

**Child Welfare ID Managers' Webinar Series: Child Welfare Information Technology  
Systems Managers and Staff**

*The Ups and Downs of Education Data Sharing to Benefit Children in Foster Care*

February 24, 2015

- Presenters:       **Joyce Rose**, ICF International  
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                      Administration  
                      **Karen Faulk**, Child Welfare Professional, Louisiana Department of Children  
                      and Families
- Coordinator:       Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants will be  
                      on a listen only mode until the question and answer session of today's call. At  
                      that time you can press star one to ask a question from the phone lines.
- I would also like to inform parties that today's call is being recorded. If you  
                      have any objections you may disconnect at this time.
- I would now like to turn the call over to Ms. Joyce Rose. Thank you and you  
                      may begin your conference.
- Joyce Rose:       Thank you very much and I apologize for a bit of a late start. We had a little  
                      bit of a technical problem but we are ready to go.

So welcome to the Child Welfare Information Technology Systems Managers and Staff Webinar Series brought to you on behalf of the Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Children's Bureau and presented by ICF International.

I am Joyce Rose, your host and moderator for today's Webinar entitled "The Ups and Downs of Education and Data Sharing to Benefit Children in Foster Care".

So next please - due to changes in funding availability and priority the opportunities for in person discussions and networking amongst professionals working on agency child welfare IT systems are limited.

As an alternative the Division of State Systems within the Children's Bureau is continuing to provide a series of Webinars supporting information sharing and discussion.

The content of the Webinar is structured so as to appeal to States and Tribal Welfare staff participating in an Agency's Child Welfare IT Initiatives.

Next - as I mentioned previously today's Webinar is entitled "The Ups and Downs of Education Data Sharing to Benefit Children in Foster Care". Next month our colleagues in Arkansas will present their experiences as they work to share data with the Courts.

New on the series list is the April topic relating to the differences, as well as the significance of QA versus IV&V. Now Webinar topics may change as we hear of things that may be of more interest to you than others so please watch for announcements via the listserv and then register as soon as possible.

Next please - so attendees are encouraged to participate in our Webinar with questions and comments. All of the participant lines are muted right now but we will open for the Q&A session at the end of the presentation. However, please be aware that you can submit questions at any time using the go to webinar chat feature and those also will be addressed during the Q&A session at the end.

Now should we run out of time we will respond to your questions via email and/or should you have additional questions you may submit those to me at the email address listed on the slide [joyce@kassets.com](mailto:joyce@kassets.com).

Next - we are always very interested in knowing who is attending this Webinar. It is our intent throughout all of the Webinars to make the content applicable and attractive for everyone participating in an agency's child welfare information system effort.

We ask that you self-select one of the five categories listed above. My colleague Elizabeth will conduct the poll - Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: Yes, so I have opened up the poll - if you can go ahead and identify yourself by roll. If you are participating in a group together today if you could select the roll maybe that represents the majority of your group members and I will just go ahead and give everybody about a minute to click on one of the options.

We have about 85 percent of you that have identified your roll. If we can go ahead and get everybody else just to click, one of the options we will go ahead and close it out and move on. That last 13 percent of you if you could go ahead and click one of the options for us. Okay, with about 92 percent of our group today completing the poll we have 22 percent, State Child Welfare

Information System Project Managers. Our biggest group today is 47 percent which is State Child Welfare Information System Program Policy or Technical Staff. We didn't have any Tribal representatives that identified themselves but we did have 8 percent who didn't complete the poll so perhaps we have some Tribal Project Managers or staff participating that didn't answer the poll and we have 31 percent ACF Children's Bureau personnel or ACF contractors.

Joyce Rose: So that is an excellent representation and it is always good to see all disciplines represented and that gives us an idea of how to tailor our topics.

So let's move on to our Webinar format which is next. So the format of today's Webinar we will do a bit of an introduction of our participants followed by about a 60 minute presentation by our guest presenters and then we will end up with an attendee Q&A session followed by a short wrap up.

So let's meet our presenters. Karen Faulk is a Child Welfare Professional having spent 21 years with the Louisiana Department of Children and Families. She has experience as a Child Protections Investigator, Foster Care Worker and State Office Program Manager in several programmatic areas. She recently ended a two year assignment as Manager of Child Welfare System Changes and Data. She is now assigned to Child Welfare Data and Analytics full time. Dr. Faulk earned her Bachelors in Sociology and Masters in Public Administration from the University of South Alabama and her Masters and PhD in social work from LSU.

David Ayer is currently the Deputy Executive Director at Maryland Social Services Administration with whom he has worked for the last eight years. Prior to that Dr. Ayer worked at the Maryland Governor's Office for Children in the early 90's and again from the late 90's through 2007 and with the

Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth from 1996 to 98. His focus throughout these years has been on developing indicators of child and family wellbeing and performance maintenance for Child and Family Services programs, designing, implementing and fixing Information Systems to help providers and frontline staff do their work and to produce administrative data needed to measure agency progress and to be accountable for all the services provided. And now I would like to turn it over to David - David.

David Ayer: Great thank you Joyce and everyone I am really happy to be on line with you and covering material around education data sharing. I am going to speak from several slides for a little while and then turn it over to Karen and then it will come back to me.

So the – as you well know we have opportunities as never before in our agencies to share data for foster care children - for foster children in particular where the State is the parent - it is critical and we focus on sharing education data today and we will have a couple of stories.

But I wanted - if you could go to the next slide. I wanted to - we wanted to take some time to talk about why and how we can be accountable for what we do and a framework that we wanted to share with you. You know, there is a lot of data that is gathered in administrative data bases and this increases our capacity to be accountable at two levels. At the community, state, even national level on the one hand and then at the individual program level.

And I wanted to take a few moments - there are several slides. I am going to go through them sort of quickly but I wanted to review an accountability framework that we have used a fair amount in Maryland over the years and excited to share this with you just to give you an idea of how information -

how data comes into play for us and why this is all the more important for us as far as being accountable.

Next slide please - and so if you look at the idea of results accountability it is made up of two parts. Looking at the whole population on the one hand for - whether it is a community, city, county, state, national level and we are looking at combining all of the various stakeholders, the village as it were, key members who can come together and take a look at what is going on for the whole population.

