

# CASELOAD EXITS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE ELEVENTH YEAR OF FIP

CATHERINE E. BORN  
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

PAMELA C. OVWIGHO  
RESEARCH DIRECTOR

KATHRYN W. PATTERSON  
PROJECT ANALYST

MAY 2011



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

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Jamie Haskel, Rennert Kane and Somlak Suvanasorn for their assistance in the collection and processing of data for this report.

This report was prepared by the Family Welfare Research and Training Group, School of Social Work, University of Maryland, 525 West Redwood Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201 with support from its long time research partner, the Maryland Department of Human Resources.

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](mailto:cborn@ssw.umaryland.edu)). Please visit our website, [www.familywelfare.umaryland.edu](http://www.familywelfare.umaryland.edu) for additional copies of this and our other reports.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	
List of Figures	
Executive Summary .....	i
Introduction .....	1
Methods .....	3
Sample .....	3
Data Sources.....	3
Analysis .....	3
Findings: Overview of Case Closures .....	4
Case Closings by Type .....	4
Case Closings by Month .....	6
Case Closings by Jurisdiction .....	6
Case Closings Relative to Caseload Size .....	8
Findings: Characteristics of Exiting Cases.....	10
Characteristics of Exiting Cases and Payees: Statewide .....	10
Characteristics of Exiting Cases and Payees: Jurisdictional Analysis.....	12
All Cases.....	13
Child-Only Cases.....	18
Traditional Cases.....	24
Core-Caseload Designations.....	30
Findings: Reasons for Case Closure .....	32
Administrative Case Closure Reasons .....	32
Statewide: All Cases.....	32
Jurisdictional Analysis.....	33
Full Family Sanctions and Jurisdictional Analyses.....	38
Conclusions .....	41
References.....	42
Appendix A: Percent of Closing Cases and Average Caseload .....	43
Appendix B: Full Family Sanctions: 10/05-9/06 .....	44

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Number of Closing Cases by Type and Jurisdiction .....	8
Table 2. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics: Statewide .....	12
Table 3. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: All Cases.....	14
Table 4. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: Child-Only Cases .....	20
Table 5. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics by Jurisdiction: Traditional Cases .....	26
Table 6. Top 3 Case Closing Reasons by Type and Jurisdiction .....	36

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Statewide Case Closings by Type .....	5
Figure 2. Statewide Child-Only Closings by Type.....	5
Figure 3. Statewide Case Closings by Month .....	7
Figure 4. Difference between Closings and Cases by Jurisdiction .....	9
Figure 5. Core Caseload Designations .....	31
Figure 6. Case Closure Reasons by Case Type.....	33
Figure 7. Full Family Sanctions.....	40

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our state has been well-served by its long-standing practice of using research to guide the development of cash assistance programs for low-income children and their families and to monitor the outcomes of those programs at the micro- and macro-levels. It has enabled Maryland to design programs based on empirical data not anecdote, make timely mid-course corrections when needed, and maintain a continuous flow of research information into ongoing policy-making and program management processes. Many studies have been carried out over the years, the best-known of which is the first in the nation and still ongoing *Life after Welfare* project series that is updated annually and tracks post-exit outcomes of families who have left welfare since the 1996 reforms. Today we present the latest report in another annual series, *Caseload Exits at the Local Level*, which also has been ongoing since 1996. The *Caseload Exits* project examines case closures at the jurisdiction-level, providing otherwise not readily available, comparative local level information about the numbers and characteristics of closing cases, the reasons for case closure and full family sanctioning. This is an important, if oft-overlooked, level of analysis because cash assistance caseloads tend to be concentrated in a few large, urbanized jurisdictions and, as a result, statewide statistics often mask important intra-state variations.

This report in the *Caseload Exits* series provides information on 19,916 unduplicated cases that closed between October, 2006 and September, 2007. This marked the 11<sup>th</sup> full year of welfare reform in Maryland and the first full year of program operation under the new, more restrictive work-related rules imposed by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA). As we now know with the benefit of hindsight, the quarter immediately following the end of our study period would subsequently be officially declared as the start of the Great Recession, our nation's

worst economic downturn since the 1930s. This adds to the importance of this year's study results because, as is now widely accepted, welfare caseloads are a leading indicator of recession and a lagging indicator of recovery. The report is issued with two companion *Caseload Exits* documents, separate reports covering the last full pre-DRA year (October, 2004 – September, 2005) and the first year of partial DRA implementation (October, 2005 – September, 2006). Taken together, these three annual reports should provide us with a solid baseline against which subsequent DRA-era results can be assessed. Key findings from today's report are briefly noted below.

1. Statewide, a total of 19,916 unique cases closed between October 2006 and September 2007. This is 15.3% fewer cases than last year and the second largest year-to-year decline since the study began in 1996. (The only larger decline was in the study year that ended five months before March, 2001, the official start of this century's earlier and milder recession; however, the caseload then was also much larger than it was during our study year.)
2. Cases with at least one adult (i.e., traditional cases) accounted for 78.1% of all closures, a similar but slightly smaller percentage than in the prior two years (80%). Baltimore City (49.6%), and Prince George's (10.7%) and Baltimore (10.2%) counties account for seven of every 10 closures (70.5%), as they did in the previous two years. Every jurisdiction's share of case closings was generally in line with its share of the average annual active caseload.
3. The profile of the typical exiting case is that of a traditional (78.1%), two-person assistance unit (37.0%), consisting of one adult (75.5%) and one child (47.5%). The youngest child is, on average, about six years old, but about two-fifths of families (43.8%) have at least one child less than three years of age. The adult in the typical case is an Afri-

can-American (79.2%) female (95.0%) in her thirties who had been on TANF for 12 or fewer months at the time of case closure (80.6%). This profile is consistent with prior years' profiles.

4. Child-only exiting cases have a very different profile. Most notably, on average, the adult caseheads are significantly older, by about 16 years, than traditional caseheads (46.8 years vs. 30.5 years), there tend to be fewer and older children in these cases, and these families had spent, on average, nearly four times as long on TANF before exiting. These findings make sense because the large majority (70.8%) of child-only closures was of the non-parental type where the caretaker adult is typically a grandparent. These findings are relatively unchanged from those reported in prior years.
5. As in years past, closing case profiles are similar across jurisdictions on most, but not all, variables. Most notably, among all cases closing, half or more in the counties of Allegany (50%), Frederick (51.8%), Garrett (52.5%), Somerset (52.5%) and Washington (56.9%) contained at least one child younger than three years. Also, the percentage of child-only cases among all closures was roughly twice the statewide average (21.8%) in Charles (40.8%), Kent (46.7%), Talbot (50%) and Worcester (41.3%) counties.
6. Among all cases closing during the study year, the top three administrative closing codes were: eligibility/verification information not provided (22.3%); work sanction (20.2%); and income above limit (18.9%), accounting for three-fifths of all closures (61.4%). The same three codes, in the same rank order, were also most commonly used to close traditional (i.e., non child-only) cases, although accounting for a somewhat larger share (74.8%) of all traditional case closures. These are the same codes in the same rank order as reported last year for both the entire sample and traditional cases. Notably, too, this year's work sanction rate for all cases (20.2%) is identical to last year's rate (20.2%) and the same is true for traditional cases as well (25.8% vs. 24.7%).
7. There is considerable local variation in the frequency with which various closing codes are used. For traditional cases, we find that in the majority of jurisdictions (14 of 24), income above limit was most commonly used, in seven counties it was work sanction, and in Baltimore City and the counties of Anne Arundel and Charles, it was failure to provide required information. Compared to last year, there are fewer counties (14 vs. 18) where income above limit was most common and more (7 vs. 3) where work sanctioning was the most commonly used closing code.
8. For child-only closures, no recertification was most common in 15 of 24 jurisdictions, including 60% of all child-only closures in Prince George's County. The most common code used in child-only cases in six counties was 'not eligible', which made up about two-thirds of all child-only closures in Garrett County. These findings are virtually the same as last year.
9. Overall, not quite one in four closures (23.8%) were full family sanctions for work (20.2%) or child support (3.6%) non-compliance, essentially the same as the prior year. In nearly all jurisdictions (22 of 24), work sanctions were more common than child support sanctions (the exceptions being Calvert and St. Mary's counties). Also of note is that 15 of 24 jurisdictions had overall sanctioning rates lower than the statewide average (23.8%) and 17 of 24 had work sanctioning rates lower than the statewide rate (20.2%). Seven jurisdictions, had work sanctioning rates that were higher than the statewide average; included among these are three jurisdictions (Baltimore City and the counties of

Baltimore and Prince George's) that, together, account for 70.5% of all closures during this study period.

This annual *Caseload Exits at the Local Level* report describes statewide and local-level client characteristics, case closing patterns, and case closing reasons during the first full year of operation (October, 2006 – September, 2007) under the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. In general, trends with regard to the types of cases that close, the reasons for closure, and the profiles of the 'typical' exiting client and case are the same this year as they have been in prior years, at both the state and local level. It also remains true that there are significant differences across the state between traditional and child-only cases on client and child demographics, case composition, welfare utilization and reasons for case closure. Study findings also continue to make it clear that, for a variety of reasons, important intra-state variation is often hidden from view when only statewide statistics are reported.

Last but not least, this year's report also shows that the trend of fewer cases closing each year continues and, in fact, appears to have accelerated. Specifically, the total number of unique cases that closed during this study period (n=19,916) was 15% lower (n=3,593 cases) than the number closing last year (n=23,509). By way of comparison, last year's number of unique closures was only three percent lower (n=768 cases) than the number which closed the year before (n=24,277).

The progressive annual declines in the number of unique cases closing from 1996 to 2007 are no doubt associated with the fact that when reform began in 1996 welfare caseloads were at historically high levels. Caseloads declined steadily over the next decade such that, during the 12 months period covered by this study (October, 2006 – September, 2007), they were at historic lows. Thus, it makes intuitive sense that, all else equal, a smaller number of unique cas-

es on aid would be associated with a smaller number of unique cases closing. Still, the 15% drop observed in cases closing this year is quite large. In hindsight, we think this steep decline was almost certainly at least partially a harbinger of the devastating economic tsunami that was just beginning to have widespread adverse effects on our nation and our state. This line of thinking is supported by the fact that the so-called Great Recession was eventually declared to have officially begun in the fourth quarter of calendar year 2007, the three month period immediately following the last month of our study period (September, 2007).

Although the recession's end has since been officially declared, many families' economic distress levels continue to be elevated and, all else equal, may remain so for the indefinite future. Most basically, job recovery has been minimal and it is predicted that pre-recession job numbers lay years in the future, with unemployment rates remaining stubbornly high, especially among younger adults, arguably the population at greatest risk for cash assistance receipt. Thus, to say the least, these remain challenging and difficult times for low-income families with children and the public social services agencies, programs, and staff charged with helping them to become and remain independent of cash assistance programs. Moreover, there are no historical precedents to guide any state's policy choices in these uncertain and unsettling times. Unlike most states, however, Maryland does have a long, strong tradition of using empirical data to document outcomes and trends and to identify issues where program alignment or revision might be worth consideration. These annual *Caseload Exits* reports are one element in this data-driven approach and we trust they continue to be of value to elected officials, program managers, front-line staff and advocates as, together, we continue to work on behalf of Maryland's hard-working families.



## INTRODUCTION

More than a decade ago, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) radically changed the country's welfare system and created the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. The TANF program, which succeeded in moving many families from welfare to work, was reauthorized in 2005 under the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA). The DRA made substantial changes in the structure of the federal work participation requirement and significantly reduced state flexibility to meet such requirements. A larger share of state caseloads must now be engaged in federally defined countable work activities, including many adults who were exempt under PRWORA. Although a significant challenge to the State of Maryland, federal standards must be met in order to avoid financial penalties.

The University of Maryland's School of Social Work, through a long-standing partnership with the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR), has helped the state respond to policy changes by providing numerous reports documenting the implementation, operation, and outcomes of welfare reform. The most well-known project is the *Life after Welfare* study which tracks short and long term post-exit experiences of nearly 15,000 randomly-selected families who have left welfare since the beginning of reform (October 1996). The *Life after Welfare* study provides empirical case- and individual-level data that can be used to assess how the reformed welfare program is working, to identify program modifications that may be needed, and to determine what happens to Maryland families once they no longer receive cash assistance.

Today's paper is part of another important, ongoing research program: *Caseload Exits at the Local Level*. Reports in this series provide additional information about Maryland welfare leavers, specifically jurisdiction-level data that are not covered in the *Life after Welfare* reports. By design, the *Life*

*after Welfare* project reports present detailed follow-up employment, recidivism and other data about a statewide random sample of exiting cases. In contrast, *Caseload Exits at the Local Level* reports examine the entire universe of cases which exit cash assistance in Maryland during a given year.

In addition to describing exit patterns and the characteristics of exiting cases on a county-by-county basis, each report in this series highlights key intra-state differences, and, as appropriate, makes note of any significant changes from one year to the next.

This year's report covers a full year of welfare program operation under the new, controversial and more stringent rules adopted as part of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA). In addition to the information available from other monitoring tools (e.g. State Stat), today's report should provide some insight into how, if at all, exiting clients and exit patterns may have changed in the DRA era.

Although greatly overshadowed by the economic recession that began in late 2007, the more stringent DRA rules—coupled with no funding increases and, as it turned out, rising requests for aid—unquestionably represent the most significant test of the reformed welfare system since its inception in 1996. Arguably, any early effects could be visible in the first full non-transition year—the 12-month period covered by today's report. Thus, to provide a context for study findings, we break from our tradition of issuing each annual *Caseload Exits* report separately. Rather, we are issuing this report along with two companion volumes. These are *Caseload Exits at the Local Level: the Ninth Year of FIP*, which provides pre-DRA baseline data, and *Caseload Exits at the Local Level: the Tenth Year of FIP*, which presents findings during the transition year of DRA implementation.

Today's report is based on the 19,916 unique cases that closed at least once between October 2006 and September 2007. With an emphasis on the local level, we examine the following questions:

1. What are the welfare case closing trends in the eleventh 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. What are the most frequently recorded case closure reasons?
5. 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. 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 for this report includes every TANF case that closed at least once in Maryland between October 2006 and September 2007. For the purposes of this study, 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 at least one month. All cases or families are included in the sample only once, even if they experienced multiple closings during the study period. For cases with multiple closures during the 12-month study period, we randomly chose one of those closures for inclusion in our analyses. This approach ensures no systematic effect of removing duplicates on the number of closings by month. It should be noted also that the total number of closures reported here may differ slightly 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 ( $n=19,916$ ), we separate child-only cases ( $n=4,356$ ) from traditional cases ( $n=15,560$ )<sup>1</sup>. Because child-only cases have unique characteristics (e.g. longer welfare histories) and different policies apply to them (e.g. they are exempt from work participation requirements), it is appropriate to consider them separately. In addition, because child-only cases are now much more prevalent in the active caseload than has historically been the case (Hetling,

Saunders, & Born, 2005), it is important that policy makers and program managers have separate information about the characteristics and circumstances of these families.

Child-only cases have at least one participating child, but do not contain any adults receiving cash assistance. Child-only cases include: 1) children living with an adult other than their parent (i.e. a relative) who is not in need of cash assistance (i.e. non-parental child-only cases); and 2) 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 (i.e. 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, and Medical Assistance.

