



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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# Child Welfare Accountability

*Annual Report of Maryland Performance Indicators*

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# Child Welfare Accountability

*Annual Report of the Maryland Performance Indicators*

## Executive Summary

The Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 increased legislative oversight of the Maryland Quality Assurance processes in child welfare. The Act also provides a framework for the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to partner with the University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMB/SSW) to develop the Maryland Quality Assurance (QA) Collaborative. The purpose of the Collaborative is to evaluate quality assurance processes and make recommendations for improvement. This annual report summarizes: (1) indicators of Maryland's performance in promoting positive outcomes for children and families involved with the child welfare system and (2) recommendations on how to improve outcomes measurement in child welfare. A separate companion report entitled *Child Welfare Accountability: Evaluating Quality Assurance Processes in Maryland*, describes and evaluates current QA processes.

## Maryland's Child Welfare Performance Indicators

The Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 specified a set of performance indicators that cover four categories of child welfare practice:

1. Child abuse and neglect,
2. Protecting children in out-of-home care from abuse and neglect,
3. Permanency and stability of children in out-of-home care, and
4. Effectiveness of efforts to address the health, mental health, education and well-being of children in out-of-home care.

Population-level data are presented from 2005 to establish a baseline from which to measure progress. Sample-level data collected from in-depth reviews of randomly selected cases across the state in 2007 provide further insight into the quality of child welfare services provided in Maryland.

## Summary of Findings

Many of the indicators do not have state or federal benchmarks. One of the primary purposes of this first annual report is to establish baselines from which to measure the progress of child welfare services and outcomes over time. For those performance indicators with established targets:

- Maryland meets federal standards for promoting child safety by a minimal level of re-maltreatment.
- Maryland does not meet federal standards for promoting the safety of children in out-of-home care, though the numbers presented in this report are likely an overestimate of abuse or neglect of children while in state custody.
- Maryland ranks below the national median on most indicators measuring the achievement of permanency, according to federal definitions.
- Sample-level quality assurance data suggest that out-of-home placements are stable and concerted efforts are made to preserve children's connection with siblings in out-of-home care when appropriate.

Results of all child welfare performance indicators are summarized in Appendix A, but should be interpreted with caution. Detailed descriptions of how the measures were calculated and implications for interpretation are carefully discussed in the narrative sections of this report.

## Summary of Recommendations

Based on this project team's extensive experience in defining outcome measures for child welfare programs and policies, and after thorough assessment of existing Maryland performance indicators, faculty and staff at the UMB/SSW offer the following recommendations for strengthening the ongoing evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of child welfare services in Maryland:

1. Continue to develop the Children's Electronic Social Services Information Exchange (CHESSIE) to more effectively and routinely report on the outputs and outcomes of child welfare services in Maryland.
2. Redefine the core set of performance indicators to match the federally-mandated performance indicators.
3. Track entry cohorts of children over time to allow for better assessment of program change.
4. Examine the trajectories of service use for children and families over time.
5. Explore differential outcomes for subgroups of children and families.
6. Improve sampling strategies for quality assurance processes.

# Child Welfare Accountability

*Annual Report of the Maryland Quality Assurance Collaborative*

## Introduction

The Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 increased legislative oversight of Maryland Quality Assurance processes in child welfare. The Act also provides a framework for the Department of Human Resources (DHR) to partner with the University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMB/SSW) to create the Maryland Quality Assurance Collaborative. Pursuant to this collaborative agreement, faculty and staff at UMB/SSW:

- Developed and led a Child Welfare Performance Indicators workgroup composed of stakeholders at UMB/SSW and DHR to identify relevant data sources,
- Developed and tested definitions of all the performance indicators found in this report, and
- Developed recommendations for improving performance indicators in the future.

This report was written by faculty and staff at UMB/SSW and reviewed by administrators at DHR. The remainder of this document is organized into three primary sections:

1. Description of the data sources that were used to calculate the performance indicators.
2. Report of findings for the performance indicators outlined in the Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006.
3. Discussion of recommendations for improved outcomes measurement in the future.

A companion report is available that presents other work of the QA Collaborative in 2007. The second report includes a critical evaluation of QA processes in Maryland and recommendations for improvement. For more information see *Child Welfare Accountability: Evaluating Quality Assurance Processes in Maryland*.

# Child Welfare Accountability

*Annual Report of the Maryland Performance Indicators*

## Methods for Calculating Maryland's Child Welfare Performance Indicators

The Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006, defined by HB-799 and SB-792, specified a set of performance indicators that relate to four categories of child welfare practice:

1. Child abuse and neglect,
2. Protecting children in out-of-home care from abuse and neglect,
3. Permanency and stability of children in out-of-home care, and
4. Addressing the health, mental health, and education and well-being of children in out-of-home care.

Part of UMB/SSW's responsibility in the Quality Assurance Collaborative was to provide consultation and guidance on the performance indicators for child welfare as specified in this bill. UMB/SSW developed and led a Child Welfare Accountability Performance Indicators Workgroup whose main task was to identify data sources to fulfill reporting requirements. This section outlines the data sources that were used to define performance indicators and offers cautions and caveats to interpret findings.

### Baseline Population-Level Data

After a thorough assessment of the performance indicators required by the Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006, the Performance Indicators Workgroup concluded that the best sources for providing baseline performance indicators from which the state of Maryland can measure performance and outcomes over time were 2005 data available from Maryland's Client Information System (CIS) and Foster Care and Child Tracking System (FACTS) data systems. Because progress will be measured relative to baseline figures it is critical that baseline measurements are accurate. Data conversion challenges between the legacy systems (CIS and FACTS) to the Children's Electronic Social Services Information Exchange (CHESSIE) system make the legacy systems the most reliable sources for calculating baseline indicators of performance. While there are limitations of using data describing child welfare clients and services as of December 2005 (i.e., the most recent data available statewide from CIS and FACTS), it is a reasonable benchmark for measuring the impact of child welfare reforms in Maryland since the Child Welfare Accountability Act passed in the winter of 2006. DHR staff, data administrators, and other collaborators are working to insure that in the future that information in CHESSIE accurately presents information about the services received and outcomes achieved by children and families served by the child welfare system in Maryland.

## **In-Depth Sample-Level Quality Assurance Data**

In addition to the 2005 CIS and FACTS data that provide baseline performance indicators for Maryland's entire child welfare population, the Social Services Administration's Quality Assurance team has conducted an in-depth review of a sample of cases in 2007. Data from the onsite Maryland Child and Family Services Reviews (MD-CFSR) and Local Supervisory Review (LSR) have been analyzed and integrated into this report to respond to some items that could not be calculated using population-level data.

**MD-CFSR** data were collected during onsite case record reviews conducted in 11 jurisdictions: Allegany, Anne Arundel, Carroll, Dorchester, Garrett, Harford, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, Washington, and Baltimore City. Three to five in-home and out-of-home cases were randomly selected from each jurisdiction for a total of six to ten cases in each sample, depending on the size of the child welfare population in that jurisdiction. A total of 80 cases were reviewed by a two-member team using a Maryland-specific version of the federal CFSR case record review instrument. All indicators in the MD-CFSR pertain to child safety, permanency, and well-being. The MD-CFSR case record review includes twenty-three items and seven outcomes—items are rated as a Strength or Area Needing Improvement, outcomes are rated as Substantially Achieved, Partially Achieved, or Not Achieved. There are no missing MD-CFSR data because site leaders reviewed each case to verify that all applicable items were completed for each case.

