Maryland
Department of Human Services

Programs for Children in Out-of-Home Placement Standards for Staff and System for Outcomes Evaluation

Completed pursuant to the Human Services Article § 8-1004(g)

January 2, 2025

REPORT REQUIREMENT

This report is hereby submitted in response to the following reporting requirement:

(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.

Source: Human Services Article § 8-1004(g)

SYSTEM FOR OUTCOMES EVALUATION

Introduction: Maryland's System for Outcomes Evaluation
The Annual Report on Systems for Outcomes Evaluation reviews the outcomes monitoring system for children in out-of-home placement, covering (a) public and private residential child care programs, (b) foster care homes or long-term treatment foster care homes and (c) residential programs operated by or under contract with the Dept. of Juvenile Services.

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). CJAMS allows for the tracking of both children and youth outcomes, as well as a separate tool assessing resource home providers to ensure the safety for children in out-of-home care. Staff training is a crucial element of the system. Regular data reports and analysis inform improvements to the outcomes evaluation system, as well as continuous quality improvement in all areas of child welfare. Finally, the outcomes of youth in DJS residential settings are captured separately through Automated Statewide System of Information Support Tools (ASSIST).

Technology
MDTHINK is the services platform shared across multiple state agencies, collecting data from each participating program. CJAMS is the child welfare case management system designed to comply with federal requirements for Comprehensive Child Welfare Information Systems responsible for collecting and reporting child welfare data. CJAMS is the operating system for outcomes evaluation as established in Human Services Article §8–1001. In all jurisdictions within Maryland, CJAMS serves as the official system of record, housing all child welfare 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.

The Dept. of Juvenile Services does not use MDTHINK or CJAMS, but instead has its own stand-alone system, ASSIST, which is used for case management and for tracking the outcomes of children under DJS supervision and in DJS residential programs. Additionally, in partnership with the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) DJS tracks and reports education and workforce outcomes for youth served in the DJS system. These outcomes include youth served in DJS- and DHS-licensed programs and are reported in DJS' annual Data Resource Guide. DJS made the decision in spring 2024 not to move forward with CJAMS migration. DJS is currently engaged with DOIT to conduct a discovery that will determine the best course of action for moving beyond the ASSIST system.

Kinship Placements

Research[1] indicates that placing children in foster care with relatives or those with close relationships improves their outcomes. Since the submission of the 2023 annual report, significant changes have been made to state statute, federal regulations and policies as well as updates to CJAMS to support implementation of practices that center kinship care and prioritizes kinship placements. In November 2023, a new federal rule, 45 CFR § 1355 and 1356, regarding relative/kinship caregiver placements permitted states to adopt alternative pathways for licensure and to extend monthly stipends to relative/kinship placements. Maryland enacted kinship care legislation, Senate Bill 708, during the 2024 Legislative Session prioritizing kinship placements as statewide practice. The updated CJAMS provider module now allows caseworkers to differentiate between relative and non-relative resource home providers (foster parents), to, among other things, facilitate efficient licensure for kinship caregivers.

Changes in CJAMS for the licensure of kinship homes reflect the statutory and regulatory changes to support kinship placements, eliminating unnecessary reporting burdens while still prioritizing the safety of children in these homes. The changes also ensure that all licensed kinship homes receive the same payment per child as non-relative resource homes, enabling more children to reside with kin. This will reduce placement disruptions for children who have kin available, but previously faced kinship licensure delays and barriers.

With the new CJAMS updates, caseworkers will be able to track kinship placements, along with the time children remain in care to monitor their progress towards permanency and whether youth are able to successfully remain with kin long term.

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[1] Shatzkin, K. (2015) *Every Kid Needs a Family* https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-EveryKidNeedsAFamily-2015.pdf

The kinship CJAMS updates will be deployed in the fall, coinciding with new state regulations going into effect on December 12, 2024. This will allow all current relative caregivers to participate and new youth in foster care to be placed with kin first.

Data Reporting and Analysis
Both DHS and DJS use an application integrated with CJAMS and ASSIST known as Quality-Learning-Interaction and Knowledge (QLIK) to report on specific data points necessary for evaluating outcomes. The data include a child's status, demographic characteristics, placement and location details, education, and permanency goals for all children and young adults in out-of-home care. QLIK allows case managers from both agencies to analyze youth outcomes data more frequently for program and policy evaluation.

Maryland's performance compiled from CJAMS data is then submitted to the federally mandated Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS); national data that is collected by the Children's Bureau can be found here. The data profile, consisting of the risk-standardized performance, will be used in the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) beginning fall 2025. Maryland has incorporated these national standards into a Headline Indicators dashboard (All Maryland Headline Indicators since 2023) with the local departments on a quarterly basis to assess trends surrounding safety and permanency. Several of these indicators reflect data related to racial disparity and disproportionality, age and gender for children served in foster care, as well as the circumstances that led to their entry into foster care. The data is provided both statewide and at a jurisdictional level which allows for deeper evaluation and understanding of the children and families and potential identification of services that could prevent additional entries into foster care or decrease the amount of time a child might remain in foster care.

Improving Outcomes Evaluation and Transparency
DHS now has a dedicated in-house Data Office, which created additional dashboards, offering more robust opportunities to evaluate the potential needs of families who interact with the Child Welfare System. The new dashboards also enhance the Department's and local departments of social services' (LDSS) understanding of the outcomes of these interactions, allowing caseworkers to focus on various attributes that can inform the services and supports provided in communities where these families live.

DHS is working towards providing several of these reports to the public to increase transparency on the families receiving services and to identify potential needs that communities could address. In this way, the Department aims to strengthen reporting practices, leverage CJAMS data to evaluate historical trends, determine the

efficacy of program services, assess overall outcomes of children in out-of-home placement, and increase transparency.

Conclusion

The child welfare outcomes evaluation system is designed to enable DHS and coordinating partner DJS to understand 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. DHS uses an effective assessment tool to collect outcome information for the individuals the Department serves, ensuring safety, well-being, and permanency of children and families. DHS continues to build reporting mechanisms in CJAMS and the dashboards created by the Data Team as well as use external federal report submissions such as the five-year Child and Family Services Plan and the Annual Progress and Services Report to evaluate and improve the Department's service delivery. With the new Data Office, DHS is now better able to analyze existing outcomes data in service of Maryland children and families. DJS continues to refine its ability to measure and report outcomes for youth in DJS residential settings. It has expanded the ability to prospectively track positive youth development outcomes to complement traditionally reported recidivism outcomes.