



THE CITIZENS REVIEW BOARD FOR CHILDREN

2009 ANNUAL REPORT

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CITIZENS REVIEW BOARD FOR CHILDREN

2009 Annual Report EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers statistical data for State fiscal year 2009 and includes program updates through December 2009.

In FY09 the Citizens Review board for Children conducted case reviews for children in Maryland's child welfare system with plans of:

- Adoption
- Guardianship
- Reunification
- Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), and
- Relative Placement

There was a slight reduction in case reviews conducted in FY09 in comparison with FY08. This is contributed to a suspension of case reviews in two key jurisdictions; Baltimore and Washington Counties due to the Transitioning Youth to Families Initiative. CRBC also saw a budget related required reduction in administrative and para-professional staff decreasing staff size from twenty-one to eleven staff persons.

During FY09 the Citizens Review Board for Children began to implement our strategic and operational plan "Moving Forward 2009," which began with an assessment of CRBC operations in FY08. CRBC examined its core practice of reviewing cases of children in out-of-home placements, effectiveness, and efficiency. The major goal was to strengthen CRBC operations and case review. We discuss the CRBC case review transition to be implemented in FY10 reviewing out of home cases with plans of Adoption and Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.

CRBC continued to see similar trends as in previous years as the number of children in out of home care decrease from 9,648 in FY08 to 9,323 this fiscal year. We began to see more jurisdictions implement the use of Family Involvement Meetings (FIMs) but were still not performing FIM's at every trigger point in a child's case such as with youth preparing to emancipate out of the foster care system. We continued to see children and youth with high rates of APPLA chosen as a permanency goal. There appears to be an overutilization and inappropriate use of APPLA by local departments. CRBC's recommendations are centered on the Department of Human Resources reassessing and addressing casework practice around determining what is considered appropriate and inappropriate selection of APPLA by caseworkers.

Citizens Review Board for Children

Program Description

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

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

The Citizen Review Board for Children consists of volunteer representatives from state and local boards in each county. There are currently 54 local review boards throughout the state. CRBC reviews cases of children in out-of-home placement and monitors child welfare programs, making recommendations for system improvements.

The State Board reviews and coordinates the activities of the local review boards. The board also examines policy issues, procedures, legislation, resources and barriers relating to out-of-home placement and the permanency of children. The state board makes recommendations to the General Assembly around ways of improving Maryland's child welfare system.

MISSION

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

VISION

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

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 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 and achieve or maintain permanency for children and about plans and efforts to improve services.

The Citizens Review Board for Children formulates recommendations for improving case management and the child welfare system and effectively communicates the recommendations to decision-makers and the public.

Legislative Agenda

The children's legislative action committee advocacy (CLAC) priorities increase a broad range of family services. CLAC is the legislative committee under the authority of State Board charged with implementing CRBC's legislative agenda. Maryland's child welfare budget is disproportionately spent on keeping about 3,500 children in high-cost placements while many thousands of children and families do not have access to high-quality family services. The Department of Human Resources Secretary seeks to change this dynamic with the innovative initiatives. Reinvesting savings from reducing inappropriate placements to fund the following:

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

CRBC Case Review Findings for Children in Care

During this fiscal year the Citizens Review Board for Children reviewed cases of children with permanency plans of Adoption, Guardianship, Reunification, APPLA, and Relative Placement.

Exhibit I

(Source CRBC Information System)

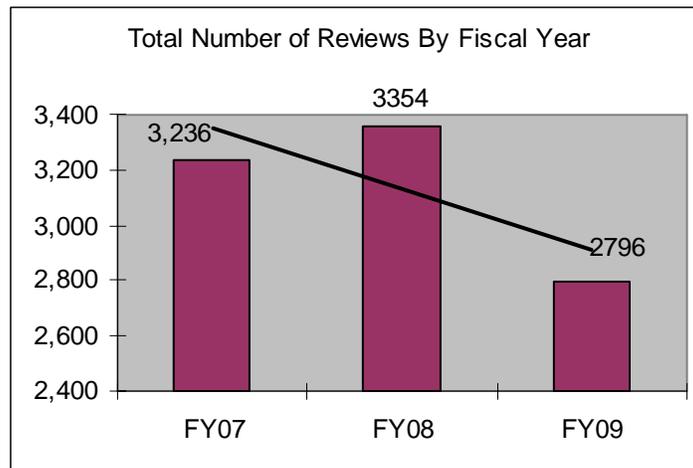
Cases Reviewed By Permanency Plan

Permanency Plan	Total Number	Percent
Adoption	273	10%
Guardianship	17	1%
Reunification	1843	66%
APPLA	253	9%
Relative Placement	399	14%
Other	11	0%

The Citizens Review Board for Children reviewed 2,796 cases of children that resided in Maryland's public foster care system. One thousand eight hundred and sixty-three cases reviewed were of children and youth with a permanency plan of reunification accounting for the 66% of our reviewed population.

