

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY



Semi-Annual Progress Report (Reducing Out-of-Home Children, Long-Term Cases and Inactive Cases)

**Report Date: February 28, 2023
Reporting Period: SFY2023, December 2022**

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Laws 2022, Second Regular Session, Chapter, 313, Section 17, the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) is required to continue this report semi-annually for data through December 2022. The Department is required to provide this report by February 28, 2023 for the period ending December 2022 and again in August 2023 for the period ending June 2023. Section 17 now requires the Department report the total number of long-term cases defined as any case in which the child has been in an out-of-home placement for at least eighteen months.

PROGRESS SUSTAINING OPEN REPORTS, INACTIVE CASES, & IMPROVING CASELOADS

DCS maintained the inactive cases well below the legislative benchmark of 1,000 since April 2017. Regrettably, the inactive cases rose above the benchmark during the prior period, largely attributable to barriers in Guardian with closing assessments. 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 to 1,579 in December 2022 which is a 90 percent decrease. While this still represents a significant decrease from March 2017, the Department has been addressing inactive cases to return below the benchmark of 1,000. To achieve this and to help improve caseloads, the Department uses performance management and other elements of the management system.

The Department achieved the original 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 10,153 as of December 2022 (see Table 1), representing a 70 percent decrease. The benchmark was decreased to 8,000 starting the first quarter of SFY19 below which the Department remained each reporting period until the third quarter of SFY21. This is primarily attributed to the transition from the previous child welfare information system (CHILDS) to the new system (Guardian) in early 2021. Additionally, the Department experienced an increase in reports to the Arizona Child Abuse Hotline as children returned to school and other settings in which mandated reporters now have more contact with potential victims. From July 2020 through December 2022, the Department averaged approximately 8,481 open reports; just slightly over the benchmark.

Like most other industries, DCS was challenged by the “Great Resignation”. As employers across the state and nation struggle to not only retain employees but also recruit and hire staff in the current environment, DCS has sought to strategize actions that might help address this challenge and minimize its impact. DCS offers telecommuting and/or a virtual work environment for staff for whom it is appropriate given their work duties. Additionally, DCS implemented a practice of offering staff who resign the ability to become temporary workers who are called to work on targeted activities or specific shift work (e.g. Hotline, after-hours investigation, or placement administration). This helps to reduce the impact of resigning staff and still have experienced resources willing to assist with critical duties.

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. Recently, the Arizona Legislature provided a much needed ten percent wage increase for state employees that was effective in July of 2022. Additionally, field staff (child safety specialists, case aides, supervisors and other field staff) were provided a one-time ten percent Critical Services Pay in December 2021 while remaining staff (i.e. non-field staff) received a five percent Conditional Retention pay in June 2022.

During SFY22 through the second quarter of SFY23, DCS HR maintained an Indeed subscription to conduct resume searches and post ads to increase applicant submission as well as seeking out potential candidates. On-site job fairs for specific Regional field offices have been conducted. Additionally, DCS engaged a campaign for ads in the Payson Roundup, city newspapers throughout Maricopa County, radio station ads, Facebook,

and HelpWanted to increase exposure. DCS also targeted high needs areas such as Apache Junction and Case Grande with billboard ads. Streaming audio ads on Spotify were utilized. Finally, a plethora of outreach efforts and digital displays on numerous media platforms, Google, social media apps and websites were conducted. In CY2021 alone, DCS received 3,013 resumes out of which 2,302 were shortlisted for consideration and 607 staff were hired from these efforts.

PROGRESS MADE REDUCING THE OUT-OF-HOME POPULATION

The Department continues its efforts to maintain a safe reduction in the historical out-of-home foster care population. The Department achieved a decrease in the number of children and youth in OOH care from 12,595 in June 2022 to 11,722 in December 2022. The total OOH population includes all youth ages zero (0) through the age of twenty (20). The number of children entering OOH care has also declined. For example, 1,788 children entered care during the first quarter of SFY23 but 2,173 children exited care during the same quarter. Additionally, the number of children entering OOH care during the current reporting period (3,340) was less than the number of children entering care in the prior reporting period (3,500). The Department is now below the established legislative benchmark of 13,964 for children in OOH care. While safely decreasing youth ages 0-17 in OOH care is paramount (currently 10,911), the Department continues to encourage youth ages 18-20 to enroll in the extended foster care to benefit from the supports and resources available to them as they transition into adulthood. The number of youth in extended foster care was 879 in December 2022. The Department has been intentionally seeking an increase for this particular population. A strategic initiative was implemented to expand the successful transition of youth to adulthood, which includes providing more youth over the age of eighteen with independent living services and supports. Additionally, the Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act passed in 2020 permitted states to allow qualified young adults to utilize Title IV-E funds on housing, education, employment and other needs. DCS partnered with Grand Canyon University to offer a best-in-class scholarship for youth aging out of foster care. The scholarship maximizes federal Pell Grant and tuition voucher funds, plus a generous scholarship from GCU that includes year-round housing and a meal plan. DCS assists with independent living funds as well, making it possible for our youth to graduate with a college degree debt-free. An on-campus job plus mentoring and tutoring will also be offered to these scholars.