And then there is performance accountability on the other hand where we are focusing on the client population, the children and families in my agency that we focus on at the program level and there is an interconnection between these two which I will talk about.

Also as we go through these slides I just want to make a mention that we drew a lot from the work, of Mark Friedman who actually was CFO for the State of Maryland's Department of Human Resources way back and worked for several years with the State and he has put these ideas together which have made ample use of over the years.

Next slide please - in terms of some definitions just to give you an idea on the population accountability side the first two are very relevant. What is a result on the one hand and what is an indicator? A result is a condition of wellbeing for children and families. There is some examples listed there that you can see and these are just basic visions that we have for our children and families across the board.

Indicators on the other hand help describe the results that we are seeking and there are a few examples of those there. And those terms result in indicators we use quite a bit here in Maryland are used on the population site.

For performance accountability we are using the term, “performance measure,” a measure of how well a program or service is doing and this gets down to the level of what we are doing in our agencies day in and day out.

And I am going to develop the ideas further of the three kinds of performance measures that we take a look at leading to the one having to do with client and customer results is anyone better off which is the ultimate question for our clients.

Next slide please - now this is - these are somewhat busy slides and I don't intend to spend too much time on these but there is a sort of a story board nature of - as it were - of how to get from examining data on the one hand and you can see on the box near the center top of the page where - whether you are looking at child maltreatment on the one hand or rates of juvenile delinquency or perhaps school harassment bullying. There could be some baseline data that has been developed and some forecast of where that might go if things aren't done differently and then a target on the other hand. And that progression from the baseline to the target is often referred to as “Turning the Curve.”

And so we are looking at trying to set up a way of fostering discussion among the folks who are intimately familiar with the data on the one hand and can talk or speak to the factors - causes that are at play that bring that about and then bringing in partners, various other agency, maybe state, local folks, private, public folks together to try to figure what might we do to turn the curve on this given issue that is tracking in the wrong direction or trending in

the wrong direction. And that ultimately should lead sooner than later to an action plan and a budget for how to get things done to make changes.

Next slide please - in Maryland over the years there have been a number of indicators that we have used - I have sort of actually misused the word measures up at the top of the slides here. This rather should be indicators describing the results that we are trying to seek for our populations but you get a sense of - from a few slides here the kind of health statistics that - indicators that we are making use of about babies being born healthy or healthy children.

And next slide please - other indicators have to do with education which of course is the major occupation for children, school age in particular, school readiness kinds of indicators or whether children are successful in school and children completing school, among others.

And next slide - a summary of some of the community kinds of measures that we use getting at the result areas of safe families and communities, independent, self-sufficient, self-supporting families and other kinds of indicators that show that we are not making good progress in those areas.

And so just a brief review of the kinds of indicators that we have been using in our results book - we have a Results for Child Wellbeing book that has been produced since 2001 in Maryland. Some of you may be familiar with Kids Count, the national book that is put together. A lot of states have their own state version of Kids Count. The Results of Child Wellbeing book is similar to that here in Maryland.

Next slide please - now shifting to what is going on in program and performance accountability In brief when you cross this notion of the quantity of what you are doing with the quality of what you are doing and with the

notions of effort, what level of effort and what effects you are having for the clients that you serve that is where a long story short, you derive the three basic questions that drive the kinds of measures - performance measures that are used. How much did we do - just fairly simple counts - how well did we do it - getting at some notion of quality of the services that we provide and is anyone better off and on both numbers and percentages generally could be displayed.

The next slide shows an example of that in relation to child welfare. We could talk about how many children we have served over the years or recently. How well did we do it, what are our caseload ratios, what percent are we visiting with our caseworker visits and then is anyone better off? To give an idea of after we have served children in foster care maybe they have left foster care. Is there repeat instances of abuse or neglect that take place are one of the issues that we have had to face in Maryland where we have had quite a downward trend in the population of foster children over the years is re-entry into foster care after reunification.

That is a trend line that has bumped us for us a little bit and so we apply some of these concepts that I am talking about here to figure out what we can do to turn the curve downward again on re-entry after reunification.

And so these are the kinds of frameworks that we have used quite extensively over the years to look at both what is going on at the population level and for the clients that we serve and it fosters - we like the framework, it is simple language and it fosters local discussions as well as state discussions.

The next slide gives a brief example and this is a very busy slide but just gives example of a scorecard that we make use of in Maryland that this is an example of the percent of foster children in Allegheny County. That A, L, E,

G in the top left there stands for Allegheny County. This is a statewide as well as a jurisdiction level online report that folks have access to.

Percent of foster children who were in care less than 12 months with two or less - two or fewer placement settings with 86 percent being the standard we are trying to reach and some statistics over several quarters of where that has been for Allegheny County and there is some other indicators of how that trend line is moving on the right hand side.

For those who might be curious the far left - all those downward arrows are simply pointing out that the current indicator is lower than the baseline which actually isn't shown on the screen.

But I just wanted to give you an idea of the kinds of data that we are putting together. You can see that there are buttons available. If you look at the lower left, the story behind the curve, the partners that are involved in addressing this issue, what works in action plan and local jurisdictions take some time updating that for themselves to help keep track. This helps provide some continuity over time as well because of course there are always staff changes that take place at agencies.

The final slide in this little segment on results accountability gives a little bit of a connection here between population accountability on the one hand which is portrayed at the top of the screen and performance accountability at the bottom of the screen. In that bottom right quadrant where we are looking at percent of repeat, abuse or neglect the percent of that among children who have been served in foster care which are, you know client results.

If we are making some good decisions and really helping families get reintegrated with their children as they return home and have success with that

reunification or it may be guardianship or even adoption then overall that large arrow that is spanning back up to the top gives some - provides some impact on the overall population statistic or indicator rate of child abuse and neglect and so there is a way to looking at both population accountability on the one hand and performance accountability on the other hand to align measures between what you are doing within your agency and how that relates to the overall issues that are facing the communities that you are working in.

