

Division of Family Services Monthly Update July 2010

Division Reorganization

We are making organizational changes to better support the priorities of the Division and the Department. Within the past several weeks, regrettably, we have lost some staff due to job changes or retirement. Those individuals include Suzanne Ashford and Linda Searcy from the Adoption Unit; Ellen Smiley from the CPS/APS Hotline; and Laura Cooper from Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). We have received permission to fill the vacancies, and in all but one instance the vacant position description has been rewritten in order support functions that are not effectively being covered at this time.

Just this week Susan Taylor, Resource Family Manager, has informed us that she is leaving effective August 2nd. It is always difficult to lose dedicated, skilled, and knowledgeable employees, but it also is an opportunity to realign work and functions consistent with our goals and desired outcomes. Consistent with this thinking, please see the following.

Rita Katzman and Therese Wolf will be asked to work together even more closely to form the **Child Protection and Permanency Team**. There are no initial changes expected for Rita's staff, but the current Foster Care and Adoption Units will experience some significant changes. Therese has been asked to take on leading the new **Permanency Unit**, and we thank Pam Cooper for serving as the interim Adoption Program Manager for over a year. Pam will now return to a supervisory role within the new permanency unit. Pam and Therese will be working with staff to fully integrate the two units so that the needs of this continuum of services can be more effectively supported at the local level.

Tamara Temoney for too long has been leading the Family Engagement effort, which we believe is the primary vehicle to achieve permanency outcomes for children, without designated assistance at the Home Office level. Tracey Jackson will move from the former Adoption Unit to help form the **Family Engagement Team**. Together this team will support the regional Family Engagement teams, attend to statewide Family Engagement efforts, work with partners on varied Fatherhood Initiatives, and manage the Putative Father Registry. They will also provide information and assistance to conduct family search and engagement activities, which are local efforts to reconstruct a child's relationships over time and locate family members and others who can play an essential role in planning and strengthening families.

A third team for **Family Support** will be led by Susan Taylor's successor and Gary Cullen. Susan currently supervises the Resource Family consultants and the CRAFFT coordinators. Gary will be moving here to Home Office (from the Central Regional Office) and supervising one of the currently vacant positions; he and this new staff will work collaboratively to provide the attention necessary to assess and develop needed resources for Prevention and the continuum of Kinship Care. Family Support is the process of providing families, youth, and resource parents with the services, resources, and timely and positive contact they need to be successful. The goal of family support is to keep children in safe and stable placements -- at home, when possible, or with relative or resource caregivers when out-of-home placement is necessary.

Training

In June, the Division of Family Services finalized the Memorandum of Agreement modifications to the VCU-VISSTA contract around the issues of curriculum development. The major effort in FY2011 will be to develop revised policy training that is heavily geared to increase transfer of learning (application of lessons learned back on the job). This process will include such changes as combining instructor led training with both online activities and guided coaching by supervisors.

The ATC Managers and several of their staff along with Hayley Brooks and Vernon Simmons from Home Office joined Phyllis Grooms-Gordon and Rhonda Harrell from VCU-VISSTA on a 2.5 day site visit to Columbus, Ohio to visit consultants from the Institute of Human Services. The site visit, which was funded by Casey Family Programs, provided several learning opportunities including the opportunity to visit with various regional training centers, discuss evaluation methodologies, and plan strategically about training reengineering efforts in Virginia. As a result of the visit, immediate plans are to pilot a 6 module supervisory training series in Virginia between September and December for child welfare supervisors and managers. We will also begin the review of competencies for child welfare supervisors and managers in July with the help of several LDSS volunteers.

Managing by Data

Representatives from the Federal government conducted an AFCARS review that highlighted areas in OASIS that need corrections in order to be consistent with federal reporting standards. A final report will be available within 90 days. Thanks to the LDSS staff who participated in the review process!

Outcome Based Reporting and Analysis (OBRA) staff updated the Virginia Child Welfare Outcomes Reporting tool (VCWOR) which is available for download at <http://spark.dss.virginia.gov/divisions/dis/oasis/software.cgi#vcwor>. OBRA staff presented initial data analysis on children with alternative foster care goals (APPLA, Permanent Foster Care, and Independent Living) to the Foster Care Process Improvement Team. OBRA will present a final analysis of data on children with alternative goals on July 15th at the Foster Care Process Improvement Team meeting and again on July 16th at the Child Welfare Advisory Committee.

