

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY



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

Report Date: March 31, 2021
Reporting Period: SFY2021, Quarter 2

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. 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 attached to this report (Attachment A).

COVID-19

Beginning the fourth quarter of SFY20 and through March 2021, the Department has been addressing 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. However, DCS did extend *Virtual Contact with Parents and Children* on Tribal land at least through March 31, 2021. Revisions to in-person visitation guidelines were issued in January 2021 along with a guide for medical providers regarding children in DCS care.

PROGRESS SUSTAINING OPEN REPORTS, INACTIVE CASES, & IMPROVING CASELOADS

DCS has 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 237 inactive cases as of December 31, 2020, representing a 98.5 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 when it 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 6,290 as of December 2020 (see Table 1) representing an 81 percent decrease. The benchmark was decreased to 8,000 starting the first quarter of SFY19 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 Specialists remains stable across most offices (see Tables 2 and 3).

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 a slight increase in the number of children (108) in OOH care in the second quarter of SFY21 compared to the first quarter of SFY21. The total OOH population includes all youth

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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. This began to increase slightly during the first quarter of SFY21. The decrease in calls was presumptively influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic as school setting mandatory reporters were not in contact with potential victims. Reports increased again in the first quarter of SFY21, as did the number of children entering OOH care. In the second quarter of SFY21, reports of abuse/neglect and the number of children entering care decreased only slightly. 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 985 in December 2020. The Department has been intentionally seeking this increase for this particular population. A strategic initiative was implemented 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 14,475 in December 2020 representing a 24% decrease. The reduction in the number of children entering out-of-home care is the result of several factors, including but are not limited to, 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 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.¹

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

	Q3FY19	Q4FY19	Q1FY20	Q2FY20	Q3FY20	Q4FY20	Q1FY21	Q2FY21
Inactive Cases ¹								
<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
<i>Actual</i>	355	179	177	308	216	95	93	237
Inactive Cases by disposition								
<i>Investigation Phase</i>	227	155	149	271	188	81	78	208
<i>Out-of-Home Cases</i>	16	2	3	5	3	0	0	1
<i>In-Home Cases</i>	112	22	25	32	25	14	15	28
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>	6,554	6,586	7,569	7,326	6,973	4,804	6,457	6,290
Number of Out-of-Home Children								
<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	14,591	14,299	13,964	13,964	13,964	13,964	13,964	13,964
<i>Benchmark (% reduction)</i>	2%	2%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Actual</i>	13,841	14,205	14,223	14,142	14,209	14,152	14,367	14,475

Footnotes

¹ Number of inactive cases is the actual figure as of the last Monday of the reporting period.

² 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.

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

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Table 2 – Headcount and Caseload Performance (SFY21-First Quarter)

Region ¹ Section # Section name			Quarter 1 FY 2021							
			FTE		Workload					
			Investigators	Case Managers	# Open Reports (investigations)	# of In home cases	# of Out-of-Home Children ²	Investigation (reports per worker)	In Home (cases per worker)	Out of Home (children per worker)
Maricopa-East (10)	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	17	123	26	10	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
105, 106 - Other	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 the first quarter of SFY 2021.

