

# DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY



## Quarterly Progress Report (Reducing Out-of-Home Children and Inactive Cases)

Report Date: December 31, 2020  
Reporting Period: SFY2021, Quarter 1

## **INTRODUCTION**

Pursuant to Laws 2020, Second Regular Session, Chapter 58, Section 14, the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) is required to continue this report for data through June 2021. Previous versions of this report required that data be reported on the last day of the quarter of the reporting period. Beginning September 2019, the Department submits this report covering data for the prior quarter.

In state fiscal year 2019 (SFY19), DCS realigned its five Regions. As a result, comparisons of regional data prior to July 2019 must be taken into account as some staff and cases previously assigned to one Region in SFY19 were reassigned to a new Region in SFY20. The regional realignment resulted in changes in the regional names, reassignment of several counties to new regions; and moving specific sections and units to different regions and/or sections. A map of the new DCS Regions is provided as an attachment to this report (Attachment A).

During the fourth quarter of SFY 2020 through December 2020, the Department has been forced to address the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, DCS continued to accept reports of abuse and neglect, respond to those reports within required timelines and continued to maintain monthly contact by DCS Specialists with children in out-of-home care, families and caregivers. Although the approach to in-person contact had to adjust based on recommendations of local, state and federal authorities, DCS continued to ensure it carried out its core mission to successfully engage children and families to ensure safety, strengthen families, and achieve permanency. Virtual visitation with children only occurred during the Governor's Executive Order 2020-18 (aka *Stay Home, Stay Healthy, Stay Connected*) which began in March 2020 through June 2020.

## **PROGRESS SUSTAINING OPEN REPORTS, INACTIVE CASES, & IMPROVING CASELOADS**

DCS maintained the inactive cases well below the legislative benchmark of 1,000 since April 2017. In March 2017, DCS fell below the legislatively required benchmark of 1,000 inactive cases. From a peak of 16,014 in January of 2015, the Department now has only 93 inactive cases as of September 30, 2020, representing a 99 percent decrease. To avoid a return to higher numbers of inactive cases and to help improve caseloads, the Department uses performance management and other elements of the management system. DCS employed several sustainment measures to ensure inactive cases remain well below the benchmark. These include the implementation of performance management metrics to monitor and control the total number of open reports and the percentage of those reports that are overdue for investigation, completion and closure and the implementation of leader standard work to ensure routine follow-up.

The Department achieved the initial benchmark of less than 13,000 open reports six months ahead of the established target date in December 2016 having reduced the number of open reports to 9,611. From a peak of 33,245 open reports in April 2015, the Department reduced that to only 6,457 as of September 2020 (see Table 1) representing an 81 percent decrease. The benchmark was decreased to 8,000 starting the first quarter of SFY 2019 below which the Department has remained each reporting period since.

Additionally, DCS HR continues its efforts to hire and place DCS Specialists at a rate equal to or greater than departures from the Department. Sustained staffing levels help contribute to the reduced number of inactive cases, total open reports, and foster care population. The overall caseloads for DCS investigators continue to decline across most offices (see Table 2).

## **PROGRESS MADE REDUCING THE OUT-OF-HOME POPULATION**

The Department continues to maintain a safe reduction in the historical out-of-home foster care population. The Department experienced an increase in the number of children (215) in OOH care in the first quarter

DCS Quarterly Progress Report on Reducing OOH Child and Inactive Cases  
December 2020

of SFY21 compared to the fourth quarter of SFY20. The total OOH population includes all youth ages zero (0) through the age of twenty (20). During the fourth quarter of SFY20, DCS experienced a significant decrease in the number of reports of abuse and neglect to the Child Abuse Hotline. Presumptively this is influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic as school setting mandatory reporters were not in contact with potential victims. As reports began to increase again in the first quarter of SFY21, so too did the number of children entering OOH care. While the Department is over the established legislative benchmark of 13,964, for the number of children in OOH care, it is important to note the number of youth in extended foster care (i.e. 18-20 year olds) continues to increase from 845 in June 2019 to 977 in September 2020. The Department has been intentionally seeking this increase for this particular population. The Department implemented a strategic initiative to increase the successful transition of youth to adulthood, which includes providing more youth over the age of eighteen with independent living services and supports.

