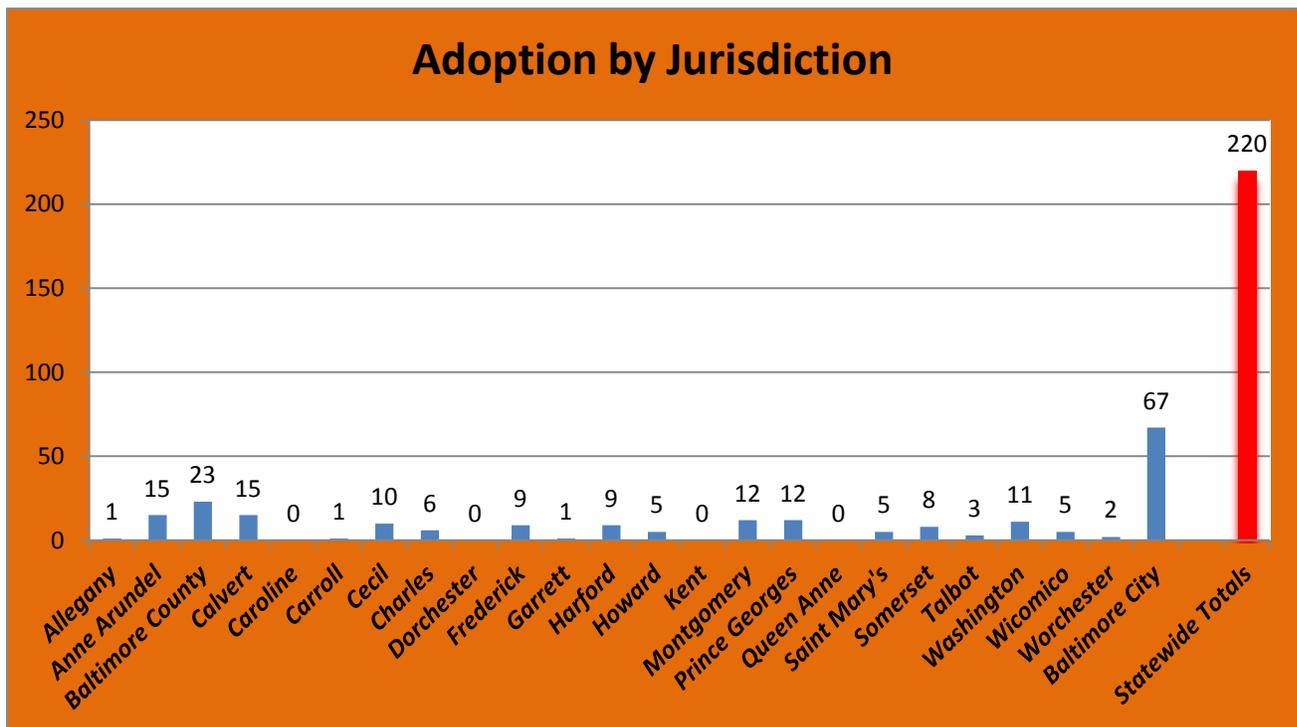
CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate): The locals boards found that in 19% of the cases reviewed the child/youth had a court appointed special advocate.

Frequency of Caseworker Visits

Frequency	Cases
Once a week	2
More than once a week	5
Less than once a week, but at least twice a month	30
Less than twice a month, but at least once a month	320
Less than once a month	4
Quarterly	4

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 the 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.



