

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY



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

**Report Date: February 28, 2024
Reporting Period: SFY2024, December 2023**

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Laws 2023, First Regular Session, Chapter 133, 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, 2024 for the period ending December 2023 and by August 31, 2024 for the period ending June 2024. Section 17 also 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 578 in December 2023 which is a 96 percent decrease. To achieve this and to help improve caseloads, the Department continues using 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 6,798 as of December 2023 (see Table 1), representing an 80 percent decrease. The benchmark was decreased to 8,000 starting the first quarter of SFY19 below which the Department has achieved in the past two reporting periods.

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.

DCS HR maintains 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 are conducted. Additionally, DCS HR participates in virtual and in-person job fairs at universities and community colleges as well coordinating classroom and virtual Education College Presentations completed by field staff. 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 1,293 as of December 2023 representing a 14 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 (youth age 0 to 20) from 11,722 in December 2022 to 10,023 in December 2023. The number of children entering OOH care has also declined. For example, 3,060 children entered care during the third and fourth quarters of SFY23 while 3,879 children exited care during the same period. Yet, the number of children entering OOH care during the first and second quarters of SFY24 reporting period was 2,827 while 3,633 exited care during this period. 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 900 in December 2023.

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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 9,123 in December 2023 representing a 49 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

Finally, DCS has reduced the number of long-term cases to 3,126 cases which is below the legislatively required benchmark of 3,323. A long-term case is defined as any case in which the child has been in an out-of-home placement for at least eighteen months. The Department utilizes the Fostering Sustainable Connections (FSC) to identify meaningful connections to youth have been care for extended period. Additionally, DCS has developed a congregate care reduction plan which includes, but not limited, re-invigorate efforts to identify a family like setting.

Table 1 – Benchmark Performance

	Q4SFY20	Q2SFY21	Q4SFY21	Q2SFY22	Q4SFY22	Q2SFY23	Q4SFY23	Q2SFY24
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>	95	237	1,879	3,089	1,726	1,579	755	578
Inactive Cases by disposition								
<i>Investigation Phase</i>	81	208	984	2,498	1,591	1,433	664	530
<i>Out-of-Home Cases</i>	0	1	294	147	89	24	9	5
<i>In-Home Cases</i>	14	28	601	444	46	122	82	43
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>	4,804	6,290	10,968	12,115	10,568	10,153	7,403	6,798
Number of Out-of-Home Children ³								
<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	13,964	13,964	13,964	13,964	13,964	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Benchmark (% reduction)</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Actual</i>	14,152	14,475	14,683	14,450	12,595	11,722	10,915	10,023
Number of Long-Term Cases ⁴								
<i>Benchmark (less than)</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,323	3,323	3,323
<i>Actual Cases</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,323	3,309	3,126
<i>Actual Children</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,715	4,548	4,229

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>

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Table 1 – Headcount and Caseload Performance (SFY24-December 2023)

Region ¹ Section # Section name			DECEMBER 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	11	324	---	307	18	---	27
	4	In Home	0	33	38	375	16	1.1	11	0
	5	Mesa	19	19	337	---	369	18	---	20
	6	Gilbert	14	20	238	---	399	17	---	20
	7	Tempe	18	17	292	---	336	17	---	19
	8	South Mountain	17	16	421	---	326	25	---	21
	9	North Central	12	18	205	---	391	17	---	21
	10	Permanency - South Mountain	0	46	0	---	1105	0	---	24
South (20)	1	Eastside Loop	10	18	204	---	191	20	---	11
	2	Tucson North - Oracle	18	17	179	---	240	10	---	14
	3	Tucson South - Valencia	10	16	126	---	201	13	---	13
	5	Madera A - 4th Ave. (includes AHIT)	25	12	159	---	188	6	---	16
	6	Permanency - Alvernon	0	35	---	---	728	---	---	21
	7	Alvernon	11	15	270	---	208	25	---	14
	8	Cochise County	12	13	139	---	233	12	---	18
	9	Madera C / Nogales	12	22	199	---	251	17	---	12
	10	In Home	0	31	12	132	98	0.4	4	3
	11	Yuma	13	15	222	68	170	17	11	11
	Northwest (30)	1	Prescott/Prescott Valley	12	10	100	56	117	8	11
3		Coconino County / Cottonwood	11	14	204	---	215	18	---	16
4		Bullhead City/Lake Havasu	9	7	63	31	120	7	5	18
5		Kingman	7	21	123	---	386	18	---	18
Northeast (40)	3	Globe / Payson / Safford	5	11	121	24	294	24	24	27
	4	St. Johns/Winslow/Show low	4	7	177	18	129	41	11	18
	5	Apache Junction/Kearney	9	10	151	89	214	17	18	21
	6	Casa Grande/Coolidge	15	11	178	20	259	12	0	24
Maricopa-West (50)	1	AHIT	26	---	1	---	---	0	---	---
	3	In Home	0	31	13	413	25	0	13	1
	4	Thunderbird	20	16	206	---	240	10	---	15
	5	Peoria	19	20	149	---	185	8	---	9
	6	Glendale/Durango	23	13	198	---	208	8	---	16
	7	Avondale/Advocacy	22	19	158	---	352	7	---	18
	8	Permanency	---	46	---	---	961	---	---	21
	12	West 101	21	20	197	---	344	9	---	18
13	Pinnacle Peak	20	16	223	---	216	11	---	14	
105, 106 - Other	various	OCWI, GH/FH, Other	69	---	1171	---	1	17	---	---

- 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.

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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	12	
	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/Kearney	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	---	---	

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