**LSR** data are coded by supervisors on a monthly basis. LSR is an ongoing process that began in January, 2007. Supervisors receive a sample of two in-home and two out-of-home cases to review using the *Local Supervisory, Peer, and Citizens Review Instrument for Child Welfare Services*. Supervisors respond *yes*, *no*, or *not applicable* to over 200 items that assesses compliance with state and federal regulations in hard copy and mail the completed instrument to DHR. UMB/SSW entered the data into statistical management software for analysis. As of December 2007, a total of 464 reviews from all 24 jurisdictions were completed and entered into the data set for use in this report.

## **Cautions and Caveats**

Before discussing the findings in detail, it is important to consider how the information was gathered and how the values were calculated.

### *CIS and FACTS*

Administrative data systems were originally designed for program management purposes and not for calculating performance measures. Thus, information is not always recorded in these systems in ways best suited for constructing outcome indicators. All methods used for constructing indicator values are presented so that readers will interpret findings in the context of any relevant limitations.

For both CIS and FACTS data systems, data were entered primarily by data entry staff, not directly by workers. In the majority of cases, the separation of casework and data entry resulted in a delay between when an event occurred and entry of related data into the system. For example, the CIS-based indicators were calculated primarily using the December 2005 end-of-month file, the last month before jurisdictions began converting to CHESSIE. However, because events that occurred in the last few weeks of December 2005 may not have been entered before the end-of-month file was created, research staff had to look forward to other months in 2006 to fill in missing data.

### *MD-CFSR and LSR*

Quality assurance activities are designed to provide an in-depth review of a sample of in-home and out-of-home cases as a means of improving overall system performance. Collection of in-depth qualitative indicators of child welfare service performance necessarily limits the size of the sample. Thus, although cases are randomly selected from the population, the overall sample sizes are not sufficient to ensure that the findings represent the population of children from which these samples are drawn.

Case record reviews for the onsite MD-CFSR are subject to careful scrutiny by experienced staff, and we can be confident of the ratings obtained in the MD-CFSR process. Though the ratings for individual cases are solid, the modest sample sizes prevent generalization to the larger population.

Data obtained through the LSR is less reliable due to challenges with the LSR instrument and data collection system. A full discussion of these challenges and plans to rectify them is provided in the companion report, *Child Welfare Accountability, Evaluating Quality Assurance Processes in Maryland*. For the purpose of this report, there are two main concerns. First, although all jurisdictions should have each completed 28 instruments for inclusion in this report, completion rates for each jurisdiction ranged from 7% to 104%. Appendix B summarizes the number of LSR cases received for each jurisdiction. Second, there is a large amount of missing data in "completed" instruments where supervisors did not rate certain items or items were not applicable in the selected cases. Differential response rates by jurisdiction and large amounts of missing data suggest the possibility for bias. Non-random bias can reduce the precision of the results.

With these cautions in mind, findings from sample-level quality assurance sources should not be generalized to the larger population of children served throughout the state.

It should also be noted that, even with the recommended data sources, there are a few indicators listed in the Child Welfare Accountability Act that must be reported with slight modifications or special considerations based on data constraints. Measurement issues with individual indicators are discussed throughout the narrative and should be considered when interpreting the results. The final section of the report provides a discussion of legislatively mandated indicators and recommendations for improving performance indicators.

# Child Welfare Accountability

*Annual Report of the Maryland Performance Indicators*

## Child Welfare Accountability Performance Indicators

This section presents findings for the indicators outlined in the Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 and when data were available, additional indicators were also constructed. Methods for constructing each indicator value are presented to aid interpretation of results.

### §5-1303. Child Abuse and Neglect

The first set of indicators concern child abuse and neglect. The Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 addresses the following items:

1. Recurrence of abuse or neglect
2. Supervisory review of screened out cases
3. Maltreatment of children remaining in the home after CPS investigation
4. Timeliness of CPS investigations
5. Service provision and safety outcomes for indicated and unsubstantiated cases of abuse and neglect.

The first two indicators concern the recurrence of child abuse or neglect among victims of indicated abuse and neglect. It is important to note that there are variations in the terms used for Child Protective Services (CPS) investigations and their dispositions. Most importantly for the present context, Maryland's terms differ from those used at the Federal level (see Table 1). For this reason, the indicators focusing on the recurrence of abuse or neglect include investigations where the conclusion in Maryland's administrative data system was either "indicated" or "unsubstantiated".

<b>Federal term – NCANDS</b>	<b>Maryland term – CIS</b>
Substantiated	Indicated
Indicated	Unsubstantiated
Unsubstantiated	Ruled out

*§5-1303.1. Recurrence of abuse or neglect*

<b>Indicator §5-1303.1a:</b> "The recurrence within 12 months of child abuse or neglect among victims of indicated abuse and neglect."	9.0%
<b>Indicator §5-1303.1b:</b> "The recurrence within 6 months of child abuse or neglect among victims of indicated abuse and neglect."	5.1%

Calendar year 2005 was chosen as the baseline year. The sample used to measure this indicator consisted of children who were victims of indicated or unsubstantiated child abuse or neglect whose investigations closed during CY2004 and who were younger than 17 years of age on the day the investigation closed. Of these 13,502 children, 9.0% (n=1,221) were recorded as victims on a subsequent indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect investigation which opened within 12 months of the original investigation closure date (i.e., between January 2004 and December 2005).<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the indicator required by the CWAA, the Child Welfare Performance Indicators Workgroup felt it was relevant to report a modified version of §5-1303. This modified version has a 6-month follow-up period to correspond with the Federal performance measure. The sample was chosen to be nearly identical to the sample chosen for indicator §5-1303.1, except that the age qualification was increased to children who were younger than 17.5 on the day the investigation closed, to examine closures that occurred between 7/1/2004 and 6/30/2005. Of these 13,567 children, 5.1% (n=687) were found to be recorded as victims on a subsequent indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect investigation which opened within 6 months of the original investigation closure date.<sup>2</sup>

On the recurrence of abuse or neglect indicator, Maryland meets and slightly exceeds the national standard for the absence of maltreatment recurrence. The national standard is 94.6%; in Maryland 94.9% of children who were victims of indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect between July 2004 and June 2005 did not have a recurrence in the following six months.

*§5-1303.2. Supervisory Review of Screened Out Cases*

<b>Indicator §5-1303.2:</b> "The percentage of screened out reports that are documented as reviewed by a supervisor."	Cannot report on this indicator at this time
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Maryland has never tracked whether or not supervisors review cases. However, under current practice, supervisors must review each case before it can be screened out. Although there are no available data sources to analyze for this indicator, theoretically, current policy and practice suggests that 100% of screened out cases should be reviewed by a supervisor. There is no comparable federal indicator for this measure.

*§5-1303.3. Maltreatment of Children Remaining in the Home after CPS Investigation*

<b>Indicator §5-1303.3:</b> "The incidence of child abuse or neglect for a child who, in the prior 12 months, was not removed from the home following an investigation that found indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect"	9.0%
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Using CY2005 as the baseline year, the sample used to measure this indicator consisted of children who were victims of indicated or unsubstantiated child abuse or neglect in an investigation which closed during CY2004, who were younger than 17 years of age on the day the investigation closed, and who were not placed in out-of-home care within 30 days of the investigation closure. Of these 13,435 children, 9.0% (n=1,198) were recorded as victims on a subsequent indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect investigation which opened within 12 months of the original investigation closure date. <sup>3</sup>

*§5-1303.4. Timeliness of CPS Investigations*

<b>Indicator §5-1303.4:</b> "The percentage of child protective services investigations that are initiated and completed in accordance with §5-706."	
completed within 10 days	5.6%
completed within 30 days	26.9%
completed within 60 days	70.5%
<i>Note:</i> The percentages displayed in this table are not meant to be totaled as the categories are not mutually exclusive. The completed within 30 days category contains investigations completed within 10 days as well as investigations completed between 11 and 30 days.	

