

Division of Family Services Monthly Update February 2010

Training

The Child Welfare Training Coordinating Committee met on January 27th and tackled several issues. Discussion topics included a budget update, a review of the draft charter, and selection of local directors to participate on the committee. In addition, three subcommittees have been established and include: Policy Subcommittee, Knowledge Center Subcommittee, and Communications Subcommittee. The next steering committee meeting will take place on February 24th.

In addition, the DFS Training Calendar that was originally located on the W drive is now located on the SPARK page. All non-VISSTA, DFS-sponsored training will be posted on SPARK under Family Services. All VISSTA training dates and subjects by Area Training Center can still be found by going to http://www.vcu.edu/vissta/vissta_atc.htm.

Managing by Data

In January, the Outcome Based Reporting and Analysis Unit (OBRA) and Mickey Groomes conducted the Applied SafeMeasures training with state and regional staff. This training focused on process measures such as visits and how they help local agencies improve outcomes for children. This training will be offered to local staff over the next few months. In addition, OBRA began conducting fiscal analyses of placement types for LDSS in order to illustrate cost savings for localities, the state, and the feds and continues to work on the private provider evaluation reports.

OBRA continues to work on the full Diversion study and hopes to finish in February. Also, requirements for OASIS release 3.7 have been finalized and interim release 3.6 will take place in March due to a server issue that affects SDM. In addition, SafeMeasures added a report that illustrates child visits with biological families. This process data will be linked to reunification outcomes.

Family Engagement

Broadcast 6050 was issued providing information about locality training phase assignments and the family engagement guidance. The Transformation website has also been updated to include several tools and resources for localities. In addition, the draft video for family engagement that was filmed several months ago has been edited and will be finalized soon.

Tamara Temoney continued discussions with the CPS, Foster Care and Adoption Regional Consultants to address the technical assistance that will be provided to localities related to family engagement. Over the next several weeks, Regional Specialists will facilitate family engagement roundtables with localities who will receive the first phase

of training. The pilot of CWS 4030, the Family Partnership Meeting Facilitator Training, has also been scheduled. In addition, the broadcast and RFA for Court Improvement Program funding available to localities to assist with the initial implementation of family engagement will be issued at the beginning of February.

Resource Families

January 2010 included Northern and Central Regional Peer Collaborative (RPC) meetings—the Central RPC marks entry into the phase that focus on resource family support. This phase has a natural overlay with family engagement, particularly in reference to working with birth parents and the importance of an early established and well-facilitated connection between birth parents and resource families.

Local agencies participating in the RPCs have expressed a need for more training, support and technical assistance on this critical relationship. In January, the Resource Family Unit and the Community Resource, Adoptive and Foster Family Training (CRAFFT) staff met to begin addressing such identified needs. Discussion included the need to create an alignment between work done in the RPCs to support agencies and the on-going training already taking place in the regions for resource families as well as how best to utilize CRAFFT staff for supporting resource families in regards to family engagement (e.g., working with birth parents, what to expect in partnership meetings). February RPC meetings include the state's final RPC 2, in Eastern region, as well as RPC 3 meetings in Piedmont, Northern and Western. Following the final RPC2, we will conduct an evaluation in order to assess progress in advancing localities forward regarding best practices related to resource families.

Community Based Care

The Family Engagement work group has completed its draft policy related to how the CSA system needs to be engaging families. The document will be reviewed by the State and Local Advisory Team on the 4th of March. Once reviewed and edited, the final draft will be discussed at the State Executive Council (SEC) on March 25th. The SEC will also discuss the recommendations of the Carve Out work group at the same meeting. If accepted, both of these policies will provide opportunities to move the service system toward more community and family-based care. Work that still needs to be done includes the development of a guidance document for family engagement should it be adopted by the SEC, and a request for a proposal process that will be required for a community to receive permission to carve out pool funds to start new services, should the carve out policy be accepted by the SEC.

Child Protective Services

CPS Prevention staff participated in a meeting of the Virginia Statewide Parenting Education Coalition (VSPEC) on January 22nd at the Prevent Child Abuse Virginia offices. Carol Dolber McMurray and Patricia Hein gave a presentation on “Best Practices in Parenting Education” that was presented to the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation

grantees. The results of the conference “Parent Education – an Anchor for Virginia Families” held in December with 83 attendees were reported as very favorable.

CPS staff co-facilitated training for the cast members for the spring 2010 tour of the child sexual abuse prevention play “Hugs & Kisses” produced by Theatre IV and Prevent Child Abuse Virginia with a grant from VDSS. The training provided the cast with information on child sexual abuse reporting and response. The spring tour begins in February. In addition, the Request For Proposals was issued on January 29th regarding Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Grants. A pre-proposal conference is scheduled for February 8th and the RFPs are due on March 15th.

