

Division of Family Services Monthly Update March 2010

Training

Work regarding the reengineering of a competency-based training system continues through the Steering Committee as well as several specialty trainings. The Steering Committee met on February 24th and welcomed two new local agency representatives as members – Hampton and Manassas. The Committee will be adding one or two more LDSS representatives over the next few months. The three existing subcommittees (Communications, Knowledge Center and Policy) are actively gathering data for analysis to make recommendations to the Steering Committee. In addition, since the VDSS contract with the Institute for Human Services is now final, consultation planning for the coming months has begun.

In an attempt to accelerate progress towards the reengineering of child welfare training, some staffing changes have been made. Vernon Simmons will continue to provide his technical expertise and training experience on a full-time basis to create the changes necessary to transform our training system. Vernon will also continue to co-chair the Steering Committee and serve as the primary liaison with the Area Training Centers. In addition, Hayley Brooks will now be working essentially full-time on this effort to help develop, coordinate, and implement plans for moving the work forward. Hayley will lead the integration of Transformation trainings into VISSTA courses and will work to ensure that all child welfare training activity is reflected within the context of a competency-based training system. Hayley and Vernon will partner together to provide oversight and coordination regarding the technical components of a competency-based system. Charlotte McNulty has also been asked to provide a substantial leadership role in the overall management of the change process and will work closely with VDSS leadership to negotiate budget and contracting issues.

In addition, specialty training sessions related to Educational Advocacy continue and will include a special session at no cost to VDSS due to a special request by a local agency. Planning for the training on Disproportionate Contact/ Referrals of Minorities in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice will now include Alexandria, Chesterfield/Colonial Heights, Norfolk, and Richmond City and is scheduled to take place at the end of May.

Managing by Data

In February, the Outcome Based Reporting and Analysis Unit (OBRA) and Mickey Groomes kicked off the Applied SafeMeasures training with the Eastern Region and will continue training in each region over the coming months. OBRA also began examining children at-risk of aging out of foster care and has developed a monthly report examining children with TPR and who are not in pre-adoptive placements, children in congregate placements for 180+ days, and children with long term foster care goals (PFC, APPLA, IL). Work continues on the full Diversion Study and will likely be published in March once all qualitative data on best practices is gathered from LDSS.

The Managing by Data Workgroup met on February 26th and has prioritized new items for SafeMeasures in the following order: CPS contacts, Adoption Timeliness, CPS timeliness with first meaningful contact, case worker visits with biological families, permanency goal timeliness, placement stability, timeliness of service plan entry (CPS and FC). In addition, the Family Services OASIS Operations Group (FSOOG) met and is currently in the process of vetting items for inclusion in this fall's 3.8 release of OASIS.

Family Engagement

Work continues around training for LDSS regarding Family Partnership Meetings. The pilot for CWS 4030, the facilitator training course offered by VISSTA for Family Partnership Meetings, took place in February. In addition, the CPS, FC and Adoption Consultants in the Eastern, Piedmont, and Central regions held their initial family engagement roundtables in an attempt to offer support and technical assistance to localities assigned to the first training phase. Roundtables for both the Central and Western regions are scheduled to take place in March.

In addition, the broadcast and RFA for Court Improvement Program funding available to localities to assist with the initial implementation of family engagement was issued in February. Since the deadline for the RFA is in March, applicants will be reviewed and grant recipients will be notified in the coming weeks.

Resource Families

February Regional Peer Cooperative (RPC) meetings included the state's final RPC 2, in Eastern, as well as the state's first RPC 3 meeting, in Central. Meetings for Piedmont, Northern and Western had to be rescheduled because of inclement weather.

As the issues and topics of the RPC meetings become more complex, the changes to practice will often require more time and greater levels of buy-in among other staff at local agencies. In March, planning will begin regarding supplements to the RPCs, which will vary by region so as to be responsive to need—these might include cluster meetings of LDSS who would make natural partners based on geography, or content conference calls on certain areas of practice.

In addition, the development of a new contract for the CRAFFT project is underway. With this new contract, greater focus will be placed on direct resource parent training and obtaining data regarding training and support needs across the Commonwealth.

Community Based Care

The Office of Comprehensive Services has just published the results of the annual service gap survey on its website. It provides information related to identified service needs at the local, regional and state levels. Across the state, crisis intervention services are at the top of the list. The results can be found on OCS website: www.csa.virginia.gov Click on "statistics" in the left column, then "CSA Featured Reports". At the bottom of that page, the results of the last three years can be seen. These results should help inform local agency staff about gaps identified by their CPMT, as well as those identified in other localities.

Additionally, on March 4th the State and Local Advisory Team (SLAT) will review policy recommendations related to family engagement and pool fund carve out. Both will be on the March 25th agenda of the State Executive Council.

