

# **Caseload Exits at the Local Level:**

## **The Second Year of FIP**

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## Executive Summary

Today's report is the second in a series which examine the universe of cash assistance cases which have closed in Maryland since the outset of the state's welfare reform program, the Family Investment Program (FIP) in October, 1996. Specifically, this report provides statewide and jurisdiction-specific data which describe the 40,773 cases which exited Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) during the second full year of reform (October, 1997 - September, 1998).<sup>1</sup> The report addresses two broad questions:

- " **What are the statewide and jurisdictional trends in cash assistance case closings during the second full year of welfare reform?**
- " **For the state as a whole and in each local subdivision, what is the profile of cases which closed and what are the administrative reasons for case closure?**

To answer these questions, we examined monthly administrative data on the universe of cases which left cash assistance in Maryland's 24 local jurisdictions during the second year of reform. During this 12 month period (October, 1997 - September, 1998), 40,773 unique cases left welfare in our state. A closing case or case closure, since we use the terms interchangeably, in this report is defined as an assistance unit which, at least once during the study period, ceased receiving Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA, formerly Aid to Families with Dependent Children). That is, we count cases or families, rather than closures per se.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A comparable report on the universe of first year welfare leavers was issued in April, 1998. See: *Caseload Exits at the Local Level: The First Year of FIP*, University of Maryland School of Social Work.

<sup>2</sup> Since cases could have exited or closed more than once during the 12 month period, the total number of closures reported here may differ from the total number of closures reported by the Department of Human Resources for that same period of time.

Information about closing cases, case characteristics and case closing reasons were obtained from two administrative data systems: Automated Information Management System (AIMS)/Automated Master File (AMF); and its successor, the Client Information System (CIS)/Client Automated Resource and Eligibility System (CARES). In addition to raw data on the total numbers of exiting cases across the state, valuable information can be extracted from these systems on characteristics of exiting cases, including: assistance unit size; case composition; welfare experience; and reasons for case closure. What do these administrative data tell us about the universe of cases which left welfare during the second year of welfare reform?

- " In general, the distribution of case closings was generally stable across the 12 month period, with no major upward or downward spikes. The spread between the month with the highest number and proportion of exits (June, 1998, n=4,052 or 9.9%) and the month with the lowest number and proportion of exits (March, 1998, n=2,870 or 7.0%) was just about 1,200 cases.
- " Most jurisdictions (16 of 24) recorded the largest number of case closures during the first quarter of the second year (October-December, 1997).
- " In 23 of 24 subdivisions, the locality's share of year two case closures equaled or exceeded its share of the year two assistance caseload. The exception was Baltimore City whose share of year two case closures (43.3%) was notably smaller than its share of the year two caseload (54.9%).

- " Statewide, the typical exiting case in year two consisted of a two person assistance unit (41%) containing one adult (84%) and one child (47%) who had been on welfare for 12 or fewer consecutive months at the time of exit (47%).
- " There are some intra-state variations in the profile of year two exiting cases. Among these are:
  - " In most jurisdictions (16 of 24) five percent or fewer exiting cases had been on welfare for more than five years; in Baltimore City, however, about one of every five exiting cases (18%) had been open for more than five years;
  - " Two parent families were a tiny fraction (3%) of closing cases statewide, but represented one of every four closing cases (26%) in Garrett County and one in every 10 in Allegany, Cecil, Carroll and Queen Anne s counties.
  - " Two person assistance units were most common among year two leavers (41%), but larger assistance units were frequent in two counties. In Cecil, there were slightly more three person (32%) than two person (31%) assistance units; in Garrett, the most common situation was a four person assistance unit. One of every three closing cases in Garrett County (32%) had four or more persons on the grant.
- " Statewide during year two, three of every five cases (61.2%) were closed for one of three administrative reasons: income above limit (22.6%); failure to reapply/complete the redetermination (22.5%); and failure to provide eligibility information (16.1%).
- " The use of full family sanctions remains fairly infrequent, the vast majority of such sanctions are work-related, and intra-state variations are evident.
  - " Statewide, about one in 10 closures (10.4%) were due to a full family sanction; 89% of these sanctions were work-related, while 11% were child support-related.
  - " In all 24 jurisdictions, work sanctions were more common than child support sanctions.

- " Work sanctions as a proportion of all year two case closures ranged from a high of 24.1% in Somerset County to a low of 1.9% in St. Mary's County. Child support sanctions ranged from 4.3% in Montgomery County to zero percent (no such sanctions were imposed) in Queen Anne's County.

These findings are generally in line with those previously reported for the first year of welfare reform in Maryland and raise no immediate red flags in terms of the operation or progress of reform in our state. Two findings, however, do warrant special mention as they may have important implications for the future.

The first salient finding has to do with case closing data for Baltimore City. On a positive note, the data show that the City accounted for a larger share of statewide exits in year two (43.3%) than it did in year one (33.6%). Similarly, the gap between Baltimore City's share of the average, annualized cash assistance caseload and its share of overall exits has been reduced from -17.1% to -11.6%. On the other hand, in year two the City accounted for a larger share of the state's total active caseload (54.9%) than it did in year one of reform (50.7%). This results, in large measure, from the fact that caseload reductions/case closures in the 23 counties have been so dramatic. Looking ahead, however, as the 23 counties together now account for a smaller share of the active welfare caseload, their ability to continue to generate large volumes of case closures is similarly reduced. Thus, in subsequent years of reform, it appears that the state's continued progress in caseload reduction, recidivism prevention and high rates of steady, post-exit employment among adults will depend ever more heavily on results achieved in Baltimore City.

As we move forward, close attention should also be paid to the use of the full



family sanction for non-compliance with work requirements. Our state continues to make sparing use of this stringent penalty, but the data show that work sanctions have increased over time. Work sanctions represented only 5.5% of all case closures during the first year of reform (n=2,226 of 41,212); in year two, the proportion, though still small, had nearly doubled (n=4,238 of 40,773 or 10.4%). This trend is consistent with what knowledgeable observers expected to happen, but nonetheless is an area to which state and local program managers should pay close attention in the next few years.

## Introduction

Through a long-standing partnership with the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR), the University of Maryland's School of Social Work is carrying out a multi-faceted, multi-year program of research studies focused on the implementation, operation and outcomes of welfare reform in our state. To date the most well-known of these projects is the *Life After Welfare* study which longitudinally tracks the post-exit experiences of several thousand randomly selected families who have left welfare since the start of reform (October, 1996) and on which three interim, statewide reports have been issued. The primary purpose of the *Life After Welfare* study is to provide empirical case-level data that policy-makers and program administrators can use to judge how well the new welfare program is working, identify any mid-course corrections that might be needed, and, most important, assess what happens to Maryland families once they no longer receive cash assistance.

Today's report offers additional information about welfare leavers in Maryland. It supplements the more detailed information contained in the *Life* reports by providing additional macro-level data that are not covered in the *Life* study. By design, the *Life* reports present detailed follow-up employment, recidivism and other data about a statewide random sample of exiting cases. In contrast, today's report focuses on the entire universe of 40,773 cases which exited cash assistance in Maryland during the second year of reform (October, 1997 - September, 1998). Today's report describes case characteristics, exit patterns and frequency of use of the new, full family sanction for each of the state's 24 local subdivisions as well as for the state as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A report on the universe of exiting cases during reform's first year was issued in April, 1998. See *Caseload Exits at the Local Level: The First Year of FIP*, University of Maryland School of Social Work.

## **Methodology**

Examination of the universe of cases which closed during the second full year of welfare reform permits us to answer a number of questions which are relevant to continued program monitoring and planning. The main questions of interest are:

- " What are the general trends in case closings in the second year of reform?
- " Do case closing trends or patterns differ across local subdivisions?
- " How does each jurisdiction's share of closings compare to its share of the overall average caseload for the same period of time?
- " What is the general profile of the second year exiting universe for the state as a whole and for each subdivision in terms of assistance unit size, number of adults, number of children and length of the most recent welfare spell?
- " What are the most common administratively-recorded reasons for case closure?
- " What proportion of cases, statewide and in each subdivision, left welfare during the second year because the agency imposed a full family sanction for non-compliance with work or non-cooperation with child support?

To address these questions, aggregate data on closing cases were obtained in the form of monthly case closing extract files created from two administrative data systems operated by the state. These are: AIMS/AMF (Automated Information Management System/Automated Master File) and its replacement, CARES (Client Automated Resources and Eligibility System). These two systems contain official records of clients' utilization of various public assistance and social service programs, including cash assistance, which are under the purview of the Department of Human Resources and local Departments of Social Services of which there are 24 in the state -

one in each of Maryland's 23 counties and in the separate, incorporated City of Baltimore.

In addition to providing raw data on the number of closing cases throughout the state, the extract files created from the administrative data systems also contain the following data which are presented in this report:

- " Assistance unit size - number of individuals included on the grant;
- " Case composition - numbers of children and adults included on the grant;
- " Benefit begin and end dates - from which length of current welfare spell is calculated.
- " Closing code - administratively-recorded reason for welfare case closure.

A closing case (or case closure), for purposes of this analysis, is defined as an assistance unit which, at least once during the 12 month study period, ceased receiving Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) benefits (formerly AFDC). That is, we are counting cases rather than closures per se. Because some cases could, conceivably, have exited or closed more than once during the 12 month period, the total number of closures reported here likely differs from the total number of closures reported by DHR for that same period of time.

## Findings

The results which follow are based on the universe of unique closing cases (n=40,773) in the second full year of welfare reform (October, 1997 - September, 1998). The universe includes all assistance units which exited cash assistance (TCA, formerly AFDC) at least once during the 12 month period. Findings for both the state and each local jurisdiction are presented in the following sections

- " Closing cases by month: statewide analysis
- " Closing cases by month: jurisdictional analysis
- " Closing cases relative to caseload size: jurisdictional analysis
- " Case characteristics: statewide and jurisdictional analysis
- " Administrative reasons for case closure: statewide and jurisdictional analysis
- " Use of full family sanctions: statewide and jurisdictional analysis.

### **Closing Cases by Month: Statewide Analysis**

Aggregate statewide data on the number of cases closing during the entire year and in each of the 12 months are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1, following. Both indicate that, in general, the distribution of closings was generally stable across the year, with no major upward or downward spikes. To illustrate, the spread between the month with the highest number and proportion of closings (June, 1998, n=4,052 or 9.9%) and the month with the lowest (March, 1998, n=2,870 or 7.0%), was just about 1,200 cases.

Although the cross-month differences are not large, the trend during year two of reform was that closings started high in October 1997, the first month of the second year (n=3,786 or 9.3%) and declined over the next few months, hitting the low point for

the year in March 1998, the sixth month (n=2,870 or 7.0%). Closings increased in the ensuing months, hitting the high for the year in June 1998. Closings were markedly lower in July (n=3,292 or 8.1%), but rose steadily in the last two months of reform s second full year.<sup>4</sup>

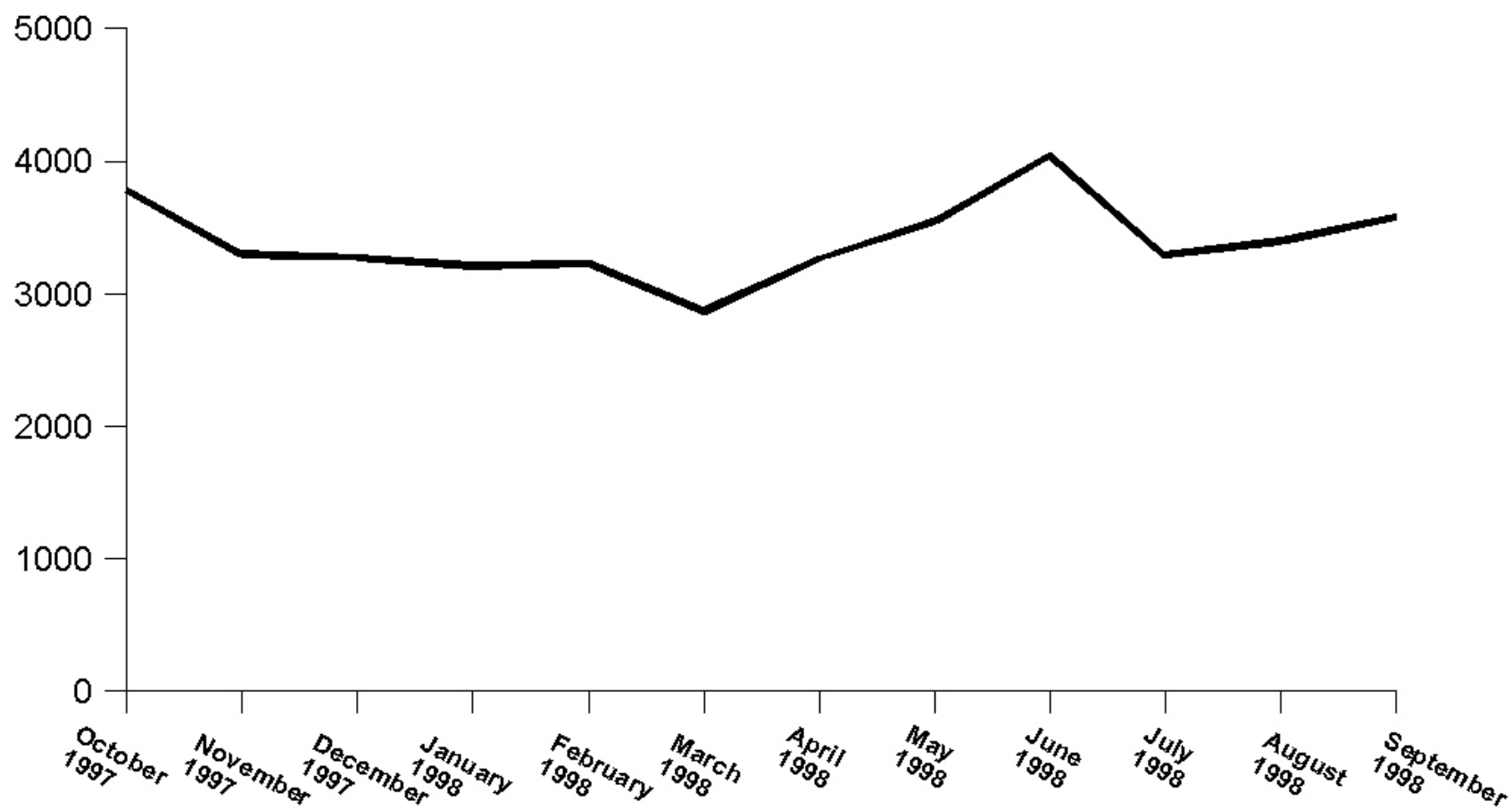
**Table 1. Number of Monthly Closing Cases: Maryland**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Closing Cases</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>October 1997</b>	3,786	9.3%	9.3%
<b>November 1997</b>	3,294	8.1%	17.4%
<b>December 1997</b>	3,276	8.0%	25.4%
<i>1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Total</i>	<i>10,356</i>	<i>25.4%</i>	<i>25.4%</i>
<b>January 1998</b>	3,201	7.9%	33.3%
<b>February 1998</b>	3,223	7.9%	41.2%
<b>March 1998</b>	2,870	7.0%	48.2%
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Total</i>	<i>9,294</i>	<i>22.8%</i>	<i>48.2%</i>
<b>April 1998</b>	3,265	8.0%	56.2%
<b>May 1998</b>	3,548	8.7%	64.9%
<b>June 1998</b>	4,052	9.9%	74.8%
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Total</i>	<i>10,865</i>	<i>26.6%</i>	<i>74.8%</i>
<b>July 1998</b>	3,292	8.1%	82.9%
<b>August 1998</b>	3,387	8.3%	91.2%
<b>September 1998</b>	3,579	8.8%	100.0%
<i>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Total</i>	<i>9,294</i>	<i>22.8%</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
<b>Annual Total</b>	<i>40,773</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

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<sup>4</sup> We suspect the somewhat anomalous June-July data may relate to the fact that the June-July period marks the end of one state fiscal year and the beginning of another.

**Figure 1. Closing Cases By Month: Maryland**



## **Closing Cases by Month: Jurisdictional Analysis**

Though Maryland is a small state, it is very diverse and, thus, statewide data often mask important intra-state variations. Welfare reform's strong emphasis on local flexibility also makes it important to examine sub-state data on dimensions such as patterns in welfare exits. These data are presented in Table 2 on the following pages, which shows monthly and quarterly closing numbers and proportions for each jurisdiction.

On a quarterly basis, Table 2 shows that the vast majority of jurisdictions (n=16 of 24) recorded their largest number and percent of closings during the first three months of the second year of reform (October 1997 - December 1997). These 16 counties are a diverse group, representing large and small, suburban and rural areas, sizable as well as moderate and small TCA caseloads: Allegany, Baltimore, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Washington and Wicomico counties.<sup>5</sup>

Six jurisdictions, four of them on Maryland's Eastern Shore (Calvert, Dorchester, Garrett, Kent, Talbot and Worcester counties) recorded the greatest number and proportion of closings in the third quarter of the 12 month period (April 1998 - June 1998). We have no empirical data to support this hypothesis, but strongly suspect this observed pattern is related to the seasonal, water-based nature of many employment opportunities in some of those areas.

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<sup>5</sup> Although certainly not conclusive, this finding may suggest that the anticipated slowdown in the number and rate of TCA exits may have begun, at least in some jurisdictions. We will examine this issue in more detail in a forthcoming report which compares case closing patterns in the first and second years of reform.



The two remaining jurisdictions (Anne Arundel County and Baltimore City) were unique. In Anne Arundel County, the peak exit period was the second quarter (January 1998 - March 1998) while in Baltimore City exits were greatest in the fourth quarter (July 1998 - September 1998). Readers are referred to Appendix A, Figures A-1 to A-24 which graphically illustrate year two monthly case closings patterns separately for each local jurisdiction.

**Table 2. Number of Closing Cases by Month and Jurisdiction**

	<b>Maryland</b>	<b>Allegany</b>	<b>Anne Arundel</b>	<b>Baltimore</b>	<b>Calvert</b>	<b>Caroline</b>	<b>Carroll</b>
<b>October 1997</b>	3,786 (9.3%)	42 (10.0%)	222 (10.8%)	552 (12.6%)	30 (9.6%)	31 (15.3%)	48 (15.0%)
<b>November 1997</b>	3,294 (8.1%)	38 (9.1%)	185 (9.0%)	456 (10.4%)	27 (8.6%)	15 (7.4%)	37 (11.5%)
<b>December 1997</b>	3,276 (8.0%)	51 (12.2%)	169 (8.2%)	397 (9.1%)	34 (10.9%)	23 (11.3%)	29 (9.0%)
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>10,356 (25.4%)</b>	<b>131 (31.3%)</b>	<b>576 (28.0%)</b>	<b>1,405 (32.2%)</b>	<b>91 (29.1%)</b>	<b>69 (34.0%)</b>	<b>114 (35.5%)</b>
<b>January 1998</b>	3,201 (7.9%)	25 (6.0%)	251 (12.2%)	331 (7.6%)	29 (9.3%)	15 (7.4%)	27 (8.4%)
<b>February 1998</b>	3,223 (7.9%)	21 (5.0%)	213 (10.3%)	350 (8.0%)	30 (9.6%)	20 (9.9%)	17 (5.3%)
<b>March 1998</b>	2,870 (7.0%)	45 (10.8%)	186 (9.0%)	399 (9.1%)	14 (4.5%)	22 (10.8%)	20 (6.2%)
<b>2<sup>ND</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>9,294 (22.8%)</b>	<b>91 (21.8%)</b>	<b>650 (31.6%)</b>	<b>1,080 (24.7%)</b>	<b>73 (23.3%)</b>	<b>57 (28.1%)</b>	<b>64 (19.9%)</b>
<b>April 1998</b>	3,265 (8.0%)	41 (9.8%)	118 (5.7%)	291 (6.7%)	27 (8.6%)	15 (7.4%)	31 (9.7%)
<b>May 1998</b>	3,548 (8.7%)	29 (6.9%)	205 (10.0%)	333 (7.6%)	39 (12.5%)	10 (4.9%)	20 (6.2%)
<b>June 1998</b>	4,052 (9.9%)	31 (7.4%)	146 (7.1%)	351 (8.0%)	27 (8.6%)	15 (7.4%)	36 (11.2%)
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>10,865 (26.6%)</b>	<b>101 (24.2%)</b>	<b>469 (22.8%)</b>	<b>975 (22.3%)</b>	<b>93 (29.7%)</b>	<b>40 (19.7%)</b>	<b>87 (27.1%)</b>
<b>July 1998</b>	3,292 (8.1%)	28 (6.7%)	138 (6.7%)	288 (6.6%)	21 (6.7%)	16 (7.9%)	19 (5.9%)
<b>August 1998</b>	3,387 (8.3%)	30 (7.2%)	113 (5.5%)	312 (7.1%)	21 (6.7%)	11 (5.4%)	23 (7.2%)
<b>September 1998</b>	3,579 (8.8%)	37 (8.9%)	114 (5.5%)	308 (7.1%)	14 (4.5%)	10 (4.9%)	14 (4.4%)
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>10,258 (25.2%)</b>	<b>95 (22.7%)</b>	<b>365 (17.7%)</b>	<b>908 (20.8%)</b>	<b>56 (17.9%)</b>	<b>37 (18.2%)</b>	<b>56 (17.5%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	40,773	418	2,060	4,368	313	203	321

Note: Quarterly percentages may not represent the exact sum of the percentages for the individual months, due to rounding.

