

## County Improvement Plan

**County Name:** Allegheny

**Date of Plan:** August 2012

**Initial**

**Update**

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### Section II. Background:

The Allegheny County Improvement Plan (CIP) was developed in collaboration with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (Offices of Children, Youth and Families; Behavioral Health; Intellectual Disabilities; Community Services; and, Integrated Services and Independent Living Initiatives through the DHS Executive Office), as well as the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families (DPW -OCYF), representatives from the Children's Court and Juvenile Probation, the University of Pittsburgh Child Welfare Resource Center, Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Collaborative, and representatives of DHS consumers, legal advocates and private provider community.

Allegheny County drew from a number of data sources in the development of this CIP, including findings from: actions taken from CIP of 2011; 2012 Quality Service Review<sup>1</sup> (Phase Two-2012); 2012 state annual licensing review<sup>2</sup>; Key Information and Data System (KIDS- Allegheny County's child welfare case management system); and, the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

Allegheny County hosted several forums to garner input for the development of the CIP. Pennsylvania DPW OCYF, the University of Pittsburgh's Child Welfare Resource Center and Allegheny County DHS leadership hosted the Quality Service Review (QSR) "Next Steps Meeting" on May 15, 2012 before an audience of 40 participants, representing public and private stakeholders involved in child welfare and other family-serving systems. The Next Steps Meeting provided a comprehensive review of the February 2012 QSR findings, in comparison with QSR 2011 results, with focus on data that identified opportunities for improving outcomes for children and families served by the Allegheny County DHS Office of Children, Youth and Families. DHS Family and Youth Support Partners, representing consumers of services, reviewed the QSR findings and gave input to improvement priorities and strategies for advancing outcomes for children and families.

### **Section III. Priority Outcomes**

**Outcome # 1:**        Improved Permanency

**Outcome # 2:**        Improved Engagement of Fathers

**Outcome # 3:**        Improved Teaming (Formation and Function)

### **Section IV. Findings**

#### **FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOME # 1: Improved Permanency**

Improved permanency remains one of the County's priority improvement outcomes for the CIP 2012. Permanency in child welfare refers to achievement of "a legally permanent, nurturing family" for children served within the child welfare system. Once safety is assured, child welfare professionals' foremost focus is "on preserving families and preventing the need to place children outside of their family homes". If efforts to preserve the family and ensure the child's safety are unsuccessful and children must be removed from their homes, permanency planning efforts then "focus on returning them home as soon as is safely possible or on placing children

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<sup>1</sup> The Quality Service Review (QSR) process is a key component to Allegheny County's CQI process and serves as a measure of Pennsylvania's practice model and standards in child welfare practice. Providing a set of qualitative indicators for measuring the quality and consistency of core practice functions used in CYF cases, the process uses an in-depth case review method and practice appraisal process to find out how children and families are benefiting from services received and how well locally coordinated services are working.

<sup>2</sup> As demonstrated by the state's shift from regulatory compliance to quality reviews, PA OCYF revised the annual survey and evaluation process for county agencies' licensure renewals in 2011 by referencing QSR findings with regulatory compliance through compliance reviews of the same cases randomly selected for the QSR.

with another permanent family. Other permanent families may include relatives, adoptive families or guardians who obtain legal custody”<sup>3</sup>.

Permanency is achieved when the child/youth is living successfully in a family situation that the child/youth, parents, caregivers and other team members believe will be lifelong. Permanency, commonly identified with the meaning of “family” or “home,” suggests not only a stable setting but also stable caregivers and peers, continuous supportive relationships and a necessary level of parental/caregiver commitment and affection. Evidence of permanency includes resolution of guardianship, adequate provision of necessary supports for the caregiver, and the achievement of stability in the child/youth's home and school settings.

### **Administrative Data**

Permanency for the purposes of this review includes placement stability, living arrangement (placement type) and permanency, as defined above. This year’s updated administrative data do not reveal significant changes from the previous year.

### **Placement Stability**

Allegheny County has conducted minimal analysis on placement stability due to past limitations in the data. However, Allegheny County’s Key Information Demographic System (KIDS) has the capability to provide more reliable information about placement stability, and enhanced data will be reported in the future. Evaluation of this metric will also examine the number of moves youth make during a home removal episode, the nature of the moves (e.g., move from a congregate to a family setting), and how placement stability varies by demographic characteristics.

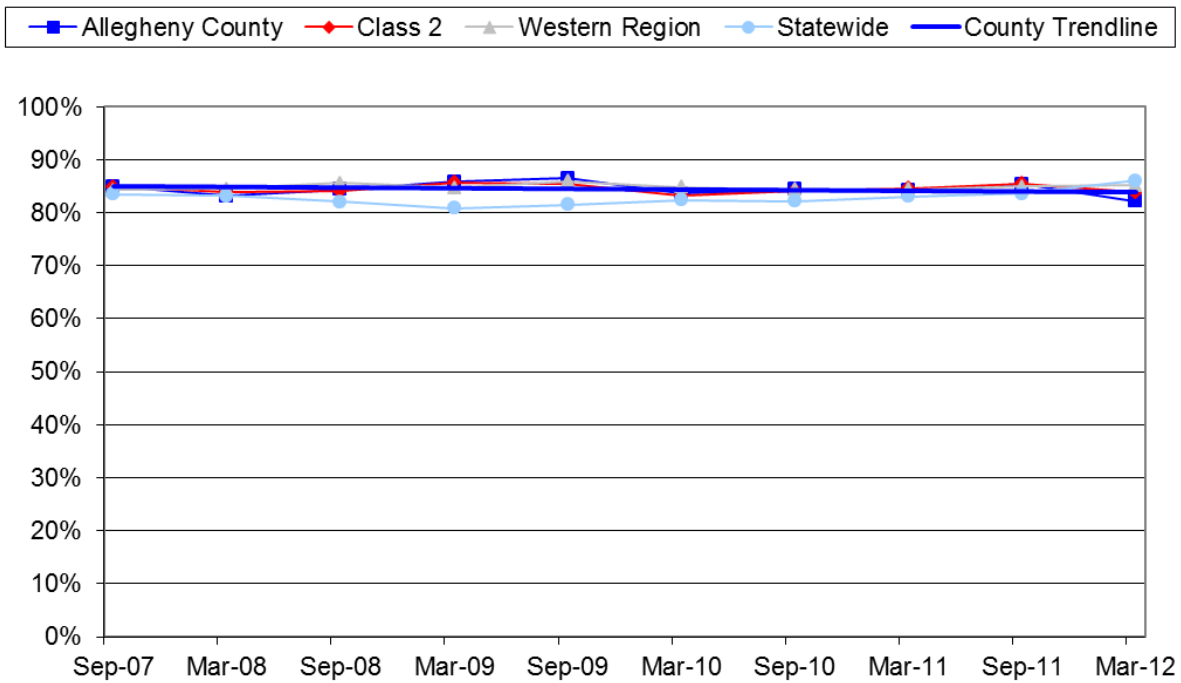
The AFCARS placement stability measure is one tool used to look at stability in Allegheny County. According to these data, placement stability in Allegheny County is comparable to stability in the state and the region within 0-12 months of placement and has been improving over time. Allegheny County performs slightly better than the state and region for placement

