

CASELOAD EXITS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE TENTH YEAR OF FIP

VALERIE HEAD, MA
JOOHEE YUM, PhD
RESEARCH SPECIALISTS

KATHRYN PATTERSON, BFA
RESEARCH ANALYST

CATHERINE E. BORN, PhD
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
525 WEST REDWOOD STREET
BALTIMORE, MD 21201

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For additional information about the report or the study, please contact Dr. Catherine Born at the School of Social Work (410.706.5134, cborn@ssw.umaryland.edu). Please visit our website, www.familywelfare.umaryland.edu for additional copies of this and our other reports.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Maryland has a long, strong tradition of using empirical research to help shape welfare programs and to measure outcomes. This data-driven approach enabled the state to craft a comprehensive, bipartisan approach to welfare reform in 1996, allowing the implementation of statewide operation on the earliest date permissible under federal law (October 1, 1996), and continues today. We have perhaps the most comprehensive, ongoing, state-level research program which monitors reform outcomes, publicly reports results, and, most importantly, continuously feeds information into the program management and legislative oversight process. Literally dozens of research studies have been done or are underway, ranging from point-in-time studies of topics such as time limits, full family sanctions and domestic violence to studies which are serial in nature.

Two research series have been ongoing since the outset of reform in 1996. One series, *Life after Welfare*, is longitudinal in nature and legislatively mandated. Cases are added to its now 15,000+ sample each month and post-welfare outcomes at the individual and case level are tracked over a period of years. *Life* not only documents person-level outcomes, but also trends over time in the profile of welfare leavers, full family sanctioning, recidivism, employment and earnings and more. The other series, *Caseload Exits at the Local Level*, also began concurrent with reform and includes this report. Reports in this series focus on case closures at the jurisdiction level, an important level of analysis because statewide findings often mask important intra-state variations due to the concentration of cash assistance caseloads in a few large, urbanized jurisdictions. Concentrated caseloads coupled with Maryland's great economic, ethnic, and other diversity makes the *Caseload Exits* reports invaluable because they provide side-by-side, jurisdiction-level information about the numbers and charac-

teristics of closing cases and the reasons for case closure, including sanctioning.

This report in the *Caseload Exits at the Local Level* series provides information on 23,509 unduplicated closures that took place between October, 2005 and September, 2006. This was the 10th full year of welfare reform in our state and the period when the new, more stringent requirements of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) began to be implemented. The DRA changes are significant, so the 12 month period covered in this report can be viewed as a year of transition from the rules and requirements of the "old" welfare system circa 1996 to the "new" DRA era. Thus, we present today's report with two companion documents, separate reports covering the last, full pre-DRA year (October, 2004 – September, 2005) and the first full year of operation under the DRA rules (October, 2006 – September, 2007). Key findings from today's report, the transition year, are highlighted below.

1. The number of unique cases closing between October 2005 and September 2006 (23,509) was slightly smaller (by 768 cases) than the year before, but continuing the downward trend in closures, was the lowest number observed since 1996.
2. Traditional cases (those with at least one adult) accounted for 80% of all closures this year, as they did last year. Baltimore City (51.4%), Prince George's (10.2%) and Baltimore (9.7%) counties together accounted for 71% of all closures, almost exactly the same percentage as the prior year (71.8%). Both findings are consistent with the composition and distribution of the statewide caseload. Notably, and alone among jurisdictions, Prince George's County's share of total closures (10.2%) was almost two percentage points less than its share of the total average annual caseload (11.8%).

3. Most (70.1%) traditional case closures were 'remainder' cases, generally the work-mandatory. This is a small decrease (-2.3%) from last year, but the number of remainder cases receiving aid declined by 5.9% over the prior year as well. Notably, remainder cases accounted for a much larger share of annual closures (70.1%) than they did of all cases active in the last month of the study period (61.4%).
4. Reflecting the dominance of traditional cases, statewide, the typical exiting case had one adult (77.6%) and one child (46.8%), was headed by an African-American (79.4%) female (95.1%) who averaged 33.6 years of age and had received 12 or fewer consecutive months of aid (79.7%) at the time of case closure. Also, 43% of all cases had at least one child under the age of three years, compared to 40.7% of last year's cases. On all other variables this year's profile is very similar to last year's.
5. As was true last year, traditional and child-only cases differ in significant and important, but not surprising, ways. The former are more likely to have a child under three (48.7% vs. 18.6%), a younger payee (mean=30.6 years vs. 46.1 years), younger children (mean of youngest=5.0 years vs. 8.8 years), more children (53.4% vs. 11.7% with three or more children) and to be exiting from a shorter welfare spell (7.4 months vs. 22.4 months). Last year's findings were quite similar.
6. In all 24 jurisdictions, more than three-fourths of traditional cases had 12 or fewer consecutive months of aid at the time of closure and, in 18 of 24, mean spell length was lower than the statewide average of 7.4 months. Mean spell length for all traditional cases this year (7.4 months) was significantly lower than last year's average (8.7 months).
7. Jurisdictional demographic findings for traditional cases were similar to those for the state as a whole and comparable to those from the prior year. One adult cases were most common everywhere, ranging from 84% of cases in Calvert County to 100% in Kent, Queen Anne's and Worcester counties. One-child units were the plurality across the state, too, but in Queen Anne's (56.5%) and Garrett (51.4%) counties they accounted for half or more of all cases whereas in Kent (34.2%) and Charles (35.2%) counties, about one-third.
8. In terms of the ages of children in traditional cases that closed, there are some noteworthy sub-state variations. Statewide, the median or mid-point child age was 5.0 years but in seven counties (Allegheny, Caroline, Kent, Somerset, Talbot, Washington and Worcester), the mid-point was 1.9 years or less. Jurisdictions also varied with regard to the percentage of cases with at least one child under three years of age. The statewide figure for traditional cases was 48.7% but ranged from 40.2% (Garrett County) to 70.3% (Washington County). Indeed, in 16 of 24 locales half or more of all traditional closing cases had a child this young and, in four counties (Kent, Somerset, Talbot, and Washington), it was two-thirds.
9. For the entire statewide sample, the following top three administrative closing codes together accounted for three-fifths (62.9%) of case closures: information not provided (23.0%); work sanction (20.0%); and income above limit (19.9%). Among traditional cases the top three codes were the same and in the same order, but accounted for nearly three-quarters (73.8%) of all closures. Compared to last year, there was a 4% decrease in work sanctions in traditional cases and a 9% increase in cases closed because information needed for eligibility determination or redetermination was not provided.

10. There were similarities but also some variations in closing code patterns at the local level. For traditional cases, income above limit was the most common code in 18 of 24 counties, compared to 17 of 24 last year. In Allegany (29.9%), Dorchester (39.3%) and Talbot (24.3%) counties, work sanctions were most common; failure to provide information was the top code used in Anne Arundel County (33.5%) and Baltimore City (32.2%); and, in Garrett County, traditional cases were most often closed at the client's request (27.0%).

This annual *Caseload Exits at the Local Level* report presents findings that are generally quite consistent with those documented in early study periods. It also confirms that the overall trend of fewer cases closing each year continues and that important sub-state variation is often masked when only statewide statistics are presented. One intriguing finding this year, however, is the observed change in the use of two case closing codes. Specifically,

among traditional, generally work-mandatory cases, we see a 9% increase in the use of the eligibility/verification information not provided code and a 4% decrease in work sanctions. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this descriptive study to determine if this shift results from a change in client behavior, agency practice, or some combination of the two factors.

As noted, the 12 month period covered by this annual report can best be characterized as a transition year when the "old" PRWO-RA work-related requirements had begun to be phased out and the "new" more stringent DRA requirements were beginning to be implemented. It is thus difficult to know if or when or how any of the new rules might have affected this year's findings. On the face of it, we certainly do not see any evidence of immediate, deleterious DRA effects during this transition year. The next and companion report in the *Caseload Exits* series will tell if results and trends remain similar or are noticeably different in the first full year of the "new" DRA-based welfare reform era.

INTRODUCTION

A decade after welfare reform via the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) reauthorized the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. Though it received little media attention at the time, the DRA substantially changed the structure of the federal work participation requirements which, among other things, significantly reduced state flexibility to meet such requirements.

Under the DRA, states have less of a caseload reduction credit and therefore must engage larger shares of their caseload in federally defined countable work activities, including certain clients who were previously exempted from such participation requirements. As a result, Maryland faced—as all states did—heightened challenges in meeting the federal work participation standards, and, as a result, also greater risk of financial penalties.

Unlike many states, however, Maryland has wealth of information regarding the composition and trends of its welfare caseload at its disposal to assist in meeting this challenge. Through a partnership between the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the University of Maryland School of Social Work, policymakers and program managers have access to numerous reports documenting the implementation, operation, and outcomes of welfare reform since PRWORA. In particular, three report series examine Maryland's welfare system. The first series, *Life after Welfare*, is an ongoing longitudinal study assessing the short- and long-term outcomes of Maryland families who left cash assistance. The second series, *Life on Welfare*, profiles Maryland's current Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) caseload and offers comparisons between those who currently receive welfare assistance and those who have utilized the program in the past.

The third series, *Caseload Exits at the Local Level*, reports on the entire universe of welfare leavers. This series emphasizes case closures at the jurisdictional level, allowing for comparisons across jurisdictions in terms of the demographic and case characteristics of Maryland welfare leavers.

These reports are critical to assessing how well Maryland's program is meeting the needs of its low-income families. This year, the tenth year of welfare reform, marks a transition year toward full implementation of DRA. We therefore present this report with its companions, *Caseload Exits at the Local Level: the Ninth Year of FIP*, which provides a pre-DRA baseline, and *Caseload Exits at the Local Level: the Eleventh Year of FIP*, which includes post-DRA data. This will provide program managers and policymakers alike with information concerning the State's progress toward meeting the work participation provisions under DRA and help identify key areas which may require further attention.

Today's report is based on the 23,509 unduplicated cases that closed at least once between October 2005 and September 2006 and examines the following questions:

1. What are the case closing trends in the tenth year of welfare reform?
2. What are the differences between a jurisdiction's share of closings and its share of the overall caseload?
3. What are the characteristics of closing cases and payees?
4. How do child-only cases differ from traditional cases in terms of their exit patterns?
5. What are the most frequently recorded case closure reasons?
6. What proportion of cases left welfare due to a full family sanction for non-compliance with work requirements or non-cooperation with child support enforcement?

METHODS

Today's study is the latest in the *Caseload Exits at the Local Level* series, which describes closed TANF cases in Maryland on an annual basis since the initiation of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1997. As such, the description of the sample and data sources used mirrors that of previous reports, with minor changes to reflect the unique aspects of this report.

Sample

The sample described in this report includes every TANF case that closed at least once in Maryland during the 10th year after the initiation of PRWORA, from October 2005 to September 2006. For purposes of the analyses presented, a case closure refers to an assistance unit that, at least once during the 12-month study period, stopped receiving Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA, Maryland's TANF program) for one month or more. All cases or families are included in the sample only once, even if they experienced multiple closings during the study period. By randomly choosing one closing record per case, we ensure no systematic effect of removing duplicates on the number of closings by month. It may be noted that the total number of closures reported here may be slightly different from the total number of closures reported by the Family Investment Administration for the same period; this is due in large part to our counting each case only once during the 12 month study period.

Of the total case closures (n=23,509), we separate child-only cases (n=4,503) from traditional cases (n=19,006). Because child-only cases have unique characteristics (e.g. longer welfare histories) and different policies that apply to them (e.g. they are exempt from work participation requirements), we believe it is worth considering them separately. In addition, the increased proportion of child-only cases in the active caseload (Hetling, Saunders, & Born 2005) provides

an incentive for policy makers and program managers to pay more attention to this type of case.

By definition, child-only cases have at least one participating child, but do not contain any recipient adults in the assistance unit. The first type of child-only case includes a child or children living with an adult or relative other than their parent who is not in need of cash assistance; these we refer to as non-parental child-only cases. The second type includes a child or children living with a parent who is not on the grant because of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) receipt, partial sanction, or ineligibility caused by the adult's immigration status; these we refer to as parental child-only cases (Hetling, et al., 2005).

Data Sources

The data used for this report come from monthly case closing files extracted from the Client Automated Resources and Eligibility System (CARES). CARES is the official statewide automated data system for the Department of Human Resources and contains all customer participation data for Temporary Cash Assistance, Food Stamps, Medical Assistance, and social services programs. Throughout this report, we also draw heavily from and make frequent reference to earlier reports in the series, as well as to our periodic reports in the *Life on Welfare* series. These reports, including the one we refer to most often—*Caseload Exits at the Local Level: the Ninth Year of FIP*—can all be found on our website at <http://www.familywelfare.umaryland.edu>.

Analyses

Throughout this report, descriptive analyses are used to provide an overall picture of our study sample. For some variables, when appropriate, chi-square and Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) were utilized.

FINDINGS: NUMBER OF CASE CLOSURES

The following chapters present the results of our analysis of all unique cases exiting Maryland's Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program for at least one month between October 2005 and September 2006. This year, marking the transition year toward the full implementation of DRA's provisions, TCA closures reached their lowest level (n=23,509) since we began our tracking study. This year's closures represented a decrease of 3.2% or 768 fewer cases compared to the previous year. This downward trend has been observed in all but one year (October 2001 – September 2002) of this report series, when closures slightly increased year over year.

To examine this study's case closures in greater detail, we focus on three main topics: the number of case closures; characteristics of closed cases; and reasons for case closure. This first chapter details the number of case closures by type, month, and jurisdiction. Subsequent chapters include statewide and jurisdictional analyses, as well as separate analyses of child-only and traditional cases.