	<b>Cecil</b>	<b>Charles</b>	<b>Dorchester</b>	<b>Frederick</b>	<b>Garrett</b>	<b>Harford</b>
<b>October 1997</b>	58 (12.3%)	72 (11.0%)	50 (12.0%)	55 (11.5%)	22 (12.4%)	106 (14.0%)
<b>November 1997</b>	47 (10.0%)	52 (7.9%)	40 (9.6%)	52 (10.9%)	9 (5.1%)	60 (7.9%)
<b>December 1997</b>	45 (9.6%)	73 (11.1%)	24 (5.8%)	55 (11.5%)	16 (9.0%)	63 (8.3%)
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>150 (31.9%)</b>	<b>197 (30.0%)</b>	<b>114 (27.4%)</b>	<b>162 (33.8%)</b>	<b>47 (26.4%)</b>	<b>229 (30.3%)</b>
<b>January 1998</b>	47 (10.0%)	58 (8.8%)	34 (8.2%)	35 (7.3%)	11 (6.2%)	70 (9.3%)
<b>February 1998</b>	32 (6.8%)	58 (8.8%)	27 (6.5%)	24 (5.0%)	18 (10.1%)	55 (7.3%)
<b>March 1998</b>	46 (9.8%)	46 (7.0%)	38 (9.1%)	42 (8.8%)	13 (7.3%)	49 (6.5%)
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>125 (26.6%)</b>	<b>162 (24.6%)</b>	<b>99 (23.8%)</b>	<b>101 (21.1%)</b>	<b>42 (23.6%)</b>	<b>174 (23.0%)</b>
<b>April 1998</b>	42 (8.9%)	47 (7.2%)	31 (7.5%)	52 (10.9%)	21 (11.8%)	82 (10.8%)
<b>May 1998</b>	38 (8.1%)	49 (7.5%)	31 (7.5%)	34 (7.1%)	14 (7.9%)	63 (8.3%)
<b>June 1998</b>	32 (6.8%)	55 (8.4%)	53 (12.7%)	40 (8.4%)	13 (7.3%)	62 (8.2%)
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>112 (23.8%)</b>	<b>151 (23.0%)</b>	<b>115 (27.6%)</b>	<b>126 (26.3%)</b>	<b>48 (27.0%)</b>	<b>207 (27.4%)</b>
<b>July 1998</b>	37 (7.9%)	47 (7.2%)	22 (5.3%)	30 (6.3%)	16 (9.0%)	45 (6.0%)
<b>August 1998</b>	23 (4.9%)	39 (5.9%)	33 (7.9%)	27 (5.6%)	11 (6.2%)	50 (6.6%)
<b>September 1998</b>	23 (4.9%)	61 (9.3%)	33 (7.9%)	33 (6.9%)	14 (7.9%)	51 (6.7%)
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>83 (17.7%)</b>	<b>147 (22.4%)</b>	<b>88 (21.2%)</b>	<b>90 (18.8%)</b>	<b>41 (23.0%)</b>	<b>146 (19.3%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>756</b>

Note: Quarterly percentages may not represent the exact sum of the percentages for the individual months, due to rounding.

	Howard	Kent	Montgomery	Prince George s	Queen Anne s	St. Mary s
<b>October 1997</b>	80 (17.5%)	8 (11.4%)	254 (12.2%)	894 (12.5%)	16 (12.4%)	35 (8.4%)
<b>November 1997</b>	39 (8.6%)	8 (11.4%)	179 (8.6%)	600 (8.4%)	9 (7.0%)	42 (10.1%)
<b>December 1997</b>	52 (11.4%)	5 (7.1%)	239 (11.5%)	830 (11.6%)	14 (10.9%)	53 (12.8%)
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>171 (37.5%)</b>	<b>21 (30.0%)</b>	<b>672 (32.2%)</b>	<b>2,324 (32.5%)</b>	<b>39 (30.2%)</b>	<b>130 (31.3%)</b>
<b>January 1998</b>	44 (9.6%)	2 (2.9%)	212 (10.2%)	623 (8.7%)	8 (6.2%)	64 (15.4%)
<b>February 1998</b>	35 (7.7%)	3 (4.3%)	173 (8.3%)	653 (9.1%)	6 (4.7%)	34 (8.2%)
<b>March 1998</b>	39 (8.6%)	7 (10.0%)	212 (10.2%)	666 (9.3%)	13 (10.1%)	24 (5.8%)
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>118 (25.9%)</b>	<b>12 (17.1%)</b>	<b>597 (28.7%)</b>	<b>1,942 (27.1%)</b>	<b>27 (20.9%)</b>	<b>122 (29.4%)</b>
<b>April 1998</b>	26 (5.7%)	11 (15.7%)	175 (8.4%)	563 (7.9%)	12 (9.3%)	29 (7.0%)
<b>May 1998</b>	31 (6.8%)	4 (5.7%)	131 (6.3%)	455 (6.4%)	12 (9.3%)	31 (7.5%)
<b>June 1998</b>	31 (6.8%)	8 (11.4%)	154 (7.4%)	512 (7.2%)	13 (10.1%)	31 (7.5%)
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>88 (19.3%)</b>	<b>23 (32.9%)</b>	<b>460 (22.1%)</b>	<b>1,530 (21.4%)</b>	<b>37 (28.7%)</b>	<b>91 (22.0%)</b>
<b>July 1998</b>	27 (5.9%)	7 (10.0%)	123 (5.9%)	409 (5.7%)	11 (8.5%)	24 (5.8%)
<b>August 1998</b>	28 (6.1%)	3 (4.3%)	120 (5.8%)	450 (6.3%)	8 (6.2%)	23 (5.5%)
<b>September 1998</b>	24 (5.3%)	4 (5.7%)	111 (5.3%)	500 (7.0%)	7 (5.4%)	25 (6.0%)
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>79 (17.3%)</b>	<b>14 (20.0%)</b>	<b>354 (17.0%)</b>	<b>1,359 (19.0%)</b>	<b>26 (20.2%)</b>	<b>72 (17.3%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	456	70	2,083	7,155	129	415

Note: Quarterly percentages may not represent the exact sum of the percentages for the individual months, due to rounding.

	Somerset	Talbot	Washington	Wicomico	Worcester	Baltimore City
<b>October 1997</b>	28 (12.5%)	12 (9.6%)	70 (10.9%)	106 (11.6%)	31 (11.9%)	964 (5.5%)
<b>November 1997</b>	25 (11.2%)	8 (6.4%)	46 (7.2%)	82 (9.0%)	20 (7.7%)	1,218 (6.9%)
<b>December 1997</b>	24 (10.7%)	10 (8.0%)	65 (10.2%)	80 (8.8%)	19 (7.3%)	906 (5.1%)
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>77 (34.4%)</b>	<b>30 (24.0%)</b>	<b>181 (28.3%)</b>	<b>268 (29.4%)</b>	<b>70 (26.9%)</b>	<b>3,088 (17.5%)</b>
<b>January 1998</b>	16 (7.1%)	10 (8.0%)	55 (8.6%)	55 (6.0%)	14 (5.4%)	1,165 (6.6%)
<b>February 1998</b>	24 (10.7%)	11 (8.8%)	61 (9.5%)	76 (8.3%)	24 (9.2%)	1,258 (7.1%)
<b>March 1998</b>	8 (3.6%)	11 (8.8%)	54 (8.4%)	72 (7.9%)	29 (11.2%)	815 (4.6%)
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>48 (21.4%)</b>	<b>32 (25.6%)</b>	<b>170 (26.6%)</b>	<b>203 (22.3%)</b>	<b>67 (25.8%)</b>	<b>3,238 (18.3%)</b>
<b>April 1998</b>	24 (10.7%)	12 (9.6%)	51 (8.0%)	82 (9.0%)	32 (12.3%)	1,450 (8.2%)
<b>May 1998</b>	16 (7.1%)	16 (12.8%)	58 (9.1%)	71 (7.8%)	19 (7.3%)	1,839 (10.4%)
<b>June 1998</b>	17 (7.6%)	15 (12.0%)	62 (9.7%)	78 (8.6%)	23 (8.8%)	2,247 (12.7%)
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>57 (25.4%)</b>	<b>43 (34.4%)</b>	<b>171 (26.7%)</b>	<b>231 (25.4%)</b>	<b>74 (28.5%)</b>	<b>5,536 (31.3%)</b>
<b>July 1998</b>	18 (8.0%)	6 (4.8%)	36 (5.6%)	67 (7.4%)	19 (7.3%)	1,838 (10.4%)
<b>August 1998</b>	12 (5.4%)	9 (7.2%)	43 (6.7%)	72 (7.9%)	17 (6.5%)	1,909 (10.8%)
<b>September 1998</b>	12 (5.4%)	5 (4.0%)	39 (6.1%)	70 (7.7%)	13 (5.0%)	2,057 (11.6%)
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>42 (18.8%)</b>	<b>20 (16.0%)</b>	<b>118 (18.4%)</b>	<b>209 (22.9%)</b>	<b>49 (18.8%)</b>	<b>5,804 (32.9%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	224	125	640	911	260	17,666

Note: Quarterly percentages may not represent the exact sum of the percentages for the individual months, due to rounding.

## **Closing Cases Relative to Caseload Size: Jurisdictional Analysis**

The preceding table shows that each jurisdiction continued to record relatively sizable numbers of case closings throughout the second full year of welfare reform. The literal number of case closings occurring (or even possible) in any given subdivision, of course, is largely a function of the size of its overall TCA caseload. Because TCA caseload sizes do vary dramatically across our state, cross-county comparisons using literal numbers and proportions are somewhat difficult. In terms of caseload exits, one useful way to contrast local jurisdictions which does take caseload size differences into account is to consider each subdivision's share of statewide case closings relative to its share of the statewide, average annual caseload for the same period of time. This information appears in Table 3, on the next page.<sup>6</sup>

Table 3 tells us several things. As would be expected, the table shows that the subdivisions with the largest caseloads (Baltimore City and the counties of Prince Georges, Baltimore, Montgomery and Anne Arundel) are also those which account for the largest shares of total case closures. These five subdivisions, to illustrate, account for more than four-fifths (86.9%) of the average annual caseload for the 12 month study period and for about four-fifths (81.7%) of total case closures statewide during that same period.

The more important data illustrated in Table 3, however, are the figures which appear in the difference column of the table. While the percentages are quite small in some cases, they show that 23 of 24 jurisdictions' shares of overall case closures in

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<sup>6</sup> Caseload data were calculated by the authors from the *Monthly Statistical Reports* issued by the Family Investment Administration, Department of Human Resources for the period October 1997 - September 1998

year two equaled or exceeded their shares of the average annual caseload in year two. In contrast, and unique among all localities, Baltimore City's share of overall case closings (43.3%) was considerably lower than its share of the overall cash assistance caseload (54.9%).

This same general pattern, including the Baltimore City finding, was observed in our April 1998 report on case closings during the first year of welfare reform. In contrast to the year one numbers, today's finding with regard to Baltimore City - where the TCA caseload is larger by far than in any other subdivision - represents both good news and not so good news insofar as the future is concerned. The good news is that the City's share of case closures in year two (43.3%) is considerably greater than it was in year one (33.6%) and the gap between cases and closures is less in the second year (-11.6%) than it was in the first (-17.1%). The not so good news is that the City, in year two, accounted for a larger proportion of the active TCA caseload (54.9%) than it did in year one (50.7%).

These aggregate data do not permit us to determine why these patterns have occurred and appear to be persisting over time, but experience suggests a few possibilities that, probably in combination, seem likely. A first is that many of the counties, especially perhaps the smaller ones, may have reached the point where most of the on-welfare cases able to make relatively speedy exits from assistance have already done so. While new entrants - some of whom will also exit fairly quickly - continue to come onto TCA in these counties, the volumes are small. This would contribute to the City's now accounting for a larger share of exits and for a larger share of the active caseload. Another possibility is that Baltimore City's approach to welfare

reform, perhaps in recognition of caseload characteristics or composition or job availability, has not, in the first few years of reform, been as focused on rapid caseload reduction as other subdivisions approaches. Regardless of the cause, if these trends continue - especially if the active caseload continues to be increasingly concentrated in Baltimore City - state and local policy-makers and administrators will have to consider what the statewide implications might be over time and what actions might be required to insure the continued success of welfare reform.

In recognition of Baltimore City's critical role in achieving continued statewide success in welfare reform, we are carrying out a separate analysis of data on all City cases included in our *Life After Welfare* sample. The report of findings from this analysis should be completed within the next few months.



**Table 3. Percent of Total Closings/Caseload by Jurisdiction:10/97 - 9/98**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Percent of Total Closings</b>	<b>Percent of Total Caseload</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Prince George s</b>	17.5%	15.6%	1.9%
<b>Baltimore</b>	10.7%	8.9%	1.8%
<b>Montg omery</b>	5.1%	3.7%	1.4%
<b>Anne Arundel</b>	5.1%	3.8%	1.3%
<b>Wicomico</b>	2.2%	1.6%	0.6%
<b>Washington</b>	1.6%	1.0%	0.6%
<b>Cecil</b>	1.2%	0.7%	0.5%
<b>Harford</b>	1.9%	1.5%	0.4%
<b>Howard</b>	1.1%	0.7%	0.4%
<b>Allegany</b>	1.0%	0.7%	0.3%
<b>Charles</b>	1.6%	1.3%	0.3%
<b>Dorchester</b>	1.0%	0.7%	0.3%
<b>Frederick</b>	1.2%	0.9%	0.3%
<b>Somerset</b>	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%
<b>Calvert</b>	0.8%	0.6%	0.2%
<b>Carroll</b>	0.8%	0.6%	0.2%
<b>St. Mary s</b>	1.0%	0.8%	0.2%
<b>Worcester</b>	0.6%	0.4%	0.2%
<b>Caroline</b>	0.5%	0.4%	0.1%
<b>Garrett</b>	0.4%	0.3%	0.1%
<b>Kent</b>	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
<b>Queen Anne s</b>	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%
<b>Talbot</b>	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
<b>Baltimore City</b>	43.3%	54.9%	-11.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

## Characteristics of Exiting Cases: Statewide and Jurisdictional Analysis

Characteristics of the universe of year two exiting cases are presented for the state and each jurisdiction in Table 4, which follows this discussion. Five characteristics describing these cases are presented: length of the TCA spell which resulted in the exit; number of adults in the assistance unit; number of children in the assistance unit; child-only cases; and size of the assistance unit.

### Length of Exiting Spell<sup>7</sup>

Table 4 shows that, statewide, the vast majority of cases which left welfare during the second year of reform had been on assistance for a relatively short period of time. About two of every three cases (68%) had been open for two years or less, just under half (47%) for 12 or fewer months and one-fifth (21%) for 13 to 24 months. About one in ten cases (11%) had received assistance for five or more years without interruption.<sup>8</sup>

At the jurisdictional level, results are similar, but variations are also evident. In all 24 jurisdictions the most common situation among exiting cases was a current welfare spell that had been ongoing for one year or less. However, there were large variations across counties in the relative size of this short spells group of exiters. In Kent County, to illustrate, fully 81% of exiting cases had been on welfare for one year or

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<sup>7</sup> Length of exiting spell refers, in this paper, to the continuous period of TCA receipt immediately preceding the closing of the case. Readers are alerted that variations in local case closing practices may influence the observed results.

<sup>8</sup> Because of the disproportionate size of Baltimore City in terms of actual numbers of exiting cases, the table presents statewide data in two forms: with the City included and with the City excluded. References to statewide figures in the text include Baltimore City.

less; at the other extreme, in Baltimore City only 37% of cases had spells that were this short.

In 11 of 24 subdivisions (Allegany, Carroll, Cecil, Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, Kent, Queen Anne s, Talbot, Washington and Worcester counties), two-thirds or more of all year two exiters had been receiving aid for one year or less. In nine of 24 jurisdictions (Baltimore County, Calvert, Caroline, Charles, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Somerset and Wicomico counties), between 50% and 65% of all year two exiters had a spell length of 12 or fewer months. There are three counties (Anne Arundel, Prince George s and St. Mary s) where the proportion of short spell exiters was greater than 40%, but less than 50% during the second year of reform. And, as noted, in Baltimore City only 37% of year two closing cases had been on welfare for one year or less.

At the other extreme, relatively few closing cases statewide or in any jurisdiction had been on welfare continuously for more than five years. In the majority of jurisdictions (n=16 of 24) five percent or fewer of closing cases had been receiving TCA continuously for this long. In the remaining seven counties (Allegany (9%), Anne Arundel (6%), Charles (7%), Montgomery (9%), Prince George s (9%), St. Mary s (7%), and Somerset (10%)), between 6% and 10% of year two exiters had been on welfare for more than five years without interruption at the time of case closure. Baltimore City data are in stark contrast; nearly one of every five cases which closed (18%) had been on welfare for more than five years.

### **Number of Adults in the Assistance Unit**

By far the most common situation among closing cases in the second year of reform is that of a family where only one adult was receiving TCA benefits. For the state as a whole, more than four-fifths (84%) of all cases contained only one recipient adult. Two-adult cases were quite infrequent (3%), while cases with no adult recipient accounted for 13% of all cases which left welfare during the second year of reform.

The same pattern was observed at the local level. In all 24 jurisdictions assistance units containing only one adult dominated among year two closing cases; proportions ranged from a low of 66% of cases in Garrett County to a high of 87% in Dorchester County. Although two adult assistance units were a very tiny proportion of all exiting cases statewide (3%), they represented a much larger proportion of exiting cases in a few, predominantly rural, jurisdictions. In Garrett County, in fact, fully one of every four closing cases (26%) contained two adults. In four other counties, about one of every 10 cases contained two adults (Allegany (11%), Carroll (10%), Cecil (11%), and Queen Anne s (11%)).

### **Number of Children in the Assistance Unit**

Statewide, TCA cases closing in the October 1997 - September 1998 period, tended to have only one (47%) or two (29%) children in the assistance unit. Overall, just about one in five cases (21%) contained three or more children.

In all 24 jurisdictions, also, one child in the assistance unit was the most common situation, though there were noticeable variations across counties. The proportions of one-child families among those who exited ranged from a low of 38% of cases in Cecil County to a high of 61% in Queen Anne s County. The proportions of exiting

households with three or more children on the grant ranged from a low of 13% in Queen Anne s County to a high of 26% in Montgomery County.

