



ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT
of CHILD SAFETY
Mike Faust, Director
Douglas A. Ducey, Governor

2020

AZ KIDS Thrive

2020 Year-End Review
#AZKidsThrive

4,626
Reunifications
in 2020

Arizona
adoptions in 2020
2,637

786 Families
Served
COVID-19 Kinship
Response Program

A year of drastic change for all - serving an unwavering mission

This year posed many challenges and opportunities for the Department and the children and families we serve. Primarily, the challenge was to remain mission-focused amidst a global pandemic. A debt of gratitude is owed to our staff and providers, to the courts, our caregivers and all who supported our children and families, exhibiting unprecedented compassion and a passion to serve.

The Department faced PPE challenges, technology hurdles, drastic shifts in workplace location and mandated reporting, and educational challenges for our youth in care. Virtual meeting technology supported the ability to convene diverse stakeholders from around the state and country on a regular basis, increasing collaboration and generating new ideas to support our most vulnerable children and families.

Both children in care as well as members of our workforce and their families contracted and battled COVID-19. The Department's thoughts and prayers go out to all families who have lost or will lose loved ones to this unpredictable and unprecedented disease.



Above: Ryan Young pictured with Lynn A Johnson, ACF/HHS Assistant Secretary Lynn A Johnson.

Right: Director Faust celebrating Jackie's accomplishment.

Arizona Pride - Jacqueline and Ryan

Jacqueline Carter, a youth in extended foster care, successfully completed her Bachelor's Degree before her 21st birthday. She joins an elite group of 3 that have achieved this goal to-date, also earning the Departments' highest educational achievement incentive of \$1,500.

Ryan Young serves as Vice-President of our Youth Empowerment Council but has also served as the Arizona Delegate at the National Foster Youth Institute in Washington DC and was selected as a National Young Leader for the Federal Administration for Children and Families. This year, Assistant Secretary Lynn A. Johnson visited Arizona and Ryan led a youth panel to discuss important issues facing foster youth.





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Child-focused

The Department maintained operations in support of our mission despite the challenges brought on by a global health emergency. The Department is grateful to the courts for their flexibility in support of our mission to achieve permanency for children in need of a safe and loving homes free from abuse and neglect, more so now than ever.

Youth-Focused

Adolescence is a time for socialization and establishing lifetime goals. The pandemic has placed extra pressure on our youth, especially those who are recovering from trauma. The Department's Office of Prevention launched a suicide awareness campaign encouraging the community to stay connected to all youth as a means of combating feelings of isolation and depression.

Parent-Focused

The Department launched their Shared Parenting program to support and encourage strong relationships between foster caregivers and a child's birth parent/s. The intent of Shared Parenting is to ensure children are comfortable in their temporary home while remaining close to their birth parents and grounded in familiar family traditions. Visit <https://dcs.az.gov/sharedparenting> to learn more. Additionally, the Parent Advisory Collaborative (PAC) assisted the Department in developing a parent resource area on the DCS website that includes *Parent Voice AZ*, a newsletter created by the PAC and parent testimonials of their successful involvement with DCS and their family reunification stories.

Kinship-Focused

The Department continues to advocate for children to be placed with kin whenever possible. At the time of this publication, nearly half, or 46% of all children under 18 are placed with kinship providers. Kinship was prioritized for needed items such as formula, diapers, wipes, even Chromebooks needed for distanced learning.



Family-Focused

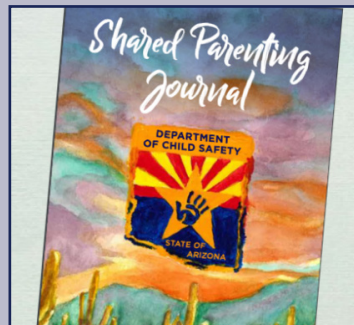
The Department worked quickly with parents and providers to ensure that visitation and parent skill-building services remained in place throughout the year, even when circumstances required services to be delivered virtually. Despite the challenges, the Department was able to deliver needed services and reunify 4,626 children, around the same number as last year.

Community-Supported

As community resources became unavailable at the onset of the pandemic, DCS staff worked with community partners to ensure delivery of essential goods such as formula, diapers and wipes, even beds to our families in need, especially kinship families. Through this partnership over 786 families were served. From donations of milk and eggs from Hickmans Farms and Shamrock Farms to diapers and wipes, Easter baskets from Cost Plus World Market, even laptops from ER2 to support our remote learners, Arizonans understood the need and rose to the occasion. The National Guard also assisted in delivering donated school supplies from Arizona Helping Hands to the Navajo Nation.

Focused on Improving Outcomes for Children and Families

2021 will prove to be even more challenging for the Department as it launches 3 major system improvement initiatives. Guardian, the new child welfare data management system will launch in February. In April, Arizona will become the first state to integrate physical and behavioral health for children in care to one integrated health plan, and throughout the year, the department will begin to lay the service array groundwork to support the Families First Prevention Act.



Left: The National Guard delivers school supplies to the Navajo Nation. Above: The Department launched Shared Parenting journals in 2020. Above right: A social media post developed by the department's prevention team for suicide awareness month.