



Accreditation: 60-Day Report

December 18, 2023 – February 15, 2024

This 60-day report by the RI Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) is submitted to the General Assembly in accordance with Article 1 as amended of Public Law 2023-079. The report describes progress made in implementing the accreditation plan filed in accordance with RIGL 42-72-5.3 and includes any projected changes needed to effectuate that plan.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Execution of the Department's divisional project plans continues to be the primary focus the Department is the completion of the "Self Study" phase of work. As a reminder, the Self Study is the largest and longest component of the COA process wherein DCYF will implement its plans for policy, practice, programmatic, and operations changes to achieve all COA standards.

The Department is scheduled to submit its Self Study evidence to COA on April 8, with a planned Site Visit scheduled for the week of June 3, 2024. The Department is currently reviewing its preparedness for the Site Visit with COA. After COA conducts its Site Visit, the Department will be given an accreditation decision, which could include a request for additional work to be completed during the summer months.

The Department continues its extensive review of its operating procedures, and the creation of new procedures where needed. In the end, the Department will have written or amended more than 50 operating procedures. During the reporting period, the Department also met with the Office of Regulatory Reform to begin the process of promulgating the state's foster care regulations to comply with COA standards.

Aside from the policy work, the Department is working to complete several other COA projects:

- Developing, gathering, and publishing new education materials targeted at birth parents and their children. This includes materials that will be provided to families at the time of investigation to help explain the process and rights and responsibilities of the family members. It also includes creating guidebook for parents and children who are receiving case management through the Department.
- Finalizing a new framework and set of procedures for supervision practices across the Department. The intent is to provide staff with clear and consistent supervision expectations that will help with workforce development, staff retention, and improved outcomes for our families. The Department intends to train staff and supervisors on the new procedures and launch the practice for calendar year 2024.
- Refining community-based resource lists to support staff in connecting families to relevant resources.

- Completing several key plans for the Department, including:
 - a Risk Prevention and Management Plan, and related annual assessments;
 - a Community Engagement plan for calendar year 2024; and
 - an interim Resource Development Plan as the Department prepares to engage with an external partner to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment related to its service array.

STAFFING PROGRESS

In attempt to expedite the hiring process for frontline vacancies, the Department implemented Public Law 2023-201, which establishes a one-year pilot process to expedite hiring for Social Caseworker II and Child Protective Investigator positions at the Department.

The Department continues its focus on backfilling existing vacancies, with an emphasis on its filling vacant frontline positions. As of February 16, the Department has 648 FTEs, compared with 585 in October 2021, for a net gain of 63 employees.

The Department has 23 vacancies for social caseworkers in our Division of Family Services (DFS). Eleven Social Caseworker II positions have been filled; these new hires will begin on February 25. The Department has civil service exams planned for March and anticipates filling the remaining positions with a hiring date of April 21.

The Department has 16 vacancies for child protective investigators. Three Child Protective Investigator positions have been filled; these new hires will begin on February 25. The Department has civil service exams planned for March and anticipates filling the remaining positions with a hiring date of April 21.

The Department also continues to look at attrition; see table below. A total of 83 employees left the Department in calendar year 2023, which is a decrease from the previous year. So far, as of February 21, nine employees have left the Department in calendar year 2024.

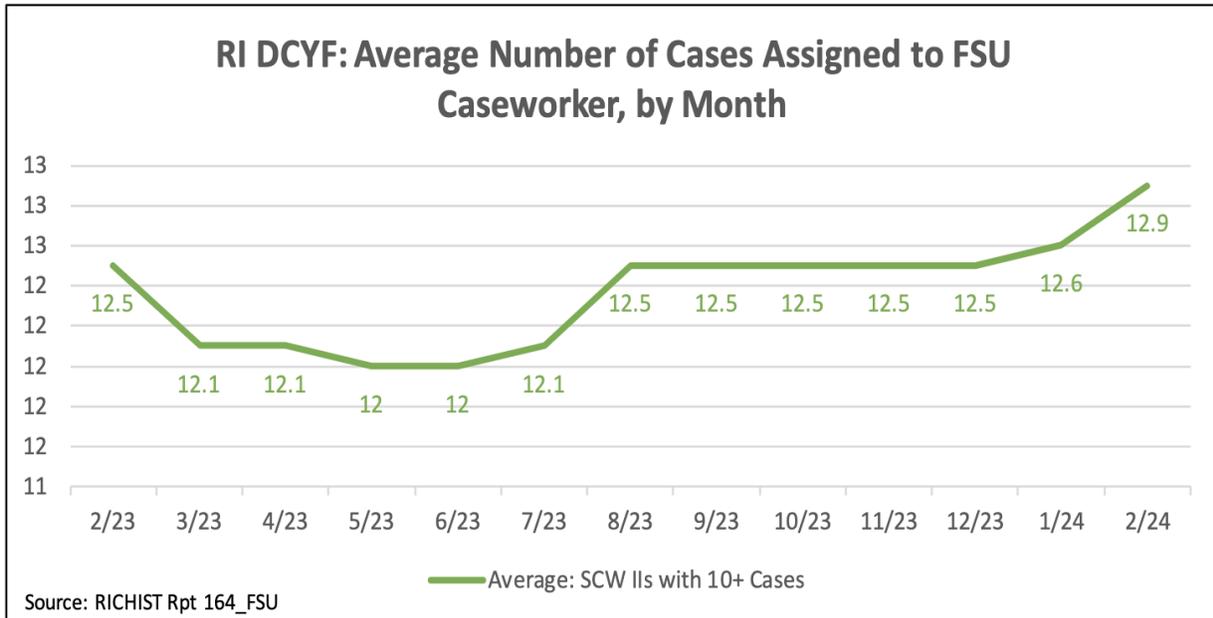
Table. Attrition of All DCYF Staff, by Calendar Year and Reason for Leaving

