

**REPORT ON VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT AGREEMENTS FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG ADULTS**

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

*Completed pursuant to Chapter 693 (House Bill 1517), Acts of 2018 and Chapter 692
(Senate Bill 977), Acts of 2018*

December 1, 2018

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The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.
President of Senate
State House, H-107
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Michael E. Busch
Speaker of the House
State House, H101
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Voluntary Placement Agreements for Children and Young Adults Report – MSAR #11534

Dear President Miller and Speaker Busch:

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is required to submit to the Governor, the Maryland General Assembly, and the Department of Legislative Services the Voluntary Placement Agreements for Children and Young Adults report. This requirement is in accordance with § 5-505.1 (d) of the Family Law Article and stated under House Bill 1517 (Ch. 693 of the Acts of 2018) and Senate Bill 977 (Ch. 692 of the Acts of 2018).

If you should require additional information please contact the Office of Government Affairs at 410-767-8543.

Sincerely,



Lourdes R. Padilla
Secretary

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

This report is hereby submitted in response to the following reporting requirement found under Chapter 693 (House Bill 1517), Acts of 2018 and Chapter 692 (Senate Bill 977), Acts of 2018:

(A) IN CONSULTATION WITH INTERESTED STAKEHOLDERS, THE ADMINISTRATION SHALL PREPARE AN ANNUAL REPORT ON VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT AGREEMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS IN THE STATE.

(B) THE REPORT SHALL INCLUDE:

- (1) THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT AGREEMENTS THAT WERE:
 - (i) APPROVED*
 - (ii) DENIED; AND*
 - (iii) REQUESTED FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH REASONS, INCLUDING VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT AGREEMENTS THAT WERE REQUESTED FOR CHILDREN WITH A DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY WHO ARE ALSO DIAGNOSED WITH A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DISORDER;**
- (2) THE REASON FOR ANY DENIALS; AND*
- (3) FOR VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT AGREEMENTS THAT WERE APPROVED, THE TYPE OF INITIAL PLACEMENT, INCLUDING:
 - (i) RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER;*
 - (ii) GROUP HOME PLACEMENT;*
 - (iii) THERAPEUTIC GROUP HOME;*
 - (iv) DIAGNOSTIC PLACEMENT;*
 - (v) THERAPEUTIC FOSTER HOME; AND*
 - (vi) ANY OTHER TYPE OF PLACEMENT.**

(C) THE REPORT SHALL GROUP THE INFORMATION REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION BY THE FOLLOWING REGIONS:

- (1) BALTIMORE REGION, CONSISTING OF BALTIMORE CITY, BALTIMORE COUNTY, AND HARFORD COUNTY;*
- (2) EASTERN SHORE, CONSISTING OF CAROLINE COUNTY, CECIL COUNTY, DORCHESTER COUNTY, KENT COUNTY, QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY, SOMERSET COUNTY, TALBOT COUNTY, WICOMICO COUNTY, AND WORCESTER COUNTY;*
- (3) METRO REGION, CONSISTING OF HOWARD COUNTY, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, AND PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY;*
- (4) SOUTHERN MARYLAND, CONSISTING OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, CALVERT COUNTY, CHARLES COUNTY, AND ST. MARY'S COUNTY; AND*
- (5) WESTERN MARYLAND, CONSISTING OF ALLEGANY COUNTY, CARROLL COUNTY, FREDERICK COUNTY, GARRETT COUNTY, AND WASHINGTON COUNTY.*

(D) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1 EACH YEAR, THE ADMINISTRATION SHALL SUBMIT THE REPORT REQUIRED UNDER THIS SECTION TO THE GOVERNOR AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1246 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Source: Senate Bill 977, pages 4-5

TOTAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT AGREEMENTS APPROVED AND DENIED

There were 167 Voluntary Placement Agreement (hereafter, VPA) requests made in FY 2018. In the Baltimore Region, the majority of VPA requests were from Baltimore County and Harford County. As this table shows, over 60% of requests are denied. The metro region and western Maryland regions have the highest indicated number of denials.

