



# Accreditation: 60-Day Report

## August 16, 2024 – October 14, 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 2024-117. 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

During the reporting period, the Department completed the “Self Study” phase of the accreditation process. As a reminder, the Self Study is the largest and longest component of the Council on Accreditation (COA) process wherein DCYF created plans and worked toward policy, practice, programmatic, and operations changes to achieve all COA standards. More than 400 documents were submitted to the accreditation body on September 24, 2024. These documents are currently under review by the COA Site Review Team.

The Self Study process included an extensive review of its operating procedures, and the creation of new procedures where needed. To date, the Department has approved 51 new or updated policies. See the appendix for the list of operating procedures.

During the reporting period, the Department also successfully submitted proposed updates to the State’s Foster Care and Adoption Regulations for Licensure. These changes include all changes needed to meet COA requirements. The proposed rule also reflects national best practices in resource family licensure and incorporates suggestions received from staff, resource families, providers, and other community partners. The proposed rule is available at the RI Code of Regulations website, <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/Organizations>. Currently, the proposed rule is out for public comment, which ends on November 7, 2024.

The Department also finalized during the reporting period a Resource Development Plan. This plan describes the State’s current efforts to meet the child and family services needs for the population served. It will be used as an interim plan as the Department prepares to engage with an external partner to begin work on a comprehensive needs assessment related to its service array.

In July, the Department began preparing for the COA Site Review, which will be conducted November 18-20. The next section describes this phase of accreditation and the Department’s current progress toward preparation for the Site Visit.

### SITE REVIEW

The final major phase before achieving accreditation is the Site Review. The phase centers around an on-site visit conducted by COA Peer Reviewers (a Review Team consisting of 2-3 child and family services experts). The purpose of the review is to assess the agency's implementation of the standards and share feedback with COA. The Site Review is composed of a case record review; personnel record review formal interviews with staff, leadership, families, and community partners; informal interviews with additional staff; observations of the Department's child welfare facilities (i.e., the Providence, Bristol, and Wakefield offices); and reviews of supplementary documents as requested.

In preparation, the Department is actively engaged in the following steps during the current and next reporting period:

- *Ongoing Education and Implementation Efforts.* Leadership team members have been asked to review all policy changes, determine which policies affect the job duties of their staff, and ensure that their staff review, understand, and are supported to implement any new requirements.
- *Preparing for the Site Visit.* The Department's internal team has completed multiple trainings to understand the COS Site Review process and develop a preparation plan.
- *Organizing the Site Visit Evidence.* The COA team has asked for up to 175 supplementary pieces of evidence that help to capture the degree of implementation of COA standards. Most of these artifacts will be submitted electronically on or before November 4. At the end of the reporting period, greater than 70% of the Site Visit Evidence had already been collected.
- *Develop a Site Visit Schedule.* The Department held an initial meeting with the Site Review leader on July 12 to deal with major logistics. A second meeting will take place on October 18 focused around developing an on-site interview schedule. A third preparation meeting will be held just prior to the review, if needed.
- *Conduct a Mock Site Visit.* Mock Site Visit activities in October and November are to include:
  - Observations to ensure that the Department's child welfare facilities meet all COA standards. The observations will focus on confirming best practices are maintained with the safe storage of case records and other sensitive information. After each mock observation, recommendations for improvement are being given to leadership team so that the staff can work together to make any necessary improvements.
  - Mock Interviews for staff, leadership, families and other community partners who will be formally interviewed by the staff. The COA team has provided sample questions and suggestions for how to approach these interviews. It is a priority for the internal team to make sure that everyone selected for interviews feels comfortable and confident to give informative, honest answers to the Review Team.
  - Identification of Areas for Improvement. As suggested by COA, the internal team will attempt to identify areas where the Department believes it may receive lower scores and provide recommendations for improvement. COA recommends that organizations focus on potential concerns before the Site Review occurs.

The Department remains on track to complete all preparation steps for the November Site Visit.

