

**DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REPORT OF ACTIVITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE FISCAL YEAR 2021**

ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES § 8-459(D)

Report date: June 4, 2021

Background

The Community Advisory Committee established June 2015 by A.R.S. §8-459, to provide a community forum with the following purpose:

1. to inform the Department, analyze current law and policy and make recommendations to improve the ability of the Department to increase the safety of children, respond to child maltreatment and ensure the well-being of and timely permanency for children who are referred to and involved in the child welfare system;
2. for collaboration among state, local, community, tribal, public and private stakeholders in child welfare programs and services that are administered by the Department; and
3. to improve communication between mandatory reporters and the Department.

Additionally, the Community Advisory Committee serves as one of several Citizen Review Panels for the Department, as required by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). One can find the list of Citizen Review Panels at <https://dcs.az.gov/about/community-advisory-committee>.

The Community Advisory Committee includes one representative from each of fourteen stakeholder groups. The Committee’s membership includes:

ARIZONA DCS COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP	
SECTOR	NAME/AFFILIATION OF REPRESENTATIVE
Child welfare agencies that directly provide contracted services to children and their families	Jacob Schmitt, MPA, President/CEO, Arizona’s Children Association
Child advocacy organizations that deal with child welfare system policy issues	Bahney Dedolph, Deputy Director, Arizona Council of Human Service Providers
Current or former foster or adoptive parent	Jennifer Huber, PhD, former foster parent and adoptive parent
Medical providers, with a preference for pediatricians, who have experience in diagnosing and treating injuries related to abuse and neglect	Cody Conklin-Aguilera, MD., FAAP, Medical Director, Department of Public Health Yavapai County, Pediatric Program Manager, Verde Valley
Volunteers with the foster care review board or Court Appointed Special Advocate program	Robin Pearson, Executive Director, Voices for CASA Children
Persons with an academic appointment to a state university who conduct research in child welfare services, child maltreatment or child abuse or neglect	Judy Krysik, PhD., MSW, Associate Professor, Arizona State University School of Social Work, Director Center for Child Well-Being
The courts, the representative must be involved in child welfare issues	Nicole Roskens, LPC, Clinical Director, Cradle to Crayons Program, Superior Court of Maricopa County Juvenile Division, and Independent Private Practice, Counselor

ARIZONA DCS COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP (CONTINUED)	
SECTOR	NAME/AFFILIATION OF REPRESENTATIVE
A rural area in this state who has experience in the child welfare system	Rita Wright, LMSW, Assistant Clinical Professor, Child Welfare Training Project Coordinator, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Northern Arizona University
A Native American tribe or nation who has experience in the child welfare system	Elisa Manuel, President, Three Precious Miracles
A child advocacy organization that advocates for or represents children who are victims of crime.	Peter Gentala, J.D., Chair, Senior Legal Counsel, National Center on Sexual Exploitation; Board member, Arizona Child and Family Advocacy Network
Persons who have experience with children with special needs and the child welfare system	Soncerea Swift, foster parent, social worker
A law enforcement agency. The representative must have experience with the Department on cases that involve criminal conduct allegations	Vacant
Schools. The representative must have experience in the child welfare system	Vacant
A faith-based organization. The representative must have experience in the child welfare system	Mark Upton, President/CEO Christian Family Care
Resigned 11/30/2020	Sergeant Matthew Lawes, Mesa Police Department
Retired 12/31/2020	Deborah Burdick, Ed.D, Superintendent, Cave Creek Unified School District

As required by A.R.S. §8-459, representatives are appointed by the Director of the Department of Child Safety and did not receive compensation for their service on the Committee. The statutory requirements of the Committee are to meet at least quarterly and produce a report of Committee activities and recommendations each fiscal year. A.R.S. § 8-459(D).

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES, ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee met in SFY 2021 to receive information about current laws and policies, and to review data relevant to the Committee’s three statutory requirements. In addition to the call to public and option for executive session, the meeting agendas included a variety of topics aimed at educating and informing the members. An archive of the Committee meetings, including material presented at the meetings can be accessed at the following web page: <https://dcs.az.gov/about/community-advisory-committee>. In accordance with A.R.S. §8-459(D), the Committee has summarized several key activities and recommendations that came from the five meetings held in SFY 2021. The final meeting of SFY 2021 (June) was used to finalize the annual report.