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<sup>3</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway (2011). “Achieving and Maintaining Permanency: Overview.”

stability beyond 12 months in care

### Placement Stability, 0-12 Months, Allegheny County



### Living Arrangement (Placement Type)

Data related to living arrangement indicates minimal change in use of congregate and kinship care. Kinship care remains the primary placement type for Allegheny County's foster care population. The table below indicates placement types for first entries only.

### Primary Placement Type for First Entries, by Entry Year (Chapin Hall)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Count</b>	<b>1162</b>	<b>1167</b>	<b>916</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>787</b>
<b>Kinship care</b>	38%	40%	35%	38%	38%	37%
<b>Foster care</b>	33%	33%	38%	35%	37%	38%
<b>Congregate Care</b>	26%	25%	23%	25%	21%	23%
<b>Independent Living</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

A recent point in time (June 08, 2012) showed that about 43 percent of all children in placement are in a kinship care setting.

### Point in Time Placement Settings (KIDS)

June 08, 2012

	Number of Children	Percent
<b>Kinship Care</b>	646	43%
<b>Foster Care</b>	423	28%
<b>Shelter Foster Care (30% kinship)</b>	115	8%
<b>Group Home</b>	124	8%
<b>Shelter Group Home</b>	93	6%
<b>Residential</b>	51	3%
<b>Independent Living</b>	49	3%
<b>Residential Treatment Facility</b>	10	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1511</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Permanency

From 2005 to 2010, almost 70 percent of children exiting placement exited to a permanent setting. Half of all youth exiting care returned to their family, 14 percent were adopted, and another five percent of children exited to permanent legal guardianship.

### Exit Destinations from All Exits (Chapin Hall)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Count</b>	<b>1949</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>1955</b>	<b>1828</b>	<b>1684</b>
<b>Return to Family</b>	48%	51%	52%	47%	49%	46%
<b>Adoption</b>	14%	14%	15%	15%	13%	14%
<b>PLC</b>	4%	5%	5%	5%	6%	7%
<b>Reach Majority</b>	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%	6%
<b>Non-permanent</b>	16%	5%	5%	7%	5%	5%
<b>Runaway</b>	7%	14%	13%	14%	14%	12%
<b>Other</b>	6%	4%	4%	6%	6%	9%
<b>Unknown</b>	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

About 30 percent of all youth who enter placement will exit and experience a re-entry. The majority of reentries (about 80%) occur within twelve months. Re-entry rates from permanent exits (return to family, adoption or PLC) within one year are slightly lower than overall rates, but still average about 21 percent.

### Re-entries from Exits to Reunification (2006-2010: Chapin Hall)

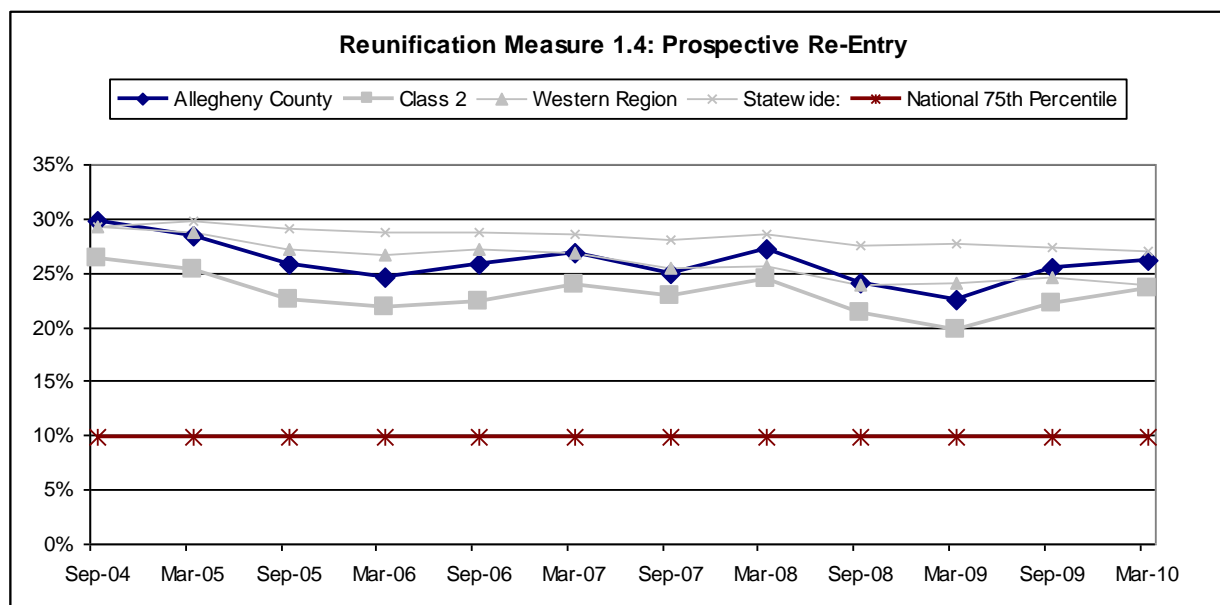
<b>Total exits</b>	4813
<b>Reentries</b>	1792
<b>Percent reentries</b>	37%
<b>Time to reentry, as percent of reentries</b>	
1 to 2 months	29%
3 to 5 months	26%
6 to 11 months	20%
12 to 17 months	9%
18 to 35 months	11%
3 years or longer	5%

The federal AFCARS measure for permanency tracks the re-entry rate within 12 months of exit for youth who are reunified with their families. While Allegheny County's performance is comparable to the state, the average re-entry rate (20%) is well above the national benchmark (9%) in Class 2 counties and the Western Region.

