

PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTING THE SYSTEM FOR OUTCOMES EVALUATION 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Completed in accordance with Human Services Article § 8-1004(g)

October 5, 2023

REPORT REQUIREMENT

This report is hereby submitted in response to the following reporting requirement found in Human Services Article § 8-1004(g):

(g) On or before October 1 of each year, the Department of Human Services, in coordination with the other cooperating departments, shall submit a report to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, to the General Assembly on the progress of implementing the system for outcomes evaluation.

System for Outcomes Evaluation

Introduction: Maryland's System for Outcomes Evaluation

Maryland's system for child welfare outcomes evaluation has multiple parts. It includes technology for gathering and maintaining interagency data known as Maryland's Total Human-services Integrated Network (MDTHINK) and the child welfare component application: the Child, Juvenile, and Adult Management System (CJAMS). Our child welfare outcomes evaluation system also includes a standardized assessment tool called the Child and Adolescent Needs & Strengths (CANS) that is integrated with CJAMS. Staff training is a crucial element of the system. Finally, regular data reports and analysis inform improvements to our system for evaluating outcomes, as well as continuous quality improvement in all areas of child welfare.

Technology

MDTHINK is a services platform shared across multiple state agencies and their programs, and it collects data from each program. CJAMS is the child welfare case management system designed to comply with federal requirements for Comprehensive Child Welfare Information Systems (CCWIS) that collects and reports child welfare data. CJAMS is the operating system for outcomes evaluation as established in Human Services Article §8-1001. The child welfare component of CJAMS was launched statewide in July 2020, while the provider module, separate from the public-facing Provider Portal, was launched in March 2021. In all jurisdictions within Maryland, CJAMS serves as the official system of record, housing all data entry and documents. Child welfare workers across all counties and jurisdictions in Maryland are tasked with maintaining and updating each child's record. MDTHINK and CJAMS are designed to ensure confidential data is protected by granting users specific roles and responsibilities within the system.

Assessments

To collect essential qualitative data needed for assessing baselines and evaluating outcomes, the agency uses the Child and Adolescent Needs & Strengths (CANS) assessment tool. This tool is integrated within CJAMS. A single assessment tool ensures that there are consistent assessments of the strengths and needs for both children and families and helps inform how services are delivered.

The CANS assessment covers various domains but, in particular, gathers system outcomes data related to:

- Stability of living environment;
- Family situation;
- Educational and vocational development;
- Legal and appropriate use of drugs and alcohol;
- Trauma;

- Behavior and emotional needs; and
- Delinquency status.

Each section of the CANS assessment tool allows for evaluation of needs and strengths over time. The data elements enable staff to assess changes in caregiver and child functioning over time and in different placements.

Providers who are contracted through DHS and SSA to care for out-of-home children and youth are required to complete CANS assessments through the public-facing Provider Portal. This data collection process ensures a consistent approach among care providers and allows for tracking trends, which contributes to the overall evaluation of program effectiveness. Maryland CANS trend data is analyzed by our Chapin Hall partners on a quarterly basis. The data are also reviewed by the DHS Social Services Administration (SSA) and the local Departments of Social Services (LDSS). The data are used to generate dashboards that display trends over time, prevalent actionable needs, prevalent strengths, and experiences of trauma. The dashboards present data based on age range, placement type, and type of assessment. Additionally, providers are contractually obligated to submit annual aggregate demographic data for all youths served in their facility, along with CANS-aligned data on outcomes related to permanency, safety, and well-being.

In March 2022, SSA initiated a statewide effort to ensure that all jurisdictional staff were up-to-date and trained in completing the CANS assessment, as needed. As of August 2023, all 24 jurisdictions have completed CANS training.

Data Reporting and Analysis

The State of Maryland employs an application integrated with CJAMS known as Quality-Learning-Interaction and Knowledge (QLIK) to report on specific data points necessary for evaluating outcomes. The data reported includes a child's removal status, demographic characteristics, placement and location details, education, and permanency goals for all children and young adults in out-of-home care.

SSA uses the Maryland data collected for the federally mandated National Youth Transition Database (NYTD) and the associated outcomes to evaluate progress in the educational and vocational development of children who are preparing to exit or who have exited care. The NYTD system tracks the independent living services states provide to youth and creates outcome measures that can assess states' performance in running their independent living programs. The NYTD survey collects data on job skills and employment readiness, which are crucial for evaluating program outcomes.

Assessing DHS System for Evaluating Outcomes

Using the dashboard created by Chapin Hall to display CANS as well as the NYTD survey data, SSA can identify and communicate to local jurisdictions potential service gaps and delivery improvements. One advantage of the child welfare outcomes evaluation system is its capacity for staff to use assessment tools to note the strengths and actionable needs of the young individuals and families with whom we collaborate. CJAMS captures the relevant data at multiple levels across the continuum.

Over the next year, the Department will continue to build a more robust process to share systems and program improvement strategies through our Outcomes Improvements Steering Committee. The committee meets monthly to review outcomes and plan for future needs based on the data and local feedback.

We look forward to strengthening our report practices that will extract data from CJAMS to evaluate and analyze historical trends, and to determine the efficacy of program services and overall outcomes. Improving reports requires enhancements to CJAMS that incorporate CANS assessments into the development of action-oriented goals in the current service and case plans for youth and families.

Conclusion

The child welfare outcomes evaluation system is designed to enable DHS to understand our efficacy and guide policy and practice changes to best serve families and children. Linked by MDTHINK with other state agencies, the child welfare outcomes evaluation system is part of a vision for interagency outcomes evaluation. Our delivery service is a single point of entry to ensure safety, well-being, permanency of children and families. SSA is using an effective assessment tool to collect outcome information for the individuals we serve. We continue to build reporting mechanisms in CJAMS as well as use external reports to evaluate and improve the Department's service delivery.