### **Child-Only Cases**

Child-only cases, those in which no adult is included in the assistance unit/benefit amount, have historically represented about 10-15% of the overall cash assistance caseload in Maryland and nationally. However, since shortly before welfare reform and continuing to the present, as traditional mother-child families have left welfare in large numbers, child-only cases have come to represent a considerably larger proportion of active cash assistance caseloads.<sup>9</sup> In Maryland, in February 1999, to illustrate, child-only cases represented fully 29.5% of all active TCA cases and, in some counties, more than two-fifths of the entire active caseload.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in all of our welfare reform research projects, including this one, we pay special attention to this type of TCA household.

Statewide during the second year of reform, child-only cases exited welfare at a rate generally consistent with their historical representation in the AFDC/TCA caseload. Overall, 13% of closing cases in the October 1997 - September 1998 period were child-only cases.

There was some, but not a great deal of, variation in this proportion across the 24 local subdivisions. The lowest proportions were eight percent and 10 percent,

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. Donald Oellerich, ASPE-US Department of Health and Human Services and Mr. Mark Millspaugh, FIA-Maryland Department of Human Resources, Personal Communication, August 1998 and October 1998, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> Family Investment Administration, *Core Caseload Report*, February, 1999, Baltimore: Department of Human Resources, April 12, 1999.

observed in the westernmost county (Garrett) and in the mid-shore county of Dorchester, respectively. The highest proportions were in Talbot (26%) and Queen Anne's counties (22%), both on the Eastern Shore.

### **Assistance Unit Size**

Closing cases ranged in size, statewide, from one to 12 persons. The most common situation, accounting for a plurality of cases (41%), was that of a two person assistance unit. Next most common was a three person assistance unit; a little over one-fourth of cases (27%) leaving welfare had three persons on the grant. Large assistance units were relatively uncommon among those who exited, as they are among the active caseload as well; about one in five closing cases (21%) were assistance units containing four or more persons.

In 22 of the state's 24 jurisdictions, two person assistance units were also most common. In these subdivisions the proportions of two person exiting cases ranged from 32% of cases in Allegany County to 44% of cases in Talbot County and 43% in Baltimore City.

The two exceptions to this pattern are the rural counties of Cecil and Garrett. In Cecil County there were slightly more three person (32%) than two person (31%) assistance units among those who left TCA during the program's second year. In Garrett County the most common situation among year two leavers was that of a four person or larger assistance unit; about one of every three closing cases in this county (32%) had four or more persons on the grant.

**Table 4. Client Characteristics By Jurisdiction - Second Year of FIP (October 1997 - September 1998)**

	<b>Allegany</b>	<b>Anne Arundel</b>	<b>Baltimore County</b>	<b>Calvert</b>	<b>Caroline</b>	<b>Carroll</b>
<b>Number of Closing Cases</b> (Unique)	418	2,060	4,368	313	203	321
<b>Length of Ending Spell<sup>11</sup></b>						
12 months or less	66%	47%	61%	64%	64%	72%
13-24 months	12%	24%	20%	18%	18%	13%
25-36 months	7%	13%	9%	7%	6%	6%
37-48 months	4%	7%	4%	5%	5%	3%
49-60 months	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
more than 60 months	9%	6%	4%	4%	5%	4%
Mean spell length (months)	20.79	22.12	17.20	16.65	16.36	13.87
Median spell length (months)	7.79	13.26	10.98	9.96	7.95	7.77
Range (months)	1 - 159	1 - 155	1 - 156	1 - 161	1 - 122	1 - 151
<b>Number of Adults</b>						
0	15%	16%	14%	11%	19%	16%
1	74%	82%	82%	81%	77%	74%
2	11%	2%	4%	8%	4%	10%
<b>Number of Children</b>						
0	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	4%
1	45%	45%	49%	51%	44%	44%
2	29%	30%	30%	27%	37%	31%
3 or more	23%	22%	19%	20%	16%	21%
<b>Child-Only Cases</b>	15%	16%	14%	11%	19%	16%
<b>Size of Assistance Unit</b>						
1	16%	13%	12%	9%	14%	13%
2	32%	38%	41%	42%	38%	38%
3	28%	27%	28%	29%	29%	26%
4 or more	24%	22%	19%	20%	19%	23%
Mean Assistance Unit Size	2.80	2.70	2.63	2.73	2.59	2.68
Median Assistance Unit Size	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Range	1 - 12	1 - 10	1 - 11	1 - 9	1 - 6	1 - 7

<sup>11</sup>Readers are cautioned that some jurisdictional differences in length of exiting spell may be explained by differences in case closing practices.

	Cecil	Charles	Dorchester	Frederick	Garrett	Harford	Howard
<b>Number of Closing Cases</b> (Unique)	470	657	416	479	178	756	456
<b>Length of Ending Spell</b>							
12 months or less	71%	50%	76%	71%	75%	58%	63%
13-24 months	14%	22%	12%	14%	14%	18%	18%
25-36 months	7%	11%	5%	6%	4%	11%	8%
37-48 months	3%	7%	2%	3%	2%	5%	5%
49-60 months	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	2%
more than 60 months	3%	7%	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%
Mean spell length (months)	13.12	22.05	11.77	14.81	13.05	17.61	16.39
Median spell length (months)	6.33	12.14	5.85	8.15	5.55	10.29	8.79
Range (months)	1 - 122	1 - 163	1 - 155	1 - 289	1 - 151	1 - 199	1 - 132
<b>Number of Adults</b>							
0	11%	11%	10%	18%	8%	14%	18%
1	78%	85%	87%	78%	66%	80%	80%
2	11%	4%	3%	4%	26%	6%	2%
<b>Number of Children</b>							
0	3%	3%	2%	2%	6%	3%	4%
1	38%	45%	46%	50%	44%	49%	46%
2	35%	27%	32%	28%	30%	27%	30%
3 or more	24%	25%	20%	20%	20%	21%	20%
<b>Child-Only Cases</b>	11%	11%	10%	18%	8%	14%	18%
<b>Size of Assistance Unit</b>							
1	10%	9%	8%	14%	13%	12%	17%
2	31%	39%	42%	40%	31%	40%	36%
3	32%	25%	31%	24%	24%	26%	27%
4 or more	27%	27%	19%	22%	32%	22%	20%
Mean Assistance Unit Size	2.90	2.83	2.70	2.62	2.87	2.71	2.63
Median Assistance Unit Size	3.00	3.00	2.50	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.00
Range	1 - 8	1 - 11	1 - 8	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 9	1 - 7



	Kent	Montgomery	Prince George's	Queen Anne's	St. Mary's	Somerset	Talbot
<b>Number of Closing Cases</b> (Unique)	70	2,083	7,155	129	415	224	125
<b>Length of Ending Spell</b>							
12 months or less	81%	51%	43%	74%	48%	58%	70%
13-24 months	10%	18%	24%	9%	22%	16%	15%
25-36 months	0%	11%	12%	5%	13%	7%	2%
37-48 months	2%	7%	7%	7%	7%	5%	9%
49-60 months	7%	4%	5%	1%	3%	4%	2%
more than 60 months	0%	9%	9%	4%	7%	10%	2%
Mean spell length (months)	10.12	22.70	24.59	13.93	21.65	21.86	13.08
Median spell length (months)	5.60	11.96	14.99	6.90	13.19	9.02	7.39
Range (months)	1 - 58	1 - 156	1 - 160	1 - 109	1 - 157	1 - 156	1 - 66
<b>Number of Adults</b>							
0	20%	13%	13%	22%	13%	14%	26%
1	77%	83%	85%	67%	81%	80%	69%
2	3%	4%	2%	11%	6%	6%	5%
<b>Number of Children</b>							
0	6%	2%	3%	4%	4%	2%	2%
1	53%	40%	44%	61%	44%	50%	54%
2	26%	32%	29%	22%	28%	28%	29%
3 or more	15%	26%	24%	13%	24%	20%	15%
<b>Child-Only Cases</b>	20%	13%	13%	22%	13%	14%	26%
<b>Size of Assistance Unit</b>							
1	20%	9%	11%	22%	9%	12%	19%
2	40%	36%	40%	41%	39%	42%	44%
3	26%	30%	26%	22%	29%	24%	22%
4 or more	14%	25%	23%	15%	23%	22%	15%
Mean Assistance Unit Size	2.36	2.88	2.76	2.39	2.76	2.68	2.45
Median Assistance Unit Size	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.00
Range	1 - 5	1 - 10	1 - 12	1 - 6	1 - 7	1 - 8	1 - 7

	Washington	Wicomico	Worcester	Baltimore City	Maryland with Balt City	Maryland without Balt City
<b>Number of Closing Cases</b> (Unique)	640	911	260	17,666	40,773	23,107
<b>Length of Ending Spell</b>						
12 months or less	77%	59%	74%	37%	47%	54%
13-24 months	14%	18%	11%	22%	21%	20%
25-36 months	4%	10%	5%	11%	11%	10%
37-48 months	1%	6%	4%	7%	6%	6%
49-60 months	2%	3%	1%	5%	4%	3%
more than 60 months	2%	4%	5%	18%	11%	7%
Mean spell length (months)	11.15	17.30	13.48	35.22	26.67	20.15
Median spell length (months)	5.73	8.72	5.19	18.07	13.08	11.53
Range (months)	1 - 154	1 - 167	1 - 151	1 - 429	1 - 429	1 - 289
<b>Number of Adults</b>						
0	13%	14%	12%	13%	13%	14%
1	81%	81%	85%	86%	84%	82%
2	6%	5%	3%	1%	3%	4%
<b>Number of Children</b>						
0	5%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%
1	49%	41%	46%	48%	47%	45%
2	26%	34%	30%	29%	29%	30%
3 or more	20%	21%	21%	20%	21%	22%
<b>Child-Only Cases</b>	13%	14%	12%	13%	13%	14%
<b>Size of Assistance Unit</b>						
1	13%	11%	10%	11%	11%	11%
2	40%	37%	40%	43%	41%	39%
3	25%	31%	29%	27%	27%	27%
4 or more	22%	21%	21%	19%	21%	23%
Mean Assistance Unit Size	2.68	2.75	2.70	2.66	2.70	2.73
Median Assistance Unit Size	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Range	1 - 9	1 - 8	1 - 7	1 - 11	1 - 12	1 - 12

## **Administrative Reasons for Case Closure: Statewide and Jurisdictional Analysis**

As we have noted in all of our welfare leavers research reports, the reasons why families leave welfare are as many and as varied as the life situations of clients. Administrative data systems, of necessity, must attempt to capture this complexity and diversity in a set of pre-determined, standardized codes. Our prior reports have also documented that, in some instances, case closing codes do not paint a full picture of why cash assistance cases close. Most notably, we have found evidence that far more clients are leaving welfare for work than are known to the welfare agency as doing so. This situation often results when the client fails to keep a redetermination appointment or to provide requested information, but does not inform the agency that (s)he has secured employment.<sup>12, 13</sup> The caveats about administrative case closing reasons notwithstanding, it is still instructive to examine statewide and local case closure patterns for the second full year of reform implementation.

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### **Top Five Case Closing Reasons: Statewide Data**

Table 5, following this discussion, presents the top five administrative reasons for year two cash assistance case closings for the universe of exiting cases statewide and, separately, for each of the state's 24 local subdivisions. Statewide, the table shows two reasons virtually tied as the most common reason for case closure: income above limit

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, University of Maryland School of Social Work, *Life After Welfare: Third Interim Report*, March 1999 for a fuller discussion of this topic.

<sup>13</sup> Because transitional benefits are available to those who leave welfare for work/higher earnings, concerted efforts are underway to educate clients and reenforce to front-line staff the importance and very real benefits of focusing on employment at the time of case exit/closure.

(n=9,218 or 22.6%) and failure to reapply/complete the redetermination process (n=9,157 or 22.5%).<sup>14</sup> The third most common reason for case closure during the second complete year of reform was failure to give eligibility information (n=6,538 or 16.1%). Together, these three reasons accounted for a bit more than three of every five closures during the 12 month period (n=24,913 or 61.2%).

Statewide, the fourth most common reason for case closure in reform's second year was failure to comply with work requirements (n=4,238 or 10.4%) - that is, case closure because of the agency's imposition of a work-related full family sanction. Rounding out the top five statewide closing reasons in year two was case closure at the request of the client (n=2,452 or 6.0%). Altogether, these top five reasons accounted for more than three-fourths (n=31,603 or 77.6%) of all case closures during the 12 month period.

As will be discussed more fully in a forthcoming report, there are both similarities and differences between the top five closure reasons in year two of reform and the patterns observed in reform's first year. Notably, the top two reasons in year two (income above limit and failure to reapply/complete redetermination) were also the most common reasons in year one, although their order was reversed. In addition, while work-related sanctions were the fourth most common reason for case closure in year two, they did not appear in the top five during the first year of welfare reform.

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<sup>14</sup> In CARES there is no closing code directly comparable to the old system's (AIMS) code "recipient started work". However, our analysis of case narratives and UI wage data confirm that "income above limit" is the CARES code routinely used in work-related exits.

### **Top Five Case Closing Reasons: Jurisdictional Data**

At the local level, patterns in the frequency of use of various administrative case closing reasons were generally similar to the statewide pattern. In 21 of the state's 24 jurisdictions, to illustrate, the most common reason for case closure was income above limit. There was considerable variation across jurisdictions, however, in the proportions of cases closed for this reason, ranging from a low of 29.4% of closures in Baltimore County to a high of 57.1% of closures in Kent County, on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

In the two jurisdictions (Prince George's County and Baltimore City) with the largest welfare caseloads and the largest number of case closures, the most common reason for case closure in this 12 month period was failure to reapply/complete the redetermination process. In Prince George's County about two of every five closures (n=2,785 or 39.0%) were for this reason, as were about one of every five (n=3,634 or 20.7%) in Baltimore City.

Anne Arundel County was unique among the state's subdivisions in year two in that the most oft-used case closing reason was the client's failure to provide eligibility information. About three of every 10 closures during the October 1997 - September 1998 period (n=600 or 29.2%) were for this reason.

We also examined which case closing reasons appeared most often in the top five lists across jurisdictions. One such reason, income above limit, the work/earnings-related closure code, shows up in the top five list in all 24 subdivisions. The assistance unit's request for case closure and the client's failure to reapply/complete the redetermination process appear in the top five lists for 18 of 24 jurisdictions. Notably, case closures for non-compliance with work are among the five most common closure

reasons in 21 of 24 subdivisions (all but the counties of Harford, St. Mary's and Wicomico). Although it does not appear in the statewide top five list, case closure due to clients' relocation of residency was among the five most common reasons in 18 of 24 localities. The highest proportions of cases closing for this reason were in the generally small, more rural counties of Talbot (12.8%), Kent (11.4%), Garrett (10.2%), Queen Anne's (10.1%) and Frederick (9.8%).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>In examining these data and Table 5, readers are alerted that for the first five of the 12 months covered by these data, Baltimore City remained on the old (AIMS) system, while the 23 counties were all using the new (CARES) system for the entire 12 month period.

**Table 5. Top Reasons for Case Closure<sup>16</sup>**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Top 5 Closing Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Maryland</b>	Income Above Limit	9,218	22.6%
	Failure to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	9,157	22.5%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	6,538	16.1%
	Work Sanction	4,238	10.4%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	2,452	6.0%
<b>Allegany</b>	Income Above Limit	180	43.1%
	Work Sanction	82	19.6%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	70	16.7%
	Assistance Unit Moved	32	7.7%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	26	6.2%
<b>Anne Arundel</b>	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	600	29.2%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	461	22.4%
	Income Above Limit	420	20.4%
	Work Sanction	252	12.3%
	Assistance Unit Moved	101	4.9%
<b>Baltimore County</b>	Income Above Limit	1,283	29.4%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	834	19.1%
	Work Sanction	773	17.7%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	569	13.1%
	Assistance Unit Moved	305	7.0%
<b>Calvert</b>	Income Above Limit	127	40.6%
	Work Sanction	69	22.0%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	34	10.9%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	31	9.9%
	Assistance Unit Moved	18	5.8%
<b>Caroline</b>	Income Above Limit	99	49.3%
	Work Sanction	32	15.9%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	21	10.4%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	20	10.0%
	Assistance Unit Moved	18	9.0%
<b>Carroll</b>	Income Above Limit	96	30.1%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	56	17.6%
	Work Sanction	42	13.2%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	38	11.9%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	29	9.1%
<b>Cecil</b>	Income Above Limit	186	39.6%
	Work Sanction	84	17.9%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	77	16.4%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	38	8.1%
	Assistance Unit Moved	34	7.2%

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<sup>16</sup> Some jurisdictions have six closing reasons listed if the fifth most common closing reason had two reasons for closure with an equal number of associated cases.

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Top 5 Closing Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Charles</b>	Income Above Limit	229	34.9%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination Work	121	18.4%
	Sanction	84	12.8%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	79	12.0%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	38	5.8%
<b>Dorchester</b>	Income Above Limit	142	34.2%
	Work Sanction	82	19.8%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	69	16.6%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	45	10.8%
	Assistance Unit Moved	29	7.0%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	29	7.0%
<b>Frederick</b>	Income Above Limit	205	42.9%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	66	13.8%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	48	10.0%
	Assistance Unit Moved	47	9.8%
	Work Sanction	46	9.6%
<b>Garrett</b>	Income Above Limit	80	45.2%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	21	11.9%
	Work Sanction	18	10.2%
	Assistance Unit Moved	18	10.2%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	16	9.0%
<b>Harford</b>	Income Above Limit	318	42.1%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	120	15.9%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	100	13.2%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	61	8.1%
	Assistance Unit Moved	57	7.5%
<b>Howard</b>	Income Above Limit	144	31.6%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination Work	121	26.6%
	Sanction	49	10.8%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	46	10.1%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	41	9.0%
<b>Kent</b>	Income Above Limit	40	57.1%
	Assistance Unit Moved	8	11.4%
	Work Sanction	6	8.6%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	3	4.3%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	3	4.3%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	3	4.3%
<b>Montgomery</b>	Income Above Limit	656	31.6%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	575	27.7%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	312	15.0%
	Work Sanction	109	5.3%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	104	5.0%



<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Top 5 Closing Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Prince George s</b>	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	2,785	39.0%
	Income Above Limit	1,476	20.7%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	822	11.5%
	Work Sanction	704	9.9%
	Assistance Unit Moved	339	4.7%
<b>Queen Anne s</b>	Income Above Limit	60	46.5%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	15	11.6%
	Work Sanction	14	10.9%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	14	10.9%
	Assistance Unit Moved	13	10.1%
<b>St. Mary s</b>	Income Above Limit	152	36.6%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	85	20.5%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	59	14.2%
	Assistance Unit Moved	34	8.2%
	Failed to Sign Repayment Agreement	21	5.1%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	21	5.1%
<b>Somerset</b>	Income Above Limit	75	33.5%
	Work Sanction	54	24.1%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	28	12.5%
	Assistance Unit Moved	20	8.9%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	19	8.5%
<b>Talbot</b>	Income Above Limit	49	39.2%
	Work Sanction	19	15.2%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	16	12.8%
	Assistance Unit Moved	16	12.8%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	8	6.4%
<b>Washington</b>	Income Above Limit	212	33.2%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	100	15.6%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	88	13.8%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	79	12.4%
	Work Sanction	74	11.6%
<b>Wicomico</b>	Income Above Limit	425	46.7%
	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	131	14.4%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	107	11.8%
	Assistance Unit Moved	65	7.1%
	Assistance Unit Requested closure	63	6.9%
<b>Worcester</b>	Income Above Limit	105	40.5%
	Work Sanction	49	18.9%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	39	15.1%
	Assistance Unit Requested Closure	30	11.6%
	Assistance Unit Moved	10	3.9%
<b>Baltimore City</b>	Failed to Reapply/Complete Redetermination	3,634	20.7%
	Failed to Give Eligibility Information	3,289	18.7%
	Income Above Limit	2,459	14.0%
	Started Work	1,607	9.2%
	Work Sanction	1,504	8.6%

## **Full Family Sanctions: Statewide and Jurisdictional Data**

Maryland has elected to impose a full family sanction - cessation of the entire assistance unit's cash assistance benefit - in situations when the adult recipient(s) fails to comply with work participation requirements or to cooperate with child support enforcement. While there is a mandatory 30 day conciliation period before a full family sanction can be imposed, state law requires a full, rather than partial, sanction upon the first instance of non-compliance.<sup>17</sup>

### **Full Family Sanctions: Statewide Data**

Following this discussion, Table 6 illustrates the frequency with which work and child support full family sanctions were used statewide and in each of the 24 subdivisions during the 13<sup>th</sup> through 24<sup>th</sup> months of reform. Statewide, the table shows that Maryland continues to make generally sparing use of these new, stringent penalties. Overall, just a little more than 10% of all year two closures (n=4,750 of 40,773 or 11.7%) were due to the imposition of a full family sanction for work or child support.