### Exits and Re-entries from First Placement Episode (Chapin Hall)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Entries to First Spell</b>	1162	1167	916	906	867	787
<b>Total Exits</b>	1152	1132	891	860	746	556
As percent of all entries	99%	97%	97%	95%	86%	71%
<b>Exits to Permanency</b>	936	936	773	698	622	459
As percent of all entries	81%	80%	84%	77%	72%	58%
As percent of all exits	81%	83%	87%	81%	83%	83%
<b>Total Reentries</b>	400	374	275	268	218	158
As percent of all entries	34%	32%	30%	30%	25%	20%
As percent of all exits	35%	33%	31%	31%	29%	28%
<b>Reentries from Exit to Family</b>	270	253	203	171	145	111
As percent of exits to family	41%	38%	34%	33%	28%	26%
<b>Reentries from Exit to Family Within 1 Year</b>	192	183	147	138	124	101
As percent of exits to family	29%	28%	25%	27%	24%	24%

Of all children who were discharged from foster care to reunification in the 12 month period prior to the target year, percentage of children who re-entered foster care in less than 12 months following the date of discharge.



### **Data from Quality Service and State Licensing Reviews 2012**

In addition to the data available on quantitative indicators of permanency, QSR and the state’s annual licensing review gives a more detailed picture of permanency efforts and plans for the sample cases reviewed. The QSR Protocol identifies *Stability*, *Living Arrangement* and *Permanency* as the indicators that comprise the outcome measure of Permanency.

1. *Stability* (degree to which the child/youth’s daily living and learning arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions; daily settings, routines and relationships are consistent over recent times; and, known risks are managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruption) was rated as acceptable across all settings in 81 percent of cases reviewed. Reviewers attributed the acceptable ratings to the agency’s efforts to find the most appropriate living arrangement to meet the child’s individual medical and emotional needs from the initial placement. Stability is also important in achieving timely permanence, as it has been shown that children with fewer placements are more likely to achieve timely permanence.<sup>4</sup>

*Living Arrangement* (degree to which the child/youth, consistent with age and/or ability, is currently living in the most appropriate/least restrictive living arrangement, consistent with the need for family relationships, assistance with any special needs, social connections, education, and positive peer group affiliation) was rated as acceptable in 85 percent of reviewed cases, which reviewers attributed to Allegheny County’s effective use of kinship foster homes which offers more stability over time. Reviewers also noted the efforts of caseworkers in finding

<sup>4</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway (2005). “Concurrent Planning: What the Evidence Shows.”

appropriate placements to meet a child's needs, including in group placement. Reviewers also recognized the importance of keeping siblings together whenever possible and the efforts the county had made to do so.

*Permanency* (degree to which there is confidence by the child/youth, parents, caregivers or other team members that the child/youth is living with parents or other caregivers who will sustain in this role until the child/youth reaches adulthood and will continue to provide enduring family connections and supports into adulthood) was rated as acceptable in 74 percent of the cases. Fifty percent of the out-of-home cases reported a primary permanency goal of "Return Home," a proportion that is slightly lower than that of the Allegheny County foster care population, where approximately 70 percent of the county's children have that primary permanency goal, as reported in AFCARS. Half of the out-of-home cases reviewed had an identified concurrent goal, with 25 percent of cases that have a concurrent goal of "Adoption." Concurrent planning is important because it, "involves considering all reasonable options for permanency at the earliest possible point."<sup>5</sup> Reviewers reported that permanency plans were often unclear or inappropriate and lacked concurrent goals. Focus group participants also identified the lack of concurrent goals as a concern and possible barrier to timely permanence.

Licensure review findings and CYF improvement strategies approved by the state follow:

- Family Service Planning and Permanency Activities: CYF is in compliance with regulatory requirements in the area of family service planning, with the exception of one out of 23 cases where the Family Service Plan was developed beyond the required timeframe. CYF is developing a process to ensure that every effort is made to engage all family members over age 14 and service providers in establishing goals and objectives for families. Implementation of Family Team Conferencing, noted in the Teaming priority outcome, is also a component of improvement efforts.
- Permanency Activities: For children in substitute care, CYF uses the permanency hierarchy, with primary goal as reunification and concurrent goal as adoption or SPLC. Concurrent planning for in-home cases appears to be less formal, with demonstrated efforts on obtaining information on extended family for kinship care considerations from case start. Licensing noted use of Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) units of services to assist with concurrent goals. QSR results indicated that only five of 19 children reviewed had an established concurrent goal. Permanency review hearings occur every three months, with no requested continuances. CYF has an established Case Practice Specialist Unit that provides quality assurance across the agency and facilitates Permanency Planning Conferences at various intervals. The Case Practice Specialist Unit and Independent Living staff engage and assist youth who are transitioning to adulthood to develop their transitional living plans prior to leaving agency custody.
- Placement Settings: CYF makes every effort to engage the family in identifying viable family resources for placement options. CYF considers environmental factors specific to the child (e.g., educational needs, location of siblings.) CYF also makes every effort to place siblings together and within close geographic range. CYF assists kinship

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<sup>5</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway (2005). "Concurrent Planning: What the Evidence Shows."



caregivers with concrete goods and works to achieve licensure for kinship caregivers. : CYF will continue to use the least restrictive placement setting and continue to work toward reduction of placements.

- Safety Assessment and Monitoring: Licensure compliance indicated that Safety Assessments (intervals of completion, safety decisions noted on assessments) required refinement. CYF plans to provide additional training on Safety Assessment Tool to direct practice personnel regarding interval periods and time frames for completion.
- Fostering Connections Activities: CYF gives kin priority for placement options and supports. CYF is compliant with the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 by notifying extended families of child placement needs. Every effort is made for sibling placements, including requests for waivers to ensure placements together. Efforts are also made to place siblings in similar geographic locations for visitation. The agency has made concerted efforts in maintaining the same educational placements for children in care, including arrangement for transportation to home schools. DHS employs a Health Care Unit that maintains oversight of medical records and coordination of medical services. CYF will maintain compliance with the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008.

### **Strategy #1: Analysis of Discharge/ Aftercare Planning, completed in 2011**

DHS Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation conducted an analysis of discharge and aftercare planning in 2011. This Re-entry Study analyzes data that represent both successful and unsuccessful exits (successful exits defined as children who exited care and did not return within one year; unsuccessful exits defined as children who exited care and returned within one year). The study uses a mixed method of review, including: telephone interviews of parents whose children had successfully exited; a written survey of OCYF caseworkers assigned to cases that were unsuccessful exits; and, in-depth case record reviews of a total of 40 cases (20 successful, 20 unsuccessful) that were included in the telephone interview or survey portions of the study.