By slowing the entry rate and sustaining performance for children exiting care, the Department has been able to maintain a safe reduction of the foster care population since its historical high of 19,044 in 2016 to 14,367 in September 2020 representing a 25% decrease. The reduction in the number of children entering out-of-home care is the result of several factors. These include, but are not limited to, the additional standardized process tools including supervisory administrative and case progress review checklists, standardized safety discussion guides, and training staff to better engage a family’s network to maintain children safely in the home. Improved response times also contribute to the reduction of children entering care as this enables DCS Specialists to make decisions that will help support families, provide services in a timely manner and avoid entry into care. In addition, this safe reduction in the number of children in out-of-home care is highlighted by no significant change in the re-entry rate for children who left care within the past 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

Through the continued application of monthly clinical staffings on reunification cases using a standardized process, ongoing workers have been able to maintain the rate of children exiting care. By way of these standard process activities, paired with the continued use of cursory case reviews and Fostering Sustainable Connections, the Department has safely maintained a reduction of the out-of-home care population during SFY2020 and SFY2021.

**Table 1 – Benchmark Performance**

		Q2FY19	Q3FY19	Q4FY19	Q1FY20	Q2FY20	Q3FY20	Q4FY20	Q4FY20
Inactive Cases <sup>1</sup>	<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
	<i>Actual</i>	302	355	179	177	308	216	95	93
Inactive Cases by disposition	<i>Investigation Phase</i>	188	227	155	149	271	188	81	78
	<i>Out-of-Home Cases</i>	16	16	2	3	5	3	0	0
	<i>In-Home Cases</i>	98	112	22	25	32	25	14	15
Number of Open Reports	<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000
	<i>Actual</i>	6,695	6,554	6,586	7,569	7,326	6,973	4,804	6,457
Number of Out-of-Home Children	<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	14,889	14,591	14,299	13,964	13,964	13,964	13,964	13,964
	<i>Benchmark (% reduction)</i>	2%	2%	2%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<i>Actual</i>	14,209	13,841	14,205	14,223	14,142	14,209	14,152	14,367

**Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Number of inactive cases is the actual figure as of the last Monday of the reporting period.

<sup>2</sup> As a result of Laws 2019, 1st Regular Session Ch. 263, Sec. 141 which continued this report, the benchmark established by the Legislature for number of out-of-home children was no longer based on a 2 percent reduction but a static number of 13,964.

Tables 2 and 3 show the caseload by section (field office) for investigations, out-of-home children, and in-home cases. Investigations are the number of open reports assigned to each office. Out-of-home represents the number of children in ongoing cases assigned to each office. In-home cases represents the number of cases assigned to each office.

<sup>1</sup> DCS Monthly Operational and Outcome Report (MOOR): <https://dcs.az.gov/news-reports/performance-measures>

DCS Quarterly Progress Report on Reducing OOH Child and Inactive Cases  
December 2020

**Table 2 – Headcount and Caseload Performance (SFY20-Fourth Quarter)**

Region <sup>1</sup> Section #      Section name			Quarter 4 FY 2020							
			FTE		Workload					
			Investigators	Case Managers	# Open Reports (investigations)	# of In home cases	# of Out-of-Home Children <sup>2</sup>	Investigation (reports per worker)	In Home (cases per worker)	Out of Home (children per worker)
Maricopa-East (10)	n/a	Moved to Northwest under realignment	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
	n/a	Moved to Northwest under realignment	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
	3	Osborn	19	19	134	---	480	7	---	25
	4	In Home	---	43	31	481	13	1	11	0
	5	Mesa	19	19	171	---	475	9	---	25
	6	Gilbert	20	20	202	---	457	10	---	23
	7	Tempe	20	20	244	---	579	12	---	28
	8	South Mountain	19	19	214	---	400	11	---	21
	9	North Central	19	19	202	---	528	11	---	28
	10	Permanency - South Mountain	---	45	3	---	1488	0	---	33
South (20)	1	Eastside Loop	9	18	77	---	268	8	---	15
	2	Tucson North - Oracle	18	18	225	---	392	13	---	22
	3	Tucson South - Valencia	9	18	162	---	360	17	---	20
	5	Madera A - 4th Ave.	17	17	96	---	251	6	---	15
	6	Permanency - Alvernon	0	31	---	---	550	---	---	18
	7	Alvernon	16	16	137	---	393	8	---	24
	8	Cochise County	10	10	101	---	188	10	---	19
	9	Madera C / Nogales	11	22	149	---	289	13	---	13
	10	In Home	0	31	6	248	75	0	8	2
	11	Yuma	12	12	89	63	233	7	---	19
	Northwest (30)	1	Prescott/Prescott Valley	9	9	118	65	192	13	13
3		Coconino County / Cottonwood	12	12	105	---	278	8	---	22
4		Bullhead City/Lake Havasu	10	10	62	42	167	6	8	17
5		Kingman	10	19	71	---	558	7	---	29
Northeast (40)	3	Globe / Payson / Safford	8	15	95	29	245	13	6	17
	4	St. Johns/Winslow/Show low	5	9	71	6	129	16	2	15
	5	Apache Junction/Kearney	17	17	164	37	533	10	5	32
	6	Casa Grande/Coolidge	18	18	199	30	478	11	6	27
Maricopa-West (50)	1	AHIT	25	---	2	---	---	0	---	---
	3	In Home	0	47	33	562	15	1	12	0
	4	Thunderbird	19	19	201	---	515	10	---	27
	5	Peoria	16	16	182	---	385	11	---	24
	6	Glendale/Durango	19	19	157	---	476	8	---	24
	7	Avondale/Advocacy	21	21	147	---	552	7	---	27
	8	Permanency	---	44	2	---	1222	---	---	28
	12	West 101	21	21	181	---	614	8	---	29
13	Pinnacle Peak	15	15	125	---	326	8	---	22	
<b>105, 106 - Other</b>	various	OCWI, GH/FH, Other	68	---	646	---	48	10	---	---