And also helps to provide a sense of what is the appropriate responsibility because everyone - all sorts of agencies, state, local, private, public have some responsibility, some stake in stability of families and lowering rates of child abuse and neglect.

Child welfare obviously has one important aspect of that but the schools, faith, community, other institutions in the community have an impact on that as well and this helps to sort of zero in on the part of it that our agency is working on that may in fact have a positive impact on the population accountability side.

And so that is just a brief snippet as it were. I do want to mention that again, the fellow Mark Friedman has put these ideas together over the years. There is a website, [raguide.org](http://raguide.org) where a lot of this information is available as well in case you have further interest.

Now go to the next slide please - we will turn more to data sharing and as we touched on earlier we have a couple of critical reasons for multi-systems data sharing. Basically in Maryland, more so than in the past, we really want to spend less time getting data. We want to start really trying to work on setting up inter-linkage – inter-linkages – between agencies so we can spend less time getting data into the hands, right, of policymakers and caseworkers on the one hand and more time using the data.

Next slide please – we have – the problem of individual agency data are incomplete and I touched on this earlier. The problems that we are trying to solve are the partial views that agencies have in relation to the families, children in the families that they are working with. We are missing a cross-agency perspective as a part of that and this means that all of the needs and strengths about our client population are not fully known and we are also missing to some extent a longitudinal perspective.

We may be involved with the families now, other agencies may have been involved with the family or the child - children before us or there may be some agencies that have some work with the children and families afterwards and all of this lack of data sharing hinders our progress on the policy program side. It could also hinder casework to some extent as well just not having up to date information about the current or prior services that children and families have received.

And so in the next slide we give some examples of that and I am not going to walk through each one of these but I think perhaps across the country folks have had various levels of success at working with their sister agencies to find out about concurrent services or crossover trends, particularly child welfare to juvenile services. Juvenile justice is one example that comes up a lot.

In Maryland we have been focusing on psychotropic medicine – medication use and we need to really be linked up with the health information websites data bases in order to get good information about that.

And the finally sort of zeroing in on the topic of today information about educational stability among our children the attendance rates that they have promotion and graduation and so forth among our school-age foster children.

And so that is where we are going to now zero our attention on in a couple stories relating to this.

The next person to speak, Karen Falk is going to share with you experiences that they have had up to now in Louisiana and it helps with policy and program development and Karen, are you ready to take on the next one?

Karen Faulk: Sure, in Louisiana our primary effort so far has been data matching through MOU's through University Research Centers and not so much direct data matching with agencies - with other agencies and so in 2010 we created an MOU with Cecil J. Picard Center for Childhood Development and Lifelong Learning which is associated with the Louisiana - University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the Picard Center is primarily a research center that is focused on education and school-based health, poverty issues and, you know, issues related to primarily to education.

And they reached out to us to look at correlating some of the foster care population to education data to see what we could learn about our population of kids in foster care at a certain point in time.

So the MOU was - it took a long time to actually get the MOU ironed out just to do this one particular project and it took a lot of - of course we had to go through the University IRB process. Our state law requires that any type of data sharing or research involving child welfare data be managed through an IRB or have IRB approval and we don't have an internal IRB process so it usually requires that any research effort be associated with a university or an agency that has an approved - a federal approved IRB process.

So we had to provide a data file that includes the identifiers that allow for proper match so that is name and date of birth and SSN and it is, you know,

always kind of scary to think about turning over data that includes that kind of private information and of course we had to develop a secure means of transferring the data to the Picard Center staff.

Next please - one of the - part of the process of developing the MOU was learning what other departments Picard Center had MOU's with and how they might use our data and to verify that we approved that - the use of our data for those purposes. So they also have MOU's with the Department of Education, with the Department of Health and Hospitals Office of Citizens with Disabilities and then when the - with the Office of Juvenile Justice. Our primary interest was in matching with the Department of Education.

Next please - one of the steps that we agreed upon was those identifiers that would be used as matching elements. The Picard Center and we have also had agreements with the University of - with LSU, with Louisiana State University with certain data sharing and we - they basically followed the same kind of procedure.

Once they create the link between our data and the Department of Education data they create a unique ID that connects those individuals together and then they hide or secure the actual identifiers in a locked process in a locked file and only allow their staff to use the data that has the unique identifier so the unique ID to link the client level data so that they actually unique identifier as the name, date of birth and SSN actually end up getting removed and then they report only aggregate data.

So that was part of what made up our agreement and then they can only use our data for purposes that we have approved and so that is how we, you know, that is how our MOU was crafted with Picard.

Next please - when they matched our data - first of all we took - we provided a point in time data set for some time in 2010 for Picard Center to match our data and we have at any given point in time about 4,000 to 4,500 kids in foster care and that has fluctuated some, you know, up and down over the last few years but in 2010 it was around 4,500 kids in foster care and as you see here the in for the foster - for a foster care children was 2,502 so our data quality was not strong enough to have a really good match ratio. We had about 50 percent - less than fifty percent match but of those kids who did match in the - in their education data they were able to demonstrate that, you know, kids in foster care have a higher rate - a substantially higher rate of in-school suspensions, out of school suspensions, in-school expulsions and out of school expulsions than the state wide kids in educational settings and so while we kind of think or suspect that our kids are at higher risk for that this provided some actual data to show that there is that difference.

Next please - another comparison that was done was a comparison of the kids in foster care to statewide kids related to their Leap Test and the statewide data is the red - represented by the red bars on the chart and the foster kids are represented by the blue bars and the first three categories are exceptional or average performance on the Leap score - on the Leap Test - advanced - I forgot what MAS stands for but - and then basic level and then the two levels where the foster kids excel are those that are underperforming measures so we see that even with Leap testing our foster kids are not performing as well as kids generally perform on the Leap Test.

Next please - and then another example of what they were able to show us with the match and again when we get down to specific grade levels the number of kids in foster care was fairly small so we have to be cautious about how we interpret the data but we can see that the percent of kids in foster care that have a basic or above score for math, science, social studies, is lower than

statewide at these grade levels. We have the fourth grade level and the eighth grade level depicted on this slide and then the gap between the two groups is displayed in the brown bar between the two grade levels.

And so there is a substantial difference even though our in for foster care is relatively small and we should be cautious about that.