### **Recommended Next Steps for 2012-13**

- KIDS System Changes
  - Modification of the field on the placement screen in KIDS, "*Has the child ever been adopted?*", to a forced data field.
  - To enhance tracking of re-entry cases, addition of field in KIDS for call screening to identify when a referral is made on a previously closed case because of achieved legal permanence through Adoption, Permanent Legal Custodianship.

### **Strategy #2: Planning for Implementation of Casey Permanency Roundtable Process, with scheduled implementation date of November 2012**

In partnership with Casey Family Programs, Allegheny County is in the planning phase of implementing a Permanency Roundtable process in November 2012 and continuing through

early 2013. Permanency Roundtables are structured, professional case consultations designed to expedite permanency for youth in out-of-home care through innovative thinking, application of best practices, and “busting” of systemic barriers. The purpose of Permanency Roundtables is to provide Allegheny County DHS with opportunity to examine our child welfare system and to determine where the greatest need for expediting permanency lies. The primary goals of the Permanency Roundtables are: to develop an action plan that will expedite permanency for select cohorts of children and youth in care; to stimulate thinking and learning about pathways to permanency for children in care; and, to identify and address systemic barriers to expedited permanency.

The Permanency Roundtable planning process includes: the development of a Permanency Roundtable Design Team; orientation and training for participants, DHS leadership and external stakeholders involved with the child welfare system; facilitation of the Roundtable meetings; and, ongoing follow-up with and data collection for the Permanency Action Plans that are developed in the meetings.

The Design Team is comprised of: Executive Director of DHS; Executive Deputy Director of Integrated Programs; Deputy Director of the Office of Children, Youth and Families; Deputy Director of the Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation; and, the DARE Manager of Quality Improvement. The Design Team, in consultation with Casey Family Programs, has selected the following cohorts of children for the first phase of PRT implementation, with a goal of conducting up to 100 roundtables during the first phase of implementation (from December 2012 through February 2013.)

- Youth ages 16 and younger with the permanency goal of Other Permanent Living Arrangement (OPLA);
- Children under age five years with the permanency goals of Permanent Legal Custodianship, Adoption and Fit and Willing Relative; and,
- Youth placed in congregate care for 12 months or longer with the permanency goal of reunification.

### **Recommended Next Steps for 2012-13**

- Development and implementation of an ongoing quality improvement process for follow-up to Permanency Action Plans and measurement of improved permanence for youth reviewed. (October 2013)
- Provision of Permanency Orientation, Values and Skills Building Training for Permanency Roundtable participants, DHS leadership and other key stakeholders to occur in November 2012
- Implementation of the first phase of Permanency Roundtables to occur the first two weeks in December 2012- review of youth ages 16 and under with permanency goal of OPLA (approximately 40 youth)
- Implementation of the second phase of PRTs to occur in January 2013- review of children under age five years with the permanency goals of PLC, adoption and FWR (approximately 30 children)

- Implementation of the third phase of PRTs to occur in February 2013- review of youth placed in congregate care for 12 months or longer with goal of reunification (approximately 30 youth)

### **Strategy #3: Planning for and Implementation of Uniform Post-discharge Services to Children and Families, to be continued in 2012**

DHS Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation conducted a Re-entry Study in 2011, analyzing data that represented successful exits (i.e., those children who exited care and did not return within one year) and unsuccessful exits (i.e., those children who exited care and returned to care within one year). The study used a mixed method of review, including: telephone interviews of parents whose children had successfully exited; a written survey of OCYF caseworkers assigned to cases that were unsuccessful exits; and, in-depth case record reviews of a total of 40 cases (20 successful, 20 unsuccessful) that were included in the telephone interview or survey portions of the study.

General findings from the study follow:

- Case record reviews indicated inconsistent evidence of required service planning documents (e.g., Individual Service Plans, Family Services Plans, and Provider Discharge Summaries) located in the OCYF case records, with the exception of the Child Permanency Planning documents that were present in the majority of case records.
- Individual Service Plans (ISPs) located in case records were generally complete and included at least partial information within the Family Domain that addressed family services, goals and progress in achieving goals.
- Discharge Summaries that were present in case records were generally incomplete, lacked measurable information on child and family goal attainment, lacked information on 'what worked' while the child was in care, and lacked specific information on recommended post-discharge services and interventions to maximize chances of successful reunification.
- Informal discharge/aftercare planning was not utilized for a majority of successful and unsuccessful exits. Informal transition planning was utilized more frequently, however, among successful discharges than among unsuccessful discharges.
- There was little evidence of formal or informal aftercare planning across the reviewed cases in the written records.
- There were not significant differences between successful and unsuccessful exits in terms of whether post-discharge services were offered; however, there were differences in levels of participation with post-discharge services. The majority of successful exits linked to post-discharge services participated successfully in those services. Unsuccessful cases were more likely to have refused services, have had services terminated due to lack of participation, or have had unnamed and/or undocumented outcomes of services.

- Placement providers maintained contact with the family following discharge for five of the 42 cases reviewed, and that contact was maintained for fewer than three months for four of the cases.
- CYF maintained open cases for the majority of unsuccessful exits. For the majority of successful exits, CYF closed the case, most often between three and six months after discharge.

### **Recommended Next Steps for 2012-13**

- Change in provider contracts to require provision of post- reunification services and follow-up from placement providers following reunification with family. DHS would like to increase its capacity for in-home and aftercare services to help reduce the number of days youth are placed in congregate care and to reduce the likelihood of reentry.<sup>6</sup>
- Continuation of Permanency Training- SWAN will provide training for DHS OCYF supervisors within each regional office on the purposes of SWAN services and the importance of SWAN referrals for all children (i.e., those with permanency goals other than adoption) in order to improve referral rates, to enhance permanency services for children and families, and to favorably impact re-entry rates.
- Exploration of community-based residential services to enable children to return home and/or to remain home with community-based supports following short periods of out-of-home stays. In addition, analysis of barriers to safely and successfully reunify children to better inform frontline staff on means of achieving enduring reunification.

