MARYLAND CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW
PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN 8th QUARTERLY REPORT

NARRATIVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Effective March 25th 2007 Maryland completed the final quarter of its 8-quarters Program Improvement Plan (PIP). The 8th quarter narrative has many accomplishments and activities that are focused on children and families, such as the design and implementation of family centered practice, improved legal and court processes, design and implementation of a quality assurance system, improved statewide access to services, and an evidence-based practice strategy.

The Three Local Departments of Social Services (DSS) (Baltimore City, Cecil and Anne Arundel Counties) identified as Phase I sites continue to implement Maryland’s Family Centered Practice Model. Staff in these counties received training and have aligned their programs with the practice model. Child Welfare policies that were reviewed, revised, and developed are being utilized to support practice changes.

During this reporting period several trainings have occurred and been conducted by the University of Maryland School of Social Work to support practice changes and to provide caseworkers, supervisors, and caregivers with information and skills on best practices in child welfare. Some of the training topics are: “Risk-Based Service Planning”, “Child and Family Services/Quality Assurance Review”, “Genograms & Eco-Maps: Dynamic Assessment Tools” and “Family Centered, Neighborhood Based Service Approach to Child Welfare”.

Since last the reporting period, the Maryland Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), has been conducted in Prince Georges’ Co DSS. The Local Supervisory, Peer, and Citizens Review Instrument continues to be piloted in Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City and by the Citizens Review Board for Children. Plans are underway to incorporate training on the instrument into the curriculum of the Child Welfare Academy.

COMMITTEE PROGRESS

Comprehensive Assessment/Family Centered Practice

During this reporting period Maryland continues to provide activities to support Maryland’s efforts to implement comprehensive assessment and family centered practice models. Trainings have been conducted that support best practices, policies and practice changes. These trainings covered topics such as early identification of parents, concurrent permanency planning training, Maryland Family Risk Assessment Training, and much more.

The Department’s Maryland Child Welfare Academy in collaboration with the University of Maryland School of Social Work is revising its pre-service training to better prepare caseworkers for practice by providing more skill-based training. The Academy is also preparing to pilot in-service training for public foster and adoptive family providers.
between January and March 2007. There will be four different types of training available in several regions across the State. The in-service training will be offered on an ongoing basis after the pilot phase. In the pilot, the training offered to providers is to focus on Parenting Education, Access to Education and Mental Health Services, the Foster Parent’s Role in Team Decision Making, and Preparation for Independent Living.

The Academy offers Family Team Decision Making courses to support Maryland’s Family Centered Practice Model, which is currently being implemented in three Local Departments of Social Services (DSS) (Baltimore City, Cecil and Anne Arundel Counties). This model includes family engagement, family team meetings, and concurrent planning assistance. Family Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings represent the foundation of Family Centered Practice. Phase I sites received additional funding for implementation and have developed their implementation plans.

Family Team Decision making (TDM) meetings represent the foundation of Family Centered Practice. It is here that family involvements in the model have its greatest impact. Therefore, the implementation sites are focusing energy in developing and implementing these meetings into child welfare casework practice. The implementation sites are using one to three of the triggers to decide when to convene a TDM. The three triggers are removals, change of placement and change of permanency plan.

Baltimore City Department of Social Services (DSS) started their TDMs on May 15, 2006. It is known as “Strong Families and Strong Neighborhoods Team Decision Making Meetings”. Baltimore City covers the East Baltimore area that includes the zip codes 21205, 21206, 21213 and 21224. They will be scheduling meetings operating within the first trigger (removals) for at least a year before they proceed to the next trigger.

Cecil County DSS started their TDM meetings in August 2006. Five TDMs have been completed thus far. The feedback on two out of the five was good. There are four TDMs that are currently pending due to Shelter Hearings. The Anne Arundel Co DSS has as part of their local policy that staff ensure a TDM occurs for all decisions involving: child removal, change of placement, change of permanency plan and reunification. They are committed to this best practice model and have identified staff to assure that this is a part of their ongoing practice.

