

Vision

Children thrive in family environments free from abuse and neglect.

Mission

Successfully partner with families, caregivers, and the community to strengthen families, ensure safety, and achieve permanency for all Arizona's children through prevention, services, and support.

Agency Description

DCS provides child abuse and neglect investigations; child safety and risk assessments; family support, preservation and reunification services, family foster care and kinship care services; prevention services to promote the safety, permanence and well-being of children with birth, foster and adoptive families; adoption promotion and support services; and health care services for children in out-of-home care. DCS also offers extended foster care services and supports for youth exiting care from age 18-21.

Executive Summary

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (AZDCS) strategies, objectives, metrics, and initiatives have been developed and aligned to reach our vision through daily application of our shared values:

- **Safety** - *We are safety experts. We create physically and psychologically safe environments for children, families, caregivers, staff, and service providers. Our organizational culture provides safety to explore all ideas and topics, learn about other perspectives, and support one another.*
- **Compassion - We are Compassioners.** *Every day, we work with empathy and respect for all. We lead with kindness in understanding that families are influenced by their experiences. We treat every child, family and caregiver as if they were our own, and connect with people by seeking all points of view.*
- **Change** - *We are all born to grow. We are curious, open to change, and seek continuous improvement, driven toward our vision and mission.*
- **Accountability** - *We hold ourselves to the highest levels of professionalism. We embrace practice and process standards in order to provide the very best services consistently and efficiently, with transparency and privacy for children and families.*
- **Equity:** *We fulfill our mission by enhancing our cultural competence, identifying and respecting our differences, and improving our policy and practice to ensure equitable outcomes for all.*
- **Advocacy** - *When children can't speak for themselves, we can. As leaders in child well-being, we advocate to make the world a better place for children, while helping their families improve and heal. We champion actions that strengthen communities, families, and our staff.*
- **Family** - *Family reaches beyond the home. As the DCS family, we strengthen each other by connecting people with their communities so that all can thrive in a safe and supportive environment.*
- **Engagement** - *Engagement means listening and being responsive to earn the trust of all we encounter. Through engagement, we make discoveries together and build upon individual strengths. We involve families in decisions and help them find family-specific solutions.*
- **Teaming** - *The best decisions are made together. We use our collective knowledge and consider everyone's viewpoints to identify opportunities, solve problems, and provide the best possible outcomes, because child safety is a responsibility we all share.*

Summary of Multi-Year Strategic Priorities

#	Five Year Strategy	Start Year	Progress / Successes
1	DCS provides support to strengthen all types of families in the child's network and community	2024	Agency will strengthen families by offering quality training for our licensed caregivers so they can successfully share the role of parenting with birth families whenever possible. Kinship will also be uniquely supported. Expansion of caregiver array to serve high-needs children such as dually-involved youth, young adults, and vulnerable populations. Initiatives for staff include training on safety assessments, team decision making, parenting time and best practice for domestic violence cases.
2	DCS culture is characterized by compassion, empathy, collaborative problem-solving, inclusion, transparency, responsiveness, and engagement	2024	Initiatives include relationship building with courts, judges, attorneys, Foster Care Review Boards, contracted providers, advocacy and non-profit groups in collaboratively supporting children and families. Building a culture of safety for staff and all who interact with vulnerable children and families, including psychological safety, trauma-informed training and safety science.
3	All members of the DCS workforce have opportunities for professional development and engagement	2024	From how the agency onboards new staff to training and mentorship of all staff; initiatives include fellowships within the department as well as increasing community of practice for staff with other government and family-serving agencies. Retention initiatives such as supporting professional certifications and succession planning.
4	DCS culture, practices, and services are anchored in a vision of Diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility	2024	Building better relationships with tribes, rural and marginalized communities will ultimately help the children and families we serve. Expansion of the Office of Prevention to include DEIA-role/s to standardize and prioritize accessibility initiatives.
5	DCS supports prevention by partnering with communities to create family-strengthening resources	2024	Expand the safety net for families by connecting community partners with family resource centers and expanding prevention services with an emphasis on screened-out intake reports.
6	DCS uses data for and technology for transparency, accessibility, and problem-solving in a values-driven culture	2024	Support effective collection and analysis of data to foster sound decision making and improvements in the child protection system. Emphasis on identifying disparities or inequities among families and if possible, reduce or eliminate paperwork for staff.