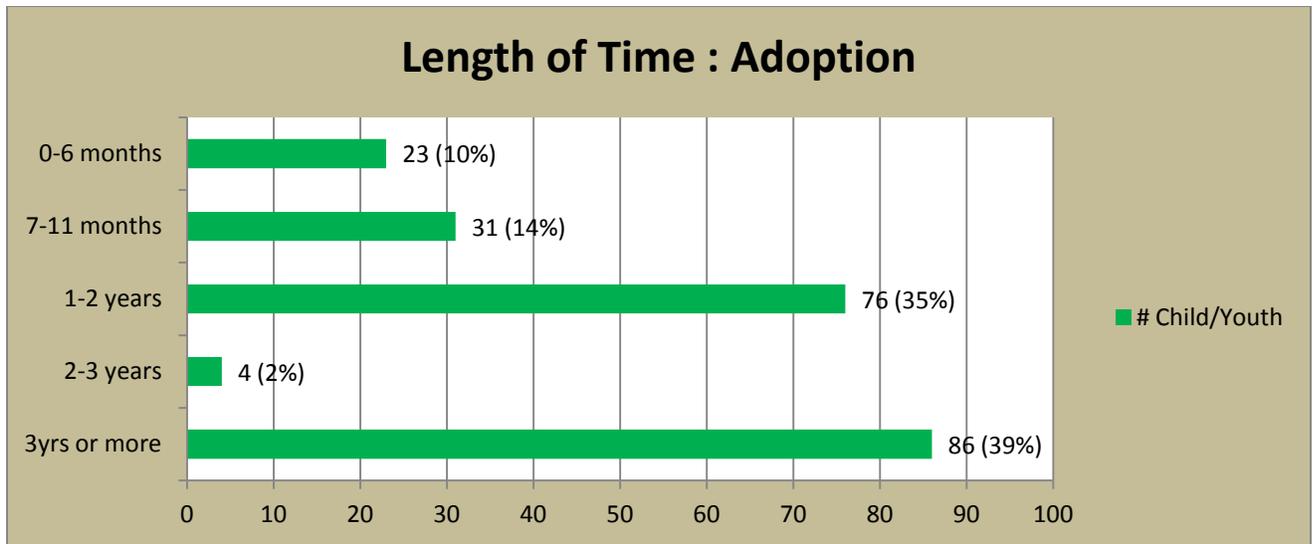
Permanency

The local boards agreed with the permanency plan of adoption in 98% of the 220 cases reviewed and recommended the following alternate plans for the remaining cases:

- APPLA: 2%

Length of time Child/Youth had a plan of Adoption

Of the 220 Adoption cases reviewed the local boards found that the length of time the child/youth had a plan of Adoption were as follows:



Placement

The local boards agreed with the departments' placement plan in 99% of the cases reviewed. The majority of placements were Private Treatment Foster Care (29%), Pre-Finalized Adoption (26%), Regular Foster Care (25%) and Restricted (Relative) Foster Care (8%).

Number of Cases	Placement
2	Formal Kinship Care
58	Pre-Finalized Adoption
55	Regular Foster Care
18	Restricted (Relative) Foster Care
7	Treatment Foster Care
63	Treatment Foster Care (Private)
0	Alternative Living Unit
1	Residential Group Home
0	Teen Mother Program
7	Therapeutic Group Home
1	Independent Residential Living Program
7	Residential Treatment Center
0	Relative
0	Non-Relative
0	Own Dwelling
1	Other

Placement Stability

The local boards found that in 70% of the cases reviewed the child/youth were placed in settings that were in close proximity to their communities which allowed for the continuity of services.

The boards also found that in 45% of the cases reviewed there was a change in placement within the 12 months prior to the review for the child/youth.

The following levels of care were found for the most recent placement change:

- 73% had the same level of care
- 18% were in less restrictive placements
- 9% had a change in placement for a positive reason; the change was made to transition toward the permanency goal

Services

The local boards looked at services offered to the child/youth, the birth family and the foster/kin family in the following areas:

- Housing
- Medical
- Mental health
- Education
- Employment
- Special needs
- Substance abuse treatment
- Visitation with family or referrals to needed resources

The boards found that appropriate services were offered to the child/youth in 99% of the cases reviewed, to the birth family in 30% of the cases, and to the foster/kin family in 60% of the cases.

Health/Mental Health

The local boards found that in 99% of the cases reviewed the child/youth received comprehensive health and mental health assessments. Medical records were found in the cases records in 79% of the cases and the child/youth had their health and mental health needs met by the local departments in 42% of the cases. In 24% of the cases the child/youth had developmental or special needs. Psychotropic medication was prescribed to address mental health issues in 35% of the cases, and in only 1% of the cases reviewed the child/youth had substance abuse issues.

Education and Employment

The local boards found that in 76% of the cases reviewed the child/youth were being prepared to meet educational goals. In 9% of the cases the child/youth had been appropriately prepared to meet employment goals, and 1% were currently participating in paid or unpaid work experience.

Risk and Safety

The local boards found that in 99% of the cases reviewed, there were no indicators of risk. Out of the 1% with risk indicators, safety protocols were followed in 80% of the cases.

Barriers to Adoption

The 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
- Incomplete submission of the interstate compact packets
- Home study not approved

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)

The local boards found that (TPR) was filed in a timely manner in 75% of the cases reviewed, and was appealed in only 6%.

Child's Consent to Adoption

The age of consent for adoption in the State of Maryland is ten. Children 10 and older must consent to be adopted. Local boards found that 17% of the children/youth reviewed consented; while 20% of the children/youth did not consent to adoption. In many of these instances wherein consent was not obtained, the children were under the age of consent which accounted for the largest percentage in this category of 55%.

Child's Consent to Adoption	Cases
Yes	38
Child did not want to be Adopted	44
N/A under age of consent	120
Unknown	13
Medically Fragile/Mental Health	3
Yes, with conditions	2

Pre-Adoptive Services and Resources

Services:

The local boards found that appropriate services and supports for the pre-adoptive family were in place to meet identified needs in 76% of the cases reviewed.

The local boards found that a social summary had been given to the pre-adoptive family in 24% of the cases reviewed.

Resources:

The local boards found that the pre-adoptive placements were appropriate in 77% of the cases reviewed.

The boards found the following pre-adoptive resources:

20% - Former Foster Parent

14% - Relative/Kin

46% - Non-Relative/Foster

Post Adoptive Services

The local boards found that post adoptive services were needed in 91% of the cases reviewed. These services include mental health, medical follow-up, educational assistance, and respite services.