Meeting #1: August 7, 2020

Activities and Actions

- Update on Evidenced Based Programs the Department is Exploring for Prevention Services - Heather Kohl from Action for Child Protection, Inc. presented to the Committee on Family Connections and Nurturing Parents, evidenced based programs that the DCS has chosen. Family Connections and Nurturing Parenting is a service array that will replace several programs existing today: Building Resilient Families, Intensive and Moderate In-Home, Family Reunification and Parent Aide Skill Building Sessions. Family Connections and Nurturing Parenting are part of a systemic change for service delivery for DCS. Much research has gone into the development of Family Connections beginning in 1996. The primary focus of the array of services offered by Family Connections is:
 - * Individualized to family need, culture and readiness for change
 - * Based on family need not case status (in-home or out-of-home)
 - * Coordinated with other family-serving agencies
 - * Separates Safety Assessment & Planning from Needs Assessment & Service Planning
 - * Naturally fits with Arizona's Safety and Risk Assessment models
 - * Consistent across providers and regions
 - * Science-based

The intent of the program is to be in place for twelve months. The key components of the programs are:

- * Intake
- * Outreach & engagement
- * Concrete services
- * Comprehensive family assessment (assessment instruments)
- * Outcome driven case plans with SMART goals
- * Change focused intervention
- * Direct facilitation of change
- * Advocacy/service facilitation
- * Evaluation of Change (at least every 90 days)
- * Case Closure

The target population for these programs are families with children from birth to age 18 who are at risk of future maltreatment and/or placement, in addition to children who are unsafe. The programs identify how to enhance Protective Factors for families at risk of future maltreatment. In families where there is currently DCS involvement and reunification is the plan, Family Connections will assist the family to improve deficiencies in their Protective Capacities.

This is a major undertaking for DCS. At the time of the meeting, the Department was preparing an RFP, and planning to go live with the programs July of 2021.

- CMDP Integration of Behavioral Health Services from the Regional Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) – Karla Mouw, Assistant Director CMDP presented to the Committee. She spoke about the background that led to the plan for the integration of Behavioral Health and CMDP in 2015 with legislation; as well as the research that led to the decision to a Managed Care Organization (MCO) Direct Contract Award with Mercy Care rather than completing the RFP process that had begun during the summer of 2019. She provided information where members could review the RFP responses that came into DCS. Workgroups have begun meeting and creating plans for the Project Plan and the roles and responsibilities that are to be developed. The integration and Go-Live date is April 1, 2021. There are contract enhancements that target specific groups, youth in transition and children from birth to five years old. There will be service coordination between providers, and the development of a network of providers, which will include most AHCCCS providers. Overall, the measurements of service will be of a higher performance than most Medicare, or Healthcare plans. CMDP will have final review of authorizations when a second opinion is required. The name for this new integrated service will be DCS Comprehensive Health Plan.
- Missing Children Initiative Report Requirements, Changes and Updates on Tracking – Mark Ewy, Project Manager presented for the Department. Mr. Ewy reviewed the data published on Missing Children and Runaway Children. He explained that missing children are often children that are missing during an investigation, and who are not in the physical custody of DCS, even if they are in legal custody. Mr. Ewy reviewed the new Quality Improvements Efforts implemented during the past year to locate runaway youth. Added scrutiny due to monthly case reviews and additional locate resources have aided the DCS Program Specialist and DCS Specialist to locate runaway youth. The Department’s check list includes the following questions:
 - * Is the child a crossover youth?
 - * Have verified that placement data is accurate?
 - * Have any data corrections needed?
 - * Has a motion for pick up filed?
 - * Was there a police report made?
 - * Are monthly locate efforts documented in CHILDS?
 - * Are the child’s parents aware of the child’s runaway status?
 - * Was a school locate referral completed?
 - * Was a report to NCMEC about the child?
 - * Is an +At-Risk runaway referral needed/submitted

When a youth has run away, this checklist ensures that proper efforts to find the youth have been undertaken. Better coordination between the DCS Specialist and the Office of Child Welfare Investigations (OCWI) have increased the types of resources available used to locate runaway youth, like Lexis Nexis and National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). Discussion by the Committee ensued regarding youth who run away from a group home multiple times and repeatedly returned to the same group home. The group home does not offer solutions to the problem, and Mr. Ewy acknowledged that no one could stop a youth from running away; even the police are unable to stop a youth from leaving either a group home or a foster home. The confidentiality of youth who run away hampers law enforcement when a youth runs away from a foster or group home. Law enforcement is unable to utilize the same tools, as they would use when a non-foster child or youth is missing or have run away. Mr. Ewy, on behalf of Director Faust advised the committee that the Department would welcome recommendations from the community.