Consistent with the pattern observed in the first year of reform, virtually all of these sanctions related to non-compliance with work, rather than non-compliance with child support. Specifically, among all case closures statewide, 10.4% (n=4,238) were work-related full family sanctions and 1.3% (n=512) were full family sanctions for non-cooperation with child support. Put another way, of all full family sanctions imposed

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<sup>17</sup>Full family sanctioning is also used for non-compliance with certain substance abuse requirements; these are not discussed in today's report, however, primarily because there have been very few such sanctions imposed to date.

during the second year of reform, 89% were work sanctions and 11% were child support sanctions.

### **Full Family Sanctions: Jurisdictional Data**

As was true in the first year of reform, the use of work- and child support-related full family sanctions varied widely across the state during the 13<sup>th</sup> through 24<sup>th</sup> months of reform. In all 24 jurisdictions, however, work sanctions were more common than child support sanctions.

Localities with the highest rates of work sanctions in year two were the counties of: Somerset (n=54 or 24.1%), Calvert (n=69 or 22.0%), Dorchester (n=82 or 19.8%) and Allegany (n=82 or 19.6%); in each of these four counties at least one of every five year two closures occurred for this reason. Full family sanctioning for work was proportionately most infrequent in the counties of Montgomery (n=109 or 5.3%), Wicomico (n=30 or 3.3%) and St. Mary's (n=8 or 1.9%).

Although sanctions for non-cooperation with child support were quite rare statewide during the second year of reform, intra-state variations were evident. Jurisdictions with the highest proportions of child support sanctions were the counties of Montgomery (n=89 or 4.3%), Charles (n=24 or 3.7%) and Howard (n=14 or 3.1%). In one Eastern Shore county (Queen Anne's), there were no reported closures for non-cooperation with child support in the second year of reform.

**Table 6. Full Family Sanctions: October 1997 - September 1998.**

	<b>Full Family Sanctions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Maryland</b>	Work Child Support	4,238 512	10.4% 1.3%
<b>Allegany</b>	Work Child Support	82 2	19.6% 0.5%
<b>Anne Arundel</b>	Work Child Support	252 2	12.3% 0.1%
<b>Baltimore County</b>	Work Child Support	773 77	17.7% 1.8%
<b>Calvert</b>	Work Child Support	69 5	22.0% 1.6%
<b>Caroline</b>	Work Child Support	32 1	15.9% 0.5%
<b>Carroll</b>	Work Child Support	42 9	13.2% 2.8%
<b>Cecil</b>	Work Child Support	84 4	17.9% 0.9%
<b>Charles</b>	Work Child Support	84 24	12.8% 3.7%
<b>Dorchester</b>	Work Child Support	82 2	19.8% 0.5%
<b>Frederick</b>	Work Child Support	46 2	9.6% 0.4%
<b>Garrett</b>	Work Child Support	18 1	10.2% 0.6%
<b>Harford</b>	Work Child Support	54 13	7.2% 1.7%
<b>Howard</b>	Work Child Support	49 14	10.8% 3.1%
<b>Kent</b>	Work Child Support	6 2	8.6% 2.9%

	<b>Full Family Sanctions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Montgomery</b>	Work Child Support	109 89	5.3% 4.3%
<b>Prince George s</b>	Work Child Support	704 124	9.9% 1.7%
<b>Queen Anne s</b>	Work Child Support	14 0	10.9% 0.0%
<b>St. Mary s</b>	Work Child Support	8 3	1.9% 0.7%
<b>Somerset</b>	Work Child Support	54 2	24.1% 0.9%
<b>Talbot</b>	Work Child Support	19 2	15.2% 1.6%
<b>Washington</b>	Work Child Support	74 3	11.6% 0.5%
<b>Wicomico</b>	Work Child Support	30 23	3.3% 2.5%
<b>Worcester</b>	Work Child Support	49 4	18.9% 1.5%
<b>Baltimore City</b>	Work Child Support	1,504 104	8.6% 0.6%

## Conclusions

This report is the second in a series which, using universe, rather than sample data for Maryland, examines annual statewide and sub-state patterns in case closings since the implementation of welfare reform. Today's report focuses on data describing the second full year of reform in the state (October, 1997 through September, 1998). A similar report focused on the first year of reform was previously issued and a report comparing the first two years will be released in the next few months.<sup>18</sup> Key findings about the universe of case closures in year two of reform include the following:

1. All 24 jurisdictions continued to experience caseload decreases such that, in all 24 subdivisions, the cash assistance caseload at the end of reform's second year was smaller than it had been at the start of the second year.
2. In 23 of 24 subdivisions, the locality's share of year two case closures equaled or exceeded its share of the year two cash assistance caseload. The exception was Baltimore City whose share of case closures in year two (43.3%) was notably smaller than its share of the year two caseload (54.9%).
3. Statewide, the profile of the typical case which left cash assistance during the second year of reform was that of a two person assistance unit (41%), consisting of one adult (84%) and one child (47%) who had been receiving aid for 12 months or less (47%) at the time of case closure.
4. The profile of exiting households is similar in the large majority of the state's subdivisions, but with a few notable variations evident.

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<sup>18</sup> University of Maryland School of Social Work, *Caseload Exits at the Local Level: The First Year of FIP*, (April 1998) Baltimore: Author.

- " In the majority of jurisdictions (16 of 24) five percent or fewer of exiting cases had been on welfare continuously for more than five years; in Baltimore City, however, nearly one of every five exiting cases (18%) had been on welfare without interruption for more than five years.
  - " Two parent families were a tiny proportion of all exiting cases statewide (3%), but accounted for one of every four exiting cases (26%) in Garrett County and one in every 10 cases in Allegany, Carroll, Cecil, and Queen Anne s counties.
  - " For the state as a whole, the most common situation among exiting cases in the second year of reform was that of a two person assistance unit (41%), a pattern which also prevailed in 22 of 24 jurisdictions. In Cecil County, however, there were slightly more three person (32%) than two person (31%) assistance units. In Garrett County, the most common situation among year two leavers was that of a four person or larger assistance unit; one of every three closing cases in this county (32%) had four or more persons on the grant.
5. For the state as a whole, a few administratively-recorded reasons accounted for the majority of closures in the 12 month study period. Income above limit (22.6%), failure to reapply/complete redetermination (22.5%) and failure to provide eligibility information (16.1%) accounted for three-fifths (61.2%) of all case closures during the second year of reform.

6. For the state as a whole, the use of full family sanctions was relatively uncommon in year two and most such sanctions were for work, rather than child support, non-compliance. However intra-state variations are evident in the data.

" Statewide, about one in ten (10.4%) year two closures were due to imposition of a full family sanction for non-compliance with work or child support rules; 89% of these sanctions were work-related and 11% were related to child support. In all 24 jurisdictions, work sanctions were more common than child support sanctions.

" Work sanctions as a proportion of all case closures in year two ranged from 24.1% in Somerset County to 1.9% in St. Mary's County.

" Child support sanctions as a proportion of all year two closures ranged from a high of 4.3% in Montgomery County to a low of no such sanctions during year two in Queen Anne's County.

In general, these findings are consistent with those reported during the first year of welfare reform in Maryland. For the most part these year two data do not appear to suggest any significant changes over time in the characteristics of families who leave welfare or the reasons why their cases close. A few specific findings from these year two data, however, do warrant emphasis as they may have important implications for the future.

Caseload and case closing data for Baltimore City are one of these areas; today's report suggests there may be reason for optimism as well as reason for concern. On a positive note, the data do show that the City accounted for a greater share of overall exits in year two (43.3%) than it did in year one (33.6%). Similarly, the gap between Baltimore



City's share of the cash assistance caseload and its share of overall exits has been reduced from -17.1% to -11.6%. On a less sanguine note, the City now accounts for a larger share of the total state's active welfare caseload (54.9%) than it did one year ago (50.7%) - in no small measure because caseload reductions/closures in the 23 counties have been so dramatic. Looking to the future, however, as the 23 counties together now account for a smaller share of the active cash assistance caseload, their ability to continue to generate large volumes of case closures is similarly reduced. The implication, of course, is that in subsequent years of welfare reform, continued statewide progress in caseload reduction, low recidivism rates, and high rates of steady post-exit employment among exiting adults will depend ever more heavily on results achieved in the City.

Another area which these year two data suggest should be closely monitored as we move forward is the use of the full family sanction for non-compliance with work. Maryland continues to make sparing use of this more stringent penalty, but work sanctions have increased over time. In the first year of reform, to illustrate, work sanctions accounted for only 5.5% of all case closures statewide (n=2,226 of 41,212); in year two the proportion, though still small, nearly doubled (10.4% or n=4,238 of 40,773). This trend is consistent with what most observers predicted would happen, but nonetheless is an area to which state and local program managers should pay close attention over time.

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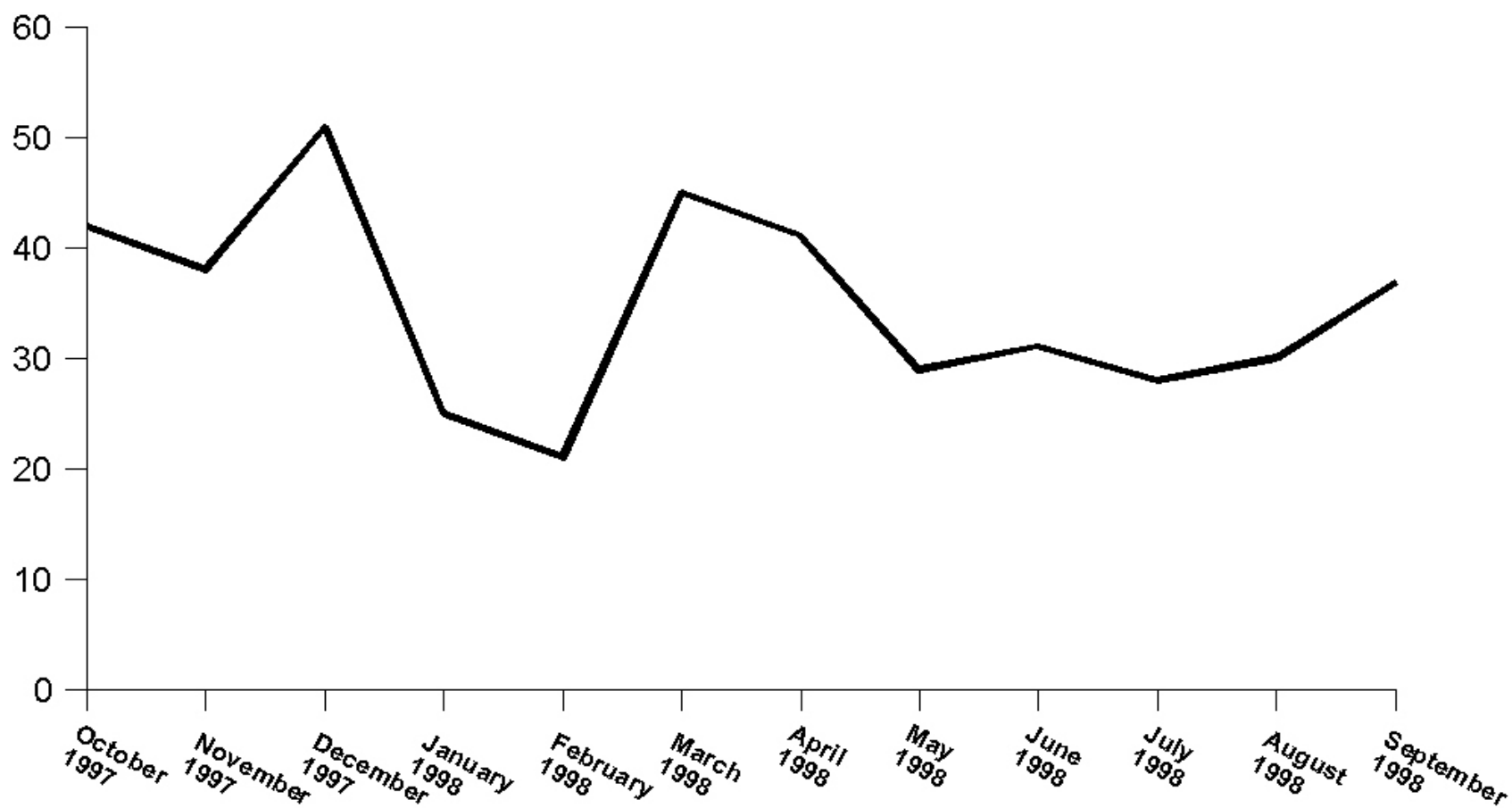
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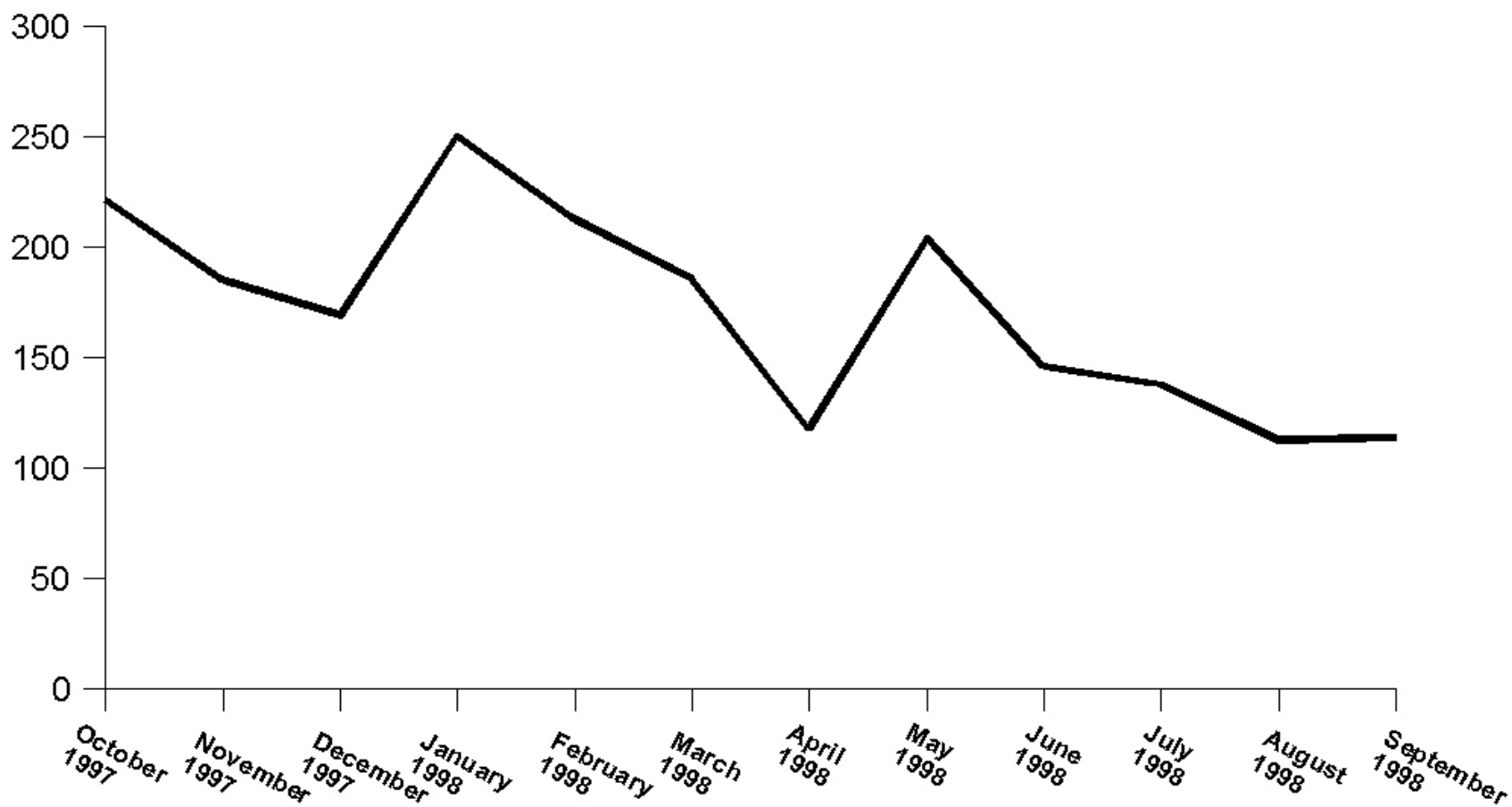
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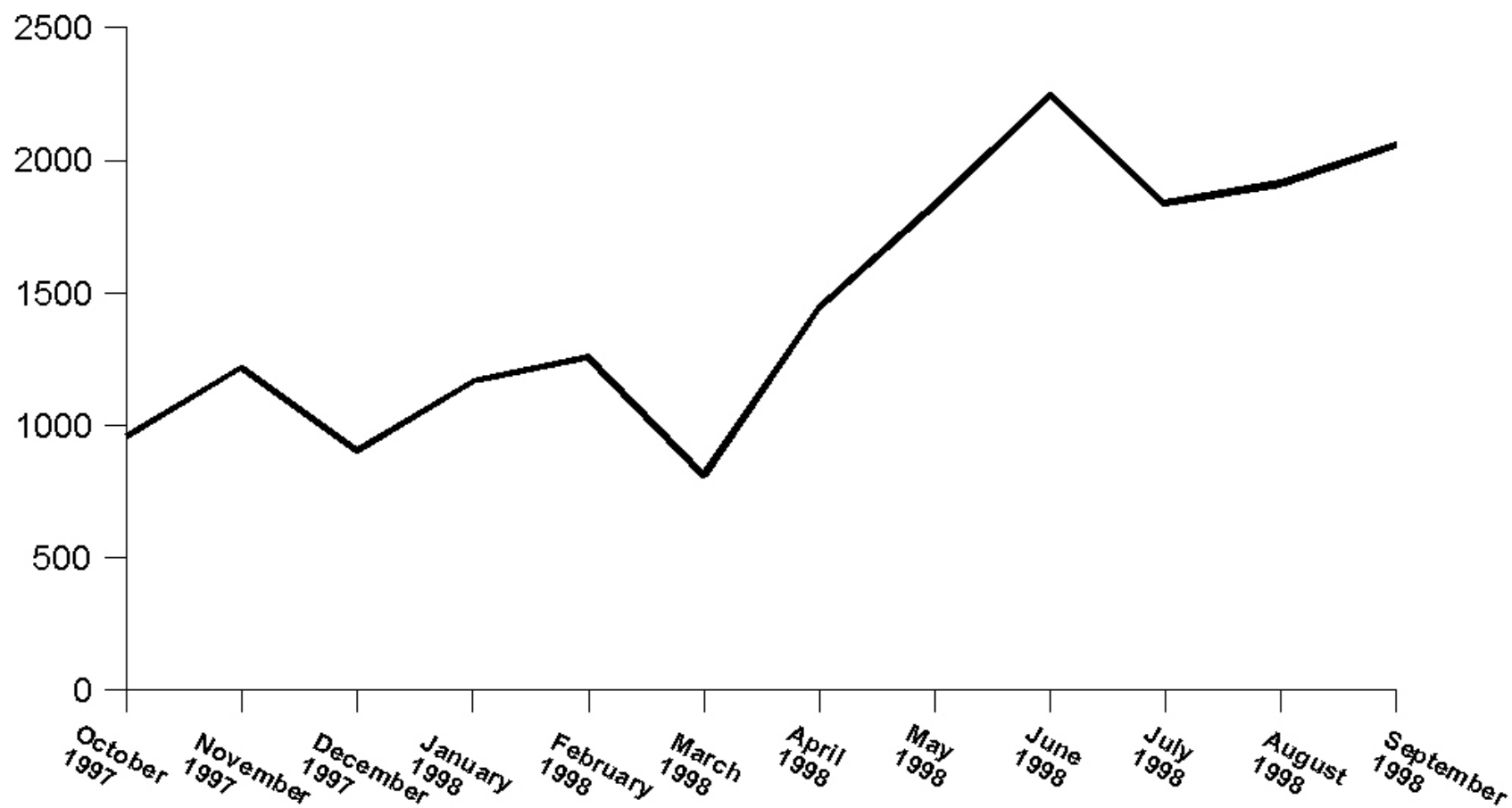
## Appendix A-1. Closing Cases By Month: Allegany County