Child Protective Services

A pre-proposal conference for Request for Proposals SVC-10-037, FY 211 Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Program was held on Monday, February 8, 2009 at the VDSS Central Virginia Regional Office. Ten people attended on-site and 39 were on the phone. CPS Program Staff and the VDSS Procurement Manager reviewed the entire Request for Proposals, clarified dates for submission and receiving questions, and responded to questions from the 49 participants. In addition, staff responded to 53 questions from potential applicants in

reference to the RFP. Twenty-five community members have been identified to serve on the review committee for the RFP.

In addition, staff worked with the Outcome Based Reporting unit to finalize and publish the Report on Child Deaths Due to Abuse and Neglect for SFY2009 which was presented to the Board of Social Services on February 17, 2010. CPS continues to improve data collection elements reported in these child fatalities.

A letter regarding the results of the monitoring visit to the Center for Child and Family Services, a Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grantee in Hampton, VA, was sent to the agency director on February 22, 2010. Further follow-up with this program will be achieved through reviews of quarterly reports and invoices. In addition, CPS staff conducted a monitoring visit at the YWCA of South Hampton Roads Domestic Violence Shelter, a VOCA grantee in Norfolk, VA on February 25, 2010. The meeting was held with the shelter director, the finance manager, and the art therapist which is the position that is funded by the VOCA grant.

All Healthy Families modifications have been signed and sent to the executive directors of each of the programs. Emails were sent to the Healthy Families program directors and fiscal staff indicating the reduced contract amount and required match and requested them to send in a revised budget. Staff is in the process of reviewing and approving the revised budgets.

The Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect met on February 26. The Board selected five recipients to receive the Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect awards and is planning the Award Ceremony in conjunction with the Child Abuse Prevention Conference, "Now's the Time, Children Can't Wait" scheduled for April 22, 2010.

CPS Prevention staff worked in partnership with Prevent Child Abuse Virginia to complete the Child Abuse Prevention Month packet that will be distributed in preparation for Child Abuse Prevention Month in April. In regards to training, CPS staff are working with VISSTA curriculum developers as the CPS On-Call Course is being modified for transition to a self-paced, on-line course. In conjunction with updating the CPS guidance manual, the Structured Decision Making training curriculum is being updated to reflect the incorporation of these tools into the CPS process at the critical decision points of intake, safety and risk.

Foster Care

The Subsidized Custody workgroup held their first meeting and steps are underway to develop policy, develop procedures, create cost codes, develop OASIS screens (or activate screens with new instructions for how to use them) and develop a final work plan. The large workgroup and several smaller subcommittees are scheduled to meet several times during March. Mid-summer is the projected implementation date although a final date will be determined as the work plan is completed.

The Educational Advisory Committee, developed to improve educational outcomes for youth in foster care by taking advantage of the changes in the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Incentives Act of 2008, held its third meeting. The overall charge of the group is for DOE and DSS to coordinate policies and practices that will enhance local educational associations and LDSS' ability to work seamlessly in improving specific outcomes for children in foster care. Five new LDSS foster care/adoption staff, two LEA representatives and 2 foster parents joined the group. Work streams reported back on deliverables and two additional work streams were formed. Issues of interest include:

- DOE and DSS identified definitions and policies on immediate enrollment of youth who are entering foster care or changing placements that require changes to create consistency between the two departments;
- Specific DSS data needs related to education (e.g., timely enrollment, attendance, graduation rates, etc.) for children in foster care will be forwarded to DOE by March 31, 2010. DOE will be able to make certain educational database changes to capture educational data for children in foster care. This may allow DSS to avoid changes in OASIS in order to capture this data.
- DOE's process for determining if it is in the best interest of the child to remain in his school of origin and DSS's Family Engagement Model were briefly discussed. DOE's lack of knowledge about Family Engagement, its purpose, how it is being rolled out, etc. creates a disconnect in how DSS and DOE approach the issue of "in the child's best interest". DSS offered to have a presentation about Family Engagement at the next meeting in April.
- A short-term workgroup to develop policies around transporting children and youth to their school of origin when placed in foster care was formed and will report back in April with proposed recommendations. Foster parents, LEA and LDSS representatives are involved.
- A draft of the workplan for the educational committee was provided and will be reviewed and updated by the next meeting.

The first draft of the Resource Family Guidance was submitted to a larger stakeholder group for review and comments. This manual will be the first complete guidance manual to come from the Department under a new format that integrates the practice model and best practices such as mutual family assessment, partnering with families, and dual approval throughout all policies and procedures.

In addition, the Foster Care Unit staff has revised the format for its guidance manual and the Permanency Advisory Committee will review the new suggested format. A draft revised manual is expected for review by the end of April.