Case Closings by Type

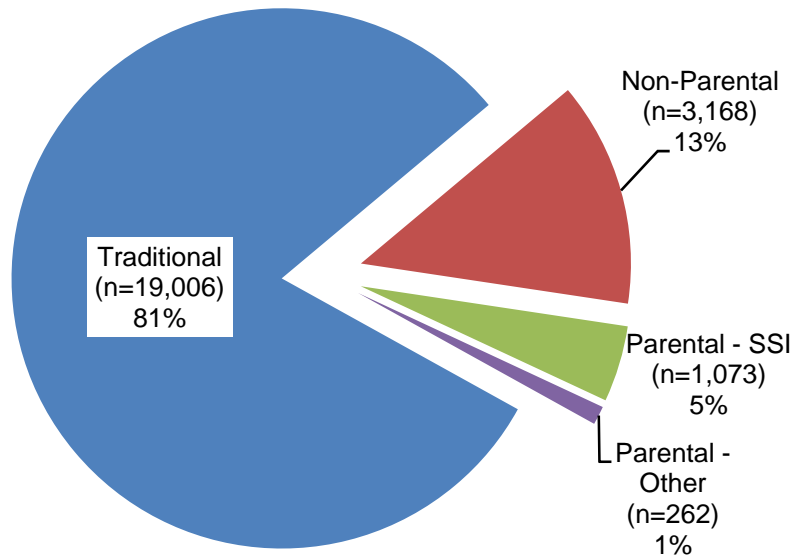
The number of case closures varies by the different types of cases that make up Maryland's exiting caseload. Each case type has certain case characteristics that reflect different welfare experiences, which is important to consider when monitoring Maryland's progress in meeting the provisions under DRA. More importantly, however, case type should also be considered when evaluating service needs and post-exit supports aimed at helping the families these closed cases represent to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency.

Figure 1, following this discussion, illustrates the types of cases that closed for at least one month in the period between October 2005 and September 2006. In October 2005, traditional cases, specifically those cases with at least one adult recipient on the TCA grant, made up three-fifths of Maryland's active caseload. Thus, it is not surprising that they also account for the vast majority of Maryland's exiting caseload: four of five closures (80.8%), as shows, were of the traditional case type. The remaining one-fifth (19.2%) of cases were child-only cases where there was no adult on the grant.

Of the 4,503 child only cases that exited TCA in the study year, the large majority (70.4%) were non-parental where the adult casehead is not a parent of the child or children eligible for assistance. The remaining child-only cases were parental: 23.8% of all child-only cases were those where the parents received Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and 5.8% had parents who were either legal immigrants or sanctioned due to failure to comply with substance abuse requirements.¹ Overall, the relative proportions of these various types of child-only case closures have remained relatively unchanged over time.

¹ For a complete discussion regarding the types of child-only cases see: Hetling, Saunders, & Born (2005). *Maryland's Child-Only Caseload: A Comparison of Parental and Non-Parental Cases*. Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Social Work.

Figure 1. Statewide Case Closings by Type



Case Closings by Month

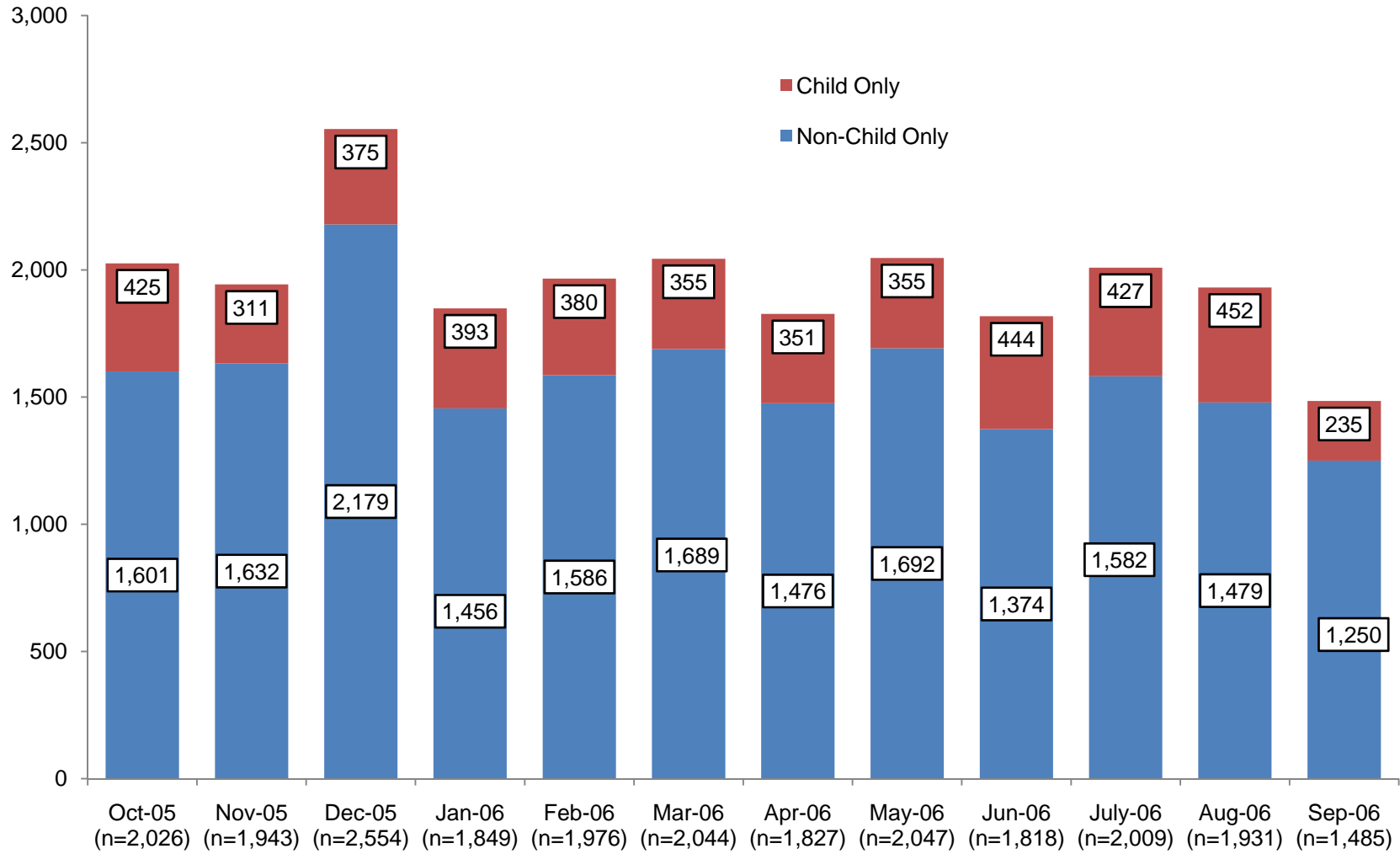
In this section, we shift our focus from annual aggregate closures by case type to case closures disaggregated by month. Figure 2, following this discussion, presents the monthly exit numbers for the 23,509 cases in our study.

As mentioned previously, the annual number of cases closed since the beginning of welfare reform in 1996 reached a new low of 23,509 cases in this study year. From Figure 2, following this discussion, we can discern that total case closings averaged roughly 1,959 cases per month, a decrease of 106 cases per month, on average, since the preceding year. Case closings peaked in December 2005 at 2,554 cases and were lowest in September 2006 with 1,485 cases closing.

As noted previously, the large majority—80.8%—of all closures were traditional (i.e. not child-only) cases. Approximately 1,580 traditional cases were closed each month, on average, in the study year, a slight decrease from the monthly average (n=1,613) during the prior year.

About one in five (19.2%) closures was a child-only case, and, on average, 375 child-only cases were closed each month. As was true for traditional cases, this represents a slight decrease (35 cases per month, on average) from the prior year. Across the current study year, the largest number of child-only closures (n=452) were recorded in August 2006 and the smallest (n=235) in September 2006. In general, although the overall number of child-only closures was smaller this year than in any prior year, the month-by-month exit patterns remained generally the same.

Figure 2. Statewide Case Closings by Month



Case Closings by Jurisdiction

Maryland is a relatively small state, yet across and within its 24 jurisdictions, it is quite diverse in terms of population and local economies. As has been repeatedly documented in numerous of our research studies over the years, this intra-state diversity is also reflected in the size, composition, and characteristics of local TCA caseloads and in the clients' post-exit outcomes as well. The tremendous diversity contained within our state's borders was explicitly acknowledged in the design of our circa-1996 reformed welfare program, when the principle that "one size does not fit all" was adopted. Consistent with this reality, one of the primary aims of this report series is to examine case closure at the jurisdictional level in order to capture the diversity of welfare exit patterns across the state. Table 1, which follows this discussion, presents information on the percent of statewide case closures accounted for by each jurisdiction for all cases and separately for child-only and traditional cases.

Table 1 reveals that the largest number of case closings, indeed just over half of the

entire total, can be found in Baltimore City (51.4%). Prince George's County, at 10.2%, recorded the second highest share of case closings. Baltimore and Anne Arundel Counties also represented a significant proportion of case closings, with 9.7% and 6.2% respectively. Of course, it is important to point out that these jurisdictions also possess the largest share of the active TCA caseloads as well. With the exceptions Harford (2.9%), Montgomery (3.4%), and Wicomico (2.0%) Counties, whose case closings accounted for between 2-3% of all state closures, statewide, all other jurisdictions each had less than a 2% share.

Table 1 also shows that when case type is taken into consideration, these jurisdictional patterns still prevail. Baltimore City cases comprise more than half (54.6%) of the state's traditional case closings and nearly two-fifths (38.3%) of total child-only exits. Both Prince George's and Baltimore Counties have sizable percentages of Maryland's traditional case closures (9.3% and 8.7%) as well as child-only closures (13.9% and 13.8%).

Table 1. Number of Closing Cases by Type and Jurisdiction

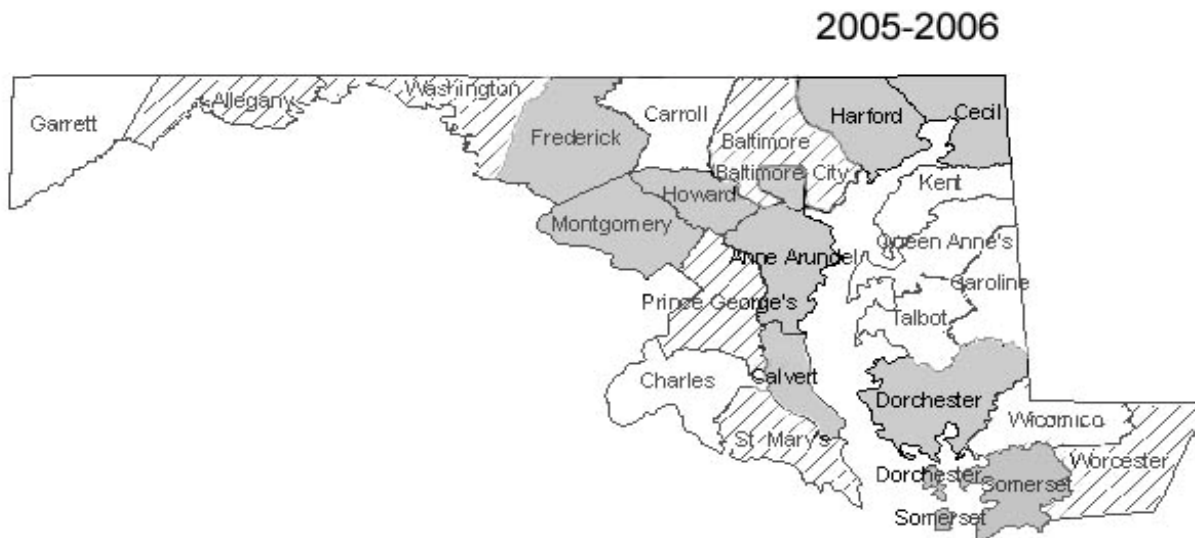
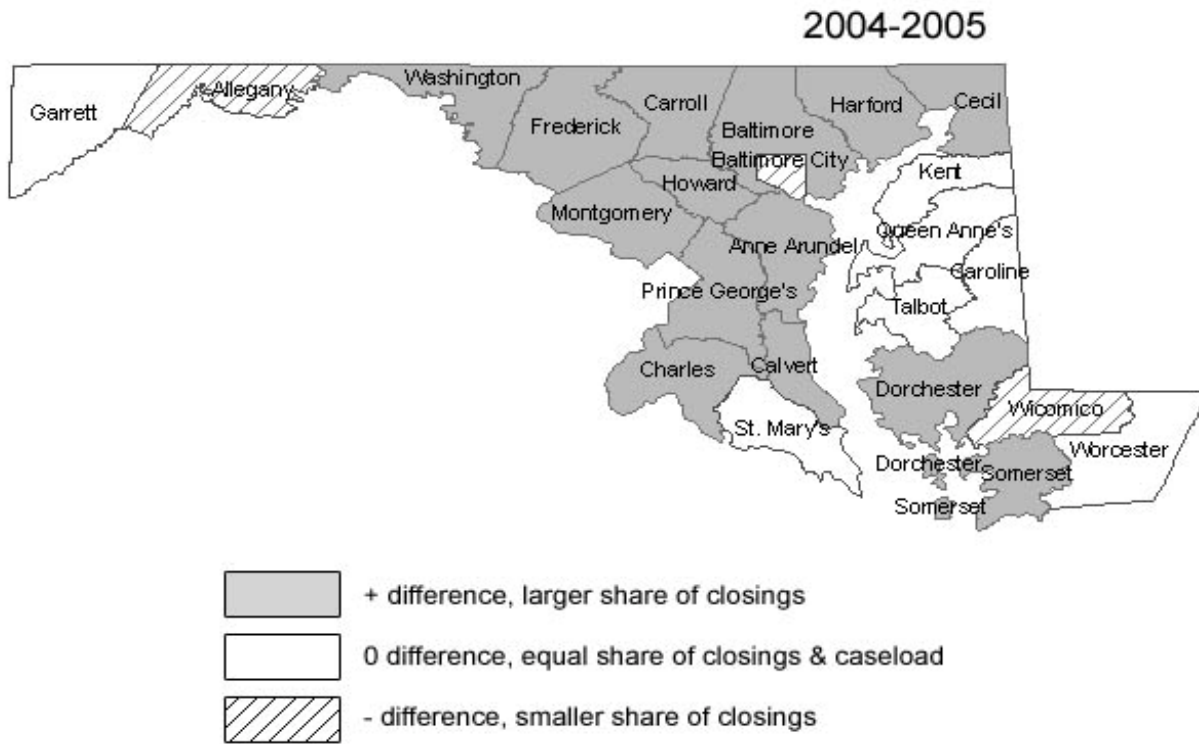
Jurisdiction	Traditional Cases	Child-Only Cases	All Cases
Allegany	0.7% (134)	1.2% (52)	0.8% (186)
Anne Arundel	5.9% (1,115)	7.4% (331)	6.2% (1,446)
Baltimore County	8.7% (1,660)	13.8% (622)	9.7% (2,282)
Calvert	0.8% (148)	0.7% (31)	0.8% (179)
Caroline	0.5% (87)	0.8% (35)	0.5% (122)
Carroll	0.8% (158)	0.8% (37)	0.8% (195)
Cecil	1.5% (294)	1.8% (81)	1.6% (375)
Charles	1.1% (207)	1.4% (65)	1.2% (272)
Dorchester	1.3% (242)	1.2% (54)	1.3% (296)
Frederick	1.5% (293)	1.4% (64)	1.5% (357)
Garrett	0.2% (37)	0.3% (12)	0.2% (49)
Harford	2.9% (553)	3.1% (140)	2.9% (693)
Howard	1.5% (283)	1.6% (73)	1.5% (356)
Kent	0.2% (38)	0.3% (14)	0.2% (52)
Montgomery	3.2% (609)	4.2% (191)	3.4% (800)
Prince George's	9.3% (1,772)	13.9% (625)	10.2% (2,397)
Queen Anne's	0.3% (62)	0.4% (18)	0.3% (80)
St. Mary's	0.9% (172)	1.4% (65)	1.0% (237)
Somerset	0.6% (110)	0.6% (28)	0.6% (138)
Talbot	0.2% (37)	0.5% (24)	0.3% (61)
Washington	1.2% (225)	1.8% (79)	1.3% (304)
Wicomico	1.9% (358)	2.5% (112)	2.0% (470)
Worcester	0.2% (41)	0.6% (26)	0.3% (67)
Baltimore City	54.6% (10,371)	38.3% (1,724)	51.4% (12,095)
Statewide Total	100% (19,006)	100% (4,503)	100% (23,509)