Reason for Leaving	Calendar Year						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bumped	0	0	3	0	1	1	0
Deceased	2	1	2	0	2	2	0
Failure to Pass Probation	7	1	1	0	0	1	0
Leave Return	0	1	0	4	1	1	0
Resignation	25	31	26	27	62	32	3
Retirement	16	18	20	24	5	12	2
Termination	4	5	7	5	10	7	1
Transfer In State	28	36	21	19	29	27	3
Transfer Out of State	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	84	93	80	79	110	83	9

CASELOAD INFORMATION

Figure 1 below shows the average number of families (cases) assigned to a DFS caseworker, by month. This figure depicts caseworkers carrying 10 or more cases to include only experienced workers and new caseworkers who are nearing the end of their probationary period.

Figure 1. Average Number of Cases Assigned to DFS Caseworker, by Month (10+ Cases)

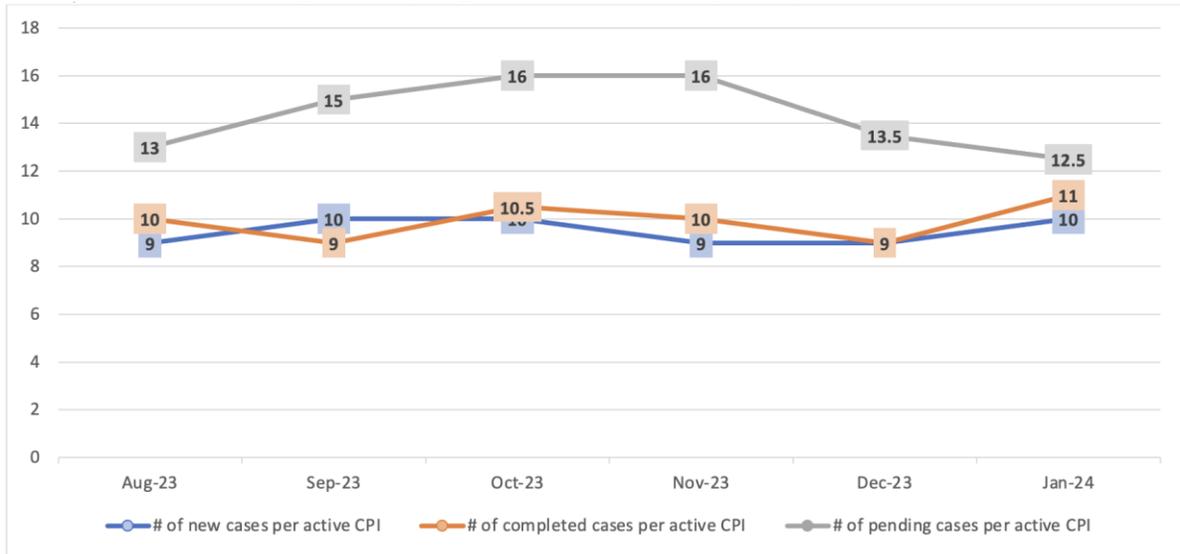


As a comparison: on March 1, 2020, just prior to the pandemic, the Department had an average of 15.4 cases per caseworker; as of the beginning of December 2023, the Department was at 12.9 cases per caseworker. During the last reporting period, caseload sizes increased slightly. Further decreases in caseload sizes are expected as the Department continues to fill its frontline vacancies.