After the Site Visit, the Department will enter the “Commission” Stage of accreditation. This final stage provides further opportunities to demonstrate implementation of the standards. Following the Site Visit, COA will recommend the provision of additional evidence as needed to help demonstrate implementation of specific standards required to achieve accreditation. COA’s Accreditation Commission, an independent group of volunteers, reviews follow-up information and makes the final accreditation decision, after which a Final Accreditation Report is issued. A preliminary commission report is anticipated to be received in the weeks following the Site Visit.

**STAFFING PROGRESS**

The Department continues its focus on expediently backfilling vacancies, with an emphasis on filling vacant frontline positions. As of October 13, the Department has 651 FTEs filled, as compared to 585 FTEs in October 2021, for a net gain of 66 employees.

The Department currently has four vacancies for social caseworkers in its Family Services Unit and 14 vacancies for child protective investigators. Two social caseworkers and seven investigators have been hired and are scheduled to begin work on October 20.

The Department also continues to look at attrition; see table below. A total of 55 employees left the Department in calendar year 2024.

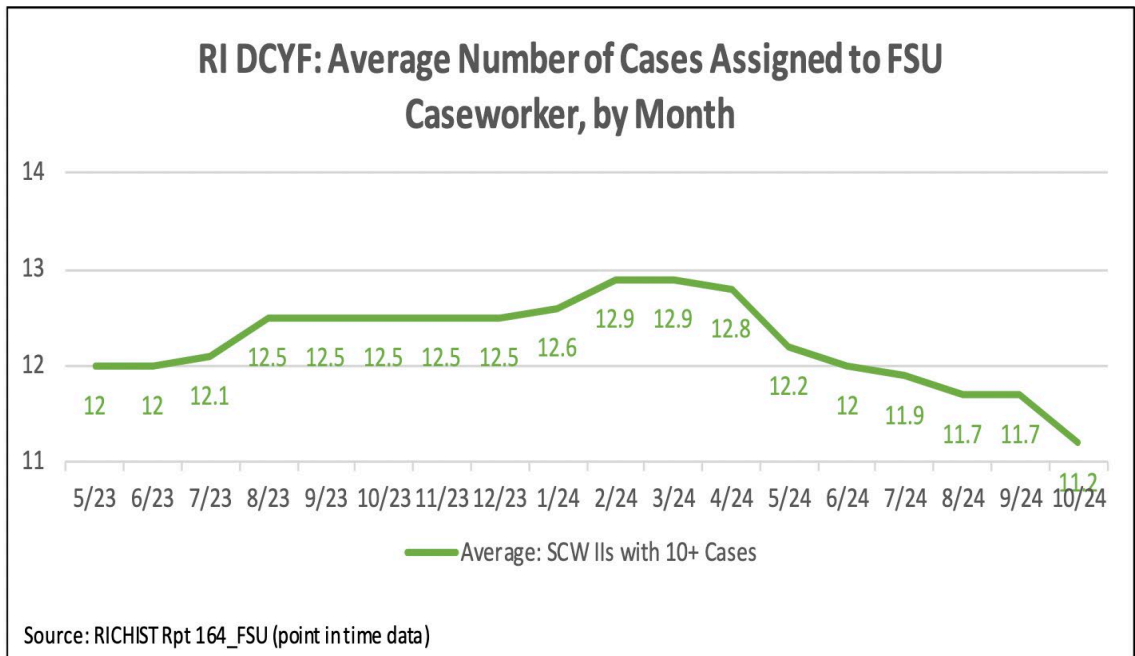
**Table.** Attrition of All DCYF Staff, by Calendar Year and Reason for Leaving

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	26
Retirement	16	18	20	24	5	12	10
Termination	4	5	7	5	10	7	4
Transfer In State	28	36	21	19	29	27	15
Transfer Out of State	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>55</b>