The guidelines provided in §5-706 require that child protective services investigations are initiated within 24 hours for reports of abuse and within 5 days for reports of neglect. In addition, it is stated that:

*"To the extent possible, an investigation...shall be completed within 10 days after receipt of the first notice of the suspected abuse or neglect by the local department or law enforcement agencies (g)(1). An investigation...which is not completed within 30 days shall be completed within 60 days of receipt of the first notice of the suspected abuse or neglect (g)(2)."*

The data in CIS only recorded the date an investigation was opened and the date an investigation was closed. Therefore, it is impossible to measure the time between when an allegation is reported and when an investigation is initiated. In addition, investigations resulting in a disposition of "ruled out" are expunged from the system after 120 days from the original investigation start date. As a result, only time to completion for investigations that opened between 9/3/2005 and 12/31/2005 can be measured. Records of investigations that began in this period but had not yet ended by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005 were explored in several 2006 data files to code missing closing date information.

Overall, there were 8,080 records of investigations that began between 9/3/2005 and 12/31/2005. Of these, 21 records had a closing date in the system that was invalid (i.e. it was in the future). In addition, 1,303 were missing a closing date in all files. When these are excluded from the analyses, 5.6% (n=379) of the remaining 6,756 investigations were closed within 10 days of the date the investigation opened, according to CIS. A little more than one quarter (26.9%, n=1,814) were completed within 30 days of the date the investigation opened, and seven out of ten (70.5%, n=4,764) were completed within 60 days. Nearly all (98.8%, n=6,675) were completed within 120 days of the date the investigation opened, with an average and median time to completion of 50 days (mean=50.09, median=50.00).<sup>4</sup>

*§5-1303.5. Service Provision and Safety Outcomes for Indicated and Unsubstantiated Cases of Abuse and Neglect*

<b>Indicator §5-1303.5:</b> "For all indicated and unsubstantiated cases of abuse and neglect, the percentage of children who: a) receive family preservation services; and b) are able to remain safely in their own homes for 18 months after receiving family preservation services."	
a) Children who receive Family Preservation Services (FPS)	7.4%
b) Receive FPS & remain safely in their homes for 18 months	75.2%
c) Do not receive FPS & remain safely in their homes for 18 months	83.5%

The fifth indicator concerning child abuse and neglect focuses on children who receive Family Preservation Services.<sup>5</sup> The sample used to measure this indicator consisted of children who were victims of indicated or unsubstantiated child abuse or neglect in an investigation which closed between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004, who were younger than 16.5 years of age on the day the investigation closed, and who were NOT placed in out-of-home care within 30 days of the investigation closure. Of these 12,440 children, 7.4% (n=924) received Family Preservation Services within 30 days of the investigation start date.<sup>6</sup>

Part B of this indicator ("are able to remain safely in their own homes for 18 months after receiving Family Preservation Services") is somewhat difficult to measure with existing data sources. Because CIS tracks if the child is a victim on a subsequent child abuse or neglect investigation and if the child is placed in out-of-home care, Part B of this indicator is defined in the negative. Of those children who received Family Preservation Services, 75.2% were not victims on a subsequent indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect investigation nor were they placed in out-of-home care within 18 months of the original investigation closure date.

In order to provide some context for this indicator, the same information is presented for the 11,516 children who were victims of indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect, but did not receive Family Preservation Services within 30 days of the investigation begin date. Among these children, 83.5% were not victims on a subsequent indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect investigation nor were they placed in out-of-home care in the 18 months after the original investigation closed.

Without more context or information about these cases, it is difficult to know how to interpret this indicator. By definition, Family Preservation Services are provided for families at highest risk of out-of-home placement. Based on this fact alone, children in families who receive Family Preservation Services would be at higher risk for subsequent maltreatment and out-of-home placement than children whose families do not receive such services.

The fact that this indicator includes an 18-month time period also creates problems for interpretation. The first two indicators concerning Abuse and Neglect are based on 6- and 12-month periods. If we consider those who did not have a subsequent indicator or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect as having remained safely in their home, then the comparable six and twelve month figures are 94.9% and 91.0%, respectively.

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### Notes on Child Abuse and Neglect

<sup>1</sup> There were an additional 79 records of indicated or unsubstantiated child abuse or neglect investigations which closed in CY2004 where the victim was missing a date of birth, so it was impossible to know whether they were younger than 17 at the time the investigation closed (and therefore, whether they were under 18 and eligible for child protective services during the entire follow-up period). Of these, 1 individual was a victim of a subsequent indicated or unsubstantiated instance of abuse or neglect. Regardless of whether these records are included in the indicator or not, the recurrence rate remains 9.0%.

<sup>2</sup> There were an additional 96 records of indicated or unsubstantiated child abuse or neglect investigations which closed between 7/1/04 and 6/30/05 where the victim was missing a date of birth, so it was impossible to know whether they were younger than 17.5 at the time the investigation closed. Of these, none were found to be a victim of a subsequent indicated or unsubstantiated instance of abuse or neglect. If these records are included in the measure, the recurrence rate drops to 5.0% (n=687/13,663).

<sup>3</sup> There were an additional 79 records of indicated or unsubstantiated child abuse or neglect investigations which closed in CY2004 where the victim was missing a date of birth, so it was impossible to know whether they were younger than 17 at the time the investigation closed (and therefore, whether they were under 18 and eligible for child protective services during the entire follow-up period). Of these, 1 individual was a victim of a subsequent indicated or unsubstantiated instance of abuse or neglect. If these records are included in the indicator, the recurrence rate decreases slightly to 8.9% (n=1,199/13,356).

<sup>4</sup> If the 1,303 records missing a closing date are included in these calculations, the percentages of investigations completed within 10 days, 30 days, and 60 days decrease to 4.7%, 22.5%, and 59.1%, respectively. Including these records would, in effect, presume that all of these investigations were not completed in 60 days or less. In fact, we do not know when these investigations were completed and in all likelihood at least a portion of them met the designated timeframes.

<sup>5</sup> In calculating this indicator, we include all Families Now and Intensive Family Services (program codes 03C1, 03C2, 03C3, 03C4, 03C5, 03C6, 05C1, 05C2, and 05N1).

<sup>6</sup> There were an additional 76 records of indicated or unsubstantiated child abuse or neglect investigations which closed in the time period where the victim was missing a date of birth, so it was impossible to know whether they were younger than 16 ½ years at the time the investigation closed (and therefore, whether they were under 18 and eligible for child protective services during the entire follow-up period). Of these, none received Family Preservation Services and none was a victim of a subsequent indicated or unsubstantiated instance of abuse or neglect. If these records are included in the calculations, the indicator values remain the same.

## §5-1304. Protecting Children in Out-of-Home Care from Abuse and Neglect

The second set of indicators concern protecting children in out-of-home care from abuse and neglect. The Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 includes the following items:

1. Abuse or neglect of children in state custody
2. Abuse or neglect after release from out-of-home care

### *§5-1304.1. Abuse or Neglect of Children in State Custody*

<b>Indicator §5-1304.1:</b> "The incidence of indicated or unsubstantiated findings of child abuse or neglect of children in the custody of a local department, or a placement agency, for out-of-home placements"		
	<b>As Measured with CIS</b>	<b>Corrected and Extrapolated</b>
% of out-of-home placement episodes	2.1%	0.49%
% of children in out-of-home placements	2.7%	0.63%

Measuring the occurrence of abuse or neglect of children in out-of-home care with administrative data is challenging because reports that occur during a placement may actually be retrospective. Research reveals that reporting of additional abuse and neglect incidents that occurred at home is not uncommon among children in out-of-home care. Garnier and Poertner (2000) found that 25% of allegations occurring after a child is in out-of-home care are actually retrospective. That is, retrospective allegations mean that a child was maltreated prior to placement but did not disclose until they were in a safe environment. In order to have an accurate understanding of abuse and neglect in out-of-home care, it is critical to know the relationship of the maltreater to the child. This is necessary to minimize the risk of mistakenly attributing retrospective allegations to maltreatment that occurred while in out-of-home care.

