



Accreditation: 60-Day Report

October 15, 2024 – December 13, 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 its Council on Accreditation (COA) Site Review, the second-to-last phase before achieving accreditation.

The on-site visit was conducted November 18-20. It was conducted by two peer reviewers, a retired public child welfare expert from Illinois and a behavioral health clinician who works in Michigan and Maine. The purpose of the Site Review was to assess the agency's implementation of the standards and share feedback with COA. The Site Review included a case record review; personnel record review; and formal interviews with staff, leadership, families, and community partners; informal interviews with additional staff; and observations of two of the Department's child welfare facilities (the Providence and Bristol offices). The Department also submitted hundreds of additional artifacts (e.g., meeting notes, recent outcomes data, training curriculum) two weeks prior to the visit to support demonstration of implementation.

The feedback received during the Site Review was overwhelmingly positive. Results and next steps are discussed in the following section.

Also, during the reporting period, the Department continued the process to update the State's Foster Care and Adoption Regulations for Licensure. The proposed changes reflect national best practices in resource family licensure and incorporate suggestions received from staff, resource families, providers, and other community partners. The initial public comment closed on November 7, 2024. Currently, the Department is incorporating feedback received and working with the Office of the Child Advocate to address their suggestions. Once a new draft is complete, DCYF intends to put the regulations back out for final public comment before finalizing. The proposed rule is available at the RI Code of Regulations website, <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/Organizations>.

SITE REVIEW RESULTS & COMMISSION PHASE

Following the Site Review, the peer reviewers submitted more than 400 ratings to COA that cover each standard and substandard evaluated for accreditation. This submission marks the beginning of the Commission, the final phase in achieving COA accreditation. The Commission stage provides further opportunities to demonstrate implementation of the standards.

The Department received on December 11 a pre-commission report, which includes recommendations about how the Department can demonstrate more effective standards implementation and/or offer another opportunity to show COA how you have implemented the standards. The pre-commission report, included as an attachment to this 60-day report, identifies three areas where additional evidence is recommended:

1. Performance reviews: The peer review team recommends that we establish a performance review process for our union frontline workers.
2. Personnel records: The peer review team recommends submitting additional evidence to demonstrate how complete and routinely updated staff personnel records will be maintained between the Department of Administration and DCYF.
3. Vehicle Safety: The peer review team recommends finalization of DCYF's policy for staff transportation of children, which has been under negotiation with the union since June 2024. Once completed, the Department must submit evidence that documentation (driver's licenses, driving record abstracts, private vehicle insurance and private vehicle registration) is being maintained and reviewed annually.

By January 23, 2025, the Department must submit a response to this pre-commission report that details how we have addressed the feedback received. The response will likely include additional evidence of implementation, as well as detailed plans for how we will continue to improve in these areas moving forward. The Accreditation Commission then reviews this follow-up information and makes the final accreditation decision.

The Department is hopeful that it will receive notification of accreditation in February 2025. After accreditation is achieved, COA issues a Final Accreditation Report, which will include a complete set of ratings for all assigned standards. This report will be made public.

SITE VISIT EXPENDITURES

During the reporting period, the Department received a \$10,000 invoice for the November Site Visit. The flat rate covered all costs and expenses of the Site Visit, including, but not limited to, travel, hotel, meals and incidentals. As part of the DCYF agreement with Social Current, the Department must pay for the Site Visit before receiving its final accreditation notification. Currently, the Department is submitting for a purchase order to pay the invoice. This is the last expenditure anticipated for this accreditation cycle.

STAFFING PROGRESS

The Department continues its focus on expediently backfilling vacancies, with an emphasis on filling vacant frontline positions. As of December 13, the Department has 652 FTEs filled, as compared to 585 FTEs in October 2021, for a net gain of 67 employees.

The Department currently has 10 vacancies for social caseworkers in its Family Services Unit and nine vacancies for child protective investigators. The Department anticipates that 10 social caseworkers and two child protective investigators will enter its next frontline academy, which will begin on January 26, 2025.

The Department also continues to look at attrition; see table below. A total of 68 employees left the Department in calendar year 2024.