### Analyses

Throughout this report, descriptive analyses are used to provide an overall picture of our study sample. Chi-square and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests are used to identify differences between child only and traditional cases.

---

<sup>1</sup> Eight cases were dropped from our sample because of irresolvable data issues.

## FINDINGS: OVERVIEW OF CASE CLOSURES

Today's report analyzes all unique cases that exited Maryland's Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program for at least one month between October 2006 and September 2007. First, in this first full non-transition year of DRA implementation, we see a large decline in the number of closures. The total for the year ( $n=19,916$ ) is roughly 15.3% ( $n=3,593$ ) less than the number reported last year ( $n=23,509$ ). This is the largest year-over-year decline in exits since year four (October 1999 to September 2000) when we saw a drop of 17.1% from the previous year. Although the percentage decline in cases closing is the second largest observed since we began tracking exits in 1996, the overall trend has been one of fewer closures each year than in the preceding year. This is due in large measure to the fact that, nationally and in Maryland, the size of the overall caseload (i.e. the universe of cases that could close) was at an historically high level at the outset of reform, but by the time period covered by today's report, had reached an all-time low. In addition, because so many work-ready clients were able to successfully leave welfare for work, so-called non-traditional cases (e.g. child only, disabled) had come to represent a much larger share of the caseload. Research has consistently found that these latter cases are less likely to leave welfare and to have significantly longer welfare spells. Child-only cases, in particular, tend to remain on assistance for extended periods of time.

Last, but certainly not least, the Great Recession, which officially began in 2007, was no doubt another major contributor to the large decrease in the number of closures in this study year. Not surprisingly, caseloads expand when the economy is not doing well and contract when it is booming. Indeed, it is now well-accepted that welfare caseloads are a leading indicator of economic decline and a lagging indicator of recovery. Thus,

findings presented in this year's report may be particularly informative as they reflect both the early months of the as yet unrecognized global economic downturn and the first full year of operation under the more stringent DRA work rules and requirements.

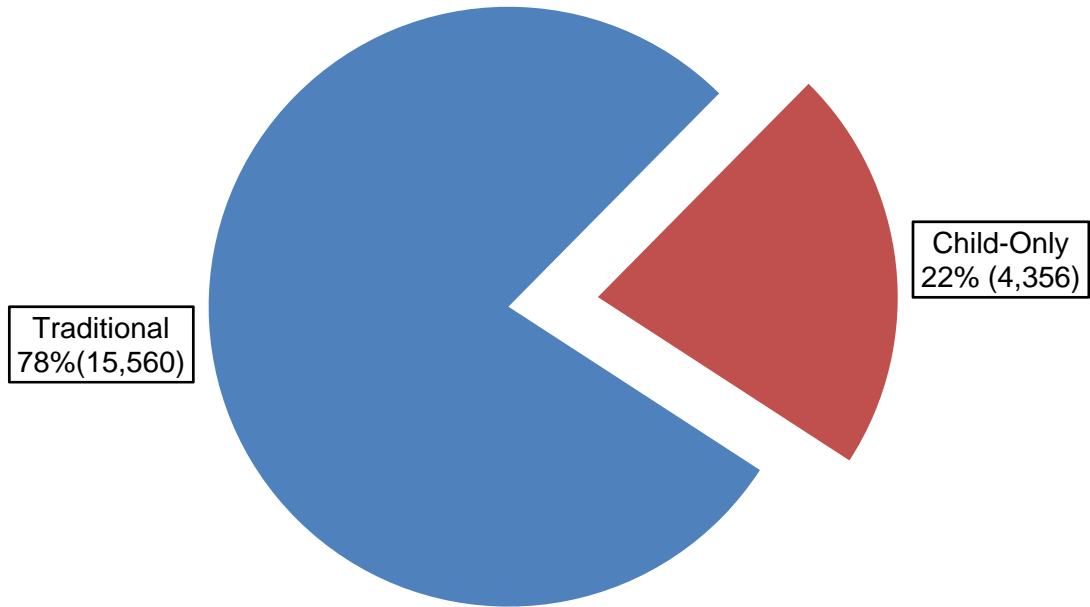
To examine October 2006 through September 2007 closures in more detail, we address these primary topics: the numbers of case closures, characteristics of cases, and reasons for closure including full-family sanctions. The remainder of this chapter describes the year's closures by case type, month of exit, and jurisdictions. The next chapter looks at the characteristics of closing cases statewide and, separately, by jurisdiction. That chapter also separately profiles child-only and traditional cases for the state as a whole and for each jurisdiction separately. Our final findings chapter looks at the most commonly recorded reasons for case closure, statewide and at the local level.

### Case Closings by Type

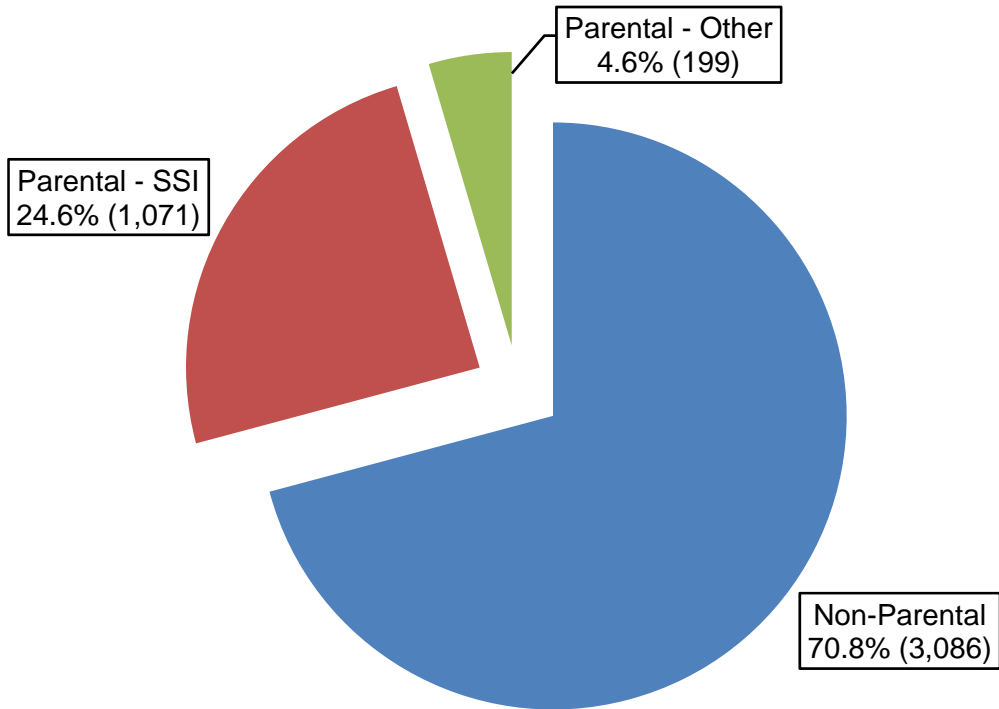
Figure 1, following this discussion, illustrates the types of cases that closed for at least one month. Traditional cases—cases that have at least one adult on the TCA grant—account for approximately four-fifths (78.1%) of the exiting caseload. The remaining 21.9% are child-only cases, in which there are no adults on the grant.

Figure 2, immediately following Figure 1, illustrates how the universe of child-only cases closing during our study period is distributed across the various sub-types of these assistance units with no adult on the grant. As shown—and consistent with findings from other studies—the large majority (70.8%) are non-parental cases, where assistance is being provided on behalf of a child who lives with a relative adult other than a parent. Roughly one in four (24.6%) child-only cases that closed had a parent receiving SSI, and very few (4.6%) were of any other subtype.

**Figure 1. Statewide Case Closings by Type**



**Figure 2. Statewide Child-Only Closings by Type**



## Case Closings by Month

In this section, we examine how many cases closed in each month of our study year. As shown in Figure 3, following this discussion, total closings averaged 1,659 cases per month. Case closings were highest (n=2,085) in October 2006, the first month of the study period, and lowest (n=1,509) in September 2007, the last month of the study period.

Traditional cases, where an adult is included in the TANF grant, composed four-fifths (78.1%) of the closing caseload (15,560 of 19,916), averaging approximately 1,297 exiting cases per month. Notably, this monthly average is 283 fewer cases than the previous year's average (n=1,580).

As noted previously, about one in five (21.8%) closures this year was a child-only case. On average, 363 child-only cases closed each month, a decrease of only 12 cases from the monthly average in the preceding year (n=375).

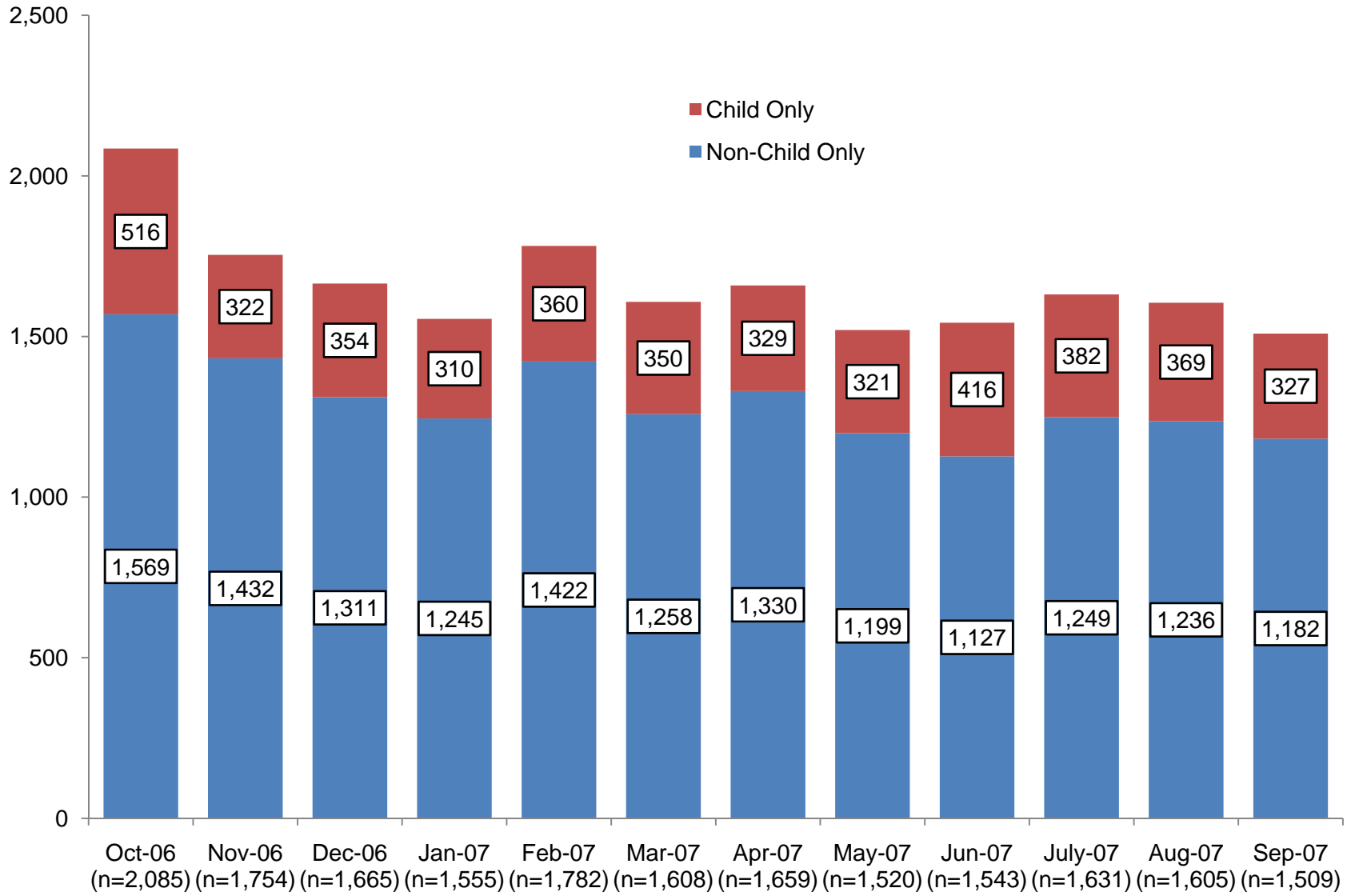
In sum, the data in Figure 3 indicate that the roughly 15% decline in the number of cases closing this year is largely a result of fewer closures among traditional cases, which often leave for purposes of employment. Specifically, traditional cases account for 95.9% of the year-over-year decrease (n=3,446 of 3,593) in case closures.

## Case Closings by Jurisdiction

Maryland is a small but diverse state, economically, culturally, and demographically. This intra-state diversity was explicitly recognized and its importance acknowledged in the “one size does not fit all” feature of our welfare reform circa 1996. For that reason and others, it is important to examine case closures at the local level in order to reflect the diversity of welfare exit patterns across the state. Thus, Table 1, immediately following Figure 3, presents information on the number and percent of all statewide cases closing that are accounted for by each jurisdiction and, separately, the same information for traditional and child-only cases. As in previous years, the largest number and percent of case closings, just under half of the entire total, were in Baltimore City (49.6%). Prince George's (10.7%), and Baltimore Counties (10.2%) also accounted for a significant proportion of the total. With the exception of Anne Arundel, Harford, and Montgomery Counties—whose closings accounted for between 3% and 5% of the state total—all other jurisdictions accounted for no more than 2% of all statewide closures.

The same pattern prevails when case type is taken into account. Baltimore City accounts for just over half of the state's traditional case total (52.6%) and about two-fifths of child-only exits (39.1%). Prince George's and Baltimore Counties both have about one in ten of the state's traditional case closures (9.8% and 9.5%), respectively, and 13.7% and 12.9% of the state's child-only case closures. These findings are generally unchanged from last year and are, in large measure, consistent with and reflective of the composition and distribution of the active caseload across the state.