Previous attempts to assess the occurrence of abuse or neglect of children in out-of-home care have noted that the CIS was not originally designed to track the maltreater. Thus, it was impossible to know if investigations of abuse or neglect that begin during an out-of-home placement concern incidents perpetuated by the out-of-home caregiver (e.g., foster parent or facility staff) or events that occurred while the child was still living at home, but were reported after the child was in state custody. Although methods for designating a maltreater in an abuse or neglect investigation were eventually adopted, the recording of this information in CIS was not consistent. According to the 2002 Statewide Assessment that was part of Maryland's Children and Family Services Review (CFSR), in 2002, almost 85% of victims in the child file submitted to the Federal government were not associated with any perpetrators. There are similar problems with missing data in the CY2005 CIS data.

To calculate the indicator for this baseline report, research staff first identified all episodes of out-of-home care in CY2005 where the child was less than 18 years of

age. In 2.1% of these episodes (n = 16,353), the child was determined to be the victim in an indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect investigation that began in CY2005 and while the child was in out-of-home care. Because children can have multiple out-of-home placements in a given year, the same measure was calculated at the child level (n = 12,594). In CY2005, 2.7% children in out-of-home care were a victim in CY2005 and while the child was in state custody or a placement agency.

Theoretically, retrospective reports would be more likely to occur shortly after the child enters out-of-home placement. Among the indicated and unsubstantiated child abuse and neglect investigations occurring for children in out-of-home care in CY2005, 16.2% began within 7 days of the out-of-home placement and almost one-quarter (24.0%) began within 30 days. When investigations that began within 7 days of placement were excluded from the analysis, the value for out-of-home episodes decreased to 1.8% and the value for children in care dropped to 2.3%.

It is also important to note that because there was no requirement to identify a maltreater for CPS investigations in CIS, it is impossible to know if the abuse or neglect was perpetuated by an out-of-home caregiver (e.g., foster parent or facility staff). For the 346 indicated or unsubstantiated abuse and neglect investigations included in this indicator, 69 (19.9%) had a perpetrator identified in CIS. The relationship codes for the victim and the maltreater suggest that 16 of the 69 (23.2%) investigations concerned abuse or neglect on the part of the out-of-home care provider. If we extrapolate that 23.2% to the full 346 indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect investigations, the indicator value for all out-of-home episodes would be 0.49% and the value for children in care would be 0.63%.

By the extrapolated measure, Maryland is not meeting the national standard of 99.68% for the percent of children in foster care who were not victims of unsubstantiated or indicated maltreatment by foster parents or facility staff members. Caution should be used, however, in interpreting the extrapolated indicator value because of the large number of investigations that are missing maltreater information.

### *§5-1304.2. Abuse or Neglect after Release from Out-of-Home Care*

<b>Indicator §5-1304.2:</b> "The incidence of indicated or unsubstantiated findings of child abuse or neglect within 12 months following the release of the child committed to the department"	5.1%
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For the second indicator concerning the safety of children in out-of-home care, CIS was used to identify all children under age 17 who exited out-of-home care or aftercare in CY2004. Among these 5,955 children, 5.1% were the victim in an indicated or unsubstantiated child abuse or neglect investigation in the 12 months following their out-of-home or aftercare exit. Notably, this "maltreatment recurrence" rate is almost half of that for the entire population of children with a previous indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect finding.

## **§5-1305. Permanency and Stability of Children in Out-of-Home Care**

The third set of indicators concern permanency and stability for children in out-of-home care. The Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 includes the following items:

1. Time to exit from out-of-home care
2. Multiple placements during over a one-year period
3. Placement with siblings
4. Exits from out-of-home care
5. Placement type
6. Number of available foster homes and treatment foster homes
7. Regulation of foster and kinship homes
8. Re-entry into out-of-home care

Instead of moving chronologically through the indicators as laid out in the Act (according to the numbers above), the indicators in this section are re-organized to increase readability and interpretation by grouping similar indicators together. Characteristics of the placement are presented first, including placement type, placement with siblings, and number of placements. Characteristics of exit, including type of permanency, time to exit, and re-entry are presented second. Finally, the number of resource family homes and their regulation are presented.

*§5-1305.5. Out-of-Home Placement Type*

<b>Indicator §5-1305.5: "The percent of children living in out-of-home placement..." by placement type on January 1, 2005</b>	<b>%</b>
Trial Home Visit	3.7
Kinship Care	33.3
Restricted Foster Homes	5.6
Regular Foster Homes	16.9
Treatment Foster Homes	14.7
Group Homes	13.9
Adoptive Homes	1.7
Other Placements	10.2

There were 10,281 children in care on January 1, 2005. This number includes all children in care on that date excluding children who are identified as having an active record due to Post-finalization Subsidized Adoptive Placement (Payment Only), Supportive Services Post Finalization or Kinship Care Aftercare.

Type of out-of-home placement was determined using the living arrangement type field in the FACTS data system, as follows:

- *Trial home visits* are identified as children living with their parents while still in care (n=380).
- *Kinship care* includes children in relative foster homes and children identified as living with relatives (n=3,423).
- *Restricted foster homes* include emergency foster homes and restricted DSS foster homes (n=576).
- *Regular foster homes* include regular DSS foster homes and private agency foster homes (n=1,734).
- Children in *treatment foster homes* are identified from the code for treatment foster homes (n=1,511).
- *Group homes* include both shelter group care and group care (n=1,427).
- The *adoptive homes* category includes the codes for relative adoptive family, foster adoptive family, and regular adoptive family (n=179).
- The *other placements* category includes: Regular Guardian Home; State Institutional Care; Incarcerated; Legal Risk Placement; Independent Living; Runaway; Semi-Independent Living; Private Treatment Facility; and Other (n=1,051).

*§5-1305.2. Multiple Placements in a One-Year Period*

<b>Indicator §5-1305.2:</b> "The percentage of children with more than two out-of-home placements during a report year"	Cannot accurately report using administrative data at this time
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Due to limitations of the FACTS and CIS data systems, it was determined that the results of the placement stability measure would not accurately represent placement stability in Maryland. The FACTS data system was designed to be updated each time a child had a change in placement setting, this in turn would cause the placement counter to increment. However, not all placement moves triggered an updated FACTS record. Anecdotal discussions with personnel in various jurisdictions suggested that children in purchase of care placements could move multiple times within the same organization and not trigger a new FACTS record.

<b>QA Indicator:</b> "Percent of children in 'stable' placements"	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Margin of Error</b>
<b>MD-CFSR</b>	42	95.2	6%
<b>LSR</b>	228	96.5	2%

In light of challenges with administrative data, the Child Welfare Performance Indicators Workgroup recommended analyzing sample-level quality assurance data. Quality Assurance data collected through the MD-CFSR and Local Supervisory Review offer an approximation of placement stability among a sample of children in out-of-home care. Results should be interpreted with caution given the small sample size and large amount of missing data in the LSR.