Case Closings Relative to Caseload Size

As the previous discussion shows, the number of case closings varies widely by jurisdiction making it difficult to know exactly how to interpret the raw totals of case closings at the local level. Because the average monthly TANF caseload in Baltimore City is about 12,000 and that of Garrett County is less than 100, it is more informative to measure each jurisdiction's share of the statewide case closures relative to its share of the statewide average caseload over the same time period (October 2005 to September 2006). Figure 3, following this discussion, illustrates the difference in jurisdictional caseload shares. The data undergirding these maps is presented in tabular form in Appendix A.

For the current study year (2005-2006), the map shows that eight jurisdictions (the counties of Caroline, Carroll, Charles, Garrett, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, and Wicomico) each had shares of statewide closures that were identical to their shares of the total average annual caseload for the same period of time. Nine jurisdictions, including Baltimore City, accounted for marginally more (0.1% to 0.3%) closures than cases. Anne Arundel County had 5.3% of cases but 6.2% of closures. At the other extreme, five counties (Allegany, St. Mary's, Washington, Worcester, and Baltimore) had very marginally smaller (0.1% to 0.2%) shares of closures than cases. The outlier here was Prince George's County, whose share of closures (10.2%) was almost two percentage points less than its share of total annual average cases (11.8%).

Figure 3: Difference between Percent of Closings and Percent of Caseload by Jurisdiction



FINDINGS: CHARACTERISTICS OF CLOSED CASES

In this chapter, we examine who left welfare in the 10th year of welfare reform. Specifically, we describe their demographic and case characteristics, including how long cases had been continuously open prior to closing, the number and ages of children on the grant, and demographic characteristics of the payee. In addition to presenting these findings for the statewide caseload, we also present them by jurisdiction, and, separately, for traditional and child-only cases.

Characteristics of Exiting Cases and Payees: Statewide

Table 2 presents demographic data for all closures statewide and both traditional and child only closures. The following variables are described: the length of exiting spell; number of adults; number of children; size of assistance unit; race; gender; age; age at first birth; and age of youngest child. As shown in the last column, a typical case closure during the tenth year of welfare reform occurred in a case where the casehead had one child (46.8%) on the TCA grant, the youngest of whom was just under six years of age (mean=5.7). The adult casehead was typically an African American (79.4%) woman (95.1%) in her early thirties (mean=33.6 years) who, on average, had been on assistance for about 10 months before exiting. This profile of a typical TCA case leaving the welfare rolls during this transition year is consistent with profiles of cases exiting in previous years.

When we examine case characteristics in terms of case type (i.e. child-only vs. traditional cases), we find statistically significant differences between the two groups on all relevant variables. Specifically, child-only cases, on average, exited from a welfare spell more than three times longer (mean=22.4 months) than the exiting spells among traditional cases (mean=7.4 months). Moreover, the vast majority of tra-

ditional cases (85.7%) ended a welfare spell of one year or less, half of them experiencing a case closure in less than five months. In contrast, almost half (45.8%) of child-only cases had welfare spells of more than a year's duration and median spell length (11.6 months) was more than twice that among traditional cases (5.0 months).

Among both traditional and child-only cases, the majority of exiting payees are African American (75.5% for child-only cases and 80.3% for traditional cases). Yet, the proportion of African American payees is significantly lower for closing child-only cases.

In addition to race, we find significant differences regarding the age of the adults heading the case. For child-only cases, the adult heading the case is significantly older than traditional caseheads: on average, the payee in a child-only case is 46 years of age, 15.5 years older than the average age of payees of traditional cases (mean=30.6). This finding is expected, for the majority of child-only closures in Maryland are among non-parental cases where the typical relative caregivers are grandparents (Hetling, et al., 2005).

In terms of assistance unit size, two-thirds of child-only closures contained only one child (65.3%). One-child assistance units were also the most common configuration among traditional cases (42.4%), but more than half (52.6%) of traditional cases included two or more children. Among child-only cases, the percentage of cases with multiple children (34.7%) was significantly lower. Not surprisingly, then, we also find statistically significant differences between the two types of cases in size of the assistance unit (i.e. the number of people included on the grant). As expected, assistance unit size, on average, is significantly smaller for child-only cases (1.5 persons) than for traditional cases (2.9 persons). Children in child-only assistance units also tended to be older than those in traditional cases and significantly fewer child-only cases have infants or toddlers on the grant. The

average age of the youngest child in an existing child-only case, to illustrate, was 8.8 years; in the typical traditional case, in contrast, the youngest child was an average of 5.0 years of age. Consistent with this find-

ing, fully one of every two (48.7%) of traditional cases had at least one child under the age of three years, compared to only one in every five (18.6%) child-only cases.

Table 2. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics: Statewide

	Child-Only Cases	Traditional Cases	All Cases
Number of Closing Cases	4,503	19,006	23,509
Length of Exiting Spell***			
12 months or fewer	54.2% (2,439)	85.7% (16,293)	79.7% (18,732)
13-24 months	19.2% (866)	10.8% (2,053)	12.4% (2,919)
25-36 months	11.0% (495)	2.3% (440)	4.0% (935)
37-48 months	6.0% (268)	0.8% (143)	1.7% (411)
49-60 months	3.2% (145)	0.2% (43)	0.8% (188)
More than 60 months	6.4% (290)	0.2% (34)	1.4% (324)
Mean [Median]***	22.4 [11.6]	7.4 [5]	10.3 [5.9]
Range	1 – 299	1 – 390	1 – 390
Number of Adults			
0	100.0% (4,503)	0.0% (0)	19.2% (4,503)
1	0.0% (0)	96.0% (18,238)	77.6% (18,238)
2	0.0% (0)	4.0% (768)	3.3% (768)
Number of Children***			
0	0.0% 0	5.0% (942)	4.0% (942)
1	65.3% (2,940)	42.4% (8,057)	46.8% (10,997)
2	23.0% (1,036)	28.7% (5,460)	27.6% (6,496)
3 or more	11.7% (527)	23.9% (4,533)	21.5% (5,060)
Size of Assistance Unit***			
1	65.3% (2,940)	4.9% (923)	16.4% (3,863)
2	23.0% (1,036)	41.4% (7,871)	37.9% (8,907)
3	7.9% (355)	28.4% (5,391)	24.4% (5,746)
4 or more	3.8% (172)	25.4% (4,821)	21.2% (4,993)
Mean [Median]***	1.5 [1]	2.9 [3]	2.6 [2]
Range	1 – 9	1 – 15	1 – 15
% African American***	75.5% (3,294)	80.3% (15,021)	79.4% (18,315)
% Female***	92.6% (4,170)	95.7% (18,188)	95.1% (22,358)
Age of Payee			
Mean [Median]***	46.1	30.6	33.6
Median	45.5	28.3	30.7
Range	18 - 89	17 - 84	17 – 89
Age of Youngest Child			
Mean [Median]***	8.8 [8.6]	5 [3.2]	5.7 [3.9]
Range (years)	<1 yr – 18	<1 yr – 18	<1yr – 18
% cases with a child under 3***	18.6% (772)	48.7% (8,876)	43.1% (9,648)

Characteristics of Exiting Cases and Payees: Jurisdictional Analysis

All Cases

Table 3, following this discussion, illustrates payee characteristics separately for each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions. The table includes payee demographics as well as length of exiting spell, assistance unit size, number of adults and children on the case, and age of youngest child. We briefly highlight key findings in the following paragraphs, with emphasis on general patterns observed. For each variable discussed, we also note which, if any, jurisdictions deviate from the general patterns and in what manner.

For the state as a whole, we previously reported that most cases (79.7%) were exiting from a welfare spell that had lasted for 12 or fewer months (mean=10.3 months). This was also true when jurisdictions were examined separately; in all 24 localities, a majority of cases were exiting from spells of 12 or fewer months. The only notable intra-state variation occurs with regard to mean (average) length of the welfare spell leading up to the exit. On this variable, Table 3 shows that three counties (Allegany, St. Mary's, and Worcester) have mean exiting spell lengths greater than 12 months (13.9 months, 12.9 months, and 17.1 months, respectively). Because means are affected by extreme values (i.e. in this instance by cases with very long or very short welfare spells), we also looked at median exiting spell lengths. Here we find that all 24 jurisdictions have medians of 9.6 months (in St. Mary's County) or less, with the lowest median spell length (3.9 months) observed in Queen Anne's County. In terms of the mean, Garrett County was the lowest (8.3 months) and, as noted, Worcester County was the highest at 17.1 months.

In terms of case and payee characteristics, most exiting cases statewide were of the traditional type and include one adult and one or two children. As mentioned earlier,

child-only cases constituted about one-fifth (19.2%) of the state's exiting caseload. Table 3, however, shows that there was considerable variation across jurisdictions on this dimension, with child-only cases ranging from nearly two-fifths of all closures in Talbot County (39.3%) and Worcester County (38.8%) to fewer than one in five cases in Baltimore City (14.3%) and the counties of Calvert (17.3%), Carroll (19.0%), Dorchester (18.2%), and Frederick (17.9%). The finding that Baltimore City has the lowest percentage of closing cases of the child-only type is consistent with numerous studies we have done describing the active TCA caseload (see, for example, Ovwigho et. al, 2006 and Saunders et. al, 2006) and of the child-only population (Hetling et.al 2005).

As was true for the state as a whole, across jurisdictions, the overwhelming majority of payees were female. The average age of exiting payees was mid-30s, but ranges from 32.0 year in Dorchester County to 37.5 years in Worcester County. Ethnicity also varied from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and is also indicative of the racial composition of each locality. More than nine out of ten payees in Prince George's County and Baltimore City were African American, whereas more than four of five payees in Allegany (84.2%) and Carroll (84.4%) Counties and nearly all Garrett County payees were Caucasian (98.0%)

We next look at the age of children in exiting cases. This statistic is reported because it conveys important information on the child care needs these exiting families may have. The average age of the youngest child varied across jurisdictions and ranged from 4 to 7 years. Statewide, nearly half of exiting families contain a child under the age of three. Taking jurisdictions individually, however, we do see some fluctuation. In St. Mary's county, less than one third of exiting cases (32.3%) has a child under the age of three. At the other extreme, nearly three of five cases in Washington County (58.3%) have at least one child this young.

