

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

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Executive Summary

Through an on-going partnership with the Family Investment Administration, Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR), the University of Maryland School of Social Work (SSW) conducts a number of studies on welfare reform and Maryland's Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program. This report, the seventh in a continuing series, profiles caseload exit patterns and the characteristics of TCA cases closing during the sixth year of reform (October 2001 to September 2002). Data from DHR's administrative data sources are used to address two questions:

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

As the following summary indicates, in most respects, year six findings mirror those from previous years (Born, Caudill, Cordero, and Kunz, 2000; Born, Caudill, Spera, and Cordero, 1999; Born and Herbst, 2002; Born, Ovwigho, and Cordero, 2000; Born, Ruck, and Cordero, 2001; Welfare and Child Support Research and Training Group, 1998). However, there are also some notable differences.

- Statewide, 26,895 unduplicated TCA cases closed at least once between October 2001 and September 2002.¹ This marks the first time in the six years of welfare reform in Maryland that the number of exiting cases has increased over a prior year.**

¹In this report, a closing case or case closure is defined as an assistance unit which, at least once during the 12 month 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". For this reason, the number of cases we report may differ from the number reported by the Maryland Department of Human Resources for the same period.

From the first year of reform through the fifth, Maryland witnessed a decline in the number of TCA case closings each year, from a high of 41,212 cases in Year One to 26,494 unduplicated cases in Year Five.² However, in this Year Six the number of unduplicated case closings increased by 401 cases. An important follow up question regarding this trend is how families are faring after their exit, a question which is addressed in our annual *Life After Welfare* reports.

- **On average, approximately 2,000 TCA cases closed in each month of the study period. The general statewide trend in Year Six was that the largest number of exits occurred in the first quarter (n = 7,489; October 2001 to December 2001) and the smallest in the last quarter (n = 6,129; July 2002 to September 2002).**

Similar to previous years, we find that the majority of exits statewide and in 12 of the 24 jurisdictions occurred in the first quarter of the study period. Six additional jurisdictions recorded their highest number of case closings in the third quarter (April 2002 to June 2002). There is no clear relationship between jurisdictional characteristics and case closing trends.

- **Collectively, Maryland's largest jurisdictions (Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George's Counties) account for 85.4% of all case closings. Consistent with previous years' trends, we find that Maryland's five largest jurisdictions account for the vast majority of case closings. These jurisdictions also contain more than 80% of the statewide TANF caseload.**
- **A locality's share of Year Six case closings equaled or exceeded its share of the average TCA caseload in 20 out of 24 jurisdictions.**

²Figures for year five reported here are for unduplicated cases and differ somewhat from those reported by Born and Herbst (2002).

Four jurisdictions (Charles, Harford, Prince George's and St. Mary's Counties) accounted for lower proportions of case closings than their share of the average annual active TCA caseload. In Charles, Harford, and St. Mary's Counties the difference was marginal or unsubstantial. This was not true in Prince George's County, however. Prince George's County accounted for 12.0% of the total caseload, but only 9.4% of the total case closings, a gap of -2.6%. The gap marks a substantial increase from the -1.6% gap observed in this county last year.

Findings from Baltimore City on the measure of proportion of case closings relative to caseload are also noteworthy. While Baltimore City's share of overall case closings (57.8%) declined slightly last year (58.1%), for the first time since the beginning of reform its share of the total caseload also declined. Last year Baltimore City accounted for 60.5% of the state's caseload, but this year that percentage was 57.7%. Notably, the jurisdiction experienced its first positive differential (0.1%) between its share of total closings and its share of the active caseload since the beginning of reform.

- **Statewide, the typical exiting case in Year Six consisted of a two-person assistance unit (38.6%), containing one adult (76.3%) and one child (47.1%). Three-fourths of cases (74.5%) had been on welfare for less than one year at the time of case closure. Conversely, just under 3 percent (2.7%) of exiting cases had been receiving cash assistance for over five years at the time of exit.**

Our results reveal that, with one notable exception, the profile of a typical exiting case closely resembles the profile of the active TCA caseload. The exception is that

we find marked differences related to the number of adults included in the assistance unit. One of every five (21.2%) cases exiting during the sixth year of reform were “child only” cases, in which the adult head of household was not receiving assistance. In contrast, over one-third of cases receiving TCA in October 2001 were child-only assistance units (Born, Hetling-Wernyj, Lacey and Tracy, 2003). Similarly, a little more than three-fourths (76.3%) of closed cases had one adult recipient, compared to only 62.7% of the active caseload (Born, et al., 2003). These differences most likely reflect the reality that the TCA policies designed to encourage families to move from welfare-to-work, such as time limits and work requirements, are not applicable to child-only cases.

- **The typical payee in an exiting case was female (95.3%), African-American (79.8%), and in her early 30's (median 32 years). On average, the youngest child in the assistance unit was six years old. Almost two-fifths of exiting cases (38.5%) included a child under the age of 3.**

In general, the profile of the typical exiting payee mirrors the profile of the typical TCA recipient in Maryland. The only notable difference observed is in the age of the payee. On average, active TCA payees are older than payees exiting the rolls in the sixth year of reform (mean age 37 years vs. 34 years, respectively).

- **As expected, jurisdictions varied somewhat in terms of the profile of Year Six exiting cases and payees. The most extreme variations were observed in terms of the prevalence of two-adult assistance units, child-only cases, and cases with a child under the age of three.**

Two-adult assistance units were the least common type of exiting assistance unit in the state, accounting for only 2.5% of all Year Six case closures. However, in eight generally small, rural jurisdictions, more than five percent of case closings were two-adult assistance units: Caroline (5.3%); Carroll (9.5%); Cecil (7.3%); Frederick (7.0%); Garrett (9.4%); Harford (5.9%); Queen Anne's (6.7%); and Somerset (6.9%) Counties. Similarly, we find that although child-only cases accounted for only 21.2% of statewide closures, they represented significantly more in three again small, somewhat rural jurisdictions: Kent (34.3%); St. Mary's (35.7%); and Worcester (31.7%) Counties.

Finally, our findings regarding the percentage of cases with a child under the age of three have important implications for local programs, particularly perhaps in terms of child care. Statewide, two out of five cases (38.5%) included a child under the age of three. However, this percentage ranged widely across jurisdictions from about one-third in Howard County (33.7%) to three cases in five in Washington County (59.6%).

- **Five case closing reasons accounted for 85.4% of all closures between October 2001 and September 2002: no recertification/redetermination (27.2%); income above limit (including started work) (20.0%); full family sanction for non-compliance with work (18.2%); eligibility/verification information not provided (14.7%); and not eligible (5.3%).**
- **In general, jurisdictional patterns were similar with the notable exception of the prevalence of “no recertification/redetermination” and “income above limit (including started work)”.**

We find that the top five case closing reasons have generally remained the same throughout the six years of welfare reform. However, their ordering has changed somewhat. Work sanctions moved up from the fourth most common reason to the third most common reason in Year Five.

While “no recertification/redetermination” was the most common case closure reason statewide, “income above limit (including started work)” was most prevalent in 16 of the 24 local jurisdictions: Calvert (46.9%); Caroline (35.6%); Cecil (28.5%); Frederick (36.5%); Garrett (25.9%); Harford (39.0%); Howard (29.7%); Kent (25.7%); Montgomery (26.4%); Queen Anne’s (40.8%); St. Mary’s (33.6%); Somerset (29.4%); Talbot (34.4%); Washington (26.6%); and Worcester (32.4%). These results are particularly noteworthy because use of this code in the administrative data allows for more efficient issuance of transitional benefits.

- **Statewide, about one in five closures (21.4%) in Year Six were due to the imposition of a full family sanction. The vast majority of sanctions in Year Six were work-related and intra-state differences are evident.**

The general trend throughout the first five years of welfare reform has been one of increasing sanction rates. During the most recent study period, sanction rates increased again to 21.4%. More than one-fifth of cases in two jurisdictions were closed because of a work-related sanction: Montgomery County (20.4%) and Baltimore City (22.4%). Child support sanctions were notable in Kent (11.4%) and Baltimore (4.7%) Counties.

In sum, our analysis of TCA case closings during the sixth year of welfare reform reveals both positive trends and areas of concern. It is encouraging that, for the first time, Baltimore City’s share of case closings was larger even if marginally so (0.1%) than its share of the active caseload.

Also heartening is the finding that “income above limit (including started work)” is the most common case closing reason in 16 of the 24 jurisdictions. Less encouraging, however, is the continuing and growing caseload/closings gap in Prince George’s County. The fact that the gap increased again this year is of particular concern given that Prince George’s County has the state’s second largest caseload.

Introduction

The University of Maryland's School of Social Work, through a long-standing partnership with the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR), is carrying out a multi-faceted, multi-year research study focused on the implementation, operation and outcomes of welfare reform in our state. The most well-known of these projects is the *Life After Welfare* study which tracks longitudinally the post-exit experiences of more than ten thousand randomly-selected families who have left welfare since the beginning of reform (October 1996) and on which seven statewide reports have been issued. The *Life After Welfare* study provides empirical case- and individual-level data that policy-makers and administrators can use to judge how the new welfare program is working, identify program modifications that may be needed, and assess what happens to Maryland families once they no longer receive cash assistance.

The *Caseload Exits at the Local Level* series of reports provides additional information about Maryland welfare leavers, specifically, macro-level data that are not covered in the *Life After Welfare* study. By design, the *Life After Welfare* 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 exited cash assistance in Maryland during a given year. This report, the sixth in the *Exits* series, is based on the 26,895 unduplicated cases which closed during the sixth year of reform (October 2001 - September 2002). It describes case characteristics, exit patterns and the use of full family sanctioning for each of the state's 24 jurisdictions and the state as a whole.

Methods

Examining all cases that closed during the sixth full year of welfare reform allows us to answer a number of questions germane to program monitoring and planning. The main questions of interest are:

- What are the general trends in case closings in the sixth year of reform?
- Do case closing patterns differ across jurisdictions?
- 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 statewide profile of all sixth year exiters and the profile in 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 demographic characteristics of exiting payees including: gender, race/ethnicity, age, age at first birth, and age of youngest child in the assistance unit?
- What are the most common administratively-recorded reasons for case closure?
- What proportion of cases, statewide and in each subdivision, left welfare during the sixth year because of a full family sanction for non-compliance with work requirements or non-cooperation with child support?