Case Planning

Service Agreements: The local boards found that in 18% of the cases reviewed a signed service agreement was in place.

Family Involvement: The local boards found that in 20% of the cases reviewed an effort was made to include the family in the case planning process.

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate): The local boards found that in 18% of the cases reviewed the child/youth had a court appointed special advocate.

Frequency of Caseworker Visits

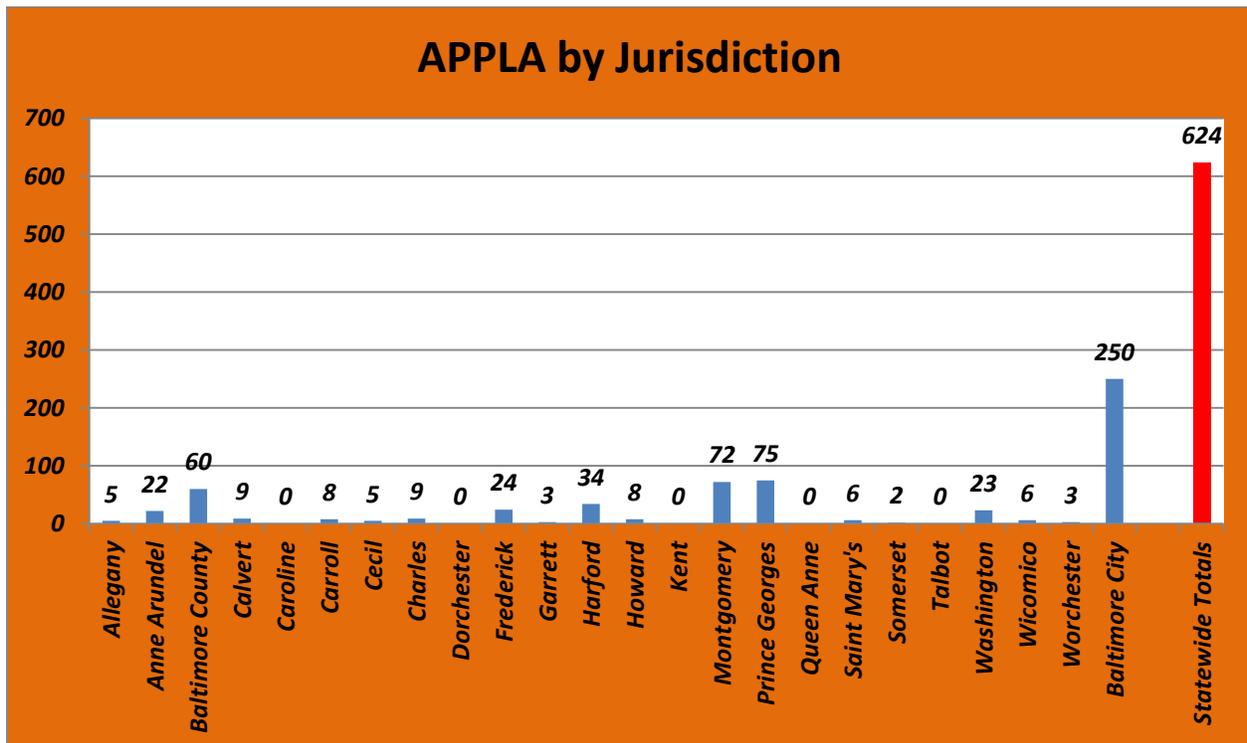
Frequency	Cases
Once a week	
More than once a week	2
Less than once a week, but at least twice a month	7
Less than twice a month, but at least once a month	202
Less than once a month	3
Quarterly	6

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 cases reviewed, 48% of the cases had a plan of APPLA and of those cases reviewed, Baltimore City had the most (250 cases) 40%. Prince George's County and Montgomery County had the same rate of (12%) and Baltimore County had 10%. All the other counties had percentages of one percent or less. Many of the cases reviewed were cases of older youth, between 17 and 20 years of age who are expected to remain in care until they age out on their 21st birthday.



Permanency

The local boards agreed with the permanency plan of APPLA in 94% of the 624 cases reviewed and recommended the following alternate plans for the remaining cases:

- Relative Placement: 1%
- Adoption: 2%
- Custody/Guardianship: 3%

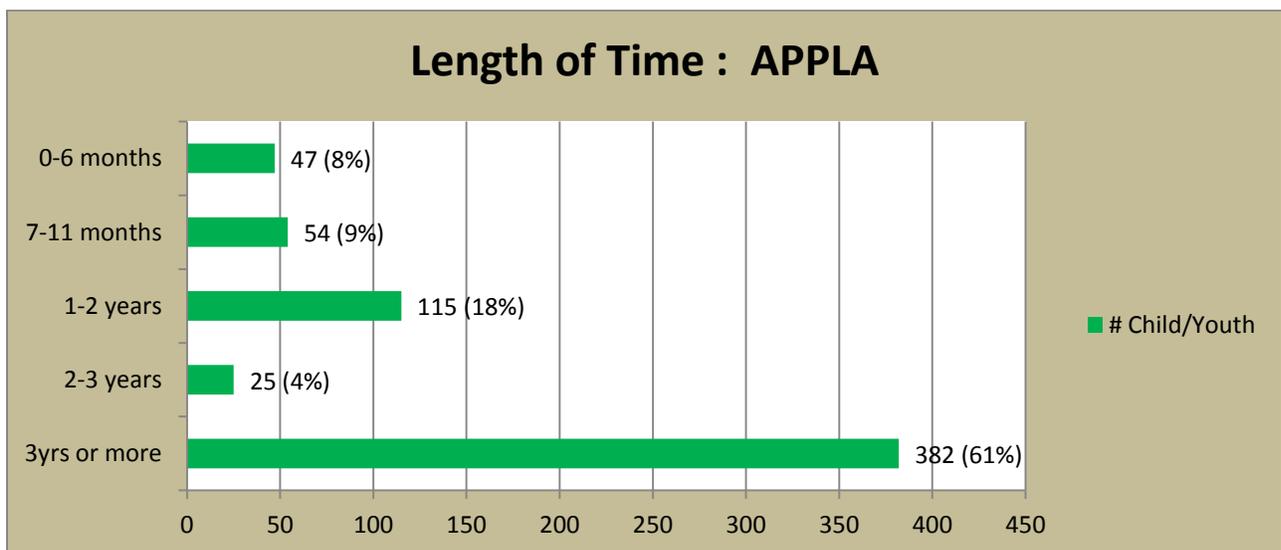
Category of APPLA plan

The local boards found the following categories of the APPLA plan:

- Emancipation/Independence: 85%
- Long Term Out of Home Placement with a Non-Relative: 6%
- Long Term Out of Home Placement with a Specified Relative: 1%
- Placement in Long Term Facility pending Adult Facility: 6%
- Other: 3%

Length of time Child/Youth had a plan of APPLA

Of the 624 APPLA cases reviewed the local boards found that the length of time the child/youth had a plan of APPLA were as follows;



Placement

The local boards agreed with the departments' placement plan in 97% of cases reviewed. The majority of placements were in Private Treatment Foster Care (22%), Independent Residential Living Program (16%), Treatment Foster Care (13%), Therapeutic Group Homes (11%), Regular Foster Care (5%), and Residential Treatment Centers (4%).

Number of Cases	Placement
6	Formal Kinship Care
31	Regular Foster Care
8	Restricted (Relative) Foster Care
78	Treatment Foster Care
136	Treatment Foster Care (Private)
1	Alternative Living Unit
9	Residential Group Home
8	Teen Mother Program
68	Therapeutic Group Home
98	Independent Residential Living Program
23	Residential Treatment Center
29	Relative
24	Non-Relative
36	Own Dwelling
69	Other

Placement Stability

The local boards found that in 68% of the cases reviewed the child/youth were placed in settings that were in close proximity to their communities which allowed for the continuity of services.

The boards also found that in 61% of the cases reviewed there was a change in the placement in the last 12 months prior to being reviewed.

The following levels of care were found for the most recent placement change:

- 28% had the same level of care
- 35% were in less restrictive placements
- 13% were in more restrictive placements

Services

The local boards looked at services offered to the children/youth, the birth family and the foster/kin family in the following areas:

- Housing
- Medical
- Mental health
- Education
- Employment
- Special needs

- Substance abuse treatment
- Visitation with family or referrals to needed resources

The boards found that appropriate services were offered to the children/youth in 97% of the cases reviewed, to the birth family in 31% of the cases, and to the foster/kin family in 27% of the cases.

Health/Mental Health

The local boards found that in 88% of the cases reviewed the child/youth received comprehensive health and mental health assessments. Medical records were found in the cases records in 58% of the cases and the child/youth had their health and mental health needs met by the local departments in 42% of the cases. In 21% of the cases the child/youth had developmental or special needs. Psychotropic medication was prescribed to address mental health issues in 33% of the cases, and in 14% of the cases reviewed the child/youth had substance abuse issues.

Education and Employment

The local boards found that 86% of the children/youth were being prepared to meet educational goals. 34% of the children/youth were participating in paid or unpaid work experience, and 56% were being appropriately prepared to meet employment goals.

Risk and Safety

The local boards found that in 68% of the cases reviewed, there were no indicators of risk. Out of the 32% with risk indicators, safety protocols were followed in 67% of the cases.

Ready by 21(Transitioning Youth)

96% of the children/youth reviewed were 14 years of age and older.

Housing

The local boards found that for 20% of the children/youth transitioning out of care a housing plan had been specified.

Permanent Connections

A permanent connection is an identified person that a child/youth can rely on for support, advice and guidance as they transition into adulthood. This connection can be sought out by the local department or the child/youth may identify them. Permanent connections are often extended family members that have a vested interest in the well being and future of the child/youth; also community members that have known the child/youth for many years and have grown attached to them.