I think there is one more slide on this - next please. And so another match that was done was the representation of foster kids in regular education, special education or gifted and talented settings and we see that foster kids had a lower rate of - the percentage of foster kids in regular ed. was 70.1% while the statewide percentage was 84.8% and foster kids were over represented in Special Ed settings and under-represented in the gifted and talented settings. And so this is just an example of some of what could be seen from our data matching.

Next please - one of the things that we found of course with the matching is that data quality is one of our biggest issues and we have worked since then to - since that match to improve the data match indicators that are helpful such as social security number and we have not done another match since that time so we need to try that again but we have worked to improve data quality because that definitely impacts the match and David will talk about that in a moment about their match rate.

We also need to have some strong software for data matching that can accommodate an algorithm that can account for things like transposed numbers, special characters and names and things of that nature because what we call near matches and without a good software package that can do that the data matching is going to be very limited like we saw with less than fifty percent match.

And in the south - I don't know if this is common in other states but in the south we have a lot of names with special characters and of course dashes can be in names, apostrophes in names and if different systems have those names stored different - with the characters and some without then the matching process can be more difficult to complete.

Next please - so we do have a new state match wish list that we are working with Department of Health and Hospitals on. We are working with the State Medicaid data to obtain - Medicaid agency to obtain data related to diagnosis for children that are in foster care so that we can try to analyze the instances in which children are prescribed psychotropic medications compared to diagnosis that they have that may or may not match up with those medications. We also have a work group that is also analyzing the situations in which children have multiple psychotropic medication prescriptions simultaneously.

We are working with the State Death Review Board to identify ways to match the child welfare fatality data to the State Death Review Board process and to try to align our definitions of what the - of what are used. For example we have a very specific definition of child abuse or neglect by a parent or caretaker that may not be the same definition that the State Death Review Board uses.

We have also worked with the Nurse Family Partnership to provide a data match with - using their data to match into our system to identify instance or prevalence of child maltreatment following the birth of a child in a Nurse Family Partnership - enrolled in Nurse Family Partnership Program. We are hoping to be able to link to immunization records and paternity acknowledgement database and individual education data in the future.

Next please - so back to David.

David Ayer: All right and just want to make a comment that the work that Karen has done or the folks in Louisiana have done is taken quite a few steps in the area of policy program data sharing to monitor the trends. We are going to have more of this kind of data at that level policy program level shortly based on the work that we have been doing but this is not an easy thing to put together. The MOU's that get hammered together they take some time.

So as we shift now back to Maryland the story that I am going to talk about is our efforts to get education data pulled into our SACWIS System so that the frontline staff can make use of it and this is a story that is still in progress. We have made some good progress so I am going to go through some of the ins and outs of how we have gotten to where we are now.

This slide shows some of the efforts and I've maybe been around too long. It takes a long time to implement a seemingly good idea and you can see some of the 1992 Strategies Committee on maybe we should have an interagency data base or shared data elements among agencies on the one hand and then almost ten years later the interagency MIS, Management Information System Initiative. The vision statement that is I still very much believe in to optimize outcomes for children, youth and families by using technology to get the right information into the right hands, at the right time, and in the right way, particularly at the casework level.

We are still chasing after that over ten years since that was published and put together by an interagency group as part of my work back in the Governor's Office for Children way back when. So we still haven't detained this vision. We are taking small steps to get there.

Next slide please - as I have been with the Child Welfare Agency in Maryland, Social Services Administration, over the last few years there has been an interagency group that was formed, including child welfare, juvenile services, education and courts to discuss opportunities and develop methods to increase in data sharing among the agencies - put out some guidance for local folks as far as data sharing goes and we have been able - we were able as part of that work group that I was brought in to work with maybe after - well after it got formed, maybe a couple of years ago, and support from the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law we were able to put together a small interagency team that were accepted into the Data Sharing Certificate Program at Georgetown - that took place at Georgetown University and that was a very good step as we moved forward in trying to put together Education Data Sharing Agreements.

Next slide please - while the last few years have been spinning along and we have had our interagency group at the state level there were some decent movements that took place at the federal level. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act FERPA, as it is known, governs the use of education data and I will just say - I guess my editorial was rather restrictive on - rightfully so - there is a lot of sensitive information about students and what happens with them and so forth that are protect - need to be protected.

The change that was made a few years back, the Uninterrupted Scholars Act, enabled data sharing with Foster Care Agencies without parental notification or consent and that really, while the group - the interagency group locally in Maryland was meeting this ended up becoming a rather key development that paved the way, the legal way as it were, for education data sharing to happen in an automated kind of fashion that could take place between the state agencies.

And so next slide please. Although laws and regulations can be fuzzy and even though there was this USA, this Uninterrupted Scholars Act, put into place things still just don't happen as if a snap of the fingers will suddenly bring information data over to us.

The interagency work that we did at Georgetown was the beginning of tentative steps leading to stronger steps to form an MOU between Social Services Administration and we are part of the umbrella organization known as DHR, Department of Human Resources, so between DHR and MSDE which is the State Education Agency, and what this work at Georgetown, and this was December of 2013, what this did was really help to build trust between the people who were involved.

You know, each agency has its rules and particularly around the privacy and protection of client data and we each of cadres of lawyers that help us know what we can and can't do and we were able - really I think the magic ingredient for us in forge - continuing to forge the way on the MOU was the certificate program that we sat down at for a few days and looked at the laws more closely. We looked at what we can do and can't do - actually learned a little bit more about the permissiveness of data sharing, particularly for foster children that was in place and, you know, learning to be respectful of the other parties and the other agencies - can't be rushing in demanding as much sense as it makes and so we began the MOU process at the beginning of last year, beginning of 2014.

If you go to the next slide please and what we have been able to hammer out in relation to the education data that can be shared is essentially everything that they have got for students who happen to be in foster care, enrollment

information, including attendance so that we get to know the - we get to develop a history of the school placements from year to year.