**CASELOAD INFORMATION**

Figure 1 below shows the average number of families (cases) assigned to a Family Services Unit (FSU) 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 FSU Caseworker, by Month (10+ Cases)

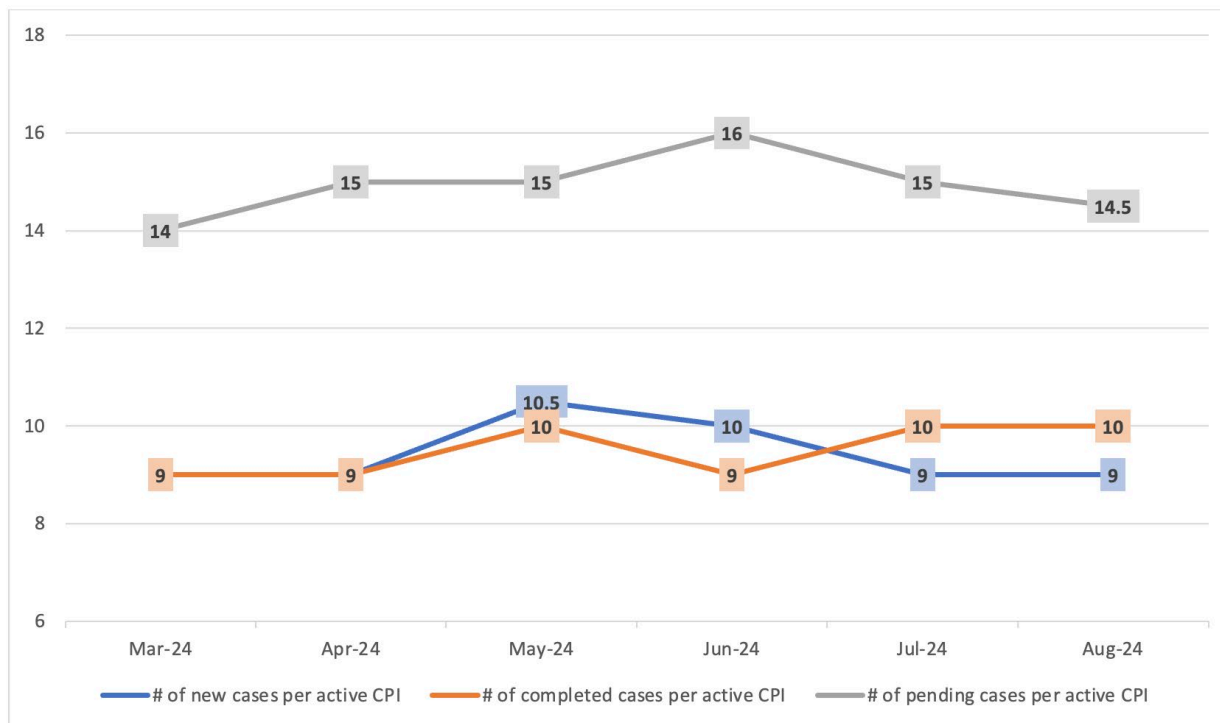


As a comparison: on March 1, 2020, just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department had an average of 15.4 cases per caseworker; as of the beginning of October 2024, the Department was at 11.2 cases per caseworker. During the last reporting period, caseload sizes decreased significantly. The Department will maintain these manageable caseload sizes by focusing on training of new staff and increasing support and retention efforts for all staff.

COA’s personnel standard suggests that an FSU 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 investigators are receiving a median of 9 new investigations per month (blue line), which the same as reported in the previous 60-day report. The median number of pending cases per child protective investigator (CPI) is 14.5 (grey line), which is a decrease from 15 as reported in the previous 60-day report.