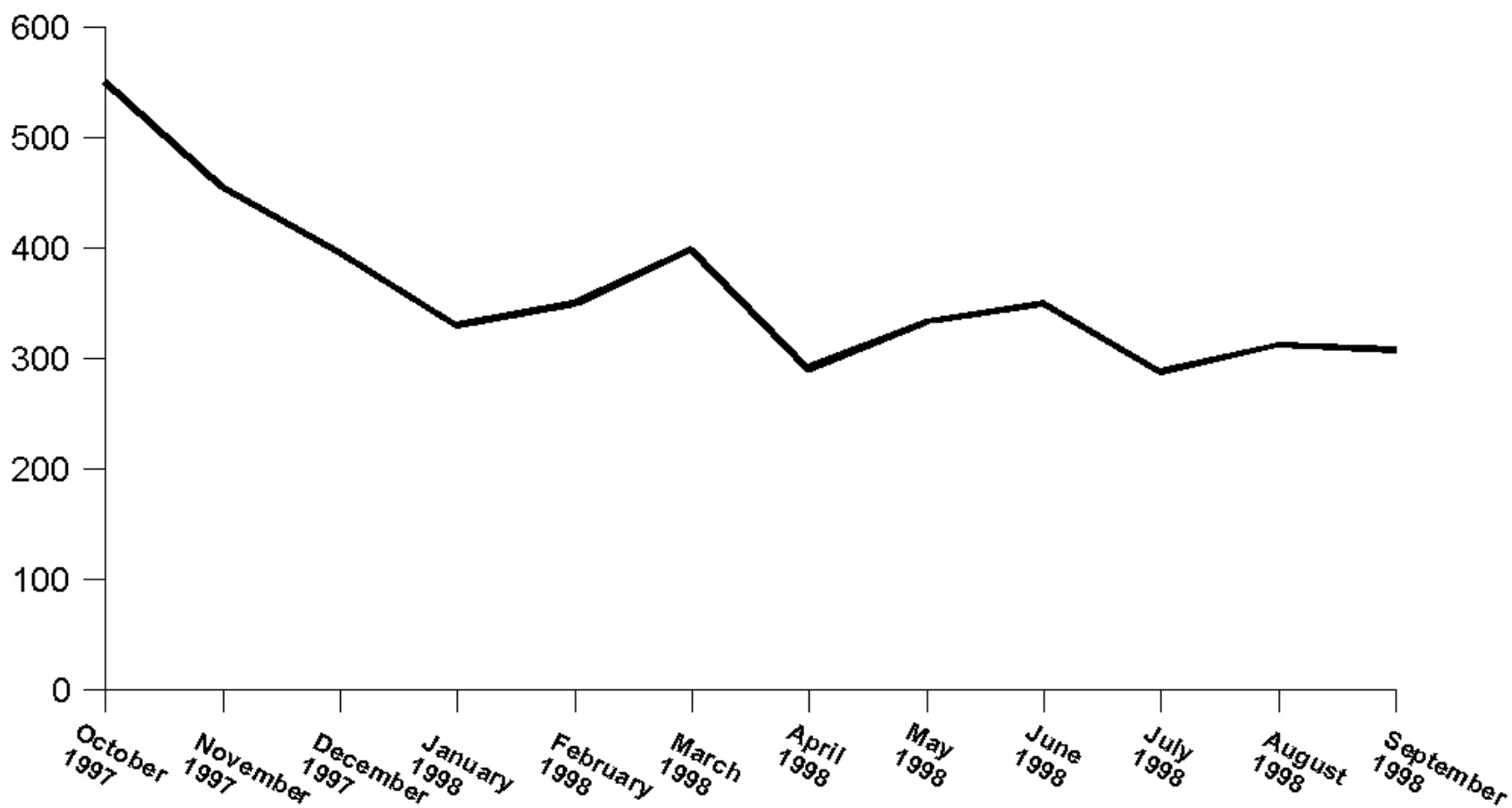
## Appendix A-2. Closing Cases By Month: Anne Arundel County



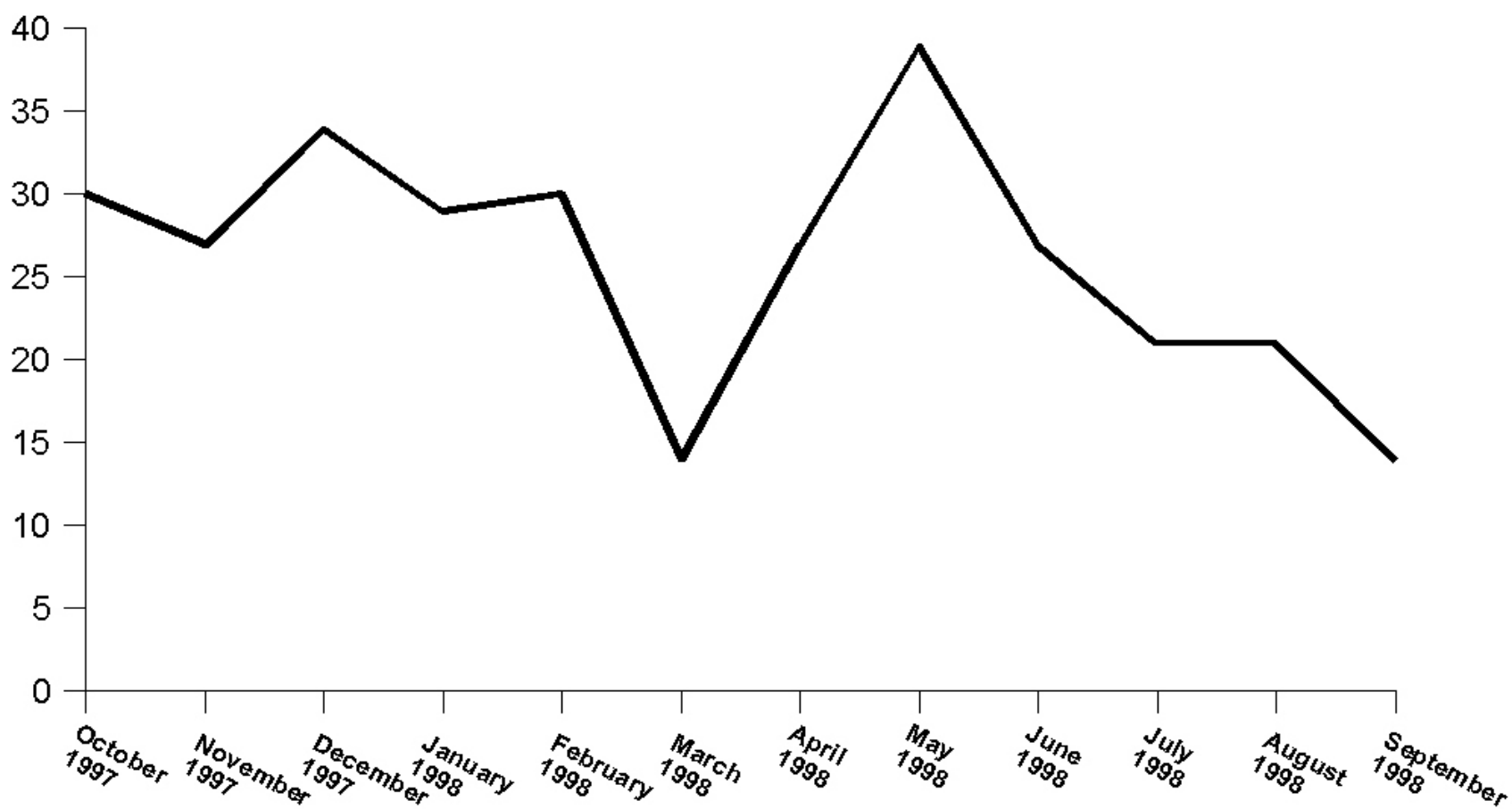
## Appendix A-3. Closing Cases By Month: Baltimore City



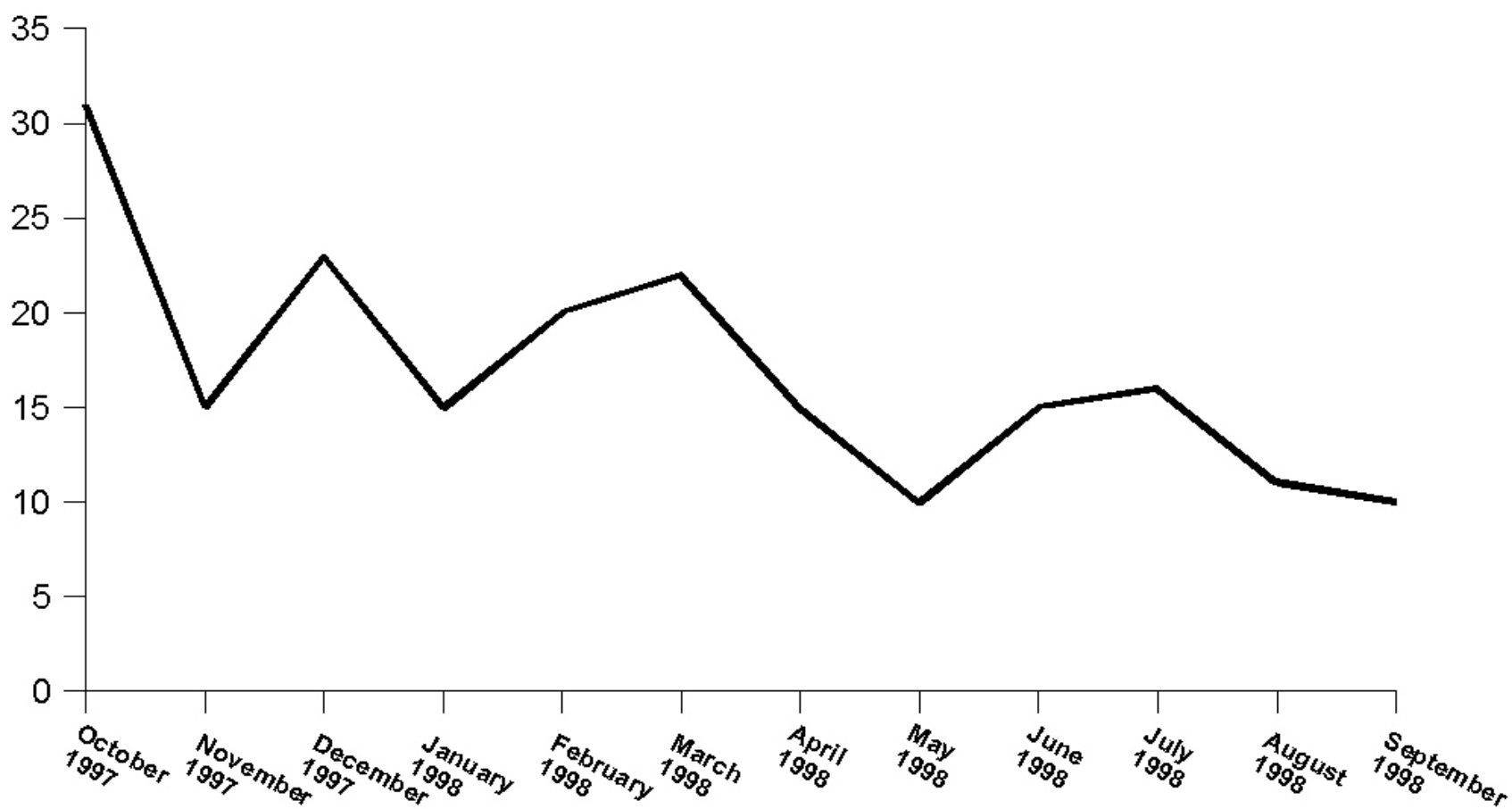
## Appendix A-4. Closing Cases By Month: Baltimore County