Item 6 of the MD-CFSR assesses whether the child is in a stable placement at the time of the review and whether any placement changes were in the best interest of the child and consistent with achieving the child's permanency goal. As such, this indicator provides a deeper understanding of placement changes among a small sample of cases. In a sample of 42 cases from 10 jurisdictions, 95% had a stable placement and any placement moves were in the child's best interest. This estimate is subject to a 6% margin of error. Case review indicators are in compliance with first-round CFSR standards when 85% of cases reviewed are rated a "strength". Our sample is in compliance with first-round CFSR standards.

Item 17 in the Local Supervisory Review asks supervisors to identify whether or not the current placement is "stable". In a sample of 228 cases reviewed by an out-of-home supervisor, 97% were in a stable placement. This estimate is subject to a 2% margin of error.

*§5-1305.3. Placement with Siblings*

<b>Indicator §5-1305.3:</b> "The percentage of children in custody of a local department or placement agency who have siblings living in different placements"	Cannot accurately report using administrative data at this time
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Due to limitations of the FACTS and CIS data systems it was determined that the results of an analysis of siblings living together would not be accurate. Neither FACTS nor CIS has an effective mechanism for examining siblings placed together. The CHESSIE data system will have the means to explore whether siblings are residing together in child welfare supervised out-of-home care.

<b>QA Indicators:</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Margin of Error</b>
<b>MD-CFSR:</b> Reasonable efforts to place siblings together when appropriate	19	100.0	
<b>LSR Cases with siblings</b> Placed with siblings	117	54.7	9%
<b>LSR Cases with siblings not placed together</b> Clinical or compelling reason for separation	68	88.2	8%
Reasonable efforts to place siblings together	60	93.3	6%

Due to challenges in using administrative data to accurately assess sibling placement, the Child Welfare Performance Indicators Workgroup recommended analyzing sample-level quality assurance data to assess this indicator. Quality Assurance data collected through the MD-CFSR and Local Supervisory Review offer additional information about the placement of siblings in out-of-home care. Results should be interpreted with caution given the small sample size and large amount of missing data in the LSR.

Item 12 of the MD-CFSR assesses whether "concerted efforts were made to ensure that siblings in out-of-home care are placed together, unless separation is necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings". In a sample of 19 cases from 10 jurisdictions where the child had a sibling in out-of-home care, concerted efforts were made to place siblings together unless the separation was clinically necessary in all cases. Estimates of 100% do not allow for a margin of error by standard computational methods, but it is clear that 19 cases cannot adequately represent placement decisions made statewide. Case review indicators are in compliance with first-round CFSR standards when 85% of cases reviewed are rated a "strength." Our sample is in compliance with first-round CFSR standards.

Item 34 of the Local Supervisory Review asks supervisors to rate whether children are placed with other siblings in out-of-home care. Follow-up questions inquire whether "reasonable efforts were made to place siblings together" or there was a "clinical or compelling reason for the separation". In a sample of 117 cases across the state, 55% of siblings (n=64) were placed together. When siblings were not placed together, there was a clinical or compelling reason for the separation in 88% of cases. Workers made reasonable efforts to place siblings together in 93% cases.

*§5-1305.4. Exits from Out-Of-Home Care*

<b>Indicator §5-1305.4a:</b> "The percentage of children who exit state custody..." by exit type Calendar Year 2005	
<b>Type of Exit</b>	<b>%</b>
Reunification*	42.4
Adoption Finalized	17.5
Relative Guardian	14.4
Non-Relative Guardian	1.1
All Other	24.6
*Reunification is defined as an exit reason of 'Return to Parents' or 'Court ordered return to parents'	

According to the FACTS data system there were 3,774 exits from the Maryland Child Welfare System in calendar year 2005<sup>7</sup>. Most exits were to reunification (n=1,600), followed by "all other" (n=928), finalized adoption (n=662), relative guardian (n=542), and non-relative guardian (n=42).

It is useful to examine trends over time for exits from child welfare. The table below illustrates that the distribution of children exiting to reunification or a finalized adoption have remained relatively consistent over the past several years.

<b>Indicator §5-1303.4b:</b> "The percentage of children who exit state custody..." by exit type and Calendar Year of exit						
<b>Type of Exit</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Reunification	42.9	39.7	40.7	34.7	40.4	42.4
Adoption Finalized	16.6	20.8	22.0	19.5	19.6	17.5
Relative Guardian	21.7	19.5	15.9	15.1	16.0	14.4
Non-Relative Guardian	1.4	1.2	0.5	1.1	1.2	1.1
All Other	17.4	18.8	20.9	29.7	22.7	24.6
*Reunification is defined as an exit reason of 'Return to Parents' or 'Court ordered return to parents'						

### *§5-1305.1. Time to Exit from Out-Of-Home Care*

§5-1305.1 refers to the national standards for time periods to achieve permanency through reunification and adoption. Standards have not yet been defined for the national indicators, so comparisons are made to the national median to evaluate Maryland's performance (NRCCWDT, 2007).

#### **Exits to Reunification**

<b>Federal measure C1.1:</b> Of all children discharged from out-of-home care to reunification in CY 2005 who had been in out-of-home care for 8 days or longer, what percent were reunified in less than 12 months from the date of latest removal from home?	54.9%
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In calendar year 2005 there were 1,600 children exiting to reunification (reunification is defined as an exit reason of 'Return to Parents' or 'Court ordered return to parents'). Of these 1,600 exits, 249 were within 7 days of entry, leaving a total of 1,351 exits where the child had been in foster care for 8 days or longer. Of the 1,351 children in out-of-home care 8 days or longer, 54.9% (n=742) reunified within 12 months. The median national score on this measure is 69.9% with percentages ranging from 44.3 to 92.5%.

<b>Federal measure C1.3:</b> Of all children who entered foster care for the first time in the 6-month period just prior to calendar year 2005, and who remained in foster care for 8 days or longer, what percent were discharged from foster care to reunification in less than 12 months from the date of latest removal from home?	28.0%
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In the six month period immediately preceding calendar year 2005 (July 1, 2004 through December 31, 2004) there were 1,204 children first entering out-of-home care in Maryland. Reunification can include return to parents or other relatives, and is defined using exit reasons of return to parent, court ordered return to parents, and custody and guardianship to relative (NCRCCWDT, 2007). Of these children, 28% exited to reunification (n=337). The national median on this indicator is 39.4% with percentages ranging from 17.7 to 68.9%.

**Exits to Adoption**

<b>Federal measure C2.1:</b> Of all children who were discharged from foster care to adoption during calendar year 2005, what percent were discharged in less than 24 months from the most recent placement date?	
<b>Pre-adoptive placement.</b> Of all children who moved into a pre-adoptive placement during calendar year 2005, what percent were placed in less than 24 months from the date of the latest removal from home?	19.9%
<b>Finalized adoption.</b> Of all children who were discharged from out-of-home care to a finalized adoption during calendar year 2005, what percent were discharged in less than 24 months from the date the child started the adoptive placement?	73.0%

In Maryland, children can be placed in pre-adoptive homes and remain in the custody of the local department. This indicator cannot be computed as defined because data constraints do not allow children’s placement history to be linked with pre-adoptive placements or finalized adoptions in FACTS. There is no way to know the full trajectory of all children who exited to adoption. The information presented here is inherently biased and should be interpreted with caution.

In light of these data constraints, two alternatives are offered. One is the time to placement in a pre-adoptive home after removal from the family. The other is the time to finalized adoption after placement in a pre-adoptive home. There are no comparable federal standards for these indicators.

In calendar year 2005, 519 children moved into an adoptive placement. Of these 519 children, 20% (n=103) entered an adoptive placement within 24 months of latest removal from the home.

In calendar year 2005, 662 children exited to a finalized adoption. Of these 662 children, 73% (n=483) had their adoption finalized within 24 months of opening the adoptive placement.