Table 3: Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: All Cases

	Allegany	Anne Arundel	Baltimore County	Calvert	Caroline	Carroll
Number of Unique Closings	186	1,446	2,282	179	122	195
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	77.4%	82.4%	80.3%	82.7%	79.5%	83.1%
13 - 24 months	9.1%	11.6%	11.8%	11.7%	10.7%	9.2%
25 - 36 months	5.9%	3.9%	3.1%	2.8%	3.3%	3.1%
37 - 48 months	1.6%	0.8%	1.4%	0.0%	3.3%	0.5%
49 - 60 months	1.1%	0.5%	1.1%	0.0%	0.8%	1.0%
More than 60 months	4.8%	0.8%	2.3%	2.8%	2.5%	3.1%
Mean [Median]	13.9 [5.7]	9.2 [5.8]	10.5 [5.6]	9.8 [6.5]	10.1 [4.7]	10.9 [5.7]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	2.4 [2.0]	2.7 [2.0]	2.4 [2.0]	2.8 [3.0]	2.5 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]
Number of Adults						
0 (Child-Only)	28.0%	22.9%	27.3%	17.3%	28.7%	19.0%
1	63.4%	72.7%	69.9%	69.3%	69.7%	73.8%
2	8.6%	4.4%	2.8%	13.4%	1.6%	7.2%
Number of Children						
0	4.3%	4.1%	3.5%	1.1%	4.1%	5.6%
1	53.8%	45.3%	51.5%	45.8%	47.5%	45.6%
2	24.2%	28.0%	26.8%	30.7%	27.0%	32.8%
3 or more	17.7%	22.6%	18.2%	22.3%	21.3%	15.9%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	84.2%	35.1%	31.9%	57.6%	46.2%	84.4%
% African American	14.7%	62.2%	64.7%	41.2%	48.7%	11.5%
% Female	89.2%	94.3%	94.7%	87.2%	96.7%	93.8%
Mean Age [Median]	34.3 [32.1]	34.3 [31.9]	34.4[32.0]	34.8 [32.4]	34.8 [31.3]	33.3 [31.2]
Age of Youngest Child						
Mean [Median]	6.0 [3.8]	5.7 [4.3]	5.7 [3.8]	5.8 [4.0]	5.5 [3.0]	5.2 [2.8]
% cases with a child under 3	47.4%	41.3%	45.5%	44.3%	50.0%	51.3%

Table 3. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: All Cases (continued)

	Cecil	Charles	Dorchester	Frederick	Garrett	Harford
Number of Unique Closings	375	272	296	357	49	693
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	86.4%	72.1%	81.1%	86.8%	89.8%	81.5%
13 - 24 months	6.9%	16.2%	10.5%	5.9%	4.1%	11.0%
25 - 36 months	2.4%	5.5%	5.1%	4.2%	4.1%	2.9%
37 - 48 months	1.3%	2.6%	0.7%	0.8%	0.0%	2.5%
49 - 60 months	1.1%	1.1%	0.3%	0.8%	0.0%	0.6%
More than 60 months	1.9%	2.6%	2.4%	1.4%	2.0%	1.6%
Mean [Median]	9.3 [5.3]	12.1 [6.1]	10.0 [5.0]	8.9 [4.8]	8.3 [5.5]	10.4 [5.7]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	2.7 [2.0]	2.8 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]	2.7 [2.0]	2.4 [2.0]	2.7 [3.0]
Number of Adults						
0 (Child-Only)	21.6%	23.9%	18.2%	17.9%	24.5%	20.2%
1	71.5%	72.1%	77.4%	78.2%	69.4%	74.7%
2	6.9%	4.0%	4.4%	3.9%	6.1%	5.1%
Number of Children						
0	3.7%	1.1%	4.4%	2.5%	0.0%	3.0%
1	44.3%	43.8%	46.9%	45.4%	55.1%	43.9%
2	29.6%	29.8%	29.6%	30.5%	30.6%	29.3%
3 or more	22.4%	25.4%	19.0%	21.6%	14.3%	23.7%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	78.4%	30.1%	24.7%	51.0%	98.0%	45.8%
% African American	20.5%	68.0%	69.8%	43.6%	2.0%	51.0%
% Female	95.5%	97.4%	93.9%	95.5%	81.6%	95.1%
Mean Age [Median]	33.4 [31.2]	35.0 [33.8]	32.0 [28.3]	32.9 [29.9]	34.7 [32.5]	33.5 [30.8]
Age of Youngest Child in AU						
Mean [Median]	5.4 [3.6]	6.6 [5.4]	4.8 [2.8]	4.8 [3.0]	6.3 [4.3]	5.4 [3.5]
% cases with a child under 3	45.0%	37.7%	52.7%	50.6%	41.7%	45.6%

Table 3. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: All Cases (continued)

	Howard	Kent	Montgomery	Prince George's	Queen Anne's	St. Mary's
Number of Unique Closings	356	52	800	2,397	80	237
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	83.1%	82.7%	82.3%	81.1%	81.3%	70.9%
13 - 24 months	10.1%	7.7%	11.8%	11.3%	8.8%	18.1%
25 - 36 months	1.1%	3.8%	3.3%	3.3%	3.8%	5.1%
37 - 48 months	2.8%	1.9%	1.0%	1.8%	2.5%	3.4%
49 - 60 months	0.6%	0.0%	0.4%	1.0%	1.3%	0.8%
More than 60 months	2.2%	3.8%	1.4%	1.6%	2.5%	1.7%
Mean [Median]	10.4 [4.8]	9.7 [5.1]	9.2 [4.7]	11.1 [7.8]	9.7 [3.9]	12.9 [9.6]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	2.6 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]	2.7 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]	2.3 [2.0]	2.5 [2.0]
Number of Adults						
0 (Child-Only)	20.5%	26.9%	23.9%	26.1%	22.5%	27.4%
1	74.4%	73.1%	69.3%	70.4%	77.5%	68.8%
2	5.1%	0.0%	6.9%	3.5%	0.0%	3.8%
Number of Children						
0	4.5%	3.8%	2.5%	4.0%	3.8%	0.8%
1	47.6%	42.3%	47.7%	46.6%	60.0%	51.7%
2	27.0%	30.8%	26.4%	27.8%	22.5%	28.0%
3 or more	20.8%	23.1%	23.3%	21.7%	13.8%	19.5%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	22.3%	42.3%	12.7%	3.0%	53.8%	46.8%
% African American	72.0%	57.7%	70.2%	93.8%	45.0%	51.1%
% Female	95.1%	92.3%	94.5%	95.0%	92.0%	95.7%
Mean Age [Median]	34.4 [31.9]	32.7 [29.3]	35.7 [34.0]	35.8 [33.5]	34.4 [35.1]	37.2 [35.7]
Age of Youngest Child in AU						
Mean [Median]	5.9 [4.2]	4.0 [2.6]	5.6 [3.6]	6.3 [4.6]	6.2 [2.5]	6.9 [6.5]
% cases with a child under 3	40.6%	50.0%	44.3%	40.4%	51.3%	32.3%

Table 3. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: All Cases (continued)

	Somerset	Talbot	Washington	Wicomico	Worcester	Baltimore City
Number of Unique Closings	138	61	304	470	67	12,095
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	76.1%	83.6%	81.3%	80.4%	77.6%	78.3%
13 - 24 months	16.7%	9.8%	10.9%	11.1%	6.0%	13.6%
25 - 36 months	3.6%	3.3%	4.3%	3.8%	6.0%	4.4%
37 - 48 months	0.7%	0.0%	1.6%	2.3%	0.0%	2.0%
49 - 60 months	0.7%	0.0%	0.7%	0.9%	3.0%	0.8%
More than 60 months	2.2%	3.3%	1.3%	1.5%	7.5%	0.9%
Mean [Median]	11.9 [5.6]	10.4 [4.3]	9.9 [4.9]	10.3 [5.8]	17.1 [6.3]	10.1 [5.9]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	2.8 [3.0]	2.3 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]	2.7 [2.5]	2.5 [2.0]	2.7 [2.0]
Number of Adults						
0 (Child-Only)	20.3%	39.3%	26.0%	23.8%	38.8%	14.3%
1	75.4%	59.0%	68.4%	72.3%	61.2%	83.5%
2	4.3%	1.6%	5.6%	3.8%	0.0%	2.3%
Number of Children						
0	1.4%	4.9%	2.0%	2.4%	1.5%	4.6%
1	47.1%	55.7%	47.7%	43.4%	47.8%	46.2%
2	26.1%	19.7%	30.6%	29.5%	31.3%	27.3%
3 or more	25.4%	19.7%	19.7%	24.8%	19.4%	21.9%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	34.8%	34.5%	68.6%	27.4%	38.8%	5.8%
% African American	63.0%	51.7%	30.1%	67.0%	59.7%	93.5%
% Female	95.7%	100.0%	91.4%	94.9%	97.0%	95.9%
Mean Age [Median]	32.3 [28.2]	34.8 [31.2]	33.3 [29.7]	33.5 [30.6]	37.5 [34.9]	32.6 [29.4]
Age of Youngest Child in AU						
Mean [Median]	4.7 [2.3]	5.5 [2.7]	4.0 [1.7]	5.1 [3.3]	7.2 [5.5]	5.7 [3.9]
% cases with a child under 3	56.7%	50.9%	58.3%	48.0%	36.9%	41.9%

Child-Only Cases

Our analyses thus far have illustrated important statewide differences between child-only and traditional case closures in terms of both their demographic and case characteristics. They have also shown that while statewide patterns generally also prevail at the sub-state level, statewide data do often mask important intra-state variation. In the next two sections, we take separate looks at the characteristics of child-only and traditional case closures.

We begin with child-only cases, and Table 4 presents, by jurisdiction, the characteristics of such cases which exited for at least one month during the study year. The number of child-only closures varies considerably across jurisdictions ranging from 12 closures in Garrett County to 1,724 closures in Baltimore City, reflecting differences in caseload size, in the main.

With the exception of Allegany County, the vast majority of child-only closures are among non-parental child-only cases where the child lives with a non-parent relative, typically a grandparent. Within these 23 localities, the percentage of these closures ranges from 45.8% in Talbot County to 92.9% in Somerset County. In Allegany County, the majority of their child-only case closures in the study year (53.8%) were headed by a parent who received SSI and was therefore ineligible to receive TCA. In most jurisdictions, parental SSI cases accounted for between one-fifth and one-fourth of all child-only closures. The lowest proportion of this type of parental case was in Somerset County (3.6%).

“Other” parental cases, the third type of child-only case, include children of immigrant parents who do not meet the TCA eligibility requirements and children of sanctioned parents. These cases are fairly rare, only representing 5.8% of all child-only closures statewide and less than 10% of child-only closures in 20 of 24 jurisdictions. In Caroline (17.1%), Howard (12.3%), and Kent

(14.3%) Counties, this type of case was more prominent and in two counties—Montgomery (33.0%) and Talbot (29.2%)—they constituted roughly one-third of child-only closures during the year.

Findings in the preceding section indicated that exiting traditional and child-only cases significantly differed in several ways. Specifically, the assistance units of exiting child-only cases typically included only one child who was, on average, four years older than the youngest child of traditional cases. Additionally, payees of child-only cases are less likely to be African-American and, on average, receive assistance for longer periods before exiting. In Table 4, we see that these statewide trends persist across the 24 jurisdictions as well.

Most payees heading child-only cases which exited within the study’s time frame were women typically in their mid- to late-40s with the exception of Frederick, Montgomery, and Talbot counties where the payees averaged slightly younger (43.5, 43.6, and 42.4 years, respectively).

As mentioned previously, Maryland varies across jurisdictions in terms of population size and racial composition, and these variations are reflected in its exiting caseload as well. Depending on local population characteristics, the racial composition of exiting child-only cases varies: the percentage of African American payees ranges from 8.3% in Garrett County to 93.5% in Prince George’s County.

Finally, we also find considerable variation regarding the length of exiting spells among child-only closures across jurisdictions. The average number of months of assistance ranges from just over one year in Garrett County (mean=13.3 months) to nearly three years in Worcester County (mean=34.9 months). For the majority of the jurisdictions (17 counties and Baltimore City) the average spell length among child-only closures typically was between 18 and 24 months.

Table 4: Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: Child-Only Cases

	Allegany	Anne Arundel	Baltimore County	Calvert	Caroline	Carroll
Number of Unique Closings	52	331	622	31	35	37
Type of Child-Only Case						
Non-Parental	46.2%	81.0%	75.6%	74.2%	65.7%	64.9%
Parental – SSI	53.8%	14.8%	20.7%	22.6%	17.1%	27.0%
Parental – Other	0.0%	4.2%	3.7%	3.2%	17.1%	8.1%
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	51.9%	61.0%	57.7%	61.3%	60.0%	54.1%
13 - 24 months	15.4%	20.8%	19.0%	19.4%	14.3%	10.8%
25 - 36 months	11.5%	10.0%	7.9%	6.5%	2.9%	13.5%
37 - 48 months	1.9%	2.4%	3.7%	0.0%	11.4%	2.7%
49 - 60 months	1.9%	2.1%	3.5%	0.0%	2.9%	5.4%
More than 60 months	17.3%	3.6%	8.2%	12.9%	8.6%	13.5%
Mean [Median]	31.1 [11.8]	17.6 [11.3]	21.2 [11.1]	21.5 [11.2]	19.8 [10.0]	28.7 [11.8]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	1.3 [1.0]	1.6 [1.0]	1.4 [1.0]	1.6 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]	1.4 [1.0]
Number of Children						
1	76.9%	61.6%	67.4%	58.1%	57.1%	67.6%
2	15.4%	24.8%	23.2%	29.0%	37.1%	27.0%
3 or more	7.7%	13.6%	9.5%	12.9%	5.7%	5.4%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	78.8%	38.6%	30.8%	31.0%	54.5%	79.4%
% African American	19.2%	58.0%	65.5%	69.0%	33.3%	17.6%
% Female	84.6%	92.1%	91.8%	80.6%	91.4%	94.6%
Mean Age [Median]	44.4 [45.5]	46.9 [46.7]	45.0 [44.4]	48.6 [48.1]	46.8 [47.7]	44.0 [45.2]
Age of Youngest Child						
Mean [Median]	10.0 [11.0]	9.1 [8.6]	8.7 [8.4]	9.1 [10.4]	8.3 [8.0]	7.1 [5.3]
% cases with a child under 3	19.1%	14.6%	18.5%	18.5%	22.9%	22.9%

Table 4. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: Child-Only Cases (continued)

