

Accreditation: 60-Day Report

October 19, 2023 – December 17, 2023

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.

In consultation with COA, the Department has moved its Site Visit from mid-February to the week of June 3, 2024. This additional Self Study time will provide the opportunity to align policy, program and operations changes with the Department’s current and future priorities under its new leadership team. A \$500 fee was assessed for this site visit change.

The Department still anticipates achieving accreditation in Summer 2024. 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.

During the reporting period, a few of the Department’s divisions have effectively completed its COA work—including Management Information Systems, Management & Budget, Contracts, and the Division of Performance Improvement. These divisions have been uploading evidence of completion to the COA portal for their review.

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. The Department has also updated the state’s foster care regulations and is preparing its submission for promulgation in January.

Aside from the policy work, the Department continues its work 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, signed into law on June 21, 2023, 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 Sunday, December 17, the Department has 627 FTEs, compared with 585 in October 2021, for a net gain of 42 employees.

The Department has 36 vacancies for social caseworkers in our Division of Family Services (DFS). Twelve Social Caseworker II positions have been filled; these new hires will begin on December 31. The current civil service exam lists for this position are exhausted. The next Social Caseworker II civil service exam is scheduled for January, with an anticipated hiring date of February 25.

The Department has 18 vacancies for child protective investigators. Six Child Protective Investigator positions have been filled; these new hires will begin on December 31. The current civil service exam lists for this position are exhausted. The next Child Protective Investigator civil service exam is scheduled for January, with an anticipated hiring date of February 25.

The Department also continues to look at attrition; see table below. As of December 17, a total of 75 employees have left the Department in calendar year 2023.

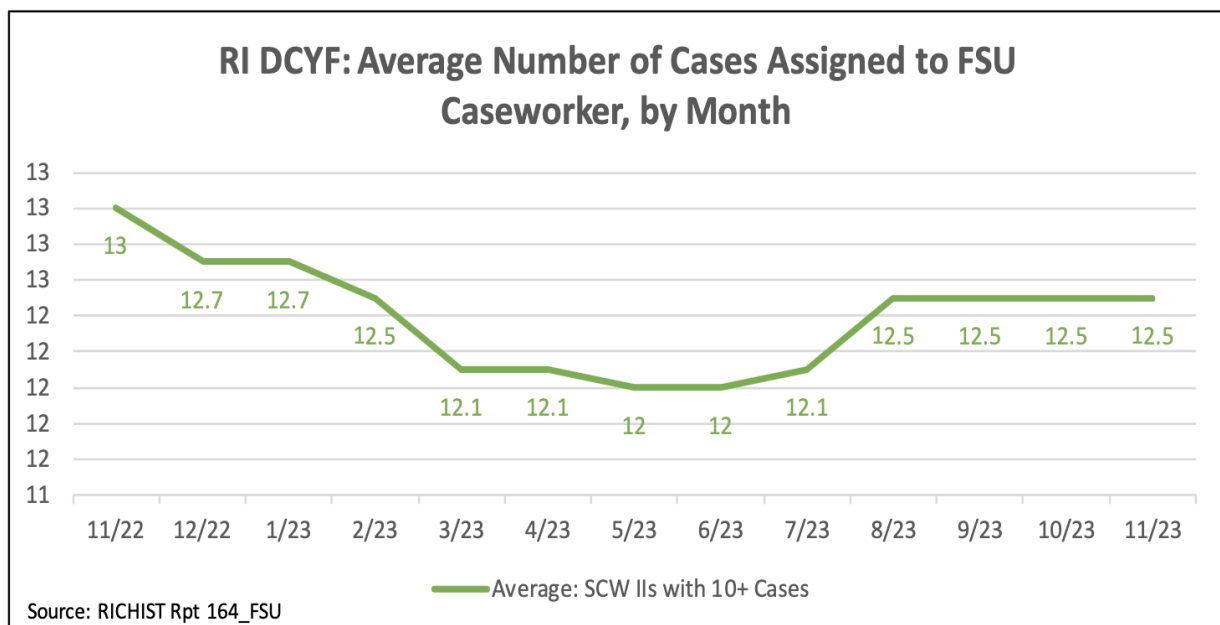
Table. Attrition of All DCYF Staff, by Calendar Year and Reason for Leaving