<b>Federal measure C2.3.</b> Of all children in foster care on the first day of the 12-month target period who were in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, what percent were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption by the last day of the 12 month target period?	Cannot report on this indicator at this time
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De-linking adoptive placements from the original out-of-home placement records for a child limits the ability to calculate federal measure C2.3. The adoptive placement record only has information from the start of the adoptive placement, which would make the placement appear to be much shorter in duration. Historical information for this child (the information prior to the movement into an adoptive placement) can not be administratively linked to the adoptive placement records by the state without receiving information from each jurisdiction.

### Exits to a permanent home before age 18

<b>Federal measure C3.1:</b> Of all children who were in foster care for 24 months or longer on the first day of calendar year 2005, what percent were discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18 <sup>th</sup> birthday by the end of the calendar year?	8.4%
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There were 5,356 children in care on January 1, 2005 who were under the age of 18 and had been in out-of-home care for 24 months or longer.<sup>8</sup> Of these children, 8.4% (n=452) were discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and by the end of the calendar year. Permanent homes are defined as exit to reunification, guardianship, and finalized adoption.

Because some children who exit to an adoptive placement via a finalized adoption do so within the calendar year, they are not counted in this measure and the estimate is biased downward. Including exits to adoptive placements increases the number of children exiting to 859 and the overall percent of children exiting care to permanency prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to 16.0%. However, the 16% estimate is likely to be too high as all of the children moving to an adoptive placement will not finalize adoption during the calendar year. Without being able to link adoptive placements and their out-of-home history prior to the adoptive placement, this measure is difficult to accurately assess.

The federal guidelines for this measure list a national median of 25% with a range of values from 8.1 to 35.3%. Maryland is below the national median.

<b>Federal measure C3.2:</b> Of all children who were discharged from out-of-home care in Calendar Year 2005 who were legally free for adoption at the time of discharge, what percent were discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18 <sup>th</sup> birthday?	90.4%
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Federal measure C3.2 assesses the movement towards permanency for children who have been identified as legally free for adoption. Children were considered legally free if there was a termination of parental rights date listed for the mother<sup>9</sup>. Permanent homes were defined as finalized adoption, reunification and guardianship.

656 children were identified as legally free for adoption at exit in calendar year 2005<sup>10</sup>. 90% of these children (n=593) exited to permanency prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Permanent homes are defined as exit to reunification, guardianship, and finalized adoption.

The federal guidelines indicate a national median of 96.8%, with percentages ranging from 84.9 to 100% of children achieving permanency prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

*§5-1305.8. Re-Entry into Out-of-home Care*

<b>Indicator §5-1305.8:</b> “The number [percent] of children who are recommitted to the Department within 12 months of release from commitment to the Department”	11.4%
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For this indicator, CIS was used to identify all children under age 17 who exited out-of-home care or aftercare in CY2004. Among these 5,955 children, 11.4% (n=1,094) began another episode of out-of-home care within 12 months of their out-of-home care or aftercare exit.

*§5-1305.6. Number of Available Foster and Treatment Foster Homes*

The Child Welfare Performance Indicators Workgroup determined there are no statewide or sample-level data systems that capture this information at baseline. The number of available foster and treatment foster homes will be available in future reporting periods.

*§5-1305.7. Regulation of Foster and Treatment Foster Homes*

<b>Indicator §5-1305.7:</b> “The percentage foster homes and kinship care homes in which the following have been conducted according to regulation:”			
	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Margin of Error</b>
a. required criminal background checks	36	91.7	9%
b. initial fire safety inspection	28	85.7	13%
c. initial health and sanitation inspection	28	85.7	13%
d. annual reconsideration for compliance with standards for safety and quality	24	95.8	8%

The Child Welfare Performance Indicators Workgroup determined that there are no statewide data systems to report on these indicators. The MD-CFSR case record review does not assess compliance with regulations, except to ensure that the local department is working to assure the safety of children in care. Items in the Well-Being 3 section of the Local Supervisory Review inquire about whether or not evidence of relevant checks and inspections are included in the case file of reviewed cases. While the LSR item does not directly examine the total percentage of foster and kinship homes that are inspected according to regulation, it is the best data available to construct this indicator.

In a sample of 36 cases, 92% (n=33) had evidence of criminal background checks of every adult over age 18 living in the placement home in the case record.

In a sample of 28 cases, 86% (n=24) had evidence of an initial fire safety inspection in the case record.

In a sample of 28 cases, 86% (n=24) had evidence of an initial health and sanitation inspection in the case record.

In a sample of 24 cases, 96% (n=23) had evidence of annual reconsideration for compliance with standards for safety and quality.

Estimates should be interpreted with caution. These figures are based on very small samples from a dataset with large numbers of missing or incomplete information. Margins of error are provided to estimate variation in the population.

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### **Notes on Permanency and Stability**

<sup>7</sup> Exits from out-of-home care were calculated by assessing the number of children who have an exit date corresponding to the year of interest. This is complicated by the process of de-linking adoptive placement records from a child's previous foster care experience. This de-linking leads to situations where a specific child could have multiple exits during a year (once to adoptive placement and once to finalized adoption). Additionally, there were communication issues between the CIS and FACTS data systems that did not always lead to the most relevant exit reason being utilized in FACTS. These complications will be addressed in the CHESSIE data system. The exit information above consists of any child with an exit date in Calendar Year 2005 (excluding exits to adoptive placement). Children exiting to adoptive placement are still in the care and custody of the state until the adoption has been finalized and are therefore not a true exit from the child welfare system.

<sup>8</sup> Excluding children who are identified as having an active record due to Post-finalization Subsidized Adoptive Placement - Payment Only, Supportive Services Post Finalization or Kinship Care Aftercare

<sup>9</sup> In most instances the termination of parental rights (TPR) dates for the mother and the father were on the same day, there were a number of instances where the mother had a TPR but there was not a TPR listed for the father. Instances where there is a TPR date for the mother only are included in this analysis.

<sup>10</sup> The 656 total excludes 67 children who exited to pre-adoptive placements during calendar year 2005, but remaining in the custody of the local department.

## §5-1306. Addressing the well-being of children in out-of-home care

The fourth set of indicators concern the effectiveness of efforts to address the health, mental health, education and well-being of children committed to the Department. The Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 includes the following items:

1. Comprehensive assessments,
2. Health examinations, and
3. School enrollment.

### *§5-1306.1. Comprehensive Assessments*

<b>Indicator §5-1306.1:</b> "The percentage of children in out-of-home placements who received a comprehensive assessment in compliance with federal regulations... within 60 days of entering placement"	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Margin of Error</b>
<b>LSR</b>	158	90.5	5%

Due to limitations in the data collected in FACTS, this indicator could not be estimated using population-level data. Instead, the Child Welfare Performance Indicators Workgroup recommended examining item 72 of the Local Supervisory Review. Based on a sample of 158 cases, 91% (n=142) of children received a comprehensive health evaluation within 60 days of placement in out-of-home care. The estimate is subject to a 5% margin of error. This estimate should be viewed with caution given the small sample size and large amount of missing data.

### *§5-1306.2. Health Examinations*

<b>Indicator §5-1306.2:</b> "The percentage of eligible children entering foster care or kinship care who have been examined by a medical provider within [5] days of entry"	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Margin of Error</b>
<b>LSR</b>	168	91.1	4%

Due to limitations in the data collected in FACTS, this indicator could not be estimated using population-level data. Instead, the Child Welfare Performance Indicators Workgroup recommended examining item 71 of the Local Supervisory Review. Based on a sample of 131 cases, 90% (n=118) of children received an initial health screening within five days of placement in out-of-home care. The estimate is subject to a 5% margin of error. This estimate should be viewed with caution given the small sample size and large amount of missing data.