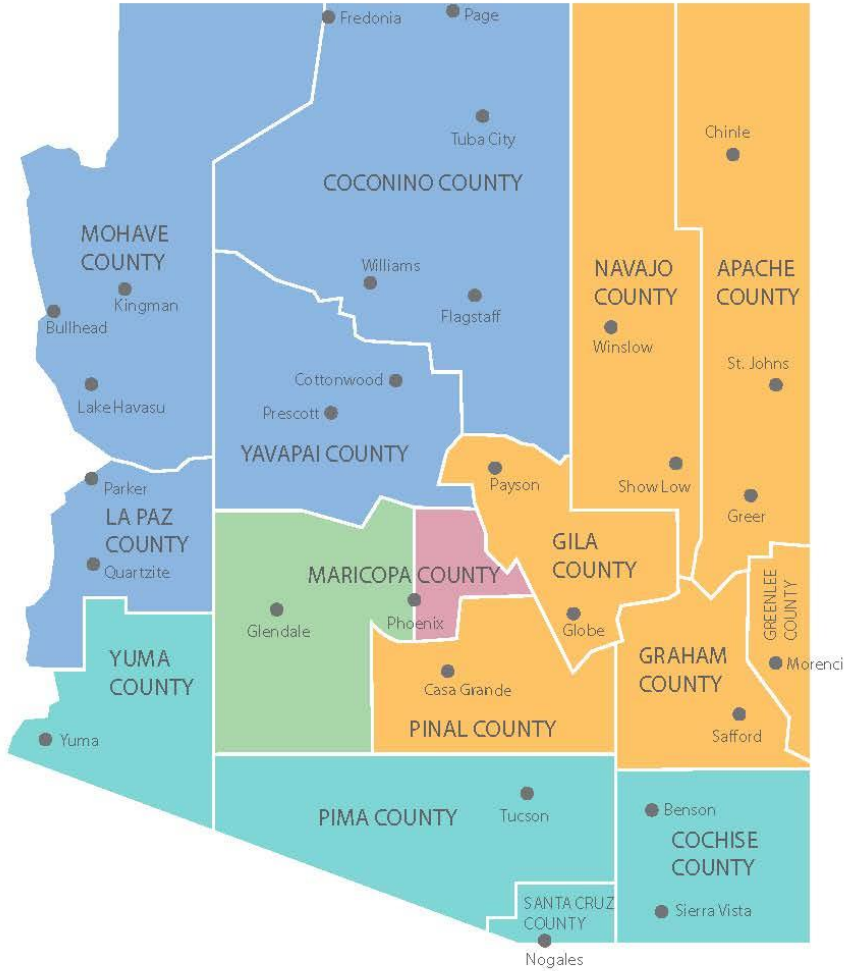
- As of Q1 FY2019, Specialists in a trainee status are accounted for in FTE figures in each section with an equal distribution of 66% caseload.
- In Home (IH) cases are based on a hand count of cases actively managed in each respective Region.
- IH cases assignments differ Regionally. Maricopa East, Maricopa West and South Regions employ specific IH units who manage IH cases only. Northwest Region has two units assigned to manage IH cases, Northeast Region has mixed units that may carry IH and/or OOH cases. Section 11 in South Region (Yuma) has workers assigned to carry IH cases.
- FTE assignments to investigations or case management are based on assignment of 50% investigative and 50% ongoing in all Regions, except for Sections 3 and 4 in Northeast Region, Section 5 of Northwest Region, and Sections 1, 3 and 9 of the South Region which employ a distribution of 34% Investigations and 66% ongoing. The fourth quarter of SFY 2020 for the South distribution was updated to reflect this change from the prior report.