	Cecil	Charles	Dorchester	Frederick	Garrett	Harford
Number of Unique Closings	81	65	54	64	12	140
Type of Child-Only Case						
Non-Parental	72.8%	63.1%	70.4%	78.1%	66.7%	73.6%
Parental – SSI	25.9%	33.8%	20.4%	12.5%	33.3%	23.6%
Parental – Other	1.2%	3.1%	9.3%	9.4%	0.0%	2.9%
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	63.0%	53.8%	63.0%	64.1%	83.3%	56.4%
13 - 24 months	13.6%	12.3%	9.3%	9.4%	8.3%	20.7%
25 - 36 months	8.6%	12.3%	13.0%	12.5%	0.0%	7.1%
37 - 48 months	3.7%	7.7%	1.9%	3.1%	0.0%	5.7%
49 - 60 months	4.9%	4.6%	1.9%	4.7%	0.0%	2.9%
More than 60 months	6.2%	9.2%	11.1%	6.3%	8.3%	7.1%
Mean [Median]	19.9 [10.8]	24.2 [11.4]	23.5 [10.0]	20.4 [9.3]	13.3 [8.5]	22.8 [11.4]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	1.5 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]	1.7 [1.0]	1.6 [1.0]	1.3 [1.0]	1.6 [1.0]
Number of Children						
1	61.7%	67.7%	57.4%	56.3%	66.7%	62.9%
2	25.9%	24.6%	24.1%	29.7%	33.3%	19.3%
3 or more	12.3%	7.7%	18.5%	14.1%	0.0%	17.9%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	81.0%	27.4%	13.2%	44.3%	91.7%	46.4%
% African American	19.0%	69.4%	79.2%	45.9%	8.3%	51.4%
% Female	93.8%	96.9%	85.2%	95.3%	75.0%	92.1%
Mean Age [Median]	44.8 [44.7]	46.6 [46.6]	44.8 [45.4]	43.5 [44.6]	49.5 [49.3]	45.7 [45.2]
Age of Youngest Child						
Mean [Median]	7.6 [6.8]	9.7 [10.6]	6.2 [3.6]	7.4 [5.8]	9.6 [9.7]	8.6 [8.2]
% cases with a child under 3	21.8%	16.7%	45.1%	22.6%	9.1%	13.8%

Table 4. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: Child-Only Cases (continued)

	Howard	Kent	Montgomery	Prince George's	Queen Anne's	St. Mary's
Number of Unique Closings	73	14	191	625	18	65
Type of Child-Only Case						
Non-Parental	61.6%	71.4%	46.1%	72.5%	77.8%	70.8%
Parental – SSI	26.0%	14.3%	20.9%	20.2%	16.7%	27.7%
Parental – Other	12.3%	14.3%	33.0%	7.4%	5.6%	1.5%
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	52.1%	57.1%	59.2%	61.0%	61.1%	53.8%
13 - 24 months	16.4%	14.3%	22.0%	16.6%	11.1%	24.6%
25 - 36 months	5.5%	7.1%	9.4%	7.7%	5.6%	7.7%
37 - 48 months	12.3%	7.1%	3.1%	5.4%	5.6%	7.7%
49 - 60 months	2.7%	.0%	1.0%	3.5%	5.6%	1.5%
More than 60 months	11.0%	14.3%	5.2%	5.8%	11.1%	4.6%
Mean [Median]	28.1 [11.8]	20.8 [10.0]	19.6 [11.2]	20.4 [10.9]	22.0 [9.3]	19.0 [11.7]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	1.5 [1.0]	1.4 [1.0]	1.7 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]	1.4 [1.0]
Number of Children						
1	63.0%	64.3%	56.5%	63.8%	72.2%	72.3%
2	23.3%	28.6%	25.7%	24.5%	16.7%	21.5%
3 or more	13.7%	7.1%	17.8%	11.7%	11.1%	6.2%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	26.2%	50.0%	11.0%	2.7%	50.0%	53.1%
% African American	69.2%	50.0%	60.8%	93.5%	50.0%	45.3%
% Female	95.9%	78.6%	93.7%	93.8%	88.9%	93.8%
Mean Age [Median]	46.9 [44.2]	46.1 [48.1]	43.6 [40.7]	47.0 [46.2]	47.3 [47.3]	47.1 [47.1]
Age of Youngest Child						
Mean [Median]	9.2 [8.7]	7.3 [6.5]	7.0 [5.8]	9.4 [9.5]	9.9 [11.0]	9.0 [9.2]
% cases with a child under 3	11.9%	7.7%	29.5%	15.9%	22.2%	10.0%

Table 4. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: Child-Only Cases (continued)

	Somerset	Talbot	Washington	Wicomico	Worcester	Baltimore City
Number of Unique Closings	28	24	79	112	26	1,724
Type of Child-Only Case						
Non-Parental	92.9%	45.8%	75.9%	65.2%	80.8%	69.0%
Parental – SSI	3.6%	25.0%	21.5%	25.9%	19.2%	27.8%
Parental – Other	3.6%	29.2%	2.5%	8.9%	0.0%	3.2%
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	57.1%	66.7%	55.7%	56.3%	53.8%	46.5%
13 - 24 months	17.9%	20.8%	21.5%	15.2%	7.7%	21.6%
25 - 36 months	10.7%	4.2%	10.1%	9.8%	11.5%	14.8%
37 - 48 months	0.0%	0.0%	5.1%	8.9%	0.0%	8.2%
49 - 60 months	3.6%	0.0%	2.5%	3.6%	7.7%	3.5%
More than 60 months	10.7%	8.3%	5.1%	6.3%	19.2%	5.3%
Mean [Median]	29.1 [9.5]	19.0 [5.2]	20.9 [11.7]	22.5 [11.3]	34.9 [10.4]	24.3 [15.4]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	1.4 [1.0]	1.4 [1.0]	1.6 [1.0]	1.6 [1.0]	1.6 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]
Number of Children						
1	75.0%	70.8%	54.4%	59.8%	61.5%	67.9%
2	14.3%	20.8%	34.2%	24.1%	23.1%	20.9%
3 or more	10.7%	8.3%	11.4%	16.1%	15.4%	11.1%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	35.7%	17.4%	64.6%	20.7%	30.8%	6.8%
% African American	60.7%	56.5%	34.2%	70.3%	69.2%	92.4%
% Female	100.0%	100.0%	88.6%	88.4%	96.2%	93.1%
Mean Age [Median]	47.8 [50.3]	42.4 [39.2]	45.0 [44.4]	44.4 [45.1]	48.6 [50.1]	46.5 [45.9]
Age of Youngest Child						
Mean [Median]	10.6 [11.3]	7.5 [6.6]	6.9 [5.9]	7.8 [7.0]	10.7 [9.6]	9.0 [9.1]
% cases with a child under 3	11.5%	26.1%	23.7%	25.7%	0.0%	18.5%

Traditional Cases

Traditional cases, specifically those cases with at least one adult and one child receiving assistance, compose the majority of Maryland's caseload. Most of these cases are subject to the more stringent work participation requirements put forth under DRA, including many cases which may have been previously exempted or paid by state maintenance of effort (MOE) funds. Despite the increasing pressure to meet the federal work participation standard, Maryland maintains its cohort-specific approach. By design, the state targets services to moving core cases into employment first, utilizing the remaining resources to target "hard-to-place" cases or those cases which may require more time and services to make the transition from welfare to work.

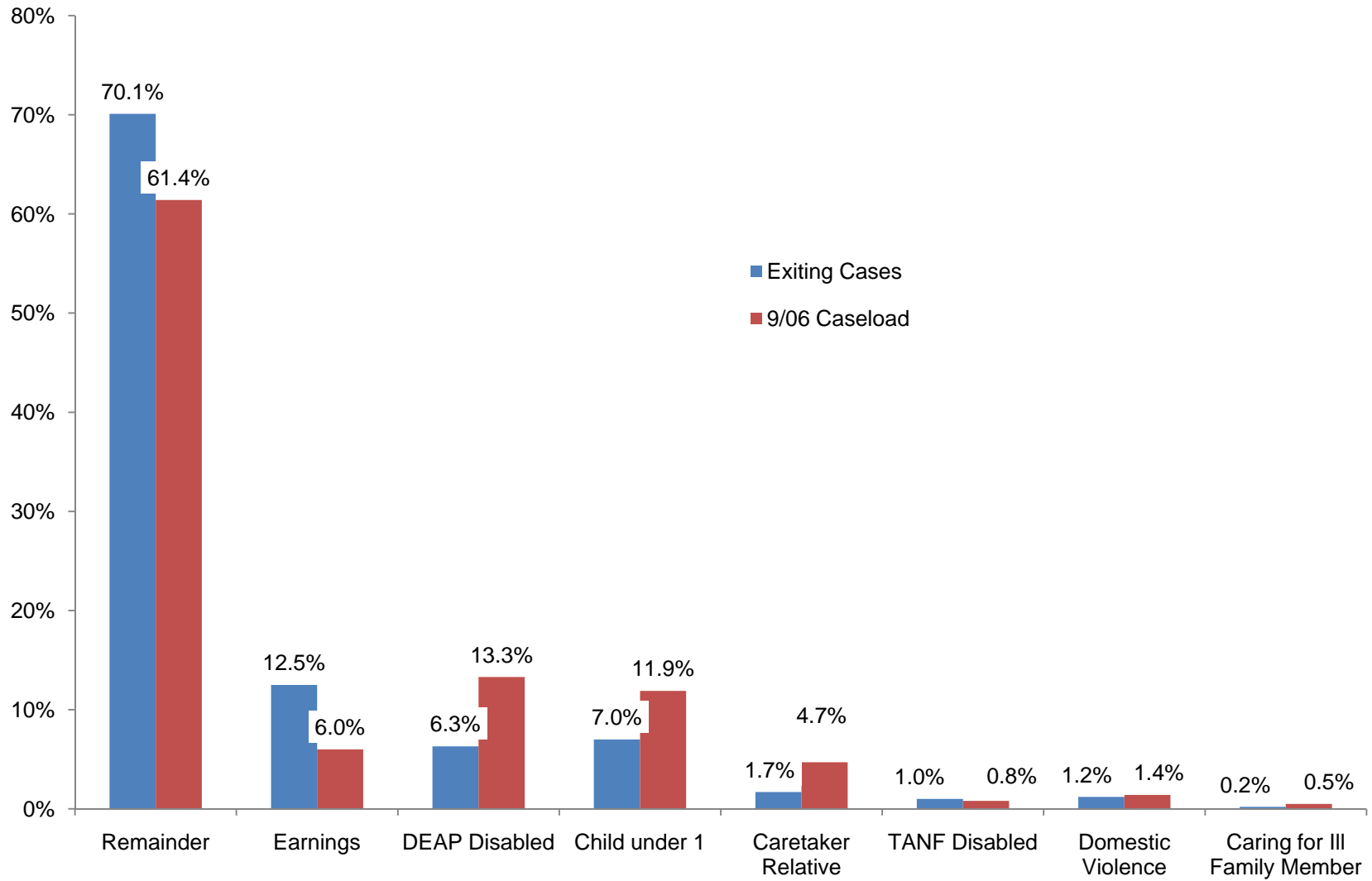
The notion of "core caseload" is an essential element in Maryland's reformed welfare program and also a key designation in terms of work participation. Thus, we describe core and non-core caseload designations among the traditional (i.e. non child-only) case closure population during the study year (October 2005 to September 2006). Essentially, Maryland's core caseload consists of non-child only TCA cases which do not fall into the following special categories: Earnings; DEAP Disabled; Child under 1; Caretaker Relative; TANF Disabled; Domestic Violence; and Caring for an Ill Family member. Figure 4, following this discussion, displays each of these special

categories for traditional cases exiting welfare as well as "remainder" cases or cases which make up Maryland's core caseload. In order to provide a context for comparison, we present the findings alongside traditional cases who received TCA in September 2006, the last month of our study period.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the majority of closed cases are from the core caseload: seven out of ten (70.1%) traditional cases closing are from the remainder or core caseload. This is a small decrease (2.3%) from the previous year, but the percentage of remainder core cases receiving assistance declined by 5.9% over the previous year as well. Figure 4 also shows that the remainder core cases accounted for a larger share of closures (70.1%) than they did of all active cases in the last month of the study period (61.4%).

Earnings cases make up the next largest proportion of traditional closing cases with 12.5% of exiting cases in this category. Earnings cases are more than twice as common among closures than among active traditional cases (12.5% of exiting cases versus 6.0% of active cases). These two findings, in particular, indicate that, despite all of the upheaval and uncertainty accompanying the passage and initial implementation of the new DRA rules, Maryland continues to pursue its long-standing and successful cohort-specific approach.

Figure 4. Core Caseload Designations for Traditional Cases



In addition to examining exiting traditional cases by case type, we also profile traditional closing cases in terms of their demographic and case characteristics.

This information is presented in Table 5, following this discussion. Included are findings on the same variables which were examined previously (see Table 4) for child-only cases. As previously noted, traditional cases make up the majority of exiting cases and, as such, the findings presented in this section are fairly similar to the findings reported in the preceding section discussing Maryland's exiting caseload as a whole. Expectedly, however, there are a few noteworthy differences at the jurisdictional level.

Table 5 reveals that in all 24 jurisdictions most traditional cases had fairly short welfare spells; more than three-fourths of traditional closures had received assistance for 12 months or fewer. The range was from 77.3% in St. Mary's County to 94.6% in Talbot County. As previously discussed, the mean length of exiting spell statewide is 7.4 months for traditional case closures, but Table 5 shows that subdivision-level averages range from 4.9 months (Talbot County) to 10.6 months (St. Mary's County).

Six jurisdictions (Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, St. Mary's, and Somerset Counties and Baltimore City) had mean spell lengths equal to or slightly greater than the statewide average. The remaining 18 had average spell lengths that were marginally, or in the case of Kent County (5.5 months) and Talbot County (4.9 months), notably lower than the statewide figure.

As our study year represents somewhat of a transition period from the "old" PRWORA rules to the new DRA requirements, we were curious to learn if there had been any changes in the number of months that cases had been on assistance prior to the exit that brought them into our sample. Although Table 5 shows that there were some changes compared to the prior year, almost all of them were relatively small.

Overall, 13 jurisdictions including Anne Arundel County, Carroll County, Garrett County, Harford County, Howard County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, St. Mary's County, Talbot County, Wicomico County, and Baltimore City experienced a slight decline in mean length of exiting spell from the previous year. Prince George's County had the largest decrease; its average length of exiting spell declined 3.5 months (from 11.2 months to 7.7 months).

Nine jurisdictions (Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Queen Anne's, and Washington Counties) experienced a slight increase in the average number of months a traditional case received assistance, while the remaining two jurisdictions (Baltimore and Kent Counties) experienced no change from the previous year. The largest increases in the average length of exiting spell were in Queen Anne's and Cecil Counties, both of which had an increase of 0.9 months from the previous year.