In addition, OBRA staff continues to work with the Division of Information Systems on version 3.7 of OASIS which will include the National Youth in Transition Database and CPS change track. OBRA published the new Critical Outcomes Report which details performance on Transformation, CFSR, and CPS outcome measures.

Family Engagement

During the month of June, Tamara Temoney and Paul McWhinney facilitated an information session for local directors in Phase 2 for family engagement. This provided Phase 2 localities with an opportunity to hear about plans for implementation and ask questions about the process. In addition, Tamara Temoney facilitated a family engagement session at the New Directors Learning Lab in Williamsburg, VA.

Family Engagement Roundtables continue across the state. LDSS staff continues to participate as well as several CSA Coordinators. Dan Cowan, a technical assistant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, has had the opportunity to participate in some. In addition, Tamara Temoney, the DFS training team, a representative of VISSTA and the VDSS Research Unit are working to develop an evaluation for CWS

4020 and CWS 4030, the courses for family engagement. This will provide the Family Engagement Manager with pertinent feedback from both courses.

Also, Tracey Jackson, who previously worked for the Division as the Adoption Policy Specialist, will begin working with the Family Engagement Program as a Family Engagement Specialist. Within this position, she will assist with the statewide implementation of family engagement, assist with the interpretation and implementation of family engagement guidance, and provide leadership in the development of fatherhood related initiatives. Tracey will also continue to maintain the Virginia Putative Father Registry.

Resource Families

In June, Regional Peer Cooperatives (RPCs) continued, featuring several RPC 5s (Recruiting Resource Families: Targeted and General Recruitment Strategies). Agencies reported that the activity pertaining to “interviewing” a birth parent has been incredibly powerful. Rarely do we consider the impact of the birth parent on how and whom we recruit – and yet through this one activity, each person in the room will now think differently and more carefully about the perspective of the birth parent and how her/his loss impacts the process.

With the sixth and final RPC session, we will continue recruitment with a focus on child-specific strategies, including family finding and diligent searches for children’s connections within their home communities. Because of the overlap between family search for recruitment and family search for the overall practice of engaging families, providing adequate notice to relatives and convening Family Partnership Meetings, RPC 6 is of critical importance.

Agencies continue to make and report a good deal of progress towards a better system of recruiting and retaining resource families, as well as supporting birth families. Alexandria, for example, will be celebrating 36 adoptions in November – up from an average of 8 – 10! They cite participation in the RPCs as having a major influence on this increase – “We now look at the whole thing differently – we search sooner for family, we work together more closely, and with that the process is smoother and easier for everyone.” A celebration session is being planned in each region to honor the tremendous work that local agencies have put into overhauling their systems of recruitment, development and support for resource families.

During the month of June a training session on Family Search and Engagement was held in each region. The sessions were conducted by Casey consultants and were well received by local staff across the child welfare continuum. Trainees agreed that the practice of locating and involving family and other caring adults from first contact to case closure is critical to ensuring successful outcomes for children and families.

Community Based Care

Much of the recent work related to community services has been to support the family engagement policy and practice developed by both the State Executive Council and VDSS. Office of Comprehensive Services (OCS) staff is participating on a planning committee for this work. In addition, each OCS technical assistant and the executive director will serve as a team member for the five DSS regional roundtables to be held in the early fall. Family engagement practices will be the cornerstone for community service development -- through this process families will provide information about what they need, allowing local systems to develop the services if not already available. The regional

roundtables can serve as a forum for the possibility of developing regionally available services that can meet the economy of scale necessary for effective service provision. OCS continues collaborating with local CSA systems and private/public providers to assist in matching identified service needs.

Child Protective Services

During the month of June, several CPS staff arranged and participated in a new CPS Structured Decision Making Supervisor Training pilot course training for trainers which was presented by the Children's Research Center. CPS Program staff conducted training for the Division of Family Services on the *Impact of Trauma on Child Development and Attachment and Implications for Child Welfare Services* on June 1st in an effort to provide professional development opportunities to home office staff.

In addition, the CPS Policy Manual revisions and Transmittal for July 1 were posted and distributed to staff. CPS Program staff sent out Award Letters to 27 applicants approved for Child Abuse Prevention grants for SFY 2011, and to applicants who were not approved for funding in response to RFP #SVC-10-037 and prepared and distributed contracts. All 36 Healthy Families contract renewals were received and signed by VDSS before June 30. Three programs have had to close due to the budget cuts and the funds have been reallocated to the 36 programs.