**Figure 3. Statewide Case Closings by Month**



**Table 1. Number of Closing Cases by Type and Jurisdiction**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Traditional Cases</b>	<b>Child-Only Cases</b>	<b>All Cases</b>
Allegany	0.9% (147)	1.2% (53)	1.0% (200)
Anne Arundel	5.9% (919)	5.5% (241)	5.8% (1,160)
Baltimore County	9.5% (1,476)	12.9% (564)	10.2% (2,040)
Calvert	0.7% (110)	0.8% (36)	0.7% (146)
Caroline	0.5% (84)	0.7% (29)	0.6% (113)
Carroll	1.0% (154)	1.3% (57)	1.1% (211)
Cecil	1.8% (287)	1.8% (78)	1.8% (365)
Charles	0.7% (103)	1.6% (71)	0.9% (174)
Dorchester	1.5% (240)	1.4% (61)	1.5% (301)
Frederick	1.3% (207)	1.4% (62)	1.4% (269)
Garrett	0.3% (49)	0.3% (14)	0.3% (63)
Harford	2.8% (439)	3.5% (153)	3.0% (592)
Howard	1.8% (282)	2.0% (88)	1.9% (370)
Kent	0.1% (16)	0.3% (14)	0.2% (30)
Montgomery	3.0% (466)	4.5% (198)	3.3% (664)
Prince George's	9.8% (1,532)	13.7% (595)	10.7% (2,127)
Queen Anne's	0.4% (56)	0.3% (12)	0.3% (68)
St. Mary's	1.1% (175)	1.3% (55)	1.2% (230)
Somerset	0.5% (85)	0.4% (17)	0.5% (102)
Talbot	0.1% (23)	0.5% (23)	0.2% (46)
Washington	1.3% (207)	2.0% (88)	1.5% (295)
Wicomico	1.8% (285)	2.7% (116)	2.0% (401)
Worcester	0.2% (37)	0.6% (26)	0.3% (63)
Baltimore City	52.6% (8,181)	39.1% (1,705)	49.6% (9,886)
<b>Statewide Total</b>	<b>100.0% (15,560)</b>	<b>100.0% (4,356)</b>	<b>100% (19,916)</b>

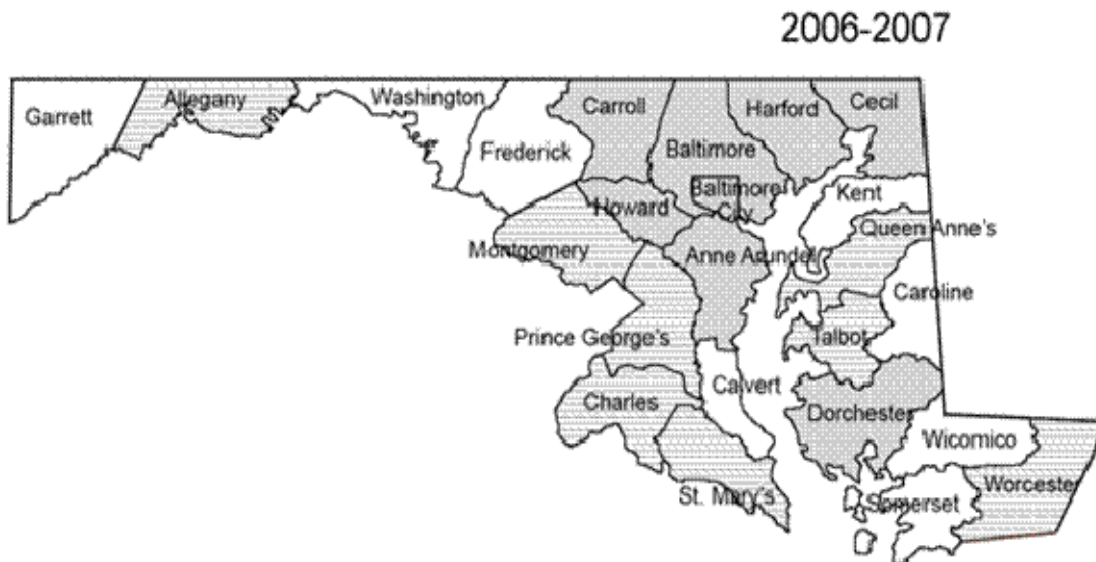
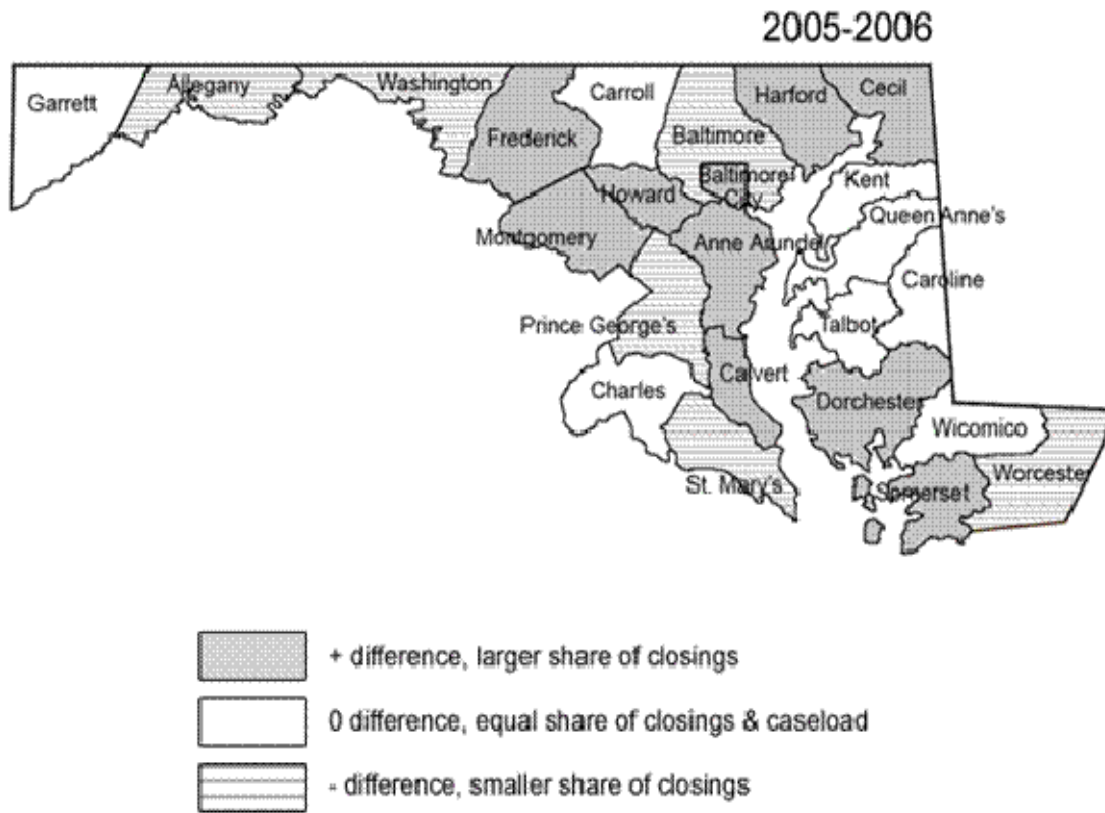
**Case Closings Relative to Caseload Size**

TANF caseloads vary widely in size across Maryland's 24 local jurisdictions, making it difficult to meaningfully interpret the raw case closings data depicted in Table 1 at the local level. For example, the average monthly TANF caseload in Baltimore City is about 12,000 while in Garrett County it is only 50. For this reason, it is more informative to examine each jurisdiction's share of the statewide case closures relative to its share of the statewide average active caseload over the same time period. Figure 4, on the next page, depicts this information for the current study year (2006-2007) and for the year before (2005-2006). The data undergirding the 2006-2007 map are presented in Tabular form in Appendix A.

Although not discernable from Figure 4, the reality this year is that all 24 jurisdictions have nearly identical shares of the active average annual caseload as they have of case closures. Indeed, the greatest difference was only one percent; Prince George's County accounted for 1% fewer closures than it did of active cases. The second largest difference was observed in Anne Arundel County. In this instance, the locality accounted for slightly more (0.6%) closures than cases. In the other 22 jurisdictions, their shares of cases and closures were either identical (eight counties) or varied by no more than three tenths of one percent. These findings, including those for Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties, are virtually identical to those reported in the prior year.



Figure 4. Difference between Closings and Cases by Jurisdiction



## FINDINGS: CHARACTERISTICS OF EXITING CASES

In this chapter we focus attention on the characteristics of the families who were involved in these case closures. The chapter presents this year's findings with regard to assistance unit size and composition and welfare utilization. Demographic information about the adults and children is also provided and, for all topics covered, findings are presented for the state as a whole and separately for each jurisdiction. Findings for child-only and traditional cases are also separately described at the state and local levels.

It is important to present this type of case and client-level information for several reasons. First and foremost, it is imperative to remember that, behind all program and research statistics are real families and, further, that the majority of cash assistance recipients and former recipients are children under the age of 18. Second, just as jurisdictions vary in the size of their cash assistance caseloads, so do their economies and their general population characteristics. They often vary in the profile of the families who use and then exit from aid. Third, as we are well into the second decade of the reformed welfare system, it is possible that client characteristics—including the characteristics of those who leave assistance—may have changed in programmatically important ways. Finally, because of the concentration of the state's cash assistance caseload in a few large, metropolitan jurisdictions such as Baltimore City and the counties of Prince George's and Baltimore, statewide statistics often mask the client and caseload realities in other admittedly smaller, but no less important, jurisdictions and regions of the state.

### **Characteristics of Exiting Cases and Payees: Statewide**

As shown in Table 2, following, the typical case closure during the study period was a traditional (i.e. non child-only), two-person assistance unit (37.0%), consisting of one adult (97.4%) and one (47.5%) child. On average, the youngest child in these cases was about six years old (mean = 5.8 years), although roughly two out of every five families (43.8%) contained at least one child under three years of age. The adult casehead in the typical closing case is an African-American (79.2%) female (95.0%) in her mid-thirties. The large majority of statewide closures this year (80.6%) were among families who had received 12 or fewer consecutive months of assistance.

Traditional cases, as discussed in the preceding chapter, comprised nearly four-fifths (78.1%) of all closures. As a result, the profile of the 'typical' case closing this year closely resembles that of a traditional exiting case. It is not surprising, then, to see that for every variable examined, Table 2 shows statistically significant differences in the profile of exiting cases and clients when traditional and child-only cases are separately examined. Notably, adults heading child-only cases are significantly older—by about 16 years, on average—than their counterparts in traditional cases. Specifically, the mean ages of the adult(s) in child-only and traditional cases are 46.8 years and 30.5 years, respectively. This finding is not unexpected because most (70.8%) child-only closures this year were of the non-parental type where the typical relative caregivers are grandparents. Child only closing cases were also significantly less likely to have African-American case heads than were traditional cases that closed (75.9% vs. 80.1%) and to have case heads who were female (91.4% vs. 96.0%).

Consistent with what we have found in other studies of the child-only TANF caseload, Table 2 also shows that child-only closing cases this year tended to contain fewer and older children than traditional cases that closed (Hetling, et al., 2005; Saunders, Born & Ovwigho, forthcoming). Two-thirds (66.9%) of child-only cases in our sample, to illustrate, contained only one child, compared to about two-fifths (42.1%) of traditional cases. In addition, the youngest child in a child-only assistance unit was nearly four and one half years older (mean = 9.2 years), on average, than his/her counterpart in a traditional case (mean = 4.8 years). Moreover, while just about one of every two (51.1%) traditional cases included a child under the age of three years, only about one case in six (16.9%) of child-only cases included a child that young.

Finally, and also consistent with prior research, we find that child-only cases, on average, had spent nearly four times as long on assistance before case closure than had traditional cases making their exit (means=23.9 months vs. 6.5 months). The differences in welfare utilization are most evident at the extremes. Roughly nine of every 10 (89.5%) traditional cases had received 12 or fewer months of aid at the time of case closure, but this was true for only half (49.1%) of child-only cases. In contrast, some 7.3% of child-only cases had received assistance for more than five years at the time of case closure, compared to only one-tenth of one percent (0.1%) of traditional cases.

**Table 2. Closing Case and Payee Characteristics: Statewide**

	<b>Child-Only Cases</b>	<b>Traditional Cases</b>	<b>All Cases</b>
<b>Number of Closing Cases</b>	21.8% (4,356)	78.1% (15,560)	100.0% (19,916)
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>			
12 months or less	49.1% (2,138)	89.5% (13,920)	80.6% (16,058)
13-24 months	21.8% (949)	8.3% (1,289)	11.2% (2,238)
25-36 months	11.4% (498)	1.4% (211)	3.6% (709)
37-48 months	6.2% (268)	0.5% (85)	1.8% (353)
49-60 months	4.3% (186)	0.2% (37)	1.1% (223)
More than 60 months	7.3% (317)	0.1% (18)	1.7% (335)
Mean [Median]***	23.9 [12.6]	6.5 [4.6]	10.3 [5.7]
Range	<1 – 309 months	<1 – 163 months	<1 – 309 months
<b>% with Two Adults***</b>	0.0% 0	3.3% (510)	2.6% (510)
<b>Number of Children***</b>			
0	0.0% 0	5.2% (811)	4.1% (811)
1	66.9% (2,915)	42.1% (6,552)	47.5% (9,467)
2	22.4% (974)	28.8% (4,480)	27.4% (5,454)
3 or more	10.7% (467)	23.9% (3,717)	21.0% (4,184)
<b>Size of Assistance Unit***</b>			
1	66.9% (2,915)	5.1% (799)	18.6% (3,714)
2	22.4% (974)	41.1% (6,398)	37.0% (7,372)
3	7.3% (318)	29.0% (4,505)	24.2% (4,823)
4 or more	3.4% (149)	24.8% (3,858)	20.1% (4,007)
Mean [Median]***	1.5 [1]	2.9 [3]	2.6 [2]
Range	1 - 10	1 - 13	1 - 13
<b>% African American***</b>	75.9% (3,202)	80.1% (12,287)	79.2% (15,489)
<b>% Female***</b>	91.4% (3,981)	96.0% (14,942)	95.0% (18,923)
<b>Age of Payee</b>			
Mean [Median]***	46.8 [47]	30.5 [28]	34.1 [31]
Range	4 – 96 years	17 – 69 years	4 – 96 years
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>			
Mean [Median]***	9.2 [9.1]	4.8 [2.9]	5.8 [3.9]
Range (years)	<1 - 18	<1 - 18	<1 - 18
% cases with a child under 3***	16.9% (680)	51.1% (7,593)	43.8% (8,273)

Note: Valid percentages are reported. \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

**Characteristics of Exiting Cases and Payees: Jurisdictional Analysis**

As mentioned previously, statewide statistics mask considerable and often important variability within our state. One of our studies, for example, indicated that Baltimore City’s active caseload has a disproportionately high number of traditional cases – nearly three of five (62.0%) which, under the DRA rules, means more work-mandatory cases. At the other extreme, half or more of

the entire TANF caseload in three counties (Allegany, Talbot, and Worcester) consists of child-only cases. And, in six other jurisdictions (Baltimore, Charles, Garrett, Kent, Washington, and Wicomico) there is a nearly even split between traditional and child-only cases (Ovwigbo, Born, & Saunders, 2006).

The above proportions may have changed somewhat as a result of the recent recession, but the general point that there is great

diversity across jurisdictions remains valid. Empirical information about the distribution and characteristics of traditional and child-only cases is important for a number of reasons, but most practically because child-only cases are exempt from TANF work requirements and thus are excluded from the state's work participation rate calculations. Thus, a lopsided distribution of traditional, generally work mandatory, cases across Maryland means that the state's success in meeting DRA work standards may largely depend on the actions taken and results achieved in but a few jurisdictions (i.e., Baltimore City). Thus, we continue our practice of presenting locality-by-locality findings for the families whose welfare cases closed during this study year (October 2006 to September 2007) by locality. We begin, first, by presenting information on all cases that closed during the study period and then separately describe and discuss traditional and child-only cases that closed.

### **All Cases**

For all cases that closed this year, regardless of case type, Table 3, spanning several pages following this discussion, presents detailed findings for each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions, including payee demographics, welfare utilization, and assistance unit size and composition. A full appreciation of the diversity across jurisdictions and its implications for policy, front-line practice, and work participation outcomes can only be gleaned by careful review of the table and its contents. Here, however, we highlight key points of similarity and difference across subdivisions.