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 ages 0-17 since its historical high of 18,007 in 2016 to 10,911 in December 2022 representing a 39 percent decrease. The reduction in the number of children in out-of-home care is the result of several factors, including but 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. Additionally, The Department received technical assistance from Action for Child Protection and the Capacity Building Center for States for development and implementation of the Atlantic Coast Child Welfare Implementation Center coaching model. DCS developed its Supervision Coach program that supports practice fidelity in safety assessment and clinical case management. 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, the Department has safely maintained a reduction of the out-of-home care population during SFY2020, SFY2021, SFY2022 and SFY2023.

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

DCS Semi-Annual Benchmark Report
February 2023

Table 1 – Benchmark Performance

	Q2SFY20	Q4SFY20	Q2SFY21	Q4SFY21	Q2SFY22	Q4SFY22	Q2SFY23
Inactive Cases ^{1,2}							
<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
<i>Actual</i>	308	95	237	1,879	3,089	1,726	1,579
Inactive Cases by disposition							
<i>Investigation Phase</i>	271	81	208	984	2,498	1,591	1,433
<i>Out-of-Home Cases</i>	5	0	1	294	147	89	24
<i>In-Home Cases</i>	32	14	28	601	444	46	122
Number of Open Reports							
<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000
<i>Actual</i>	7,326	4,804	6,290	10,968	12,115	10,568	10,153
Number of Out-of-Home Children ³							
<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	13,964	13,964	13,964	13,964	13,964	13,964	n/a
<i>Benchmark (% reduction) ²</i>	n/a						
<i>Actual</i>	14,142	14,152	14,475	14,683	14,450	12,595	11,722
Number of Long-Term Cases ⁴							
<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,323
<i>Actual Cases</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,323
<i>Actual Children</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,715

Footnotes

¹ Number of inactive cases is the actual figure as of the last day 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.

³ Pursuant to Laws 2022, Second Regular Session, Chapter, 313, Section 17, this metric(number of out-of-home children) is no longer required. Therefore, the benchmark has been removed. However, the Department will continue to report the total number of children in out of home care since it is needed for caseload determinations.

⁴ Pursuant to Laws 2022, Second Regular Session, Chapter, 313, Section 17, this metric was added to this report. Long-term case means any case in which the child has been in 20 an out-of-home placement for at least eighteen months. The benchmark is the case load reported for December 2022. Therefore, the benchmark for the February 2023 iteration of this report will be the actual for December 2022.

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 represent the number of cases assigned to each office.

DCS Semi-Annual Benchmark Report
February 2023

Table 2 – Headcount and Caseload Performance (SFY23-December 2022)

Region ¹ Section # Section name			DECEMBER 2022								
			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	16	14	630	---	372	39	---	27	
	4	In Home	0	23	13	313	19	1	13	1	
	5	Mesa	13	16	356	---	386	27	---	25	
	6	Gilbert	14	14	354	---	370	25	---	26	
	7	Tempe	15	17	297	---	231	20	---	14	
	8	South Mountain	14	17	390	---	390	28	---	23	
	9	North Central	16	18	388	---	558	24	---	32	
	10	Permanency - South Mountain	0	42	0	---	1200	0	---	29	
South (20)	1	Eastside Loop	9	11	165	---	226	18	---	21	
	2	Tucson North - Oracle	16	17	302	---	380	19	---	22	
	3	Tucson South - Valencia	11	16	236	---	247	21	---	15	
	5	Madera A - 4th Ave. (includes AHIT)	23	12	364	---	190	16	---	16	
	6	Permanency - Alvernon	0	31	0	---	754	---	---	24	
	7	Alvernon	13	13	173	---	340	13	---	27	
	8	Cochise County	12	13	171	---	237	14	---	18	
	9	Madera C / Nogales	13	19	238	---	281	18	---	15	
		10	In Home	0	24	35	310	135	1	13	6
		11	Yuma	13	13	273	76	184	21	13	14
Northwest (30)	1	Prescott/Prescott Valley	14	12	142	33	135	10	8	12	
	3	Coconino County / Cottonwood	11	14	231	---	240	22	---	17	
	4	Bullhead City/Lake Havasu	11	8	207	34	172	19	6	21	
	5	Kingman	6	23	146	---	465	23	---	20	
Northeast (40)	3	Globe / Payson / Safford	6	9	166	13	151	28	8	17	
	4	St. Johns/Winslow/Show low	7	4	142	7	137	20	2	32	
	5	Apache Junction/Kearney	11	15	358	62	388	33	10	25	
	6	Casa Grande/Coolidge	12	19	354	16	387	29	8	20	
Maricopa-West (50)	1	AHIT	28	---	13	---	---	0	---	---	
	3	In Home	0	29	3	357	17	0	12	1	
	4	Thunderbird	15	12	329	---	321	23	---	27	
	5	Peoria	16	13	247	---	446	15	---	33	
	6	Glendale/Durango	19	12	308	---	320	17	---	27	
	7	Avondale/Advocacy	17	19	457	---	398	26	---	21	
	8	Permanency	---	44	0	---	1112	---	---	25	
	12	West 101	16	15	244	---	361	16	---	24	
	13	Pinnacle Peak	14	7	350	---	153	25	---	21	
105, 106 - Other	various	OCWI, GH/FH, Other	54	---	2071	---	19	38	---	---	