To answer these questions, aggregate data on case closings were obtained from monthly case closing extract files created from an administrative data system, the Client Automated Resources and Eligibility System (CARES). This system contains 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 (LDSSes). There are 24 LDSSes 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 case closings throughout the state, the extract files created from the administrative data system also contain the following data which are presented in this report:

- Assistance unit size - number of individuals included in a TCA grant;
- Case composition - number of children and adults included in a TCA grant;
- Benefit begin and end dates - from which length of current welfare spell is calculated;
- Closing code - administratively-recorded reason for welfare case closure; and
- Demographic characteristics of exiting payees - age, racial/ethnic group, age of youngest child in assistance unit, and age of female payees at the birth of their first child.

A case closing (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) for at least one day. That is, we count “cases”, or families, 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 may differ from the total number of closures reported in the Family Investment Administration’s statistical reports for the same period of time.

Findings

This chapter presents data on patterns of case closings and characteristics of exiting cases for the state and each of its 24 local jurisdictions during the sixth year of welfare reform. Data are based on the universe of closing cases ($n = 26,895$) which exited Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) at least once between October 2001 and September 2002 in Maryland. Findings for the state and each of its 24 local jurisdictions are presented in the following sections:

- Case closings by month: statewide and jurisdictional analyses
- Case closings by month: jurisdictional analysis
- Case closings relative to caseload size: jurisdictional analysis
- Characteristics of exiting cases: statewide and jurisdictional analyses
- Characteristics of exiting payees: statewide and jurisdictional analyses
- Administrative reasons for case closure: statewide and jurisdictional analyses
- Full family sanctions: statewide and jurisdictional analyses.

Case Closings by Month: Statewide and Jurisdictional Analyses³

Figure 1 illustrates the statewide pattern of case closings by month. Table 1, following, provides detailed monthly closing figures for the state and each of its 24 local jurisdictions.

Statewide, in year six there were 26,895 cases which closed for at least 1 day. This marks the first time in the six years of welfare reform in the state of Maryland that the number of exiting cases has increased from one year to the next. From the first

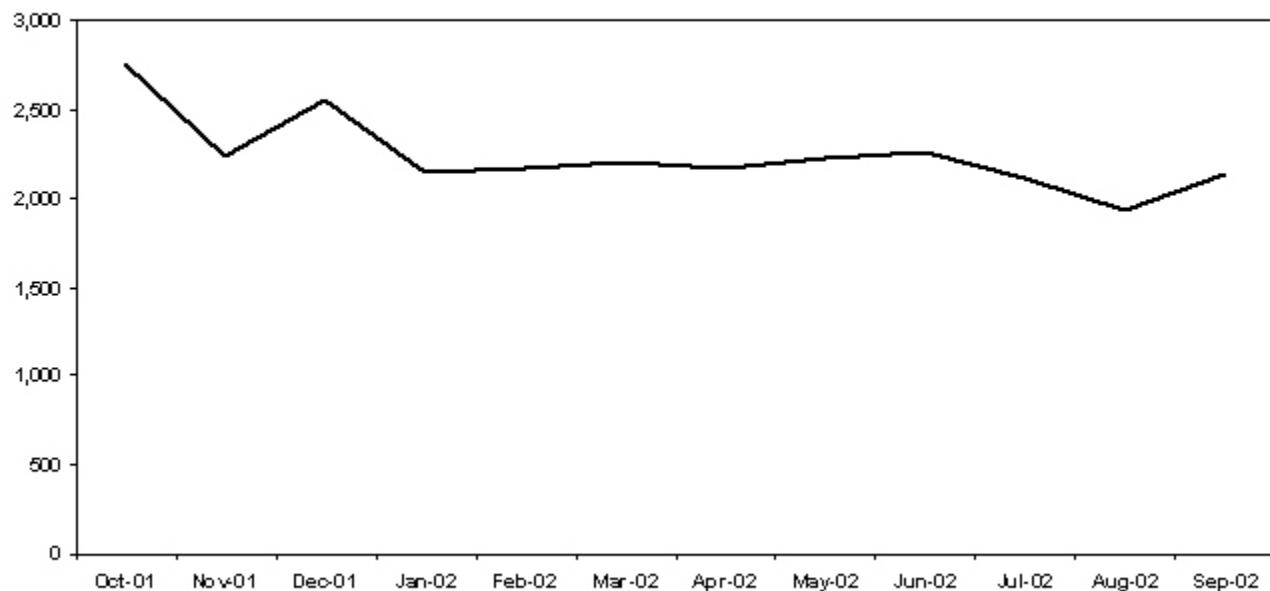
³ For readers unfamiliar with Maryland, a state map is included as Appendix A.

year of reform through the fifth, Maryland witnessed a decline in the number of TCA case closings each year, from a high of 41,212 cases in Year One to 26,494 cases in Year Five.⁴ However, in this sixth year the total number of case closings actually increased by 401 cases. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to ascertain why this change occurred. Likewise it is not possible with these data to determine if this represents an aberration or the start of a new trend or to predict what the longer-term implications might be, if any, for policy program or front-line practice. Our eighth *Life After Welfare* study, to be issued in October 2003, will provide detailed the outcome data on exiting families and should shed some light on this issue.

In terms of monthly exits, for the period October 2001 to September 2002, the average number of case closings was relatively constant at roughly 2,000 per month. The general trend in year six was that of more exits in the beginning of the year followed by a general decrease throughout the rest of the year. The largest number of closings (n=7,546) occurred in the first quarter (October 2001 - December 2001). While there was a slight increase between the second and third quarters (n=6,517 and n=6,662), the downward trend started in the second quarter and picked up again in the fourth quarter (n= 6,170). The difference between the month with the highest number and proportion of closings (October 2001, n=2,753 or 10.2%) and the month with the lowest number (August 2002, n=1,926 or 7.2%) was 827 cases.

⁴Figures for year five reported here are for unduplicated cases and differ somewhat from those reported by Born and Herbst (2002).

Figure 1. Maryland Case Closings by Month - October 2001 to September 2002



Maryland is a small state, but within its borders is considerable diversity in terms of population and geography. Thus, state-level analyses often mask important intra-state differences. In addition, Maryland's commitment to flexibility in welfare reform practice at the local level necessitates an examination of differences among jurisdictions. Monthly and quarterly closing numbers and proportions for each jurisdiction are presented in Table 1 on the following pages.

While there is no one way to characterize the nature of case closings across the state, some broad patterns do emerge. Exactly one-half (12 out of 24) of Maryland's jurisdictions experienced the largest proportion of closings in the first quarter (October 2001 - December 2001). These counties are quite diverse in terms of location, population and TCA caseload size (Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Cecil,

Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, and Somerset Counties, and Baltimore City). Another quarter (6 out of 24) of the jurisdictions recorded their largest number and percent of closings during the third quarter (April 2002 - June 2002). These jurisdictions are also quite varied demographically and economically: Calvert, Caroline, Charles, Garrett, Talbot, and Washington Counties. In the second quarter (January 2002 - March 2002), four counties, all on the Eastern Shore, experienced their peak number of case closings: Dorchester, Kent, Wicomico, and Worcester. Finally, only two jurisdictions (Harford and Howard Counties) had the largest proportion of closings in the fourth quarter (July 2002 - September 2002).

Table 1. Number of Closing Cases by Month and Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002

	Maryland	Allegany	Anne Arundel	Baltimore	Calvert	Caroline	Carroll
October 2001	2,733 (10.2%)	27 (12.9%)	98 (7.7%)	264 (10.6%)	15 (10.3%)	15 (11.4%)	22 (10.4%)
November 2001	2,220 (8.3%)	15 (7.1%)	111 (8.7%)	209 (8.4%)	7 (4.8%)	6 (4.5%)	13 (6.1%)
December 2001	2,536 (9.5%)	22 (10.5%)	149 (11.6%)	238 (9.6%)	9 (6.2%)	8 (6.1%)	24 (11.3%)
1st Quarter	7,489 (28.0%)	64 (30.5%)	358 (28.0%)	711 (28.6%)	31 (21.4%)	29 (22.0%)	59 (27.8%)
January 2002	2,128 (8.0%)	18 (8.6%)	113 (8.8%)	192 (7.7%)	10 (6.9%)	11 (8.3%)	30 (14.2%)
February 2002	2,148 (8.0%)	16 (7.6%)	102 (8.0%)	216 (8.7%)	8 (5.5%)	10 (7.6%)	8 (3.8%)
March 2002	2,190 (8.2%)	14 (6.7%)	136 (10.6%)	244 (9.8%)	16 (11.0%)	11 (8.3%)	15 (7.1%)
2nd Quarter	6,466 (24.2%)	48 (22.9%)	351 (27.4%)	652 (26.2%)	34 (23.4%)	32 (24.2%)	53 (25.0%)
April 2002	2,156 (8.1%)	11 (5.2%)	107 (8.4%)	207 (8.3%)	19 (13.1%)	11 (8.3%)	15 (7.1%)
May 2002	2,212 (8.3%)	22 (10.5%)	112 (8.8%)	186 (7.5%)	14 (9.7%)	19 (14.4%)	17 (8.0%)
June 2002	2,254 (8.4%)	22 (10.5%)	103 (8.0%)	196 (7.9%)	18 (12.4%)	15 (11.4%)	13 (6.1%)
3rd Quarter	6,622 (24.8%)	55 (26.2%)	322 (25.2%)	589 (23.7%)	51 (35.2%)	45 (34.1%)	45 (21.2%)
July 2002	2,097 (7.9%)	13 (6.2%)	93 (7.3%)	162 (6.5%)	11 (7.6%)	10 (7.6%)	24 (11.3%)
August 2002	1,914 (7.2%)	12 (5.7%)	81 (6.3%)	176 (7.1%)	8 (5.5%)	8 (6.1%)	12 (5.7%)
September 2002	2,118 (7.9%)	18 (8.6%)	75 (5.9%)	196 (7.9%)	10 (6.9%)	8 (6.1%)	19 (9.0%)
4th Quarter	6,129 (22.9%)	43 (20.5%)	249 (19.5%)	534 (21.5%)	29 (20.0%)	26 (19.7%)	55 (25.9%)
Total	26,895	210	1,280	2,486	145	132	212

Note: Totals across the 24 jurisdictions may not equal the statewide figures because jurisdictional information was missing for 189 cases.

