

Division of Family Services Monthly Update January 2010

Governor's Conference on Children's Services Transformation

The first governor's conference on Children's Services Transformation was held in December. It was a remarkable success. The conference produced a variety of perspectives on increasingly critical issues. The two-day event was hosted by First Lady Anne Holton and, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey and Freddie Mac Foundations.

The conference brought together approximately 600 stakeholders and advocates to celebrate milestones of the Children's Services Transformation program and focused on sharing best practices to most effectively help at-risk children and their families throughout the Commonwealth. For information on the conference, including presentation materials from the conference's workshops, please see the Children's Services System Transformation website at <http://vafamilyconnections.com/>

Training

A phone conference was held on December 14th with staff at the Institute for Human Services (IHS) to map out their work in Virginia under the contracts with VDSS and Casey Family Programs. A preliminary work plan was developed for the first four months of 2010 that focuses on assessment for capacity in relation to the development of goals. The Child Welfare Training Coordinating Committee met on December 15th with IHS consultants in attendance. The Committee received presentations from the Transformation Building Block leads in order to gain a better perspective of the DFS sponsored training that has taken place in relation to the Transformation thus far. Discussion topics following the presentations included the establishment of a subcommittee to look at policy training, the development of the IHS consultation plan, and the scheduling of Family Partnership Meetings courses in conjunction with the phased VDSS roll out plans. In addition, Nan Beeler from IHS along with Kevin Filbey, co-chair of the Steering Committee and Vernon Simmons, conducted a break out session at the Governor's Conference on Children's Services Transformation on December 16th.

Managing by Data

The Outcome Based Reporting and Analysis Unit (OBRA) has completed a preliminary analysis of the DFS Diversion Study. According to the sample, somewhere between 8.3% and 11.6 % of all referrals are diverted from foster care and placed with relatives. OBRA will publish a full version of the DFS Diversion Study next month. In addition, OBRA has finished a preliminary analysis of placement cost data and will continue to work toward producing a placement cost calculator.

In the upcoming months, OBRA has scheduled Applied SafeMeasures training in all five DSS regions. These trainings will be conducted by Mickey Groomes and Rebecca Hjelm from February – April. In addition, OBRA will finalize requirements on the next release of OASIS featuring the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) and will continue work on the private provider evaluation reports.

Family Engagement

Progress continues on the family engagement work group which recently met to discuss next steps for 2010. Tamara Temoney, along with two Family Engagement workgroup members, attended the pilot of the VISSTA course CWS 4020, the Introduction to Virginia's Family Engagement Model. Tamara Temoney also attended the first meeting of the OCS family engagement workgroup to discuss how FAPT and CPMT will support family engagement practice. A work of this group continued at a subsequent meeting on January 8th.

In an effort to further educate stakeholders about family engagement, Tamara Temoney had an opportunity to facilitate a panel at the Governor's Conference on family engagement. Family engagement and youth engagement were strong themes throughout the two day conference. In the coming weeks, family engagement guidance will be finalized and a broadcast will be issued. In addition, local departments will be notified of their training phase assignment based on the Readiness Assessment Tool that was distributed and completed by most LDSS in fall 2009.

Resource Families

December featured the second meeting of the Regional Peer Cooperatives (RPCs) in each region. The focus was on training and assessment of prospective families, with a continued emphasis on creating sufficient capacity for managing more families prior to engaging in recruitment. Also in December, the Resource Family Unit participated in a site visit to Ohio, which is also a state supervised and locally administered system. Ohio has a model of resource family assessment and training that is more streamlined and supports local agencies—particularly smaller, more rural agencies—while also maintaining a high level of quality in training. Such a system is imperative for (a) helping the Commonwealth's local agencies fulfill the training requirements for resource families, and (b) ensuring that families have access to the specific types of training they need for the children in their care. Both of these are key elements in creating a larger pool of resource families which leads to better matches with children, fewer disruptions in placements, and greater retention of families over time.

January 2010 includes several RPC 2 meetings as well as two offerings of RPC 3, which will focus on how we support and retain resource families. Both Commonwealth and national data indicate that up to 80% of resource families are brought in by other families. Supporting existing families not only increases safety, permanency and well-being for children and youth in foster care, but it also serves as a self-sustaining and low cost tool for recruitment. In addition, the Resource Family Unit and the Community Resource, Adoptive and Foster Family Training (CRAFFT) Project will come together in January to develop a plan for more comprehensive coverage of local agencies and to address the needs of their resource families.

Community Based Care

The Office of Comprehensive Services has training events planned in February that will assist localities in community-based service development. It will be specific to developing skills for

service cost estimation and will be a “train the trainer” format so localities can have someone available that can assist as needed. Training will be provided at several venues statewide and is open to public and private providers as well as local CPMT and FAPT members. Dates will be posted on the CSA website the week of January 11, 2010. The two work groups – carve out and family engagement – continue their work, with plans to have recommendations ready for the State Executive Council in March. These, too, are important to the ability of localities to understand the need for and develop community-based services.