The local boards found that in 65% of cases reviewed a permanent connection had been identified for the child/youth by the local department and that the identified permanent connection was appropriate in 65% of the cases reviewed.

Case Planning

Service Agreements: The local boards found that in 48% of the cases reviewed a signed service agreement was in place.

Family Involvement: The local boards found that in 82% of the cases reviewed an effort was made to include the family in the case planning process.

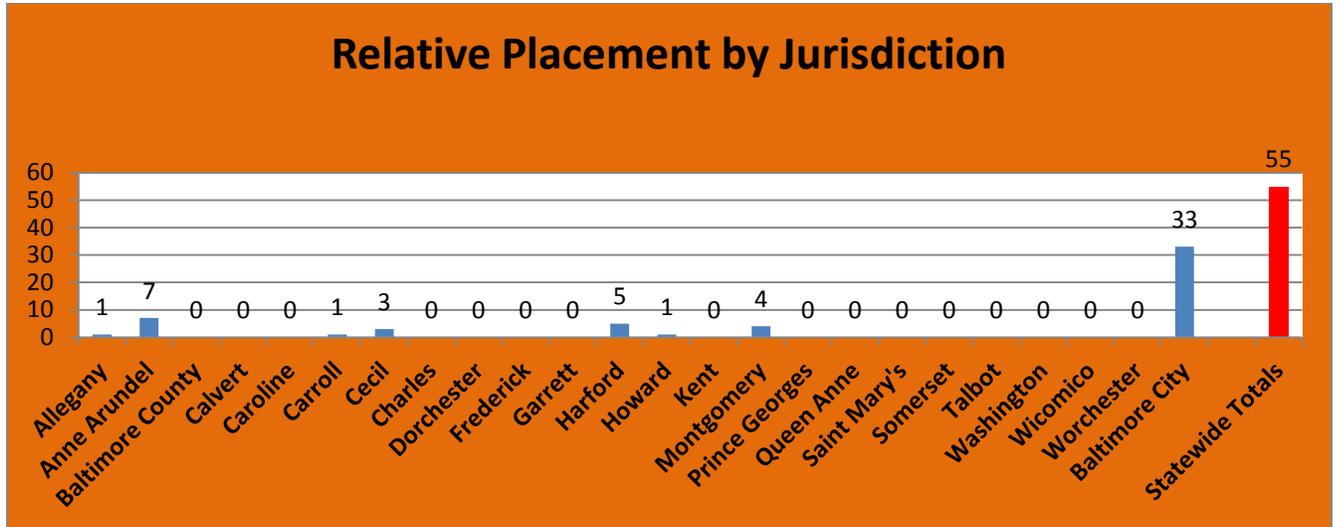
CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate): The local boards found that in 17% of the cases reviewed the child/youth had a court appointed special advocate.

Frequency of Caseworker Visits

Frequency	Cases
Once a week	3
More than once a week	5
Less than once a week, but at least twice a month	30
Less than twice a month, but at least once a month	559
Less than once a month	9
Quarterly	18

Relative Placement 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 when reunification is not possible.



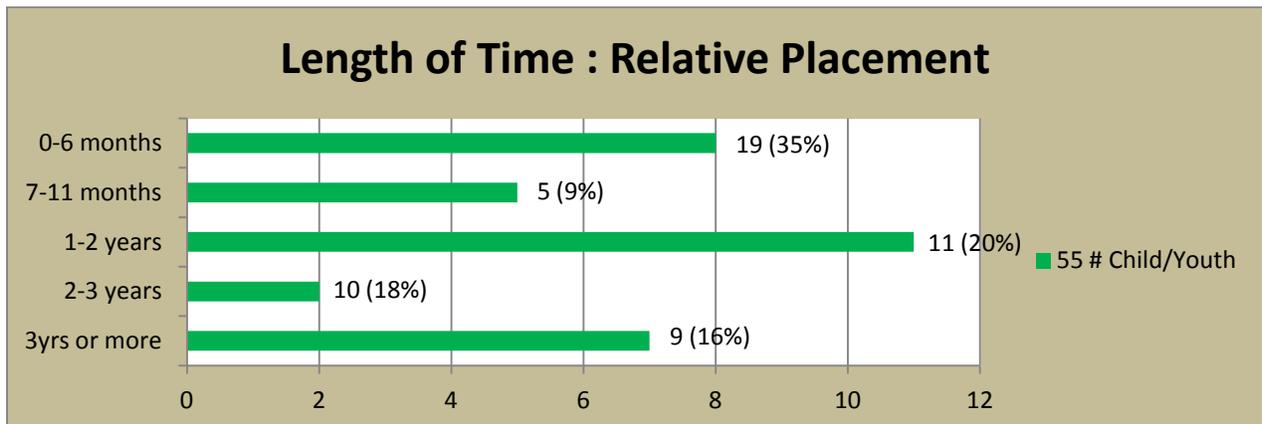
Permanency

The local boards agreed with the permanency plan of relative placement in 56% of the 55 cases reviewed and recommended the following alternate plans for the remaining cases:

- APPLA: 15%
- Reunification: 7%
- Adoption: 15%
- Custody/Guardianship: 7%

Length of time child/youth had a plan of Relative Placement

Of the 55 cases reviewed the local boards found that the length of time the child/youth had a plan of Relative Placement were as follows:



Placement

The local boards agreed with the departments' placement plan in 71% of cases reviewed. The majority of placements were with a Relative (25%), Private Treatment Foster Care (22%), and Formal Kinship Care (18%).

