



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY SFY 2022 Arizona Citizen Review Panel Report

Agency Response to Recommendations

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS or the Department) is pleased to receive and respond to the recommendations made by the three Arizona Citizen Review Panels (CRP) in their Annual Reports for SFY 2022.

Citizen participation is vital to achieving successful engagement of children and families by bringing the voice of the community to safeguard and strengthen families to maintain permanency. An engaged citizenry brings vibrant new ideas and fresh perspectives creating an environment that is welcoming of community input for the elimination of child abuse and neglect, and improved child and family well-being. Citizen participation provides for open and honest communication between the citizens and DCS that forge a relationship built on mutual trust and respect.

The Department is committed to the strategic goals and initiatives outlined in the DCS Strategic Plan and demonstrated daily by our shared values:

- **Safety** - We are safety experts.
- **Compassion** - We are Compassioners.
- **Change** - We are all born to grow.
- **Accountability** - We hold ourselves to the highest levels of professionalism.
- **Advocacy** - When children can't speak for themselves, we can.
- **Family** - Family reaches beyond the home.
- **Engagement** - Engagement means listening and being responsive to earn the trust of all we encounter.
- **Teaming** - The best decisions are made together.

We thank each member of the Citizen Review Panels for their commitment and continued partnership.

The Department's response to each panel's recommendation are as follows:

Successful Transition to Adulthood for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care:

Recommendation #1: Create a mechanism or process for communication between CAC and other CRP's.

DCS Response: The Department is in agreement with this recommendation and will work on opening a line of communication between the three CRPs.

Recommendation #2: Provide updates from DCS on efforts to address disproportionality and disparities of families and youth served by DCS be made public, accessible and disseminated.

DCS Response: The Department is in agreement with this recommendation. The Department will provide updates on the strategic improvement plan, efforts to improve engagement with the community and incorporate feedback from its internal employee-led Disparity Committee, and other work to mitigate disproportionality in child welfare. There is a new section of the Monthly Operational Outcomes Report specific to African American Disparity measures as well. This report can be found on our website in the reports area. The Department encourages continued discussions with the CAC on this subject.

Recommendation #3: Continue efforts to illuminate barriers for housing for Transition Aged-Youth in and of care.

DCS Response: The Department is in agreement with this recommendation.

Recommendation #4: Establish youth-friendly tailored mechanisms for recurring communication with current and former youth from foster care with many mediums such as updating DCS website, creating youth guides, and community events.

DCS Response: The Department is in agreement with this recommendation.

Recommendation #5: Continue innovative efforts to engage community members in CRP and provide opportunities for meaningful involvement such as compensation, integration, and initiatives to get involved.

DCS Response: The Department is in agreement with this recommendation. CAPTA requires that Citizen's Review Panels be comprised of volunteers. The Department will seek other ways to encourage integration and participation.

The Arizona DCS Community Advisory Committee Panel

The DCS Community Advisory Committee produces an annual report in August, after the end of each state fiscal year. The annual report is available to the public on the Department's website at: <https://dcs.az.gov/about/community-advisory-committee>.

Recommendation #1: Regarding trauma-informed and responsive training: The Committee recommends that the Department provide training to staff that comprehends the significance of adverse childhood experiences in the lives of children, that promotes positive outcomes for increased resiliency, safety, and social-emotional wellbeing while promoting effective non- traumatic methods for reducing negative reactions to trauma. The Committee notes that there is an existing State contract for services in this area that may provide an opportunity for resources for the Department. The Committee additionally notes that providers also benefit from trauma-informed and responsive training and many are provided such training in the delivery of their services.

DCS Response: The Department is in agreement with the recommendation. Trainings currently including Trauma Informed response and care include initial trainings, ongoing and advanced trainings, child welfare community partner trainings, and foster parent trainings. The Department will continually seek training opportunities to help ensure our practice and response to families is compassionate and trauma-informed.

Recommendation #2: Regarding transfer of cases between case managers: In light of staffing shortages, the Committee recommends the Department gather and track the number of transfers between case managers to more fully assess the impact of transfers on permanency and wellbeing for children, and identify and implement measures to limit disruptions for children. The Committee recognizes the Department has data review processes in place and partners with the provider community to review and identify data reporting requirements for the Department which may be beneficial for this recommendation.

DCS Response: The Department will consider the benefits of conducting an analysis as described and discuss with the DCS Data Committee.

Recommendation #3: Regarding foster home licensure for kinship families: The Committee recommends the Department review licensing requirements, the availability of waivers, and training requirements for licensure of kinship families, to expedite and increase kinship-care placements in all communities, particularly in Native-American communities.

DCS Response: The Department is in agreement with the recommendation and will update the committee on its efforts.

Recommendation #4: Regarding the Department's overall workforce: The Committee recommends that the Department prioritize strategies to decrease vacancy rates and increase retention rates. The Committee additionally recommends that the Department alert policymakers to the importance of this priority for the success of its mission, including the need to conduct market analysis to maintain competitive compensation for employees who conduct and supervise investigations and case management.

DCS Response: The Department is in agreement with this recommendation and is working to address employee retention.

Recommendation #5: Regarding the Department's contract provider workforce: The committee expresses concern with the vacancy rates among the Department's contract provider workforce and the impacts of these vacancies on the ability of children and families to have timely access to high quality services and recommends the Department in partnership with providers, review rates and contractual requirements to address the realities of the provider community. Further, it is recommended the Department in conjunction with the provider community and university partners develop strategies to help with workforce challenges.

DCS Response: The Department is in agreement and will work with provider agencies on ways DCS might be able to assist with staffing issues.

Recommendation #6: Regarding the Department's subsidized childcare rate: The Committee expresses concern that the Department's childcare subsidy rates are substantially below what childcare providers charge and recommends the Department conduct a review of rates and implement adjustments to keep up with market costs. The Committee notes that a higher level of childcare is often necessary to meet the needs of the vulnerable children in the Departments custody.

DCS Response: The Department does not set the childcare subsidy. Those rates are set by the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES). The Department regularly meets with DES and is supportive of rate and payment point enhancements that increase access to quality child care settings.

Recommendation #7: Regarding vaccination rates for children in DCS custody: The committee expresses concern about the vaccination rates for children in DCS custody and recommends that the Department take steps to more fully incorporate COVID vaccination policies and practices in alignment with general Departmental child vaccination policies and practices.

DCS Response: The Department will continue to update, modify and communicate its COVID vaccination policies based on recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and the Arizona Department of Health Services.

Recommendation #8: Regarding scholarships and other assistance for higher-education: The committee expresses its appreciation of the program implemented by Grand Canyon University for children who had formerly been in foster care providing for full tuition, room and board and encourages other higher learning institutions, including Arizona's state universities to implement similar programs and benefits for Arizona's former foster children.

DCS Response: The Department is in agreement with this recommendation and is currently discussing creation of additional scholarship programs that support current and former foster youth.

The Arizona DCS Citizens Review Panel on Prevention

This panel is new as of November 2021 and is exploring focus areas at this time. The panel intends to make its recommendations in FY2023.