

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY



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

**Report Date: August 31, 2023
Reporting Period: SFY2023, June 2023**

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 was required to provide this report by February 28, 2023 for the period ending December 2022 and by August 31, 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

In March 2017, DCS fell below the legislatively required benchmark of 1,000 inactive cases. From a peak of 16,014 in January 2015 to 755 in June 2023 which is a 95 percent decrease. 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 7,403 as of June 2023 (see Table 1), representing a 78 percent decrease. The benchmark was decreased to 8,000 starting the first quarter of SFY19 below which the Department has achieved.

DCS continues to strategize actions that improve not only the recruitment but retention of employees. DCS offers telecommuting and/or a virtual work environment for staff for whom it is appropriate given their work 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.

During 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. DCS has shown a steady increase in filled positions for DCS Specialists. In July 2022, there were 1,137 filled DCS Specialists out of 1,406 appropriated positions. This has increased to a high of 1,355 as of June 2023 representing a 19 percent increase in this critical role.

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 (all children youth age 0 to 20) from 11,722 in December 2022 to 10,915 in June 2023. The number of children entering OOH care has also declined. For example, 1,577 children entered care during the third quarter of SFY23 while 1,896 children exited care during the same quarter. Additionally, the number of children entering OOH care during the current reporting period (3,057) was less than the number of children entering care in the prior reporting period (3,352). The Department is well below the previously established legislative benchmark of 13,964 for children in OOH care. It is noted that pursuant to Laws 2022, Second Regular Session, Chapter, 313, Section 17, a benchmark for this measure is no longer required. While safely decreasing youth ages 0-17 in OOH care is paramount, 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 youths in extended foster care was 879 in June 2023. 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

DCS Semi-Annual Benchmark Report
August 2023

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 10,022 in June 2023 representing a 44 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, 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

Table 1 – Benchmark Performance

	Q2SFY20	Q4SFY20	Q2SFY21	Q4SFY21	Q2SFY22	Q4SFY22	Q2SFY23	Q4SFY23
Inactive Cases ^{1,2}								
<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	1,000	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	755
Inactive Cases by disposition								
<i>Investigation Phase</i>	271	81	208	984	2,498	1,591	1,433	664
<i>Out-of-Home Cases</i>	5	0	1	294	147	89	24	9
<i>In-Home Cases</i>	32	14	28	601	444	46	122	82
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>	7,326	4,804	6,290	10,968	12,115	10,568	10,153	7,403
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	n/a
<i>Benchmark (% reduction)</i>	n/a							
<i>Actual</i>	14,142	14,152	14,475	14,683	14,450	12,595	11,722	10,915
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	3,323
<i>Actual Cases</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,323	3,309
<i>Actual Children</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,715	4,548

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.

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

DCS Semi-Annual Benchmark Report
August 2023

Table 2 – Headcount and Caseload Performance (SFY23-June 2023)

Region ¹ Section # Section name			JUNE 2023							
			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	18	13	356	---	380	20	---	29
	4	In Home	0	31	14	343	6	0	11	0
	5	Mesa	18	18	301	---	374	17	---	20
	6	Gilbert	19	17	201	---	281	11	---	17
	7	Tempe	17	18	244	---	364	14	---	21
	8	South Mountain	15	19	360	---	372	24	---	20
	9	North Central	17	16	174	---	381	10	---	23
	10	Permanency - South Mountain	0	48	0	---	1169	0	---	25
South (20)	1	Eastside Loop	11	14	177	---	223	17	---	16
	2	Tucson North - Oracle	16	17	205	---	340	13	---	20
	3	Tucson South - Valencia	11	17	143	---	201	13	---	12
	5	Madera A - 4th Ave. (includes AHIT)	22	11	180	---	202	8	---	18
	6	Permanency - Alvernon	0	32	0	---	764	---	---	24
	7	Alvernon	16	12	198	---	272	12	---	22
	8	Cochise County	11	14	163	---	245	15	---	18
	9	Madera C / Nogales	13	20	204	---	259	16	---	13
	10	In Home	0	26	16	132	109	1	5	4
	11	Yuma	13	17	191	80	181	15	13	11
	Northwest (30)	1	Prescott/Prescott Valley	12	12	135	51	145	12	10
3		Coconino County / Cottonwood	11	11	227	---	223	21	---	20
4		Bullhead City/Lake Havasu	10	7	92	29	127	10	5	17
5		Kingman	7	23	94	---	445	13	---	20
Northeast (40)	3	Globe / Payson / Safford	6	9	139	16	184	23	10	20
	4	St. Johns/Winlow/Show low	6	7	141	9	156	24	5	23
	5	Apache Junction/Keamey	11	15	207	74	371	19	12	24
	6	Casa Grande/Coolidge	11	17	148	0	286	13	0	17
Maricopa-West (50)	1	AHIT	24	---	0	---	---	0	---	---
	3	In Home	0	32	5	342	8	0	11	0
	4	Thunderbird	17	14	314	---	260	18	---	18
	5	Peoria	20	18	179	---	345	9	---	19
	6	Glendale/Durango	22	15	181	---	289	8	---	19
	7	Avondale/Advocacy	21	23	252	---	390	12	---	17
	8	Permanency	---	47	0	---	1008	---	---	22
	12	West 101	19	20	190	---	371	10	---	18
13	Pinnacle Peak	19	15	236	---	175	12	---	12	
105, 106 - Other	various	OCWI, GH/FH, Other	66	---	1736	---	9	26	---	---

- 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
August 2023

Table 3 – 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
	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.