Also, 39 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Contract Modification Letters were sent to sub-grantees for signature and were returned with modified budgets and work plans for fiscal year 2011. Increased deposits into the Crime Victims Fund over the past year provided for a slight increase in funding for the VOCA sub-grantees. A total of eighteen (18) proposals were received in response to the Request for Proposals (RFP) for fiscal year 2011 under the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) Grant Funding Number SVC-10-062 which was posted on May 11, 2010. The Evaluation Committees met in Richmond on June 28 & 29, 2010 to select the grantees and the award amounts for the above-referenced grant. The committees recommended that seventeen (17) of the applicants be awarded contracts for the provision of CAC services and training. The Notice of Award was posted on July 1, 2010.

Permanency

The Process Improvement Team - "Exploring Permanency: Youth with Goals of PFC, IL and APPLA" met on June 14, 2010. Additional data requested by the group was presented by Matt Wade and Tania White. The group's charter was discussed and finalized. Data discussion led to decisions regarding the need to look at children with all three goals rather than attempting to separate by goal assignment. Data needs that are unable to be obtained through OASIS/SafeMeasures also resulted in discussion about obtaining a sample of cases for in-depth case analysis regarding a list of questions brainstormed by the group. Comparing certain data for children with these goals against an equal sample of children with permanency goals, and who achieved permanency from the same cohort, was reinforced as a much-needed analysis to help identify process differences between the 2 groups. A methodology for the next data analysis was discussed and OBRA will work with the Department's research unit to draw on both teams expertise to gather the data requested.

The Rate Structure Committee met after 6 months hiatus to review feedback and experiences of the public and private sector in utilizing the VEMAT. Specific areas of change were decided upon and a sub-committee to work on clarifying definitions was formed. Using the VEMAT for Adoption Assistance was discussed and additional questions for the federal policy liaison were identified. Training and changes to the tool to better address the medical needs of children were the primary areas of discussion that

require additional action on the part of the Division to address. Baseline data on expenditures in FC and Adoption were also obtained through LASER from the new cost codes that went into effect last year. This will allow for comparisons in costs to be made over time.

Lyndell Lewis, funds manager of the Title IV-B Subpart2, Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) federal grant had the opportunity to participate in the PSSF Annual Grantee Meeting held June 8-9 in Washington D.C. Twenty-nine states were represented and the participants' costs were paid by the Children's Bureau. The two-day meeting centered on discussions of state services/activities and outcomes under the PSSF service types (Family Support, Family Preservation, Time-Limited Family Reunification and Adoption Promotion and Support). The purpose of the discussions was to increase understanding of 1) how PSSF works, 2) how PSSF can support practice and system changes, 3) identify areas where technical assistance is needed, and 4) facilitate peer exchange.

Representatives from the Division of Family Services' Permanency unit met with Outcome Base Reporting and Analysis staff and other Division representatives to discuss changes in OASIS to facilitate capturing data relevant to implementing Custody Assistance (previously called "Subsidized Custody") in Virginia. OBRA plans to release the placement screens that support the implementation of Custody Subsidized by January 2011. Discussion of screens included items such as changing the Placement Screen to include a drop down box where the service worker can choose "Custody Transfer to Other Relatives" and "Custody Transfer to Other Relatives with Custody Assistance." Concern was expressed that 'custody assistance' may be interpreted by the service worker as TANF Child-Only. The Subsidized Custody sub-group working on guidance and tools will need to decide if the draft tool, "Service Worker Permanency Planning Checklist" will become a mandated tool. If it is mandated, it can be a web base form and anyone could have access to it via web site. If it is not mandated, it can just be added as a form in SPARK. The work group also has to come up with a list of reasons for suspension and termination of custody assistance to create a drop down list in OASIS. Other discussion focused on data fields to capture siblings groups, payment changes, and data regarding the annual renewal (if the policy workgroup decides such annual renewals are needed).

Preparation continues for the August 2010 Federal IV-E Review. IV-E staff has been working with forty-eight local agencies to complete and submit payment histories for 100 IV-E cases selected for the review. A complete summary report compiling all the payment histories from all agencies was provided to the Federal Office July 2, 2010. In addition, Title IV-E Consultants have begun site visits to assist the agencies in preparing the cases for the review. File preparation and shipping instructions have been sent to all the selected agencies. Agency case records will be shipped to the Home Office between July 19 and 21, 2010.