Exhibit II

(Source CRBC Information System)



CRBC reviewed 558 fewer cases than in FY08. This is a 15% decrease from the previous fiscal year. This decrease is attributed to the required suspension of local board reviews by the Department of Human Resources in Washington and Baltimore Counties. The Department and Casey Family Programs conducted administrative reviews for the Transitioning Youth to Families Initiative for all youth in-group care. The initiative looked at moving youth to permanency by returning them to their biological family and or a foster family.

Jurisdictions

Maryland is comprised of 24 county jurisdictions including Baltimore City. According to Place Matters DHR identifies jurisdictions as large, medium, and small according to caseload size. As of July 2008 jurisdictions size criteria are determined by:

- **Large:** 500 cases or more
- **Medium:** 300- 500 cases
- **Small:** Fewer than 100 cases

Large Jurisdictions: Baltimore City accounted for 59% of permanency cases reviewed. Local board members reviewed 1006 cases in Baltimore City and were in agreement with the local department's permanency plan in 77% percent of cases reviewed.

Exhibit III

(Source CRBC Information System)

Large Jurisdictions	# Reviews	% Of Total Reviews	Board Agreements
Baltimore City	1006	59	779
Baltimore County	185	11	159
Montgomery	301	18	268
Prince Georges	199	12	179

Medium Jurisdictions: Harford and Anne Arundel Counties accounted for the majority cases reviewed in medium size jurisdictions. Local boards agreed with the local department's permanency plan in 70% of reviews in both jurisdictions.

Exhibit IV

(Source CRBC Information System)

Medium Jurisdictions	# Reviews	% Of Total Reviews	Board Agreements
Allegany	73	9	42
Anne Arundel	128	15	90
Cecil	97	12	71
Charles	77	9	68
Frederick	92	11	76
Harford	149	18	105
Saint Mary's	69	8	69
Washington	82	10	50
Wicomico	63	8	46

Small Jurisdictions: Of the small jurisdictions Howard County accounted for 20% of cases reviewed with the local boards agreeing with the local departments permanency plan in 85% of those cases.

Exhibit V

(Source CRBC Information System)

Small Jurisdictions	# Reviews	% Of Total Reviews	Board Agreements
Calvert	45	16	38
Caroline	28	10	28
Carroll	21	8	17
Dorchester	23	8	23
Garrett	30	11	19
Howard	55	20	48
Kent	2	1	2
Queen Anne	3	1	2
Somerset	23	8	19
Talbot	13	5	12
Worcester	32	12	28

Volunteers Activity

CRBC local boards consisted of 293 governor-appointed volunteers with 234 volunteers actively participating in their local jurisdiction. High volumes of CRBC volunteers are identified as retirees. Most volunteers have professional backgrounds in child welfare, child protection, mental health, advocacy, or are current and former foster parents. There were 410 interested persons that attended local review boards. Interested

persons are identified as family, youth in care, foster parents, caseworkers, CASA workers, mental health professionals, etc and are actively involved in the child's life.

Child Protection Panel Reviews

In-Home Case Reviews

In 1998, CRBC became a Citizen Review Panel in response to the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (U.S.C. 5101 et. seq., October 1996) and State law (Chapters 355 and 356 of the Acts of 1999) requiring citizen oversight of the child protection system.

CRBC's reviews emphasize policies, procedures, and cases pertaining to reports of child abuse and neglect in which a finding of indicated was made. Indicated is a finding that there is credible evidence, which has not been satisfactorily refuted, that neglect, physical abuse, or sexual abuse did occur. A local panel may be established in each jurisdiction, which reports its findings and recommendations to CRBC's State Board and to the local department of social services.