1. Recommendation – when children or youth are found and returned into DCS physical custody one again, it would be beneficial to have that child or youth receive a full health check.
 2. Review group homes that have multiple youth who have run away episodes often to determine if there is a pattern or a trend. There is recognition some group homes may have a higher incidence of runaways due to behavioral or mental health issues in specialized group homes.
 3. Newly Adopted Legislation: The Committee notes the passage of House Bill 2439 (55th Leg., 1st Reg. Sess. 2021). This newly adopted legislation, which creates new specific reporting requirements for the Department concerning missing children. The first applicable reporting period for the Department covers the period between January 1, 2022 and June 30, 2022.
- Call for Public Comments - The Arizona Department of Health Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had issued guidance regarding the Coronavirus, which limits gatherings to less than ten people as a means of protection of the public’s health. Therefore, pursuant to A.R.S. Sec. 38-431.01(H), the Call for Public Comment portion of the August 7, 2020 meeting was subject to temporary suspension.

Meeting #2: October 2, 2020

Activities and Actions

- Trends in the Placement of Children in Foster Care in Light of Covid-19 Gillian Vanasse, Assistant Director for Foster Care and Post Permanency Supports presented for the Committee.
 - * Ms. Vanasse stated that the Department has bi-monthly meetings with congregate care provider partners, as well as community partners to discuss Covid testing. Since March there have been 185 youth test positive for Covid-19 and all have recovered, and no hospitalizations. Currently there are no active cases of the virus. A majority of the cases have come from congregate care facilities and in youth 13+ years old. A partnership with Banner Urgent Care conducts testing for youth in care. When a caregiver notifies DCS that there is exposure of a child to Covid-19 that caregiver receives a referral for an

appointment, and a list of Banner Urgent Care facilities for immediate testing, turnaround time for a response is very quick. Additionally, the Department has arranged to have rapid testing at a pediatric office in Chandler, and has collaborated with a mobile unit that will go to group homes when there are many youth within that home exposed to the virus. DCS staff have the ability to test through a partnership agreement with ASU.

- * Recruitment campaign for foster families has gone well. DCS has received a great deal of support from the community. The Essential campaign was successful. During the month of August, 680 leads came into the Department. There were small increases in the number of foster families in both May and September. Kinship placements have been on the rise, with 57% of all first time placements as kinship placements. Placement is with a family member or fictive kin. Currently, the Department is preparing for the fall recruitment campaign and National Adoption Month.
- * Distance learning for youth, the Department believes that in person learning is preferable to distant learning. On July 6, the Department made this announcement and there was misinformation in the media. The Department recognizes that there will be exceptions to in-person learning and kinship and foster families can request an exception when they feel it is necessary. The Department has set up a protocol for request; the caregiver after contact with the Department matched with an Educational liaison who works with the caregiver and the DCS Specialist to ensure that the educational needs of a child are satisfied. Presently, there have been 85 approved exceptions to in-person learning. Similar process has been set up for children in congregate care and children with IEPs or 504 plans, which 26% of children in care do have. A member raised the question about the number of children in congregate care. Director Faust attended and stated that in the last week of September 2019, there were 14,507 children in DCS care, and 1602 in congregate care and in the last week of September 2020 there were 14,610 children in DCS care, with 1553 in congregate care.
- * The committee discussed the information provided in the presentation and members asked questions regarding the protocol for testing when a child moves from a group home to a family setting. When a child moves or enters DCS care testing would occur only if the child was exposed, and if so would be subject to quarantine. In response to the question of a protocol for testing foster parents, the protocol is similar.
- Racial Disproportionality and Disparities in Child Welfare – Katherine Guffey, Chief Quality Improvement Officer presented to the committee. Ms. Guffey presented that Black and American Indian children are disproportionately overrepresented in the out-of-home care population, in comparison to the underrepresentation of white and Hispanic children in the out-of-home care population. An example from the data, Black children are 4% of the population, and American Indian are 5% but each represent 16% and 8% respectively of the out-of-home children population. Additionally, the report rate per thousand children to DCS for Black children is ninety-six, and the entry rate per thousand children into DCS care is nineteen, which equates to a 1:5 ratio. For American Indian children the report rate per thousand