Adoption

The Adoption Unit posted Broadcast 6082 regarding the adoption components of Foster Connection to Success and Increasing Adoption Act of 2008. This broadcast provides guidance to local agencies and licensed child-placing agencies on the changes in the 2008 law that became effective October 1, 2009 and that impacts adoption assistance eligibility. The Act expands eligibility for federal adoption assistance and makes changes to other activities related to adoption. The Act will ultimately de-link Title IV-E adoption assistance eligibility from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) by phasing in the new requirements over the next nine years. By October 1, 2017, maintenance payments for adoption assistance payments for children in custody of LDSS and licensed child placing agencies will become Title IV-E.

Other program requirements highlighted in the broadcast include: the requirement to inform prospective adoptive parents about the federal tax credit as an incentive to adopt from foster care, the responsibility of adoptive parents to notify the local agency who make the adoption assistance payment of the child's enrollment in school, a requirement to inform adoptive parents of a child's eligibility for independent living services if adopted after age 16, and that children adopted from other countries are not generally eligible for adoption assistance. Tracey Jackson, the Adoption Policy Specialist and Pamela F. Cooper, Adoption Program Manager, provided an overview of the Broadcast in the Tidewater Region on February 16th and will provide

the overview in Central (March 25th), Northern (March 30th), Piedmont (March 15th) and Western in April (date to be determined).

In addition, the Northern Region Heart Gallery was opened its second site on February 8 in Historic Fredericksburg, with the opening reception on February 11, 2010 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The Heart Gallery originally opened November 9 – 29 in Winchester. The Host agency was Fredericksburg Department of Social Services. Janine Sewell, Director of Fredericksburg DSS, made the opening comments for the Gallery. Welcoming remarks were made by Dr. Thomas Tomzak, Mayor of the City of Fredericksburg, Diane Clark, Chair of the Fredericksburg Board of Social Services, and Paul McWhinney, VDSS Director of the Division of Family Services. Despite the snow, the program was well attended by workers from several agencies. The Portrait Exhibit of the 23 children in the Northern Region Virginia Heart Gallery was exquisitely displayed. The Exhibit was on site at the Marriott Hotel in Historic Fredericksburg through February 28, 2010. The Region is in the process of seeking a new location for a future display of the Heart Gallery.

In addition, the Adoption Unit is actively working on the recommendations made by the Adoption Process Improvement Team. The Team addressed the problem statement of the timeliness to finalized adoption for children as a priority for the Department. An analysis was done on all children in care during 2004 and 2009 using the Chapin Hall Multi-State Data Achieve and Oasis data. The data indicated:

- It took just under 24 months for 25% of children to exit to adoption.
- It took approximately 2.5 years for 50% of children to exit to adoption.
- It took less than 4 years for 75% of children to exit to adoption.
- As of June 1, 2009, 56.28% of children with a goal of adoption had TPR and were awaiting adoption.

As a result, a work plan is being developed with a cross section of division staff to address changes needed with adoption contracts and Adoption Resource Exchange of Virginia, the adoption resource exchange to display waiting children for adoption. It is anticipated that work plans will be finalized by the end of March with implementation beginning in April through July 2010.

ICPC

The Broader Agreement between Virginia and Tennessee started in February. To date, there have been 3 cases using the new process – 2 in Bristol and 1 in Washington County. To date, Tennessee had to postpone some of their training because of the weather and one of the Virginia judges asked for technical assistance. Mary Norris, the CPS Regional Consultant in the Western Region, is providing the training and technical assistance for Virginia.

For ICPC, the total number of cases is 2,883. During the month of February, there were 208 new cases and 16 cases that were closed. Placement statistics for the month of February are listed below:

- Adoption – 47
- Foster Care – 58
- Parental Placements – 24
- Relative Placements – 25
- Residential Placements – 54
- Local agency out of state – 1 (to Tennessee)
- Parental placements out of state – 2 (to Tennessee and Pennsylvania)

For Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA), there are a total of 2,577 cases. There were 35 new cases for the month of February. In addition, ICAMA case information is in the process of being updates in the ARRIS system. The ICAMA staff has met with the Outcome Based Reporting and Analysis Unit to develop the program and identify the changes to the ARRIS system

Continuous Quality Improvement

A Child Welfare Quality Review was conducted at the Pittsylvania Department of Social Services in February. Planning continues with Casey Family Programs to implement The Quality Service Review. The QSR is a strategy for the Process Improvement Plan submitted to our federal partners this month. In March, Child Welfare Quality Reviews will be conducted in Stafford County DSS, Norton DSS, and Greene County DSS. A communication plan is in development for the implementation of QSR.

Program Improvement Plan

In preparation for the submission deadline of February 25th, PIP work continued throughout the month of February. The Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC) met on February 26th to provide feedback and opportunities were given to the Virginia League of Social Services to provide feedback via email.

Now that the PIP has been formally submitted to our federal partners, negotiations will begin immediately. A phone conference has already taken place around setting baselines for the PIP measurement section. There is a new 2009 state data profile, but there is also a need for some data clean up. Once the data is resubmitted, baselines can be selected.