



DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY

2023 JOINT INVESTIGATION REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Prepared by the Office of Child Welfare Investigations

Pursuant to [A.R.S. § 8-817](#) and [A.R.S. 8-471\(H\)](#), the Department of Child Safety's Office of Child Welfare Investigations (OCWI) developed an annual report on joint investigations conducted during the fiscal year. This report provides data on criminal conduct reports that received a joint investigation from DCS and the appropriate law enforcement agency, in addition to the reasons why a criminal conduct report did not receive a joint investigation.

The Department of Child Safety (DCS) is required to develop, establish, and implement initial screening and safety assessment protocols in consultation with the Attorney General and statewide with county attorneys, chiefs of police, sheriffs, medical experts, victims' rights advocates, domestic violence victim advocates, and mandatory reporters. These inter-agency protocols are to guide the conduct of investigations of allegations involving criminal conduct. DCS has worked with the aforementioned agencies to comply with the requirements set forth in statute.

When a citizen calls the Arizona Child Abuse Hotline ('Hotline') with a concern of suspected abuse or neglect, the Intake Specialist will determine if the call meets the pre-established criteria for an intake report. Once the Intake Specialist has gathered all necessary information, they generate an intake report for investigation and assign it to a field unit. Tracking characteristics are assigned by the Hotline based on the information provided by the caller. A tracking characteristic is a circumstance that occurs in a report. It may occur independently of child abuse or neglect allegations or may carry a general description of a condition that exists in the family. Reports requiring a joint investigation with law enforcement have a tracking characteristic of Criminal Conduct (CC).¹ If during the course of an investigation, it is determined that a subsequent tracking characteristic applies, it may then be added to the assessment.

OCWI's primary goal is to ensure child safety by jointly investigating criminal conduct allegations of child abuse or neglect within the State of Arizona. This is accomplished by conducting a joint investigation with law enforcement personnel.

¹ "Criminal conduct allegation" means an allegation of conduct by a parent, guardian, or custodian of a child or an adult member of the victim's household that, if true, would constitute any of the following:

- (a) A violation of section 13-3623 involving child abuse.
- (b) A felony offense that constitutes domestic violence as defined in section 13-3601.
- (c) A violation of section 13-1404 or 13-1406 involving a minor.
- (d) A violation of section 13-1405, 13-1410 or 13-1417.
- (e) Any other act of abuse that is classified as a felony.
- (f) An offense that constitutes domestic violence as defined in section 13-3601 and that involves a minor who is a victim of or was in imminent danger during the domestic violence.

Number of Reports Coded as Criminal Conduct Allegations

The first data element in the table that follows is the number of reports generated for field investigation that contained a CC allegation (Table 1). As required by Department protocols, any report that contains a CC characteristic must be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency, and a joint investigation must occur.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF INTAKE REPORTS CODED AS CRIMINAL CONDUCT (CC) ALLEGATIONS RECEIVED BY THE DEPARTMENT ²

Month	Number of Reports
JULY	441
AUGUST	492
SEPTEMBER	478
OCTOBER	429
NOVEMBER	437
DECEMBER	443
JANUARY	504
FEBRUARY	498
MARCH	547
APRIL	536
MAY	578
JUNE	443
Total	5,826

During state fiscal year 2023 (SFY23), the Arizona Child Abuse Hotline received 43,154 intake reports of abuse or neglect (excludes reports in which DCS has no jurisdiction). Of those, 5,826 were classified as criminal conduct compared to 5,561 in fiscal year 2022.

The Department continues to work to improve the recognition of criminal conduct allegations. In state fiscal year 2018, OCWI embedded a Hotline Analyst at the Arizona Child Abuse Hotline. The Hotline Analyst continues to provide ongoing training and quality assurance relating to allegations of criminal conduct to Hotline, DCS, and OCWI staff.

² Prior reports produced this data by county. For SFY 2023, this data is being reported by month as county data is being updated for the fourth quarter of SFY 2023.

Joint Investigations

The second data element shows the number of reports with joint investigation documentation recorded according to the protocols (Table 2). As stated previously, all reports that contain the CC allegation are intended to be jointly investigated by DCS/OCWI and the appropriate law enforcement agency.

**TABLE 2: NUMBER OF CHILD SAFETY REPORTS CATEGORIZED
AS CC JOINTLY INVESTIGATED ACCORDING TO THE PROTOCOLS, BY COUNTY**

County	Number of Reports
APACHE	21
COCHISE	115
COCONINO	92
GILA	39
GRAHAM	26
GREENLEE	9
LA PAZ	14
MARICOPA	3,400
MOHAVE	212
NAVAJO	94
OUT OF STATE	42
PIMA	821
PINAL	345
SANTA CRUZ	36
YAVAPAI	214
YUMA	99
COUNTY NOT AVAILABLE	247
Total	5,826

In state fiscal year 2019, OCWI established Joint Investigation Liaison positions. These Liaisons provide training and guidance on the joint investigation process on CC reports in all areas statewide where OCWI does not have investigative staff. The Liaisons maintain contact and collaborate with DCS supervisors, DCS Specialists, law enforcement, and all other agencies who are involved in the joint investigation of criminal conduct allegations to ensure that the joint investigation protocol is followed. Prior to the Liaison positions, OCWI was able to collaborate on approximately 70% of all criminal conduct investigations statewide. Their collaborative efforts have improved the efficiency and quality of the joint investigation on CC reports received throughout the state.