### **Strategy #4: Development and Implementation of Safe Case Closure Protocol (revised Action Step for 2012)**

Modification of CIP 2011 strategy from Safe Case Closure Protocol to full implementation of the Safety Assessment Management Process (SAMP)

- Per licensure review, refinement of the Safety Assessment and Management Process (including intervals of completion, safety decisions noted on assessments) is required:
  - The assessment of child protective service need is based on current safety and risk of future harm with consideration of mitigating protective factors. The level of safety and risk for each family (and household) is case- specific. Case closure standards exist and must be viewed as a clinical framework designed to assist in the assessment for case closure. CYF administration and quality assurance staff have reviewed internal and state- developed documents and found that they align. Protocols established by the state are regularly reviewed during Permanency Planning Conferences, at trainings, qualitative reviews and other

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<sup>6</sup> Note: Forty four percent of youth between the ages of 13 and 17 years are placed in congregate care; 43 percent of those youth have been in care for one year or longer. However, only 25 percent of all youth exiting care receive one unit of paid non-placement service]

interdisciplinary team reviews, and supervisory reviews, as well as orientation and required, ongoing training for all casework staff.

- Though the state is expected to issue updated guidelines for safety factors and safety plan intervals and provide training for all county agencies, CYF has begun implementation of the Safety Assessment and Management Process (SAMP). State Training Documents on Safety, Risk, Case Closure and Case Closure for Sexual Abuse have been posted to a networked policy portal for Casework Staff to review for guidance, and Family Group Decision Making and Inua Ubuntu's Case Closure Guidelines are shared with provider staff.
- CYF's Training Department has developed a checklist for staff use until the state issues final SAMP guidelines.
- With KIDS implementation, all casework staff have received additional training on how to operationalize and document risk and safety assessments, plans, service selection and provision, further reinforcing case closure guidelines. In addition, KIDS User Manuals and Job Aids have been developed and updated.
- Implementation of *SafeMeasures*, a reporting tool developed by the Children's Research Center and designed to support ongoing accountability and quality improvement processes. Using this tool, CYF supervisors and case managers can monitor their work and compliance with local case practice standards, as well as with state and federal outcomes.

### **Recommended Next Steps for 2012-13**

- Continued implementation of the revised SAMP process within CYF.
- Independent review of safety assessments as a component of the internal continuous quality improvement process.
- Continued implementation of Safe Measures to support accountability and quality improvement.

### **Strategy #5: Enhancement of Practices, Documentation and Outcome Measurements related to Concurrent Permanency Planning, through 2012**

- CYF continues to make the philosophical and practice shift toward the need for immediate concurrent planning, and has planned revisions for 'forced' choices on electronic Family Service Plan and Child Permanency Plan templates to reflect this shift. CYF has published a new policy to reflect this shift, focusing staff on specific steps required to consider and implement the federally mandated concurrent permanency goal of adoption sooner in the 'life' of the case.
- CYF has modified notification letters to parents when children first enter foster care to clarify the concept of concurrent planning for families, which has been updated as a report in KIDS (see OCYF 350 Report). These concepts are discussed and reinforced at every Family Service Plan and Permanency Planning meeting. Goals are discussed at every contact with family members.
- A new electronic Permanency Planning module has been built to help Case Practice Specialists ensure that placements are selected in the best interest of the child and that Permanency Goals are fully explored in the hierarchical and concurrent manner as

mandated. Concurrent Family Service Plan goals are first developed jointly by Casework Staff and family members and are subsequently reviewed by Case Practice Specialists, using a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound) framework during interdisciplinary meetings with families, providers, attorneys, and other stakeholders.

- Foster care staff and Resource Specialists participate in Permanency Planning Conferences to add their expertise to this process.
- CYF is beginning efforts to examine in-home services, resource family recruiting and visitation in order to improve concurrent planning outcomes. CYF is in the process of an extensive evaluation of in-home service delivery for children in foster care and with both parents.
- CYF has requested funding to target recruiting efforts and supports to maintain a pool of resource families that can care for teenagers and sibling groups. CYF is planning enhancements for placement matches sooner and in neighborhoods in closer proximity to the child's family of origin. CYF expects offset of expenses for emergency shelter care, congregate care, coordinating and transporting siblings for visits with each other and parents, and transportation to the child's old school; in addition, leading to a reduction in placement disruptions and reentries, which are costly and impact the well-being of children and families.

### **Recommended Next Steps for 2012-13**

- Modification of the Concurrent Planning Strategy to state, "*Development of a best practices guide to assist DHS OCYF staff in understanding the most promising ways of implementing concurrent planning*".
- Completion of a self-assessment by July 31, 2013, in accordance with state's Concurrent Planning Bulletin issued in May 2012. The state will provide ongoing assistance through the T.A. Collaborative to fully implement the conditions of the bulletin and to enhance concurrent planning processes within Allegheny County.
- Research of jurisdictions with effective concurrent planning outcomes to determine how we can adapt their approaches to enhance Allegheny County's concurrent planning process (Work Group).
- Synchronization of child and family service/planning processes (e.g., Family Service Plan, Child Permanency Plan, Individual Service Plan) with Permanency Planning Conferences to better streamline scheduling and to improve coordination and effectiveness of planning, with desired outcome of enhanced permanency.

### **FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOME # 2: Engagement of Families, with Emphasis on Fathers**

As noted in the CIP 2011, father involvement is relevant to the three major outcomes of the child welfare system: safety, permanency and well-being. There is evidence that a healthy father-child relationship produces positive benefits for all family members across all socio-economic and cultural groups. "*When fathers are involved, children can learn more, perform better in*

school, and exhibit healthier behaviors. Even when fathers do not share a home with their children, their active involvement can have a lasting and positive impact.”<sup>7</sup> Children living in homes without a father are significantly more likely to experience poverty and incarceration and are twice as likely to repeat a grade in school. They are also more likely to use drugs, alcohol and tobacco, and they generally have poorer physical and mental health. Furthermore, children from single-parent homes have a 120 percent greater risk of suffering some form of child abuse or neglect, as compared to children from two-parent homes.<sup>8</sup> A report to the Pennsylvania State Roundtable (May 2011) noted disparities within Pennsylvania’s dependency system in the engagement, inclusion and treatment of fathers, particularly non-resident fathers, and those efforts underway to raise awareness and effectuate changes with the system, both in culture and practice.