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

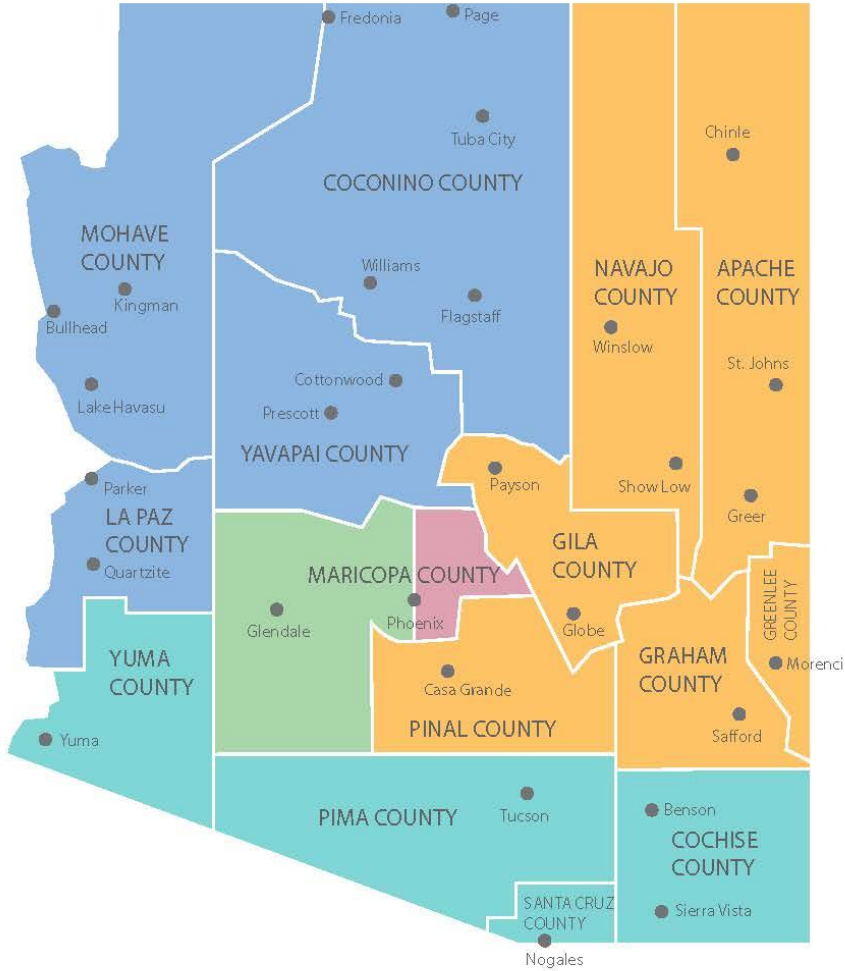
Region ¹ Section # Section name			Quarter 2 FY 2021							
			FTE		Workload					
			Investigators	Case Managers	# Open Reports (investigations)	# of In home cases	# of Out-of-Home Children ²	Investigation (reports per worker)	In Home (cases per worker)	Out of Home (children per worker)
Maricopa-East (10)	3	Osborn	15	15	287	---	513	19	---	34
	4	In Home	---	41	29	422	7	1	10	0
	5	Mesa	18	18	212	---	521	12	---	29
	6	Gilbert	15	15	316	---	505	20	---	33
	7	Tempe	16	16	267	---	474	17	---	30
	8	South Mountain	17	17	285	---	508	17	---	31
	9	North Central	16	16	225	---	478	14	---	30
	10	Permanency - South Mountain		45	9	---	1482	0	---	33
South (20)	1	Eastside Loop	8	16	140	---	282	17	---	17
	2	Tucson North - Oracle	16	16	339	---	415	22	---	27
	3	Tucson South - Valencia	8	16	134	---	400	16	---	25
	5	Madera A - 4th Ave.	19	19	98	---	286	5	---	15
	6	Permanency - Alvernon	0	33	1	---	615	---	---	19
	7	Alvernon	15	15	179	---	444	12	---	29
	8	Cochise County	10	10	135	---	167	13	---	16
	9	Madera C / Nogales	15	20	166	---	308	11	---	15
	10	In Home	0	31	18	210	76	0	7	2
	11	Yuma	12	12	147	67	242	12	17	20
	Northwest (30)	1	Prescott/Prescott Valley	13	13	215	60	163	17	15
3		Cocoonino County / Cottonwood	11	11	104	---	257	9	---	23
4		Bullhead City/Lake Havasu	11	11	114	58	211	11	11	20
5		Kingman	9	17	95	---	537	11	---	31
Northeast (40)	3	Globe / Payson / Safford	8	15	135	31	243	18	7	16
	4	St. Johns/Winslow/Show low	5	9	78	18	121	17	6	13
	5	Apache Junction/Kearney	16	16	241	118	523	15	20	32
	6	Casa Grande/Coolidge	18	18	255	37	529	14	25	29
Maricopa-West (50)	1	AHIT	25	---	4	---	1	0	---	---
	3	In Home	0	43	27	481	12	1	11	0
	4	Thunderbird	17	17	286	---	590	17	---	34
	5	Peoria	15	15	208	---	360	13	---	23
	6	Glendale/Durango	19	19	141	---	408	7	---	21
	7	Avondale/Advocacy	18	18	239	---	541	13	---	30
	8	Permanency	---	47	0	---	1230	---	---	26
	12	West 101	18	18	241	---	609	13	---	34
13	Pinnacle Peak	16	16	197	---	384	12	---	24	
105, 106 - Other	various	OCWI, GH/FH, Other	70	---	723	---	33	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.

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Regional Map

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

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