COA’s personnel standard suggests that a DFS worker’s caseload “should have no more than 15 total families with no more than 10 children in out-of-home care.” The Department has adequate FTE resources available to meet the COA standard.

Figure 2 below shows that the Child Protective Services (CPS) investigators are receiving a median of 10 new investigations per month (blue line), which is an increase from the 9 cases as reported in the previous 60-day report. The median number of pending cases per child protective investigator (CPI) is 12.5 (grey line), which is a decrease from the 16 as reported in the previous 60-day report.

Figure 2. Median caseloads (new, completed, and pending investigations per active CPI*), by month, August 2023 to January 2024, RI DCYF

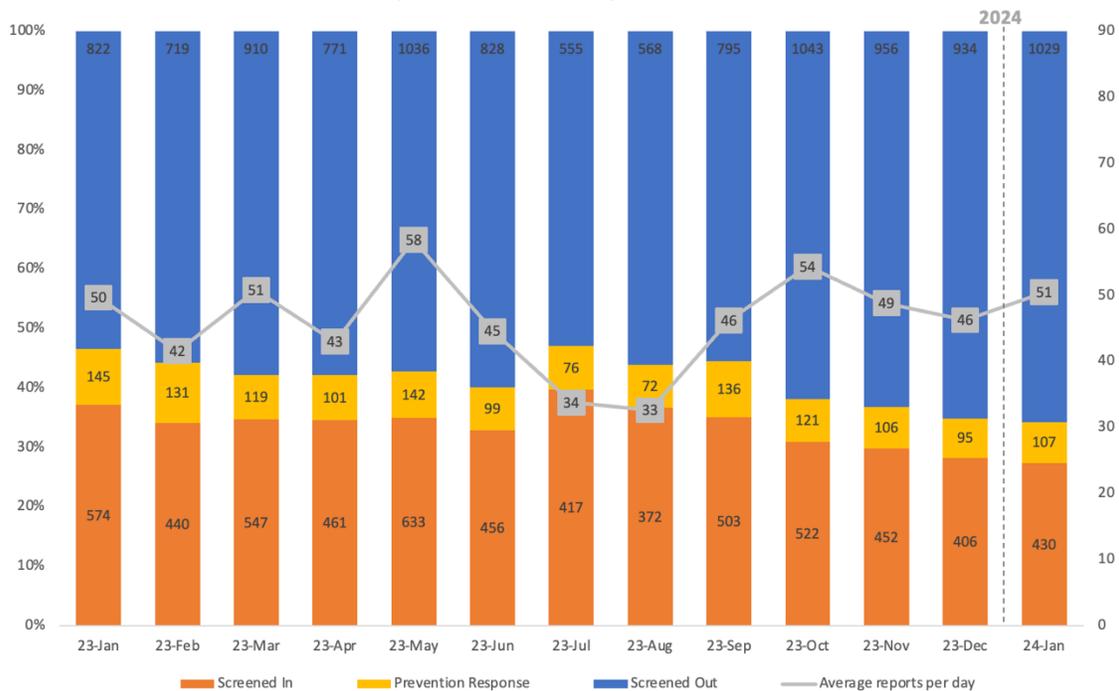


Data notes: Source-RPT 259, 500

*Active investigator: investigator who had 8 or more investigations in a month.

The two previous 60-day reports attributed rises in median pending caseloads to a steep rise in call volume seen to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline since the summer. However, an error in our data reporting, corrected in Figure 3 below, shows that call volume has not been outside the normal range. The Department received an average of 51 reports per day in January 2024; as a comparison, the hotline received an average of 50 reports per day in January 2023.

Figure 3. CPS Reports, by Screening Disposition, and Average CPS Reports per Day, by Month, January 2023 to January 2024, RI DCYF



Data notes: Source-RICHIST RPT 718

As we continue to fill existing vacancies, the Department anticipates further caseload reductions for child protective investigators. COA's personnel standard suggests that CPS investigators' caseloads "generally do not exceed 12 active investigations at a time, including no more than 8 new investigations per month." The Department has adequate FTE resources available to meet the COA standard.

NEXT STEPS

The Director's Office and COA Administrator are monitoring the completion of the remaining Self Study tasks to ensure preparedness for the Site Visit planned for June. A key consideration in preparedness will be not only completing the policies and plans described above, but also ensuring sufficient time for staff to be trained on and successfully implement policy and practices updates. If additional time is needed, this will be negotiated with COA in the next reporting period.