Someone may wonder or think well why, you know, why do you need to - why is this exciting. I think I will just sort of mention that our SACWIS System currently does have education screens contained in it, it - they came to us as part of the program that was transferred to us. We have a Transfer SACWIS as it were - I think it was West Virginia came to Maryland and to DC and we have both needed to improve or update as we move forward. So we had some education screens there and we do have some policies and directives to folks to collect and enter information in about education but as you may be familiar some information is well collected and well documented in a SACWIS System and others are not and education data falls prey to sporadic data entry so I could never be sure of what I had over the years as far as education data.

So the exciting part is having all of this information, assessments information, in and out of school suspensions, as Karen showed, use some actual data on that. I will be able to start doing that sooner than later. Student courses and grades and that is not very much helpful at the state level because each of the jurisdictions - Maryland has 24 jurisdictions including Baltimore City, 23 counties and Baltimore City - each of those school - those are the same of the school districts in Maryland. Each of those has their own way of naming classes and assigning and grades and such to them. It is really - that is going to be more helpful to the caseworkers.

Special enrollment - I mean Special Ed Enrollment and information about the exits, career and technology enrollment and outcomes as well is going to come over to us and the process that we are going to be following for this will be to create a list of our foster children. In Maryland we currently have around

5,000 children in foster care on any given day and that is down from well over 10,000 when I first stepped into the agency. We went through quite a process of focusing on family and kin resources and a number of other steps to help support families and prevent the need for placement and returning a lot of children over the years. We have been - our exits from care have far exceeded for the most part, from month to month quarter to quarter, the entries that we have into care.

So we have brought our population - foster care population down quite a bit but we send that list over and we have a - an opportunity for them to do the match and oh and if we can go to the next slide.

Okay, if you - some idea of the kind of time frames that are involved. On the - start on the right hand side - those are the time frames when we would produce and send over detailed information about our foster care population. I mean maybe they need the DHR identifier, first name, last name, date of birth and we send that over to the schools and they do a matching based on that.

You can see from the right hand side of this table here that there are a few times quarterly over the course of the year when we would send our information over to NSDE, over to the state schools. And then you can see on the left hand side the timeframes during which we would get the data and it starts at the top left if you can read that, with mid-January. So in mid-January following a school year - so let's say the school year runs through August of the prior year - let's say - what are we in, '15 so August of 2014 is the 2014 academic year. So in mid-January we - oh I am sorry, I misspoke - the - in mid-January we would get information about the current school year that we are in so this is 2015 and we would get information about enrollment as of 9-30 - we would start to get attendance information and you can see some of the other kinds of tests and some of the other information that becomes available.

And as you go down the left hand side with some of the other timeframes you see some of the other pieces of information that come. What you can immediately sort of gather from looking at this and reviewing this is that we are on a bit of a lagged schedule and we are going to therefore be able to say that we have accurate data moving forward as far as education information is concerned for our children in foster care but it will be with a time lag.

The time frames that are listed on the left hand side are a function of when the State Department can finalize data that it receives from the local schools. They have a quarterly update give or take amongst the local schools at different parts - times of the year - these updates to the State Department of Education take place. And so while we will be able to say we will have accurate data about children in foster care it will be on, you know, up to a three to six month lag, depending on what kind of data it is that we are talking about. Some of the assessment information takes a little bit longer.

And we will be needing to work a little bit on timeliness as we move forward and currently there are no plans at the state education level to speed up or increase the frequency with which they receive information from the local jurisdictions. They - I know some states are much larger than Maryland but they receive 24 sets of information. It takes them a while to do data cleanup and making sure that everything is all together before they finalize a set of data and then they will make that available to us based on the latest set of foster care children for the school year that we are in that we send over to them.

And so we are very excited to be at this point in time the MOU itself - oh, next slide please. The MOU itself was signed in December - this past December. Now some people say six months to finalize an MOU isn't long

but it just drove me crazy. It took, a very long time for my perspective and we managed finally to nail it down just before in Maryland our gubernatorial transition took place. We have a new governor now and with the folks, the leaders that were in place, we were able to finalize this just in time essentially.

In January we sent over our first set of foster care data. The match rate was 93% and we had sent over the complete set of foster care children. I mean even knowing that the preschool age foster children probably won't get matched over to MSDE but we sent all over. One of our reasons for doing that was just to have a process in place for generating and sending all education data over as we reach a good process with the school-aged information education data with the schools. We are then going to add to the agreement to go after preschool information. There are a lot of early education programs that the schools support and they do collect various information about children in the various preschool programs that MSDE supports through Federal and State funding and we will go after that as a next step.

The education data that is being assembled by the State Department of Education is going to include some historical data. We - as part of our agreement we were able to get historical data for the children who are in care currently for the past several years going back to 2012. So at least for the children who are in care now we will have a history going back to 2012 and so all of the different schools that a child has been to - all the various assessments, suspensions and what not have come over.

As we were looking at just some of the raw numbers of records that were coming over some of the kinds of things that Karen was pointing out with her statistics I think will be true for ours as well and a little over representation as far as special ed. on the one hand - the in and out of school suspension, file records seem pretty high to me as we took a quick look at.

We are going to assemble this data into a student profile and I don't have an example of that just yet. We haven't quite gotten to it yet but that will fall together fairly quickly and I hoping it will be no more than a two or three page profile on each of the foster care students that will then be distributed to the appropriate local foster care workers and supervisors so that they have that available to them and can make use of that as they move forward.

We will be, as it mentions here, putting manual reports together first eventually leading to automated reports. The other thing that we obviously are going to need to do is make a lot of changes in our SACWIS System to accommodate the actual data that we now have coming to us from the State Department of Education.

Next slide please - the final next steps as it were - as I mentioned we are getting this data - we are going to have accurate education data for our foster care children but not necessarily timely. We had some early discussions with our local schools and local departments of social services to begin the process of - now that we have a process in place for the data that the local schools already submit on a quarterly basis to the State Department of Education we are going to see if at least maybe a portion of that data might be delivered to us directly from the local schools for the children, for the foster care children in that jurisdiction so that we can improve the timeliness of the data that we are trying to get.

And so that would ultimately mean that we would have to forge partnerships with 24 entities on a more timely basis, maybe monthly or every other month - I don't think weekly or anything like that, to get this data on a more timely basis. At least the enrollment and attendance data - maybe some other pieces as well.