In all 24 jurisdictions, the majority of families were exiting the welfare rolls after receiving aid for 12 or fewer months, the range being from 62.1% in Charles County to 85.8% and 85.7% in Cecil and Howard counties, respectively. The average time on aid prior to the case closure ranged from a low of 7.6 months and 7.7 months in Somerset and Cecil counties to a high of more than 12 months in the counties of Charles

(14.4 months), Kent (15.3 months), Talbot (15.8 months), Wicomico (12.1 months), and Worcester (12.9 months). It will be recalled that, for the state as a whole, four-fifths (80.7%) of all cases had received 12 or fewer months of aid at the time of case closure and had an average spell length of 10.3 months.

For the statewide all-cases sample, we previously reported that more than three-fourths (78.1%) of all closures were of the traditional case type and roughly one-fifth (21.8%) were of the child-only variety. This pattern generally prevailed across subdivisions as well, but there are some notable exceptions, as illustrated in Table 3. In most subdivisions child-only cases accounted for somewhere in the range of about one-fifth to one-quarter of all closures, but the percentage was much higher in four counties. These are Kent (46.7%), Charles (40.8%), Worcester (41.3%), and Talbot (50%). At the other end of the spectrum, Somerset County had the lowest percentage of child-only closures (16.7%)

A final area of programmatically important intra-state variation reflected in Table 3 concerns the ages of the children whose families left the TCA rolls during this study year. For the state as a whole, we know that the average age of the youngest child in all exiting cases is 5.8 years and, further, that two-fifths (41.6%) of all assistance units included at least one child under the age of three years. Across jurisdictions, the youngest child's average age ranged from 4.5 years in Washington County to 6.3 years in Queen Anne's and Charles counties. In terms of assistance units with at least one child under the age of three years, the range across the state is from a low of 36.5% in Charles County to highs of 50% or more in the counties of Allegany (50.0%), Frederick (51.8%), Garrett (52.5%), Somerset (52.5%) and Washington (56.9%).

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

	<b>Allegany</b>	<b>Anne Arundel</b>	<b>Baltimore County</b>	<b>Calvert</b>	<b>Caroline</b>	<b>Carroll</b>
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	200	1160	2041	146	113	211
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	75.5%	84.7%	78.7%	78.8%	84.1%	80.6%
13 - 24 months	15.0%	10.3%	11.8%	9.6%	10.6%	11.8%
25 - 36 months	3.5%	2.8%	4.0%	4.8%	1.8%	3.8%
37 - 48 months	2.0%	1.1%	2.0%	2.1%	0.9%	0.5%
49 - 60 months	1.0%	0.5%	1.5%	1.4%	0.9%	0.9%
More than 60 months	3.0%	0.6%	2.1%	3.4%	1.8%	2.4%
Mean [Median]**	12.0 [5.2]	7.9 [4.3]	11.0 [5.7]	11.5 [6.4]	9.1 [5.1]	10.9 [5.8]
<b>Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]**</b>	2.4 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]	2.4 [2.0]	2.7 [2.0]	2.4 [2.0]	2.4 [2.0]
<b>Number of Adults</b>						
0 (Child-Only)	26.5%	20.8%	27.6%	24.7%	25.7%	27.0%
1	67.5%	76.6%	70.2%	68.5%	71.7%	69.2%
2	6.0%	2.6%	2.1%	6.8%	2.7%	3.8%
<b>Number of Children*</b>						
0	3.0%	4.7%	3.0%	2.7%	3.5%	7.1%
1	57.5%	44.1%	51.9%	44.5%	54.0%	48.3%
2	21.5%	29.7%	28.0%	31.5%	26.5%	29.9%
3 or more	18.0%	21.5%	17.1%	21.2%	15.9%	14.7%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	85.4%	36.8%	30.8%	56.3%	44.2%	78.6%
% African American***	13.6%	61.1%	66.2%	40.8%	55.8%	14.6%
% Female***	91.0%	95.2%	94.8%	91.8%	93.8%	92.9%
Mean Age [Median]**	33.3 [32.0]	33.7 [31.0]	34.6 [32.0]	36.6 [34.5]	34.4 [32.0]	35.5 [33.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>						
Mean [Median]**	5.4 [3.05]	5.5 [3.75]	5.7 [3.53]	5.8 [3.54]	6.1 [3.6]	5.8 [4.2]
% cases with a child under 3***	50.0%	46.0%	46.1%	45.7%	44.3%	42.2%

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

	<b>Cecil</b>	<b>Charles</b>	<b>Dorchester</b>	<b>Frederick</b>	<b>Garrett</b>	<b>Harford</b>
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	365	174	301	269	63	592
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	85.8%	62.1%	79.1%	85.5%	79.4%	78.0%
13 - 24 months	8.8%	17.8%	9.6%	6.3%	12.7%	13.5%
25 - 36 months	3.0%	9.2%	5.3%	3.0%	1.6%	3.4%
37 - 48 months	1.1%	7.5%	2.0%	2.2%	1.6%	2.2%
49 - 60 months	0.5%	1.7%	1.7%	0.4%	1.6%	1.2%
More than 60 months	0.8%	1.7%	2.3%	2.6%	3.2%	1.7%
Mean [Median]**	7.7 [4.3]	14.4 [7.8]	10.9 [5.3]	10.8 [4.6]	11.4 [3.8]	10.9 [6.5]
<b>Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]**</b>	2.6 [2.0]	2.4 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]	2.5 [2.0]	2.5 [2.0]	2.5 [2.0]
<b>Number of Adults</b>						
0 (Child-Only)	21.4%	40.8%	20.3%	23.0%	22.2%	25.8%
1	72.3%	58.6%	75.7%	75.5%	65.1%	68.9%
2	6.3%	0.6%	4.0%	1.5%	12.7%	5.2%
<b>Number of Children*</b>						
0	4.7%	3.4%	5.6%	3.3%	1.6%	1.5%
1	46.8%	54.0%	42.9%	49.4%	46.0%	51.9%
2	28.5%	20.7%	31.6%	27.9%	41.3%	26.4%
3 or more	20.0%	21.8%	19.9%	19.3%	11.1%	20.3%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	76.3%	24.1%	24.7%	43.1%	100.0%	45.8%
% African American***	21.2%	73.5%	67.7%	49.1%	0.0%	50.8%
% Female***	95.1%	96.6%	95.0%	95.2%	85.7%	94.3%
Mean Age [Median]**	34.4 [32.0]	36.5 [35.0]	32.7 [29.0]	34.0 [30.0]	34.8 [29.0]	34.4 [30.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child in AU</b>						
Mean [Median]**	5.8 [4.1]	6.3 [4.8]	5.5 [3.3]	5.3 [2.8]	5.6 [2.9]	5.4 [3.4]
% cases with a child under 3***	43.9%	36.5%	48.3%	51.8%	52.5%	45.9%

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

	Howard	Kent	Montgomery	Prince George's	Queen Anne's	St. Mary's
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	370	30	665	2129	68	230
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	85.7%	70.0%	78.3%	77.6%	82.4%	79.6%
13 - 24 months	6.8%	10.0%	11.4%	15.2%	8.8%	12.2%
25 - 36 months	2.7%	10.0%	4.2%	3.0%	2.9%	5.7%
37 - 48 months	1.9%	3.39%	2.0%	1.3%	1.5%	1.3%
49 - 60 months	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%	0.4%
More than 60 months	2.2%	6.7%	3.3%	2.2%	4.4%	0.9%
Mean [Median]**	10.5 [5.9]	15.3 [7.0]	11.4 [4.9]	11.8 [8.1]	10.5 [3.2]	11.0 [8.1]
<b>Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]**</b>	2.6 [2.0]	2.0 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]	2.5 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]
<b>Number of Adults</b>						
0 (Child-Only)	23.8%	46.7%	29.8%	28.0%	17.6%	23.9%
1	72.4%	53.3%	67.6%	69.8%	75.0%	68.7%
2	3.8%	0.0%	2.6%	2.3%	7.4%	7.4%
<b>Number of Children*</b>						
0	1.6%	10.0%	2.7%	4.9%	4.4%	5.2%
1	50.3%	43.3%	47.9%	47.6%	52.9%	49.1%
2	27.3%	33.3%	25.6%	26.2%	17.6%	24.8%
3 or more	20.8%	13.3%	23.8%	21.3%	25.0%	20.9%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	23.3%	34.5%	13.6%	2.8%	59.7%	49.1%
% African American***	72.4%	62.1%	75.2%	94.7%	38.8%	50.0%
% Female***	95.4%	86.7%	94.0%	94.6%	91.2%	92.2%
Mean Age [Median]**	34.6 [32.0]	36.1 [32.5]	36.5 [34.0]	35.6 [33.0]	34.7 [32.0]	35.2 [32.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child in AU</b>						
Mean [Median]**	6.1 [4.8]	5.6 [3.2]	6.0 [4.1]	6.1 [4.2]	6.3 [4.8]	5.9 [4.4]
% cases with a child under 3***	41.4%	48.1%	40.2%	42.3%	40.9%	45.2%



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

	<b>Somerset</b>	<b>Talbot</b>	<b>Washington</b>	<b>Wicomico</b>	<b>Worcester</b>	<b>Baltimore City</b>
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	102	46	295	401	63	9890
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	82.4%	67.4%	81.7%	78.8%	79.4%	81.6%
13 - 24 months	12.7%	13.0%	10.5%	9.5%	9.5%	10.6%
25 - 36 months	3.9%	8.7%	3.7%	4.5%	0.0%	3.5%
37 - 48 months	0.0%	2.2%	1.0%	3.0%	3.2%	1.8%
49 - 60 months	1.0%	4.3%	2.0%	2.2%	3.2%	1.2%
More than 60 months	0.0%	4.3%	1.0%	2.0%	4.8%	1.4%
Mean [Median]**	7.6 [4.5]	15.8 [4.5]	9.6 [5.4]	12.1 [5.4]	12.9 [5.6]	9.8 [5.5]
<b>Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]**</b>	2.9 [3.0]	2.0 [2.0]	2.5 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]	2.4 [2.0]	2.6 [2.0]
<b>Number of Adults</b>						
0 (Child-Only)	16.7%	50.0%	29.8%	28.9%	41.3%	17.2%
1	77.5%	47.8%	66.8%	69.3%	57.1%	80.7%
2	5.9%	2.2%	3.4%	1.7%	1.6%	2.0%
<b>Number of Children*</b>						
0	2.0%	2.2%	2.4%	3.2%	0.0%	4.4%
1	41.2%	65.2%	52.5%	44.4%	57.1%	46.2%
2	29.4%	19.6%	23.7%	28.7%	22.2%	27.5%
3 or more	27.5%	13.0%	21.4%	23.7%	20.6%	21.8%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	29.4%	43.2%	60.1%	28.1%	49.2%	5.9%
% African American***	68.6%	54.5%	34.3%	70.2%	47.6%	93.5%
% Female***	94.1%	95.7%	92.2%	95.3%	95.2%	95.6%
Mean Age [Median]**	31.8 [29.0]	39.9 [39.0]	33.1 [30.0]	35.3 [33.0]	36.9 [35.0]	33.3 [30.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child in AU</b>						
Mean [Median]**	5.3 [2.4]	6.0 [5.2]	4.5 [2.0]	5.9 [3.9]	5.4 [3.9]	5.8 [4.1]
% cases with a child under 3***	52.5%	42.9%	56.9%	44.%	45.9%	42.5%

## Child-Only Cases

At the statewide level, we have already reported differences between traditional and child-only closing cases on important dimensions such as welfare utilization and the ages of the adults and children in the assistance unit. We also noted wide variation across the state in the proportions of exiting cases that were of the child-only type. In this section of the chapter we take a separate look at the characteristics of child-only cases at the local level. Table 4, following this discussion, presents by jurisdiction, detailed information about the characteristics of child-only cases which left welfare for at least one month during the study period. Key intra-state variations are briefly described in the next few paragraphs.

For the state as a whole, the preceding chapter found that the large majority (70.8%) of all child-only closures were cases in which the adult was a relative other than the child's parent. Cases of this type are generally referred to as 'non-parental' cases and we know from other of our research studies, that the adults in these cases are usually a grandparent.

Non-parental cases were also the most prevalent sub-type of child-only closures in 23 of 24 jurisdictions, as Table 4 shows. The exception is Allegany County, where in three-fifths (60.4%) of case closures the resident parent was not included in the TANF case because he or she was receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). In the remaining 23 jurisdictions, non-parental situations accounted for between 53.0% (Montgomery County) and 88.2% (Somerset County) of all child-only closures during the study period. Montgomery County is also notable because one in five (20.0%) child-only closures there was a case in which the parent was present in the home but not TANF-eligible for some 'other' reason, most likely because the parent's immigration status made him or her ineligible for benefits. This situation also accounted for 14.3% of all child-only closures in Kent County; in the

majority of the remaining jurisdictions, these cases accounted for fewer than 5% of all child-only closures.

It has been previously noted that, considering all statewide cases together, the traditional and child-only closing cases differ on other important dimensions as well. In particular, child-only cases, on average, tend to have fewer and older children on the grant, to have adult case heads that are older, and to have been on assistance for longer periods of time before case closure. Table 4 shows that, with a few noteworthy exceptions, these statewide findings also generally hold true at the jurisdictional level of analysis.

In terms of the number of children in the assistance unit, the majority of cases in all 24 subdivisions contain only one youngster. The range is between 54.4% in Carroll County and 83.3% in Queen Anne's County. The seven counties of Allegany (69.8%), Baltimore (72.7%), Caroline (72.4%), Charles (70.4%), Frederick (71.0%), Harford (71.9%), and Talbot (78.3%) also had a higher percentage of one child assistance units among their child-only closing cases than was true for the statewide child-only sample as a whole (66.9%).

The average age of the youngest child in child-only cases that closed ranged from 7.2 years in Worcester County to 10.4 years in Queen Anne's County. The statewide average for this variable was 9.2 years, but it should be noted that this average is heavily influenced by Baltimore City which had the largest number of child-only closures (n=1,705 of 4,356) and an average youngest-child age of 9.5 years. In 17 of 24 jurisdictions, in fact, the average age of the youngest child was lower than the statewide average. In terms of child-only closing cases with relatively young children, there is considerable variation across the state. For all statewide child-only case closures, 16.9% of assistance units included at least one toddler under the age of three years. At the local level, the range was from fewer

than one in 10 cases in Caroline County (7.4%) to one in four cases in the counties of Calvert (26.5%), Cecil (26.3%), Dorchester (26.2%) and Queen Anne's and Worcester at 25.0% each. Once again, Baltimore City, where the number of exiting child-only cases was largest and the percentage of exiting cases with toddlers was relatively low (16.4%), exerts great influence on the statewide percentage. In reality, the percentage of child-only closing cases with at least one child under the age of three years was greater than the statewide percentage in 16 of 24 jurisdictions.

The last area of important, significant difference across jurisdictions concerns the length of time our child-only exiting cases had been on assistance at the time the case closed. It is now well-established that, in general, child-only cases – particularly those where the child resides with a relative other than his/her own parent – tend to have lengthy episodes of welfare assistance. This reality has already been reflected in this study's finding that, at the statewide level, the typical child-only closing case had received assistance for roughly two years (23.6 months) prior to exiting, compared to an average of just about six months (6.5 months) for traditional cases. Median spell lengths for the two types of exiting cases were also quite different: 12.6 months for child-only closures and 4.6 months for traditional cases.