*§5-1306.3. School Enrollment*

<b>Indicator §5-1306.3: “The percentage of school-aged children in out-of-home placements enrolled in school”</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Margin of Error</b>
<b>LSR</b>	285	96.1	2%
<b>LSR... within 5 days of entry into out-of-home placement</b>	129	89.1	5%

Due to limitations in the data collected in FACTS, this indicator could not be estimated using population-level data. Instead, the Child Welfare Performance Indicators Workgroup recommended examining item 64 of the Local Supervisory Review. Based on a sample of 285 cases, 96% (n=273) of school-aged children in out-of-home placements are enrolled in school. The estimate is subject to a 2% margin of error. Eighty-nine percent of a sub-sample of 129 children in out-of-home care (n=114) were enrolled in school within five days of entry into an out-of-home placement. These estimates should be viewed with caution given the small sample sizes and large amount of missing data.

# Child Welfare Accountability

*Annual Report of the Maryland Performance Indicators*

## Discussion of Existing Performance Indicators

The Child Welfare Performance Indicators Workgroup and faculty and staff compiling data at UMB/SSW noted several measurement issues with the performance indicators defined in the Act. Measurement issues are to be expected because identifying producible and meaningful performance indicators is a long-term process. The first stage is to identify concerns about existing indicators. In particular:

**Performance indicators required by the Child Welfare Accountability Act are defined in a manner inconsistent with the Federal performance indicators.**

Several measures discussed in the Child Welfare Accountability Act resemble the federal performance measures, but have different time frames or different language used to describe the indicator. This is problematic for two reasons. First, administrators, analysts and collaborative partners must duplicate work to monitor and respond to two separate sets of performance indicators, one for the state and one for the federal review. Second, tracking state performance indicators does not inform progress on the Federal performance indicators to which Maryland is held accountable.

**Performance indicators do not reflect all the critical decision points along a child's trajectory in child and family services.** Existing performance indicators focus on child maltreatment reports and then skip to placement outcomes without first examining placement decisions. UMB/SSW and DHR will work together, as provided for in §5-1309, to develop meaningful indicators accounting for the full breadth of child welfare services and provide a more complete picture of outcomes for children served.

**Measurement is inconsistent across indicators.** As worded in the Child Welfare Accountability Act, there are inconsistencies among measures. For example, some measures call for results presented as numbers, while others call for percentages and still others reflect the incidence. Additionally, relevant time periods, such as the number of months without a recurrence of abuse or neglect, change with each indicator making consistent interpretation difficult. Additionally, the interpretation of indicators can be challenging when the directionality of measures is not consistent - a higher figure is considered a positive outcome on some indicators, but a negative outcome on others. UMB/SSW and DHR will work together, as provided for in §5-1309, to develop meaningful indicators accounting for the full breadth of child welfare services and provide a more complete picture of outcomes for children served.

**Point-in-time indicators compare different populations of children at report, placement and exit.** While it can be informative to measure number and types of reports, placements and exits, it is difficult to track improvements over time. Both

cross-sectional and exit cohort measures are problematic for outcome measures designed to examine changes over time because children do not have an equal probability of being in the sample (Courtney et.al., 2003; Courtney et.al., 2004).

**Retrospective measures are inherently biased.** When a population is defined by an event and events that preceded the defining event are measured retrospectively, segments of the population are omitted because children have different probabilities of being selected for these types of measures. In addition, retrospective measures fail to provide the information needed for program improvement.

As an example, consider federal composite one, measure one (included as part of §5-1305 Permanency and stability of children in out of home care): *“Of all children discharged from foster care to reunification in the target 12-month period, and who had been in foster care for 8 days or longer, what percent were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home?”* There is a danger that improving system performance (moving children who have been in care for extended periods of time toward reunification) would appear to be declining performance according to the measure. This would occur because, when more children who have been in care for extended periods move to reunification the denominator becomes larger, while the numerator [reunification in less than 12 months] stays flat leading to decreased performance on the measure. A prospective analysis would not suffer from this bias because the base population would be constant (children entering care during a specific period).

**Current sample sizes for quality assurance processes are too small to make meaningful generalizations.** While random selection is an appropriate way to select an unbiased sample from the total population, it can only be a true representation of the population when the sample size is large enough to allow for generalization. Existing sample sizes must be substantially increased before any meaningful generalizations can be made to the larger population. Targeted sampling of certain kinds of cases could be implemented so there is more information from the qualitative measures.

# Child Welfare Accountability

*Annual Report of the Maryland Performance Indicators*

## Recommendations for Improvements in Future Performance Indicator Reports:

The federal measures required in the Child and Family Service Reviews were designed to answer questions related to child welfare program outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency and well-being. Performance indicators were originally developed based on the availability of data in two federal child welfare data systems: the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). Both AFCARS and NCANDS are designed to provide annual snapshots of children in care (AFCARS) or referrals to the child welfare system with a disposition code (NCANDS). Neither data system has a means of effectively linking records across multiple time periods in order to understand a child's experience over time in the child welfare system.

As a result of these data constraints, the preponderance of federally-mandated measures are either cross-sectional examinations (point in time) or exit cohort measures. There has been continuous discussion in the child welfare literature as to whether the outcome measures required by the federal government are accurate indications of overall child welfare system performance (Courtney, Needell & Wulczyn, 2003; Courtney, Needell & Wulczyn, 2004). Exit cohorts and point in time measures are important, but there is general consensus in the child welfare research community that entry cohorts are best suited for evaluations of system performance and outcome measures over time.

Nevertheless, Maryland will continue to be held accountable to federal standards. Based upon a thorough assessment of existing performance indicators and experience defining outcome measures for child welfare programs and policies, the faculty and staff at UMB/SSW recommend that in future years instead of constructing a report with an entirely different set of indicators (as currently defined in the Child Welfare Accountability Act), that the report construct indicators according to federal standards but also begin to provide more meaningful indicators using entry cohorts to measure the services provided to children and families over time and the outcomes achieved over time. The following specific recommendations are offered for improving child welfare performance indicators in Maryland in the future:

**Continue to develop CHESSE** in order to provide all indicators using population-level data that is not subject to sampling bias.

**Redefine performance indicators to match the federally-mandated performance indicators.** Track progress of Federal measures on an ongoing basis in order to provide periodic feedback on progress towards achieving improvement goals. Measure outcomes in the same way as Federal administrators will hold Maryland accountable and provide the most efficient way to prepare for re-evaluation by the USDHHS, Children's Bureau.

**Track entry cohorts over time.** Following one population of children and youth through their child welfare experiences is the single best, least biased method of measuring service receipt and outcomes (Wulczyn, 2007; Zeller & Gamble, 2007). Entry cohort analyses are being successfully utilized in Maryland to examine welfare service utilization through a partnership between SSA and UMB and should become a staple of Maryland's child welfare services measurement system.

**Examine the trajectories of children and families.** Using an entry cohort will allow Maryland to follow children from report through investigation, to in-home or out-of-home child and family services, to the outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being. Examining children's trajectory through the various levels of child welfare services is the best way to understand the effects of services on children and families.

**Explore differential outcomes for subpopulations.** Child welfare research has demonstrated differential outcomes for unique subgroups within the child welfare population. To determine whether outcomes are equal for all children and families, performance indicators should be stratified by such child demographics as age at entry, race/ethnicity, and local department (Wulczyn, 2007).

