



**Douglas A. Ducey**  
Governor

**Gregory McKay**  
Director

Dear Fellow Citizens:

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) is pleased to provide you with the Department's State Fiscal Years 2016-2020 Five-Year Strategic Plan. This plan outlines the key issues, strategies, goals and performance measures that are in place and will guide our work and progress towards carrying out the Department's mission. The five strategic issues are built around core functions that, with intentional and thoughtful improvement, will lead to better outcomes.

DCS is part of a broad solution for Arizona's children and families which require transparency and dialogue with our stakeholders and partners. As such, we appreciate the leadership and support of Governor Ducey as well as the support of the Arizona Legislature, the county courts, foster parents, services providers, volunteers and the community at large. We also appreciate the hard work of the professional and dedicated employees of DCS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory McKay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gregory McKay  
Director



## Executive Summary

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) is committed to achieving safety, permanency and well-being for Arizona's children and families. 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, DCS developed the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan that outlines a clear and thoughtful approach to accomplishing these goals.

As a newly established department, it is essential 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. The strategic issues identified each directly impact the other and are linked throughout DCS operations. The strategies outlined to accomplish the goals are geared toward the implementation of tools and processes that have been developed over the last several months. Thoughtful preparation has been taken to ensure that the processes are meaningful, sustainable, and will deliver better outcomes for children and families.

The important task of keeping children safe and strengthening families requires intentional preparation, transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. The implementation of the Strategic Plan provides a platform to make thoughtful decisions about sequencing our efforts toward addressing current issues while also building for the future.

### Agency Description:

The Arizona Department of Child Safety is a human service organization dedicated to achieving safety, well-being and permanency for children, youth and families through leadership and the provision of quality services in partnership with communities.

### DCS Vision:

Children thrive in family environments free from abuse and neglect.

### DCS Mission:

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

### Core Principles:

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

## Strategic Issues

### Improve objective decision making at the Hotline and Investigations

Increase accuracy of referral categorization at the Hotline

- Hotline decision-making guide and quality assurance function

Increase accuracy of safety & risk assessments in Investigations

- Standard process to document that children have been seen and safety has been assessed
- Child Safety and Risk Assessment (CSRA) Documentation & Field Guide
- Create a dashboard to track investigation case management
- Supervisory case review forms for investigations
- Team Decision Making meetings when removal is being considered

### Improve performance and quality of service through employee retention

Address factors that contribute to the investigations backlog

- Overdue investigation reduction teams
- Triage Dashboard with risk factors

Improve job fit through targeted techniques

- Utilize behavioral characteristic profiles to screen potential job applicants
- Refine and centralize DCS exit interview survey data

Increase advanced training opportunities for employees

- Develop advanced training curriculum for Specialists and Supervisors

### Reduce length of stay for children in out-of-home care

Improve timeliness of reunification, guardianship, and adoption

- Early case transfer from investigations to ongoing
- Supervisory case review forms for ongoing casework
- Implement monthly case progress reviews by supervisors
- Conduct targeted permanency reviews

Establish standard processes statewide to increase efficiencies

- Develop process flow and clear casework transitions in Model Field Offices

### Improve capacity to place children in family environments

Increase the number of foster homes and the availability of foster home placements

- Strengthen foster home recruitment and retention efforts
- Partner with faith-based community for caregiver supports

Increase the time that children are placed with a kinship caregiver

- Enhance kinship search practices

### Reduce recurrence of maltreatment by improving service delivery

Expand the availability of services to prevent repeat reports for investigations and foster care re-entry

- Assess high report and removal zip codes to recommend targeted community-based interventions
- Expand Substance Exposed Newborn Safe Environment (SENSE) program in rural counties

Reduce waitlists for in-home and parent services

- Refine and implement service referral and approval process statewide
- Define and implement common best practice for service utilization statewide



In order to create a working environment that promotes accountability and continuous improvement, standard processes and procedures need to be in place. Defining a standard best process can be challenging, but also very valuable in better meeting the needs of children and families.

A number of these process improvement efforts are already underway across DCS. Standard investigations and case management processes are currently being tested in *Model Field Offices* where they will be refined and then rolled out to other offices statewide. A single, tested statewide process will enhance the consistency of the outcomes we work toward everyday.

In addition to building on continuous quality improvement, this approach creates teams that can solve problems and adapt to the daily challenges through the utilization of standard tools, process adherence, performance management and leadership at all levels.

### Performance Measures

The performance measures below represent areas where DCS can make significant impact that will lead to better outcomes for children and families. Improvement in these measures will mean that: children are seen timely; safety assessments are completed; the workforce is stable, leading to fewer case transfers; children exit care timely; when children are in care, they are placed in family settings; and once a family interacts with DCS, a positive impact has been made and that family will not need our services again.

*Improve initial response timeliness.*

*More reports are closed than received statewide.*

*Employee retention is increased across Child Safety Specialist positions.*

*Of all children who enter care, increase the percentage who discharge to permanency within 12 months of entering care.*

*Of total care days, reduce the percentage of days spent in shelter or non-therapeutic group home.*

*Of children who are the subject of a report to DCS (alleged or confirmed victim), reduce the percentage who are the subject of another report to DCS within 12 months.*

**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.

### Resource Assumptions

	FY 2016 Appropriations	FY 2017 Budget Request	FY 2018 Estimate	FY 2019 Estimate	FY 2020 Estimate
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Positions	3,057.1	3,280.6	3,280.6	3,280.6	3,280.6
General Fund	356,448.2	461,009.8	461,009.8	461,009.8	461,009.8
Other Appropriated Funds	160,667.6	160,667.6	160,667.6	160,667.6	160,667.6
Non-Appropriated Funds	-	-	-	-	-
Federal Funds	330,400.0	347,938.5	347,938.5	347,938.5	347,938.5
Total Agency Funds	847,515.8	969,615.9	969,615.9	969,615.9	969,615.9

Notes:  
Excluding FTEs, numbers are in thousands.

DCS requested a supplemental appropriation in FY 2016 of \$65.4M to support increased caseload and baseline administrative expenditures.