The reviews address five child welfare outcomes that are aligned with the Child and Family Services Family Review. For each review the panels decide if the outcome is substantially achieved, partially achieved, not achieved, or not applicable. During fiscal year 08, ten jurisdictions jointly completed twenty-six reviews. The jurisdictions are: Allegany, Anne Arundel, Garret, Harford, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Washington, and Worcester counties, and Baltimore City.

Child Protection Panels conducted fifty-five (55) In-Home reviews this fiscal year. Forty percent of reviews were conducted in Baltimore City (11) and Anne Arundel County (11). Many of the comments have been consistent with previous reviews conducted in prior fiscal years.

Exhibit VI Votes Taken During Citizen Review Process

<i>Outcome Area</i>	<i>Measure</i>	<i>Effectiveness Rating by Panel</i>	<i>Frequent Comments by Panels</i>
SAFETY OUTCOME 1	<i>Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.</i>	<p><i>Of the 46 applicable cases the outcome was:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Substantially achieved in 62% of cases; and</i> • <i>Partially achieved in 16% of the cases</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Investigation was completed within the designated time frame.</i> • <i>No repeat maltreatment reports within the review period.</i> • <i>Adequate attempts were made by worker,</i>
SAFETY OUTCOME 2	<i>Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate</i>	<p><i>Of the 49 applicable cases the outcome was:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Substantially achieved in 64% of cases;</i> • <i>Partially achieved in 16% of cases; and</i> • <i>Not achieved in 9% of</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Documentation indicated that the Agency made efforts to provide services to the family.</i> • <i>An Initial assessment, monitoring, and updated safety plan was completed.</i> • <i>Services were provided to keep</i>

Outcome Area	Measure	Effectiveness Rating by Panel	Frequent Comments by Panels
		cases	<i>the child in household, there were no efforts made in assisting father,</i>
WELL-BEING OUTCOME 1	<i>Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.</i>	<p>Of the 48 applicable cases the outcome was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantially achieved in 58% of cases; • Partially achieved in 27% of cases; and • Not achieved in 13% of cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth needs were addressed • Case worker visits were completed on a monthly basis with all family members • Lack of documentation of basic services, • An initial assessment was not completed nor was case planning completed for specific identified needs for mother or father
WELL-BEING OUTCOME 2	<i>Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs</i>	<p>Of the 24 applicable cases the outcome was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantially achieved in 36% of cases; • Partially achieved in 2% of cases; and • Not achieved in 5% of cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth receives special education, there was a current IEP that addressed those needs • An alternative school setting is being sought to provide a more intense academic setting for youth • No indication that the child became known to the agency due to educational issues.
WELL-BEING OUTCOME 3	<i>Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.</i>	<p>Of the 36 applicable cases the outcome was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantially achieved in 55% of cases; • Partially achieved in 2% of cases • Not achieved in 9% of cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No indication that the child had any physical, dental or mental health needs that needed to be addressed • Youth had some mental health issues that needed to be addressed, •

Other Activities

July 2009, the Baltimore City Child Protection Panel conducted a forum that focused on youth transitioning out of care and that reside in independent living programs. The forum discussed strategies on how the State can prepare older youth with life skills to ensure that they have the ability to live not only independently but also successfully after leaving the foster care system.

In-Home Social Services Administration Client Population¹

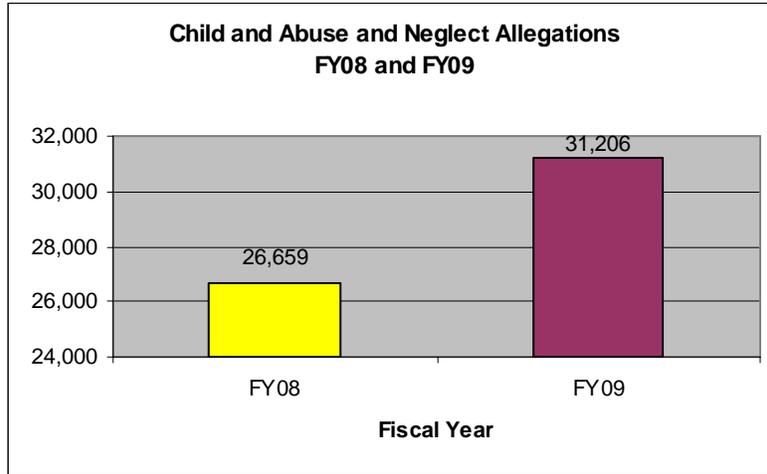
During the last quarter of FY09, the Social Services Administration (SSA) provided in-home services to 3,539 families; with a total of 6,489 served for the fiscal year. There was an average of 672 new cases per month. SSA provided services to 5,218 youth under the age of 18 as of 12/13/09. There was an average of 1,021 in-homes cases closed by SSA.