- In Home (IH) cases are based on a hand count of cases actively managed in each respective Region.

- 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, Investigations and/or OOH cases. Section 11 in South Region (Yuma) has workers assigned to carry IH cases.

- During SFY2022, methodology of utilizing a 50/50 split for determining FTE assignments for investigation and ongoing Child Safety Specialists at the Section level was discontinued. Specific assignments are now based on the designations of their specific role as denoted in HRIS. However, Specialists in a trainee status are accounted for in FTE figures in each section with an equal distribution of 66% caseload. Filled FTE only includes case-carrying DCS Specialists and does not include Specialists assigned to the Child Abuse Hotline or Statewide Placement Administration.

DCS Semi-Annual Benchmark Report
February 2023

Table 3 – Headcount and Caseload Performance (SFY22-June 2022)

Region ¹ Section # Section name			JUNE 2022							
			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	12	482	---	472	32	---	39
	4	In Home	0	26	21	261	17	1	10	1
	5	Mesa	15	13	336	---	403	23	---	31
	6	Gilbert	16	14	645	---	475	40	---	33
	7	Tempe	13	11	240	---	251	19	---	24
	8	South Mountain	9	11	245	---	447	26	---	42
	9	North Central	12	16	409	---	505	35	---	32
	10	Permanency - South Mountain	0	33	18	---	1237	0	---	38
South (20)	1	Eastside Loop	9	12	220	---	258	25	---	22
	2	Tucson North - Oracle	13	15	263	---	343	20	---	23
	3	Tucson South - Valencia	9	14	273	---	288	29	---	21
	5	Madera A - 4th Ave. (includes AHIT)	24	11	370	---	243	15	---	22
	6	Permanency - Alvernon	0	32	0	---	723	---	---	22
	7	Alvernon	13	14	293	---	339	23	---	25
	8	Cochise County	8	13	178	---	211	21	---	17
	9	Madera C / Nogales	11	18	165	---	298	16	---	17
		10	In Home	0	24	19	197	151	1	8
	11	Yuma	12	16	250	79	215	21	13	14
Northwest (30)	1	Prescott/Prescott Valley	9	9	196	33	130	23	7	15
	3	Coconino County / Cottonwood	11	13	261	---	260	23	---	20
	4	Bullhead City/Lake Havasu	10	7	131	45	177	14	8	24
		5	Kingman	8	25	91	---	468	12	---
Northeast (40)	3	Globe / Payson / Safford	5	9	154	13	169	31	8	20
	4	St. Johns/Winslow/Show low	4	5	89	3	135	21	2	29
	5	Apache Junction/Kearney	10	12	495	62	405	50	11	33
		6	Casa Grande/Coolidge	11	17	434	22	442	38	9
Maricopa-West (50)	1	AHIT	27	---	0	---	0	0	---	---
	3	In Home	0	24	11	415	34	0	17	1
	4	Thunderbird	13	12	401	---	501	31	---	42
	5	Peoria	19	15	339	---	326	18	---	22
	6	Glendale/Durango	21	14	275	---	330	13	---	24
	7	Avondale/Advocacy	16	17	341	---	447	22	---	26
	8	Permanency	---	40	1	---	1259	---	---	32
	12	West 101	16	14	431	---	411	28	---	29
	13	Pinnacle Peak	12	10	469	---	199	40	---	20
105, 106 - Other	various	OCWI, GH/FH, Other	60	---	2072	---	26	35	---	---

- As of Q1 SFY 2019, 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.

- 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, Investigations and/or OOH cases. Section 11 in South Region (Yuma) has workers assigned to carry IH cases.

- During SFY2022, methodology of utilizing a 50/50 split for determining FTE assignments for investigation and ongoing Child Safety Specialists at the Section level was discontinued. Specific assignments are now based on the designations of their specific role as denoted in HRIS. However, Specialists in a trainee status are accounted for in FTE figures in each section with an equal distribution of 66% caseload. Data produced for December 2021 was updated from prior reports using this methodology.

- The Department continues to diligently address data quality issues and will continue to update data as issues are identified and resolved. This data element will be updated and resubmitted in future iterations of this report.