**Improve sampling strategies for quality assurance processes.** To ease the burden of increased sample size on an in-depth review of cases, quality assurance processes should be incorporated into everyday practice. With a revised supervisory review instrument in development it could be feasible for each worker to have a case reviewed as part of the local supervisory review process each month—dramatically increasing the sample size by incorporating QA data collection into standard practice. Increasing the size of MD-CFSR review teams by recruiting local community partners to serve as reviewers can increase the number of cases that can be reviewed in each jurisdiction without substantially increasing resources required for reviews.

## References

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## Appendix A: Summary of Maryland Performance Indicators

Summary of Maryland Performance Indicators		Data Source	Sample Size	%	Meets Federal Standards?
<b>§5-1303. Child abuse and neglect</b>					
1	The recurrence within 12 months of child abuse or neglect among victims of indicated abuse or neglect.	CIS	13,502	9.0	-
	The recurrence within 6 months of child abuse or neglect among victims of indicated abuse or neglect.	CIS	13,567	5.1	Yes <5.4%
2	The percentage of screened out reports of child abuse or neglect that are documented as reviewed by a supervisor.	-	-	-	-
3	The incidence of child abuse or neglect for a child who, in the prior 12 months, was not removed from the home following an investigation that found indicated or unsubstantiated abuse or neglect.	CIS	13,435	9.0	-
4	The percentage of child protective services investigations that are completed in accordance with §5-706:	CIS	6,756		
	a) completed within 10 days			5.6	-
	b) completed within 30 days			26.9	-
	c) completed within 60 days			70.5	-
5	For all indicated and un-substantiated cases of abuse and neglect, the percentage of children who	CIS	12,440		
	a) receive family preservation services			7.4	-
	b) are able to remain safely in their own homes for 18 months after receiving family preservation services			75.2	-
	c) do not receive FPS and remain safely in their homes for 18 months			83.5	-
<b>§5-1304. Protecting children in out-of-home care from abuse and neglect</b>					
1	The incidence of indicated or unsubstantiated findings of child abuse or neglect of children in the custody of a local department, or a placement agency.	CIS	12,594	2.7	No <.32%
2	The incidence of indicated or unsubstantiated findings of child abuse or neglect within 12 months following the release of a child committed to the department.	CIS	5,955	5.1	-

**Summary of Maryland Performance Indicators**

	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Meets Federal Standards?</b>	
<b>§5-1305. Permanency and stability of children in out-of-home care</b>					
1	The percentage of children who exit foster care within time periods consistent with national standards with a breakdown by each standard:				
	C1.1. Of all children discharged from out-of-home care to reunification in CY 2005 who had been in out-of-home care for 8 days or longer, what percent were reunified in less than 12 months from the date of the latest removal from home?	FACTS	1,351	54.9	Below national median 69.9%
	C1.3. Of all children who entered foster care for the first time in the 6-month period just prior to CY 2005, and who remained in foster care for 8 days or longer, what percent were discharged from foster care to reunification in less than 12 months from latest removal?	FACTS	1,204	28.0	Below national median 39.4%
	C2.1. <b>Pre-adoptive placement.</b> Of all children who moved into a pre-adoptive placement during CY 2005, what percent were placed in less than 24 months from the date of the latest removal from home?	FACTS	519	19.9	-
	C2.1. <b>Finalized adoption.</b> Of all children who were discharged from out-of-home care to a finalized adoption during CY 2005, what percent were discharged in less than 24 months from the date the child started the adoptive placement?	FACTS	662	73.0	-
	C2.3. Of all children who were in foster care on the first day of CY2005, and who were in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer, what percent were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption by the last day of CY 2005?	-	-	-	-
	C3.1. Of all children who were in foster care for 24 months or longer on the first day of CY 2005, what percent were discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18th birthday and by the end of the fiscal year?	FACTS	5,356	8.4	Below national median 25.0%
	C3.2. Of all children who were discharged from foster care in CY 2005 who were legally free for adoption at the time of discharge, what percent were discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18th birthday?	FACTS	656	90.4	Below national median 96.8%
2	The percentage of children with more than two out-of-home placements during a report year				
	MD-CFSR: percent of children in "stable" placements	MD-CFSR	42	95.2 ± 6%	Yes, >85%
	LSR: percent of children in "stable" placements	LSR	228	96.5 ± 2%	-
3	The percentage of children in the custody of a local department or placement agency who have siblings living in different placements				
	MD-CFSR: concerted efforts to place siblings when appropriate	MD-CFSR	19	100.0	Yes, >85%
	LSR: placed with siblings	LSR	117	54.7 ± 9%	-
	LSR: if not placed together, clinical or compelling reason for separation	LSR	68	88.2 ± 8%	-
	LSR: if not placed together, reasonable efforts to place siblings together	LSR	60	93.3 ± 6%	-

<b>Summary of Maryland Performance Indicators</b>					
	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Meets Federal Standards?</b>	
4	The percentage of children who exit state custody to:	FACTS	3,774		-
	Reunification			42.4	
	Finalized adoption			17.5	
	Relative guardian			14.4	
	Non-relative guardian			1.1	
	All other			24.6	
5	The percent of children in an out-of-home placement living in:	FACTS	10,281		-
	Trial home visit			3.7	
	Kinship care homes			33.3	
	Restricted foster homes			5.6	
	Regular foster homes			16.9	
	Treatment foster homes			14.7	
	Group homes			13.9	
	Residential treatment centers			1.7	
	Other specified types of placements.			10.2	
6	The number of foster homes and treatment foster homes available for children in the custody of a local department, or a placement agency.	-	-	-	-
7	The percentage of foster homes and kinship care homes in which the following have been conducted according to regulation:	LSR			
	a) required criminal background checks		36	91.7 ± 9%	-
	b) initial fire safety inspection		28	85.7 ± 13%	-
	c) initial health and sanitation inspection		28	85.7 ± 13%	-
	d) annual reconsideration for compliance with standards for safety and quality		24	95.8 ± 8%	-
8	The number of children who are recommitted to the Department within 12 months of release from commitment to the Department.	CIS/FACTS	5,955	11.4	
<b><u>§5-1306. Effectiveness of efforts to address the health, mental health, education and well-being of a child committed to the Department</u></b>					
1	The percentage of children in out-of-home placements who received a comprehensive assessment in compliance with federal regulations for the Early and Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program within 60 days of entering out-of-home placement.	LSR	158	90.5 ± 5%	-
2	The percentage of eligible children entering foster care or kinship care who have been examined by a medical provider within 10 days of entry into out-of-home placement.	LSR	168	91.1 ± 4%	-
3	The percentage of school-aged children in out-of-home placements enrolled in school.	LSR	285	96.1 ± 2%	-
	The percentage of school-aged children in out-of-home placements enrolled in school within 5 days of placement.	LSR	129	89.1 ± 5%	-

## Appendix B: Local Supervisory Review Completion Rate

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Number of cases</b>	<b>Completion Rate</b>
Allegany	28	100%
Anne Arundel	26	93%
Baltimore City	24	86%
Baltimore County	2	7%
Calvert	23	82%
Caroline	21	75%
Carroll	20	71%
Cecil	21	75%
Charles	23	82%
Dorchester	24	86%
Frederick	14	50%
Garrett	23	82%
Harford	27	96%
Howard	12	43%
Kent	28	100%
Montgomery	19	68%
Prince George's	21	75%
Queen Anne's	27	96%
Somerset	6	21%
St. Mary's	4	14%
Talbot	21	75%
Washington	29	104%
Wicomico	12	43%
Worcester	9	32%

**NOTE:** At the time of this report, each jurisdiction should have submitted 28 cases. This table only includes those cases that were completed by the jurisdiction, submitted to DHR, and entered in a database maintained by UMB/SSW by 12/3/07. Washington County submitted one extra instrument for an in-home case with two children—one for each child.