¹ Social Services Administration CWRR December 2009 Report and DHR StateStat July 09 Report

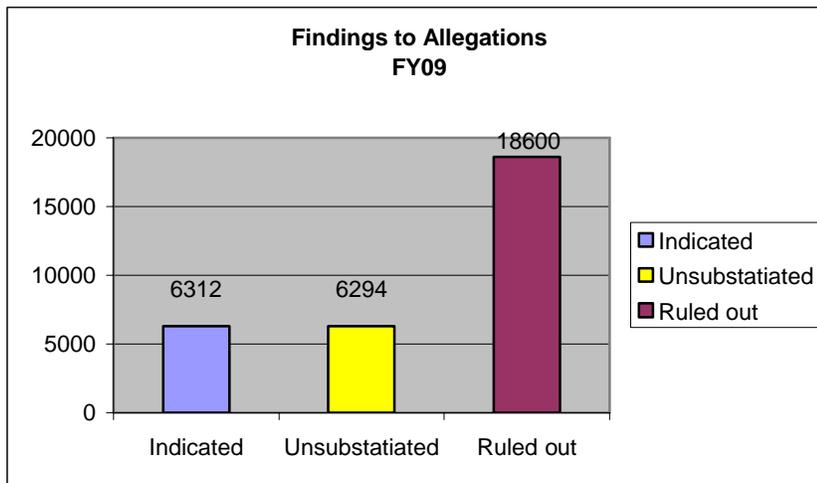
In FY10, CRBC will continue to conduct child protection panel reviews throughout the state. Annually CRBC in conjunction with local panels will identify 1 or 2 priority areas for review within various jurisdictions. CRBC will continue to develop new local panels in various areas that currently do not have functioning panels.

Child Protection Services²

Statewide 31,206 child abuse and neglect allegations were made. The State saw an average increase of 14.5% in FY09 in comparison to FY08. A total of 18,600 allegations were ruled out and 6,294 were unsubstantiated.



There was an average of 5,118 child protection service (CPS) investigations in fiscal year 2009. As of 12/31/09 there were 5,557 active CPS investigations. There was an average of 2,563 monthly new allegations made in FY09; with neglect accounting for the majority of cases with a monthly average of 1,371 allegations. There was an average absence of recurrence of maltreatment in an average of 96% of cases.



² Social Services Administration CWRR December 2009 Report and DHR StateStat July 09 Report

Who Are the Children in Care?

As of June 30, 2009 there were 9,323³ children residing in out of home care in Maryland's public foster care system. In FY09 the number of children continued to decline in out-of-home care from 9,648 to 9,323.⁴ Thirty-four percent had a permanency plan of Reunification. Twenty-five percent of children and youth had a plan of APPLA that includes youth with a required need for long-term placement of independent living services. The Citizens Review Board for Children reviewed 60% of cases with a permanency plan of reunification. There were 4,832 males represented and 4,490 females in care.⁵

Exhibit VII

(Source Social Service Administration and CRBC Information System)

Number of Youth in OOHC by Permanency Plan

Permanency Plan	# of Children	% Reviewed by CRBC
Adoption	1147	24%
APPLA - Child Requires Long Term Care	1334	11% Combined
APPLA - Independent Living Services	1005	
Guardianship	909	Less than 2%
Live with Other Relative(s)	974	41%
Reunification	3117	60%
Not yet identified	837	
Total	9323	

Race and Ethnicity

Of the reported 9,323 children and youth in care:

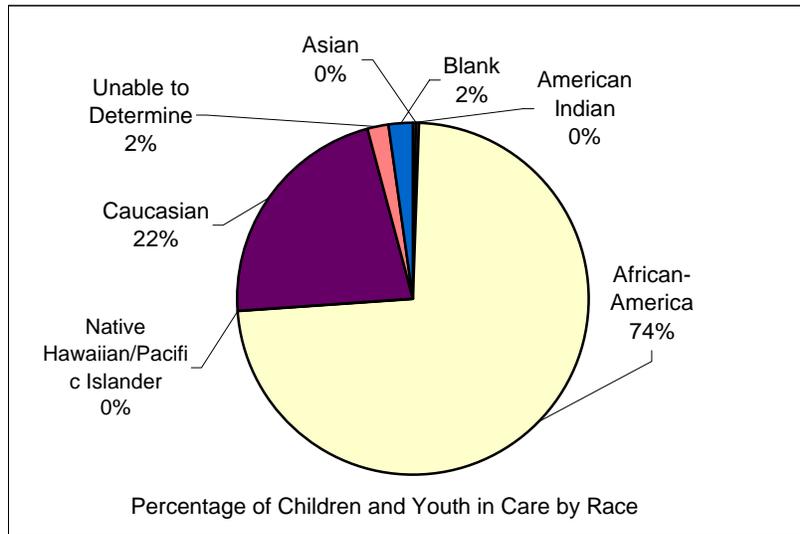
- 6,830 were identified as African-American or Black
- 2,058 were identified as White/Caucasian
- 54 were identified as either American Indian, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- 380 were categorized as unable to determine or blank

³ Social Service Administration – StateStats R3 1-4 OOH June 09

⁴ Place Matters, between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008

⁵ Social Service Administration – StateStats R3 1-4 OOH June 09

Exhibit VIII
(Source Social Service Administration)
Percentage of Children and Youth in Care According to Race



African-American children and youth make up 74% of the population in out of home care while their Caucasian cohorts account for 22% in the State of Maryland. The Department of Human Resources-Social Security Administration December 2009, Child Welfare Results Reports indicates that 78% of children and youth reside in Family Foster Care Homes; this includes those in trial home visits. Residential treatment facilities and group homes account for 15% of placements. .

Enter and Exit Data

An average of 243 children and youth entered care monthly. The Department of Human Resources – Social Services Administration reported that 3,715* children and youth exited out of home care during ‘fiscal year 09⁶:

- 1616 exited care through reunification;
- 770 exited care through adoption;
- 486 exited to guardianship; and
- 226 exited care with plans of APPLA

**The total number of exits does not reflect every child that exited care without achieving permanency. SSA provided total numbers and breakdowns.*

⁶ Department of Human resources-Social Services Administration December 2009 Child Welfare Result Report

APPLA is the least preferred permanency plan. APPLA requires the child to have a permanent connection with a supportive adult while the child remains under the custody of the State. Federal guidelines recommend APPLA plan for children twelve and above. Maryland's youngest child with a plan of APPLA is eight.

Citizens Review Board for Children Moves Forward

Moving Forward '09

In 2008 CRBC conducted an assessment of practice that included identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement. The major goal was to strengthen CRBC operations and case review process. After intensive strategic planning and conversations with stakeholders such as the courts, local departments, and community partners, it was determined that CRBC had to reorganize its practices in order to remain relevant in the child welfare field. As a result the operational plan Moving Forward 09 was created to identify how we needed to reorganize.

During FY09 the Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) began to implement "Moving Forward 2009," CRBC examined its core practice of reviewing cases of children in out-of-home placements, effectiveness, and efficiency. Moving Forward identified key objectives to address during FY09 and was identified as:

- **Identify the most effective role for CRBC in the areas of case review, local assessment and improvement and systems advocacy;**
 - Result: In conjunction with Department and State Board developed a target review agenda to review cases of Adoption And APPLA
- **Ensure high level meetings of CRBC with key stakeholders for purpose of improving case reviews, local assessment and planning and systems advocacy;**
 - Result: Conducted over 8 high level meetings with the Department and Social Service Administration and State Board around case review practice resulting in agreed legislation and Memorandum of Agreement between State Board and Department of Human Resources
 - Other Collaborations: Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children, Commission on Improving Child Welfare, Foster Care Court Improvement Commission, Child and Family Services Review
- **Ensure accurate and value added content, production and dissemination of data reports;**
 - Result: In FY10 will conduct quarterly analysis of case review findings and make finding available to Department.

Case Review Transition

With CAPTA (federal legislation) and Maryland accreditation requirements many of the CRBC's responsibilities were being conducted by several mandated review processes such as Court reviews, Peer reviews, Supervisory reviews, Panel reviews, and mandatory county assessments. Due to the numerous reviews there was duplication in efforts in several systems. The Department of Human Resources asked CRBC to review cases of Adoption and APPLA as they found those were the areas where they were least successful in moving children through the system.