## Appendix A-5. Closing Cases By Month: Calvert County

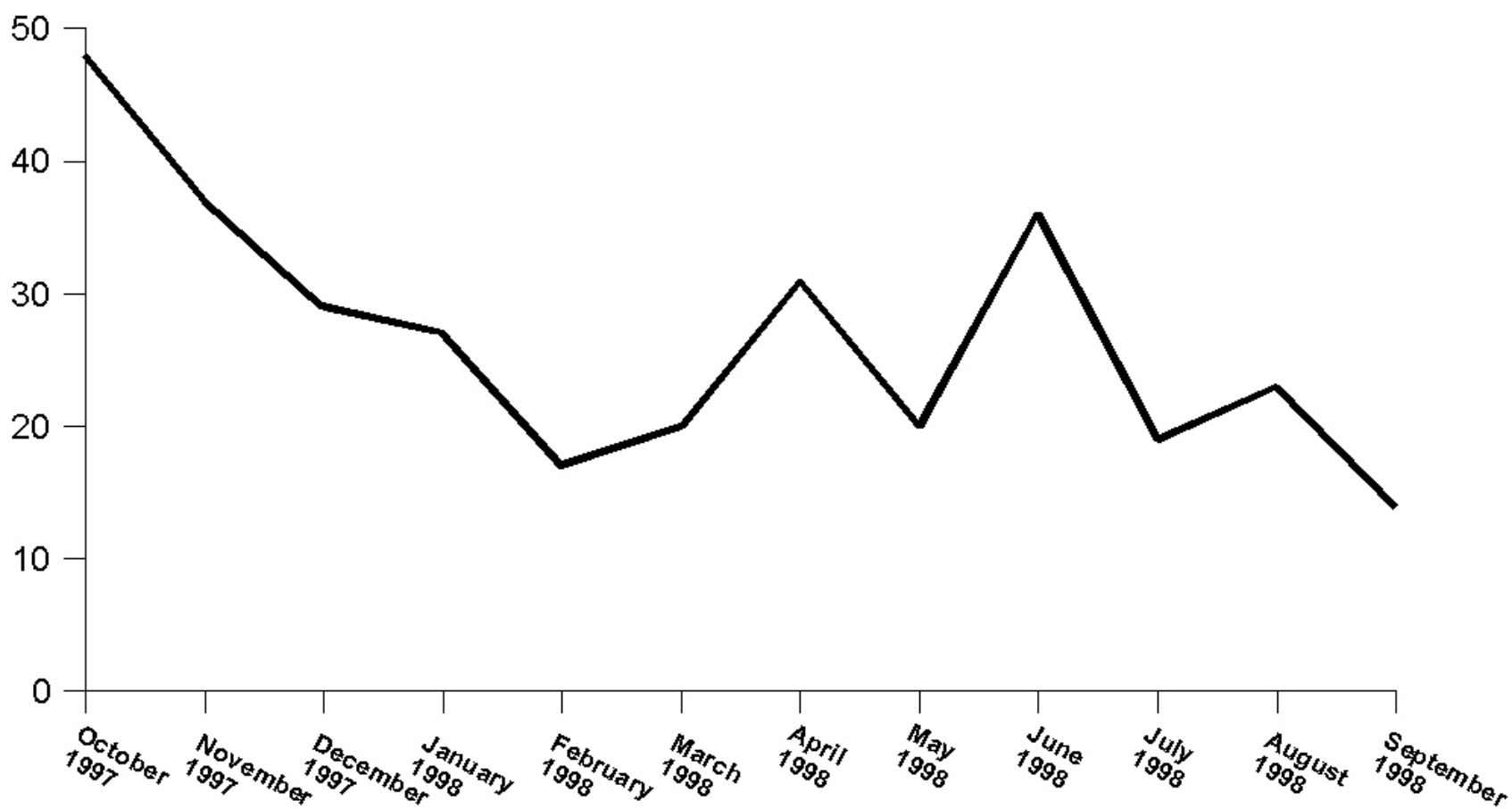


## Appendix A-6. Closing Cases By Month: Caroline County

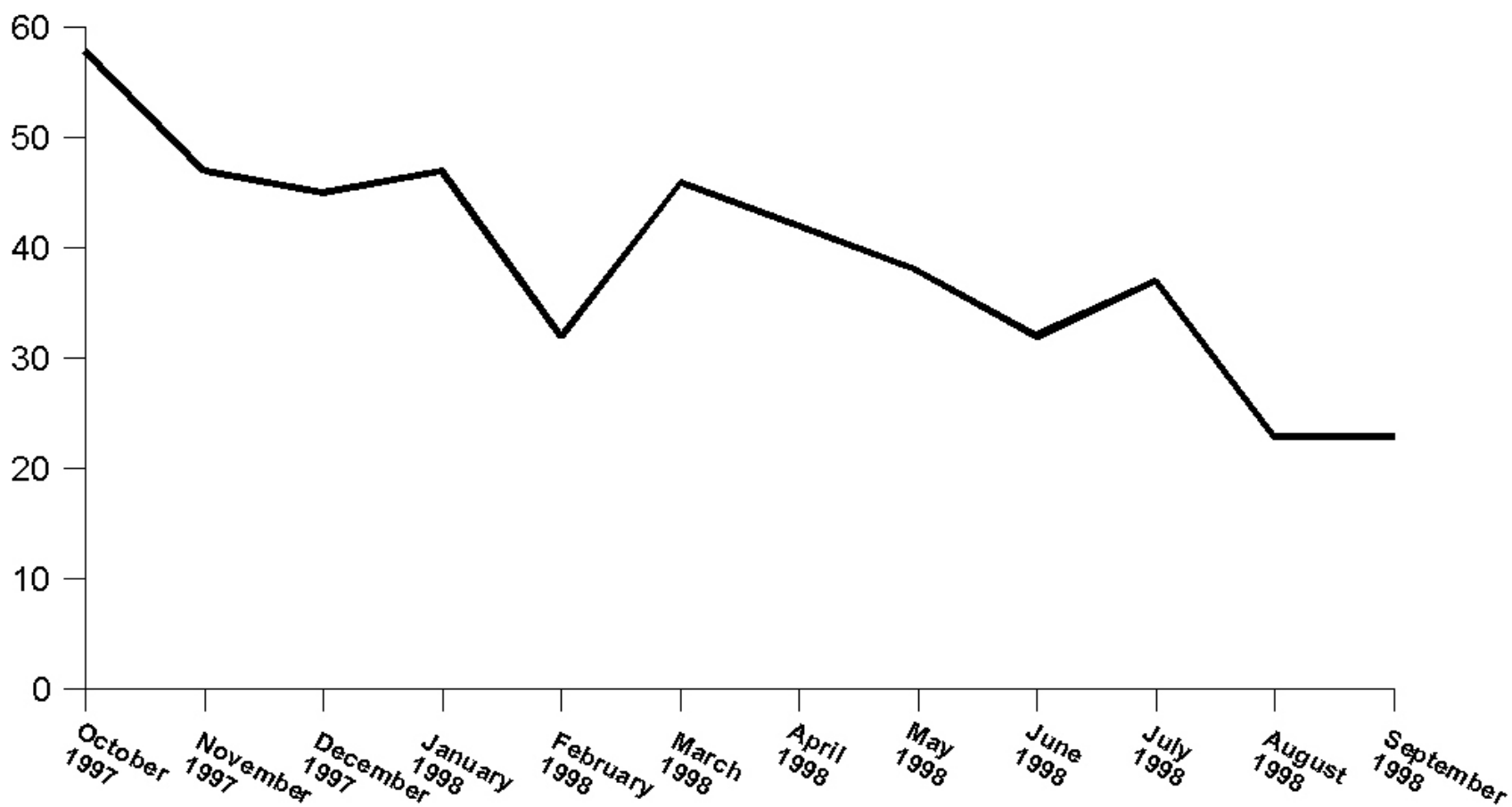




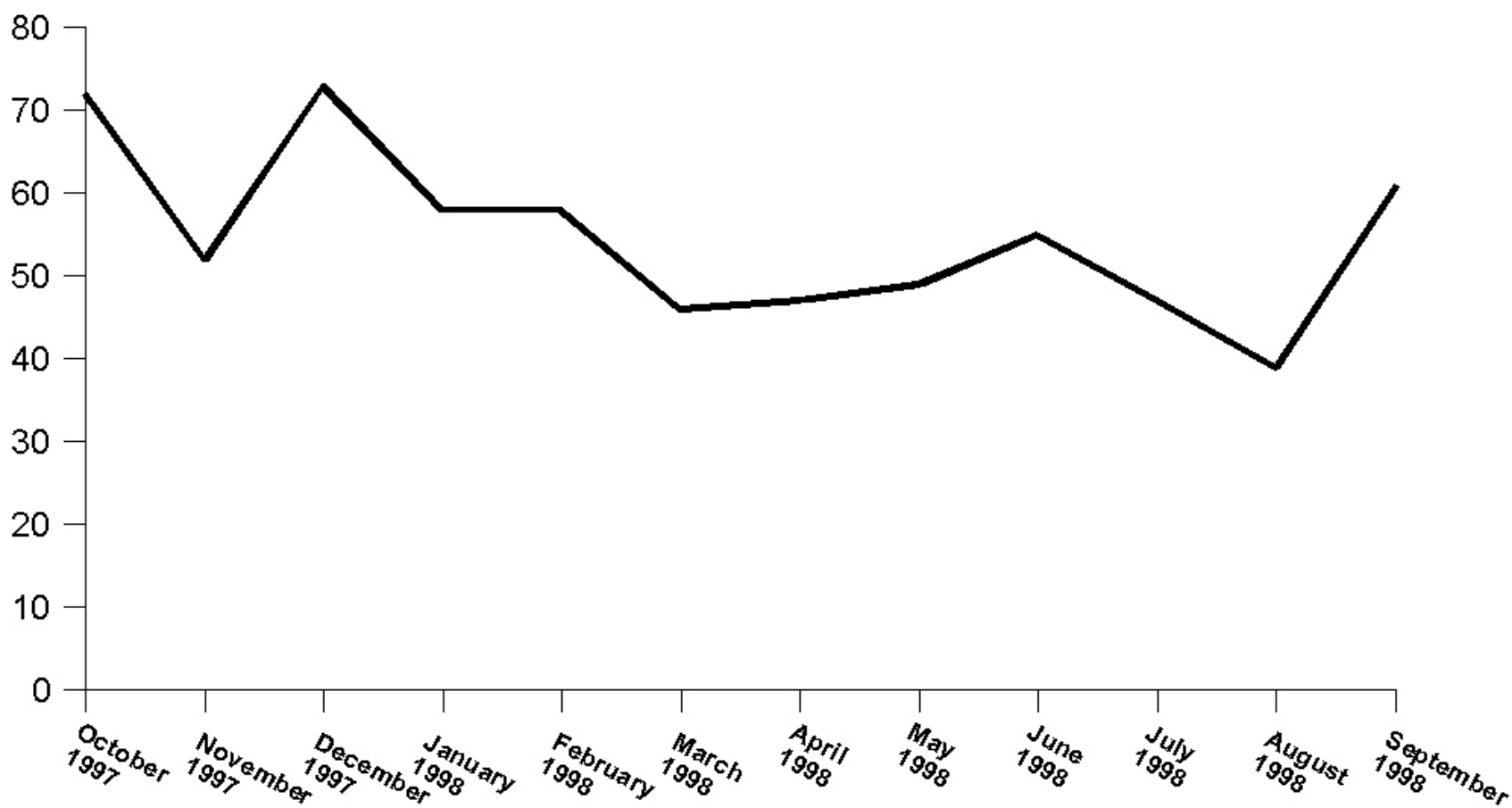
## Appendix A-7. Closing Cases By Month: Carroll County



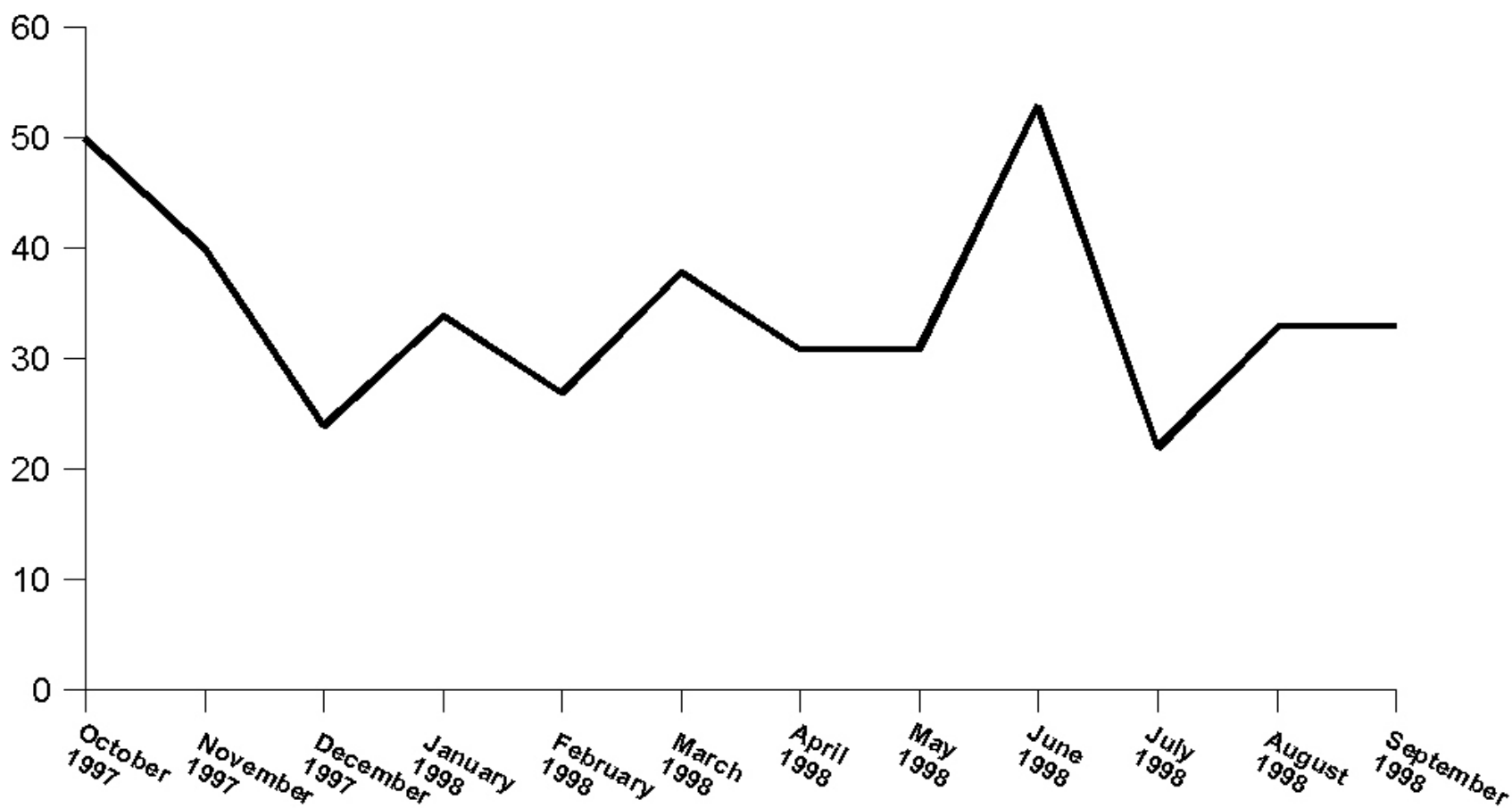
## Appendix A-8. Closing Cases By Month: Cecil County



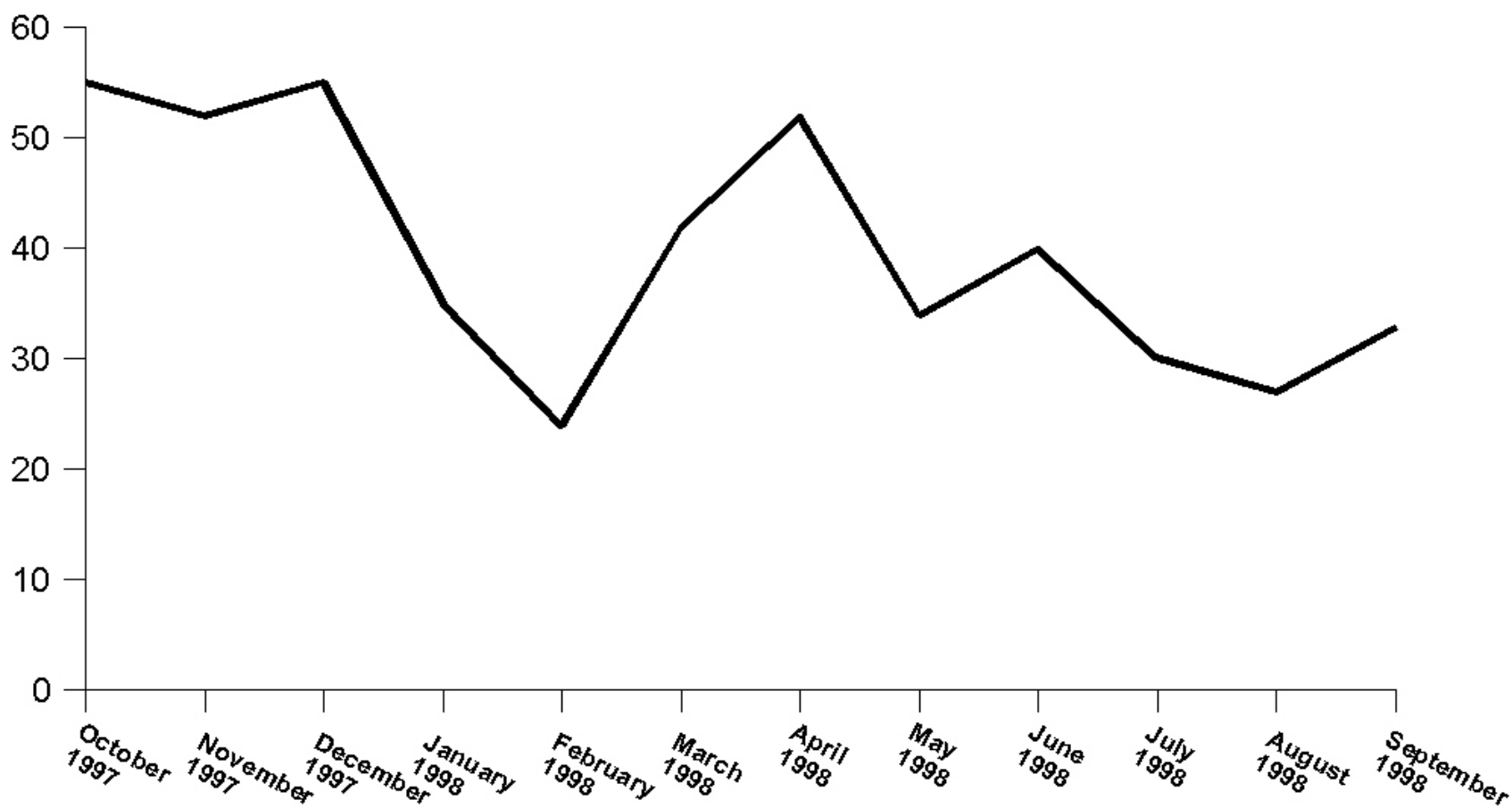
## Appendix A-9. Closing Cases By Month: Charles County



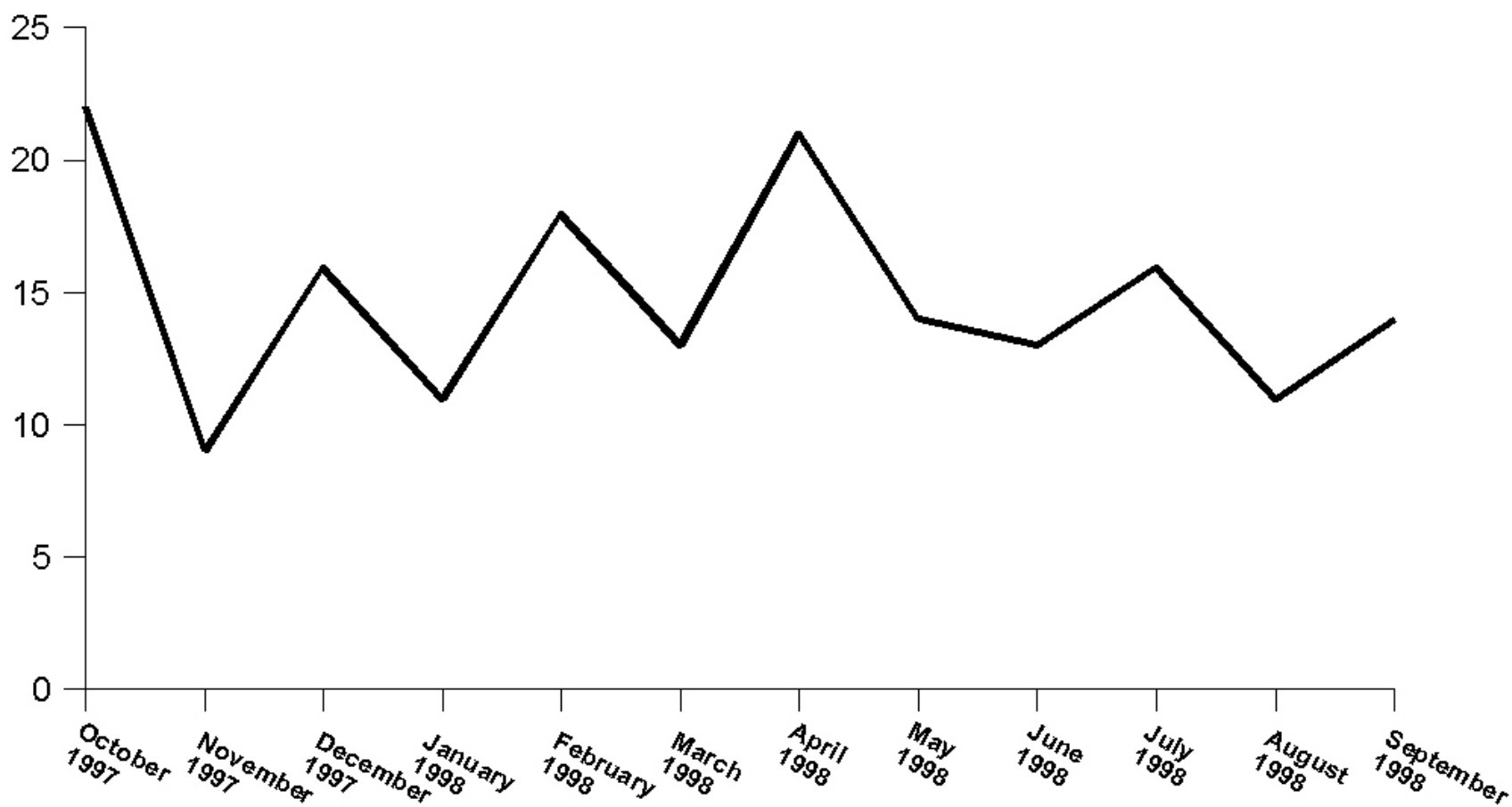
## Appendix A-10. Closing Cases By Month: Dorchester County



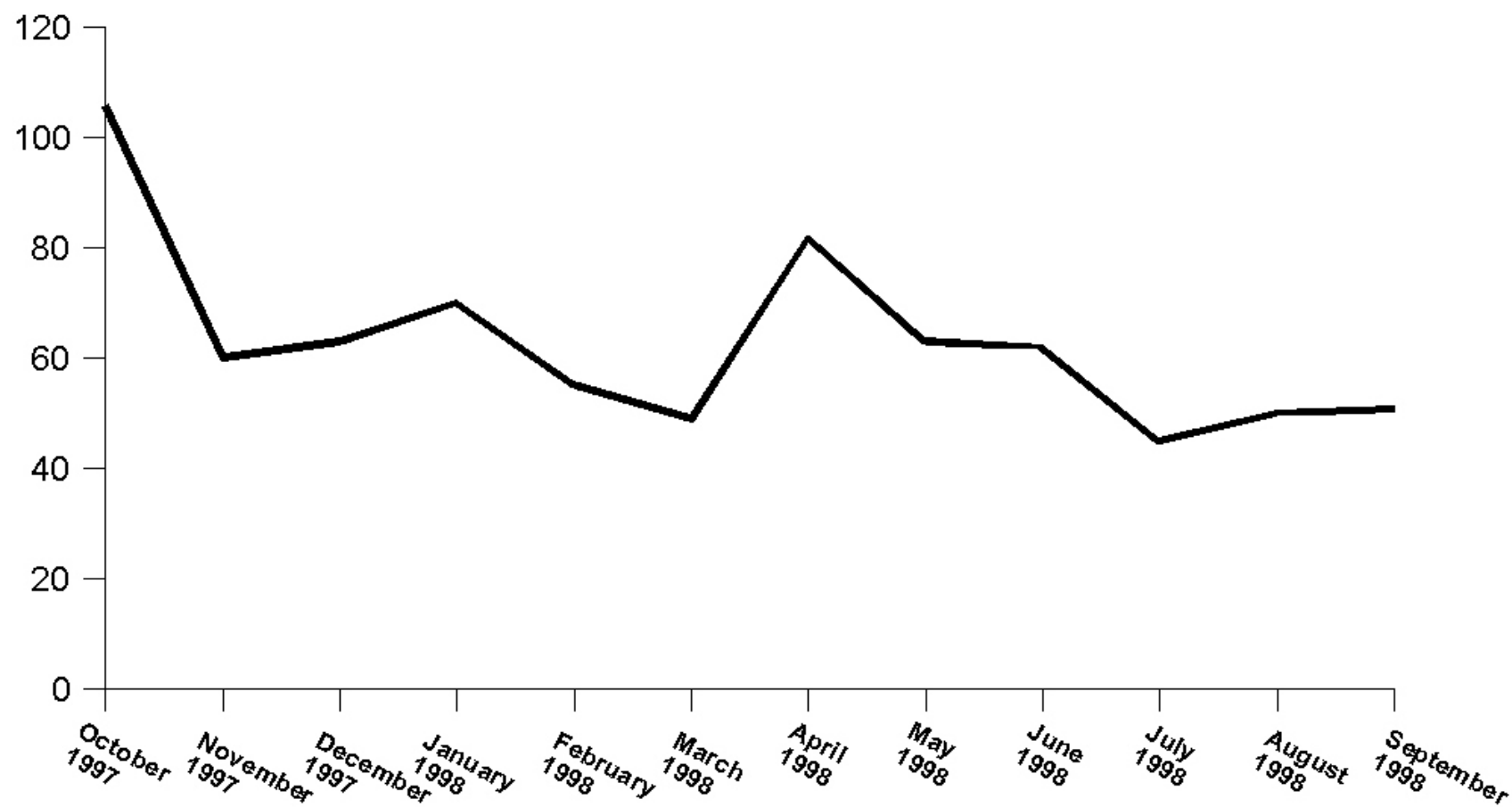
## Appendix A-11. Closing Cases By Month: Frederick County