As illustrated in Table 4, there is a fairly wide range across the state in terms of average spell length. It ranges from a low of just over one year (13.0 months) in Somerset County to highs of nearly three years (32.3 months) in Garrett County and, in Somerset County, 31.8 months. In 16 of the other localities, the mean spell length for child-only closing cases was roughly two years and in the remaining five it was roughly one and one-half years. Because mean spell length is affected by extreme values (i.e., cases with very long or very short spells), it is also instructive to examine the median. Here, Table 4 shows more congru-

ence across the state. Median spell lengths range from 8.8 months in Calvert County to 18.3 months in Charles County, while the majority (n=18) of jurisdictions have medians of between 10 and 13 months.

There is also statistically significant intra-state variation on another important measure of benefit utilization: the percent of short-term and long-term recipients. Statewide, we found that 7.3% of all child-only closing cases, at the time of the departure that brought them into this study, had received cash assistance for more than 60 consecutive months and about half of them (49.1%) had gotten 12 or fewer months of continuous aid. Local jurisdictions do differ significantly on both of these measures. In all but seven subdivisions (the counties of Allegany, Charles, Dorchester, Garrett, Montgomery and Talbot, and Baltimore City), one half or more of all child-only closing cases had received 12 or fewer months of aid at the time of the exit. The lowest percentages of these short-term cases were in Charles County (33.8%), Baltimore City (42.3%) and Garrett County (42.9%). At the other end of the benefit receipt continuum, we find that 10% or more of child-only closures had received more than 60 months of uninterrupted cash assistance in six counties (Allegany, Frederick, Garrett, Montgomery, Queen Anne's and Worcester). On these variables as on all others described in this narrative, it must be remembered that, for many subdivisions, the actual numbers of cases involved are fairly small. In eight of the 24 jurisdictions, to illustrate, fewer than 50 child-only case closures are represented in Table 4 and, thus, in this text. Because study findings are based on the universe of cases closing for at least one month during the study period, the findings presented are valid and the patterns and outlying values noted are real ones. However, because we generally report percentages rather than whole numbers in the text, it is worth noting that, in some counties, the universe of included cases is quite small.

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

	<b>Allegany</b>	<b>Anne Arundel</b>	<b>Baltimore County</b>	<b>Calvert</b>	<b>Caroline</b>	<b>Carroll</b>
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	53	241	564	36	29	57
<b>Type of Child-Only Case***</b>						
Non-Parental	37.7%	80.9%	70.7%	77.8%	72.4%	63.2%
Parental – SSI	60.4%	16.6%	24.5%	22.2%	24.1%	29.8%
Parental – Other	1.9%	2.5%	4.8%	0.0%	3.4%	7.0%
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	47.2%	59.8%	51.6%	66.7%	65.5%	57.9%
13 - 24 months	26.4%	22.8%	19.3%	5.8%	17.2%	17.5%
25 - 36 months	5.7%	7.5%	11.5%	0.0%	6.9%	12.3%
37 - 48 months	7.5%	4.6%	6.4%	8.3%	0.0%	1.8%
49 - 60 months	1.9%	2.5%	3.9%	3.4%	3.4%	1.8%
More than 60 months	11.3%	2.9%	7.3%	6.9%	6.9%	8.8%
Mean [Median]***	26.9 [13.5]	16.7 [11.0]	23.3 [11.9]	23.4 [8.8]	17.6 [10.3]	22.6 [11.2]
<b>Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]</b>	1.4 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]	1.4 [1.0]	1.7 [1.0]	1.4 [1.0]	1.7 [1.0]
<b>Number of Children</b>						
1	69.8%	64.7%	72.7%	61.1%	72.4%	54.4%
2	20.8%	23.7%	19.3%	19.4%	13.8%	31.6%
3 or more	9.4%	11.6%	8.0%	19.4%	13.8%	14.0%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	88.7%	31.8%	35.3%	50.0%	37.9%	72.7%
% African American***	9.4%	64.8%	61.9%	50.0%	62.1%	23.6%
% Female**	90.6%	90.9%	91.1%	77.8%	86.2%	89.5%
Mean Age [Median]	43.5 [44.0]	47.1 [47.0]	45.7 [45.0]	49.1 [46.0]	47.2 [47.0]	47.3 [48.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>						
Mean [Median]**	8.6 [7.3]	9.0 [9.0]	9.1 [8.9]	8.6 [9.4]	9.8 [10.9]	7.8 [6.4]
% cases with a child under 3	19.1%	16.8%	17.4%	26.5%	7.4%	14.8%

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

	<b>Cecil</b>	<b>Charles</b>	<b>Dorchester</b>	<b>Frederick</b>	<b>Garrett</b>	<b>Harford</b>
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	78	71	61	62	14	153
Type of Child-Only Case***						
Non-Parental	71.8%	63.4%	73.8%	67.7%	71.4%	85.6%
Parental – SSI	28.2%	26.8%	24.6%	24.2%	28.6%	12.4%
Parental – Other	0.0%	9.9%	1.6%	8.1%	0.0%	1.2%
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	55.1%	33.8%	47.5%	56.5%	42.9%	60.1%
13 - 24 months	24.4%	26.8%	18.0%	12.9%	28.6%	19.6%
25 - 36 months	10.3%	18.3%	13.1%	11.3%	7.1%	5.9%
37 - 48 months	3.8%	12.7%	6.6%	6.5%	0.0%	3.9%
49 - 60 months	2.6%	4.2%	8.2%	1.6%	7.1%	3.9%
More than 60 months	3.8%	4.2%	6.6%	11.3%	14.3%	6.5%
Mean [Median]***	18.0 [10.7]	23.8 [18.3]	23.7 [16.7]	28.6 [11.3]	32.3 [12.7]	21.0 [11.0]
<b>Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]</b>	1.4 [1.0]	1.5 [ 1.0]	1.6 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]	1.4 [1.0]	1.4 [1.0]
<b>Number of Children</b>						
1	66.7%	70.4%	60.7%	71.0%	57.1%	71.9%
2	26.9%	16.9%	24.6%	16.1%	42.9%	17.0%
3 or more	6.4%	12.6%	14.8%	12.9%	0.0%	11.1%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	74.0%	20.6%	21.3%	41.9%	100.0%	55.3%
% African American***	22.1%	75.0%	77.0%	51.6%	0.0%	43.4%
% Female**	96.2%	94.4%	91.8%	93.5%	71.4%	87.6%
Mean Age [Median]	46.7 [47.5]	46.4 [47.0]	46.0 [45.0]	45.5 [44.0]	50.6 [49.5]	47.3 [46.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>						
Mean [Median]**	8.4 [7.6]	8.6 [8.3]	7.9 [6.7]	9.4 [7.9]	9.5 [9.9]	8.7 [8.4]
% cases with a child under 3	26.3%	14.5%	26.2%	10.7%	15.4%	17.1%

**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
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	88	14	198	595	12	55
Type of Child-Only Case***						
Non-Parental	69.3%	64.3%	53.0%	74.5%	83.3%	65.5%
Parental – SSI	25.0%	21.4%	26.8%	19.5%	16.7%	30.9%
Parental – Other	5.7%	14.3%	20.0%	6.1%	0.0%	3.6%
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	58.0%	57.1%	49.5%	51.3%	58.3%	58.2%
13 - 24 months	12.5%	7.1%	21.7%	26.4%	16.7%	21.8%
25 - 36 months	11.4%	21.4%	10.1%	8.2%	0.0%	10.9%
37 - 48 months	6.8%	7.1%	5.6%	3.9%	0.0%	3.6%
49 - 60 months	2.3%	0.0%	2.0%	2.7%	0.0%	1.8%
More than 60 months	9.1%	7.1%	11.1%	7.6%	25.0%	3.6%
Mean [Median]***	24.5 [11.4]	22.5 [10.6]	25.1 [12.1]	23.3 [11.9]	31.8 [9.2]	18.3 [10.9]
<b>Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]</b>	1.5 [1.0]	1.4 [1.0]	1.6 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]	1.3 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]
<b>Number of Children</b>						
1	63.6%	64.3%	62.1%	63.2%	83.3%	63.6%
2	25.0%	28.6%	22.2%	26.2%	8.3%	21.8%
3 or more	11.4%	7.1%	15.7%	10.6%	8.3%	14.5%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	24.1%	30.8%	12.2%	2.4%	50.0%	43.4%
% African American***	73.4%	61.5%	71.3%	95.0%	50.0%	52.8%
% Female**	94.3%	78.6%	88.9%	92.3%	91.7%	89.1%
Mean Age [Median]	46.4 [45.0]	46.5 [43.5]	46.0 [46.5]	47.8 [47.0]	47.7 [47.0]	47.7 [48.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>						
Mean [Median]**	8.8 [8.7]	7.8 [8.9]	8.3 [7.6]	9.9 [10.4]	10.4 [11.8]	8.6 [9.1]
% cases with a child under 3	19.2%	23.1%	19.5%	12.4%	25.0%	23.1%

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

	<b>Somerset</b>	<b>Talbot</b>	<b>Washington</b>	<b>Wicomico</b>	<b>Worcester</b>	<b>Baltimore City</b>
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	17	23	88	116	26	1705
<b>Type of Child-Only Case***</b>						
Non-Parental	88.2%	78.3%	70.5%	75.0%	73.1%	70.0%
Parental – SSI	11.8%	17.4%	20.5%	22.4%	23.1%	27.3%
Parental – Other	0.0%	4.3%	9.1%	2.6%	3.8%	2.7%
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	52.9%	47.8%	59.1%	53.4%	61.5%	42.3%
13 - 24 months	35.3%	26.1%	18.2%	16.4%	11.5%	22.7%
25 - 36 months	11.8%	8.7%	11.4%	12.9%	0.0%	14.1%
37 - 48 months	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%	6.0%	7.7%	7.7%
49 - 60 months	0.0%	8.7%	5.7%	5.2%	7.7%	5.7%
More than 60 months	0.0%	8.7%	2.3%	6.0%	11.5%	7.4%
Mean [Median]***	13.0 [11.0]	24.3 [14.7]	16.8 [10.6]	24.0 [11.5]	23.1 [9.8]	26.1 [17.7]
<b>Mean Size of Assistance Unit [Median]</b>	1.5 [1.0]	1.4 [1.0]	1.6 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]	1.5 [1.0]
<b>Number of Children</b>						
1	64.7%	78.3%	61.4%	62.9%	65.4%	67.7%
2	23.5%	8.7%	23.9%	28.4%	26.9%	21.8%
3 or more	11.8%	13.0%	14.8%	8.6%	7.7%	10.4%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	29.4%	40.9%	56.3%	31.0%	46.2%	7.2%
% African American***	70.6%	54.5%	37.9%	68.1%	50.0%	92.2%
% Female**	82.4%	91.3%	84.1%	93.1%	92.3%	92.4%
Mean Age [Median]	44.3 [46.0]	48.4 [49.0]	43.6 [45.5]	46.8 [47.0]	43.7 [43.0]	47.2 [47.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>						
Mean [Median]**	10.0 [12.6]	8.8 [7.4]	7.4 [6.1]	8.5 [7.2]	7.2 [6.0]	9.5 [9.7]
% cases with a child under 3	17.6%	19.0%	21.8%	17.8%	25.0%	16.4%

## Traditional Cases

Traditional cases typically have one adult and one or two children in the assistance unit. Such cases have long comprised the majority of active TANF cases and the majority of cases that close in any given year. It is these so-called traditional cases for which the original PRWORA and now DRA-stiffened work requirements were meant. Because of their relative dominance in the caseload and the fact that, since DRA, far fewer cases can be exempted from federal work participation rules, expectations and penalty calculations, it is important to monitor this population, including their case closures. It is also important to track this population at the subdivision level because, in Maryland at least, traditional (i.e., work-mandatory) cases are not evenly distributed. In large measure due to the lopsided distribution of these cases, the state's overall success in meeting federal performance mandates and its ability to avoid financial sanction hinges largely on the outcomes achieved in a few large jurisdictions (i.e., Baltimore City). Thus, this report section describes, for each jurisdiction separately, the case and client characteristics of traditional cases that closed during the study period (October 2006 – September 2007). Key intra-state similarities and differences are noted in the narrative; findings appear in Table 5, which follows the discussion.

Earlier in this chapter, we described that, for the statewide sample as a whole, traditional cases accounted for roughly four of five (78.1%) closures during this year's study period and that, typically, these traditional closures occurred among assistance units that contained only one child (42.1%), whose average age was 4.8 years, and one adult (96.7%) who was an African-American (80.1%), female (96.0%) about 30 ½ years of age. We noted also that just about half (51.1%) of these assistance units contained at least one child under the age of three years and that the vast majority (89.5%) of cases closed after being on assistance continuously for 12 or fewer months. In fact, we

found that, on average, cases had been open for 6.5 months at the time of closure and that fully half of them had received aid for fewer than 4.6 months.

The important intra-state question then is whether this statewide profile is an accurate reflection of reality at the local level. In most respects, Table 5 shows that it is. With regard to continuous welfare use immediately prior to the closure which brought the case into this year's study sample, to illustrate, we see that in all 24 jurisdictions more than four of every five cases closing had received 12 or fewer months of ongoing aid. The range across the state is from roughly 82% in the counties of Calvert, Charles, and Kent Counties to roughly 94% in the counties of Cecil, Frederick, and Howard.

Table 5 also shows that, with a few notable exceptions, there is great consistency across jurisdictions in mean and median assistance unit size, number of adults and number of children on the case. In terms of mean and median assistance unit sizes, all jurisdictions' values are either identical to the statewide mean (2.9 persons per unit) and median (3.0) or hover very close thereto.

Also similar to our statewide findings (96.7%), in all but one jurisdiction, 90% or more closures were of one-adult assistance units. The outlier here is Garrett County. One adult cases were most prevalent here, too, (83.7%) but, notably, a bit fewer than one in five cases (16.3%) had two adults on the grant. There were also significant differences among counties with regard to the ethnicity of the case payee but, as Table 5 shows, these reflect and are consistent with general population characteristics in the various counties.

There is considerably more variation in terms of the numbers and ages of the children who were part of a traditional exiting case this year. Intra-state differences are found as well in the percentage of cases in which at least one child under three years of



age was present. It will be recalled that, statewide among traditional closures, one-child assistance units were the plurality (42.1%). This situation also prevails in all but one county (Kent) where one-child assistance units accounted for one in four (25.0%) closures and two-child assistance units were most common (37.5%). In three other counties (Calvert, Dorchester, Garrett), there was a generally even balance of one-child and two-child assistance units; the one- and two-child figures in these three counties, respectively, are: 39.1% and 35.5%; 38.3% and 33.3%; 42.9% and 40.8%.

Statewide, a little less than one-fourth (23.9%) of all traditional case closures were households with three or more children on the grant. Across jurisdictions, this percentage ranged from 13.0% in Talbot County to highs of 30.6%, 29.8% and 29.7% in the Eastern Shore counties of Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester, respectively.