children is thirty-nine and the entry rate is eight, which also equates to a 1:5 ratio. For Hispanics and White children the ratio is 1:11 and 1:7. Ms. Guffey echoed the words of Director Mike Faust, who spoke about the initiative that DCS is planning to move forward with in the near future. Mr. Faust stated that disproportionality and implicit bias are complex issues and that many difficult conversations will need to be had to gain greater understanding and to develop solutions. Mr. Faust stated that DCS is planning to create a diversity council that will be inclusive of staff, all levels, possibly youth in foster or former foster youth and others. Mr. Faust said that the strategic plan is going to have this issue tied into the strategic plan over the next few years as well. Ms. Guffey spoke about relationships and problem exploration for inclusion and self-reflection of DCS. Forging relationships and trust with the community, and gaining an understanding of the perception by the community of DCS. The committee had questions for Ms. Guffey, there was discussion and agreement that DCS is taking the proper steps, in developing new measurements, introducing evidenced based programs and reaching out to the community at-large to improve perceptions. Ms. Vanasse pointed out that DCS recruitment efforts have focused on the American Indian community and the response has much improved from prior campaigns. Ms. Vanasse and the Foster Care and Post Permanency team are in the process of redesigning the foster care information website and they are creating a new orientation video that will show a more diverse population. The Diversity Council will follow the model of the DCS Youth Empowerment Council, with independence to govern itself and the capability to advise DCS.

1. Recommendation – Review barriers to Black and American Indian ability to become licensed foster parents. There are barriers, that if eliminated will increase the number of potential families, because they serve no practical purpose.
2. Recommendation – Delve further into the data to determine how much of the relationship of Black and American Indian children in DCS care is due to the incarceration of Black and American Indian parents.
3. Consider proposing legislative changes to address poverty related issues that are mistaken for child neglect.
 - Call for Public Comments - The Arizona Department of Health Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had issued guidance regarding the Coronavirus, which limits gatherings to less than ten people as a means of protection of the public’s health. Therefore, pursuant to A.R.S. Sec. 38-431.01(H), the Call for Public Comment portion of the October 2, 2020 meeting was subject to temporary suspension.

Meeting #3: December 4, 2020

Activities and Actions

- Update on the BK vs Snyder/Faust Class Action Litigation – Mark Ewy, Project Manager, presented on behalf of the Department. Mr. Ewy reviewed the history of the lawsuit, discussed at a prior meeting last year. Preliminary approval of the settlement agreement by the court came in October 2020. The court has scheduled a final approval hearing in February 2021. The public is welcome to comment, and the hearing will be open to the public. Complete details of the settlement is located at <https://dcs.az.gov/news-reports/settlement>. The completion of the settlement terms is

December 31, 2025. DCS was required to notify everyone involved in the lawsuit. The plan for notification that included a variety of methods has begun and submitted to the court for approval. The settlement covers four areas:

- * Behavioral Health
- * Physical and Dental Health
- * DCS Specialist work loads
- * Placement array

Within each area of the settlement, there is a variety of requirements to update policy, to update training or to establish performance measurements in each area to monitor activities. The committee discussed the settlement, specifically about the allocation of funding and resources to accomplish the goals of the settlement. The Department has been working to make improvements in these areas. Additional discussion centered on when the benchmarks will become available to the public, and with the goal for completion of the settlement December 31, 2025, and whether it could end earlier.

