



Arizona Department of Child Safety

Fiscal Year 2017 Strategic Plan

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Table of Contents

I.	Overview	1
II.	Vision, Mission, and Values	1
III.	Strategic Planning Process	2
	Federal Oversight and External Stakeholders	
IV.	Strategic Goals & Objectives.....	3
	Five-Year Strategic Goals	
	Strategic Objectives, Initiatives & Key Actions	
V.	Management System – Continuous Improvement & Sustainment	5

Overview

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS or the Department) is committed to achieving safety, permanency and well-being for Arizona's children and families. DCS is driven by this commitment, as well as a desire to be a national leader for child safety through a well-run, efficient, and effective organization based on best practices and continuous improvement.

It is a privilege to present the fiscal year 2017 strategic plan as a continuation of the accomplishments achieved in fiscal year 2016 that stabilized the incoming workload, established business operations for the new agency, and improved objective decision-making at the Child Abuse Hotline and in investigations. Fiscal year 2017 is focused on sustaining the improvements made and safely eliminating the investigations backlog so that Department resources can be redirected to support permanency efforts for children in care.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Guiding the strategic planning process, are the vision, mission, and values that serve as a compass ensuring that the right priorities are identified and supported throughout all levels of the Department. It is imperative that the daily work continues without interruption, while implementing well-defined strategies to improve the overall performance and quality of our engagement with children, families, communities, and partner stakeholders. Again, in fiscal year 2017, strategic priorities were set to align with the vision, mission, and values.

Vision

The comprehensive strategic plan works toward a single vision for the agency:

Children thrive in family environments free from abuse and neglect.

This vision clarifies what DCS should look like in the future and where the organization would like to be in the future. It communicates the core principles that guide the work of child welfare in Arizona:

- Safety: All Arizona's children are safe and protected from harm
- Permanency: All Arizona's children live in safe, loving forever families
- Well-Being: All Arizona's children are given the opportunity to thrive through support of strong families and their communities

Mission

The plan outlines strategies for building the workforce, systems, and culture necessary to support the agency in achieving its mission:

Successfully engage children and families to ensure safety, strengthen families, and achieve permanency.

This mission clarifies DCS's purpose and why it should be doing what it does. The focus on successful engagement of children and families communicates how and why DCS reaches and partners with Arizona's children and families.

Values

The plan acknowledges and supports a set of core values that serve as guiding principles for DCS. Each of the values listed below guides the agency in achieving its mission and outcomes. They are also the foundation to building the organizational culture.

- **Child-Centered:** Children belong with families – their own when it is safe to do so and when it's not, with a safe, permanent family who can meet their unique needs and will maintain their supporting, meaningful connections to continue positive values, beliefs and their cultural legacies.
- **Family-Focused:** Families have the primary responsibility for raising their children and keeping them safe. Families are the experts regarding their own strengths and needs and will have a voice and decision-making role regarding decisions that affect them and their children.
- **Successful Engagement:** Children, youth, and families are best served when child welfare staff respect the family, actively listen to them, and invite participation in decision-making to achieve positive outcomes.
- **Partnerships and Community:** The entire community shares the responsibility of keeping children safe and protected from abuse and neglect.
- **Professional Environment and Workforce Excellence:** Our professional competence will be demonstrated by an organization and workforce that proactively responds to the changing needs of communities and provides respectful treatment to families.
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** All children and families have the right to be understood within the context of their own family rules, traditions, history, beliefs, and culture.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** The child welfare system holds itself accountable to the highest standards of practice at all levels within the organization. We are transparent and responsive to our children, youth, and families as well as our staff, partners, and communities within the limits of confidentiality.

Together, the vision, mission, and values shape the thinking and behavior of all levels of professionals within our organization and how we engage with each other, children and families, and the community.

Strategic Planning Process

In the development of the strategic plan, the Department gave thoughtful consideration to a variety of inputs ranging from feedback from stakeholders and DCS staff, trends in key Department performance metrics, and federal and state mandated requirements. The section below describes the Department's efforts in aligning strategic priorities to better serve Arizona's children and families.

Federal Oversight and External Stakeholders

Collaborations with key stakeholders are mandated through the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process. In an effort to build on the already established framework, the strategic plan was developed with thoughtful consideration of the CFSR process that is conducted by the federal Children’s Bureau that closely examines child and family outcomes, and systemic factors through a variety of methods including case reviews, and interviews with stakeholders and families. Chart 1 shows the significant alignment between the strategic plan and the CFSR requirements. It is with intentional planning that the Department will begin a consistent dialogue about the well-being of families and children in Arizona, while maintaining transparency and accountability.

Chart 1: Planning Continuum



Another important input into the strategic planning process is the alignment with child welfare stakeholders, and state and federal oversight entities. Formal engagements include the Community Advisory Committee, the Arizona Citizen Review Panels, DCS Oversight Committee, and others. In addition to formal engagements, throughout the year DCS participates in a variety of meetings with service providers, community partners, sister agencies, county court partners, and other key child welfare stakeholders. These meetings help address immediate concerns and provide insight to challenges that exist outside of the Department, but may have significant impact to the Department’s ability to best serve families and children.