To promote supervisor skill and knowledge development the Academy continues to offer the Excellence in Public Child Welfare Supervision Training Program, a 10 session monthly seminar series focusing on Clinical Supervision and Management skills for new child welfare supervisors at local departments of social services (new is defined as having less than two years experience as a clinical child welfare supervisor). The topics of the 10 full day seminars are Effective Leadership: Making the Transition from Social Worker to Supervisor, Achieving Excellence in Staff Performance, Promoting the Growth and Development of Staff, Building the Foundation for Unit Performance, Building a Cohesive Work Team, Clinical Supervision: Methods, Clinical Supervision: Focus and Process, Managing Conflict in Supervision, Managing Change in My
Maryland Child and Family Services Review
Program Improvement Plan 8th Quarterly Report

Organization, Using Groupwork Skills and Policy to Enhance Worker Performance. Seminars were lead by Ms Marsha Salus, MSW who is a nationally known trainer and expert in the area of social work supervision, child welfare practice issues, and curriculum development. A new class of 29 new supervisors from local departments of social services begun on October 5, 2006 and will run to June 2007. A “Booster” workshop is underway and set for January 12, 2007. This workshop will allow the participants from the first pilot to come together for a day-long refresher to reinforce learning from the original seminar program.

In addition, Clinical Supervision Competencies that were identified and used to develop the training curriculum have been incorporated into the new Child Welfare Supervisory Training. The Maryland Child Welfare Academy has made the final approval on these draft competencies. The Clinical Supervision Competencies were developed into “360 assessments” that are given to child welfare supervisors, their supervisees, and their administrators and the results are used to provide feedback and individual supervisors participating in the training program.

To support Maryland’s Kinship Care providers the current contract with Coppin State University for running the Kinship Care Resource Center was extended to June 30, 2007 and continues to be operational.

Improved Legal and Court Processes

The Legal and Court Practice Committee is charged with collaborating with the Foster Care Court Improvement Project (FCCIP) to improve court practices that have a significant impact on service delivery such as Adoption and Safe Family Act exceptions, Concurrent Planning, Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), Child In Need of Assistance (CINA) and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR). The FCCIP has worked to improve the court processes indicated in the final report through its Implementation Committee. The Implementation Committee is the FCCIP oversight committee and is comprised of Judges, Masters, a representative from the Citizen’s Review Board, the Director of the Social Services Administration and FCCIP staff.

During the 8th quarter, the FCCIP continued to participate in the Department of Human Resources CFSR related activities. The FCCIP Legal Intern completed gathering data on the Maryland CINA and TPR Appeals process. The intern’s report is currently under review by the FCCIP Representation, Practice and Procedure Subcommittee and the Legal and Court Practice Committee. Recommendations from both committees on how to address any areas of concern from the data collected will be made to the FCCIP Implementation Committee by February 2007. The Legal and Court Practice Committee has met via conference call, in addition to reviewing the data collected on Maryland’s CINA and TPR Appeals Process, the committee is working on identifying additional training needs for attorneys involved in CINA and TPR matters. The final version of the Best Practice Manual, with all sections, has been sent to the printer for final compilation. It is anticipated that the Manual will be distributed to all Juvenile Judges and Masters and
other interested stakeholders by the end of January 2007. The approved Continuance/Postponement Policy for CINA and related Termination of Parental Rights matters section of the Manual requires each Juvenile Court to develop a policy. The FCCIP would like to report that as of September 30, 21 out of 24 jurisdictions have completed and begun to implement their new policies. For the remaining 3 jurisdictions, Chief Judge Bell will be sending out a directive for those jurisdictions to comply with the requirements of the Manual and to develop Continuance/Postponement Policies within a specified timeframe.

The Annual Judicial Child Abuse, Neglect, and Delinquency Options Conference occurred October 16-18, 2006. The Nuts and Bolts of CINA is a part of the training curriculum. Foster Parent/Caregiver notification and opportunity to be heard was a part of the Nuts & Bolts of CINA session. A session on Concurrent Planning for Judges and Masters was conducted by the DHR.

Lastly, in regards to the second phase of the judicial workload assessment, the University of Maryland is on track to begin conducting focus groups. The first focus group was held on October 17, 2006, at the annual Judicial Conference. The FCCIP continued to conduct Site Visits for the Maryland Circuit Courts. The FCCIP has visited 24 Circuit Courts; information gathered from the site visits will be used to supplement the second phase of the judicial workload assessment.

**Design and Implement a Quality Assurance (QA) system**

Maryland’s Quality Assurance (QA) System is designed to build continuous quality improvement at every juncture of service delivery for children and families served by DHR Social Services Administration. The Maryland Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), mirrors the federal CFSR process and has been implemented in six local departments: Baltimore, Worcester, Wicomico, Cecil, and Howard counties, and Baltimore City. The QA system is a three-tiered approach for review of child welfare services: 1) the local self-assessment, 2) the on-site CFSR review, 3) citizens review. The MD CFSR process is continuing to progress.

During these quarters local on-site reviews were conducted in Wicomico County DSS, Baltimore City DSS, and Cecil County DSS. The on-site reviewers included stakeholders from the Citizen Review Board for Children and Court Appointed Special Advocates volunteers. Katy Hill a consultant with the National Resource Center on Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) provided on-site technical assistance. Follow-up MD CFSR meetings with the three pilot sites have also occurred for Worcester County DSS, Baltimore County DSS; and Howard counties.