In terms of assistance unit size, the statewide average among traditional cases is 2.9 persons, significantly larger than the average among child-only cases (1.5 persons). We have also previously reported that the vast majority (96.0%) of traditional cases statewide contain only one adult and a plurality (42.4%) contain only one child. There is virtually no intra-state variation in terms of average assistance unit size. As shown in Table 5, average size across all 24 subdivisions ranges from 2.6 persons per unit (Queen Anne's County) to 3.2 persons per unit (Charles County). In all 24 jurisdictions, one-adult assistance units predominated, accounting for 84% (Calvert County) or more of all cases and, in three counties (Kent, Queen Anne's, and Worcester) for 100%. In contrast, two-adult cases accounted for one in ten or fewer cases in all but two counties. In those locales, although one-adult cases were dominant, we observed the highest percentages of two-adult

cases among our closures. These two counties are Allegany and Calvert, where 11.9% and 16.2% of all closures, respectively, had two adults on the grant.

Of the 24 jurisdictions, Queen Anne's County experienced the largest change from the previous year in terms its composition of exiting assistance units. Last year, Queen Anne's County had the largest proportion of two-adult case closures (17.6%). This year, in contrast, Queen Anne's County has virtually no two-adult cases exiting its welfare rolls.

As was true for all traditional statewide closures considered as a whole, one-child cases were a plurality in all 24 local subdivisions. There were, however, a few notable intra-state differences. In Garrett County (51.4%) and Queen Anne's County (56.5%), more than half of all closures in our sample were ones where the grant included only one child. At the other end of the spectrum, one-child assistance units, while still a plurality, accounted for less than two in five cases. The specific jurisdictions and their one-child percentages are: Charles (35.2%), Harford (39.1%), Kent (34.2%), Wicomico (38.2%), and Worcester (39.0%). We also found within-state variation with regard to average age of the youngest child in the assistance unit and the percentage of study cases with at least one child under the age of three years. For the state as a whole, the youngest child in a traditional closing case was five years old, on average, and almost one in every two (48.7%) cases did include one or more youngsters who were less than three years old. The comparable average age across counties ranged from roughly three years (Kent County) to six years (St. Mary's County). In other jurisdictions, the youngest child on the case was, on aver-

age, between the age of four and five years. Means (averages), as noted elsewhere in this report, are influenced by extremely high and extremely low values—in this instance by the presence of very “old” children (i.e. teenagers) and those who are very young (i.e. newborns).

Thus, it is also instructive to note that, when we look at the median or midpoint age of the youngest child, by jurisdiction, a somewhat different picture emerges. The two highest medians were in two southern Maryland counties (Charles and St. Mary's) where half of all children in traditional cases were 4.5 years old or older and half were younger. In contrast, in seven of 24 counties the midpoint age of the youngest child was less than two years. Two of these counties were in the western part of the state: Allegany with a midpoint of 1.9 years and Washington with a midpoint of 1.1 years. The other five counties are: Caroline (1.4 years), Kent (1.3 years), Somerset (1.6 years), Talbot (1.6 years), and Worcester (1.9 years).

Finally, we reported earlier that statewide, more than nine in ten (95.7%) exiting traditional cases are headed by woman. There is extreme racial variation at the local level of analysis (e.g. the percentage of African-American case heads ranges from 0% in Garrett County to 93.9% in Prince George's County). This finding is not cause for alarm, in and of itself, however, because there is also wide variation in the ethnic compositions of Maryland's counties. And, last but not least, the average age of the payees in our traditional case closures was 30.6 years for the state as a whole and ranged from 27.8 years in Kent County to 33.4 years in St. Mary's County.

Table 5. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: Traditional Cases

	Allegany	Anne Arun- del	Baltimore County	Calvert	Caroline	Carroll
Number of Unique Closings	134	1115	1660	148	87	158
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	87.3%	88.7%	88.7%	87.2%	87.4%	89.9%
13 - 24 months	6.7%	8.9%	9.2%	10.1%	9.2%	8.9%
25 - 36 months	3.7%	2.2%	1.3%	2.0%	3.4%	0.6%
37 - 48 months	1.5%	0.3%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
49 - 60 months	0.7%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
More than 60 months	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.7%	0.0%	0.6%
Mean [Median]	7.2 [4.2]	6.7 [4.8]	6.4 [4.3]	7.4 [5.3]	6.3 [4.5]	6.8 [5.0]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	2.9 [3.0]	3.0 [3.0]	2.8 [3.0]	3.1 [3.0]	2.9 [3.0]	2.8 [3.0]
Number of Adults						
1	88.1%	94.3%	96.1%	83.8%	97.7%	91.1%
2	11.9%	5.7%	3.9%	16.2%	2.3%	8.9%
Number of Children						
0	6.0%	5.3%	4.8%	1.4%	5.7%	7.0%
1	44.8%	40.4%	45.6%	43.2%	43.7%	40.5%
2	27.6%	29.0%	28.2%	31.1%	23.0%	34.2%
3 or more	21.6%	25.2%	21.5%	24.3%	27.6%	18.4%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	86.4%	34.1%	32.4%	62.8%	43.0%	85.4%
% African American	12.9%	63.5%	64.4%	35.8%	54.7%	10.1%
% Female	91.0%	95.0%	95.8%	88.5%	98.9%	93.7%
Mean Age [Median]	30.0 [28.1]	30.6 [28.7]	30.5 [28.6]	32.0 [29.9]	30.0 [28.7]	30.8 [29.6]
Mean Age at First Birth [Median]	22.2 [21.2]	21.9 [20.4]	22.2 [20.5]	23.1 [21.1]	22.2 [20.5]	23.3 [21.6]
% who gave birth before 18	15.7%	22.5%	19.3%	11.5%	14.3%	5.6%
% who gave birth before 21	47.0%	56.7%	54.0%	47.7%	54.8%	44.8%
Age of Youngest Child						
Mean [Median]	4.6 [1.9]	4.7 [3.1]	4.4 [2.4]	5.2 [3.2]	4.3 [1.4]	4.7 [2.0]
% cases with a child under 3	57.9%	49.3%	55.2%	49.0%	60.9%	57.9%

Table 5. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: Traditional Cases (continued)

	Cecil	Charles	Dorchester	Frederick	Garrett	Harford
Number of Unique Closings	294	207	242	293	37	553
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	92.9%	77.8%	85.1%	91.8%	91.9%	87.9%
13 - 24 months	5.1%	17.4%	10.7%	5.1%	2.7%	8.5%
25 - 36 months	0.7%	3.4%	3.3%	2.4%	5.4%	1.8%
37 - 48 months	0.7%	1.0%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	1.6%
49 - 60 months	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
More than 60 months	0.7%	0.5%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Mean [Median]	6.4 [4.5]	8.3 [5.4]	7.0 [4.5]	6.4 [4.3]	6.6 [5.2]	7.2 [4.5]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	3.0[3.0]	3.2 [3.0]	2.8 [3.0]	2.9 [3.0]	2.8 [3.0]	3.0 [3.0]
Number of Adults						
1	91.2%	94.7%	94.6%	95.2%	91.9%	93.7%
2	8.8%	5.3%	5.4%	4.8%	8.1%	6.3%
Number of Children						
0	4.8%	1.4%	5.4%	3.1%	0.0%	3.8%
1	39.5%	36.2%	44.6%	43.0%	51.4%	39.1%
2	30.6%	31.4%	30.8%	30.7%	29.7%	31.9%
3 or more	25.2%	30.9%	19.2%	23.2%	18.9%	25.2%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	77.7%	30.9 %	27.3%	52.4%	100.0%	45.6%
% African American	21.0%	67.6%	67.6 %	43.1%	0.0%	50.9%
% Female	95.9%	97.6%	95.9%	95.6%	83.8%	95.8%
Mean Age [Median]	30.3 [28.9]	31.3 [29.6]	29.1 [26.2]	30.5 [28.5]	29.9 [25.6]	30.4 [27.9]
Mean Age at First Birth [Median]	22.1 [20.6]	21.8 [20.0]	21.5 [19.8]	23.2 [21.7]	22.3 [20.5]	21.9 [20.5]
% who gave birth before 18	17.2%	19.5%	22.5%	13.0%	12.9%	21.0%
% who gave birth before 21	54.9%	57.9%	64.2%	45.4%	58.1%	55.4%
Age of Youngest Child						
Mean [Median]	4.8 [2.8]	5.7 [4.5]	4.5 [2.6]	4.2 [2.1]	5.3 [2.4]	4.6 [2.7]
% cases with a child under 3	51.4%	43.9%	54.3%	56.7%	51.4%	53.4%

Table 5. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: Traditional Cases (continued)

	Howard	Kent	Montgomery	Prince George's	Queen Anne's	St. Mary's
Number of Unique Closings	283	38	609	1,772	62	172
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	91.2%	92.1%	89.5%	88.1%	87.1%	77.3%
13 - 24 months	8.5%	5.3%	8.5%	9.4%	8.1%	15.7%
25 - 36 months	0.0%	2.6%	1.3%	1.7%	3.2%	4.1%
37 - 48 months	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%	0.5%	1.6%	1.7%
49 - 60 months	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%
More than 60 months	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%
Mean [Median]	5.8 [4.1]	5.5 [4.2]	5.9 [3.6]	7.7 [6.2]	6.1 [3.1]	10.6 [8.4]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	2.8 [3.0]	3.0 [3.0]	3.0 [3.0]	3.0 [3.0]	2.6 [2.0]	3.0 [3.0]
Number of Adults						
1	93.6%	100.0%	91.0%	95.3%	100.0%	94.8%
2	6.4%	0.0%	9.0%	4.7%	0.0%	5.2%
Number of Children						
0	5.7%	5.3%	3.3%	5.4%	4.8%	1.2%
1	43.6%	34.2%	45.0%	40.5%	56.5%	43.9%
2	28.0%	31.6%	26.7%	29.0%	24.2%	30.4%
3 or more	22.7%	28.9%	25.0%	25.2%	14.5%	24.6%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	21.4%	39.5%	13.2%	3.1%	54.8%	44.3%
% African American	72.7%	60.5%	73.2%	93.9%	43.5%	53.3%
% Female	95.4%	97.4%	92.9%	94.7%	96.8%	91.3%
Mean Age [Median]	31.2 [28.4]	27.8 [25.7]	33.3 [31.6]	31.8 [30.1]	30.7 [28.3]	33.4 [32.7]
Mean Age at First Birth [Median]	22.5 [20.4]	21.9 [20.5]	23.9 [22.1]	22.4 [20.5]	23.0 [21.0]	23.0 [21.4]
% who gave birth before 18	19.6%	13.9%	14.0%	21.3%	12.3%	13.8%
% who gave birth before 21	56.2%	61.1%	41.3%	53.3%	49.1%	47.4%
Age of Youngest Child						
Mean [Median]	5.1 [3.2]	2.9 [1.3]	5.2 [3.1]	5.2 [3.2]	5.0 [2.2]	6.2 [4.5]
% cases with a child under 3	47.6%	64.9%	48.7%	48.7%	60.3%	40.2%

Table 5. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: Traditional Cases (continued)

	Somerset	Talbot	Washington	Wicomico	Worcester	Baltimore City
Number of Unique Closings	110	37	225	358	41	10,371
Length of Exiting Spell						
12 months or less	80.9%	94.6%	90.2%	88.0%	92.7%	83.6%
13 - 24 months	16.4%	2.7%	7.1%	9.8%	4.9%	12.2%
25 - 36 months	1.8%	2.7%	2.2%	2.0%	2.4%	2.7%
37 - 48 months	0.9%	0.0%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.9%
49 - 60 months	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
More than 60 months	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Mean [Median]	7.6 [5.3]	4.9 [3.3]	6.1 [4.5]	6.5 [4.8]	5.8 [4.8]	7.7 [5.2]
Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]	3.1 [3.0]	2.9 [2.0]	3.0 [3.0]	3.1 [3.0]	3.0 [3.0]	2.9 [3.0]
Number of Adults						
1	94.5%	97.3%	92.4%	95.0%	100.0%	97.4%
2	5.5%	2.7%	7.6%	5.0%	0.0%	2.6%
Number of Children						
0	1.8%	8.1%	2.7%	3.1%	2.4%	5.4%
1	40.0%	45.9%	45.3%	38.2%	39.0%	42.6%
2	29.1%	18.9%	29.3%	31.2%	36.6%	28.4%
3 or more	29.1%	27.0%	22.7%	27.5%	22.0%	23.7%
Payee Characteristics						
% Caucasian	34.5%	45.7%	70.0%	29.5%	43.9%	5.6%
% African American	63.6%	48.6%	28.6%	65.9%	53.7%	93.6%
% Female	94.5%	100.0%	92.4%	96.9%	97.6%	96.3%
Mean Age [Median]	28.4 [26.5]	29.9 [25.8]	29.1 [26.4]	30.1 [27.4]	30.5 [29.4]	30.3 [27.8]
Mean Age at First Birth [Median]	21.0 [19.9]	21.6 [20.2]	22.1 [20.3]	21.8 [20.1]	21.8 [20.6]	21.3 [19.6]
% who gave birth before 18	23.3%	18.8%	21.8%	22.4%	20.0%	30.6%
% who gave birth before 21	65.0%	59.4%	58.4%	57.9%	52.5%	63.0%
Age of Youngest Child						
Mean [Median]	3.3 [1.6]	4.2 [1.6]	3.1 [1.1]	4.2 [2.4]	5.0 [1.9]	5.2 [3.4]
% cases with a child under 3	67.6%	67.6%	70.3%	55.0%	60.0%	45.6%

FINDINGS: REASONS FOR CASE CLOSURE

In this final findings chapter, we shift our attention from the question of who is leaving welfare to the question of why families are leaving welfare during this transition year. DRA's heightened focus on work participation rates generated concerns nationwide that this emphasis would drive states toward harsh sanctioning policies as well as policies discouraging families from coming on the welfare rolls (Ewen, Lower-Basch, Strawn, & Turetsky, 2007). We explore this issue by examining the administrative case closure codes used in the study year. We present findings both statewide and by jurisdiction as well as by case type. In addition, we also examine full-family sanction rates for each jurisdiction and the distribution of work and child support sanctions.