Allegheny County’s Quality Service Review 2012 findings draw attention to the need for improved father engagement served by Allegheny County CYF. The QSR Practice Performance Indicator of Engagement measures the diligence shown by the team in taking actions to find, engage and build a rapport with children and families and to overcome barriers to families’ participation.<sup>9</sup> This indicator assesses the degree to which those working with the children/youth and their families (parents and other caregivers) are:

- Finding family members who can provide support and permanency for the child/youth.
- Developing and maintaining a culturally competent and relevant, mutually beneficial trust-based working relationship with the child/youth and family.
- Focusing on the child/youth and family’s strengths and needs.
- Being receptive, dynamic and willing to make adjustments in scheduling and meeting locations to accommodate family participation in the service process, including case planning.
- Offering transportation and childcare supports, where necessary, to increase family participation in planning and support efforts.

The majority of cases for the Engagement indicator were rated as acceptable across four of the five sub-indicators. Engagement efforts were more likely to be rated as acceptable for the children/youth (73%) and substitute caregivers (75%). Based on the earlier discussion, it is not surprising that mothers were much more likely to be engaged (67%) than fathers (31%). Fathers were not engaged for a variety of reasons; however, in three cases the fathers expressed desire to be active members in the case. These fathers feel they are not considered a part of the case and have to get updated case information from the mothers or other family members. One father stated he had been engaged until just recently, after he turned down a housing option. According to the reviewers, the county was concerned the father refused the housing option because he was concerned about the responsibility and his capacity to parent his son as a single father, as the child’s mother was incarcerated. If the county had engaged the father

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<sup>7</sup> Minnesota Fathers & Families Network (2011). “Child Welfare Sector Analysis: Linking Father.”

<sup>8</sup> Casey Family Programs (2009). “Engaging Fathers in the Child Welfare System.”

<sup>9</sup> While there is no specific measure for father involvement, there are four items on the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) that can be examined for engagement with fathers: parental visitation; needs/services provided to parents; child/family involvement in case planning; and, worker visits with parents (Minnesota Fathers & Families Network, 2011.)

further they may have been able to encourage the father to meet this goal and provide him with appropriate supports to be able to parent the child/youth with the assistance of formal and informal supports.

While children and youth were more likely to be engaged than their fathers, one youth from an out-of-home case reported having been in care for nearly three years and has had only two meetings with the assigned caseworker. The youth did note, however, that he/she had regular visits from her kinship caregiver provider. Mothers who reported a lack of engagement with their caseworkers stated they would obtain updates on the case from other family members, such as grandparents who were in regular contact with the team members. Participants of the Supervisors' Focus Group suggested that time constraints due to increased bureaucracy and paperwork reduce the availability of the caseworker to engage with families one-on-one. Additionally, caseworkers face a number of challenges when attempting to engage with incarcerated parents, e.g., visiting hours, inconvenient parking, length of wait time before being able to visit with the incarcerated parent, and the uncertainty of a 'lockdown' interrupting a scheduled visit .

Licensure review commended the use of Family Group Decision Making as it relates to improved engagement and family role and voice outcomes. Use of Family Finding practices was also noted as a strength. Extended families were identified for all children whose cases were reviewed. CYF's D.A.D.S. Program and other fatherhood programs that provide comprehensive supports to fathers served within CYF were noted as strengths. CYF will continue work toward meaningful engagement of all family members, particularly fathers, so that they become a stable factor in their children's lives and key partners in the planning process.

### **Strategy #1: Analysis of Administrative Data related to Custodial and Non-custodial Fathers served within DHS OCYF (completed spring 2012)**

In order to aid in identifying what data on fathers is captured and what data needs to be enhanced through KIDS, DARE launched an analysis of data related to custodial and non-custodial fathers served in the child welfare system as well as Family Group Decision- Making placement outcomes. First steps involved a look at descriptive data related to fathers served by CYF by collecting data associated with relationships between children with active CYF case involvement and their identified fathers, as of March 27, 2012. These data evaluate the percentage of fathers and mothers identified on child welfare cases by several different criteria but do not indicate the level of parental involvement with the case. Some of the findings follow:

- **Children with Mother and Father Relationships Identified:**  
Ninety-four percent of children have a biological mother identified on their case, and 99 percent have any kind of mother relationship. About 81 percent of children have a biological father identified, and a total of 88 percent of children have any kind of father relationship identified.
- **Presence of Father Relationships by Characteristics of Mother:**  
If the child's mother is under age 18 years old when the case is opened, the likelihood of a father's involvement is much lower than if the mother is over age 18. Among this population, children are twice as likely not to have any father identified, and when one is identified, they are two to three times more likely to be identified as putative. As a result,



65 percent of children with mothers under age 18 at the beginning of case involvement have a biological father identified, compared to about 84 percent of children with mothers over age 18.

- Presence of Father Relationships by Characteristics of Child** (for children with case involvement beginning in 2010-2012):

Rates of father relationships identified vary by age of the child; this variation does not occur in a continuous pattern as a child's age increases. The likelihood that a father is identified on a case does not vary with the child's gender. The presence of an identified father relationships by the race of a child. If the child is African American, the chance there will not be a father identified is twice as high as if the child is white (15% versus 8%).
- CYF Active Youth Identified as Parents** (number of youth who are participating in cases as both a child and as the parent of a child):

Over eight percent (1 in 12) of young women ages 18 to 20 who are active as a child in child welfare also have a case open for their own child, compared to only one percent of young men. Fewer than four percent of young women ages 13 to 17 are identified as a parent; this number is less than half the rate among older teens, yet there are about the same number of teen mothers in this age group as in the 18 to 20 group. There are four times more teen girls in this group identified as a parent than teen boys who are identified as fathers.
- Family Structure** (Note: The data on the household structure where children reside at the start of case involvement is not complete, with the location of parents unknown for eight percent of all children. However, the following table provides a snapshot of the parents' living arrangements relative to their children.):

**Parents Living in Household (HH) with Child at Start of Case Involvement\***

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
<b>Both Parents in HH</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Father in HH</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>4%</b>
Mother not in HH	86	3%
Mother location unknown	26	1%
Mother not identified	19	1%
<b>Mother in HH</b>	<b>1752</b>	<b>57%</b>
Father not in HH	1303	42%
Father location unknown	127	4%
Father not identified	322	10%
<b>Neither Parent in HH</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Unknown</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>8%</b>
Both Unknown	166	5%
One parent not in HH, other location unknown	42	1%
One parent not in HH, other parent unidentified	52	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3084</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Limited to children under age 18, with case involvement beginning in 2010-2012 (TPRs excluded)

At the start of case involvement, at least 28 percent of children live with both their mother and father in the same household. Another 57 percent of children live in female-headed households, and four percent live with their fathers.