Table 1. Number of Closing Cases by Month and Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002 (continued)

	Cecil	Charles	Dorchester	Frederick	Garrett	Harford
October 2001	29 (10.5%)	23 (6.9%)	36 (13.2%)	32 (8.6%)	6 (7.1%)	51 (9.0%)
November 2001	34 (12.3%)	30 (9.0%)	13 (4.8%)	39 (10.5%)	5 (5.9%)	48 (8.5%)
December 2001	27 (9.7%)	29 (8.7%)	17 (6.2%)	32 (8.6%)	5 (5.9%)	44 (7.8%)
1st Quarter	90 (32.5%)	82 (24.6%)	66 (24.2%)	103 (27.6%)	16 (18.8%)	143 (25.4%)
January 2002	22 (7.9%)	32 (9.6%)	33 (12.1%)	23 (6.2%)	8 (9.4%)	43 (7.6%)
February 2002	27 (9.7%)	23 (6.9%)	23 (8.4%)	36 (9.7%)	11 (12.9%)	48 (8.5%)
March 2002	18 (6.5%)	30 (9.0%)	20 (7.3%)	38 (10.2%)	5 (5.9%)	34 (6.0%)
2nd Quarter	67 (24.2%)	85 (25.5%)	76 (27.8%)	97 (26.0%)	24 (28.2%)	125 (22.2%)
April 2002	14 (5.1%)	32 (9.6%)	28 (10.3%)	22 (5.9%)	8 (9.4%)	35 (6.2%)
May 2002	24 (8.7%)	21 (6.3%)	21 (7.7%)	31 (8.3%)	4 (4.7%)	47 (8.3%)
June 2002	23 (8.3%)	33 (9.9%)	12 (4.4%)	30 (8.0%)	13 (15.3%)	61 (10.8%)
3rd Quarter	61 (22.0%)	86 (25.8%)	61 (22.3%)	83 (22.3%)	25 (29.4%)	143 (25.4%)
July 2002	21 (7.6%)	27 (8.1%)	17 (6.2%)	32 (8.6%)	7 (8.2%)	58 (10.3%)
August 2002	17 (6.1%)	26 (7.8%)	24 (8.8%)	30 (8.0%)	7 (8.2%)	41 (7.3%)
September 2002	21 (7.6%)	27 (8.1%)	29 (10.6%)	28 (7.5%)	6 (7.1%)	54 (9.6%)
4th Quarter	59 (21.3%)	80 (24.0%)	70 (25.6%)	90 (24.1%)	20 (23.5%)	153 (27.1%)
Total	277	333	273	373	85	564

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

Table 1. Number of Closing Cases by Month and Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002 (continued)

	Howard	Kent	Montgomery	Prince George's	Queen Anne's	St. Mary's
October 2001	16 (8.8%)	5 (14.3%)	96 (10.2%)	276 (11.0%)	13 (17.1%)	14 (12.1%)
November 2001	11 (6.0%)	0 (0.0%)	88 (9.3%)	199 (7.9%)	8 (10.5%)	7 (6.0%)
December 2001	13 (7.1%)	5 (14.3%)	85 (9.0%)	239 (9.5%)	2 (2.6%)	12 (10.3%)
1st Quarter	40 (22.0%)	10 (28.6%)	269 (28.5%)	714 (28.5%)	23 (30.3%)	33 (28.4%)
January 2002	10 (5.5%)	4 (11.4%)	56 (5.9%)	190 (7.6%)	12 (15.8%)	5 (4.3%)
February 2002	17 (9.3%)	3 (8.6%)	89 (9.4%)	202 (8.1%)	7 (9.2%)	9 (7.8%)
March 2002	13 (7.1%)	4 (11.4%)	82 (8.7%)	164 (6.5%)	4 (5.3%)	8 (6.9%)
2nd Quarter	40 (22.0%)	11 (31.4%)	227 (24.1%)	556 (22.2%)	23 (30.3%)	22 (19.0%)
April 2002	13 (7.1%)	2 (5.7%)	76 (8.1%)	193 (7.7%)	6 (7.9%)	9 (7.8%)
May 2002	14 (7.7%)	2 (5.7%)	80 (8.5%)	212 (8.5%)	8 (10.5%)	7 (6.0%)
June 2002	13 (7.1%)	3 (8.6%)	74 (7.8%)	213 (8.5%)	2 (2.6%)	15 (12.9%)
3rd Quarter	40 (22.0%)	7 (20.0%)	230 (24.4%)	618 (24.7%)	16 (21.1%)	31 (26.7%)
July 2002	20 (11.0%)	0 (0.0%)	82 (8.7%)	196 (7.8%)	8 (10.5%)	12 (10.3%)
August 2002	14 (7.7%)	5 (14.3%)	61 (6.5%)	215 (8.6%)	4 (5.3%)	8 (6.9%)
September 2002	28 (15.4%)	2 (5.7%)	74 (7.8%)	205 (8.2%)	2 (2.6%)	10 (8.6%)
4th Quarter	62 (34.1%)	7 (20.0%)	217 (23.0%)	616 (24.6%)	14 (18.4%)	30 (25.9%)
Total	182	35	943	2,504	76	116

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

Table 1. Number of Closing Cases by Month and Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002 (continued)

	Somerset	Talbot	Washington	Wicomico	Worcester	Baltimore City
October 2001	11 (10.8%)	3 (3.3%)	21 (7.3%)	43 (9.5%)	4 (3.9%)	1,613 (10.4%)
November 2001	10 (9.8%)	4 (4.4%)	24 (8.3%)	30 (6.7%)	10 (9.8%)	1,299 (8.4%)
December 2001	8 (7.8%)	7 (7.8%)	23 (8.0%)	31 (6.9%)	12 (11.8%)	1,495 (9.7%)
1st Quarter	29 (28.4%)	14 (15.6%)	68 (23.5%)	104 (23.1%)	26 (25.5%)	4,407 (28.5%)
January 2002	10 (9.8%)	11 (12.2%)	26 (9.0%)	44 (9.8%)	15 (14.7%)	1,210 (7.8%)
February 2002	4 (3.9%)	8 (8.9%)	26 (9.0%)	48 (10.6%)	9 (8.8%)	1,198 (7.8%)
March 2002	6 (5.9%)	6 (6.7%)	15 (5.2%)	44 (9.8%)	7 (6.9%)	1,256 (8.1%)
2nd Quarter	20 (19.6%)	25 (27.8%)	67 (23.2%)	136 (30.2%)	31 (30.4%)	3,664 (23.7%)
April 2002	7 (6.9%)	9 (10.0%)	27 (9.3%)	35 (7.8%)	8 (7.8%)	1,262 (8.2%)
May 2002	10 (9.8%)	7 (7.8%)	27 (9.3%)	44 (9.8%)	10 (9.8%)	1,273 (8.2%)
June 2002	11 (10.8%)	11 (12.2%)	27 (9.3%)	35 (7.8%)	10 (9.8%)	1,301 (8.4%)
3rd Quarter	28 (27.5%)	27 (30.0%)	81 (28.0%)	114 (25.3%)	28 (27.5%)	3,836 (24.8%)
July 2002	6 (5.9%)	6 (6.7%)	20 (6.9%)	34 (7.5%)	6 (5.9%)	1,232 (8.0%)
August 2002	10 (9.8%)	6 (6.7%)	25 (8.7%)	27 (6.0%)	7 (6.9%)	1,090 (7.1%)
September 2002	9 (8.8%)	12 (13.3%)	28 (9.7%)	36 (8.0%)	4 (3.9%)	1,217 (7.9%)
4th Quarter	25 (24.5%)	24 (26.7%)	73 (25.3%)	97 (21.5%)	17 (16.7%)	3,539 (22.9%)
Total	102	90	289	451	102	15,446

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

Case Closings Relative to Caseload Size: Jurisdictional Analysis

While Table 1 provides information on the case closing patterns across time in Maryland's 24 jurisdictions, it does not allow for meaningful cross-jurisdiction comparisons because the literal numbers of closings vary so much. This in turn, reflects the fact local jurisdictions vary widely in caseload size from 45 TCA cases in Kent County to 16,075 cases in Baltimore City in September 2002. However, one way to contrast localities which takes 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. This information appears in Table 2, following this discussion.⁵

Table 2 reveals several interesting findings. First, it is important to note that jurisdictions with the largest caseloads (Baltimore City and the counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery and Prince George's) are also those with the largest proportions of total case closures. These five jurisdictions account for 85.4% of the average annual caseload and a similar proportion of statewide case closures (84.8%) during the 12-month study period.

Second, as indicated by the "difference" column, the percentage of total case closings equaled or exceeded the share of the average annual total caseload in 20 of the 24 jurisdictions. Exceptions to this trend are Charles, Harford, Prince George's and St. Mary's Counties. Of the four jurisdictions with lower proportions of case closings, Prince George's County is especially noteworthy. Prince George's County's share of

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 2001 - September 2002.

case closings (9.4%) was over two percentage points lower (-2.6%) than its share of the state's annual caseload (12.0%).⁶

The figures for Baltimore City are also worth mentioning. While the City's share of overall case closings (57.8%) declined from the previous year's (58.1%), for the first time since the beginning of reform its share of the total active caseload also declined. Last year Baltimore City accounted for 60.5% of the state's caseload, but this year that percentage was slightly less, 57.7%. Thus, for the first time, Baltimore City recorded its first positive differential (0.1%) between its percent of the state's total closings and its percent of the state's total caseload since the beginning of welfare reform.

To illustrate how marked this turnaround has been readers are reminded that, in the first year of welfare reform Baltimore City had a closings-to-caseload differential of -17.1%. In Year Two the gap was -11.6% and -3.8%, -5.5% and -2.4% in Years Three, Four and Five, respectively.

⁶In the early years of reform, Prince George's County recorded positive closings-to-caseload figures. In more recent years, however, results have been negative (i.e., they have accounted for a smaller share of total closings than they have of the total active caseload). The figures are 1.1% (year 1), 1.9% (year 2), 2.0% (year 3), -1.1% (year 4), -1.6% (year 5) and, as noted, -2.6% in year six.

Table 2. Case Closings Relative to Caseload - October 2001 to September 2002

Jurisdiction	Percent of Total Closings	Percent of Total Caseload	Difference
Baltimore County	9.3%	8.5%	0.8%
Anne Arundel	4.8%	4.1%	0.7%
Montgomery	3.5%	3.1%	0.4%
Cecil	1.0%	0.8%	0.2%
Carroll	0.8%	0.6%	0.2%
Dorchester	1.0%	0.9%	0.1%
Wicomico	1.7%	1.6%	0.1%
Frederick	1.4%	1.3%	0.1%
Washington	1.1%	1.0%	0.1%
Baltimore City	57.8%	57.7%	0.1%
Calvert	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%
Garrett	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Queen Anne's	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Allegany	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%
Kent	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Somerset	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%
Caroline	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%
Talbot	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Worcester	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%
Howard	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%
Charles	1.2%	1.3%	-0.1%
Harford	2.1%	2.3%	-0.2%
St. Mary's	0.4%	0.6%	-0.2%
Prince George's	9.4%	12.0%	-2.6%
Total	100%	100%	0%

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 2001 - September 2002.