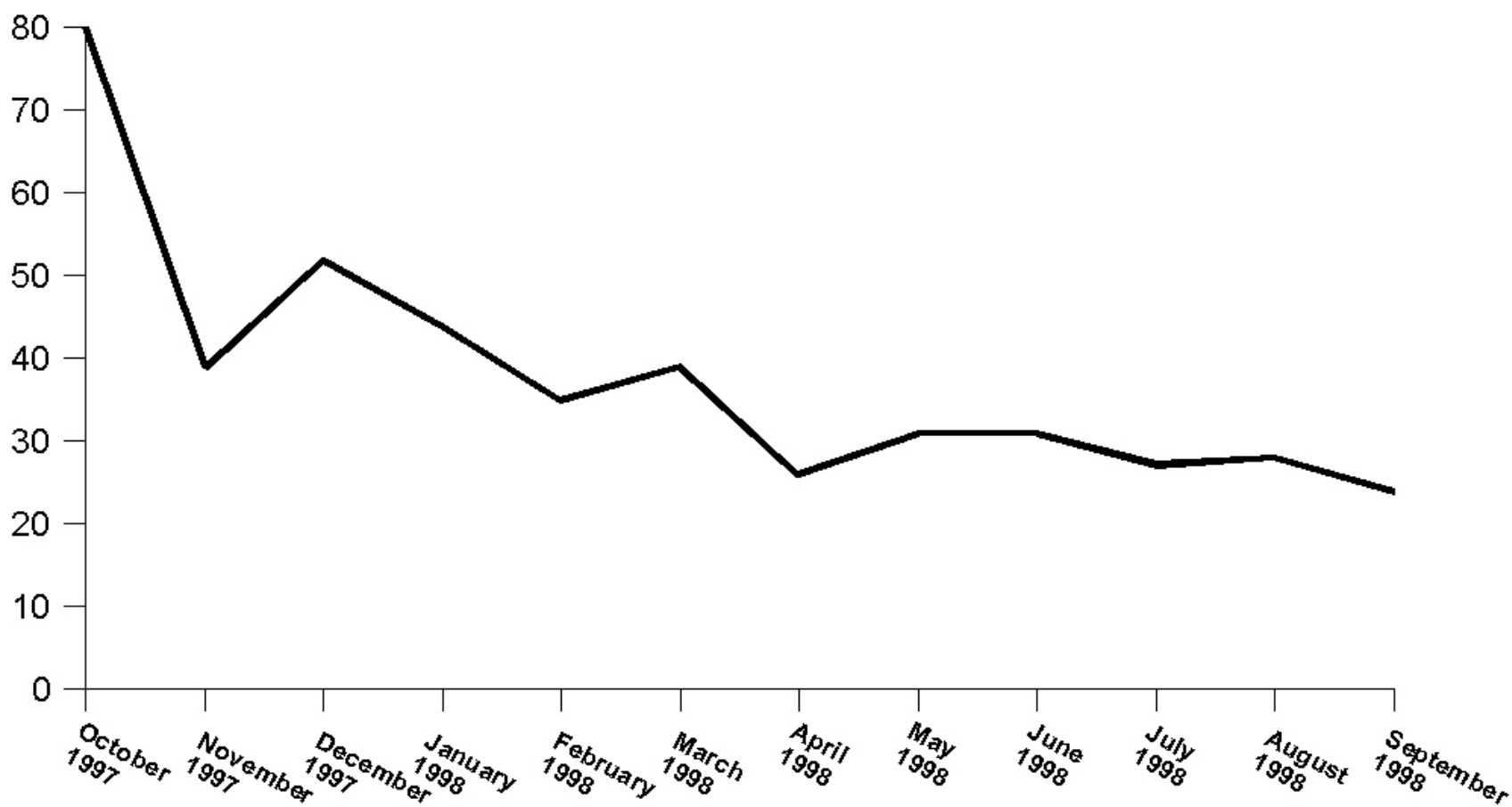
## Appendix A-12. Closing Cases By Month: Garrett County



## Appendix A-13. Closing Cases By Month: Harford County

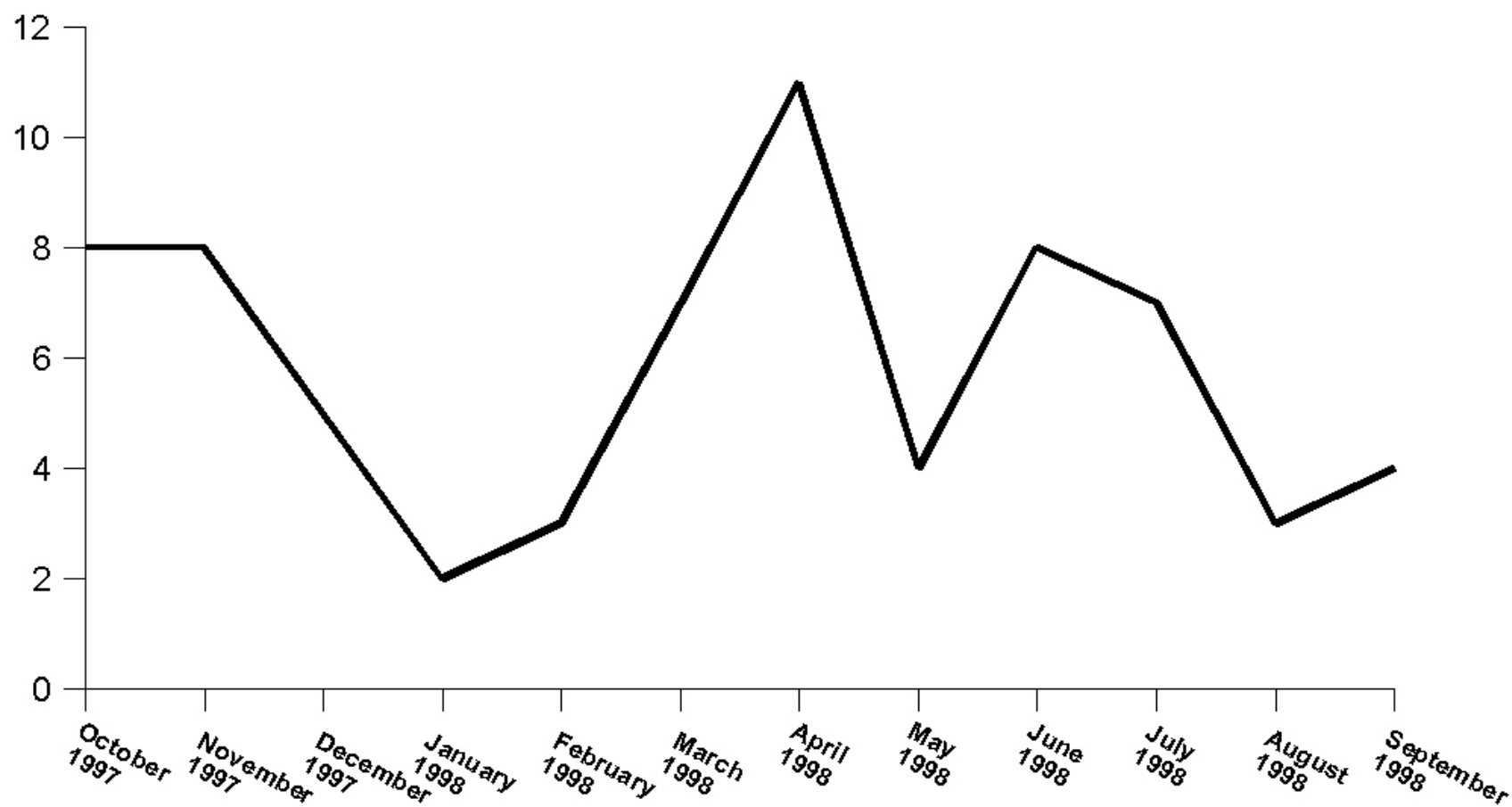


## Appendix A-14. Closing Cases By Month: Howard County

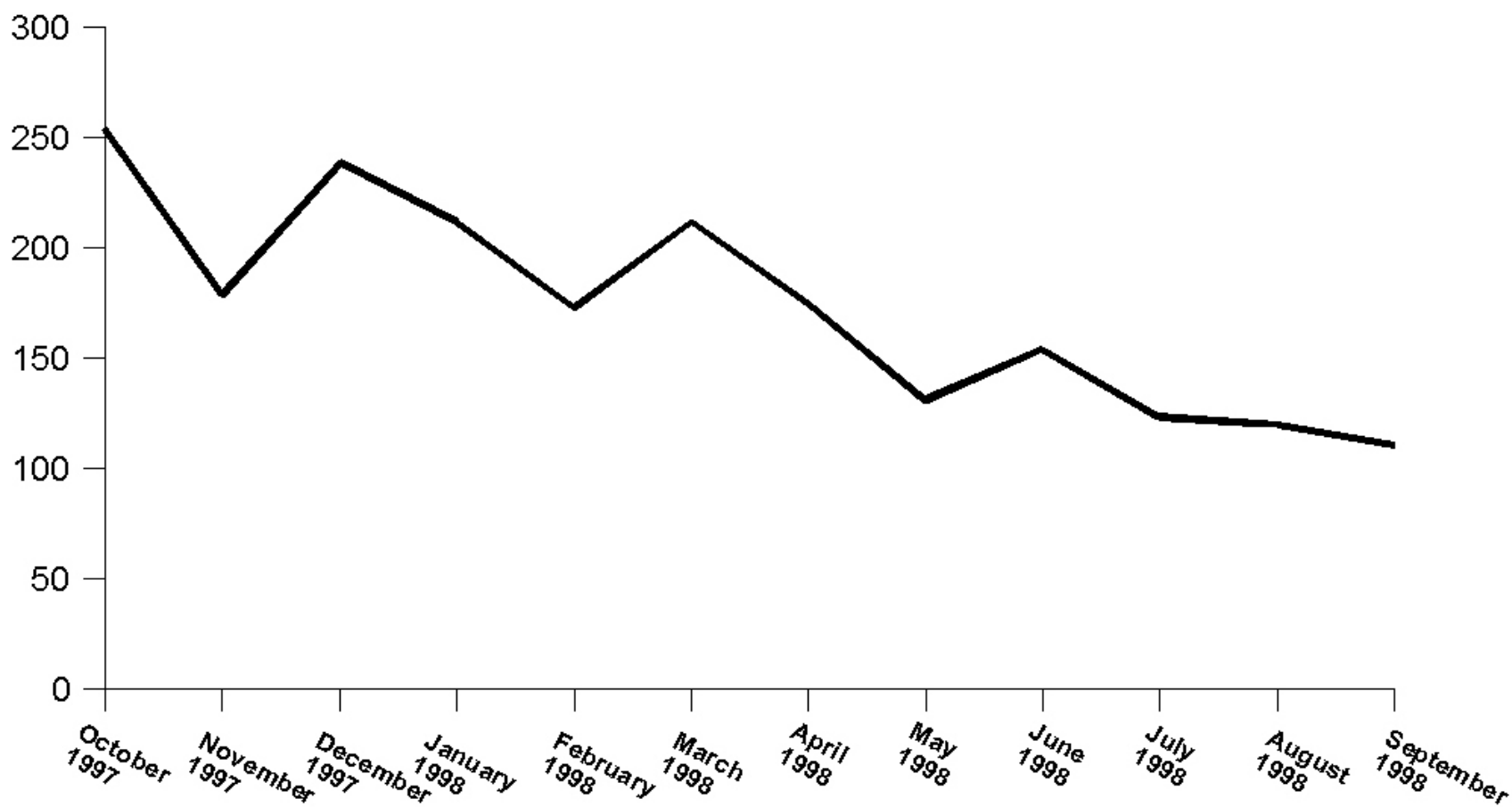




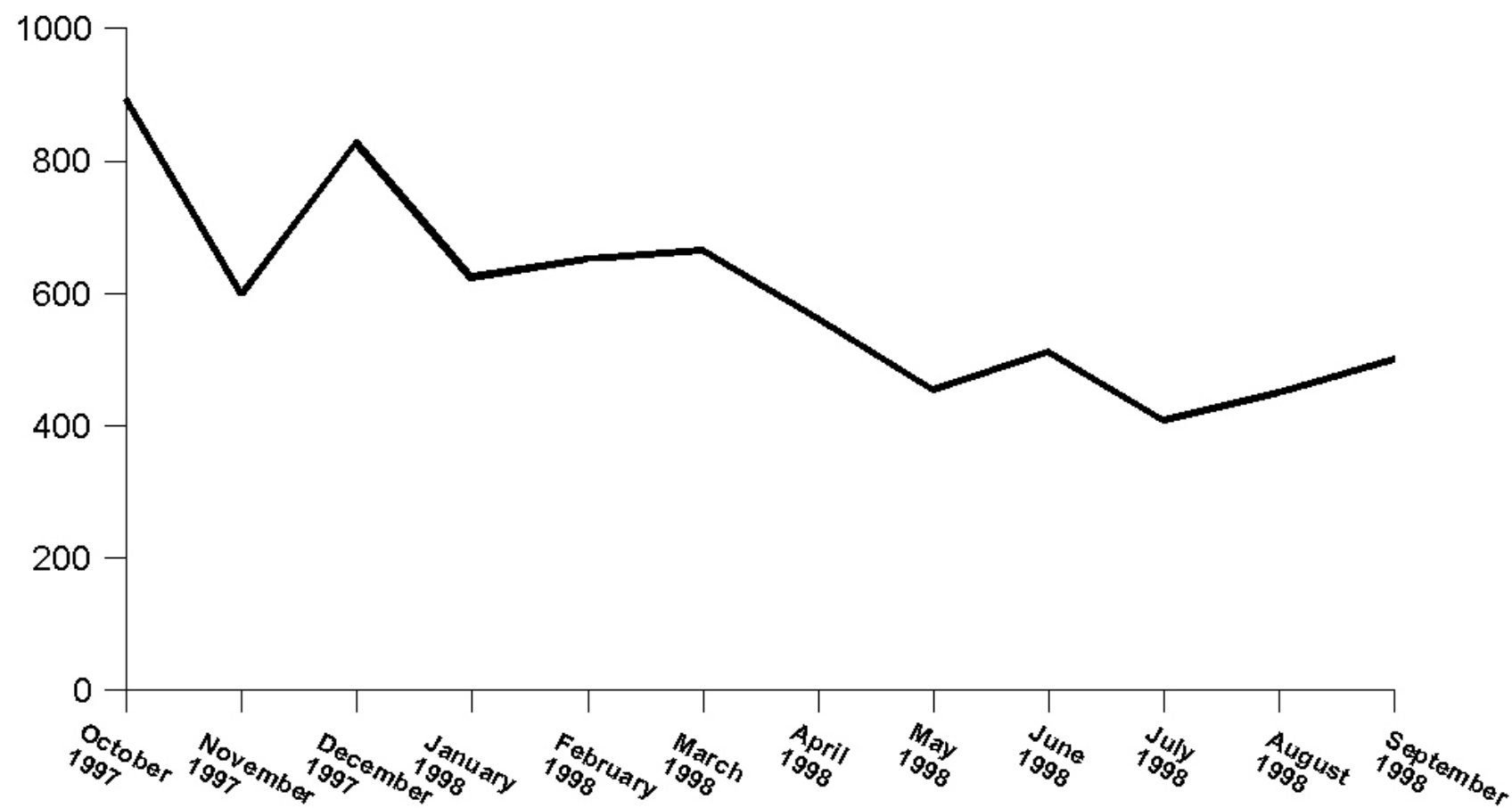
## Appendix A-15. Closing Cases By Month: Kent County



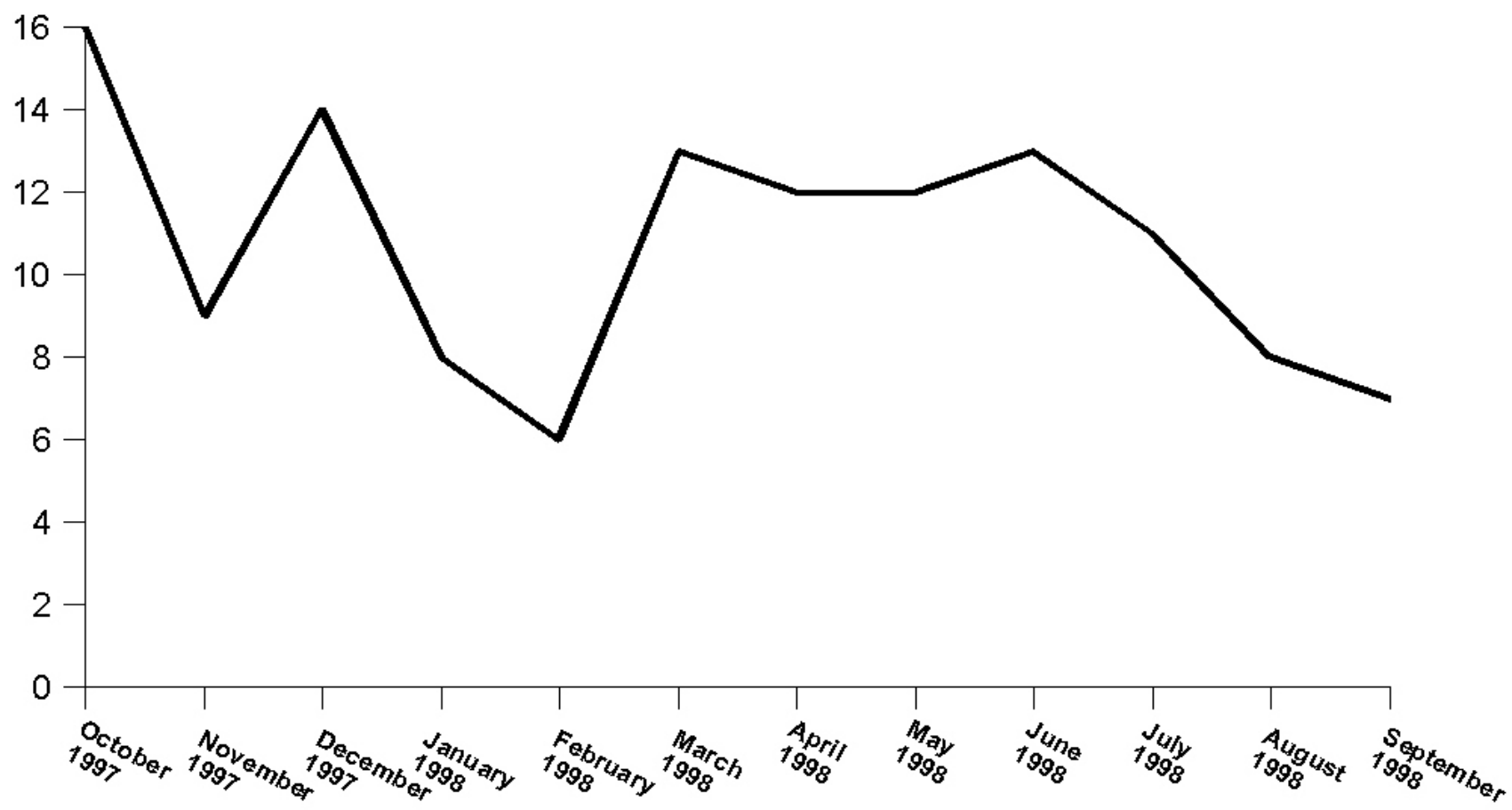
## Appendix A-16. Closing Cases By Month: Montgomery County



