

## Maryland's Title IV-E Waiver Grant

### Background

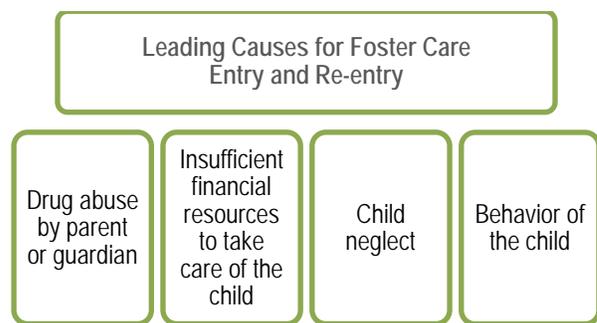
Maryland was awarded a \$650 million Title IV-E Waiver grant which allows the Department of Human Resources (DHR) greater flexibility in how it spends its federal Title IV-E child welfare funds. In the past, these funds were only permitted to be used for services for 4,387 youth who currently live in out-of-home placements—which include foster and group homes.<sup>1</sup> Now the waiver allows DHR to use IV-E funds for services for out-of-home placements and the 2,844 youth, who as of June 2015, remain with their families.<sup>2</sup>

The IV-E Waiver grants give states such as Maryland the opportunity to implement new and innovative child welfare practices. If there are cost savings in any of these practices, states can reinvest it into the child welfare system. Maryland's IV-E waiver is aimed at reducing the number of children who return to foster care after being reunified with their families (*figure 1*). This process is colloquially referred to as “re-entries.”<sup>3</sup> In addition to reducing re-entries, DHR is targeting its efforts toward children who are at risk of entering care for the first time. The grant, which is for five years, was awarded in September 2014 and began in July 2015.

### Implementation

Maryland's Department of Human Resources is leading the design and implementation of the IV-E Waiver project. They are receiving input from the local departments of social services (LDSS) and the University of Maryland's School of Social Work. To begin the process, DHR created a Readiness Assessment for completion by LDSS' caseworkers. The survey evaluated three areas: the factors that drive

entry and re-entry into the child welfare system; the various statewide current policies and practices that address entry and re-entry; and the ways in which LDSS is engaged in trauma-informed practices. The survey results revealed the leading causes involvement in the child welfare system.



In order to get additional input from the LDSS and stakeholders, DHR commissioned five focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to identify practices in jurisdictions which would be included in the Waiver program and to identify barriers to implementation. Teams from across the state participated in the focus groups including:

- Baltimore City, Cecil and Harford counties
- Mid-Shore Region—Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot counties
- Southern Region—Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties

The focus groups identified current and potential successful practices such as trauma-informed training, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), and the need for increased housing services. The focus groups also identified areas of improvement such as securing buy-in from LDSS staff and stakeholders as well the need for technical assistance.

<sup>1</sup> Maryland Department of Human Resources, Child Welfare Data, June 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Maryland Department of Human Resources, Child Welfare Data, June 2015.

<sup>3</sup> The most recent publically available data on re-entries where a child re-entered foster care within 12 months of reunifying is included on page 2 of this Issue Brief. Maryland Department of Human Resources, Child Welfare Data, June 2015.

FY14 (Q4) Exits to Reunification July 01, 2013 to June 30, 2014 Reentries within 12 months			
Jurisdiction	Exits	Reentries within 12 months of Exit	
		#	%
Maryland	1,341	196	14.62%
Allegany	30	1	3.33%
Anne Arundel	34	2	5.88%
Baltimore City	720	128	17.78%
Baltimore County	102	11	10.78%
Calvert	18	0	0.00%
Caroline	7	0	0.00%
Carroll	12	4	33.33%
Cecil	35	4	11.43%
Charles	13	1	7.69%
Dorchester	0	0	0.00%
Frederick	41	5	12.20%
Garrett	15	1	6.67%
Harford	65	7	10.77%
Howard	10	0	0.00%
Kent	0	0	0.00%
Montgomery	83	13	15.66%
Prince George's	65	5	7.69%
Queen Anne	1	0	0.00%
Somerset	3	1	33.33%
St. Mary's	21	5	23.81%
Talbot	6	0	0.00%
Washington	54	8	14.81%
Wicomico	0	0	0.00%
Worcester	5	0	0.00%

Figure 1

### Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System

A significant piece of Maryland's IV-E Waiver Demonstration project is to make the state's entire child welfare system one that is based on trauma-informed care. Almost all children and parents who are involved in the child welfare system have experienced trauma that has negatively affected their well-being. Research from the Child Welfare Information Gateway has shown that trauma impacts children's brain development and causes changes in brain structure and chemical activity.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway, "Understanding the Effects of Maltreatment on Brain Development," (April 2015) p.8.

This trauma impacts social skills and educational success because of issues such as increased risk for anxiety and depression, diminished memory, and delayed developmental milestones.<sup>5</sup> The effects of trauma, however, can be reduced and managed with proper care. Practices that enhance physical and psychological safety for the child and family will lead to enhanced resiliency for children and their families. These include trauma-informed practices, early intervention, and treatments that target the part of the brain that has been altered.<sup>6</sup>

Ensuring that the child welfare system is cognizant of and adhering to best practices for working with families that have experienced trauma will lead to better outcomes for these families. Having a trauma-informed child welfare system will also help protect the staff at LDSS, who may suffer from secondary trauma through their child welfare cases.

### Impact on Maryland's Children and Families

DHR anticipates better outcomes for children by combining evidence-based and promising trauma-informed practices. These outcomes include decreased new entries and re-entries into foster care, reduced lengths of stay and increased levels of permanency. In addition, DHR expects improved social and educational success for child trauma victims.

Evaluation, through the University of Maryland's School of Social Work is built into the IV-E Waiver, and as these reports are submitted to the Administration for Children and Families, they will be available publicly. Re-entry rates, as well as the quality of the experiences of families involved with the child welfare system will have to be closely monitored to measure ultimate success. With DHR's commitment to transparency, we are confident that all the data needed to evaluate the IV-E Waiver program's success will be available to the public. We believe that with buy-in from the LDSS and other child welfare stakeholders, Maryland's IV-E Waiver program will be a win for Maryland's children and families.

<sup>5</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway, "Understanding the Effects of Maltreatment on Brain Development," (April 2015) p.8-9.

<sup>6</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway, "Understanding the Effects of Maltreatment on Brain Development," (April 2015) p.11.