Characteristics of Exiting Cases: Statewide and Jurisdictional Analyses⁷

Characteristics of the universe of Year Six exiting cases are presented for the state and each jurisdiction in Table 3, which follows this discussion. Four characteristics describing exiting cases are presented: length of the TCA spell which culminated in the exit;⁸ number of adults in the assistance unit; number of children in the assistance unit; and size of the assistance unit.

Length of Exiting Spell

Table 3 shows that, statewide, the vast majority of exiting cases during the sixth year of reform were on cash assistance for a relatively short period of time. Almost three quarters (74.5%) of the cases had been open for 12 months or less. Another 15.2% were open between one and two years. Thus, nearly nine (89.7%) of every 10 exiters during the sixth year had been on welfare continuously for under two years. Conversely, just under three percent (2.7%) had received assistance for more than five uninterrupted years. Statewide, the typical case had been open on average slightly more than one year (mean = 13.4 months) at the time of exit, with a median of 8.9 months.

Jurisdictional results are similar, with some noteworthy variations. In all 24 jurisdictions the majority of exiting cases were ending a welfare spell that had lasted for one year or less. However, there were large variations across jurisdictions in the

⁷Because 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.

⁸Length of exiting spell refers, in this report, to the continuous period of TCA receipt immediately preceding the closing of the case. Readers should be aware that variations in local case closing and/or redetermination practices during the study period may influence the observed results.

percentage of short spell exiters. For example, in Queen Anne's County, 85.5% of exiting cases had been on welfare for one year or less. Even in the three counties (Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's) with the lowest proportion of short spell exiters, at least two-thirds of all exiting cases had been open for one year or less. The percentages are: 67.6%, 69.8% and 66.4% for Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's Counties, respectively. Not surprisingly, Queen Anne's County had the shortest median spell length of all 24 jurisdictions at 3.8 months while Baltimore City had the longest median spell length at 10 months. Kent County had the shortest average spell length at a little under 8 months (mean = 7.96 months) while the longest average spell length at the time of exit was registered in St. Mary's County (mean = 15.7 months).

At the other end of the spectrum, relatively few exiting cases statewide or in any jurisdiction had been on welfare continuously for more than five years. Only five jurisdictions had over 5% of their exiting cases receiving TCA continuously for this long. These five jurisdictions included: Allegany (5.7%), Dorchester (5.1%), Garrett (5.9%), Wicomico (5.1%), and Worcester (5.9%) Counties. In two counties (Calvert and Kent) no exiting cases had received welfare for more than 60 continuous months. The 18 remaining jurisdictions fell somewhere in between 1.4% (Carroll County) and 4.9% (Somerset County) of cases having received TCA uninterrupted for more than five years. _____

Number of Adults in the Assistance Unit

The most prevalent household situation among year six case closings was that of an assistance unit containing only one adult. Statewide, approximately three-fourths (76.3%) of all cases had only one adult recipient. Conversely, two-adult cases were the

exception (2.5%), and child-only cases (no adult recipients) accounted for more than one of every five (21.2%) exiting cases during the sixth year of reform. These figures are considerably different from those for the active TCA caseload. For example, in October 2001, 62.7% of assistance units included one adult and over one-third (36.0%) were child-only cases (Born, Hetling-Wernyj, Lacey, and Tracy, 2003).

Similar patterns are evident at the local level. In all 24 jurisdictions, assistance units with one adult were most common among Year Six case closings. The percentages ranged from a low of approximately three-fifths of cases in St. Mary's (60.7%) and Somerset (62.4%) Counties to a high of 73.2% in Calvert County and 79.9% in Baltimore City. Although assistance units composed of two adults were a very small percentage of all exiting cases statewide (2.5%), they were a much larger proportion of exiting cases in two jurisdictions that are predominantly rural. In Carroll and Garrett Counties, roughly one out of every ten case closings (9.5% and 9.4%, respectively) contained two adults.

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, large numbers of traditional mother-child families have left welfare due to aggressive reforms and the availability of jobs. As a result, child-only cases have come to represent a considerably larger proportion of cash assistance caseloads. By 2001, child-only cases represented 31% of the total national caseload ("Relative Caretakers in Child-Only Cases", 2002). In September 2002, child-only cases represented more than one third (35.5%) of all active

TCA cases in Maryland and in 17 counties, more than two-fifths of the entire active caseload (Family Investment Administration, 2002).

Not surprisingly, there was a great deal of variation across jurisdictions in the proportion of case closings which were child-only. Percentages ranged from 15.7% in Carroll County to about a third in Allegany (31.1%), Kent (34.3%), and St. Mary's (35.7%) Counties. In general, for the state as a whole and at the county-level, child-only cases are under-represented in the population of exiters.

Number of Children in the Assistance Unit

Statewide, almost three-fourths of all cases closing between October 2001 and September 2002 contained only one (47.1%) or two (27.7%) children in the assistance unit. Just over one in five cases (21.4%) contained three or more children.

In all 24 jurisdictions, the largest proportion of cases had one child in the assistance unit though, again, there were noticeable variations across counties. The percentages of one-child families ranged from a low of 42.5% of cases in Cecil County to a high of 62.9% in Kent County. Considering that Kent County had the highest proportion of one-child families, it is no surprise that it was also the jurisdiction with the lowest percentage of exiting cases with three or more children (5.7%). Of all of the jurisdictions, Prince George's County had the highest percentage of cases with three or more children (24.2%), or almost one in four cases.

Assistance Unit Size

Statewide, case closings in year six ranged in size from one to 15 persons. The most common situation, which existed in almost two of every five cases (38.6%), was that of a two person assistance unit. Three-person assistance units were considerably

less common, accounting for slightly under one-fourth (24.4%) of all exiting cases, while those containing four or more individuals comprised 20.4% of exiting cases.

In every jurisdiction, two-person assistance units were most common, though there was significant variation among jurisdictions. The range of two-person exiting cases was from 28.6% in St. Mary's County to 44.6% in Howard County.

Table 3. Closing Case Characteristics by Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002

	Allegany	Anne Arundel	Baltimore County	Calvert	Caroline	Carroll
Number of Closing Cases (Unique)	210	1,280	2,486	145	132	212
Length of Ending Spell						
12 months or less	77.1%	82.8%	78.5%	79.3%	75.8%	82.1%
13-24 months	12.9%	10.7%	12.9%	13.1%	15.2%	10.4%
25-36 months	1.9%	2.3%	4.1%	4.8%	5.3%	3.8%
37-48 months	1.9%	0.9%	1.6%	2.1%	0.8%	1.9%
49-60 months	0.5%	1.1%	1.0%	0.7%	0.8%	0.5%
more than 60 months	5.7%	2.2%	1.9%	0.0%	2.3%	1.4%
Mean spell length (months)	13.89	9.85	10.68	9.40	12.02	8.52
Median spell length (months)	5.69	4.80	6.01	5.69	6.88	4.03
Range (months)	1 - 203	1 - 198	1 - 196	1 - 59	1 - 192	1 - 99
Number of Adults						
0 (Child Only)	31.1%	25.3%	26.5%	21.8%	29.8%	15.7%
1	64.6%	71.0%	70.9%	73.2%	64.9%	74.8%
2	4.4%	3.8%	2.6%	4.9%	5.3%	9.5%
Number of Children						
0	2.4%	5.4%	2.8%	2.1%	1.5%	3.3%
1	50.5%	47.3%	51.3%	55.6%	58.0%	45.7%
2	27.7%	26.5%	28.4%	24.6%	24.4%	32.9%
3 or more	19.4%	20.8%	17.4%	17.6%	16.1%	18.2%
Size of Assistance Unit						
1	21.4%	21.7%	20.5%	17.6%	24.4%	13.3%
2	38.8%	35.6%	38.8%	42.3%	38.2%	34.8%
3	21.4%	23.0%	23.9%	23.2%	22.1%	33.3%
4 or more	18.4%	19.7%	16.7%	16.9%	15.3%	18.6%
Mean Assistance Unit Size	2.44	2.53	2.45	2.46	2.35	2.64
Median Assistance Unit Size	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00
Range	1 - 7	1 - 9	1 - 10	1 - 8	1 - 8	1 - 6

Table 3. Closing Case Characteristics by Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002 (continued)

	Cecil	Charles	Dorchester	Frederick	Garrett	Harford	Howard
Number of Closing Cases (Unique)	277	333	273	373	85	564	182
Length of Ending Spell							
12 months or less	82.3%	67.6%	77.3%	81.5%	78.8%	76.1%	78.0%
13-24 months	6.9%	20.1%	11.4%	9.7%	9.4%	12.6%	9.3%
25-36 months	4.7%	6.3%	3.7%	3.8%	1.2%	4.3%	5.5%
37-48 months	3.2%	1.5%	1.1%	1.3%	4.7%	1.8%	2.7%
49-60 months	1.1%	0.9%	1.5%	0.3%	0.0%	2.3%	1.1%
more than 60 months	1.8%	3.6%	5.1%	3.5%	5.9%	3.0%	3.3%
Mean spell length (months)	9.81	14.12	12.27	12.00	15.22	12.96	11.51
Median spell length (months)	4.24	8.22	4.96	5.88	4.90	7.03	5.70
Range (months)	1 - 94	1 - 167	1 - 98	1 - 163	1 - 174	1 - 195	1 - 88
Number of Adults							
0 (Child Only)	22.5%	28.0%	19.3%	21.8%	20.0%	19.2%	26.0%
1	70.2%	67.5%	77.4%	71.2%	70.6%	74.9%	70.1%
2	7.3%	4.5%	3.3%	7.0%	9.4%	5.9%	4.0%
Number of Children							
0	2.9%	1.5%	5.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.0%	4.5%
1	42.5%	48.5%	48.9%	50.8%	52.9%	45.1%	50.8%
2	32.7%	30.7%	26.7%	31.2%	34.1%	31.2%	32.2%
3 or more	21.9%	19.2%	19.2%	15.5%	10.6%	21.7%	12.4%
Size of Assistance Unit							
1	16.0%	20.8%	19.3%	14.0%	15.3%	13.3%	18.1%
2	35.6%	32.8%	37.4%	43.8%	40.0%	37.7%	44.6%
3	25.5%	28.0%	24.8%	27.2%	32.9%	26.4%	23.2%
4 or more	22.9%	18.4%	18.5%	15.1%	11.8%	22.6%	14.1%
Mean Assistance Unit Size	2.69	2.58	2.54	2.55	2.42	2.70	2.38
Median Assistance Unit Size	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Range	1 - 10	1 - 10	1 - 7	1 - 9	1 - 5	1 - 8	1 - 7