Reason for Leaving	Calendar Year					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Bumped	0	0	3	0	1	1
Deceased	2	1	2	0	2	2
Failure to Pass Probation	7	1	1	0	0	1
Leave Return	0	1	0	4	1	1
Resignation	25	31	26	27	62	31
Retirement	16	18	20	24	5	9
Termination	4	5	7	5	10	7
Transfer In State	28	36	21	19	29	23
Transfer Out of State	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	84	93	80	79	110	75

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)

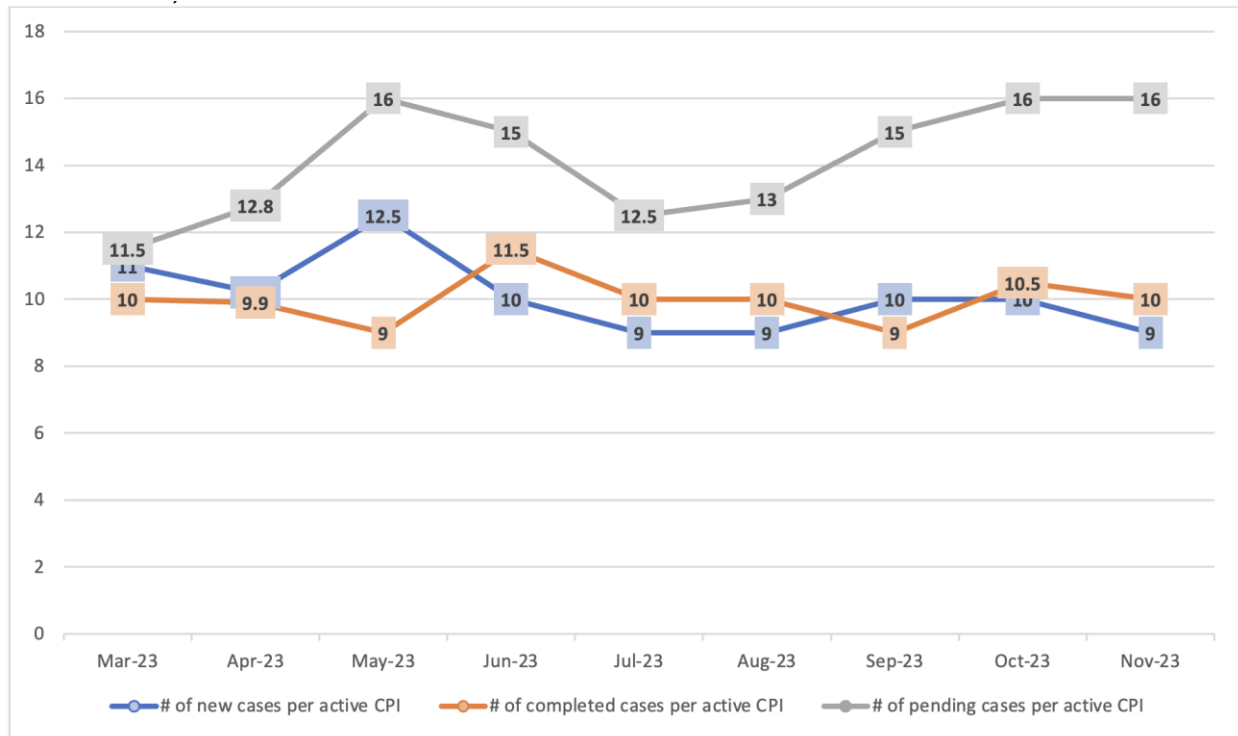


As a comparison: on March 1, 2020, just prior to the pandemic, the Department had an average of 15.4 cases per caseworker; as of the beginning of December 2023, the Department was at 12.5 cases per caseworker. During the last reporting period, caseload sizes remained the same. Further decreases in caseload 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 9 new investigations per month (blue line), which is an increase from the 10 cases as reported in the previous 60-day report. The median number of pending cases per child protective investigator (CPI) is 16 (grey line), which is an increase from the 15 as reported in the previous 60-day report.