Number of Cases	Placement
10	Formal Kinship Care
0	Pre-Finalized Adoption
4	Regular Foster Care
5	Restricted (Relative) Foster Care
1	Treatment Foster Care
12	Treatment Foster Care (Private)
0	Alternative Living Unit
0	Residential Group Home
0	Teen Mother Program
4	Therapeutic Group Home
1	Independent Residential Living Program
2	Residential Treatment Center
16	Relative
0	Non-Relative
0	Own Dwelling
0	Other

Placement Stability

The local boards found that in 78% of the cases reviewed the child/youth were placed in settings that were in close proximity to their communities which allowed for the continuity of services.

The boards also found that in 34% of the cases reviewed there was a change in placement within the 12 months prior to the review for the child/youth in regards to level of care.

The following levels of care were found for the most recent placement change:

- 15% had the same level of care
- 5% were in less restrictive placements
- 12% were in more restrictive placements

Services

The local boards looked at services offered to the child/youth, the birth family and the foster/kin family in the following areas:

- Housing
- Medical
- Mental health
- Education
- Employment
- Special needs
- Substance abuse treatment
- Visitation with family or referrals to needed resources

The local boards found that appropriate services were offered to the child/youth in 95% of the cases reviewed, to the birth family in 70% of the cases, and to the foster/kin family in 73% of the cases.

Health/Mental Health

The local boards found that in 64% of the cases reviewed the child/youth received comprehensive health and mental health assessments. Medical records were found in the cases records in 29% of the cases and the child/youth had their health and mental health needs met by the local departments in 38% of the cases. In 14% of the cases the child/youth had developmental or special needs. Psychotropic medication was prescribed to address mental health issues in 20% of the cases, and in 3% of the cases reviewed the child/youth had substance abuse issues.

Education and Employment

The local boards found that in 71% of the cases reviewed the child/youth were being prepared to meet educational goals. There were no children/youth participating in paid or unpaid work experience. The employment goals were not applicable since the vast majority of the children were not eligible due to age.

Risk and Safety

The local boards found that in 98% of the cases reviewed, there were no indicators of risk. Out of the 2% with risk indicators safety protocols were followed in 98% of the cases.

Case Planning

Service Agreements: The local boards found that in 20% of the cases reviewed a signed service agreement was in place.

Family Involvement: The local boards found that in 64% of the cases reviewed an effort was made to include the family in the case planning process.

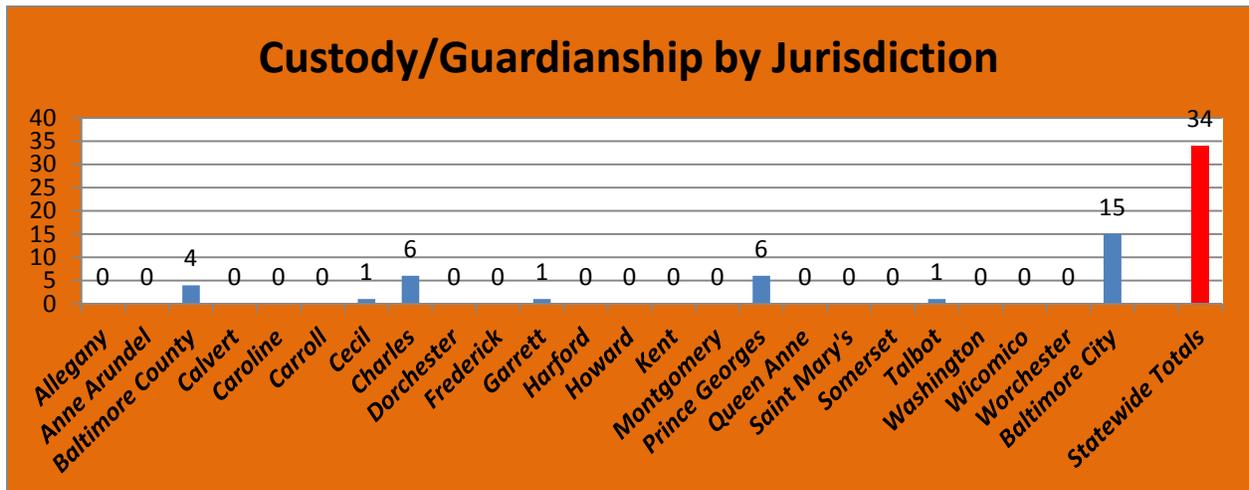
CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate): The local boards found that in 20% of the cases reviewed the child/youth had a court appointed special advocate.