Administrative Case Closure Codes

Statewide: All Cases

We first present an examination of administratively-recorded case closure reasons, a set of predetermined codes that welfare caseworkers assign when they close a case. It is important to point out that, although there are numerous codes from which caseworkers must choose, these system codes may not fully capture the complexity surrounding a family's decision to exit welfare. It has also been shown that leavers often fail to inform the agency of their recent employment and as a result, closing codes underestimate true work-related exits. Nonetheless, research indicates that administrative case closure codes are correlated with important post-exit outcomes such as employment and recidivism and are arguably the best available indicator of full family sanctioning rates (Ovwigbo, Tracy, & Born, 2004).

Figure 5, following this discussion, presents the three most commonly recorded administrative closing codes for all cases exiting TCA in the study year. Taken together,

these three reasons account for over three-fifths of all closed cases, with "Eligibility/ Verification Information Not Provided" (23.0%) and "Work Sanction" (20.0%) constituting more than two-fifths (43.0%) of all recorded reasons for closure. "Income above the Limit" accounts for another one-fifth (19.9%) of closing codes. Although not shown in Figure 5, the next two most commonly used codes, when all cases are considered, are "No Recertification" (17.5%) and "Not Eligible" (5.6%).

Overall, statewide case closing reasons slightly differ from the closing reasons recorded in the previous year. Comparatively, we find a sizeable increase (7.2%) in the number of cases closing due to lack of eligibility and verification. We also find decreases in the percentage of cases closing due to "No Recertification," "Work Sanction," and "Income above the Limit," while the proportion of cases closing due to "Not Eligible" remained unchanged.

We continue our analysis of administratively-recorded closings codes by presenting findings separately for traditional and child-only cases. As shown throughout this report, child-only and traditional cases differ considerably in terms of their demographic and case characteristics and, in most instances, are subject to different requirements including those concerning work participation and time limits. Consequently, it is reasonable to expect that reasons for closure may also vary according to case type.

Figure 5, following this discussion, illustrates that closing codes do, in fact, substantially differ between child-only and traditional cases. In fact, Figure 5 shows that there is no overlap in terms of the top three closure codes. Among child-only cases, more than one-third (36.1%) closed for the reason, "No Recertification," not quite one in five (18.9%) closed because the cases were not eligible, and 14.0% requested case closure. Together, these three codes accounted for just about seven in 10 (69.0%) of child-only closures during the year. The

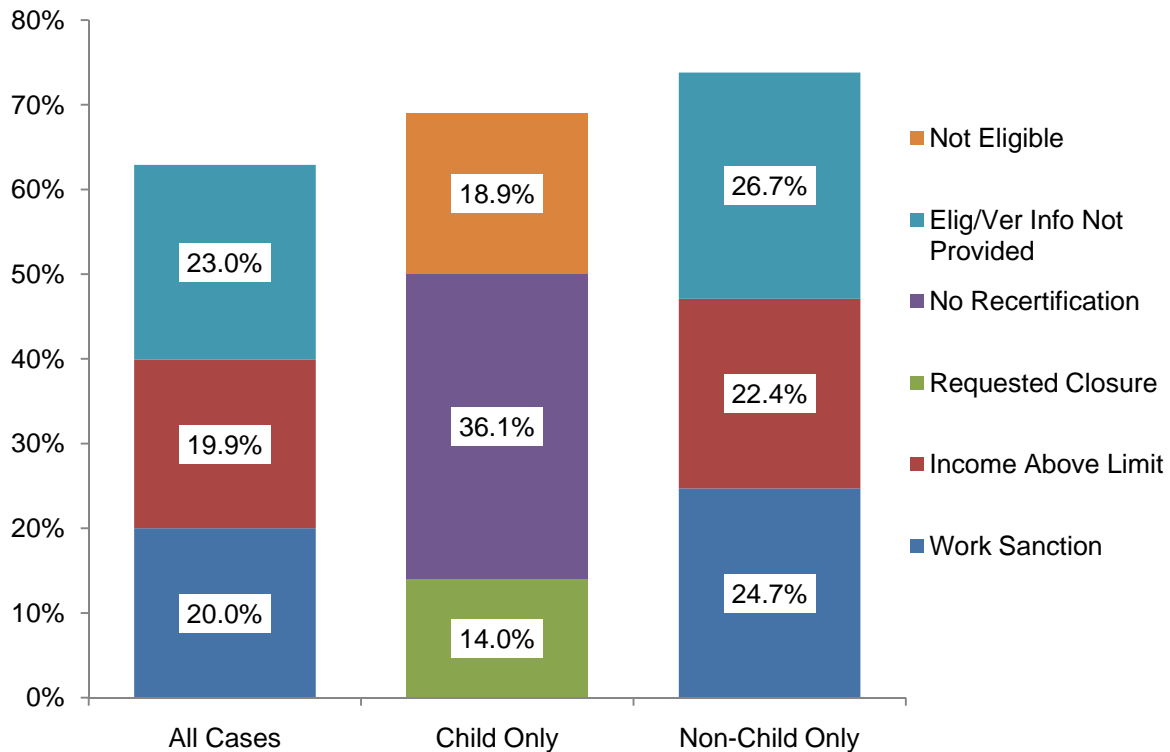
prevalence of these codes—no recertification, ineligibility, and request closure—is suggestive of household composition changes such as the recipient child reaching the age of majority or moving out of the home.

In contrast, Figure 5 shows that traditional cases are more likely to close for quite different reasons. Specifically, more than one-fourth (26.7%) of traditional cases closed because they did not provide eligibility verification information, one-quarter (24.7%) were sanctioned for non-compliance with work requirements, and more than one-fifth (22.4%) closed because the family’s income was above the TCA eligibility threshold. Among all traditional case closures during the year, approximately three in four

(73.8%) were accounted for by these three codes.

Overall, we find notable changes in this DRA transition year compared to the previous year findings. Among child-only cases, closures due to “Requested Closure” and “Not Eligible” decreased 2.5% and 2.3% respectively from the prior year, while cases closing because of “No Recertification” increased 7.3%. Additionally, traditional cases closing due to “Eligibility/ Verification Information Not Provided” increased 9% from the previous year. Cases closing due to work sanctions declined by 4% and cases closing because of incomes above the limit decreased 2.5% from last year.

Figure 5. Top 3 Case Closing Reasons by Case Type



Jurisdictional Analysis

Table 6, following this discussion, examines case closure codes by jurisdiction for both traditional and child-only cases, as well as for all cases that have closed for at least one month in the study year.

As in recent years, the most common closing code in 17 of 24 jurisdictions is “Income above Limit.” Across these jurisdictions, having income above the eligibility threshold accounted for between one-fifth (21.5% in Allegany County) and two-fifths (40.5% in Kent County) of case closures. As for the remaining seven jurisdictions, there was some variation. In three counties (Prince George’s, St. Mary’s, and Talbot), “No Recertification/No Redetermination” was the most frequently used code, accounting for 30.3%, 30.8%, and 23.0% of all closures in those jurisdictions, respectively. The client’s failure to provide eligibility or verification information was the most commonly recorded code in Anne Arundel County (27.7%) and in Baltimore City (28.8%). Case closure at the client’s request was the most common code in Garrett County (28.6%) and among all closures this year, Dorchester County most often used the work sanction code; nearly one closure in three (32.1%) was for this reason.

As was true statewide, reasons for case closure also differ between traditional and child-only cases when we look at the jurisdiction level. Looking at child-only cases first, we see that the most common administrative closure code for 13 of the 24 jurisdictions is “No Recertification/No Redetermination.” This code accounted for over one

quarter of the closures in Washington County (27.8%) and nearly three out of five closures in Prince George’s County (57.0%). Of the remaining 11 counties, six—Allegany, Dorchester, Kent, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester—had “Not Eligible” as the most common closing code, representing between 19.2% (Worcester) and 71.4% (Kent) of all child-only closures in those counties. Closure at the request of the client was the most common code among child-only closings in Cecil (33.3%), Frederick (29.7%), and Garrett (33.3%) Counties. Finally, the top closing code among child-only cases was “Income above Limit” in two counties: Calvert (32.3%) and Carroll (21.6%).

For traditional cases, “Income above Limit” is the most common administrative closing code in 18 of 24 jurisdictions, representing about one-quarter of the closures in Prince George’s County (24.2%) and half of closures in Kent County (50.0%). In most of the rest of the jurisdictions, it should be mentioned that “Income above Limit” did account for roughly one-third of all closures among traditional cases. In the counties of Allegany (29.9%), Dorchester (39.3%), and Talbot (24.3%), work sanction was the most common reason for closure this year among traditional cases, accounting for between one-fourth and two-fifths of all such closures. The client’s failure to provide information was most common in traditional cases in Anne Arundel County (33.5%) and Baltimore City (32.2%). Finally, and alone among jurisdictions, the most common traditional case closure reason in Garrett County was closure at the client’s request (27.0%).

Table 6. Top 3 Case Closing Reasons by Type and Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	All Cases	Child-only	Traditional
Allegany	Income above limit 21.5% Work sanction 21.5% Requested closure 15.1%	Not eligible 26.9% Worker voided application 25.0% Income above limit 15.4%	Work sanction 29.9% Income above limit 23.9% Requested closure 19.4%
Anne Arundel	Eligibility/verification info not provided 27.7% Income above limit 17.4% Work sanction 16.7%	No recertification/no redetermination 28.1% Not eligible 16.0% Child support sanction 15.4%	Eligibility/verification info not provided 33.5% Work sanction 21.5% Income above limit 19.1%
Baltimore County	Income above limit 23.7% Work sanction 20.0% No recertification/ no redetermination 17.6%	No recertification/no redetermination 32.0% Requested closure 18.5% Not eligible 14.1%	Income above limit 29.3% Work sanction 27.4% Eligibility/verification info not provided 17.4%
Calvert	Income Above limit 38.0% Eligibility/verification info not provided 18.4% No recertification/no redetermination 10.6%	Income above limit 32.3% No recertification/no redetermination 22.6% Not eligible 19.4%	Income above limit 39.2% Eligibility/verification info not provided 20.3% Work sanction 12.2%
Caroline	Income above limit 29.5% No recertification/ no redetermination 20.5% Work sanction 13.9%	No recertification/no redetermination 31.4% Income above limit 20.0% Not eligible 11.4%	Income above limit 33.3% Work sanction 19.5% No recertification/no redetermination 16.1%
Carroll	Income above limit 33.8% Eligibility/verification info not provided 22.1% No recertification/ no redetermination 12.3%	Income above limit 21.6% Requested closure 21.6% No recertification/no redetermination 16.2%	Income above limit 36.7% Eligibility/verification info not provided 25.3% No recertification/no redetermination 11.4%
Cecil	Income above limit 27.2% Work sanction 17.9% Eligibility/verification info not provided 17.1%	Requested closure 33.3% No recertification/no redetermination 19.8% Income above limit 19.8%	Income above limit 29.3% Work sanction 22.8% Eligibility/verification info not provided 20.4%
Charles	Income above limit 28.7% No recertification/ no redetermination 17.3% Eligibility/ verification info not provided 16.9%	No recertification/no redetermination 30.8% Not eligible 24.6% Income above limit 15.4%	Income above limit 32.9% Eligibility/verification info not provided 20.3% Work sanction 19.8%
Dorchester	Work sanction 32.1% Income above limit 20.9% Eligibility/ verification info not provided 13.9%	Not eligible 27.8% Eligibility/verification info not provided 14.8% Income above limit 13.0%	Work sanction 39.3% Income above limit 22.7% Eligibility/verification info not provided 13.6%
Frederick	Income above limit 33.9% Eligibility/ verification info not provided 23.2% Requested closure 10.6%	Requested closure 29.7% No recertification/no redetermination 20.3% Income above limit 18.8%	Income above limit 37.2% Eligibility/verification info not provided 27.0% Work sanction 12.6%
Garrett	Requested closure 28.6% Income above limit 18.4% Work sanction 16.3%	Requested closure 33.3% Income above limit 16.7% Not eligible 16.7%	Requested closure 27.0% Work sanction 21.6% Income above limit 18.9%
Harford	Income above limit 29.1% Work sanction 17.2% Eligibility/ verification info not provided 16.5%	No recertification/no redetermination 33.6% Requested closure 21.4% Not eligible 19.3%	Income above limit 34.0% Work sanction 21.5% Eligibility/verification info not provided 19.0%