Table 3. Closing Case Characteristics by Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002 (continued)

	Kent	Montgomery	Prince George's	Queen Anne's	St. Mary's	Somerset	Talbot
Number of Closing Cases (Unique)	35	943	2,504	76	116	102	90
Length of Ending Spell							
12 months or less	82.9%	76.5%	69.8%	85.5%	66.4%	79.4%	76.7%
13-24 months	11.4%	12.0%	18.3%	9.2%	17.2%	9.8%	7.8%
25-36 months	2.9%	3.1%	6.1%	1.3%	6.0%	3.9%	8.9%
37-48 months	0.0%	3.2%	1.8%	1.3%	6.0%	1.0%	2.2%
49-60 months	2.9%	2.1%	1.2%	0.0%	1.7%	1.0%	0.0%
more than 60 months	0.0%	3.2%	2.7%	2.6%	2.6%	4.9%	4.4%
Mean spell length (months)	7.96	12.79	14.22	8.70	15.73	12.89	12.14
Median spell length (months)	4.50	6.31	9.37	3.80	9.20	6.69	5.29
Range (months)	1 - 50	1 - 179	1 - 201	1 - 75	1 - 213	1 - 110	1 - 97
Number of Adults							
0 (Child Only)	34.3%	25.7%	23.7%	25.3%	35.7%	30.7%	27.8%
1	65.7%	70.0%	74.3%	68.0%	60.7%	62.4%	70.0%
2	0.0%	4.3%	2.0%	6.7%	3.6%	6.9%	2.2%
Number of Children							
0	5.7%	3.0%	4.5%	2.7%	1.8%	4.0%	4.4%
1	62.9%	46.0%	43.9%	57.3%	46.4%	46.5%	53.3%
2	25.7%	28.6%	27.3%	21.3%	30.4%	25.7%	26.7%
3 or more	5.7%	22.4%	24.2%	18.6%	21.5%	23.7%	15.5%
Size of Assistance Unit							
1	34.3%	17.3%	19.3%	18.7%	23.2%	19.8%	22.2%
2	40.0%	37.7%	34.5%	44.0%	28.6%	34.7%	42.2%
3	20.0%	24.0%	23.1%	21.3%	33.0%	24.8%	22.2%
4 or more	5.7%	21.0%	23.1%	16.0%	15.2%	20.8%	13.3%
Mean Assistance Unit Size	1.97	2.61	2.66	2.48	2.48	2.54	2.37
Median Assistance Unit Size	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Range	1 - 4	1 - 11	1 - 12	1 - 8	1 - 7	1 - 6	1 - 7

Table 3. Closing Case Characteristics by Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002 (continued)

	Washington	Wicomico	Worcester	Baltimore City	Maryland with Balt City	Maryland without Balt City
Number of Closing Cases (Unique)	289	451	102	15,446	26,706	11,260
Length of Ending Spell						
12 months or less	81.0%	74.5%	75.5%	73.2%	74.5%	76.4%
13-24 months	10.7%	11.3%	9.8%	16.4%	15.2%	13.4%
25-36 months	3.5%	5.5%	4.9%	4.7%	4.6%	4.4%
37-48 months	0.7%	1.8%	1.0%	2.3%	2.1%	1.8%
49-60 months	1.7%	1.8%	2.9%	0.8%	1.0%	1.3%
more than 60 months	2.4%	5.1%	5.9%	2.7%	2.7%	2.8%
Mean spell length (months)	11.60	14.56	13.53	14.33	13.42	12.16
Median spell length (months)	6.28	5.75	5.49	10.02	8.91	6.61
Range (months)	1 - 169	1 - 157	1 - 92	1 - 512	1 - 512	1 - 213
Number of Adults						
0 (Child Only)	31.2%	27.1%	31.7%	18.3%	21.2%	25.1%
1	67.7%	71.3%	68.3%	79.9%	76.3%	71.4%
2	1.1%	1.6%	0.0%	1.8%	2.5%	3.5%
Number of Children						
0	1.4%	3.4%	2.0%	3.7%	3.6%	3.5%
1	51.6%	43.9%	57.4%	46.6%	47.1%	47.9%
2	30.9%	29.1%	29.7%	27.3%	27.7%	28.4%
3 or more	16.2%	23.5%	10.9%	22.5%	21.4%	20.2%
Size of Assistance Unit						
1	20.4%	19.1%	23.8%	14.7%	16.6%	19.2%
2	41.4%	35.4%	43.6%	39.6%	38.6%	37.2%
3	23.9%	23.8%	23.8%	24.5%	24.4%	24.2%
4 or more	14.4%	21.7%	8.9%	21.2%	20.4%	19.3%
Mean Assistance Unit Size	2.46	2.61	2.21	2.66	2.61	2.55
Median Assistance Unit Size	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Range	1 - 9	1 - 8	1 - 5	1 - 15	1 - 15	1 - 12

Characteristics of Exiting Payees: Statewide and Jurisdictional Analyses

In addition to understanding case composition, it is also useful to profile the demographic characteristics of exiting payees and their children. The next few sections provide data about payees' gender, racial/ethnic group, age, age at first birth and age of the youngest child in the payee's assistance unit for cases which closed during the sixth year of welfare reform. Table 4, following this discussion, presents these data for the state and each local subdivision.⁹

Gender of Payee

More than nine out of ten case (95.3%) closings between October 2001 and September 2002 were headed by women. Male payees were a very small minority; fewer than one in twenty cases was headed by a man (4.7%). As would be expected, cases headed by female payees were also the norm at the jurisdictional level. In every jurisdiction, excluding Kent County (88.6%), more than nine out of ten exiting payees were female. _____

Age of Payee

Exiting payees range in age from 15 to 86 years, with an average age of 34.1 years. This average is considerably lower than the average age of 37 years for payees in the October 2001 active TCA caseload (Born, et al., 2003). This difference is most likely related to differences between closing cases and the active caseload in the prevalence of child-only assistance units.

⁹ 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.

There was very little jurisdictional variation found in the mean age of exiting payees. Average ages ranged from 32 years in Cecil County to 37 years in Kent County.

Age at First Birth¹⁰

The average payee in an exiting case in Maryland was 22-years old when she had her first child. The majority of exiting payees (57.6%) began childbearing before the age of 21, while slightly more than one in four (26.0%), had their first child before the age of 18.

There was very little variation at the jurisdictional level in estimated age at first birth, the range being from 20.9 years in Dorchester County to 24.3 years in Howard County. There was much greater jurisdictional variation in the proportion of exiting caseheads who had their first child at a relatively young age. The share of exiting payees who had their first child prior to age 18 ranged from a low of 10.5% in Carroll County to a high of 33.8% in Worcester County. In all jurisdictions, two in five exiting caseheads had their first child before age 21; the highest proportion of first births before age 21 was recorded in Dorchester County (62.5%) while the lowest proportion occurred in Howard County (39.2%).

Age of Youngest Child

The youngest child in Year Six exiting families was, on average, just over six years old (6.1 years). The median, or midpoint, age of the youngest child was 4.6 years. Close to two out of every five (38.5%) exiting cases included a child under age three.

¹⁰ Estimates of age at first birth for female payees were calculated using the payee's date of birth and the date of birth of her oldest child included in the assistance unit. Our calculations underestimate the prevalence of early child-bearing if payees have another older child who is not in the assistance unit.

Jurisdictional analyses show that the average age of the youngest child ranged from 4.6 years (Washington County) to 6.6 years (Kent County). The proportion of cases including at least one child under age three also varied greatly across the state, from 33.7% in Howard County to almost three-fifths in Washington County (59.6%).

Table 4. Characteristics of Exiting Payee by Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002

	Allegany	Anne Arundel	Baltimore County	Calvert	Caroline	Carroll
Number of Closing Cases (Unique)	210	1,280	2,486	145	132	212
% Caucasian	91.8	45.8	33.7	58.0	47.7	81.2
% African American	7.7	51.3	63.7	40.6	48.4	16.4
% Female	93.8	94.7	94.8	93.8	92.4	93.4
% Male	6.2	5.3	5.2	6.2	7.6	6.6
Age of Payee						
Mean	34.38	34.83	33.78	34.27	33.16	33.17
Median	32.68	33.14	31.36	32.44	29.43	32.93
Std. Dev.	11.64	11.89	12.03	12.13	12.37	10.35
Range (years)	18 - 78	18 - 83	17 - 82	18 - 76	20 - 74	18 - 69
Estimated Age at First Birth						
Mean	22.89	22.63	21.99	23.27	21.59	23.03
Median	21.08	20.89	20.40	21.58	19.99	21.30
Std. Dev.	5.48	5.63	5.40	6.20	5.25	5.05
Range (years)	16 - 39	10 - 48	13 - 45	11 - 47	15 - 44	14 - 38
% who gave birth before 18	12.7	18.8	22.2	14.0	23.7	10.5
% who gave birth before 21	49.0	51.0	56.7	45.6	62.4	48.3
Age of youngest child						
Mean	5.55	6.09	5.64	5.79	5.89	5.30
Median	3.02	4.46	3.89	3.93	3.59	3.64
Std. Dev.	5.48	5.07	5.04	5.43	5.37	4.82
Range	< 1yr - 18	< 1yr - 18	< 1yr - 18	< 1yr - 18	< 1yr - 17	< 1yr - 17
% cases with a child under 3	50.0	38.6	43.9	45.0	47.3	42.4

Table 4. Characteristics of Exiting Payee by Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002 (continued)