As I mentioned we have to update our SACWIS to handle these data. Once we have updated our SACWIS System then these screens will get populated directly with the education data and I have not been able to dive into it quite yet, taking a look at the new AFCARS rules and data elements that are being proposed. I am hoping though that the education data that we are going to be getting on an ongoing basis from the state level schools will help us to meet any requirements that ultimately get put into place for AFCARS.

And so that is where we are at in Maryland. I wanted to just say that the process has been sort of a ginger process of forming an MOU. There was one point in time I will recall - just share this one little snippet as I sat down with education folks whom I love but they are very careful about the data and we sat down and we were talking about getting all of this data, all that data that I just showed you coming over and I talked about that we would be for the first time able to produce a fairly accurate report, an aggregate report, a numbers report like you just saw with Karen's data that would give some information about what is going on with our foster care children.

And they looked at me for a moment as though I was ready and willing to break the law because they were very clear with me that this data that comes over it is to go into your SACWIS - it is to be seen only by the foster care folks and supervisors and other folks in the agency, state or local, that have a direct interest or responsibility in relation to educational planning for the foster care students - for the foster children who are students and that the thought that you would then go producing aggregate level reports I thought I was going to lose it at that moment - the whole possibility of making this MOU happen.

And I explained further that not only did we want to do that because we have never had that kind of information before for overall planning but we do have some federal reporting for our IV-B reports and others that we need to have better information, more accurate data to talk about timeliness of enrollment and so forth.

And so they got in touch with their FERPA people, a phone call - I don't think it was written, a phone call and the person that they talked to at the Education Department was rather clear to them that absolutely we would expect that people with whom you are sharing this information would be able to produce some aggregate level reports because the exact nature of the FERPA language in the law didn't speak to it directly. In some respects really had thrown off the local or Maryland State Education folks into taking a much more constrictive or restrictive view of what could be done with this.

And there are certainly many restrictions. The very last thing I will mention is that if anyone is interested and Joyce we could also post this up on the Website if anyone would be interested in going to grab it, the MOU that we actually signed in December.

And with that - that is the story of where we are at so far in Maryland and there is a lot more to come that we are rather excited about finally. In fact today the first set of data has been delivered to us for us to take a look at and start making some sense of so we are underway with this process.

And that is the story for Maryland, at least as far as getting education data into the hands of caseworkers. We are getting closer and closer to it.

Karen Faulk: And so David one of the things I wanted to kind of mention is that, you know, thinking about potential issues going forward of course one of the issues is

that you point out is the frequency of the data match impacts how helpful the data exchange will be for the frontline staff and because the State Department of Educations are usually behind getting the data from the local districts.

David Ayer: Right.

Karen Faulk: That source of data is going to have its limitations. In Louisiana we have 70 school districts –

David Ayer: Right.

Karen Faulk: ...and so we don't really want to try to do an agreement with 70 different districts.

David Ayer: Right.

Karen Faulk: And then the other issues that can occur in terms of looking at the kind of data that's needed for children is that some children may not be enrolled in public schools because there are now, you know, some options to have - for children to be home-schooled –

David Ayer: Right.

Karen Faulk: ...as well as some states like Louisiana, have education vouchers that can be used to enroll a child in a private school.

David Ayer: Right.

Karen Faulk: And so how data will be available on kids who are receiving education through non-public schools using public dollars, that level of data is not yet –

David Ayer: Right.

Karen Faulk: ...I don't know where that is yet, at least for us.

David Ayer: Yes. Those are good points. Let me just make a mention about the first one. Yes, the state - there's probably no change that's going to take place any time soon. The State Education folks are busy enough at this time.

The quarterly basis for data collection from all their school districts; the 24 jurisdictions in Maryland will continue and we will have that issue. I don't - and they're not going to speed that up. I don't know how else to do this except to start for - it will take some time. But to start forging relationships with each of the 24.

In fact I didn't want to really start diving into that with any local school district until I could at least bring in my hand, this is what we have forged with the State Department of Education that sort of leads the way that it's okay to share this data for this purpose.

Of course FERPA changes already allow for that, but believe me, every one of these is a baby step to reach that point of trust and the give and take that has to go on with putting this kind of data together. So I wanted to have that in place.

And this will take some time, but I think we do envision it, and attempt at least, to try to work with local schools to get at least a portion of the data. At least to be up to speed on where the child is at as far as their educational placement goes.

In terms of the point that yes, they're not all in public schools, and while we do have a pretty high rate of match of the moment, there will be some of those children for whom we don't have the data.

That I think will just fall back on our case workers or local departments to try to chase that down because we're not going to have any kind of automated systematic way of collecting that from anyone else. That's sort of an example where we're going to just have to collect the data and put that in.

But if that's only a couple or a few or several percent of all of the foster children that are in school, that's a much easier problem than what we've had up to now which hasn't worked very well as far as our accuracy - our level of accuracy with the school's data.

And so that would be the approaches that we would be thinking about taking next. But, don't hold your breath. It will take a little while for us to plow through that.

Joyce Rose: All right. Elizabeth, I think the slide is the Q&A. Can you...

Elizabeth: Yes it is.

Joyce Rose: I want to take this moment to thank David and Karen for their presentation and the marvelous work that they're doing. I can hear the excitement and the passion in your voices which will only serve our foster children to make improvements in their lives. So thank you very much.

David Ayer: Sure.

Joyce Rose: Can we open the phone lines and the chat to our attendees for our Q&A session now? And once again I'm going to turn this over to Elizabeth to manage the Q&A session.

Elizabeth: Okay, and I'm actually going to ask Cordero if you could let us know how people can line up on the phone for questions.

Coordinator: Thank you. We will now begin the question and answer session. If you would like to ask a question please press star 1. You will be prompted to mute your phone and record your name.

Your name is required to introduce your question. And again that's star 1 to ask a question from the phone lines. And one moment for our first question.

Elizabeth: Okay, while we're waiting for people to line up on the phone we do have quite a few questions that came in via chat so maybe we can move through some of those.