Frequency of Caseworker Visits

Frequency	Cases
Once a week	
More than once a week	
Less than once a week, but at least twice a month	1
Less than twice a month, but at least once a month	54
Less than once a month	
Quarterly	

Custody/Guardianship (Non-Relative) Reviews

Custody and guardianship is another option that local departments can explore for families, 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.



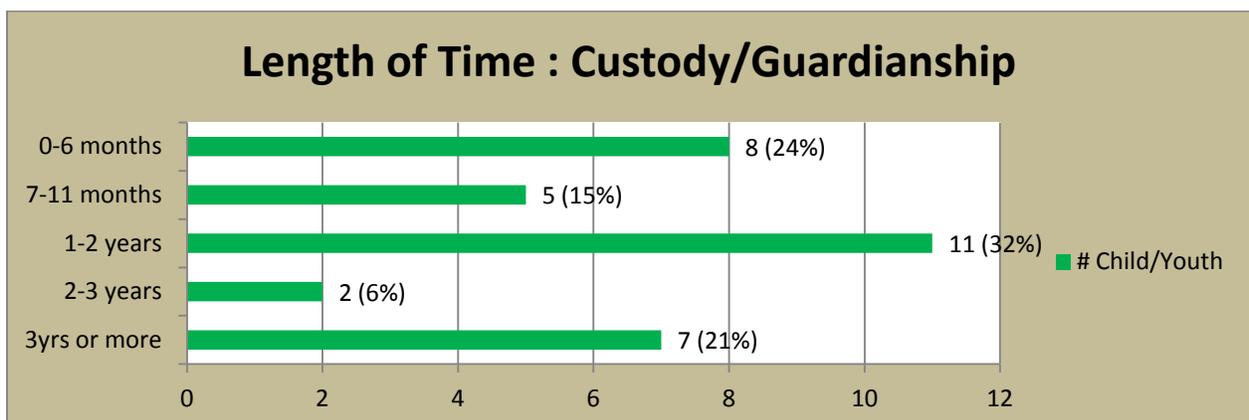
Permanency

The local board agreed with the permanency plan of custody/guardianship in 85% of the 34 reviewed and recommended the following alternate plans for the remaining cases:

- APPLA: 9%
- Relative Placement: 6%

Length of time a Child/Youth had a plan of Guardianship

Of the 34 cases reviewed the local boards determined that the length of time the child/youth had a plan of Guardianship were as follows;



Placement

The local boards agreed with the departments' placement plan in 100% of cases reviewed. The majority of placements were in Treatment Foster Care (38%) and Private Treatment Foster Care (18%).

Number of Cases	Placement
4	Formal Kinship Care
4	Regular Foster Care
2	Restricted (Relative) Foster Care
13	Treatment Foster Care
6	Treatment Foster Care (Private)
0	Alternative Living Unit
0	Residential Group Home
0	Teen Mother Program
1	Therapeutic Group Home
1	Independent Residential Living Program
1	Residential Treatment Center
0	Relative
0	Non-Relative
0	Own Dwelling
2	Other

Placement Stability

The local boards found that in 88% of the cases reviewed the child/youth were placed in settings that were in close proximity to their communities which allowed for the continuity of services.

The boards also found that in 85% of the cases reviewed there was a change in the placement in the last 12 months prior to being reviewed.

The following levels of care were found for the most recent placement change:

- 29% had the same level of care
- 6% were in less restrictive placements
- 9% were in more restrictive placements

Services

The local boards looked at services offered to the children/youth, the birth family and the foster/kin family in the following areas:

- Housing
- Medical
- Mental health
- Education
- Employment
- Special needs
- Substance abuse treatment
- Visitation with family or referrals to needed resources

The local boards found that appropriate services were offered to the children/youth in 48% of the cases reviewed, to the birth family in 39% of the cases, and to the foster/kin family in 45% of the cases.

Health/Mental Health

The local boards found that in 99% of the cases reviewed the child/youth received comprehensive health and mental health assessments. Medical records were found in the cases records in 99% of the cases and the child/youth had their health and mental health needs met by the local departments in 47% of the cases. In 26% of the cases the child/youth had developmental or special needs. Psychotropic medication was prescribed to address mental health issues in 59% of the cases, and in 6% of the cases reviewed the child/youth had substance abuse issues.

Education and Employment

The local boards found that 100% of the children/youth were being prepared to meet educational goals. There were no children/youth participating in paid or unpaid work experience. The employment goals were not applicable since the vast majority of the children were not eligible due to age.

Risk and Safety

The local boards found that in 100% of the cases reviewed, there were no indicators of risk.

Case Planning

Service Agreements: The local boards found that in 18% of the cases reviewed a signed service agreement was in place.

Family Involvement: The local boards found that in 100% of the cases reviewed an effort was made to include the family in the case planning process.

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate): The local boards found that in 29% of the cases reviewed the child/youth had a court appointed special advocate.