	Cecil	Charles	Dorchester	Frederick	Garrett	Harford	Howard
Number of Closing Cases (Unique)	277	333	273	373	85	564	182
% Caucasian	78.8	31.5	24.3	58.7	100.0	47.6	33.3
% African American	19.0	66.4	72.4	37.8	0.0	48.1	61.6
% Female	95.7	93.1	96.0	92.5	96.5	92.4	94.0
% Male	4.3	6.9	4.0	7.5	3.5	7.6	6.0
Age of Payee							
Mean	32.45	35.15	32.54	34.06	32.75	33.25	36.37
Median	31.22	33.45	30.02	32.27	31.47	31.86	35.66
Std. Dev.	9.73	12.21	11.55	11.59	11.52	10.22	12.15
Range (years)	18 - 75	18 - 77	18 - 77	19 - 75	19 - 69	19 - 80	18 - 79
Estimated Age First Birth							
Mean	21.33	22.32	20.93	23.27	22.41	22.15	24.25
Median	20.10	20.60	19.47	21.37	20.75	20.73	22.81
Std. Dev.	4.75	5.39	5.02	6.10	5.15	5.23	6.25
Range (years)	10 - 40	14 - 45	13 - 44	15 - 44	14 - 41	13 - 44	15 - 41
% who gave birth before 18	23.2	15.6	32.7	16.5	12.3	19.8	16.8
% who gave birth before 21	62.3	52.3	62.5	47.0	56.2	51.4	39.2
Age of youngest child							
Mean	5.70	6.27	5.92	5.22	5.45	5.60	6.50
Median	3.92	4.89	4.61	3.23	3.09	4.25	5.36
Std. Dev.	5.13	5.04	4.76	5.08	5.52	4.73	5.20
Range	< 1yr - 18						
% cases with a child under 3	42.6	37.4	39.4	49.0	47.5	41.2	33.7

Table 4. Characteristics of Exiting Payee by Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002 (continued)

	Kent	Montgomery	Prince George's	Queen Anne's	St. Mary's	Somerset	Talbot
Number of Closing Cases (Unique)	35	943	2,504	76	116	102	90
% Caucasian	40.0	15.3	4.0	49.3	50.4	32.7	34.5
% African American	57.1	69.4	93.7	50.7	48.7	65.3	63.2
% Female	88.6	94.4	95.0	98.7	94.0	94.1	95.6
% Male	11.4	5.6	5.0	1.3	6.0	5.9	4.4
Age of Payee							
Mean	36.96	35.58	35.07	34.89	36.19	33.23	34.59
Median	36.61	33.88	33.05	32.83	35.09	29.25	31.67
Std. Dev.	12.63	11.36	11.56	11.59	11.87	12.31	13.49
Range (years)	19 - 73	17 - 81	17 - 85	19 - 59	19 - 69	19 - 71	18 - 76
Estimated Age at First Birth							
Mean	23.90	24.05	22.76	22.41	21.82	21.96	22.30
Median	22.40	22.57	21.09	20.88	20.87	20.36	20.92
Std. Dev.	6.17	6.36	5.93	4.79	4.70	4.94	5.77
Range (years)	17 - 38	13 - 48	13 - 49	15 - 37	15 - 33	14 - 38	14 - 43
% who gave birth before 18	13.0	15.4	19.5	15.5	22.0	17.9	22.1
% who gave birth before 21	43.5	39.8	49.5	51.7	51.2	55.1	51.5
Age of youngest child							
Mean	6.59	6.00	6.10	5.72	6.46	4.90	6.49
Median	4.04	4.25	4.88	3.72	5.52	2.82	3.96
Std. Dev.	5.86	5.02	4.90	5.26	5.31	4.97	5.81
Range	< 1yr - 17	< 1yr - 18	< 1yr - 18	< 1yr - 18	< 1yr - 18	< 1yr - 18	< 1yr - 17
% cases with a child under 3	37.1	40.0	37.3	43.2	41.1	50.0	44.7

Table 4. Characteristics of Exiting Payee by Jurisdiction - October 2001 to September 2002 (continued)

	Washington	Wicomico	Worcester	Baltimore City	Maryland with Balt City	Maryland without Balt City
Number of Closing Cases (Unique)	289	451	102	15,446	26,706	11,260
% Caucasian	69.9	24.4	37.5	7.5	18.3	33.3
% African American	27.2	73.4	62.5	91.9	79.8	63.1
% Female	92.7	96.5	93.1	95.8	95.3	94.5
% Male	7.3	3.5	6.9	4.2	4.7	5.5
Age of Payee						
Mean	34.23	33.75	35.56	33.90	34.09	34.40
Median	32.08	31.42	32.45	31.61	31.96	32.47
Std. Dev.	12.67	12.24	13.34	11.91	11.82	11.74
Range (years)	18 - 70	18 - 80	19 - 75	15 - 86	15 - 86	17 - 85
Estimated Age at First Birth						
Mean	23.07	21.32	21.25	21.43	21.87	22.52
Median	21.13	20.09	19.98	19.66	20.12	20.82
Std. Dev.	6.01	5.02	5.85	5.61	5.66	5.68
Range (years)	13 - 42	12 - 43	14 - 48	10 - 49	10 - 49	10 - 49
% who gave birth before 18	14.4	24.8	33.8	30.3	26.0	19.6
% who gave birth before 21	49.0	59.9	61.8	61.6	57.6	51.6
Age of youngest child						
Mean	4.64	5.28	6.26	6.25	6.07	5.82
Median	1.36	3.10	5.40	4.79	4.55	4.20
Std. Dev.	5.40	5.02	5.50	4.90	4.97	5.05
Range	< 1yr - 18	< 1yr - 18	< 1yr - 18			
% cases with a child under 3	59.6	49.2	44.9	36.0	38.5	41.9

Administrative Reasons for Case Closure: Statewide and Jurisdictional Analyses

As has been noted in our previous research reports focusing on welfare leavers, the reasons why families exit welfare are varied. Unfortunately, administrative data systems must try to capture this complexity and diversity in pre-determined, standardized codes, which do not always paint a full picture of why cash assistance cases close. Most notably, we have found that far more customers leave welfare for work than are known to the welfare agency as doing so. This situation often results when customers fail to keep a redetermination appointment or provide requested information, but do not inform the agency that they have secured a job (see, Welfare and Child Support Research and Training Group, 1999, for a discussion of this issue).

The caveats about administrative case closing reasons notwithstanding, it is still instructive to examine statewide and local case closure patterns for the sixth year of welfare reform. These data are particularly useful in illustrating the extent to which full-family sanctioning was used during reform's sixth year.

Top Five Case Closing Reasons: Statewide Data

Figure 2, following this discussion, illustrates the top five administrative reasons for the universe of exiting cases statewide and each of the state's 24 local jurisdictions. The table in Appendix B displays detailed data on the same topic.

The two most common reasons for case closure throughout Maryland are "no recertification/no redetermination" (n=7,372 or 27.2%) and "income above limit" (including started work) (n=5,378 or 20.0%). Together in Year Six these two codes accounted for nearly half (47.2%) of all recorded case closing reasons. This finding was expected, as these two reasons have been the most commonly used closing codes in all

six years of welfare reform in Maryland. These two reasons together have accounted for between 47% and 58% of all case closures in each year of welfare reform.

There was a notable change in the third most common reason for case closure between the fifth and sixth years of reform, however, as “work sanction” (n=4,900 or 18.2%) moved up from being the fourth most common reason last year. Together, the “top three” reasons account for nearly two-thirds of all case closings during the 12-month period (n=17,605 or 65.5%).

Statewide, the fourth most common reason for case closure between October 2001 and September 2002 was “eligibility/verification information not provided” (n=3,947 or 14.7%), which moved down after being the third most common reason last year. As was the case in years 4 and 5, the fifth most common closing reason was “not eligible” (n=1,416 or 5.3%). Altogether, these top five reasons accounted for more than four-fifths (n=22,968 or 85.4%) of all case closings.

Top Five Case Closing Reasons: Jurisdictional Data

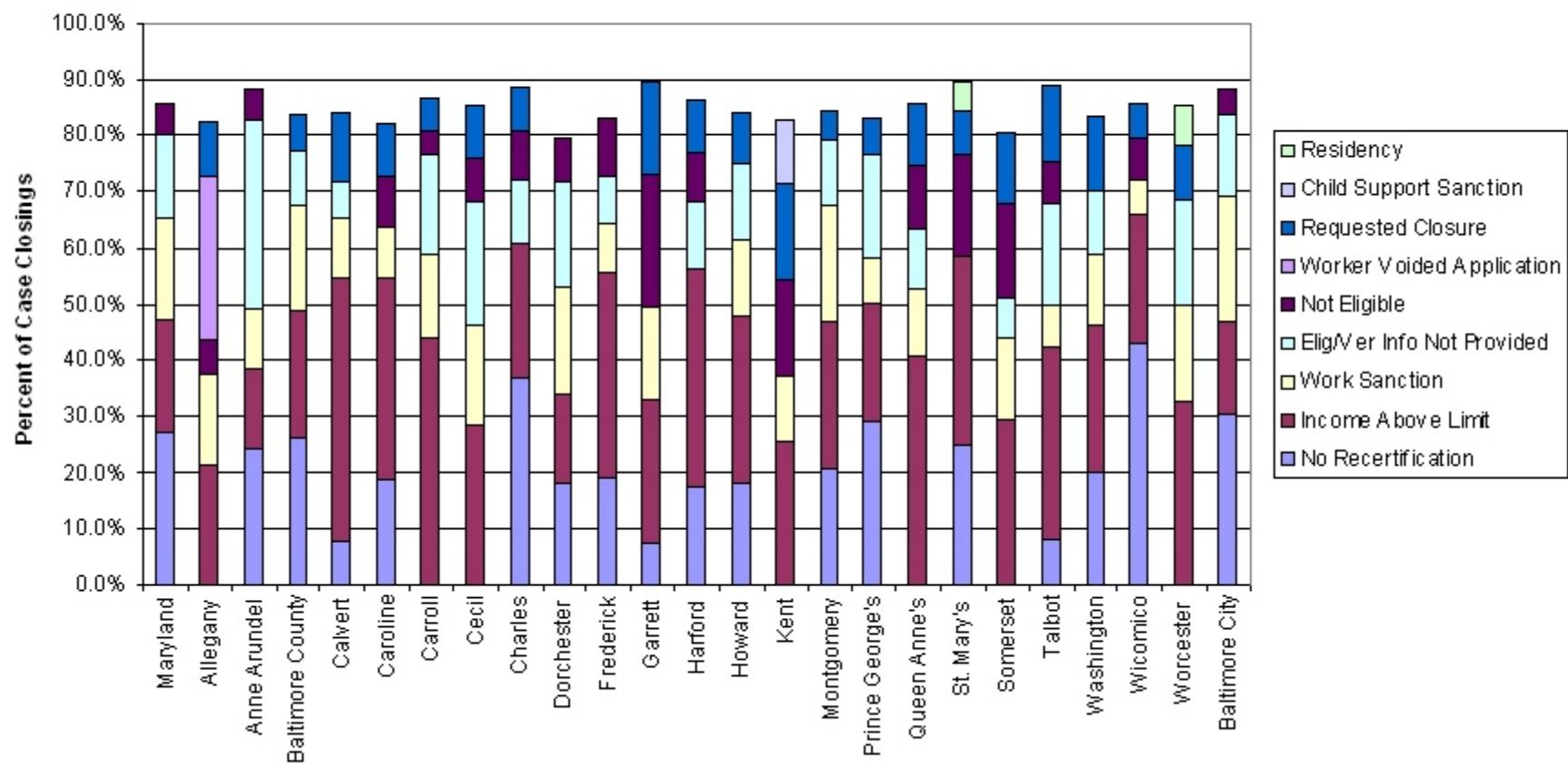
Although jurisdictional patterns in the use of administrative case closing reasons were generally similar to the statewide pattern, there was one interesting difference between state and jurisdictional trends. While “no recertification/no redetermination” was the most common reason for closure statewide, in 16 of the state’s 24 jurisdictions, “income above limit” (including started work) was predominant. In Year Six, the percentage of cases closed for this reason ranged from 14.1% in Anne Arundel County to 46.9% in Calvert County.