Finally, we see in Table 5 that the average age of the youngest child in a traditional exiting case is between three and five years in all 24 jurisdictions, the low being 3.1 years in Talbot County and the high being 5.4 years in Queen Anne's County. While statewide about half (51.1%) of all traditional cases include a child under the age of three years, the proportion is much higher in a number of counties with generally smaller caseloads and relatively few closing cases. Regardless of scale, however, study findings do suggest that child care could potentially be a particularly widespread need among former TANF families in these jurisdictions. These seven counties are: Allegany (60.3% of all traditional cases closing have at least one child under the age of three years and n=147, total number of traditional cases closing this year); Frederick (63.3%, n=207); Garrett (62.5%, n=49); Kent (71.4%, n=16); Somerset (59.5%, n=85); Talbot (66.7%, n=23); and Washington (72.1%, n=207).

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

	<b>Allegany</b>	<b>Anne Arundel</b>	<b>Baltimore County</b>	<b>Calvert</b>	<b>Caroline</b>	<b>Carroll</b>
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	147	919	1476	110	84	154
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	85.7%	91.3%	89.1%	82.7%	90.5%	89.0%
13 - 24 months	10.9%	7.0%	8.9%	10.9%	8.3%	9.7%
25 - 36 months	2.7%	1.5%	1.1%	6.4%	0.0%	0.6%
37 - 48 months	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%
49 - 60 months	0.7%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
More than 60 months	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Mean [Median]***	6.6 [4.0]	5.6 [3.6]	6.3 [4.3]	7.6 [5.5]	6.2 [4.4]	6.5 [4.4]
<b>Mean [Median ]AU Size</b>	2.8 [2.0]	2.9 [3.0]	2.8 [3.0]	3.0 [3.0]	2.7 [2.5]	2.6 [2.0]
<b>Number of Adults***</b>						
1	91.8%	96.7%	97.1%	90.9%	96.4%	94.8%
2	8.2%	3.3%	2.9%	9.1%	3.6%	5.2%
<b>Number of Children</b>						
0	4.1%	6.0%	4.2%	3.6%	4.8%	9.7%
1	53.1%	38.6%	43.9%	39.1%	47.6%	46.1%
2	21.8%	31.3%	31.3%	35.5%	31.0%	29.2%
3 or more	21.1%	24.0%	20.6%	21.8%	16.7%	14.9%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	84.1%	38.1%	29.2%	58.3%	46.4%	80.8%
% African American***	15.2%	60.1%	67.8%	38.0%	53.6%	11.3%
% Female	91.2%	96.3%	96.2%	96.4%	96.4%	94.2%
Mean Age [Median]***	29.6 [26.0]	30.2 [28.0]	30.3 [28.0]	32.5 [30.0]	29.9 [27.0]	31.1 [30.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>						
Mean [Median]***	4.3 [1.5]	4.6 [2.5]	4.4 [2.3]	4.9 [2.8]	4.8 [2.3]	5.1 [2.8]
% cases with a child under 3***	60.3%	53.6%	56.6%	51.9%	57.0%	52.4%

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

	<b>Cecil</b>	<b>Charles</b>	<b>Dorchester</b>	<b>Frederick</b>	<b>Garrett</b>	<b>Harford</b>
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	287	103	240	207	49	439
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	94.1%	81.6%	87.1%	94.2%	89.8%	84.3%
13 - 24 months	4.5%	11.7%	7.5%	4.3%	8.2%	11.4%
25 - 36 months	1.0%	2.9%	3.3%	0.5%	0.0%	2.5%
37 - 48 months	0.3%	3.9%	0.8%	1.0%	2.0%	1.6%
49 - 60 months	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
More than 60 months	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Mean [Median]***	4.9 [3.4]	7.9 [4.7]	7.6 [4.3]	5.4 [3.3]	5.5 [3.0]	7.4 [4.9]
<b>Mean [Median] AU Size</b>	2.9 [3.0]	2.9 [3.0]	2.9 [3.0]	2.8 [3.0]	2.8 [3.0]	2.9 [3.0]
<b>Number of Adults***</b>						
1	92.0%	99.0%	95.0%	98.1%	83.7%	92.9%
2	8.0%	1.0%	5.0%	1.9%	16.3%	7.1%
<b>Number of Children</b>						
0	5.9%	5.8%	7.1%	4.3%	2.0%	2.1%
1	41.5%	42.7%	38.3%	43.0%	42.9%	44.9%
2	28.9%	23.3%	33.3%	31.4%	40.8%	29.6%
3 or more	23.7%	28.2%	21.3%	21.3%	14.9%	23.5%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	77.0%	26.5%	25.5%	43.4%	100.0%	42.5%
% African American***	20.9%	72.5%	65.3%	48.3%	0.0%	53.4%
% Female	94.8%	98.1%	95.8%	95.7%	89.8%	96.6%
Mean Age [Median]***	31.1 [30.0]	29.7 [27.0]	29.3 [27.0]	30.6 [28.0]	30.3 [27.0]	29.9 [28.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>						
Mean [Median]***	5.1 [3.2]	4.9 [2.6]	4.9 [2.5]	4.2 [2.0]	4.5 [2.0]	4.3 [2.5]
% cases with a child under 3***	48.7%	50.5%	54.2%	63.3%	62.5%	55.2%

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

	Howard	Kent	Montgomery	Prince George's	Queen Anne's	St. Mary's
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	282	16	466	1532	56	175
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	94.3%	81.3%	90.6%	87.9%	87.5%	86.3%
13 - 24 months	5.0%	12.5%	7.1%	10.8%	7.1%	9.1%
25 - 36 months	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	0.9%	3.6%	4.0%
37 - 48 months	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%	0.3%	1.8%	0.6%
49 - 60 months	0.4%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
More than 60 months	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Mean [Median]***	6.1 [4.7]	9.1 [2.9]	5.5 [3.5]	7.3 [5.8]	6.0 [2.6]	8.6 [7.4]
<b>Mean [Median] AU Size</b>	2.9 [3.0]	2.6 [3.0]	3.0 [3.0]	2.9 [3.0]	2.9 [2.0]	2.9 [3.0]
<b>Number of Adults***</b>						
1	95.0%	100.0%	96.4%	96.9%	91.1%	90.3%
2	5.0%	0.0%	3.6%	3.1%	8.9%	9.7%
<b>Number of Children</b>						
0	2.1%	18.8%	3.9%	6.8%	5.4%	6.9%
1	46.1%	25.0%	41.8%	41.6%	46.4%	44.6%
2	28.0%	37.5%	27.0%	26.2%	19.6%	25.7%
3 or more	23.8%	18.8%	27.3%	25.4%	28.6%	22.9%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	23.1%	37.5%	14.2%	2.9%	61.8%	50.9%
% African American***	72.2%	62.5%	76.8%	94.5%	36.4%	49.1%
% Female	95.7%	93.8%	96.1%	95.5%	91.1%	93.1%
Mean Age [Median]***	30.1 [29.0]	27.0 [26.0]	32.4 [30.0]	30.9 [28.0]	31.9 [30.0]	31.2 [29.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>						
Mean [Median]***	5.3 [3.5]	3.6 [0.8]	5.0 [3.1]	4.7 [2.6]	5.4 [4.3]	5.0 [2.9]
% cases with a child under 3***	47.6%	71.4%	48.3%	53.7%	44.4%	52.1%

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

	Somerset	Talbot	Washington	Wicomico	Worcester	Baltimore City
<b>Number of Unique Closings</b>	85	23	207	285	37	8181
<b>Length of Exiting Spell***</b>						
12 months or less	88.2%	87.0%	91.3%	89.1%	91.9%	89.8%
13 - 24 months	8.2%	0.0%	7.2%	6.7%	8.1%	8.1%
25 - 36 months	2.4%	8.7%	0.5%	1.1%	0.0%	1.3%
37 - 48 months	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.6%
49 - 60 months	1.2%	0.0%	0.5%	1.1%	0.0%	0.2%
More than 60 months	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.4%	0.0%	0.1%
Mean [Median]***	6.6 [3.9]	7.3 [3.1]	6.6 [4.9]	7.2 [4.2]	5.7 [3.6]	6.4 [4.6]
<b>Mean [Median] AU Size</b>	3.2 [3.0]	2.6 [2.0]	2.9 [2.0]	3.0 [3.0]	3.1 [3.0]	2.9 [3.0]
<b>Number of Adults***</b>						
1	92.9%	95.7%	95.2%	97.5%	97.3%	97.6%
2	7.1%	4.3%	4.8%	2.5%	2.7%	2.4%
<b>Number of Children</b>						
0	2.4%	4.3%	3.4%	4.6%	0.0%	5.3%
1	36.5%	52.2%	48.8%	36.8%	51.4%	41.8%
2	30.6%	30.4%	23.7%	28.8%	18.9%	28.7%
3 or more	30.6%	13.0%	24.2%	29.8%	29.7%	24.2%
<b>Payee Characteristics</b>						
% Caucasian***	29.4%	45.5%	61.7%	26.9%	51.4%	5.6%
% African American***	68.2%	54.5%	32.7%	71.0%	45.9%	93.7%
% Female***	96.5%	100.0%	95.7%	96.1%	97.3%	96.3%
Mean Age [Median]	29.3 [28.0]	31.4 [29.0]	28.6 [26.0]	30.6 [28.0]	32.2 [29.0]	30.4 [28.0]
<b>Age of Youngest Child</b>						
Mean [Median]***	4.4 [1.7]	3.1 [0.7]	3.3 [1.1]	4.8 [2.6]	4.3 [1.5]	5.0 [3.3]
% cases with a child under 3***	59.5%	66.7%	72.1%	54.2%	59.5%	47.8%

## Core Caseload Designations

In this last section of the chapter, we examine case closures according to a different dimension: core caseload designation. The concept of “core” cases has been a natural outgrowth of the empirically-driven, client-focused approach which Maryland adopted in response to the 1996 national welfare reform legislation (i.e. PWRORA) and, to its credit, has maintained over time. The essence of the approach was and remains to help the most work-ready customers transition off welfare as expeditiously as possible, reinvesting the resulting savings into services for clients with multiple and/or severe barriers to independence. These latter types of clients, for a variety of reasons, were placed in a Separate State Program (SSP) and their benefits paid with state general funds. These state dollars, in turn, counted as part of the state Maintenance of Effort (MOE) expenditures required to draw down maximum federal TANF dollars. Under the original PRWORA rules, SSP-funded clients could be excluded from work participation requirements and performance calculations.

The controversial Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 made significant changes. The base year for calculating the caseload reduction credit was changed, the definition of what constitutes ‘work’ was substantially tightened and all states, including Maryland, are now required to include SSP-funded client groups in the work participation denominator if the SSP funds expended are claimed as MOE. The net effect of this latter change is that, since October 2006, virtually all assistance units with an adult must be included in work participation rate calculations; the cumulative effect of all DRA changes is to make the states’ challenge of

moving clients from welfare to work even more difficult.

Despite the more stringent DRA rules and requirements, Maryland has maintained a client-centered, ‘one size does not fit all’ approach. One indication of this is the use of a case typology for program planning and statistical reporting purposes. Specifically, each assistance case is assessed to see first if it is a child-only (i.e. no adult) case. During the time period covered by this report, remaining cases, that is the universe of so-called ‘traditional’ cases, are then assigned, if appropriate, to one of the following categories: earnings; caretaker relative; DEAP disabled; domestic violence victim; TANF disabled; child less than one year of age; and caring for an ill family member. All cases not fitting into one of these groups constitute the work-mandatory cohort. These cases are generally referred to as ‘remainder’ cases because, in essence, they are defined by what they are not (e.g. not child-only, not disabled, etc.).

In Figure 5, on the next page, we illustrate how this year’s case closures are distributed across the core caseload groups. As shown, two-thirds (66.5%) of cases closing were members of the remainder or work-mandatory category. Not surprisingly, this is a significantly higher proportion than the 55.4% of the active caseload that was in the work-mandatory/remainder category in the last month of the study year (September 2007). This is a positive finding because it indicates that, consistent with the conceptual underpinnings of Maryland’s reformed welfare program and the PRWORA and DRA mandates, resources and welfare-to-work efforts are being targeted toward work-mandatory customers.

**Figure 5. Core Caseload Designations**



## FINDINGS: REASONS FOR CASE CLOSURE

In this chapter we shift our attention from questions related to “who” left welfare during the study period, to another important question: “why” their cases closed. Our findings are based on closure reasons as reflected in the computerized administrative data system. Although the data system offers caseworkers a broad array of closing codes from which they may select, it is important to note that these pre-determined codes may not fully capture the complexity surrounding a family’s welfare exit. In particular, previous analyses indicate that administratively-recorded closing codes significantly understate the true rate of work-related closures because payees may not notify the agency when they have found work. Instead, the client may simply not keep her next scheduled redetermination appointment; in this instance, the case closing data would not reflect a work-related exit but, rather, the fact of closure due to no redetermination. Despite their admitted limitations as a vehicle through which to understand families’ total situations and circumstances, it is still instructive to examine statewide and local case closing codes. Maryland research has shown that the various codes do correlate with important post-closure outcomes such as employment and recidivism and the administrative closure codes are the best measure of full family sanctioning rates (Ovwigbo, Tracy, & Born, 2004).

For the reasons noted above, this final findings chapter examines the important topic – why assistance cases close – and the extent of full family sanctioning for non-compliance with work or child support requirements. We begin by looking at the top three closing codes used this year for the statewide sample as a whole and, separately, for traditional and child-only cases. Intra-state trends and patterns are then discussed and the chapter concludes with a brief discussion of full family sanctioning.

### Administrative Case Closure Codes

#### Statewide: All Cases

Figure 6, following, displays information on the top three case closing reasons for all leavers, child-only cases, and traditional case closures for the entire state. As shown, for all statewide cases considered together, the most commonly used codes this year were: eligibility/verification information not provided (22.3%); work sanction (20.2%); and income above limit (18.9%). Each of these accounted for roughly one of every five closures during the 12 month period and, together, represented 61.4% of all closures statewide.

Figure 6 also shows that the top three codes used to close traditional cases were the same and in the same order as those for all cases considered together. However, the three most common codes accounted for a much larger share of all closures, roughly three of every four (74.8%), among this group. Moreover, there was only a one percentage point difference between the top two codes; information not provided accounted for 26.9% of all traditional closings and 25.8% were work sanctions. Income above limit, the code typically used to reflect a work-related exit was used in somewhat more than one-fifth (22.1%) of all traditional closure cases. These three codes, in the same order, were also the most commonly used codes for traditional cases last year. The only notable differences are a slight uptick this year in the percentage of cases closed because of a work sanction (25.8% vs. 24.7%) and a similarly-sized decrease in the percentage of cases closed because their income was above the limit (22.1% vs. 22.4%).