Frequency of Caseworker Visits

Frequency	Cases
Once a week	
More than once a week	1
Less than once a week, but at least twice a month	
Less than twice a month, but at least once a month	32
Less than once a month	1
Quarterly	

Child Protection Panels

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. Local child protection panels may be established in each jurisdiction. Panel members are appointed by the local appointing authority and local child protection panels report findings and recommendations to the CRBC State Board.

In FY2015, the Baltimore City Child Protection Panel was the only local child protection panel that completed reviews that addressed outcomes as adapted from the DHR approved Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) review instrument.

Review Findings

There were 16 cases reviews conducted; 4 were found to be inappropriate cases for review, based on the eligibility review criteria instructions on the review tool. 3 of the cases reviewed were incomplete, because additional records were requested by the panel and they were not provided.

Outcome Area	Measure	Effectiveness Rating by Panel
Safety Outcome 1	Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect	The outcome was: Substantially achieved in 75% of cases Not achieved 12.5% of cases
Safety Outcome 2	Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate	The outcome was: Substantially achieved in 75% of cases Not achieved in 13% of the cases
Well Being Outcome 1	Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their needs	The outcome was: Substantially achieved in 50% of cases Partially achieved in 25% of the cases Not achieved in 25% of the cases
Well Being Outcome 2	Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs	The outcome was: Substantially achieved in 37.5% of the cases

Well Being Outcome 3	Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs	The outcome was: Substantially achieved in 62% of cases Partially achieved in 12.5% of cases Not achieved in 12.5% of cases
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Child Protection Services In-Home-Care Cases

- The panel reported that some cases were closed too soon. These were cases where referrals had been made but there was no follow up to see if referrals were followed through before the cases were closed.
- The panel reported that there were some cases which were closed but the panel thought that the child was not safe, and that the case should not have been closed or that the case should have come in on a shelter care petition.

Services to Children and Families

- The panel reported concerns regarding the lack of getting fathers involved in the provision of services, especially when the father is living in the home or is involved with the children.
- The panel reported that there continues to be a lack of documentation of referrals, school or medical records mentioned in Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) records. LDSS frequently fails to follow up on mental health and substance abuse referrals for parents so there is no evidence that the parent actually benefited from the referral.
- The panel reported that there were concerns that medical or educational records in the file were incomplete.
- The panel reported concerns that home visit attempts where no contact was made with the family are designated in MD CHESSIE as face to face visits creating the appearance that there had been a face to face in person visit.
- The panel reported concerns that older children were interviewed in the presence of the parents when home visits were done. They advised that older children should be interviewed out of the parents' presence, such as in a school setting.
- The panel reported concerns about the cases where the children were not interviewed at all.

Montgomery County Child Protection Panel

The Montgomery County local panel does not conduct case reviews. However, the panel reported on focusing on the following activities:

- Providing input to improve mental health services for children who have been maltreated and on the training and support that foster parents receive in caring for maltreated children.
- Explored how the agency can improve recruitment, retention and training for foster parents.
- Basic skills training and housing needs of youth transitioning from foster care.

The panel's focus and goals was Voluntary Placement:

- Voluntary Placement (VPA) legislation was created to address the needs of those children/youth whose parents could no longer provide for them. Initially there were approximately 7 cases in the system. Today there are 35 cases, nearly 10% of the child welfare foster care caseload. The primary reason parents ask for a voluntary placement is because their children have severe mental health needs (75%).
- The panel will identify how voluntary placements are referred to child welfare, what happens to them when they reach the age of maturity, the community services needed to prevent these placements, and how coordination between county agencies occurs.

Worcester County Local Child Protection Panel

The Worcester County local panel chose to review CPS cases and have workers present as part of the review. The panel's focus was to look for systemic problems with cases by following identified cases.

The panel reported the following activities:

- Exploring what is best for community of trauma
- Health Department refreshers; Integrated Substance Abuse Program, worker, support worker and substance abuse counselor.
- Health Department offering more support and interventions for families
- Parents night out at the WYMCA
- Meeting with AR administrators
- Expanding In-Home parenting programs, and direct services to improve parenting skills
- Identifying ways to implement programs

CRBC Recommendations to the Department of Human Resources

- Increase efforts to ensure that health and mental health needs of children and youth are met.

While local departments reported that a high percentage (90%) of children and youth reviewed statewide had a comprehensive health and mental health assessments, the local boards agreed that the health and mental health needs of the child/youth had been addressed in only 50% of the total cases reviewed. While local boards agreed that the department made efforts , there were many contributing factors that led to health and mental health needs not being met including lack of follow through with referrals by older youth and/or caregivers, and lack of follow through with referrals and progress made by local departments. It is paramount that actual follow up treatment and care is obtained and monitored by local departments in order to ensure that the health and mental health needs of children and youth entrusted to their care is met.

- Increase the number of relative/kin placements and permanency resources.
- Explore adoption counseling for children and youth that have not consented to adoption.
- Explore other permanency options at least every 6 months for children and youth with a permanency plan of APPLA.
- Ensure that a viable 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.
- Ensure that older youth transitioning out of care are engaged in opportunities to use independent living skills obtained.

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