Strategic Goals & Objectives

The purpose of the strategic plan is to build the systems and structure that will support outcomes for the future while at the same time identifying challenges that have evolved over time that need to be addressed in the immediate term. The five-year strategic goals provide the long-term direction. With these strategic goals, the agency balances the priorities to ensure sustainability:

Five-Year Strategic Goals

1. Improve objective decision-making at the Hotline and investigations
2. Improve performance and quality of service through employee retention
3. Reduce length of stay for children in out-of-home care
4. Improve capacity to place children in family environments
5. Reduce recurrence of maltreatment by improving service delivery

Strategic Objectives, Initiatives & Key Actions

The fiscal year 2017 strategic objectives are aimed at being responsive to immediate needs while continuing to work towards building systems to ensure sustainability and success over the long term:

1. Avoid historic 10%+ out-of-home population growth through improving safety decisions, targeted activities, and prevention work
2. Maintain Fiscal Responsibility
3. Improve Employee Retention

Each strategic objective consists of initiatives and key actions that have been identified as moving the Department towards successful completion. Additionally, each strategic initiative has an assigned team lead and a project management type (A3 planning, project management, basic project plan) to guide the efforts and track timely delivery. Monthly reporting is required and allows the management team to address unforeseen barriers as well as make any necessary modifications to project plans as needed.

Objective One: Avoid historic 10%+ out-of-home population growth through improving safety decisions, targeted activities, and prevention work

Metric: Maintain OOH population below 19,000 children by June 30, 2017

The DCS system has experienced significant growth in the number of children in care over the last several years. The number of children coming into care has outpaced the number of children exiting care, therefore creating a capacity in the system that has not been manageable. To compliment strategic efforts taken in fiscal year 2016 to improve the processes on the front end of the system, the Department has prioritized efforts to expedite permanency for children in care, as well as further develop prevention efforts that can help families stay intact without DCS intervention. The initiatives are:

- Refine and implement Safety Assessment and Intervention Model improvements
- Refine and implement statewide field standardization
- Implement targeted permanency activities to reduce OOH population
- Expand the Office of Prevention

Objective Two: Maintain Fiscal Responsibility

Metric: Operate the Department at or below appropriated budget

It is a priority to the Department to be mindful in allocating and maintaining resources in order to improve services to children and families. Over the last several years, the Department has undergone significant

changes in caseloads and agency structure. As capacity challenges have begun to stabilize and the Department is closer to full autonomy, the Department is committing to further evaluate the use of DCS resources across all areas. Initiatives under this objective include:

- Refine and implement the budget control process
- Refine and implement the placement improvement process
- Refine and implement service array standards and application
- Achieve operations cost targets
- Execute the Title IV-E waiver demonstration project

Objective Three: Improve Employee Retention

Metric: Reduce all employee turnover from 26.7% to 25.0% by June 30, 2017

A stable workforce is a key component to sustaining the positive gains the Department makes. It is important that staff feel supported, that their work is meaningful, their ideas are heard, and they are provided with opportunities for professional growth and development. The Department is committed to a multi-pronged approach to address several of the main factors that contribute to turnover:

- Execute investigations backlog reduction project
- Define and implement case management job family and compensation structure
- Refine and implement "onboarding" experience
- Define and implement a leadership development program for all people leaders

Management System – Continuous Improvement & Sustainment

The DCS Management System is a subset of the Arizona Management system that has been established on the principles of lean. The DCS Management system is an intentional means of developing a learning organization. DCS is one year into building a management system to guide strategic decision-making while sustaining positive progress across all areas of the Department.

The management system contains the following components: people development, leader behaviors, waste identification and problem solving, visual management, tiered accountability, and standard work. Coaching and implementation of these concepts is occurring across all areas of field and business operations. This management system approach encourages continuous improvement in processes and procedures while maintaining safety and quality in the work and services delivered. It is designed to provide department leaders with techniques to oversee their areas for success, to engage staff, and achieve their desired outcomes through process improvement and measuring target goals.

The goal of the management system is to have “everybody, every day, everywhere reflecting on how they did yesterday, where the waste occurred and how to do better tomorrow.”

Strategic planning is an integral part of the DCS management system. The priorities for the year are developed using key data metrics, compliance with state and federal regulation, trends in feedback received

from internal and external stakeholders, and internal quality control mechanisms established through the Department's Office of Quality Improvement. Once the annual priorities are finalized, careful planning and project management is utilized to meet the agreed upon milestones. Progress on the strategic plan is reviewed on a monthly basis at the Director's business review meeting with the DCS leadership team (see Strategy Deployment A3 below). Each month key metrics are reviewed, unforeseen challenges or barriers are raised, and priorities are evaluated to ensure continued alignment with strategic plan goals and targets.

Updates on the Department's progress will be made available after the close of the quarter. Any questions can be directed to DCSStrategicPlan@azdes.gov.