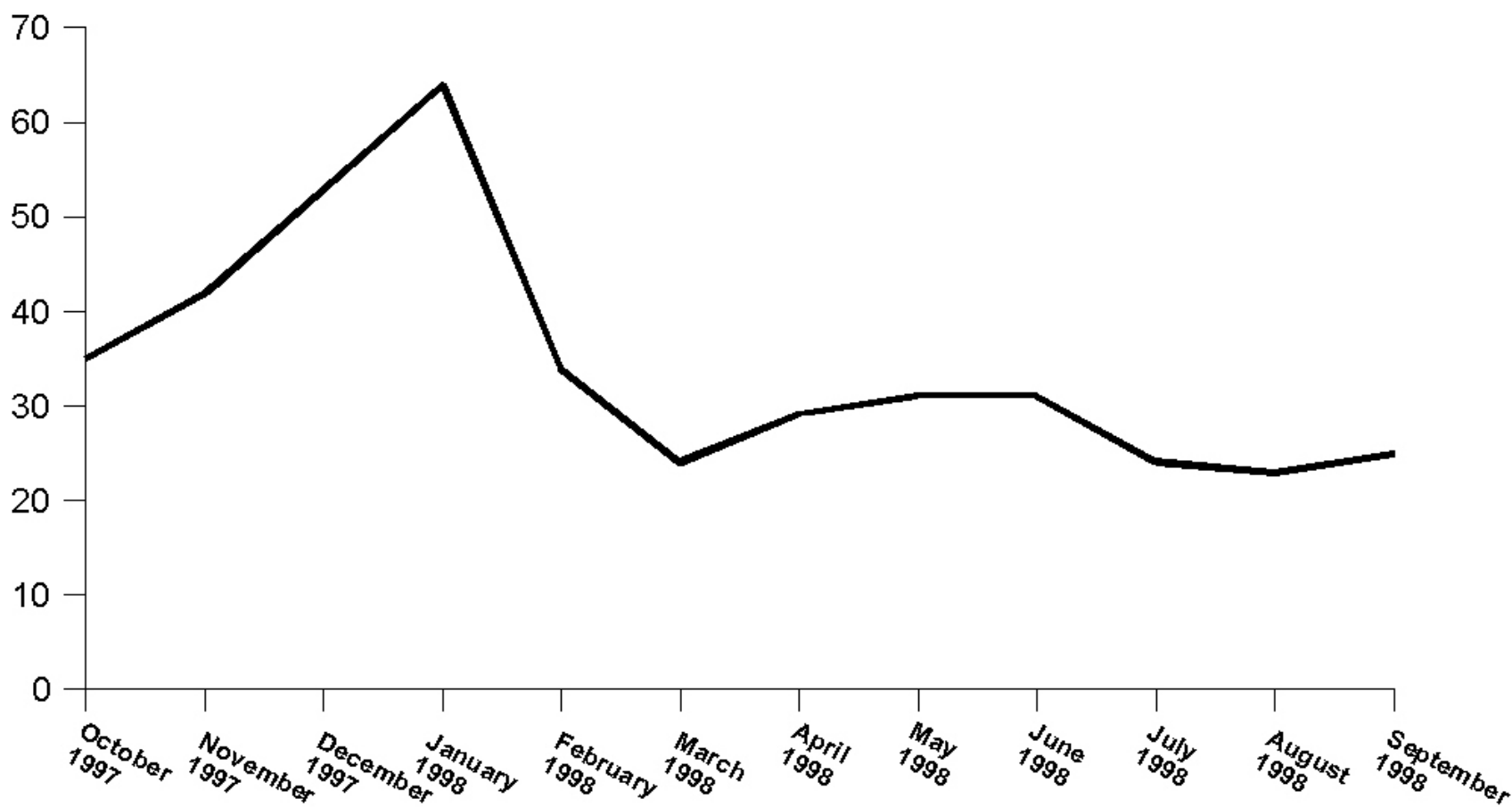
## Appendix A-17. Closing Cases By Month: Prince George's County



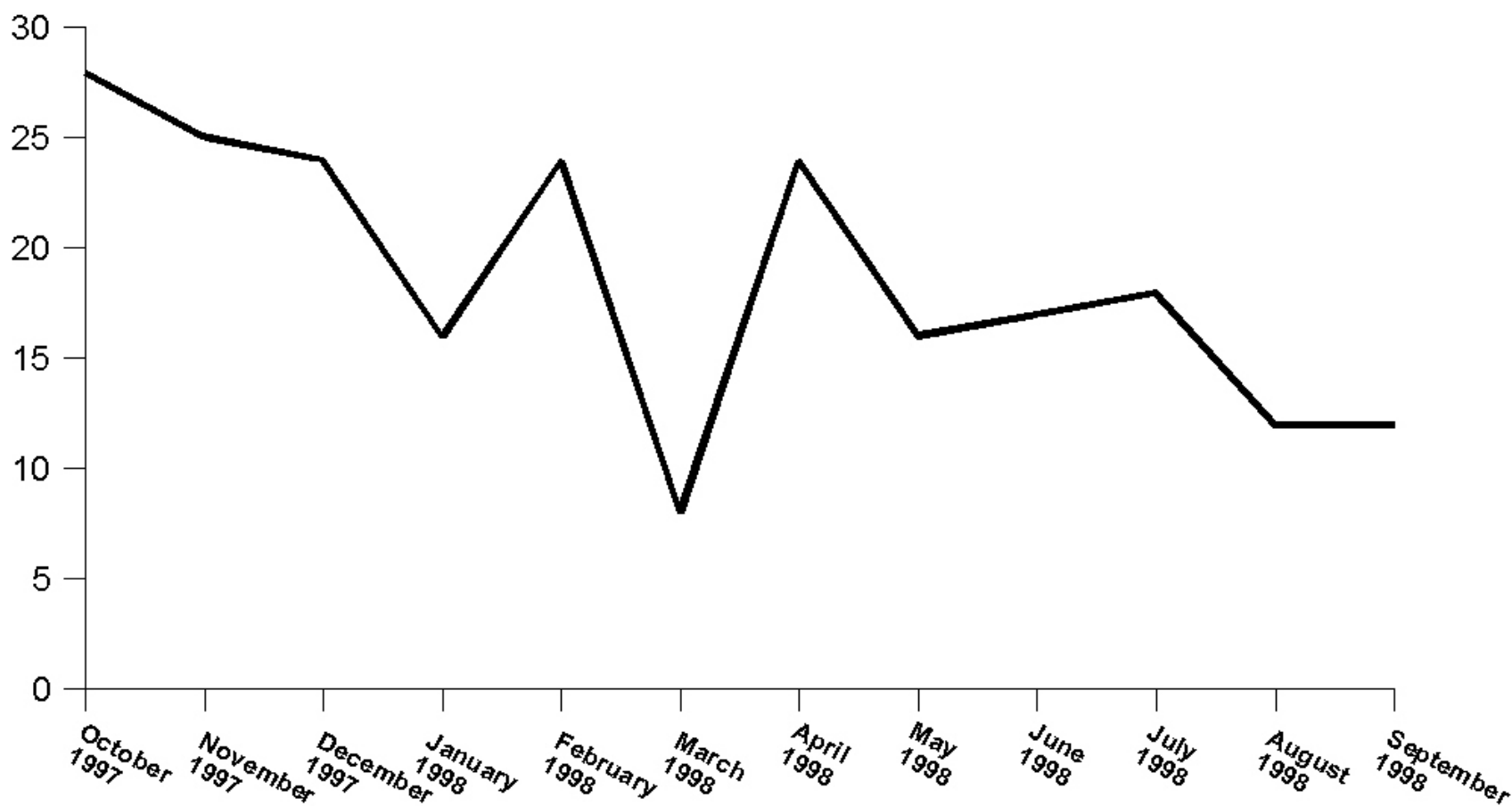
## Appendix A-18. Closing Cases By Month: Queen Anne's County



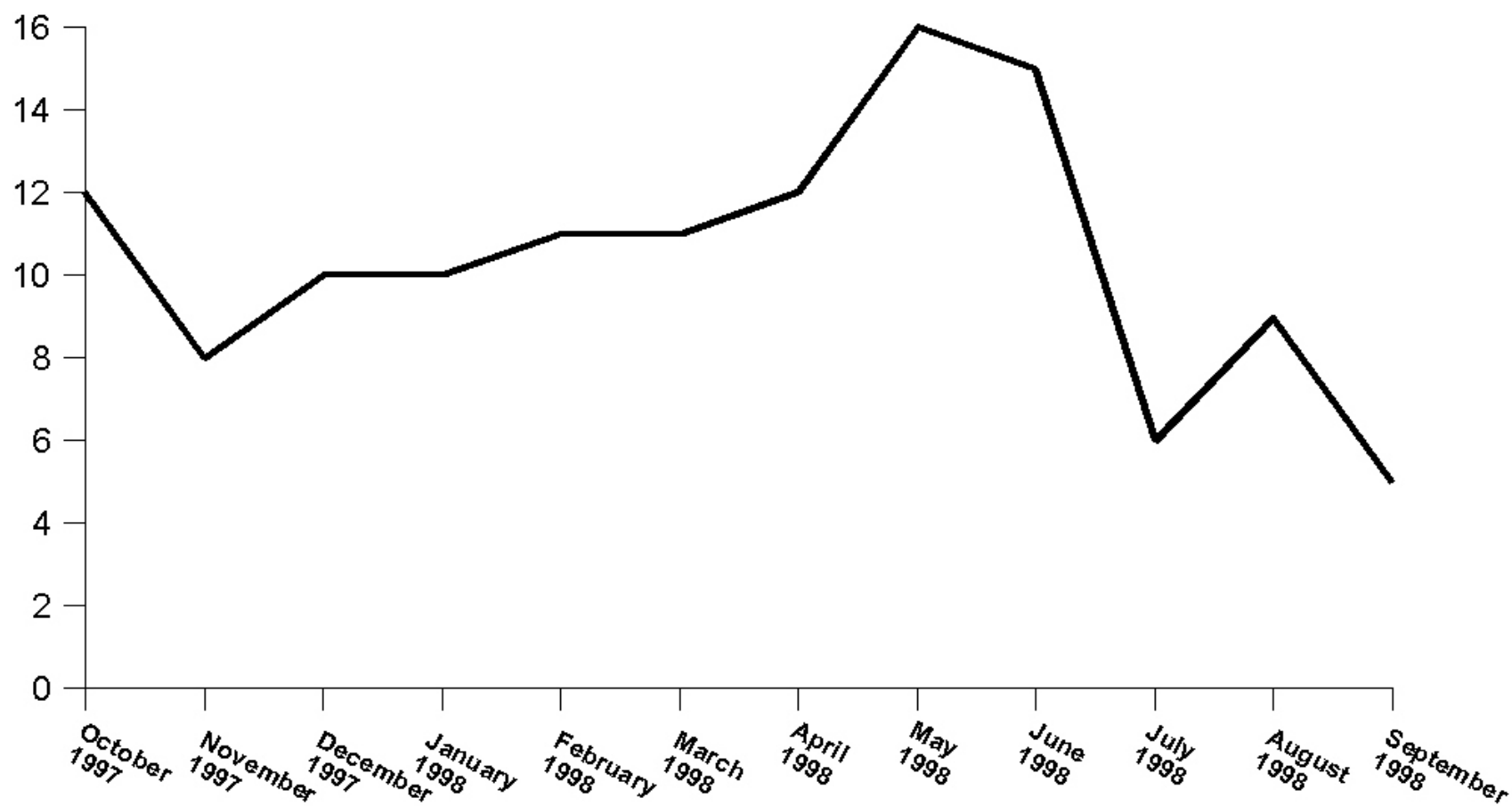
## Appendix A-19. Closing Cases By Month: Saint Mary's County



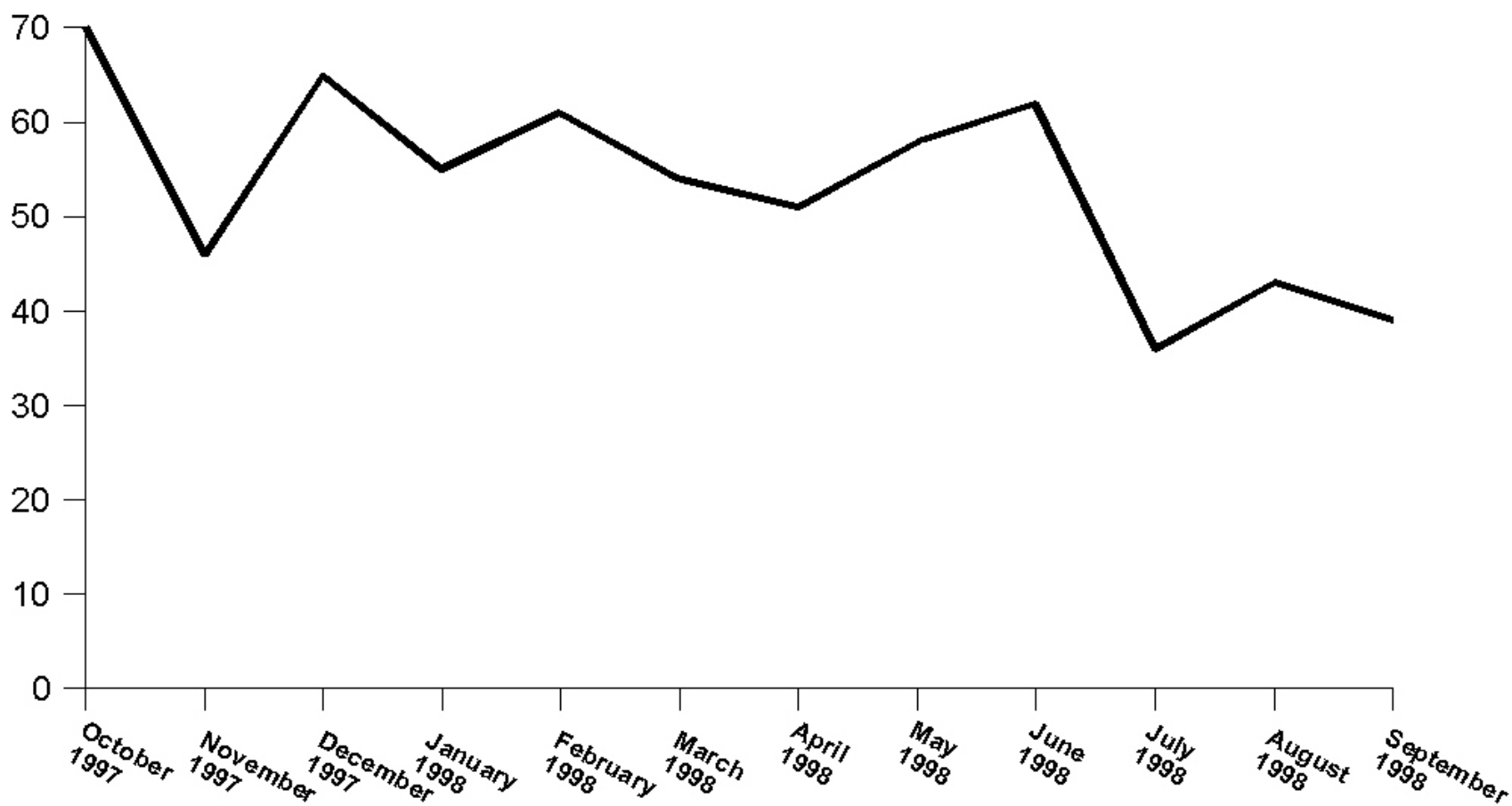
## Appendix A-20. Closing Cases By Month: Somerset County



## Appendix A-21. Closing Cases By Month: Talbot County

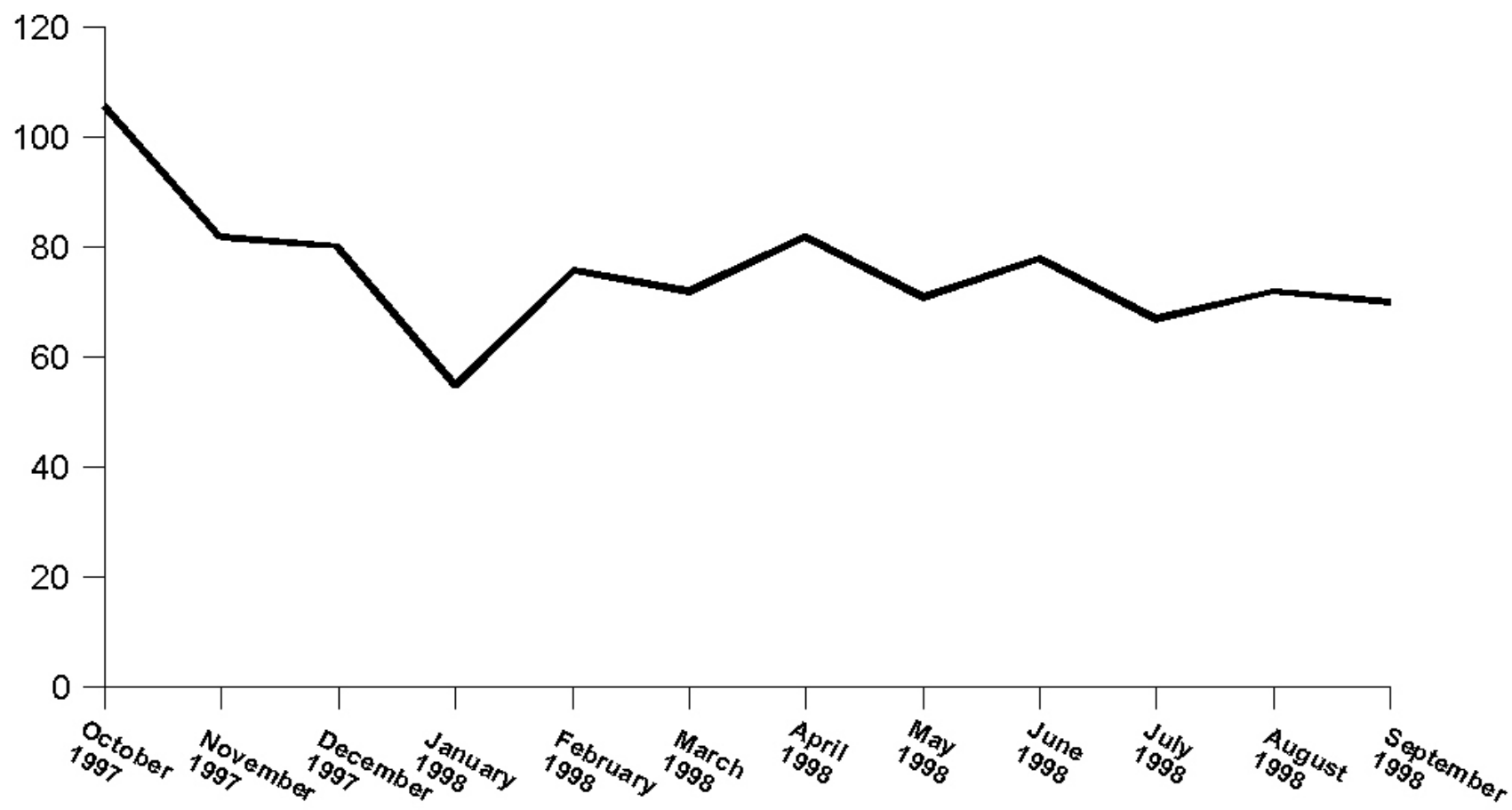


## Appendix A-22. Closing Cases By Month: Washington County





## Appendix A-23. Closing Cases By Month: Wicomico County



## Appendix A-24. Closing Cases By Month: Worcester County