## **Strategy #2: Enhancement of Engagement with all Fathers**

- **Enhancement of Family Finding**
  - Enhancement of engagement with fathers is primarily being addressed through a number of measures to improve understanding of how to locate Fathers and efforts to improve visitation among family members.
  - All CYF casework and administrative staff have received training in the Family Finding™ Model (*beginning October 2011 and completed in May 2012*). As with the Child and Adolescent Needs Assessment Tool (CANS)™, Allegheny County has operationalized concepts from the model into a tailored approach for CYF. Also, within the last fiscal year, courts in Allegheny County began to order Family Finding.
  - Since many stakeholders (including staff, providers and other partners) were confusing Family Finding with one new search tool or partial concepts, it was determined to be more efficient to organize these concepts into three separate business processes (or policy and procedures), in light of changing legislation and direction from the state, using terms and concepts already familiar to CYF staff.
- **Diligent Search Policy**- Existing Policy and Procedure was revised to clarify all the times when diligent search is required (with an emphasis on identifying and locating fathers and relatives), how-to instructions, and a list of updated resources. *It makes reference to Relative Notification and Family Engagements policies (see below), once people are identified and located.*
- **Relative Notification**- In an older memorandum about Fostering Connections, steps had been identified and new forms developed for staff to notify relatives as required. A more formal Policy and Procedure directs staff to conduct a diligent search to identify and locate relatives and mandates notifications to kin about children in foster care.

In addition, letters from casework staff invite relatives to:

- Consider becoming a resource family for their kin in foster care
  - Establish/maintain contact with the youth, and/or
  - Participate in Family Engagement Meetings with DHS-OCYF to help determine what is in the best interest of the child.
- **Visitation**: CYF has developed an Improvement Plan for Visitation (dated 9/29/2011) and has implemented strategies from the plan. Practice Memoranda were issued with direction on visiting children at home and in foster care, increased frequency of

visits with infants, and tiered management solutions to help staff correctly track visits with children.

### **Recommended Next Steps for 2012-13**

- Family Engagement: review of Policies and Procedures to direct staff on referrals to or use of Family Group Decision Making, Family Team Conferencing, and Family Finding to include family members in case planning and decision-making processes.
- Proposed Diligent Search and Family Engagement Unit: proposed unit will be charged to locate family members who can be approved as foster parents to avoid the double bind of children's placements in uncertified and unapprovable homes by the Court because no other relative home is readily available. This Unit will work across DHS regional offices and also with the Independent Living Initiative. The purpose of the Unit will be to use the model to achieve permanency for children and establish permanent connections between children and their family members.

The unit will begin to implement family finding with cases that meet the following criteria:

- Youth who age out of CYF care without supports. Ideally, Family Finding will begin when these youth are 15 – 16 years of age
- Sibling groups
- Youth in congregate care, unstable foster care or in other permanent living arrangement (OPLA)
- Youth in the Independent Living Initiative
- Families involved in the current Permanency Planning Initiative (all of these youth live in the Mon Valley region of Allegheny County)

To identify the best possible home for a child who must enter foster care, the new unit(s) of caseworkers will:

- Conduct in-depth diligent searches in emergency and non-emergency placement situations (*to find placements and/or family connections before the shelter hearing, to avoid having to move the child to another foster home*);
- Send required relative notification letters (*including Indian Tribes, etc.*);
- Facilitate family engagement meetings for interested relatives; and
- Participate in Permanency Planning Conferences along with Casework staff, etc.

Once these procedures are approved, the diligent search module in KIDS will be updated, new procedures will be distributed, and all staff will receive training.

- Home Visit Specialists- Planning for a new unit of home visit specialists to augment established casework practice. Specialists would not carry a regular caseload but would visit family members to assist caseworkers of record with safety plan enhancement, compliance and quality of service. The intention is for additional units of specialized

caseworkers with smaller caseloads to work with families with children of the most vulnerable ages, families with multiple households (e.g., mother and two fathers), those with many siblings or household members, and/or those involved with multiple systems that require more complex coordination and interdisciplinary planning and implementation. Implementation of this strategy will not require additional funding, as no new positions would be created. Rather, this strategy will require repositioning of current staff to provide additional visitation supports in order to enhance safety outcomes and compliance with regulations.

### **Strategy #3: Review and Revision of CYF Documentation related to Fathers**

- Change in requests to the functional areas in KIDS was completed on November 29, 2011 to highlight information on fathers for caseworkers. The father's name is now displayed first on the following DHS OCYF reports: Family Service Plan and Family Service Plan Review; Child Permanency Plan; Intake Risk Assessment; Family Service Risk Assessment; and, the Intake Transfer Summary. Termination of Parental Rights is now shown, next to the corresponding parent, on the Family Service Plan and Child Permanency Plan.

### **Recommended Next Steps for 2012-13**

- Classification of kinship foster care parents by their relationship to the child in order to track placement rates with paternal kin.
- Further assessment regarding visitation by father to determine whether additional fields should be added to KIDS.

### **Strategy #4: Enhancement of Coaching and Staff Training Strategies, inclusive of Father Engagement**

- The Engagement of Fathers Work Group consulted with the Child Welfare Resource Center and DHS OCYF Training Department to determine what training requirements and resources exist around engagement with fathers. CWRC offers two trainings on engaging with fathers and incarcerated parents that are held locally at both their Monroeville and Meadville sites. Low enrollment in these trainings poses challenges and as a result, cancellations do occur. These two trainings are offered at no cost to county Children and Youth agencies and are presented by CYF as voluntary or elective trainings for caseworkers. At this time, trainings offered by the juvenile court or community providers regarding gender bias in service provision or engagement with fathers remain unknown.

A statewide Fatherhood Workgroup addressed cross-system training related to engagement with fathers, specifically, gender specific communication, locating fathers and establishing paternity. The Family Finding model is comprised of a set of strategies that enable child welfare practitioners to reconnect children with safe, healthy family members.

### **Recommended Next Steps in 2012-13**

- Consideration for designation of two CWRC training session regarding engagement with fathers and incarcerated parents “call back” trainings to expand awareness and participation by caseworkers.
- Participation of fathers in ongoing educational trainings to better understand judicial processes; child welfare policy and procedure; Adoption and Safe Families Act (AFSA) guidelines; and, how their actions are perceived and education to combat those negative stereotypes. Additionally, consultation between the Fathers’ Workgroup and the Deputy Administrator of Juvenile Court highlighted training for parent advocates and conflict council regarding issues related to service provision and gender bias by attorneys as a critical topic needing consideration by court administrators.