New Legislation

On April 13, 2009 The General Assembly passed House Bill 1337 and Senate Bill 933. The new legislation did NOT change the scope of CRBC; instead it removed very descriptive language that bonded State Board to the type of reviews it could conduct. The new legislation also calls for more analysis and reporting of case review findings on a systemic level to promote changes within the system. State Board will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department regarding the type of cases to be reviewed per Administration.

Review Plan

The Citizens Review Board for Children will review out-of-home cases of children in the public foster care systems that have a permanency plan of Adoption or APPLA. CRBC, DHR, SSA, and the Courts will work collaboratively to allow the review of these cases. CRBC will provide advocacy for children by identifying jurisdictional strengths and areas of improvement to DHR and SSA regarding the adoption and APPLA process.

Review Process

Review of Adoption Cases

CRBC will review the case to determine whether:

- The child is receiving the identified appropriate services to become adopted and finalized;
- That the adoption is progressing so that it may be achieved in a timely manner will achieve permanency in a timely manner;
- The identification and removal of systemic barriers that prevent timely achievement of adoption;
- There are other determined indicators regarding the adoption process.

Review of APPLA Cases

CRBC will review the case to determine whether:

- The child's APPLA plan is appropriate according to state and federal policy;

- The child is receiving the identified appropriate services to achieve goals of APPLA;
- A plan is in place to identify a permanent connection for the child;
- Proper and adequate preparation is happening to ensure a child has a successful transition out of care by the age of 21;
- And other determined indicators.

Summary Recommendations

Addressing Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)

Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) is a case plan designated for children in out-of-home care for whom there is no goal for placement with a legal permanent family.⁷ The Citizens Review Board for Children recommends that the Department of Human Resources address the needs of children and youth in care with permanency plans of APPLA. CRBC further recommends that the Department look at the overutilization and inappropriate use of APPLA by local departments in cases planning.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), calls for state child welfare agencies to establish permanent placement plans for all children in the foster care system. The 2005 AFCARS reported that Maryland overuses the plan of APPLA statewide. The 2008 Annie E. Casey Foundation Permanency in Maryland: The Use of APPLA report identified that:

- APPLA is the most used Permanency Plan designated;
- Maryland uses APPL for young children;
- Children with APPLA spend significantly more time in care than children with other plans; and
- Most children with APPLA are not with Kin.

The Citizens Review Board for Children is in agreement with the American Bar Association, Washington, DC Center on Children and the Law that APPLA is not a catchall for temporary arrangements when all other preferred permanency arrangements are not possible, but rather a permanent alternative for placing a child. Rather than a physical location, it is an endpoint that is both planned and permanent, and meets the psychological and educational needs of the child as well as a physical environment in which they receive care and support.⁸

⁷ www.childwelfare.gov/outofhome/types/APPLA_ltfc.cfm

⁸ American Bar Association, Washington, DC. Center on Children and the Law Vol. 21, pp. 1, 38-42

DHR Should:

- Provide training to local departments around proper determinates to assess whether a plan of APPLA is appropriate also using reasonable efforts to exhaust other possibilities;
- Assess the appropriateness of children and youth with plans of APPLA.
- Continue to create policy and implement practice to decrease the number of youth and children that have a plan of APPLA;
- Ensure that youth aging out of care with a permanency plan of APPLA has appropriate permanent connections to provide them with needed support; and
- Ensure that youth are properly being provided with appropriate targets life skills training for youth 14 years and older.

THE STATE BOARD

Nettie Anderson-Burrs, Chairperson

*Representing
Allegany, Garrett, and Washington Counties*

Mae Kastor, Vice-Chairperson

Representing Baltimore City

Delores Alexander

Representing Baltimore and Harford Counties

Vacant*

Representing Caroline, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's and Talbot Counties

Rev. Cameron Carter

Representing Baltimore City

Doretha Henry

Representing Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties

Helen Diane Johnson

Representing Frederick and Montgomery Counties

Patricia Ranney

Representing Anne Arundel, Carroll, and Howard Counties

Sylvia Smith

Representing Baltimore City

James Trent

Representing Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and Saint Mary's Counties

Sabrena Barnes- McAllister

Administrator

*CRBC is aggressively focused on recruiting and filing this vacant Board position