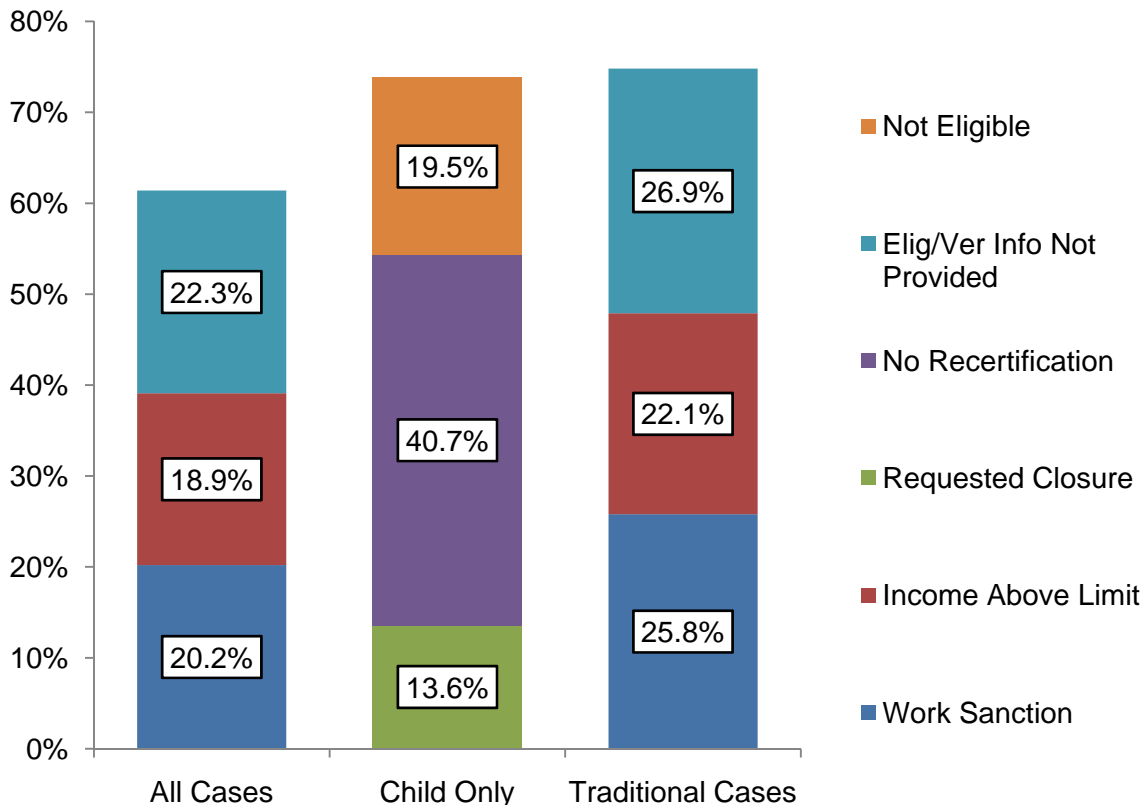
Given their different demographic profiles, welfare utilization patterns, and the fact that they are not subject to work requirements (and thus the possibility of work sanctioning), it is not at all surprising that Figure 6 shows a very different set of commonly-



used closure codes among child-only cases. Here, the most common closure code, accounting for two of every five closures (40.7%) is no recertification of the case. About one in five (19.5%) child-only cases was closed because the family was no longer eligible and 13.6% closed at the request of the client. Not quite three of every

four (73.8%) child only closures were accounted for by these three codes. This pattern is quite similar to that observed last year; the same three codes, in the same rank order, were most common although, together, they accounted for a slightly smaller share (69.0%) of prior year closures.

**Figure 6. Case Closure Reasons by Case Type**



### Jurisdictional Analysis

Previously in this report and other of our studies, we have reported that Maryland jurisdictions vary greatly in the actual and relative sizes of their traditional and child-only caseloads and in the shares of their total caseloads that are represented by traditional vs. child-only cases. It is also plausible, then, that there might be intra-state variation in the reasons that cases close. Thus, Table 6 presents the top three closing codes, by jurisdiction, for all cases that closed as well as the top three reasons, separately, for traditional and child-only

cases. Noteworthy findings are briefly discussed below.

For all cases, regardless of type, Table 6 shows great consistency across jurisdictions in the most commonly used closing code, but also a few noteworthy exceptions. In 8 of 24 subdivisions, income above limit, the code typically used when the closure is work-related, accounted for the largest percentage of closures. Among counties where this code was the most common one, the share of such closures ranged from roughly one case in four (Allegany, Baltimore, Caroline, Cecil, Howard, Washington, Wicomico,

and Worcester) to roughly two out of five (Calvert and Queen Anne's,).

In two of the six remaining subdivisions (Prince George's and St. Mary's counties), the most common administratively-recorded reason for case closure was that no case recertification or redetermination was done. This code accounted for 26.4% and 28.7% of all study year closures in these two counties, respectively. In Baltimore City (28.3%) and Anne Arundel County (35.3%), the client's failure to provide required eligibility/verification information was the most commonly-used code. And, finally, in two small Eastern Shore counties, more cases were closed due to non-compliance with work requirements than for any other reason. In Somerset County, a bit more than one of every four closures (27.5%) resulted from a work sanction and, in Dorchester County, more than one of every three (36.9%) closures was for this reason.

As might be expected, there was considerable diversity with regard to the second and third most oft-recorded closing codes. One interesting observation concerns the relative use of work-related, full family sanctioning. In fully half of the state's subdivisions, primarily those in the southern, western, and eastern part of the state, work sanctioning was not among the "top three" reasons that cases were closed. On the other hand, it was the second most commonly used code in seven jurisdictions, six of which are urbanized, metropolitan jurisdictions and five of which have among the state's largest caseloads. These seven jurisdictions are: the counties of Baltimore, Cecil, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's and Wicomico and the City of Baltimore.

At the jurisdiction-level, as was true for the state as a whole, we do find differences between traditional and child-only cases insofar as commonly-recorded case closure reasons are concerned. Looking first at child-only cases, Table 6 reveals that in the majority (n=15) of subdivisions, closures most often took place because there was no

recertification/redetermination of the case. The highest rate of closure for this reason was observed in Prince George's County where three of every five child-only cases (60.2%) were closed with this code. Notably, two very disparate jurisdictions (Baltimore City and Dorchester County) also had high rates of this type of child-only closure. Nearly half of all child-only closures in the study period used this code, the percentages being 46.7% and 47.5% for Baltimore City and Dorchester County, respectively. The other counties where this code was most common and the percentage of all child-only closures where this code was found are: Anne Arundel (22.8%); Baltimore (37.4%); Caroline (24.1%); Carroll (38.6%); Harford (30.7%); Howard (38.6%); Kent (35.7%); Montgomery (29.8%); Queen Anne's (25.0%); Talbot (21.7%); and Washington (34.1%).

Of the remaining nine counties, "not eligible" was the most common closing code for child-only cases in six (Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Garrett, Somerset, and Wicomico), accounting for between one in four (25.4%) child-only closures in Charles County, to not quite two of every three (64.3%) in Garrett County. Three counties were unique in this regard: worker voided application was the top closing code in Allegany County (34.0%), client requested closure was number one in Cecil County (30.8%), and income above limit was used most often in Worcester County (26.9%).

The picture is quite different for traditional cases that closed for at least one month during the study year and two particular codes were predominant. Income above limit, the typical work-related code was the most common in the majority of jurisdictions (n=14 of 24), while case closure due to a work sanction was most common in seven other localities. In the Baltimore City and the counties of Anne Arundel and Charles, the most common reason for traditional case closure was that required eligibility/verification information had not been provided. The respective percentages of cases

closed for this reason are: 33.0%, 41.3%, and 28.2% for the City and the two counties, respectively.

Across the 14 counties where income above limit was the most commonly-recorded case closure code, between roughly one-quarter (Allegany, 26.5%) and one-half (Kent, 50.0%) of all traditional closures were of that type. Table 6 shows that the seven counties where the number one traditional case closing reason was a work sanction

are a diverse group (the counties of Baltimore, Cecil, Dorchester, Montgomery, Prince George's, Somerset, and Worcester). Five of them, however, had work sanction rates in the range of roughly one case in four (Worcester County, 24.3%) to one case in three (Baltimore County, 32.9%; Cecil County, 30.0%; Prince George's, 30.2%; and Somerset County, 32.9%). Across the state, work sanctioning rates this year were highest in Dorchester (46.3%) and Montgomery (38.6%).

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

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>All Cases***</b>	<b>Child-only***</b>	<b>Traditional***</b>
<b>Allegany</b>	Income above limit 26.0% Requested closure 15.5% Worker voided application 15.0%	Worker voided application 34.0% Income above limit 24.5% Not eligible 15.1%	Income above limit 26.5% Work sanction 19.7% Requested closure 19.7%
<b>Anne Arundel</b>	Eligibility/verification info not provided 35.3% Income above limit 18.5% Work sanction 15.8%	No recertification/no redet 22.8% Child support sanction 17.4% Not eligible 15.4%	Eligibility/verification info not provided 41.3% Work sanction 19.8% Income above limit 19.7%
<b>Baltimore County</b>	Income above limit 25.5% Work sanction 24.1% No recertification/no redet 17.5%	No recertification/no redet 37.4% Not eligible 17.2% Requested closure 14.4%	Work sanction 32.9% Income above limit 31.8% Eligibility/verification info not provided 12.5%
<b>Calvert</b>	Income above limit 37.7% Eligibility/verification info not provided 17.1% Not eligible 11.6%	Not eligible 33.3% Income above limit 19.4% No recertification/no redet 13.9%	Income above limit 43.6% Eligibility/verification info not provided 20.9% Work sanction/Child support sanction 7.3%
<b>Caroline</b>	Income above limit 26.5% Eligibility/verification info not provided 17.7% No recertification/no redet 17.7%	No recertification/no redet 24.1% Not eligible 24.1% Requested closure 20.7%	Income above limit 31.0% Eligibility/verification info not provided 22.6% No recertification/no redet 15.5%
<b>Carroll</b>	Income above limit 30.3% Eligibility/verification info not provided 23.2% No recertification/no redet 20.4%	No recertification/no redet 38.6% Not eligible 12.3% Requested closure 12.3%	Income above limit 37.7% Eligibility/verification info not provided 29.2% No recertification/no redet 13.6%
<b>Cecil</b>	Income above limit 24.9% Work sanction 23.6% Eligibility/verification info not provided 20.3%	Requested closure 30.8% No recertification/no redet 19.2% Residency 11.5%	Work sanction 30.0% Income above limit 29.3% Eligibility/verification info not provided 24.7%
<b>Charles</b>	Income above limit 21.3% Eligibility/verification info not provided 17.8% No recertification/no redet 14.9%	Not eligible 25.4% No recertification/no redet 23.9% Income above limit 14.1%	Eligibility/verification info not provided 28.2% Income above limit 26.2% Work sanction 17.5%
<b>Dorchester</b>	Work sanction 36.9% Income above limit 18.6% No recertification/no redet 17.3%	No recertification/no redet 47.5% Requested closure 23.0% Not eligible 13.1%	Work sanction 46.3% Income above limit 22.1% Eligibility/verification info not provided 12.5%
<b>Frederick</b>	Income above limit 30.5% Eligibility/verification info not provided 24.9% Requested closure/No recertification/no redet 10.4%	Not eligible 29.0% No recertification/no redet 27.4% Requested closure 17.7%	Income above limit 36.2% Eligibility/verification info not provided 30.0% Work sanction 10.1%
<b>Garrett</b>	Income above limit 30.2% Not eligible 20.6% Eligibility/verification info not provided/ Requested closure 12.7%	Not eligible 64.3% No recertification/no redet 14.3% Income above limit/requested closure/residency 7.1%	Income above limit 36.7% Eligibility/verification info not provided 16.3% Requested closure 14.3%
<b>Harford</b>	Income above limit 31.6% Eligibility/verification info not provided 16.2% No recertification/no redet 13.7%	No recertification/no redet 30.7% Not eligible 29.4% Requested closure 19.0%	Income above limit 39.6% Eligibility/verification info not provided 20.3% Work sanction 17.5%

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>All Cases***</b>	<b>Child-only***</b>	<b>Traditional***</b>
<b>Howard</b>	Income above limit 23.5% Work sanction 21.9% No recertification/no redet 17.6%	No recertification/no redet 38.6% Not eligible 15.9% Eligibility/verification info not provided / Requested closure 11.4%	Income above limit 29.8% Work sanction 28.7% Eligibility/verification info not provided 15.6%
<b>Kent</b>	Income above limit 30.0% No recertification/no redet 16.7% Requested closure/ Eligibility/verification info not provided 13.3%	No recertification/no redet 35.7% Not eligible 21.4% Requested closure 14.3%	Income above limit 50.0% Eligibility/verification info not provided 25.0% Requested closure 12.5%
<b>Montgomery</b>	Income above limit 28.9% Work sanction 27.1% No recertification/no redet 11.4%	No recertification/no redet 29.8% Not eligible 23.7% Income above limit 13.1%	Work sanction 38.6% Income above limit 35.6% Eligibility/verification info not provided 7.9%
<b>Prince George's</b>	No recertification/no redet 26.4% Work sanction 21.7% Eligibility/verification info not provided 16.0%	No recertification/no redet 60.2% Not eligible 11.1% Requested closure 9.9%	Work sanction 30.2% Eligibility/verification info not provided 20.8% Income above limit 20.6%
<b>Queen Anne's</b>	Income above limit 38.2% Eligibility/verification info not provided 20.6% Work sanction 17.6%	No recertification/no redet 25.0% Income above limit 25.0% Not eligible/requested closure 16.7%	Income above limit 41.1% Eligibility/verification info not provided 23.2% Work sanction 21.4%
<b>St. Mary's</b>	No recertification/no redet 28.7% Income above limit 28.3% Requested closure/ Not eligible 10.0%	No recertification/no redet 41.8% Not eligible 21.8% Requested closure 16.4%	Income above limit 35.4% No recertification/no redet 24.6% Whereabouts unknown 10.3%
<b>Somerset</b>	Work sanction 27.5% Income above limit 26.5% Requested closure 16.7%	Not eligible 41.2% Requested closure 23.5% Worker voided application 17.6%	Work sanction 32.9% Income above limit 30.6% Requested closure 15.3%
<b>Talbot</b>	Income above limit 28.3% Requested closure 17.4% Eligibility/verification info not provided 17.4%	No recertification/no redet 21.7% Requested closure 21.7% Income above limit/worker voided application 17.4%	Income above limit 39.1% Eligibility/verification info not provided 30.4% Requested closure 13.0%
<b>Washington</b>	Income above limit 23.4% No recertification/no redet 21.4% Requested closure 19.0%	No recertification/no redet 34.1% Requested closure 22.7% Not eligible 21.6%	Income above limit 29.5% Requested closure 17.4% No recertification/no redet 15.9%
<b>Wicomico</b>	Income above limit 26.9% Work sanction 18.7% Eligibility/verification info not provided 14.0%	Not eligible 31.9% No recertification/no redet 24.1% Requested closure 12.1%	Income above limit 34.0% Work sanction 26.3% Eligibility/verification info not provided 18.2%
<b>Worcester</b>	Income above limit 25.4% Eligibility/verification info not provided 19.0% Residency/Work sanction/Requested closure 17.5%	Income above limit 26.9% Residency 23.1% Eligibility/verification into not provided 19.2%	Work sanction 24.3% Income above limit 24.3% Eligibility/verification info not provided 18.9%
<b>Baltimore City</b>	Eligibility/verification info not provided 28.3% Work sanction 21.4% No recertification/no redet 20.2%	No recertification/no redet 46.7% Not eligible 21.2% Requested closure 13.6%	Eligibility/verification info not provided 33.0% Work sanction 25.8% Income above limit 16.3%

## Full Family Sanctions: Statewide and Jurisdictional Analyses

Among the most controversial features of federal welfare reform circa 1996 was the option it afforded states to impose a full family sanction – cessation of the entire assistance grant – in cases where the adult was non-compliant with child support or work requirements. Although the choice was hotly debated, Maryland did elect the full family sanction option. It was hoped that use of this more severe penalty would, as many front-line workers argued, ‘get the client’s attention’ and lead her to come into compliance with program expectations. At the request of the legislature and the Department of Human Resources, we have been tracking sanction use and sanctioned clients’ outcomes since the penalty was first imposed in October, 1996. The vast majority of sanctions have been work- rather than child support related and this has been true year after year. Also, as might be expected, the trend in sanctions has been an incrementally upward one. Whereas the full family sanctioning rate was 14.8% in the earliest period, the rate among those who left been April 2007 and March 2008 was 22.8% (Ovwigo, Born, Patterson & Kolupanowich, October 2008). However, consistently over time the data show that clients whose welfare cases are closed because of sanctioning do return to welfare at a significantly higher rate than those who leave for other reasons, implying that they have come into compliance with program rules.

