



March 17, 2015

Nettie Anderson-Burrs, Chairperson
Citizens Review Board for Children
1100 Eastern Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21221

Dear Ms. Anderson-Burrs:

As you are aware, the Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) prepares an annual report providing details on the reviews done by local boards. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) utilizes the report, in concert with the quarterly reports, to assess adherence to current policies, identifying gaps in policy and provide feedback to LDSS management. I want to take this opportunity to let you know of the policy work being done that addresses recommendations resulting from reviews completed during SY14.

The importance of preparing transitional age youth for self sufficiency is a highlight for DHR this year. Through our Ready By 21 services youth are receiving the necessary skills to transition from foster care to self sufficient adults. On September 29, 2014, Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act was signed into federal law. This law restricts and changes the way Maryland can use the permanency plan of APPLA in the following ways:

- APPLA is only utilized for youth 16 years and older;
- Document at each permanency hearing efforts to place the youth permanently with parents, relatives, or in guardianship or adoption;
- Ensure the youth is engaged in age and developmentally appropriate activities.

These changes mandated in this federal law and the continuation of our Ready BY 21 services will address the recommendations outlined in your report for youth with a plan of APPLA.

I appreciate the work done by the CRBC and the vital information that is provided by the case reviews. DHR will continue to utilize the feedback by the CRBC to inform practice and policy development. I am confident that the work we are doing at the central and local level will have a positive impact on cases reviewed by your volunteers. I look forward to our continued collaboration as we strive to meet the goals of safety, permanence, and well being for every youth in our system.

Sincerely,

Deborah Ramelmeier, LCSW-C, JD
Acting Executive Director
Social Services Administration