DCS Quarterly Progress Report on Reducing OOH Child and Inactive Cases  
December 2020

**Table 3 – Headcount and Caseload Performance (SFY21-First Quarter)**

Region <sup>1</sup> Section # Section name			Quarter 1 FY 2021							
			FTE		Workload					
			Investigators	Case Managers	# Open Reports (investigations)	# of In home cases	# of Out-of-Home Children <sup>2</sup>	Investigation (reports per worker)	In Home (cases per worker)	Out of Home (children per worker)
Maricopa-East (10)	n/a	Moved to Northwest under realignment	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
	n/a	Moved to Northwest under realignment	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
	3	Osborn	17	17	229	---	557	13	---	33
	4	In Home	---	42	42	461	14	1	11	0
	5	Mesa	18	18	240	---	494	13	---	28
	6	Gilbert	21	21	365	---	447	18	---	22
	7	Tempe	20	20	279	---	582	14	---	29
	8	South Mountain	17	17	294	---	421	17	---	24
	9	North Central	17	17	242	---	514	14	---	31
	10	Permanency - South Mountain	---	44	4	---	1425	0	---	33
South (20)	1	Eastside Loop	9	18	128	---	275	14	---	15
	2	Tucson North - Oracle	16	16	293	---	407	19	---	26
	3	Tucson South - Valencia	9	17	129	---	375	15	---	22
	5	Madera A - 4th Ave.	18	18	90	---	243	5	---	14
	6	Permanency - Alvernon	0	32	---	---	580	---	---	18
	7	Alvernon	16	16	190	---	448	12	---	27
	8	Cochise County	11	11	147	---	187	13	---	17
	9	Madera C / Nogales	11	21	145	---	343	14	---	17
	10	In Home	0	31	6	248	60	0	8	2
	11	Yuma	12	12	129	63	218	11	16	18
	Northwest (30)	1	Prescott/Prescott Valley	12	12	211	52	165	18	13
3		Coconino County / Cottonwood	12	12	142	---	281	12	---	24
4		Bullhead City/Lake Havasu	11	11	136	38	205	12	6	18
5		Kingman	10	19	125	---	573	13	---	30
Northeast (40)	3	Globe / Payson / Safford	8	15	148	32	230	19	8	15
	4	St. Johns/Winslow/Show low	4	8	113	1	123	26	1	15
	5	Apache Junction/Kearney	17	17	275	51	534	16	9	31
	6	Casa Grande/Coolidge	18	18	230	36	504	13	22	28
Maricopa-West (50)	1	AHIT	26	---	10	---	---	0	---	---
	3	In Home	0	45	28	481	24	1	11	1
	4	Thunderbird	20	20	265	---	599	13	---	30
	5	Peoria	17	17	229	---	333	14	---	20
	6	Glendale/Durango	19	19	145	---	411	8	---	21
	7	Avondale/Advocacy	17	17	248	---	545	14	---	31
	8	Permanency	---	43	2	---	1216	---	---	28
	12	West 101	19	19	239	---	617	12	---	32
13	Pinnacle Peak	16	16	189	---	355	11	---	22	
<b>105, 106 - Other</b>	various	OCWI, GH/FH, Other	70	---	770	---	59	11	---	---

- As of Q1 FY2019, Specialists in a trainee status are accounted for in FTE figures in each section with an equal distribution of 66% caseload.
- In Home (IH) cases are based on a hand count of cases actively managed in each respective Region.
- IH cases assignments differ Regionally. Maricopa East, Maricopa West and South Regions employ specific IH units who manage IH cases only. Northwest Region has two units assigned to manage IH cases, Northeast Region has mixed units that may carry IH and/or OOH cases. Section 11 in South Region (Yuma) has workers assigned to carry IH cases.
- FTE assignments to investigations or case management are based on assignment of 50% investigative and 50% ongoing in all Regions, except for Sections 3 and 4 in Northeast Region, Section 5 of Northwest Region, and Sections 1, 3 and 9 of the South Region which employ a distribution of 34% Investigations and 66% ongoing. The South distribution was updated in this report for the first quarter of SFY 2021.



Regional Map

<b>NORTHWEST REGION</b>
Coconino, Mohave, La Paz and Yavapai Counties
<b>NORTHEAST REGION</b>
Apache, Graham, Greenlee, Gila, Navajo and Pinal Counties
<b>MARICOPA - WEST</b>
Maricopa County - West of 7th Avenue
<b>MARICOPA - EAST</b>
Maricopa County - East of 7th Avenue
<b>SOUTH REGION</b>
Cochise, Pima, Santa Cruz, and Yuma Counties
<b>OFFICE OF CHILD WELFARE INVESTIGATIONS</b>
Statewide
<b>CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE-1-888-SOS-CHILD</b>
1-888-767-2445

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