- Trends in the Placement of Children in Foster Care in Light of Covid-19 Gillian Vanasse, Assistant Director for Foster Care and Post Permanency Supports presented for the Committee. Ms. Vanasse included a PowerPoint presentation that showed the number of children in congregate care had gone down over the period from when the pandemic began March 2020 by 2% from 39% to 37% for children in out-of-home care from (0 – 17 years old). The percent of children going into out-of-home care during this period placed in kinship care had increased by 3% from 43% to 46%. Youth, ages eighteen to twenty-one choosing Extended Foster Care has also increased and they are receiving more support from the Department. A major focus of the Department is the reduction for first time placement into congregate care. The objective is to place children into kinship and family like settings. Covid has presented challenges but the Department has been able to maintain consistency. Ms. Vanasse included a chart that showed the ages of youth who enter congregate care for first time placement, and the Department has increased its focus on identifying foster homes with family like settings for older youth. Another objective is increasing foster families due to various reasons some foster families relinquish their licenses. During May and September of this year, there was a net increase in the number of foster families, which is quite good considering we are in a pandemic. The most recent recruitment campaign, “Light up a Life” is successful due to the type ads focused on the demographics of children in care and matching them with the community targeted. Recruiting new foster families is important, but retaining foster families is equally important and the Department is looking at ways to retain foster families. The Department has increased the special rates for children with special needs, and the percentage of foster family’s receiving special rates has gone up since September of 2019. The percentage of all children in family foster homes receiving special rates is 8.1%.
- DCS Legislative Agenda for the Upcoming Legislative Session – Magdalena Jorquez, Senior Legislative Council and Chanetta Curtis, Assistant Legislative Liaison, addressed the Committee. The agenda for the upcoming Legislative session is not complete at this time. Therefore, the current update will review the 2020 Legislative session. The presentation focused on ten bills signed by the Governor, four from the Arizona House of Representatives and six from the Arizona Senate. Initially there were one hundred and eighty-two bills introduced. Ms. Jorquez and Ms. Curtis responded to questions by the

Committee members. They did state that they will follow-up with the Committee once it is determined there is Covid funding that will come to DCS.

- Call for Public Comment - The Arizona Department of Health Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued guidance regarding the Coronavirus, which limits gatherings to less than ten people as a means of protection of the public's health. Therefore, pursuant to A.R.S. Sec. 38-431.01(H), the Call for Public Comment portion of the December 4, 2020, meeting will require the public to forward comments to CommunityAdvisoryCommittee@azdcs.gov prior to the meeting, or during the meeting. The Committee Chair will read the comments into the official record of the meeting. The Committee request that anyone wishing to comment provide their name and contact information on the comment card. The comment card is located at <https://dcs.az.gov/about/communityadvisory-committee>. There was one comment sent in to the Committee and read into the minutes of the meeting by the Chair.
- Sergeant Matthew Lawes, the representative from a law enforcement agency resigned from the Committee. The Committee is grateful to Sergeant Lawes for his service. His position on the Committee is open, and the Director must appoint some to replace Mr. Lawes in that sector. The representative must have experience with the department on cases that involve criminal conduct allegations. If anyone has a recommendation for someone who can replace Sergeant Lawes, please forward it to the Committee Chair or Director Faust.
- Dr. Deborah Burdick, the representative from schools retired from the committee and her position as Superintendent of the Cave Creek School district. The Committee is grateful to and thanks Dr. Burdick for her service. The Committee position for representative from the educational sector is open. In addition to educational experience, the representative must have experience in the child welfare system. If anyone has a recommendation for someone who can replace Dr. Burdick, please forward it to the Committee Chair or Director Faust.

Meeting #4: February 5, 2021

Activities and Actions

- Trends in the Placement of Children in Foster Care in Light of Covid-19 - Gillian Vanasse, Assistant Director for Foster Care and Post Permanency Supports presented for the Committee. Due to the pandemic, Ms. Vanasse has been providing updates to the Committee on an ongoing basis. Children in out-of-home care (0 – 17 years old) placed in kinship homes has risen since March 2020 from 43% to 47% in December 2020. The community foster care population dropped from 39% to 36%. The congregate care population dropped from 15% to 14% currently. Youth (18 – 21 years old) are remaining opting for Extended Foster, either in kinship care, family foster care or living independently with subsidy. Overall, the congregate population is reducing. First time kinship placements has increased continuously, since June of 2019. All children in care receive a stipend, including kinship placement. In 2020 this was not so. Recruitment of foster families continues to rise. The Department uses its Estimator Tool to predict the number of foster families needed over the next year, statewide, county-by-county. Ms. Vanasse is pleased that during the pandemic, the Department has been able to maintain foster families, and the fall recruitment campaign brought

about a considerable number of leads. The number of children in standard family foster homes receiving special rates continues to rise month by month.

