

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Rhode Island Department of Children Youth and Families Becomes First Child Welfare Agency in New England to Achieve National Accreditation

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) has officially achieved accreditation through the Council on Accreditation (COA), through Social Current, making Rhode Island one of only six states in the nation and the first in New England to receive this designation.

In a notification email late Friday, Jody Levison-Johnson, president and CEO of Social Current, wrote:

“I am delighted to inform you that Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families has achieved accreditation through COA Accreditation, a service of Social Current. This is a tremendous achievement that demonstrates that your organization has successfully implemented high-performance standards and, as such, is delivering high-quality services.”

“This has been a long but incredibly worthwhile journey,” said DCYF Director Ashley Deckert, MSW, MA. “It required advocacy from our union members, unwavering support from Governor McKee and the General Assembly, and buy-in and execution from the entire DCYF staff. I want to personally thank Assistant Chief of Planning (Accreditation) Adam Williams for his steadfast leadership and Programming Services Officer JoAnn Harry for her historical knowledge, attention to detail, and unwavering dedication throughout this process. Every area of our department made changes, and because of that, our agency is stronger than ever.”

With state funding secured in 2020, DCYF developed an accreditation plan and launched the process in 2021. The effort required revisions to more than 50 policies and procedures and a heavy investment in frontline staff, resulting in a significant reduction in caseload sizes— from 15.4 cases per worker to 11 cases per worker over the past five years.

Recognizing this achievement, Governor Dan McKee praised DCYF’s leadership and commitment to improving outcomes for children and families in Rhode Island:

“We all know how difficult the work is at DCYF,” McKee said. “Being the first New England state to achieve accreditation demonstrates this Department’s commitment to providing excellent services to Rhode Island children and their families when they need it.”

This historic accomplishment positions DCYF among an elite group of only five other accredited child welfare jurisdictions in the nation—joining Illinois, Maryland, Missouri, Ohio, and Tennessee."

"Director Deckert and the entire DCYF team worked diligently to align their work with the standards set out by Social Current's process, ensuring that DCYF's policies and procedures align with best practice" said Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretary Richard Charest. "Support and additional funding from Governor McKee and the General Assembly assured that DCYF had the staffing and resources to make this a successful endeavor."

About DCYF

The Department of Children, Youth & Families' highest priority is the safety and well-being of all children. Families and youth in need of immediate support are encouraged to contact DCYF's Support and Response Unit at 1-888-RI-FAMILY (1-888-743-2659). All Rhode Islanders are required by law to report known or suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to DCYF within 24 hours of becoming aware of such abuse or neglect. Please call 1-800-RI-CHILD (1-800-742-4453) to report known or suspected cases of child abuse.

About Council on Accreditation and Social Current

Accreditation through the Council on Accreditation is a service of Social Current, whose mission is to advocate for and implement equitable solutions to society's toughest challenges through collaboration, innovation, policy, and practice excellence.

Many public agencies have used the accreditation process as a means of creating and sustaining organizational change, enhancing supervisory practices, and improving quality in both oversight and service delivery. Accreditation intends to provide an objective, independent and reliable validation of an agency's performance. COA accreditation demonstrates accountability in the management of resources, sets standardized best practice thresholds for service and administration, and increases organizational capacity and accountability by creating a framework for ongoing quality improvement. COA accreditation is a gold standard for public agencies, serving as a national benchmark for quality and accountability. The accreditation process provides:

- Independent validation of agency performance
- Stronger oversight and quality improvement initiatives
- Enhanced best practices in child welfare services
- A foundation for sustainable reform and accountability

DCYF's success in achieving accreditation marks a pivotal moment in strengthening Rhode Island's child welfare system and sets a new standard of excellence for child-serving agencies across the region.

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