Following this brief discussion, we see in Figure 7, that, for the state as a whole, the general sanctions picture remains basically the same percentage-wise as in prior years. Overall, not quite one in four closures (23.8%) were a full family sanction (20.2% being work sanctions and 3.6% being child support sanctions). These figures are virtually unchanged from those reported for the prior year when the statewide sanctioning rate was 23.7% (20.0% work-related and 3.7% related to child support). As noted

early in this report, however, the actual number of sanctions was markedly lower this year (n=4,746) than last (n=5,580) as were the number of work sanctions (n=4,032 vs. 4,708) and child support sanctions (n=714 vs. 872). This is a reflection of the fact that the number of unique cases closing this year (n=19,916) was also much lower than the number recorded the year before (n=23,509).

Figure 7 also visually depicts overall sanctions and the relative proportions of work and child support sanctions for each jurisdiction. More detailed intra-state information can be found in Appendix B. Earlier in this report, we noted a few key findings with regard to sanctioning at the local level, but, because of the importance of the topic to families, agencies, advocates, and legislators, we also comment briefly here on intra-state trends and patterns. We report these findings in terms of percentages, but readers are reminded that, in some instances, the actual numbers are very small.

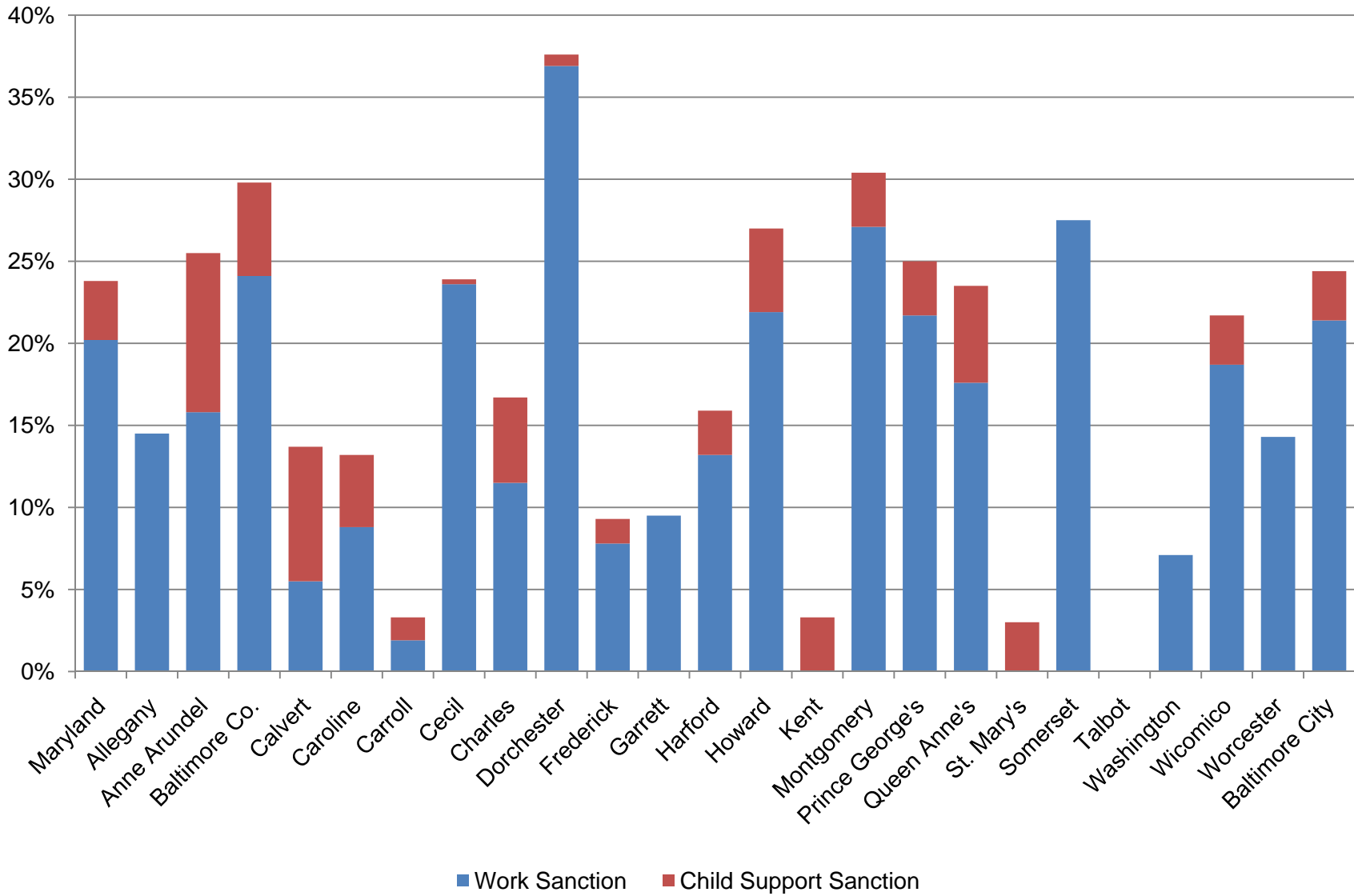
A first observation is that in the large majority of jurisdictions (n=22 of 24), work sanctions are more prevalent than child support sanctions. Only in two Southern Maryland counties (Calvert and St. Mary’s) were there more child support sanctions than work sanctions. Another general point is that 15 counties had overall sanctioning rates that were lower than the state rate (23.8%), eight jurisdictions had rates that were higher than this, and one (Cecil County) had a rate that was just about the same (23.9%). Notably, there is one jurisdiction (Talbot County) that had no recorded full family sanctions during the study period while Dorchester County had the highest rate of sanctioning in the state, closing nearly four of every 10 (37.6%) cases for this reason.

In terms of work sanctions Figure 6 illustrates and Appendix B details that 17 of 24 jurisdictions had work sanctioning rates that were lower than the statewide rate (20.2%) while seven had rates that were higher. As noted elsewhere in this report, four of these

higher-rate jurisdictions (Baltimore City and the counties of Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George's) account for more than 70% of all closures this year, affecting the statewide rate. The outliers with regard to work sanctioning are Dorchester County, where more than one of every three cases (36.9%) had a work sanction imposed, and the counties of St. Mary's and Talbot where there were none.

Child support sanctions, as noted, represent only 3.6% of all case closures statewide this year (n=714/19,916) and only 15.0% of all sanctions (n=714/4,746). The highest rates of child support sanctioning were in the counties of Anne Arundel (9.7%), Calvert (8.2%), Queen Anne's (5.9%), Baltimore (5.7%), Charles (5.2%) and Howard (5.1%). There were no child support sanctions this year in the counties of Allegany, Garrett, Somerset, Talbot, Washington and Worcester.

**Figure 7. Full Family Sanctions**





## CONCLUSIONS

This report, the latest in our annual, *Caseload Exits at the Local Level* series, describes statewide and subdivision-specific client characteristics and case closing patterns during the first full year (October 2006 - September 2007) of program operation under the more stringent rules adopted as part of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. Overall, the general trends with regard to the types of cases that close, the reasons for case closure and the profile of the 'typical' exiting client and case are the same this year as they have been in years past, at both the state and sub-state level. It also remains true that, across the state, there are significant differences between traditional and child-only cases on client and child demographics, welfare utilization, and reasons for case closures.

On the other hand, we also find that the total number of unique cases that closed this year was 15% lower than the number closing in the prior year. This is the second largest year-over-year decline observed since we began this annual report series in 1996 although it should be noted that, in general, the trend has been one of a decreasing number of closures each year. This is due in some measure to the fact that, at the outset of reform, caseloads were at record high levels but, during the 12 month period covered by today's report, were at near all-time lows. Also contributing to the steep decrease in exits compared to the prior year, however, is the fact that welfare caseloads are a leading indicator of economic decline and a lagging indicator of recovery.

With the benefit of hindsight, we now know that the economy was on the brink of major recession and that this significant one-year drop in the number of welfare exits was a

harbinger of what was to come. Nationwide and in Maryland, of course, as the job market tightened and unemployment rose, welfare caseloads began to rise as it became more difficult for many low-income clients to support their families without some measure of financial aid. At the time of this writing, based on certain macro-economic indicators, the so-called Great Recession has been officially declared over. However, certain micro-economic indicators suggest that families' economic distress remains high. Job recovery has been minimal, unemployment remains stubbornly high, cash assistance caseloads are at elevated levels, and record numbers of Americans, roughly one of every seven, participate in the Food Supplement Program (formerly Food Stamps).

In short, although none of us knew it at the time, the 12 month period covered by today's study will probably be viewed by future welfare scholars as marking the beginning of the first, very serious, and quite protracted test of the work-oriented, reformed welfare system adopted in 1996. It is clear that this test and its challenges, for clients, agencies and elected officials, are far from over and, of course, there are no historical precedents to guide policy choices in these uncertain and difficult times. Unlike most states, however, Maryland does have a long, strong tradition of using empirical data to provide ongoing assessment of trends and outcomes and to identify issues where program realignment or revision might be appropriate. One of the elements in our state's data-driven approach to program management and monitoring is this annual *Caseload Exits* series of reports. We trust it will continue to be of value to state and local elected officials, program managers, front-line workers and advocates in Maryland as, together, we continue to navigate these uncharted, albeit reformed, welfare waters.

## REFERENCES

- DeParle, J. (2009, February 2). *Welfare aid isn't growing as economy drops off*. From New York Times Web site:  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/02/us/02welfare.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/02/us/02welfare.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all)
- Hetling, A., Saunders, C., and Born, C.E. (2005). *Maryland's Child-Only Caseload: A Comparison of Parental and Non-Parental Cases*. Baltimore: University of Maryland.
- National Bureau of Economic Statistics. (2008). *Determination of the December 2007 peak in economic activity*. From the NBER Web site: <http://www.nber.org/dec2008.html>
- Owigho, P.C., Born, C.E., Patterson, K., & Kolupanowich, N. (2008). *Life after Welfare: Annual Update*. Baltimore: University of Maryland.
- Owigho, P. C., Born, C. E., and Saunders, C. (2006). *Profile of the active caseload: separate state programs & short-term disabilities*. Baltimore: University of Maryland.
- Owigho, P.C., Tracy, K., and Born, C.E. (2004). *Research Brief: Estimating Welfare Work Exits: Case Closing Reasons vs. UI Data*. Baltimore: University of Maryland.
- Saunders, C., Owigho, P. C. and Born, C. E. (forthcoming). *Belonging everywhere and nowhere: non-parental TANF cases in Maryland*. Baltimore: University of Maryland.

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	5.8%	(1160)	5.2%	(1,107)	0.6
Dorchester County	1.5%	(301)	1.2%	(248)	0.3
Baltimore County	10.2%	(2040)	10.0%	(2,142)	0.2
Carroll County	1.1%	(211)	0.9%	(202)	0.2
Harford County	3.0%	(592)	2.8%	(596)	0.2
Howard County	1.9%	(370)	1.7%	(364)	0.2
Baltimore City	49.6%	(9886)	49.5%	(10,522)	0.1
Cecil County	1.8%	(365)	1.7%	(357)	0.1
Calvert County	0.7%	(146)	0.7%	(147)	0.0
Caroline County	0.6%	(113)	0.6%	(131)	0.0
Frederick County	1.4%	(269)	1.4%	(289)	0.0
Garrett County	0.3%	(63)	0.3%	(55)	0.0
Kent County	0.2%	(30)	0.2%	(41)	0.0
Somerset County	0.5%	(102)	0.5%	(113)	0.0
Washington County	1.5%	(295)	1.5%	(313)	0.0
Wicomico County	2.0%	(401)	2.0%	(437)	0.0
Allegany County	1.0%	(200)	1.1%	(236)	-0.1
Charles County	0.9%	(174)	1.0%	(216)	-0.1
Montgomery County	3.3%	(664)	3.4%	(727)	-0.1
Queen Anne's County	0.3%	(68)	0.4%	(75)	-0.1
Talbot County	0.2%	(46)	0.3%	(62)	-0.1
Worcester County	0.3%	(63)	0.4%	(78)	-0.1
St. Mary's County	1.2%	(230)	1.4%	(291)	-0.2
Prince George's County	10.7%	(2127)	11.7%	(2,522)	-1.0
<b>Statewide Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(19,916)</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(21,268)</b>	<b>-----</b>

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 2006 - September 2007. Figures might not add exactly to 100% because of rounding.

APPENDIX B: FULL FAMILY SANCTIONS: 10/06-9/07

Jurisdiction	Work Sanction	Child Support Sanction	Full Family Sanction
Allegany	14.5% (29)	0.0% (0)	14.5% (29)
Anne Arundel	15.8% (183)	9.7% (112)	25.5% (295)
Baltimore County	24.1% (491)	5.7% (117)	29.8% (608)
Calvert	5.5% (8)	8.2% (12)	13.7% (20)
Caroline	8.8% (10)	4.4% (5)	13.2% (15)
Carroll	1.9% (4)	1.4% (3)	3.3% (7)
Cecil	23.6% (86)	0.3% (1)	23.9% (87)
Charles	11.5% (20)	5.2% (9)	16.7% (29)
Dorchester	36.9% (111)	0.7% (2)	37.6% (113)
Frederick	7.8% (21)	1.5% (4)	9.3% (25)
Garrett	9.5% (6)	0.0% (0)	9.5% (6)
Harford	13.2% (78)	2.7% (16)	15.9% (94)
Howard	21.9% (81)	5.1% (19)	27.0% (100)
Kent	0.0% (0)	3.3% (1)	3.3% (1)
Montgomery	27.1% (180)	3.3% (22)	30.4% (202)
Prince George's	21.7% (462)	3.3% (71)	25.0% (533)
Queen Anne's	17.6% (12)	5.9% (4)	23.5% (16)
St. Mary's	0.0% (0)	3.0% (7)	3.0% (7)
Somerset	27.5% (28)	0.0% (0)	27.5% (28)
Talbot	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Washington	7.1% (21)	0.0% (0)	7.1% (21)
Wicomico	18.7% (75)	3.0% (12)	21.7% (87)
Worcester	14.3% (9)	0.0% (0)	14.3% (9)
Baltimore City	21.4% (2117)	3.0% (297)	24.4% (2414)
<b>Total</b>	<b>20.2% (4032)</b>	<b>3.6% (714)</b>	<b>23.8% (4746)</b>

**Note:** Percents calculated using the total number of closings in each jurisdiction, as presented in Table 1. Statewide, the total number of case closings between October 2006 and September 2007 was 19,916.