The Fostering Connections Education Workgroup met on Thursday, June 3, 2010 at United Methodist Family Services. VDSS Independent Living Education Specialist Peyton McCoy and Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Student Services Specialist Dr. Vivian Stith-Williams share responsibility for the group. Areas identified by the group as specific to their work include (a) School stability, (b) Appropriateness and Proximity, (c) Recruitment and retention of families in local school divisions to address proximity, (d) Immediate and Appropriate Enrollment, (e) Attendance, (f) Transportation, (g) Older Youth Provisions, and (h) Accountability. Using these areas as a template, the group established a work plan which specifies primary strategies, goals, and objectives. The primary purpose and focus of this meeting included: 1) A recap of progress to date, work stream reports where applicable, and discussion of potential legislation that impacts the work and associated guidance; 2) Focused attention on remaining

work, who needs to do it, and what we need to do it; and 3) Establishment of the agenda items for the upcoming meeting.

The Putative Father Campaign began on June 14 with public services announcements on the CW Network and the distribution of the newly revised registration brochure. Brochures were disseminated to all 120 local departments of social services, 40 licensed child-placing agencies who provide adoption services, adoption attorneys, and state health departments. The Campaign will run through July 27, 2010 to heighten awareness related to the Virginia Putative Father Registry. The purpose of the Registry is to protect the rights of a putative father who wants to be notified in the event of a proceeding for adoption. Timely registration entitles the father to notification of the termination of parental rights or adoption proceeding for a child he may have fathered. Registration may be used to establish paternity, but does not start the legal process to establish paternity.

The adoption contracts to assist local departments of social services with timely adoption have been revised. Five regional informational sessions were held with local agencies and adoption contractors to provide joint information on the changes with the contracts effective July 1, 2010, to seek input from LDSSs and adoption contractors on prioritizing the list of waiting children, training needs, and building partnerships, and to establish and/or reinforce existing relationships among LDSS and adoption contractors. The meetings were held in the regions as follows: Western, June 14; Eastern, June 17; Piedmont, June 28; Northern, June 29; Central, June 30.

Within the next month, local agencies and contractors will be meeting to complete agreements to achieve timely adoptions for waiting children.

Adult Services

During the month of June, Paul McWhinney gave a presentation on the Adult Services/Adult Protective Services Program to the State Board of Social Services.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) and Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA)

The Border Agreement between Virginia and Tennessee started in February, 2010 which addressed emergency placements for non-custodial children. Virginia and Tennessee staff will begin to evaluate the possibility of developing or altering an existing process to address children in custody who can be placed with relatives across state lines.

For ICPC, there were 226 new cases for a total of 3,049 cases. Placement statistics for the month of June are listed below:

- Adoption – 36
- Foster Care – 62
- Parents – 35
- Relative – 22
- Residential – 71

In regards to ICAMA, there are a total of 2,725 cases – 54 of which are new for the month of June.

Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)/Program Improvement Plan (PIP)

DFS is planning on submitting the PIP again in July. We have resubmitted our AFCARS data and are expecting a new state data profile within the next couple of months. Once we get the state data profile we can set baselines. The CQI unit has reviewed the appropriate number of cases using the CFSR instrument to use for the first baseline measurement. The quality assurance monitors will be reviewing more cases this year for a second sample to be used for baseline measurement.

Continuous Quality Improvement

The focus for the Continuous Quality Improvement Unit for the month of June has been on sub-recipient monitoring plans and the development and implementation of Quality Service Reviews. Twenty different program areas, grants and funding streams have provided sub-recipient monitoring plans with documentation of reporting templates and six month reporting cycles for VDSS. Several of these plans will be continually modified as implementation of new risk assessments and monitoring approaches are utilized.

As you already know, Virginia is implementing Quality Service Reviews (QSR) which is a unique opportunity for Virginia to begin to shift from measuring the quality of compliance within our local departments of social services to measuring the quality of practice to improve outcomes for children and families. The QSR is a measure of frontline practice performance which provides a way of knowing what is working and is not working in practice and why. By August, materials will be posted on the VA Family Connections website explain the process and projected timelines.

Casey Engagement and Agents of Change

The Annie E. Casey and Casey Family Programs engagements with us continue as demonstrated throughout this narrative. We are extremely grateful for their support and encouragement as we transform child welfare in Virginia.

The Agents of Change program, which was funded by both the Virginia Department of Social Services and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, ended on June 10th. Several staff from the Division of Family Services had the opportunity to participate in five, two-day leadership development sessions over a six-month period of time. The program, which involved several stakeholders from various localities, was designed to support collaborative leadership to further the goals of the Transformation which include: improving the way Virginia's public systems help at-risk children and their families to achieve success in life; safety for children and communities; family based placements and life-long family connections.