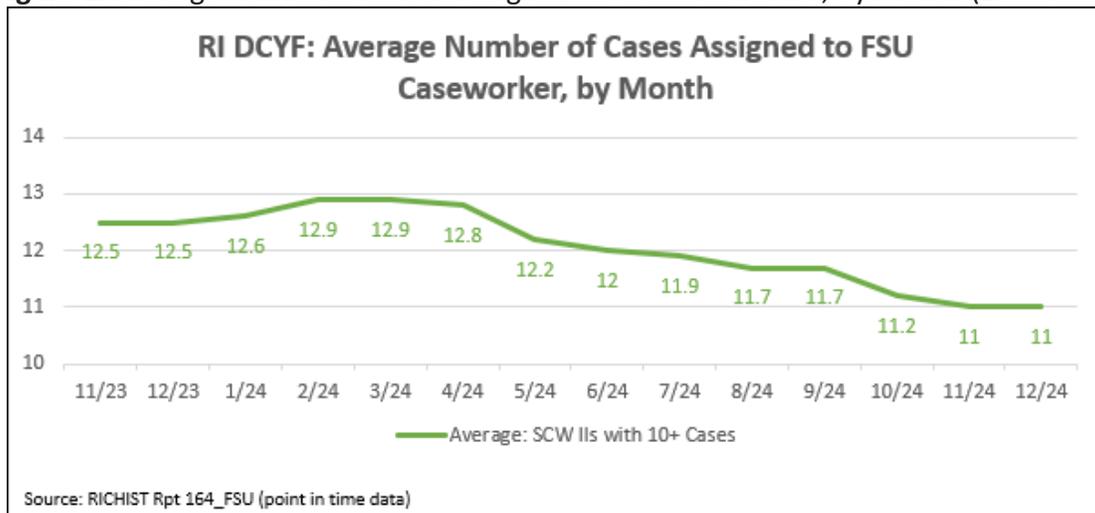
Table. Attrition of All DCYF Staff, by Calendar Year and Reason for Leaving

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	1
Resignation	25	31	26	27	62	32	29
Retirement	16	18	20	24	5	12	12
Termination	4	5	7	5	10	7	5
Transfer In State	28	36	21	19	29	27	21
Transfer Out of State	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	84	93	80	79	110	83	68

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)

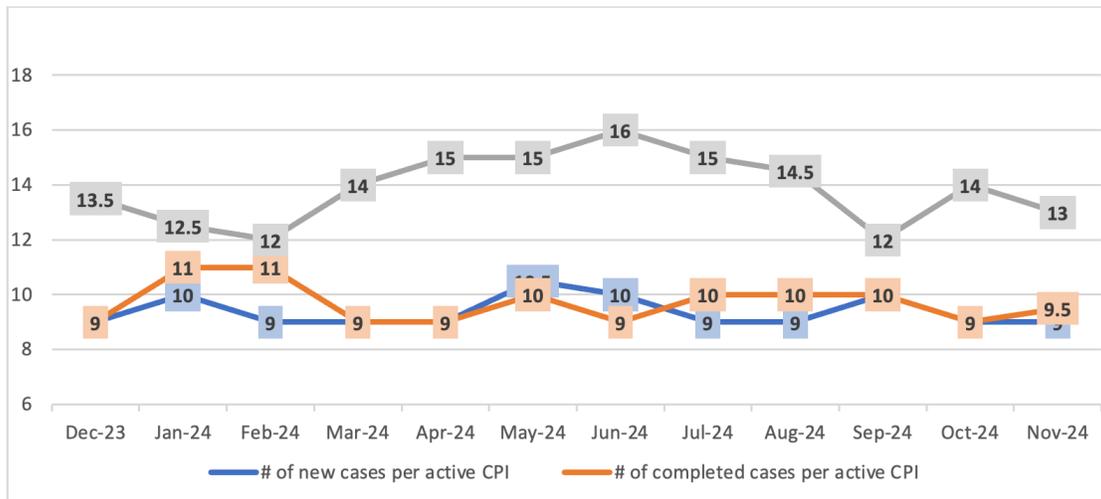


As a comparison: on March 1, 2020, just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department had an average of 15.4 cases per caseworker; as of the beginning of December 2024, the Department was at 11.0 cases per caseworker. This is a decrease from 11.2 as reported in the previous 60-day report. The Department will maintain these 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 is the same as reported in the previous 60-day report. The median number of pending cases per child protective investigator (CPI) is 13 (grey line), which is a decrease from 14.5 as reported in the previous 60-day report.

Figure 2. Median caseloads (new, completed, and pending investigations per active CPI*), by month, December 2023 to November 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 fully address the three areas identified by the peer review team and complete its response to the pre-commission report. If successful, it the Department could receive a final accreditation decision during the next reporting period. Additionally, the Department will continue steps toward promulgation of the proposed rule for Foster Care and Adoption Regulations for Licensure.