### **Strategy #5: Enhancement of Communication Resources available for Fathers**

- Development of a resource guide for fathers in Allegheny County. The DHS Office of Community Relations (OCR) has begun updating its online resource guide to include services offered to fathers and expectant fathers. Special attention is being paid not to duplicate existing resources but provide tools (e.g. service matrix, spatial analysis mapping) to better assist fathers and community providers in locating appropriate services.

### **Recommended Next Steps for 2012-13**

- DHS to host informational and networking events for fathers, service providers and community partners that provide multi- faceted services to fathers and expectant fathers.
- Consideration of disparate impact analysis to of administrative and systemic changes (e.g., relocation of Hearing Offices out of CYF Regional Offices and reassignment of CYF casework practice specialist among CYF Regional Offices) to gauge the effects of these policy and procedural changes on fathers and demonstrate administrative changes improved outcomes.
- Additional resources to support an increase of paralegal staffing at the CYF intake level to enhance agency efforts at locating fathers and extended paternal relatives
- Ready access of email addresses for conflict counsel to assist in mitigating delays experienced by fathers leaving voicemail for their attorney. The administrative judge has approved the dissemination of email. Conflict counsel communicates with clients via email to establish a time for phone calls or to give status updates; however, legal advice is not provided via e-mail as the communication can be misconstrued.

### **FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOME # 3: Improved Teaming**

The QSR Practice Performance Indicator of Teaming examines and evaluates the formation of the team and the functioning of the team as two separate components. This indicator assesses the degree to which appropriate team members have been identified and formed into a working

team that shares a common “big picture” understanding and long-term view of the child/youth and family. Team members are expected to have sufficient craft knowledge, skills and cultural awareness to work effectively with the child and family to share information, plan, provide and evaluate services.

In less than half (47%) of the cases reviewed was the overall Teaming indicator rated as acceptable. The “Formation” indicator was rated as acceptable (58%) for a higher proportion of cases than the “Functioning” (37%) indicator, meaning, when teams did form, they were not likely to function successfully. Reviewers rated 43 percent of the in-home cases as unacceptable for both sub-indicators – “Formation” and “Functioning.” A lack of communication among team members and lack of inclusion with all formal supports as team members were identified most often as the reason for the unacceptable team functioning.

For out-of-home cases, 42 percent of the cases were rated as unacceptable overall for teaming; of which, three cases (25%) were rated as unacceptable under “Functioning” while being rated as acceptable under “Formation,” again indicating teams did not function well.

A lack of teaming was a subject of discussion in the Supervisors' Focus Group, with participants' noting many of the same issues found in the case reviews. Supervisors suggested a lack of teaming has resulted in a couple of issues: individuals with clashing personalities are not able to work well together, and staff most familiar with the family are not able to contribute to decision making. Not surprisingly, adoption workers have found the lack of teaming to be difficult because they must work with both the biological and adoptive families.

Participants in the Supervisors' Focus Group did state that, “DHS’ integrated focus has helped increase responsiveness from other offices within DHS” and, “certain areas of teaming have improved because of advocates.”

### **Recommended Next Steps for 2012-13**

Allegheny County has modified its strategy identified in the CIP 2011, in that the County plans to enhance the integration of human services through family team conferencing. The term family conferencing refers to several models of case management that employ the use of a facilitator to conduct meetings with family members, natural supports and service providers to plan services that address the needs, utilize the strengths, and achieve the goals of families. During this process, the family is engaged in decision-making, setting goals and achieving outcomes of safety, well-being and permanency. Family Group Decision-making (FGDM), High Fidelity Wraparound (HFW), Integrated Service Planning Process (ISPP), and Permanency Planning Conferencing (PPCs) are current conferencing models used at DHS to promote this holistic, cross-systems approach to addressing the diverse strengths and needs of children and families. Members of the Allegheny County Children’s Roundtable participated in developing the plan to use all of these processes as part of a strategy to improve permanency outcomes for children. These efforts have resulted in enhanced family ‘role and voice’ in planning for services for children and youth with complex needs. Data gathered on these approaches demonstrate a reduction in the number of children entering into care, especially residential placement.

- Family Team Conferencing- In 2012/2013, DHS will expand upon current family teaming practice models by training CYF caseworkers to phase in Family Team Conferencing

(FTC), with the goal of offering that model with all families and youth involved in CYF within five years. Current conferencing models targeted for specific CYF sub-populations will continue (e.g., Family Group Decision Making, High-Fidelity Wraparound, and Integrated Service Planning)

- Anticipated implementation is scheduled for January 2013.
- Cross- systems' coaches and facilitators in FTC were trained between April and June 2012.
- Second training component for Skill Building began in July 2012 and is in progress, with a third component scheduled for September 2012.
- Six-week consultative planning is scheduled to begin in September 2012.
- A small work group is being formulated to develop child welfare practice policies related to FTC.
- Additional coaches and facilitators of the model will be trained in fall 2012 (Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group.)
- DHS will continue planning throughout 2013 to build capacity to implement FTC as our teaming practice at a larger scale. Those families who are eligible for and choose to accept Family Group Decision Making or High Fidelity Wrap services will continue with those teaming practices.

### **Enhancement of Qualitative Case Review/Data Review Process, with Focus on Identified Priority Improvement Outcomes**

DHS plans to re-establish a continuous quality improvement process that focuses on the improvement priority outcomes cited in the CIP and other administrative data associated with the federal outcomes.

#### **Recommended Next Steps for 2012-13**

- Implementation of qualitative case review process that includes presentations of qualitative case reviews and administrative data associated with the three improvement priorities noted in this CIP, as well as other administrative data, to inform policy and practice decisions (fall 2012)

### **Sustainability Planning for Allegheny County's Quality Service Review Process**

Allegheny County plans to continue the implementation of the QSR process on an annual basis, with continued supports from the state. The county's Needs Based Plan and Budget reflects the following supports from the state:

- Addition of two full-time quality improvement specialists to staff the enhanced quality improvement practice as Allegheny County works to enhance our CQI efforts and to achieve a more robust CQI process that extends across child welfare services and other systems' partners that collaborate to provide services to children and families in Allegheny County;

- QSR Train-the-Trainer to build internal capacity to sustain an internal process of QSR (funding to train four cross-systems' trainees as QSR Trainers);
- In lieu of Hornby-Zeller and Associates' support in data analysis and reporting on QSR findings, funding for an internal analyst;
- Supplies associated with implementing an internal QSR process (printing; materials; consumer goods).



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