The Local Supervisory, Peer, and Citizens Review Instrument has been piloted in Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City and the Citizens Review Board for Children. Training was presented on the Local Supervisory Review Instrument for supervisors attending the Putting Children First Conference. A directive to local department directors has been issued regarding statewide implementation of the local supervisory, peer and citizen
review instrument statewide in December 2006. DHR Social Services Administration and the Citizens Review Board for Children have entered into a MOA to streamline the review process of both agencies.

MD CFSR training continues to be conducted by the University of Maryland School of Social Work. The Department has entered into a MOU with the University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW) to provide technical assistance, consultation, to enhance Maryland’s revised Quality Assurance System. Several conference calls were held with Maryland’s regional and national child welfare representatives regarding the implementation of QA as outlined in the PIP. Plans for continuing technical assistance from the National Resource Center have been established. In December 2006 Peter Watson, Director of the NRCOI, provided training assisted by Kathy Hill to the central office quality assurance staff which has increased from one full-time staff person to a unit of four full-time staff persons.

DHR requested and is receiving technical assistance in setting PIP baselines from the Children’s Bureau. The results of the local on site reviews are being used to determine the best method of establishing the baselines. Discussions continue with Children’s Bureau regarding baselines.

**Improved Statewide Access to Services**

Seven Local DSS have started their service array assessments. Worcester, Wicomico and Somerset counties have completed a 1st draft of report of the assessment. Worcester has completed a draft resource plan and Wicomico and Somerset counties are presently working on theirs. Talbot, Kent, Caroline and Baltimore Counties held their 1st stakeholder meetings on November 15, 29, 30 and December 14, 2006 respectively. The assessment reports for these counties will be completed during the 8th quarter.

The Access to Mental Health Subcommittee hosted two meetings with representatives from a wide range of partner organizations. These meetings provided an:

- Overview of the Federal Child and Family Services Review Findings related to Mental Health Services and Subsequent Stakeholder Comments about Barriers to Access

- Overview of Maryland’s Mental Health Transformation Planning Process

- Overview on Mental Hygiene Initiatives
  - RTC Demonstration Waiver
  - Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative
  - Mental Health Workforce

A detailed discussion about the list of barriers to access taken from the CFSR Report and
Stakeholder comments was also held. The group answered the following questions in regard to the issues:

- Are the issues listed legitimate areas of concern?
- Are there major issues not listed?
- Which issues are already being addressed in another process or should be addressed in another process? How can we participate in those other processes to ensure inclusion of “our” issues?
- Of the issues not being addressed elsewhere, which are the priorities that we should focus on? Are they short-term or long-term issues? Who else do we need at the table to address these issues? How do we organize ourselves to make progress on these issues?

Based on the discussion the subcommittee agreed to establish a workgroup to evaluate data from the Medicaid files on mental health services and pharmacy services for children in out-of-home care. The subcommittee will continue to meet during the 8th quarter.

The Access to Education subcommittee has two workgroups: MOU and Handbook workgroups. The MOU workgroup as requested technical assistance from the NRC to work with the State and local education departments regarding access to education. The Handbook subcommittee has completed a first draft of the Education handbook for both child welfare and education staff.

In May 2006, MD Governor Ehrlich thanked Maryland's 3,000 Foster Parents and unveiled a recruitment campaign to add to their number. The Governor marked Foster Parent Appreciation Month by highlighting the important service that roughly 3,000 foster parents who care for many of the approximately 11,000 children in out of home care. In addition to applauding existing foster parents the Governor also unveiled the “Little Achievements” advertisement campaign to recruit additional foster families. The “Little Achievements” campaign speaks to the important role foster parents play in helping kids to achieve the small things that make the big difference.

The Department has also been working with Baltimore City DSS is an attempt to secure additional providers for hard to place teens. Meetings have been held with providers to request expansion of programs to meet the needs of the identified population. These discussions will continue during the upcoming quarter.

**Evidence Based Practice**

The MD CHESSIE full implementation continues with the overall goal of meeting requirements of a statewide information system. Twenty-three counties are currently live on CHESSIE. Baltimore City is scheduled to go live with full CHESSIE on January 8, 2007. The project team continues to work to resolve user issues and concerns with the
system. Currently, a management report workgroup is in the process of defining thirty management reports to be made available to local and central staff. This workgroup consist of local assistant directors and members from central staff. The reports are being designed to provide data for local department administrators and supervisors to assist in decision making and managing workload.