Continuous Quality Improvement

The vacant position for a Quality Analyst has been filled by Lytricia Toler, formerly of Portsmouth DSS. Lytricia will bring solid field and supervisory experience to the work of Child Welfare Quality Reviews and we welcome her to VDSS. Local Departments are beginning to submit System Improvement Plans with the assistance of Regional Consultants. This process is used to identify opportunities for improvement after the completion of a Child Welfare Quality Review. System Improvement Plans define the problem or issue, develop solutions, identify steps to implement solutions and determine what measures will be used to monitor improvements and change. Safe Measures has been a great tool for local departments in this process. Six month reports on System Improvement Plans will begin this month.

Child Protective Services

The CPS Policy Advisory Committee met in December and continued its work on CPS policy/guidance to incorporate family engagement practices as well as Structured Decision Making (SDM) processes. They also discussed statewide SDM implementation, results of the Child and Family Services Review, and utility of Safe Measures. VDSS entered into a no cost contract extension with the Children’s Research Center to continue support and technical assistance for SDM. In addition, CPS staff attended the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) administrators’ meeting at the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) in December. The topics of discussion included the status of the State Performance Reports to the Feds for the regular VOCA and the VOCA Recovery Act grants, the updated Quarterly Reporting Form and requirements for the VOCA Recovery Act grants, as well as the need for coordination of grant monitoring. The second quarterly VOCA sub-recipient report was completed and submitted to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. The sub-recipient is Children Youth and Families, Inc. in Charlottesville. All Healthy Families grantees were notified that their funding for the current year would be cut by 10% and modifications to their contracts are being made accordingly.

In the coming weeks, CPS staff will review the final report from the federal Child and Family Services Review and develop portions of the Program Improvement Plan. In addition, work will continue on the development and distribution of the RFP for the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Grants for 2010. A monitoring visit is scheduled in the month of January at the Center for Child and Family Services in Hampton, Virginia. The purpose of the visit will be to ensure that this sub-grantee is in compliance with VOCA program requirements, to assess the

progress achieved on their goals and outcomes, and to identify and correct any problems in the sub-grant management process.

Foster Care

The Foster Care Program held a one day retreat to review the Children's Services Practice Model and set goals for the units work in the next year. Chris Behan from Annie E. Casey Foundation provided consultation. Five primary goals were selected including development of a Program Unit as well as individual work plans. Further development of these goals into deliverables and identification of resources needed to meet each goal will occur on a formal basis in monthly Foster Care unit meetings. The Permanency Advisory Committee (PAC) met in December and continued its work on reviewing format styles for the DFS guidance manuals. Specifically, the revisions to the "Services to Older Youth" section, which reflects an alternative format, were discussed and suggestions were made. Phyllis Savides, Supervisor at Albemarle DSS, will work with Therese Wolf to revise the foster care guidance section on placement of children to make this section of guidance consistent with the Practice Model and useful to the daily work of social workers. PAC also discussed and approved the charge of the group; finalized plans for adding new members and limiting terms; and added representatives of statewide groups such as the Virginia Association of Licensed Child Placing Agencies. Independent living staff completed the first review of user requirements for OASIS changes to support gathering data for the federal National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). In addition, staff began reviewing drafts of the CFSR PIP and the kinship care work plan. At the next unit meeting, these documents will be reviewed and work considerations addressed in light of the goals from the Program's retreat.

Adoption

In December, the Adoption Unit completed an internal assessment on how to improve the State processes to improve timeliness to adoption. Processes reviewed included the Adoption Resource Exchange of Virginia and the use of Adoption Contractors to assist local agencies. In addition, developing a process to interface with the Resource Family unit related to family recruitment and training was also discussed. The three priority recommendations were to develop and to implement an older youth project for youth 12 and older to address children with termination of parental rights who are not adopted within twenty-four months, to revise the roles and responsibilities of the adoption contractors, and to re-engineer the Adoption Resource Exchange of Virginia to meet the needs of local agencies. The Adoption Unit will continue to work on the proposal for the older youth and will incorporate changes for AREVA and the adoption contractors within that proposal. The Adoption Unit also worked on a proposal to assist local agencies in using Accurint as a search engine to locate family members. In addition, a quarterly meeting was held with the adoption contractors on December 7, 2009. A verbal update of the internal assessment was provided to the contractors.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)

The Tennessee/Virginia Broader Agreement has been signed by the appropriate Commissioners. Once VDSS receives signatures from local directors in Virginia who border Tennessee, the process will be close to complete. The anticipated implementation date is February 1, 2010.