First one, do you see any improvement in getting information from schools since the change in FERPA which allows schools to share data for children in foster care without parental permission?

David Ayer: I have. That was the critical key to stepping forward in Maryland. And it wasn't sufficient. We still had to go through a process of creating an MOU, but it paved the way for that to be able to happen.

And with the trust that we had built up with folks, I think we were able to follow through with the MOU that now is starting to bear some fruit for us.

Elizabeth: Okay. Karen did you want to add anything?

Karen Faulk: No, we haven't pursued exchange of data since our 2010 MOU with the Picard Center, so we haven't done a direct exchange or attempt to do a direct exchange with our Department of Education yet.

Elizabeth: Okay. Well I won't let you off the hook. Then the next question is for you. You mentioned improving data such as social security number as being key. Do either of your agencies have direct interfaces with the Social Security Administration to gather demographic and benefit data? And if not, then how do you get that information.

Karen Faulk: We actually do not, and this has been a real struggle for us because of the limits that are available to interface with Social Security.

And my understanding may be limited or our experience here may be different than other states, but we have not been given direct access to do that.

Actually the only method that we have for having our data updated is for individual case workers to update that data in our system. And since so many of our kids come - I mean their record comes to us first from a CPI investigation where information - the specific date of birth and SSN may not have been collected during the investigation.

Then if those documents are not obtained at the time of removal and they have to be requested, there is a delay in getting accurate data. And then there is the problem of people going into the system to update the system.

So that's one of the reasons we have a data quality issue with some of that information.

We have put together - we have a Dynamic Dashboard that is available to our staff and that is monitored. Certain reports on that dashboard are monitored regularly. And we have created an algorithm to identify numbers that are in our social security number field for our foster kids that do not meet the criteria to be a social security number.

And that report is on the dashboard and is monitored regularly by our regional and local staff. So they have this push to try to make sure the SSNs are accurate. But again, we're using an algorithm like you can't have all 9s or you can't have a number that begins with a 9 in your SSN field.

So we're using kind of a logic that says if you have a number that looks like this or this or this, then it's wrong. Therefore you go on the list and it needs to be corrected.

So that's what we've done to try to address the SSN errors. Date of birth is a little different because there are lots of things that could happen to that to cause it to be inaccurate. So we're still working on improvement of the data, but the SSN report is one of the things that we've done to improve that.

It has helped a lot because we also - we do get a monthly download file from our Medicaid system of children enrolled in the Medicaid program. And we do match against that system, and we use that to help test the accuracy of our data. And it has improved over time with the use of that dashboard report.

David Ayer: Right. In Maryland I think there may have been an ongoing relationship with Social Security but that went away. I'm not too sure what happened with that.

We follow the same kind of process as Karen described in Louisiana that at some point the case workers collect that social security information and put that into the system.

We have a social security number in the system for nearly - for most of the children in the system; adults as well.

Because at DHR we have a lot of the clients also involved in other aspects of our department, Family Investment Administration, child support Enforcement and so those get used.

And we either have them from those other systems that may populate into CHESSIE or our workers put them in.

Karen Faulk: Right. I forgot about those other systems. We do have access to look at some of that information in other systems, but we do not auto-populate it into our Child Welfare System. But some staff have access to more information than other staff.

But they do use some of the child support data and the SNAP data system - data from the SNAP system to identify correct date of birth and SSNs as a proxy for waiting on the actual birth certificate or social security card when they have to order those.

David Ayer: Right.

Elizabeth: All right.

Karen Faulk: It's very manual.

David Ayer: Yes.

Elizabeth: Cordero, do we have any calls on the phone?

Coordinator: We do. Our first question comes from Michele Safrin. Your line is now open.

Michele Safrin: Hi, this is Michele Safrin from New Jersey. My question is whether in your conversations with the Department of Education, were there any concerns that they were not the primary holder of the education data?

David Ayer: No. If I - I might need you to elaborate a little bit more. They're not the primary holder but in our instance they periodically collect information from the primary holders - the 24 school districts in Maryland.

So we - they clean it up too and that I think just helps with accuracy of the data that ends up coming to us.

Michele Safrin: Right. So it's similar here in New Jersey although we have actually 900 school districts...

David Ayer: Wow.

Michele Safrin: ...that upload their information to the State Department of Education. And their concern, even with what's permissible under the U.S.A. is that the districts are really the ones that hold the data. So they are really giving us some pushback in terms of going directly to the districts.

And I think you and Louisiana both agree that you know, trying to reach to all the different districts is quite challenging.

David Ayer: Oh yes. Especially in your instance, definitely.

Michele Safrin: Nine hundred.

David Ayer: Quite a few.

Michele Safrin: Yes. And so we have - you know we did not - there's ongoing conversations with, you know, with the Department of Ed, but we instead have now started with one of our 900 districts and signed a MOU. But we are still hoping that our Department of Ed will have a change of heart.

David Ayer: Let me make sure I understand. The 900 currently have some obligation or requirement to send information up?

Michele Safrin: Yes. Yes, they all have to.

David Ayer: Yes, yes okay, good.

Michele Safrin: They send it actually twice a year. So it would be similar concerns about, you know, there would be a lag...

David Ayer: A lag, right.

Michele Safrin: ...and that kind of thing. But at least we - and I think you had said this before, that at least we would have some aggregate data that would at least be able to target which districts our children are not performing well in.

David Ayer: Right.

Michele Safrin: And that we would go to those districts first. And that's one of the reasons why we chose the district that we're going to - that we're working with now –

David Ayer: Good.

Michele Safrin: ...because their high school graduation rate is like 20%. So - but I was just wondering if you had any insight, and it doesn't sound like you had that - that you ran into that?

David Ayer: No, no didn't run into that kind of issue. I mean just the lag issue is the main –

Michele Safrin: Right.

David Ayer: ...thing, but there was - yes I mean gosh 900, I don't know how you would manage to do that except with the State Education's help to try to organize them to do something a little bit more frequently.

Maybe for a portion of the enrollment and attendance data that gives you the school that the child is in on a more frequent basis. But wow, that's going to be a major –

Michele Safrin: Right.

David Ayer: ...kind of effort.

