



May 16, 2016

Nettie Anderson-Burrs, Chairperson  
Citizens Review Board for Children  
1100 Eastern Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21221

Dear Ms. Anderson-Burrs:

The work of the Citizens Review Board for Children (CRCB) and its annual report provides great insights for Department of Human Resources (DHR) to review and improve services to children. DHR continues to benefit from the observations and feedback of the CRBC case review process and would like to highlight some of its efforts in response to CRBC recommendations for Fiscal Year 2015 Report.

DHR continues to ensure that foster children receive appropriate health and mental health services, and to address barriers to access to services and to proper documentation of services. DHR has established a work group consisting of Department of Mental Health and Hygiene (DHMH); Behavioral Health Administration (BHA); University of Maryland, School of Medicine; and University of Maryland, School of Pharmacy. This workgroup was established to identify barriers and create strategies to address barriers.

For foster children whose permanency plan is APPLA (Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement), DHR will continue to re-explore all other permanency plans to ensure that the child is placed in the least restrictive environment while continuing to follow federal 2014 legislation (Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act) that requires the "redetermination of appropriateness of placement at each permanency hearing" for children with a permanency plan of APPLA. DHR policy is that permanency hearings take place every six months, and DHR will continue to follow the new federal law by verifying the suitability of placement for youths with APPLA at each permanency hearing.

For youth aging out of foster care, DHR's Ready By 21 policy requires a plan to obtain housing. This plan is discussed during the youth's transitional family involvement meetings (FIM), occurring every six months after the youth's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. Ready By 21 ensures that youth develop and apply life skills by participating in experiential learning coupled with constant assessment and guidance. The Casey Life Skills assessment tool is used annually for foster youth, ages 14 to 21, to monitor life skill progress in education, employment, mental and physical health, housing, financial literacy, and interpersonal skill development. In Fiscal Year 2015, 93% of youth participating in Ready By 21 Survey reported having a place to live after turning 21.

Thank you for this report. DHR expects to step forward in a spirit of continued collaboration to assure the safety, permanency, and well-being for the children and families we serve.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Jones Gaston  
Acting Executive Director  
Social Services Administration