- Missing and Runaway Children DCS and Law Enforcement Coordination – Keith Moffitt, Chief of the Office of Child Welfare Investigations (OCWI) for DCS presented to the Committee. Mr. Moffitt gave an overview of OCWI and the role it has in supporting DCS staff in the field. When a child runs away or a child is missing, there are many steps taken to find the child. The DCS Specialist will notify the parents, the child’s attorney, and/or the Guardian Ad Litem, and the caregiver of the child. By the following day, DCS will make a home visit to the out-of-home caregiver to ensure they notified law enforcement. A motion for the pick-up of the child is filed with the court, thereby notifying the Assistant Attorney General. Additionally contacted are, family members, the child’s school and prior placements in an attempt to locate the child. Notification made to the National Child for Missing and Exploited Children (NEMEC). An Amber Alert is not an option when a child is a runaway; Amber Alerts signify that a stranger has abducted a child or a relative, and the child is currently in danger. Law enforcement enters all missing or runaway children into the National Crime Informational Center. Mr. Moffitt hoped to clarify any misunderstanding regarding the role of an Amber Alert, and notification to national organizations, NCMEC and NCIC that assist in helping to return children to safety. Throughout the time that a child is, missing DCS continues to network with anyone who may encounter the child to maximize the opportunity to find the child and return them to safety. DCS requires group homes to take current photographs of children in their care. A new program has begun requiring all children over the age of fourteen to obtain a state I.D. card. Local and federal law enforcement are encouraged to send out bulletins to the community seeking to locate missing and runaway children.
- Newly Adopted Legislation: The Committee notes the passage of House Bill 2439 (55th Leg., 1st Reg. Sess. 2021). This newly adopted legislation, which creates new specific reporting requirements for the Department concerning missing children. The first applicable reporting period for the Department covers the period between January 1, 2022 and June 30, 2022.
- Update on the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Implementation and the Associated Evidenced Based Programs – Katherine Guffey, Executive Consultant to the Director presented to the Committee. Regarding the Prevention Services portion of FFPSA, the Department issued an RFP for the Family Connections and Nurturing Parenting programs. It is anticipated that the contract will be awarded in April, and the go live date will be July 1st. Training for providers will be handled by the National Program Development organization thereby ensuring consistent training to all providers. Additionally, DCS has been reaching out to people and organizations in various communities that have not traditionally bid on contracts with DCS. Solicitation for bids have gone out to the African-American and Native American communities, as well as rural communities for them to be aware of the bid.
- Update on Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRPT) - Gillian Vanasse, Assistant Director for Foster Care and Post Permanency Supports presented for the Committee. The QRPT outlined in the FFPSA is a congregate care facility that is trauma informed to support youth through their assessed needs to transition into a family like setting. Initially, six grants awarded to six providers and all grantees were successful in becoming accredited, and have implemented trauma informed models for care. The six are near

completion of all requirements and will soon be ready for contract and accept children as a QRTP. The Department has created an Estimator Tool for recruitment to provide a projection of the number of QRTP bed needed. DCS will reimburse the accreditation costs for providers to become QRTP. Several agencies are seeking to become QRTP certified over the next year, and DCS has created a policy to guide providers in becoming QRTP certified.

- DCS Legislative Agenda for the Upcoming Legislative Session - Chanetta Curtis, Assistant Legislative Liaison addressed the Committee. Currently, there are two bills that DCS has on its agenda for this session:
 - * HB 2332 – Aggravated Assault of DCS Employees - Adds DCS workers to the list of first responders that would qualify for protections under the aggravated assault statute.
 - * HB 2399 – Department of Child Safety fees - Allows the Department to establish and collect fees from non-contracting licensees and establishes the Child Welfare Licensing Fee Fund (Fund).

DCS is tracking one hundred and ninety-three (193) bills currently this Legislative session. Of those thirteen (13) are being closely followed. DCS is neutral on much of the legislation introduced, but is always willing to educate lawmakers on their proposals.

- Call for Public Comment – Public comment, at this meeting was held similarly the method used in December 2020. Members of the public were able to email comments into the Committee, the comments read into the minutes of the meeting by the Committee Chair. There was one comment sent in to the Committee and read into the minutes of the meeting by the Chair.

Meeting #5 April 2, 2021

Activities and Actions

- Update on the DCS Implementation of the Guardian System – Mike Faust, Director of the Department of Child Safety presented to the Committee. Mr. Faust provided a candid and precise presentation of the transition to the Guardian system from the outdated twenty-four year old CHILD’s system. Mr. Faust gave a high-level overview, including the challenges and “bumps in the road” that have occurred during the eight weeks since Guardian went live. Guardian is delivering the stability and security that was anticipated, and along the way, as barriers and challenges are identified they are being dealt with individually, and progress is happening on a continuous basis. The information flow to providers has been improving and providers appear satisfied since they are receiving more information about the services their clients are receiving. Mr. Faust is encouraged by the progress made throughout the transition, and he is feeling positive that the greater access to Guardian that the system offers for providers, foster families and adoptive families is going to deliver tremendous benefits for children and families. The Committee concurred with Mr. Faust as they discussed the positive enhancements they have experienced already due to the transition to Guardian.
- Update on the Status of Residential Programs – QRTP - Gillian Vanasse, Assistant Director for Foster Care and Post Permanency Supports presented for the Committee. At the last meeting, Ms. Vanasse presented the policy and requirements necessary to become a QRTP provider. As of today, twenty-two organizations are moving forward.