	Approved	Denied
Baltimore Region	24	2
Eastern Shore	10	10
Metro Region	7	30
Southern Maryland	6	23
Western Maryland	17	38
Totals (167)	64	103

REASONS REQUESTED

DHS/SSA began to collect data on approved VPAs in FY 2018. The following data includes approved VPAs and the reason they were requested. Of the 64 cases approved, 88% of families request VPAs due their child’s behavioral health needs.

	Behavioral Health Disorder (BHD)	Developmental Disability (DD)
Baltimore Region	20	4
Eastern Shore	10	0
Metro Region	6	1
Southern Maryland	6	0
Western Maryland	14	3
Total (64)	56	8

REASONS FOR VPA DENIALS

When a child is referred for a voluntary placement, as with any type of placement, the referral is evaluated to determine whether all other resources have been exhausted. Separation from family for a child can be very traumatic. Therefore, an out-of-home placement should be the last option and must be justified by demonstrating a need that can only be met by an out-of-home provider.

The majority of VPAs denied are due to the parent withdrawing the application or not following through with the process and providing sufficient documentation to demonstrate that all community resources and/or in-home services have been exhausted. This is a consistent trend related to denial reasons across the State.

The second most common reason for denial is failure to prove that reasonable efforts to prevent the placement were exhausted. Other reasons for a denial include:

- Out-of-home placement due to a Child in Need of Assistance (hereafter, CINA) petition - If there is abuse or neglect and the child is in danger then the Local Department of Social Services (hereafter, LDSS) would file a CINA petition with the juvenile court.
- Parents did not submit documentation by a psychologist, psychiatrist or physician, or the presenting documentation was not sufficient to support the need for voluntary placement.
- Autism Waiver Program - If a child is in the Autism Waiver program, residential placement may be approved. Community-based residential care is a service covered under this waiver.
- Core Service Agency Placement - The local Core Service Agency/Local Behavioral Health Authority are the local jurisdiction's mental health authorities, which manage the public mental health and substance abuse services in their community. They are the lead agency for children who are:

1. Receiving Medical Assistance
2. In need of a Residential Treatment Center (hereafter, RTC)
3. Not in the custody of DHS
4. If the local school system has approved funding for placement
5. If the RTC will send the child to public school.

- Parents have private insurance that cover an RTC placement. If parents have private insurance coverage, there wouldn't be a need for the LDSS to get involved and pursue a VPA, unless educational services require funding.

Reasons for VPA Denial

	Baltimore Region	Eastern Shore	Metro Region	Southern MD	Western MD	Total (103)
Need to exhaust community resources/Referred to community resources.	0	0	10	8	8	26
Parents did not submit documentation by psychologist, psychiatrist, or physician/Documentation did not suffice.	0	5	1	2	1	9
Child became a CINA*& placed out-of-home.	0	0	0	2	2	4
Child placed under Autism Waiver.	0	0	0	1	0	1
Child transferred to Core Service Agency or another State Agency for placement.	1	0	1	1	1	4
Parents used private insurance for placement.	0	0	1	0	0	1
Parents Withdrew/Didn't Follow Through/Did Not Meet VPA Criteria	1	5	17	9	26	58

TYPE OF INITIAL PLACEMENTS FOR APPROVED

Approximately 80% of children were placed initially in a RTC; 16% in Group Homes; and 3% in Diagnostic Placements. Children are typically placed in RTCs due to experiencing intensive behavioral health related issues. As the chart below demonstrates, 16% of youth were placed in Group Homes. The youth placed in the Group Home setting tend to be those youth with autism, developmental disabilities or medically fragile conditions.

	Residential Treatment Center (RTC)	Group Home (Traditional and DDA)	Therapeutic Group Home	Therapeutic Foster Home	Diagnostic
Baltimore Region	17	6	0	1	0
Eastern Shore	9	1	0	0	0
Metro Region	6	0	0	0	1
Southern Maryland	5	1	0	0	0
Western Maryland	14	2	0	0	1
Totals	51	10	0	1	2