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



Data notes: Source-RPT 259, 500

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

As DCYF continues to minimize its vacancies and train new staff, the Department anticipates further caseload reductions for CPIs. The accreditation standard suggests that CPI 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

During the next reporting period, the Department will prepare for and participate in its first-ever COA Site Visit. The Department will also focus on additional COA standard implementation activities in the next reporting period:

- Develop and complete annual assessments across several domains to promote risk prevention and management.
- Finalize additional policy changes, including the following operating procedures:
  - 100.0330 – Children’s Behavioral Health Coordination
  - 200.0000 – Staff Transporting Children
  - 700.0070 – Missing Children/Youth Absent from Care
- Collect required documents from staff who drive children as part of their job duties.
- Receive in November all public comments related to the proposed Foster Care and Adoption Regulations for Licensure. The Department will work to review all feedback and modify the proposed rule as needed.



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## Appendix: Policy Changes to Date

Below is a list of all the Department new and updated operating procedures that were worked on as part of the accreditation process.

The Department's entire policies and operating procedures manual is available on the DCYF website: <https://dcyf.ri.gov/about-us/dcyf-policies-operating-procedures>

### **General Administration**

- 100.0035 – Rights and Responsibilities of Persons Served
- 100.0100 – Department Leadership
- 100.0130 – Effective Communication with Persons of Limited English Proficiency
- 100.0135 – Strategic Planning
- 100.0160 – Succession/Transition Planning
- 100.0165 – Research Protections and Data Requests
- 100.0205 – Implementing Department-Wide Change Initiatives
- 100.0230 – Facility Safety and Maintenance
- 100.0265 – Public Disclosure of Child Fatality and Near Fatality Information
- 100.0290 – Critical Event Reviews
- 100.0360 – Contracting and Contract Management
- 100.0385 – Technology-Based Service Delivery
- 100.0500 – Development, Maintenance and Distribution of Policies

### **Personnel**

- 200.0045 – Interning, Volunteering and Shadowing at the Department
- 200.0060 – Code of Conduct
- 200.0065 – Training and Professional Development
- 200.0070 – DCYF Staff Onboarding and Support
- 200.0095 – Staff Safety
- 200.0100 – Supervision of Staff
- 200.0105 – False Claims Act and Whistleblower Protections

### **Division of Licensing and Resource Families**

- 300.0010 – Licensing of Resource Caregiver Homes

### **Child Abuse/Neglect Investigations**

- 500.0000 – Child Abuse and/or Neglect Reports

- 500.0005 – Child Abuse and Neglect Definitions
- 500.0015 – Screen-Out Reports Requiring a Response
- 500.0025 – Assessing Reports of Child Abuse/Neglect and Child Safety Determinations
- 500.0035 – Institutional Child Abuse and Neglect
- 500.0045 – Removal of Child from Home

### **Case Management**

- 700.0005 – Reasonable Efforts
- 700.0015 – Delivery and Coordination of Support Services
- 700.0020 – Administrative Review
- 700.0030 – Family Time
- 700.0035 – Kinship Care
- 700.0045 – Contents and Format of Department Record Keeping
- 700.0050 – Ongoing Safety Assessment and Service Planning
- 700.0055 – Adoption
- 700.0085 – Expectant and Parenting Youth in Out-of-Home Care
- 700.0090 – Ongoing Engagement with Families Open to the Family Services Unit or Juvenile Probation
- 700.0115 – Youth Transition Planning and Support
- 700.0120 – Respite Care
- 700.0130 – Concurrent Planning
- 700.0155 – Legal Guardianship and Kinship Guardianship Assistance
- 700.0170 – Placement Determinations, Referrals and Transitions
- 700.0175 – Voluntary Extension of Care
- 700.0180 – Enhanced Case Management for VEC Youth
- 700.0190 – Support and Response Unit
- 700.0210 – Supportive Reunification Placements
- 700.0225 – Home-Base Services Authorization Process
- 700.0230 – Family Search and Engagement
- 700.0250 – Prudent Parenting and Normalcy for Youth in Out-of-Home Care
- 700.0265 – Caring Connection Calls

### **Medical**

- 1000.0025 – Physical and Mental Healthcare for Children in OOH Care