Five of those organizations were among the original grantees, and are moving into the final stages and once completed, and the contracts are in place, placement will begin as a QRTP. Two organizations certified on their own and the Department is engaging with them to complete the additional steps necessary to become a QRTP. Therefore, soon there will be seven organizations to take placement of children as a QRTP. The fifteen reminder organizations, the majority have begun working with the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and have their six-month pre-surveys scheduled. Several organizations have teamed up with the original grantees and are collaborating to obtain accreditation. Ms. Vanasse briefly explained that congregate care facilities would continue for large sibling groups and as stabilization before moving a youth to family foster homes. The QRTP will work closely with a family and the Child and Family Team (CFT) to assist the child in support and overcoming trauma, before a move into a family like setting. A QRTP is not a behavioral health facility. Length in a QRTP will be for six months, and if goes beyond six months the Director must report the reason why.

- Update on the RFP for Family Connections and Nurturing Parenting and Impact on FFPSA Implementation – Katherine Guffey, Executive Consultant to the Director presented to the Committee. The RFP closed on March 26 and the Department is evaluating the proposals. The Department is on track to make referrals in the beginning of July. The Department is working with the Arizona Council of Human Service Providers to get providers together to discuss training and transition plans. Ms. Guffey gave a brief overview of the project that has been in the planning stages for three years. The Department is going to replace its current family skill building programs, Building Resilient Families, In-Home Intensive and Moderate Family Reunification Team and Parent Aide Services with evidenced based programs, Family Connections and Nurturing Parenting supported by research. Ms. Guffey is confident there will not be any interruption in any parenting time with families, and the transition will proceed smoothly, especially with the collaboration of the Arizona Council of Human Service Providers.
- Discussion on Current Legislative Session – there was no presenter from the DCS but a general discussion of various legislative bills introduced into the current legislative session, and followed by members of the Committee. The bills currently on close watch are:
 - * HB 2410 – safe haven, new born to extend time period from 72 hours to 30 days
 - * HB2439 – reporting on missing children
 - * SB1144 – TANF funding for children in care
 - * SB1391 – Juvenile dependencies appointment of an attorney
 - * SB1018 - Severe trauma reporting
- Call for Public Comment – Public comment, at this meeting was held similarly the method used in February 5, 2021. Members of the public were able to email comments into the Committee, the comments read into the minutes of the meeting by the Committee Chair. There was one comment sent in to the Committee and read into the minutes of the meeting.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DCS FOR STATE FISCAL YEAR 2021

1. Regarding Missing Children: The Committee Recommends that:
 - a. Children found and returned into DCS physical be given a full health check.
 - b. Review group homes that have multiple youth who have run away episodes often to determine if there is a pattern or a trend.
 - c. During the SFY 2022, the department share with the Committee a draft report for its compliance with the newly adopted House Bill 2439 (55th Leg., 1st Reg. Sess. 2021). The Department is encouraged to share the draft report in time to enable Committee comment prior to the first reporting period.
2. Regarding Racial Disparities and Disproportionality in Child Welfare: The Committee recommends that:
 - a. The Department to review barriers to Black and American Indian ability to become licensed foster parents.
 - b. The Department delve further into the data to determine how much of the relationship of Black and American Indian children in DCS care is due to the incarceration of Black and American Indian parents.
 - c. The Department work with the Committee to consider proposing legislative changes to address poverty related issues that are mistaken for child neglect.
 - d. The Department regularly advise the Committee on its progress in establishing and convening a task force to address this issue further. The members of the Committee offer their assistance in this important project.
3. The Committee recommends that all vacancies be filled by the Department by the end of state fiscal year 2021, or as soon as possible thereafter.
4. The Committee recommends that it be continued as a statutory committee.
5. The Committee invites legislative staff to attend its meetings.