Howard	Income above limit 33.1% No recertification/ no redetermination 16.9% Work sanction 15.4%	No recertification/no redetermination 39.7% Not eligible 12.3% Child support sanction 11.0%	Income above limit 39.6% Work sanction 19.4% No recertification/ no redetermination 11.0%
Kent	Income above limit 40.4% Not eligible 19.2% Work sanction 15.4%	Not eligible 71.4% Income above limit 14.3% Requested closure 14.3%	Income above limit 50.0% Work sanction 21.1% Requested closure 13.2%
Montgomery	Income above limit 31.0% Work sanction 20.1% Eligibility/ verification info not provided 13.4%	No recertification/no redetermination 29.3% Not eligible 18.3% Income above limit 15.7%	Income above limit 35.8% Work sanction 26.1% Eligibility/verification info not provided 14.6%
Prince George's	No recertification/no redetermination 30.3% Income above limit 19.2% Eligibility/ verification info not provided 18.1%	No recertification/no redetermination 57.0% Not eligible 11.7% Requested closure 10.6%	Income above limit 24.2% Eligibility/verification info not provided 23.3% No recertification/no redetermination 20.9%
Queen Anne's	Income above limit 26.3% Work sanction 15.0% Eligibility/ verification info not provided 15.0%	No recertification/no redetermination 33.3% Not eligible 22.2% Requested closure 16.7%	Income above limit 30.6% Work sanction 19.4% Eligibility/verification info not provided 17.7%
St. Mary's	No recertification/no redetermination 30.8% Income above limit 28.7% Not eligible 12.7%	No recertification/no redetermination 32.3% Not eligible 30.8% Requested closure 16.9%	Income above limit 37.2% No recertification/no redetermination 30.2% Requested closure 7.6%
Somerset	Income above limit 31.2% Work sanction 26.8% Requested closure 12.3%	Not eligible 21.4% Requested Closure 21.4% No recertification/no redetermination 17.0%	Income above limit 35.5% Work sanction 31.8% Requested closure 10.0%
Talbot	No recertification/ no redetermination 23.0% Work sanction 16.4% Requested closure 14.8%	No recertification/no redetermination 33.3 % Not eligible 20.8% Requested closure 16.7%	Work sanction 24.3% Eligibility/verification info not provided 18.9% No recertification/ no redetermination 16.2%
Washington	Income above limit 31.6% No recertification/ no redetermination 17.4% Requested closure 15.8%	No recertification/no redetermination 27.8% Income above limit 20.3% Not eligible 17.7%	Income above limit 35.6% Requested closure 16.9% No recertification/no redetermination 13.8%
Wicomico	Income above limit 28.3% Work sanction 22.1% Eligibility/ verification info not provided 15.3%	Not eligible 30.4% No recertification/no redetermination 25.0% Income above limit 17.9%	Income above limit 31.6% Work sanction 29.1% Eligibility/verification info not provided 18.7%
Worcester	Income above limit 31.3% Work sanction 11.9% Eligibility/ verification info not provided 10.4%	Not eligible 19.2% Child support sanction 15.4% Income above limit 15.4%	Income above limit 41.5% Work sanction 19.5% Eligibility/ verification info not provided 14.6%
Baltimore City	Eligibility/ verification info not provided 28.8% Work sanction 23.8% No recertification/ no redetermination 17.6%	No recertification/no redetermination 38.6% Not eligible 22.4% Requested closure 13.0%	Eligibility/ verification info not provided 32.2% Work sanction 27.8% Income above limit 16.9%

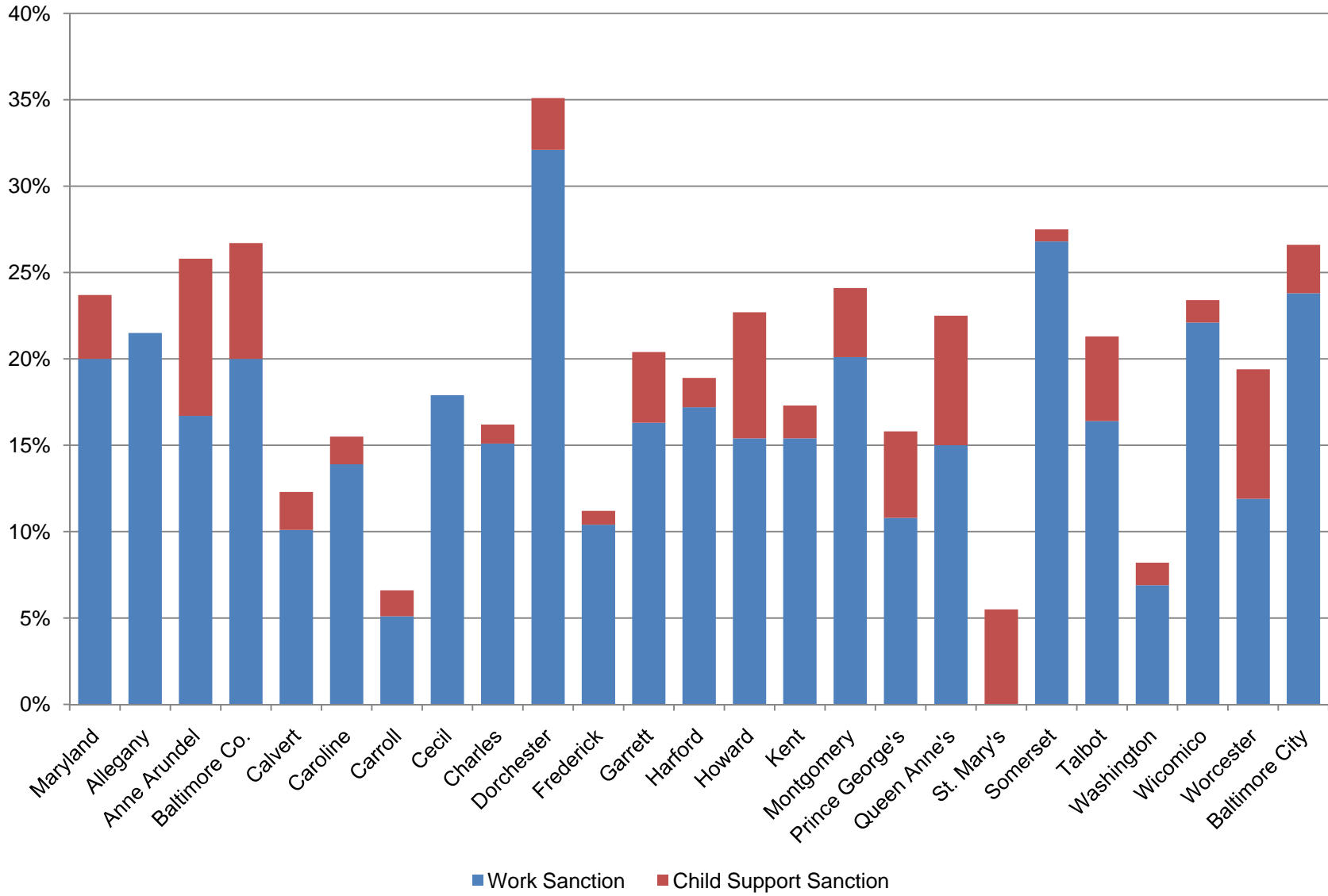
Full Family Sanctions: Statewide and Jurisdictional Analyses

In Maryland, full family sanctions refer to the termination of cash benefits when a customer fails to comply with work participation or child support enforcement requirements. The intent of full-family sanctions is not to reduce the state's caseload, but rather to encourage customers to comply with program requirements. With the passage of DRA, however, there is concern that the narrow Federal definitions of countable work activities may impel states to use sanctions more punitively, or at least more aggressively. Fortunately, and as expected, we did not find any evidence of this. In fact, as previously discussed, the statewide sanction rate for traditional cases was 24.7%, a 4%

decline from the previous year, and, notably, the first decline since we began our *Caseload Exits* report series in 1996. However, it is important to note that, relatively speaking, the sanction rate is still fairly high. In the first year of welfare reform, to illustrate, the sanction rate was 5.5% (Ovwigo, Saunders, Kolupanowich, & Born, 2005).

To provide a more complete picture of sanctioned cases, Figure 6 shows, by jurisdiction, the breakdown between work and child support sanctions. As illustrated, in all but one county (St. Mary's), work sanctions were far more prevalent than child support sanctions. More detailed information can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 6. Full-Family Sanctions



CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is important to consider what implications our study findings hold for state and local policy makers and program managers. The tenth year of welfare reform marked a critical transition as our state began implementing the DRA provisions. Several trends related to case closing patterns are evident in our data:

- **The number of unique TANF cases closing each year continues to decline. This year had the smallest number of closings of any year since we began tracking this information in the first year of reform.**

The radical changes associated with abolition of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program and establishment of TANF, paired with a strong economy, produced historically high numbers of welfare exits. Over the ensuing years, the number of closings has declined, as the caseload (i.e. the number of cases eligible for exit) shrank as well. However, in recent years, caseload size has stabilized while there have been fewer closings each year. This suggests that the proportion of the caseload composed of long-term cases or those not likely to exit rapidly or easily under the current work-focused paradigm may be growing. For program management purposes, these data suggest the importance of periodically examining the characteristics and composition of the welfare caseload to ensure that program strategies are appropriately aligned with the needs and potential of current TANF recipients.

- **Our comparison of local closing shares relative to caseload shares indicates that some degree of shift may have occurred this year, perhaps at least in part because of DRA implementation or some slowing down of the larger economy.**

Most notably, more jurisdictions had a smaller share of statewide closings than their share of the statewide active caseload.

The DRA's changes to the work participation rate calculation essentially require states to increase the number and types of cases meeting the federal work participation requirement. Previous analyses of Maryland's active caseload suggested that, because of variations in local caseloads, jurisdictions would be affected differently by DRA implementation (Ovwigbo, et al., 2006). Our finding that some jurisdictions, particularly smaller ones with fewer work mandatory cases, are now closing fewer cases than expected is consistent with earlier predictions.

- **Despite expectations that an increased focus on meeting work requirements would cause an increase in the number of full family sanctions for non-compliance with work activities, we find that they actually declined in the tenth year of reform. Somewhat surprisingly, full family sanctions for non-compliance with child support increased.**

When first adopted, full family sanction provisions raised concerns that they would be used en masse to reduce welfare rolls and that families would be left without support. Maryland has seen full family sanctioning rates generally rise over time, although work sanctions have never accounted for more than a quarter of closings. This year's data show that even as agencies were increasingly focused on getting customers engaged in work activities, full family sanctions for work requirements actually declined. This fact coupled with the fact that Maryland successfully met the federal work participation rate standard attest to the hard and conscientious work of local welfare staff and customers.

The more stringent DRA rules and requirements unquestionably present heightened challenges for state officials, local Departments of Social Services, and, most importantly, for low-income families. Although the findings presented in this annual report cover a time period still quite early in the DRA era, they suggest that our state is responding appropriately to challenges presented, just as it did to the earlier challenges presented by PRWORA. Through these annual *Caseload Exits* reports, we will continue to monitor and report on case closings and patterns at the state and local level.

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APPENDIX A: PERCENT OF CLOSING CASES
AND AVERAGE CASELOAD

Jurisdiction	Percent of Total Closings		Percent of Average Caseload		Difference (in Percentage Points)
Anne Arundel County	6.2%	(1,446)	5.3%	(1,241)	0.9
Baltimore City	51.4%	(12,095)	51.1%	(11,950)	0.3
Cecil County	1.6%	(375)	1.4%	(336)	0.2
Dorchester County	1.3%	(296)	1.1%	(261)	0.2
Howard County	1.5%	(356)	1.3%	(312)	0.2
Montgomery County	3.4%	(800)	3.2%	(755)	0.2
Calvert County	0.8%	(179)	0.7%	(167)	0.1
Frederick County	1.5%	(357)	1.4%	(318)	0.1
Harford County	2.9%	(693)	2.8%	(660)	0.1
Somerset County	0.6%	(138)	0.5%	(123)	0.1
Caroline County	0.5%	(122)	0.5%	(127)	0.0
Carroll County	0.8%	(195)	0.8%	(188)	0.0
Charles County	1.2%	(272)	1.2%	(278)	0.0
Garrett County	0.2%	(49)	0.2%	(47)	0.0
Kent County	0.2%	(52)	0.2%	(45)	0.0
Queen Anne's County	0.3%	(80)	0.3%	(70)	0.0
Talbot County	0.3%	(61)	0.3%	(72)	0.0
Wicomico County	2.0%	(470)	2.0%	(468)	0.0
Allegany County	0.8%	(186)	0.9%	(222)	-0.1
St. Mary's County	1.0%	(237)	1.1%	(263)	-0.1
Washington County	1.3%	(304)	1.4%	(320)	-0.1
Worcester County	0.3%	(67)	0.4%	(83)	-0.1
Baltimore County	9.7%	(2,282)	9.9%	(2,314)	-0.2
Prince George's County	10.2%	(2,397)	11.8%	(2,750)	-1.6
Statewide Total	100%	(23,509)	100%	(23,369)	-----

Note: Caseload data were calculated for this table by the authors from the Monthly Statistical Reports issued by the Family Investment Administration, Department of Human Resources for the period October 2005 - September 2006.

APPENDIX B: FULL FAMILY SANCTIONS, 10/05 – 09/06

Jurisdiction	Work Sanction	Child Support Sanction	Full Family Sanction
Allegany	21.5% (40)	.0% (0)	21.5% (40)
Anne Arundel	16.7% (241)	9.1% (132)	25.8% (373)
Baltimore County	20.0% (456)	6.7% (153)	26.7% (609)
Calvert	10.1% (18)	2.2% (4)	12.3% (22)
Caroline	13.9% (17)	1.6% (2)	15.6% (19)
Carroll	5.1% (10)	1.5% (3)	6.7% (13)
Cecil	17.9% (67)	.0% (0)	17.9% (67)
Charles	15.1% (41)	1.1% (3)	16.2% (44)
Dorchester	32.1% (95)	3.0% (9)	35.1% (104)
Frederick	10.4% (37)	.8% (3)	11.2% (40)
Garrett	16.3% (8)	4.1% (2)	20.4% (10)
Harford	17.2% (119)	1.7% (12)	18.9% (131)
Howard	15.4% (55)	7.3% (26)	22.8% (81)
Kent	15.4% (8)	1.9% (1)	17.3% (9)
Montgomery	20.1% (161)	4.0% (32)	24.1% (193)
Prince George's	10.8% (260)	5.0% (119)	15.8% (379)
Queen Anne's	15.0% (12)	7.5% (6)	22.5% (18)
St. Mary's	.0% (0)	5.5% (13)	5.5% (13)
Somerset	26.8% (37)	.7% (1)	27.5% (38)
Talbot	16.4% (10)	4.9% (3)	21.3% (13)
Washington	6.9% (21)	1.3% (4)	8.2% (25)
Wicomico	22.1% (104)	1.3% (6)	23.4% (110)
Worcester	11.9% (8)	7.5% (5)	19.4% (13)
Baltimore City	23.8% (2883)	2.8% (333)	26.6% (3216)
Statewide Total	20.0% (4708)	3.7% (872)	23.7% (5580)