Michele Safrin: Okay all right. But thanks, we can at least say to them that your two states are doing something like that, so.

David Ayer: Yeah, yeah. And like I said, the MOU that we've put together is a PDF file. We can get that posted up somewhere or get in touch with me directly and we can get - if that might help at all.

Michele Safrin: Great, thank you.

Elizabeth: We'll post contact information in just a minute so people can request it there. Cordero, do we have other questions on the line?

Coordinator: And at this time I'm not seeing any other questions in queue.

Elizabeth: Okay. So next question that we have via chat is, does Louisiana also have the issue of individual school districts designing courses in grading? And for either Maryland or Louisiana, how does this impact using foster care?

David Ayer: Right. The courses and the grades are context specific. They vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. And so we'll have a - we're not going to make as much use of that at the state level as far as any kind of aggregate reporting that we might do.

We simply are interested in pipelining it as it were, to the local worker with the names of the classes and the grades that are used in that jurisdiction so that they could be using the same language; the same terms. And really that's really just a direct help to the case worker.

I also want to mention, and other folks may have been thinking about this as part of the - as we were presenting and so forth is - and it's true here amongst some jurisdictions more than others that there relationships now between the schools and local social services where, you know, as a parent -- and I'm a parent; I have three kids going through the public school system over the

years -- you know you get on line and you can see information about attendance; about the grades and all that kind of thing.

A lot of those kinds of relationships have been developed locally, so that either foster parents on the one hand and/or the case worker have access to that online screen that the schools have.

Now in Maryland I think every school system in Maryland has some sort of online log-on Web site that you can go to. And some folks make use of that maybe more than others.

And so this isn't to say that folks have had a total lack of knowledge about what's going on with their children - their foster children in school. But this just helps to add a layer of continuity for all the data that we want to have in our system about education in there.

But yes it's - the course names and the grades that are peculiar to each of the jurisdictions, that's really for the case workers to know and make use of.

Karen Faulk: And I think that's true in Louisiana too, that the school districts - the local school districts have some flexibility about how grades are structured and course names and things of that nature.

Elizabeth: Okay. Next question via the chat for both of you actually - is this an administrative cost or a development one? And do you and DOE share the cost?

David Ayer: The cost - we in Maryland, each side is in effect, absorbing the cost. It's admin cost I guess, in relation to managing data requests and so forth.

The MSDE folks, I just sat down with six folks the other day, a couple of whom are the real data cruncher people that get the data out. As part of this MOU, they're following through on doing this.

There's no cost portion of the MOU. Each side is taking care of its cost of doing this.

On our side we're going to have costs in relation to changing our SACWIS screens in order to accommodate the education data that comes over. That will be done - part of it, the maintenance and operations part of further screen changes that we need to make.

And then the manpower or person power that it takes to put the reports together, that's part of staff that I have at the agency.

And so basically it's part of the administrative work that we're doing and the jobs that people have come to them because we're in public service so they absorb it and they do it.

Karen Faulk: That's essentially how it works here as well. While we haven't done a direct match with DOE or with Department of Ed here, the process that we went through with the Picard Center, we absorbed, you know, our own cost of creating the data file of all the work that went into doing the MOU was absorbed by our agency in terms of our attorneys reviewing it and weighing in on it and modifying it.

David Ayer: Oh yes, same here, right.

Karen Faulk: And all that stuff. And of course the process of creating the file and getting it transmitted and all of that, we absorbed that cost to provide that data to Picard Center.

And when we do data matches or data sharing with another department it's - the cost is just absorbed by each of the departments to do their part of it.

David Ayer: Yes.

Elizabeth: Okay, and let me see, Cordero do we have anyone else on the phone?

Coordinator: At this time I have no other questions in queue. If you would like to ask a question, please press star 1. You will be prompted to unmute your phone and record your first and last name. Again, star 1.

Elizabeth: All right I'm going to ask I think one more from our online. And David I think you might have covered this, but the number has slipped my mind.

How often will data be shared between Social Services and Education once the automated reports are scheduled in Maryland?

David Ayer: Right. Social Services, our foster care list of children will go over - originally intended is four times a year we might actually consolidate that a bit and send a file over three times a year.

We've been tweaking the process a little bit since we started discussing what we're going to do. And in fact the timeframes that I illustrated, that comes from the MOU. There will be a little bit of consolidation around that as we go.

But currently three times we send over. And on a quarterly basis, depending on what education data have become available, the schools will send that available information over to us. So they will be on a quarterly schedule, sending information back.

Elizabeth: Okay.

David Ayer: For the given academic school year.

Elizabeth: Great, thank you. Cordero, I'm going to check one last time to make sure we don't have any other questions. And if not, I'm going to turn it back over to Joyce to close things up for the day.

Coordinator: And at this time there are no questions in queue.

Elizabeth: Okay Joyce, back to you.

Joyce Rose: Thank you. Okay, so for our conclusion, any of the materials that were referenced today such as the MOUs from Maryland and - Karen are you willing to share any of your MOUs with our attendees?

Karen Faulk: I'll verify it. I think we can but I'll just need to verify it and I can send it - just send it to you?

Joyce Rose: Yes, please.

Karen Faulk: Okay.

Joyce Rose: I have already received an email requesting the MOUs, so I think that would be the process to follow. If you would like those MOUs, please send them to

me to the email listed on the screen - joyce@kassets.com, and we'll get them to you.

So now, what's next? As I mentioned we're busy working on the March Webinar which is another data sharing topic, and this is with the Courts. And we will learn what Arkansas is doing in that arena.

So we hope that today's information was very informative and valuable to you. As a reminder, remember to register for that March Webinar once the announcement is released.

And additionally, if you have any questions regarding today's topics or would like more information about any of our scheduled webinars, or in fact would like to volunteer your state as a topic presenter, please do not hesitate to contact me, again at that email listed on the slide.

So this Webinar has been recorded and will be made available on line. When it is complete and posted we will send a message via the SACWIS Manager's Listserv with that link.

Thank you so much for attending and have a wonderful rest of the day.  
Goodbye.

Coordinator: And that concludes today's conference. Thanks for participating and you all may disconnect at this time please.

END