Table 3 below shows that 91% percent of investigations conducted statewide were jointly investigated according to the protocols.

TABLE 3: NUMBER OF CC REPORTS JOINTLY INVESTIGATED ACCORDING TO THE PROTOCOLS, BY AGENCY

Agency Conducting Investigation	Total of Number CC Reports	Number of CC Reports Not Jointly Investigated	Number of CC Reports Pending Documentation	Number of CC Reports with a Joint Investigation Conducted	Percentage of CC Reports with a Joint Investigation Conducted
DCS / OCWI	5,826	235	267	5324	91%

There are several reasons a joint investigation between DCS/OCWI and law enforcement may not occur (Table 4). The main reasons are:

- **Child Not Available:** At the time of the initial contact by DCS, OCWI, or law enforcement, the alleged child victim is not available to be interviewed. This occasionally happens, for example, if a report is received and the alleged child victim is located in another state at the time of the investigation.
- **Law Enforcement Disagrees:** When the DCS case manager receives a report requiring joint investigation, contact is made with the appropriate law enforcement agency to make a police report and request the joint investigation. Law enforcement officials sometimes decline to accept the information as meeting criminal conduct standards and inform the DCS case manager that the investigation may be completed without law enforcement present. In these situations, DCS follows up with an additional report to law enforcement during the investigation if further information indicates criminal activity.
- **Law Enforcement Unavailable:** When the DCS case manager contacts law enforcement prior to the initial contact, there are times when law enforcement is unable to provide an officer or detective during the course of the investigation due to other incidents. In these situations, DCS follows up with an additional report to law enforcement if the initial contact further indicates criminal activity.
- **No Jurisdiction:** If the alleged victim or perpetrator lives on either a federal military installation or Native American reservation, DCS does not have jurisdiction and the case is transferred to the appropriate agency.

TABLE 4: REASONS WHY A JOINT INVESTIGATION DID NOT OCCUR

County	Child Not Available	Law Enforcement Disagrees	Law Enforcement Unavailable	No Jurisdiction	Total Reports
APACHE	0	1	0	0	1
COCHISE	0	9	1	0	10
COCONINO	0	3	1	0	4
GILA	0	3	0	0	3
GRAHAM	0	0	0	0	0
GREENLEE	0	0	0	0	0
LA PAZ	0	0	0	0	0
MARICOPA	7	101	25	0	133
MOHAVE	0	9	2	1	12
NAVAJO	0	4	3	0	7
OUT OF STATE	1	2	1	0	4
PIMA	1	24	6	0	31
PINAL	0	3	2	0	5
SANTA CRUZ	0	0	0	0	0
YAVAPAI	0	8	2	0	10
YUMA	0	2	0	0	2
COUNTY NOT AVAILABLE	2	10	1	0	13
TOTAL	11	179	44	1	235

Continued partnerships between law enforcement and DCS/OCWI have provided opportunities for identifying and addressing systemic issues between the agencies. Prior to state fiscal year 2019, the scope of the OCWI Deputy Chief position broadened to include a focus on the development of relationships with law enforcement agencies throughout the state. This position has continued to foster relationships with law enforcement partners, addressing any areas for improvement as they are identified, on behalf of both DCS and OCWI.

In 2018, a Victim Services Unit was created to serve as a liaison between DCS and the various prosecuting offices to ensure victims of crime are afforded the constitutionally protected rights they are entitled to while they are in DCS custody. OCWI continues to work closely with this unit to ensure children’s rights and representation as victims of crime are implemented swiftly when adults have been arrested on criminal conduct investigations.

OCWI continues to provide joint investigation trainings to DCS staff. Joint investigation with law enforcement training had been formally incorporated in to DCS’ training curriculum. All new supervisors, both from DCS and OCWI, will complete this course.

There continues to be regular collaboration and communication with the agencies involved in the investigation of criminal conduct throughout the state. This includes DCS, OCWI, law enforcement, prosecution, medical personnel, victim advocates, and advocacy centers to strengthen the successful outcome of the investigation and provide comprehensive services. This is accomplished through regular multidisciplinary team meetings, case reviews, and co-location opportunities with law enforcement. Additional partnerships will continue to be established in counties that do not have regular multidisciplinary team meetings or case reviews.