In keeping with the statewide pattern, five of the remaining eight jurisdictions (Baltimore, Charles, Prince George’s, and Wicomico Counties and Baltimore City) had “no recertification/no redetermination” as their number one reason for case closure. The

share of cases closed with this code were: Baltimore County 25.9%; Charles County 36.9%; Prince George's County 28.8%; Wicomico County 42.8%; and Baltimore City 30.3%.

The three remaining jurisdictions all had different top reasons for case closure. The number one reason for case closure in Allegany County was "worker voided application" which accounted for 28.6% of that county's case closings. In Anne Arundel County "eligibility/verification information - not provided", was the most common closing reason, accounting for one out of every three (33.5%) case closings in that jurisdiction. In Dorchester County, the number one reason for case closure was work sanction (19.0%). This marks the first time since the start of welfare reform that work sanction was the number one reason for case closure in any jurisdiction in the state of Maryland.

Figure 2: Top 5 Case Closing Reasons



Full Family Sanctions: Statewide Analyses

As part of its welfare reform efforts, Maryland imposes a full family sanction - termination of the entire cash assistance benefit - when the adult recipient does not comply with work participation requirements or cooperate with child support enforcement. State law requires a full, rather than partial, sanction upon the first instance of non-compliance, but there is a mandatory 30 day conciliation period before the first full family sanction can be imposed. The following sections describe patterns of sanctioning statewide and by jurisdiction.

Following this discussion, Figure 3 illustrates the frequency with which work and child support sanctions were used statewide and in each of the 24 jurisdictions in Year Six.¹¹ Roughly one in five cases (21.4% or 5,750/26,895) closed during the sixth year of reform due to a full family sanction. This continues the trend of increasing sanctions each year.

As has been the case in the previous five years of reform, however, virtually all full family sanctions in year six were for non-compliance with work. Specifically, among all case closures statewide, 18.2% (n=4,900/26,895) were work-related full family sanctions and 3.2% (n=850/26,895) were full family sanctions for non-cooperation with child support. In other words, of all full family sanctions imposed during the sixth year of reform, more than eight out of ten (85.2%) were work sanctions.

Full Family Sanctions: Jurisdictional Analyses

Similar sanctioning patterns were observed at the local level. In 23 out of the 24 jurisdictions, the number of work sanctions was at least double the number of child

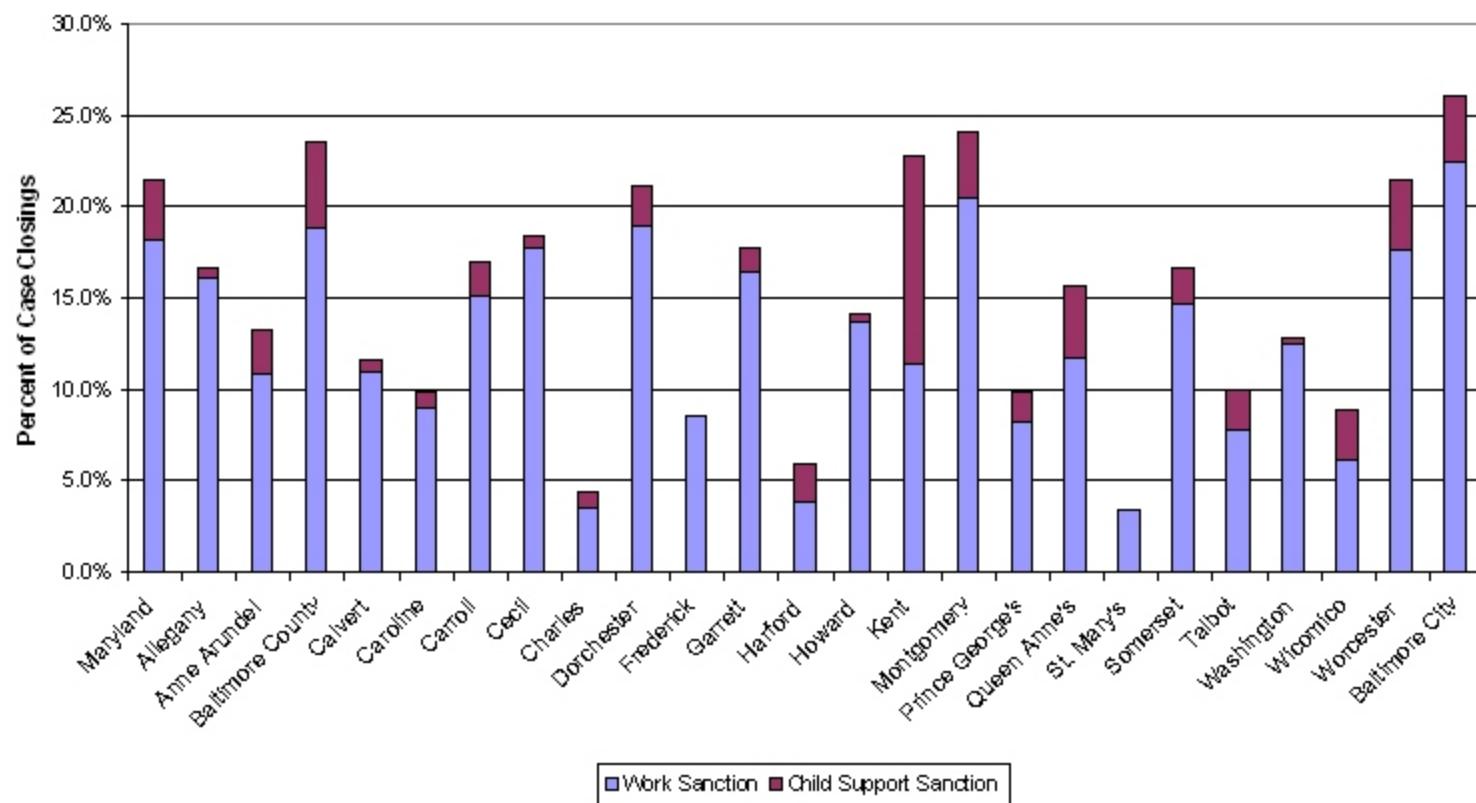
¹¹Numbers and percentages used in the creation of Figure 3 are presented in Appendix C.

support sanctions. The only jurisdiction where this was not the case was Kent County, which had an equal number of work and child support sanctions, with four of each.

There were four jurisdictions where work sanctions accounted for roughly one out of every five case closures, including: Baltimore County (n=469 or 18.9%), Dorchester County (n=52 or 19.0%), Montgomery County (n=193 or 20.5%), and Baltimore City (n=3,460 or 22.4%). Full family work sanctions were used most sparingly in Charles (n=12 or 3.6%), Harford (n=22 or 3.9%), St. Mary's (n=4 or 3.4%), and Worcester (n=18 or 3.9%) Counties.

On the state level, sanctions for non-cooperation with child support were relatively rare (3.2% of all closures) during the sixth year of reform, but there were some notable differences among jurisdictions. The jurisdiction with the highest proportion of child support sanctions was Kent County (n=4 or 11.4%). In two counties (Frederick and St. Mary's) there were no reported closures for non-cooperation with child support. This was the second consecutive year that St. Mary's County had zero case closures as a result of non-cooperation with child support.

Figure 3: Sanctions



Conclusions

This report profiles case closing patterns and the characteristics of families exiting TCA during the sixth year of Maryland's welfare reform. As the following summary indicates, in most respects, Year Six findings mirror those from previous years (Born, Caudill, Cordero, and Kunz, 2000; Born, Caudill, Spera, and Cordero, 1999; Born and Herbst, 2002; Born, Ovwigho, and Cordero, 2000; Born, Ruck, and Cordero, 2001; Welfare and Child Support Research and Training Group, 1998). However, there are also some notable differences.

The total number of unduplicated exiting cases (n= 26,895) was, for the first time since the start of welfare reform, actually higher than the previous year (n= 26,494 unduplicated cases).¹² While this is an increase of only 401 cases, it could be considered meaningful in that it reverses a four year trend of declining numbers of exiting cases. The total number of case closings in Year One was 41,212, which decreased to 40,773 in Year Two. In Year Three the total number of exiters was 37,997 and Year Four saw a significant decrease, down to 31,482. An important follow-up question regarding this trend is how families are faring after their exit, a question which is addressed in our annual *Life After Welfare* reports, the next of which is scheduled for completion in October of this year.

In general, our analysis of TCA case closings during the sixth year of welfare reform reveals both positive trends and areas of concern. It is encouraging that Baltimore City's share of the statewide caseload decreased and for the first time, its

¹²Figures for year five reported here are for unduplicated cases and differ somewhat from those reported by Born and Herbst (2002).

share of case closings was marginally larger (0.1%) than its share of the active caseload. Last year Baltimore City accounted for 60.5% of the state's caseload, but this year that percentage was reduced to 57.7%.

Also encouraging is the finding that although "no recertification/redetermination" remains the top closing reason for the state as a whole, "income above limit (including started work" is the most common case closing reason in 16 of the 24 jurisdictions: Calvert (46.9%); Carroll (43.9%); Caroline (35.6%); Cecil (28.5%); Frederick (36.5%); Garrett (25.9%); Harford (39.0%); Howard (29.7%); Kent (25.7%); Montgomery (26.4%); Queen Anne's (40.8%); St. Mary's (33.6%); Somerset (29.4%); Talbot (34.4%); Washington (26.6%); and Worcester (32.4%).