#	Annual Objective	Objective Metrics	Annual Initiatives
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote caregiver experience of being supported and equipped to care for children Expand the caregiver array to meet the individual and diverse needs of children in care Improve fidelity and quality of family-serving practice models and programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the percentage of kinship caregivers who become licensed Increase the percentage of children in care who live with kin Increase the number of community foster care homes Reduce the percentage of children in care who live in congregate care to less than 10% Increase parent satisfaction with DCS referred services Reduce service waitlists Increase the rate of children exiting care to reunification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solicit new Foster and Adoptive Supports scope of work Expand access to targeted training for foster, kinship, and other caregivers Implement recruitment efforts to expand therapeutic foster home availability, placement options for dually-adjudicated youth, and availability of African American/Black and native American foster homes Conduct Permanency Roundtables for Black/African American children residing in congregate care Implement the Cultural Broker program Transform Team Decision Making meetings to improving teaming, inclusion, and shared decision making Transform Parenting Time practice to be natural and supportive for families and all involved Implement staff development activities to increase fidelity of SAFE AZ model application by all partners Implement new supports to improve quality of contracted services, including a Community of Practice
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop skills and processes that improve communication, responsiveness, and collaborative problem-solving within DCS and with external partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Culture survey results Reduce Ombudsman complaints Increase average response time for public records requests Annual partner satisfaction survey results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deepen the integration of safety science throughout DCS operations Provide Culturally Grounded Practice and Empathy Training for all DCS staff Provide trauma and resiliency training to staff and caregivers Implement methods to protect the physical safety and emotional well-being of DCS employees Develop an Engagement Practice Profile with core elements and operational definitions of behaviors that demonstrate the DCS culture when interacting with families Implement technology to enable internal communication and feedback loops between all levels and functions
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen and expand learning and mentoring opportunities for DCS employees Expand internal opportunities for career development and professional advancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce DCS employee turnover Decrease employee separations Increase average length of employment with DCS Increase employee engagement survey scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand partnerships with Arizona colleges, universities and other state agencies to increase professional development opportunities for DCS and Assistant Attorneys General Implement career development and professional advancement pathways for family-serving and support service employees Provide Supervisors and Program Managers guided coaching on the core elements of SAFE AZ and Supervision Transform Core training to support transfer of learning from classroom to the practical application of skills
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Program in accordance with the Governor's Executive plan Improve relationships to increase collaborative decision-making with communities that are disproportionally involved with DCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce racial disparity in rate of child entry into care Reduce racial disparity in calls to the DCS Hotline Safety Culture survey results related to diversity and inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an office of DEIA that will provide continuous learning regarding DEIA in the organizational culture, practices, and services to clients and the public, ensuring all are anchored in the DCS DEIA vision Establish outreach and engagement with rural communities and providers Develop authentic, collaborative partnerships with people who have lived experience with DCS and impacted communities to inform better prevention programs, service delivery, and family experiences. Continue to support and integrate the work and recommendations of the DCS Black/African American Disparity committee
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and strengthen access to community resources that meet families' needs without DCS involvement Improve prevention services to maintain children safely at home and support reunification for families with DCS involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the rate of calls to the DCS Hotline per 1,000 children in Arizona Reduce the rate of child entry into care Reduce the rate of repeated DCS reports within 12 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the Office of Prevention to increase community outreach and engagement and implement the FFPSA Prevention Plan Collaborate with prevention partners to strengthen the Family Resource Center Network Implement mandated reporter reforms Expand family support services in Tucson and other communities with high rates of child entry into care
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase data and software use within the DCS value driven culture for accessibility, transparency, and collaboration Upskill people within DCS business functions to create and use technology to add measurable value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of reports disaggregated by race and ethnicity Implement a support network for employees to increase their technology skills Deploy a modern cloud data platform Reduce the number of paper forms required by policy and procedure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define organizational structures, policies, and procedures for use of products and data Define and implement supports to build capacity of internal employees to create new technology solutions Design and implement a modern cloud data platform and governance tools Define governance framework for use of data