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

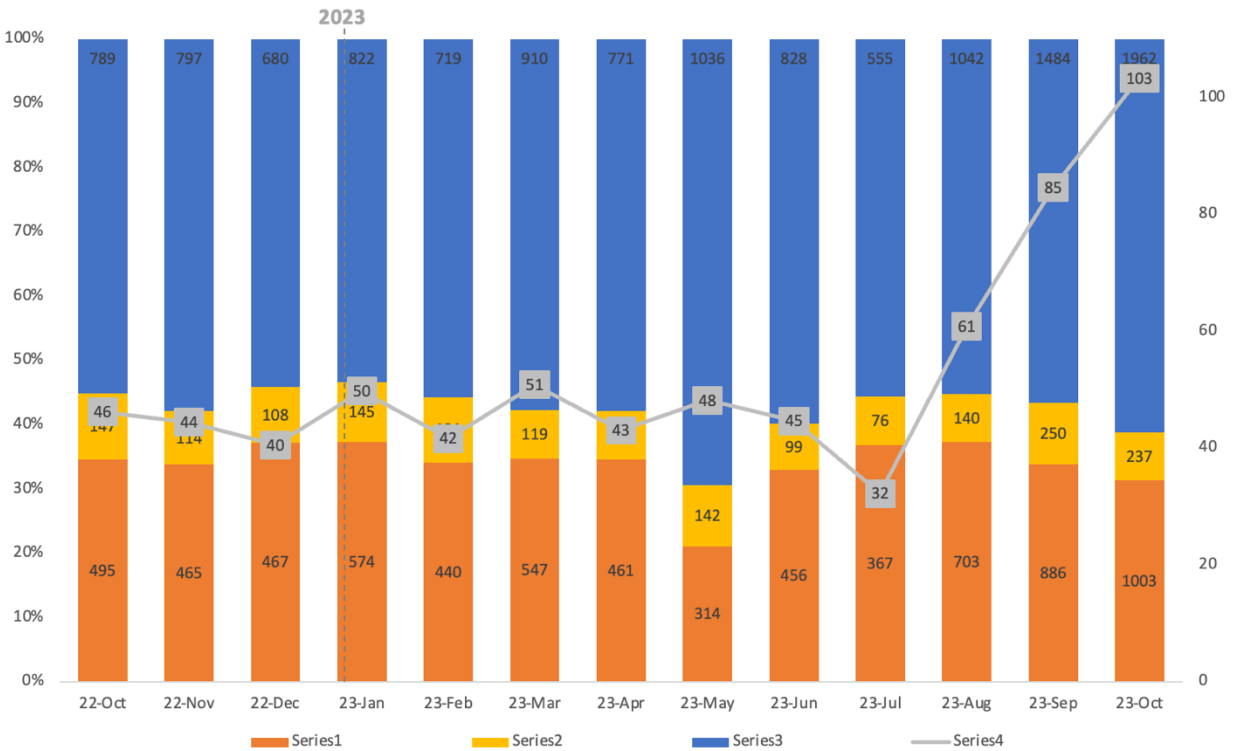


Data notes: Source-RPT 259, 500

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

The increase since July in the median pending caseloads are attributable to a steep rise in call volume seen to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline since the summer. Figure 3 below contains data on CPS reports, by screened in and screened out, and the average number of CPS hotline reports over time. The Department received an average of 103 reports per day in October 2023; as a comparison, the hotline received an average of 41 reports per day in October 2022.

Figure 3. CPS Reports, by Screening Disposition, and Average CPS Reports per Day, by Month, October 2022 to October 2023, RI DCYF



Data notes: Source-RICHIST RPT 718

The Department will continue to monitor the CPS reports to determine how workload might affect future hiring needs. 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 have created a strict timeline to support completion of the Self Study by April 8, 2024, and preparation for the June site visit. Major deadlines within the updated timeline include:

- January 31: Submission of the Foster Care Regulations*
- Completion of Risk Management Plan*
- Completion of Community Engagement Plan*
- March 15: Completion of all Department Operating Procedures*
- March 29: Completion of Resource Development Plan*

The modified plan was designed intentionally to build additional time between now and June for staff to be trained on and successfully implement policy and practices updates.