Less encouraging, however, is the continuing and growing caseload/closings gap in Prince George's County. In Year Six, Prince George's County accounted for 12.0% of the total active caseload, but 9.4% of the total case closures, a gap of 2.6%. The gap marks a substantial increase from the 1.6% difference observed in Year Five. The fact that the disparity increased again this year may be of particular concern given that Prince George's County has the state's second largest caseload.

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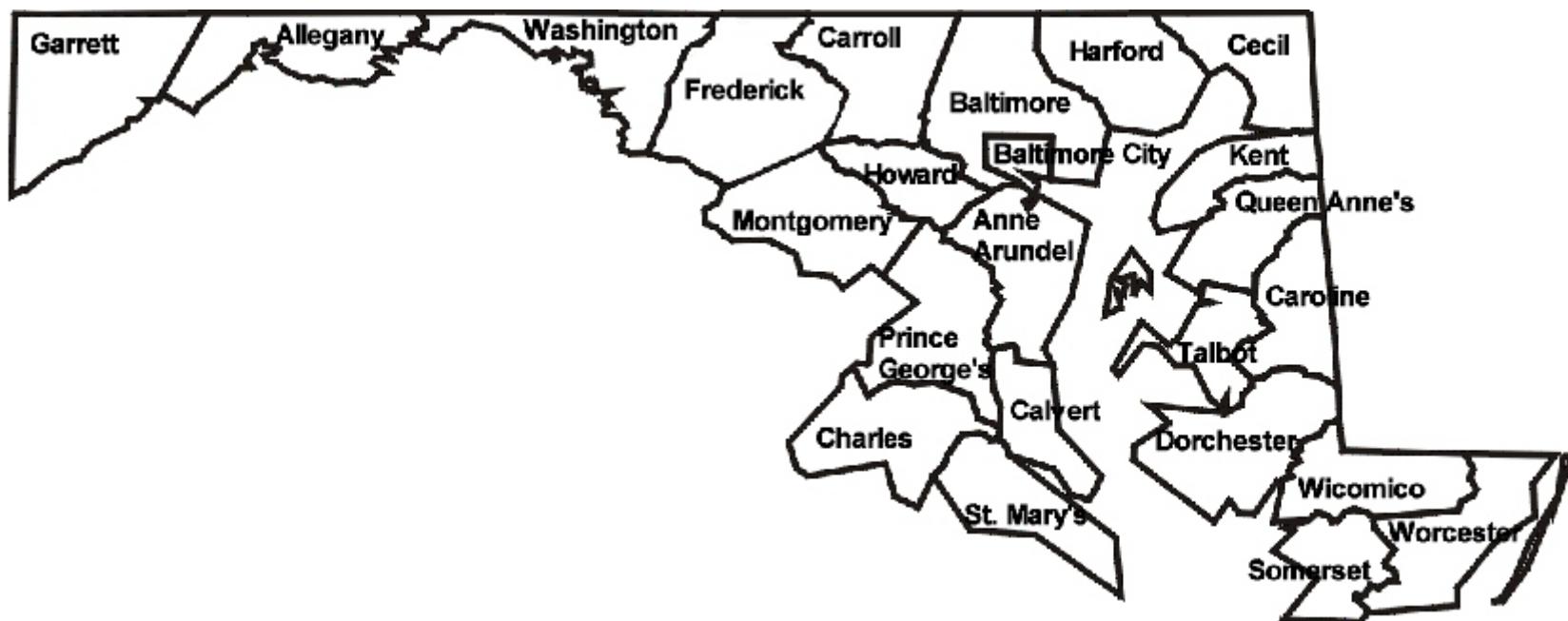
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Appendix A. Map of Maryland



Appendix B. Top Reasons for Case Closure¹³

Jurisdiction	Top 5 Closing Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Maryland	no recertification/no redetermination income above limit (including started work) work sanction eligibility/verification information - not provided not eligible	7,327 5,378 4,900 3,947 1,416	27.2% 20.0% 18.2% 14.7% 5.3%
Allegany	worker voided application income above limit (including started work) work sanction requested closure not eligible	60 45 34 21 13	28.6% 21.4% 16.2% 10.0% 6.2%
Anne Arundel	eligibility/verification information - not provided no recertification/no redetermination income above limit (including started work) work sanction not eligible	429 308 180 140 70	33.5% 24.1% 14.1% 10.9% 5.5%
Baltimore County	no recertification/no redetermination income above limit (included starting work) work sanction eligibility/verification information - not provided requested closure	643 568 469 238 158	25.9% 22.8% 18.9% 9.6% 6.4%
Calvert	income above limit (including started work) requested closure work sanction no recertification/no redetermination eligibility/verification information - not provided	68 18 16 11 9	46.9% 12.4% 11.0% 7.6% 6.2%
Caroline	income above limit (including started work) no recertification/no redetermination work sanction not eligible requested closure	47 25 12 12 12	35.6% 18.9% 9.1% 9.1% 9.1%
Carroll	income above limit (including started work) eligibility/verification information - not provided work sanction requested closure not eligible	93 37 32 13 9	43.9% 17.5% 15.1% 6.1% 4.2%
Cecil	income above limit (including started work) eligibility/verification information - not provided work sanction requested closure not eligible	79 61 49 26 21	28.5% 22.0% 17.7% 9.4% 7.6%

¹³Some jurisdictions have more than 5 closing reasons listed if the fifth most common closing reason had two or more reasons for closure with an equal number of associated cases.

Appendix B. Top Reasons for Case Closure

Jurisdiction	Top 5 Closing Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Charles	no recertification/no redetermination income above limit (including started work) eligibility/verification information - not provided not eligible requested closure	123 79 39 29 25	36.9% 23.7% 11.7% 8.7% 7.5%
Dorchester	work sanction eligibility/verification information - not provided no recertification/no redetermination income above limit (including started work) not eligible	52 51 49 44 21	19.0% 18.7% 17.9% 16.1% 7.7%
Frederick	income above limit (including started work) no recertification/no redetermination not eligible work sanction eligibility/verification information - not provided	136 71 38 32 32	36.5% 19.0% 10.2% 8.6% 8.6%
Garrett	income above limit (including started work) not eligible work sanction requested closure no recertification/no redetermination	22 20 14 14 6	25.9% 23.5% 16.5% 16.5% 7.1%
Harford	income above limit (including started work) no recertification/no redetermination eligibility/verification information - not provided requested closure not eligible	220 97 68 53 48	39.0% 17.2% 12.1% 9.4% 8.5%
Howard	income above limit (including started work) no recertification/no redetermination work sanction eligibility/verification information - not provided requested closure	54 33 25 25 16	29.7% 18.1% 13.7% 13.7% 8.8%
Kent	income above limit (including started work) not eligible requested closure work sanction child support sanction	9 6 6 4 4	25.7% 17.1% 17.1% 11.4% 11.4%
Montgomery	income above limit (including started work) no recertification/no redetermination work sanction eligibility/verification information - not provided requested closure	249 194 193 110 51	26.4% 20.6% 20.5% 11.7% 5.4%
Prince George's	no recertification/no redetermination income above limit (including started work) eligibility/verification information - not provided work sanction requested closure	721 533 453 205 162	28.8% 21.3% 18.1% 8.2% 6.5%

Appendix B. Top Reasons for Case Closure

Jurisdiction	Top 5 Closing Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Queen Anne's	income above limit (including started work) work sanction not eligible requested closure eligibility/verification information - not provided	31 9 9 8 8	40.8% 11.8% 11.8% 10.5% 10.5%
St. Mary's	income above limit (including started work) no recertification/no redetermination not eligible requested closure residency	39 29 21 9 6	33.6% 25.0% 18.1% 7.8% 5.2%
Somerset	income above limit (including started work) not eligible work sanction requested closure eligibility/verification information - not provided	30 17 15 13 7	29.4% 16.7% 14.7% 12.7% 6.9%
Talbot	income above limit (including started work) eligibility/verification information - not provided requested closure work sanction no recertification/no redetermination not eligible	31 16 12 7 7 7	34.4% 17.8% 13.3% 7.8% 7.8% 7.8%
Washington	income above limit (including started work) no recertification/no redetermination requested closure work sanction eligibility/verification information - not provided	77 57 38 36 33	26.6% 19.7% 13.1% 12.5% 11.4%
Wicomico	no recertification/no redetermination income above limit (including started work) not eligible work sanction requested closure	193 104 34 28 27	42.8% 23.1% 7.5% 6.2% 6.0%
Worcester	income above limit (including started work) eligibility/verification information - not provided work sanction requested closure residency	33 19 18 10 7	32.4% 18.6% 17.6% 9.8% 6.9%
Baltimore City	no recertification/no redetermination work sanction income above limit (included starting work) eligibility/verification information - not provided not eligible	4,677 3,460 2,541 2,243 673	30.3% 22.4% 16.5% 14.5% 4.4%

Appendix C. Full Family Sanctions: 10/01-9/02

	Full Family Sanctions	Frequency	Percent
Maryland	Work Child Support	4,900 850	18.2% 3.2%
Allegany	Work Child Support	34 1	16.2% 0.5%
Anne Arundel	Work Child Support	140 31	10.9% 2.4%
Baltimore County	Work Child Support	469 116	18.9% 4.7%
Calvert	Work Child Support	16 1	11.0% 0.7%
Caroline	Work Child Support	12 1	9.1% 0.8%
Carroll	Work Child Support	32 4	15.1% 1.9%
Cecil	Work Child Support	49 2	17.7% 0.7%
Charles	Work Child Support	12 3	3.6% 0.9%
Dorchester	Work Child Support	52 6	19.0% 2.2%
Frederick	Work Child Support	32 0	8.6% 0.0%
Garrett	Work Child Support	14 1	16.5% 1.2%
Harford	Work Child Support	22 11	3.9% 2.0%
Howard	Work Child Support	25 1	13.7% 0.5%
Kent	Work Child Support	4 4	11.4% 11.4%
Montgomery	Work Child Support	193 35	20.5% 3.7%
Prince George's	Work Child Support	205 40	8.2% 1.6%
Queen Anne's	Work Child Support	9 3	11.8% 3.9%
St. Mary's	Work Child Support	4 0	3.4% 0.0%

Appendix C. Full Family Sanctions: 10/01-9/02

Somerset	Work Child Support	15 2	14.7% 2.0%
Talbot	Work Child Support	7 2	7.8% 2.2%
Washington	Work Child Support	36 1	12.5% 0.3%
Wicomico	Work Child Support	28 12	6.2% 2.7%
Worcester	Work Child Support	18 4	17.6% 3.9%
Baltimore City	Work Child Support	3,460 564	22.4% 3.7%