The CPS Manual is in the process of being updated to include guidance on the practice model, Family Partnership Meetings, relative search efforts, and implementation of structured decision making tools in the CPS process. In addition, the Governor’s Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect is scheduled to meet in February to plan for the April Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Conference including hosting its award ceremony, providing input into proposed legislation, and the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

Foster Care

The Foster Care Program began work on residential rate structuring and subsidized custody. Initial work plans are in development and first meetings for each project were held. In addition, work was completed for OASIS screen development for the National Youth in Transition Database and the web-based version of the Virginia Enhanced Maintenance Assessment Tool.

The Educational Advisory Committee, developed to improve educational outcomes for youth in foster care, held its second meeting. Work streams were finalized and members assigned; deliverables were identified and dates were set for producing deliverables. Priorities for this work group include:

- DOE and DSS shared definitions and policy regarding school enrollment and attendance. This includes a MOA between both agencies;
- Data acquisition regarding immediate enrollment and attendance;
- Guidance for funding transportation of youth in foster care to their school of origin;
- OASIS screen development to capture education information; and
- Revisions to the OASIS service plan to capture educational information more fully.

Project LIFE completed and presented the needs assessment of services to older youth which is being used to inform implementation of project deliverables. The three part Needs Assessment is available for review and focused on the Virginia Youth Advisory Council and the new Educate, Advocate, Elevate Regional Initiative. It also includes a data detail supplement, compiling administrative data supplied by DSS, qualitative data gathered from interviews and focus groups and survey data. Key findings include:

- An analysis of the distribution of eligible youth in localities showed:
 - Nearly 60 % of localities have 15 or fewer eligible youth.
 - Over 78 % have 30 or fewer youth.
 - Eight LDSS have more than 75 eligible youth; these 6.67% of all LDSS serve 918 eligible youth, or 33.66 % of all eligible youth in Virginia.
- Each region has a core group of IL coordinators who are both knowledgeable about and committed to supporting IL practice improvements. Only about 24% of LDSS are regularly involved in regional IL committees and 70% are rarely or never involved.
- LDSS directors are supportive of regional IL committees and want to see them play substantive roles in practice improvements in their regions; however, LDSS staff cites competing demands on their time and travel as barriers to their in-person participation.
- There is evidence of support for the ideas and intended purposes of CSST (Children's Services System Transformation), but markedly less understanding of how to apply the ideas to practice in any comprehensive or systematic way to produce the transformation envisioned. Few LDSS could cite a single example of a change in practice reflecting CSST.
- Regional IL committees do not function as formal organizations engaging in purposeful and systematic pursuit of CSST or Virginia's Practice Model outcomes; although all have engaged in activities that support related outcomes, there are no patterns of systematic, purposeful, and sustained alignment of regional activities and state outcomes.
- The concept of regional youth councils is almost universally supported.
- Foster parents are an underutilized resource in supporting youth transitions to adulthood; the need for greater engagement and capacity-building with foster parents is clear.
- Regional IL committees have identified a broad range of areas and topics for which there is interest in information, training, and technical assistance; close, region-by-region examinations of informant responses should inform Project LIFE activities in each region.

Adoption

The Adoption Unit worked with Fredericksburg Department of Social Services to implement plans to host the Northern Virginia Heart Gallery opening in Fredericksburg on February 11, 2010. This Heart Gallery will continue to raise awareness about children available for adoption in the Northern Region. This Heart Gallery originally opened in November in the Warrenton area and included 23 available children. One child will be removed from the Heart Galley due to an appeal on the termination of parental rights.

Continuous Quality Improvement

The CQI Unit hosted the third meeting of the QA Network in January. This group represents LDSS who have specific quality initiatives and who come together to share resources and strategize methods to increase the quality of practice in local departments. Major issues of discussion included the implementation of Quality Service Reviews which will change the quality review process to focus on improved practice which will ultimately result in improved compliance for safety, permanency and well being for children in the child welfare system. In the coming weeks, work will continue around the development of a communication plan and detailed implementation plan for Quality Service Reviews. Child Welfare Quality Reviews for local DSS agencies continues and a schedule for the next four months has been finalized.

Child and Family Services Review/Program Improvement Plan

In anticipation of the submission deadline for the PIP, our federal partners came to Virginia for a site visit and attended January's Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC) meeting. Each PIP strategy co-chair met with the federal team to discuss how to refocus and streamline the PIP. In addition, The CWAC group received an update on the Health Advisory Committee and Educational Advisory Committee. Both are tied to Fostering Connections legislation but are also well-being outcome measures that can be captured in the PIP.

The draft PIP is due at the end of February. Guidance from the feds is to significantly cut the current draft and refocus efforts to a more initiative based approach. Key leads within DFS have been meeting to discuss appropriate strategies and ways to capture intended outcomes.

Diligent Family Search

Over the past month, family finding options and resources has been explored in order to provide needed support to local departments as they roll out Family Engagement. The Division group working on this is using the term diligent family search (DFS) to describe the process. At this point, the group has identified a half day training that state staff can provide to LDSS staff following a Training-for-Trainers session this spring. Options are also being explored regarding the utilization of Project LIFE staff. Development of options continues.