



2020 Special Committee on Foster Care Oversight

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DCF Workforce

Presented by:

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Testimony of:

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Chair Concannon, Vice Chair Baumgardner, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on the status of the DCF workforce.

DCF has approximately 2,300 employees spread throughout the six DCF regions in the state. It's important to note that DCF employs only a portion of the overall child welfare workforce in the state. While DCF employs CPS investigators, staff to support grantees, and KPRC staff, our grantees employ the foster care case management staff and prevention services practitioners that interact with families engaged in child welfare services. Over the past year and a half DCF has made a concerted effort to invest in that workforce by amplifying existing supports and finding new innovations to ensure that DCF employees feel supported and are able to efficiently execute their role.

DCF has received new positions via budget enhancements in recent years. The legislature allocated 26 frontline positions to DCF in Fiscal Year 2019. These positions included employees to assist in the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act, staff for the KPRC, and some positions in the regions. An additional 16 regional frontline positions were added in Fiscal Year 2020. These positions have helped to lower caseloads for frontline CPS staff, increasing the efficiency of service delivery.

Most recently the legislature allocated 10 positions in Fiscal Year 2021 to improve the frontline supervisor to worker ratio and hire Team Decision Making facilitators. The Council on Accreditation recommends a child welfare best-practice ratio of 1 supervisor to 6 frontline practitioners. Since the implementation of these positions, the statewide supervisor to worker ratio has improved from 1 supervisor for every 6.58 frontline practitioners to 1 supervisor for every 5.6 frontline practitioners. This ratio supports supervisors and gives them the time needed to support, train and develop staff to build the skill and experience of the existing workforce.

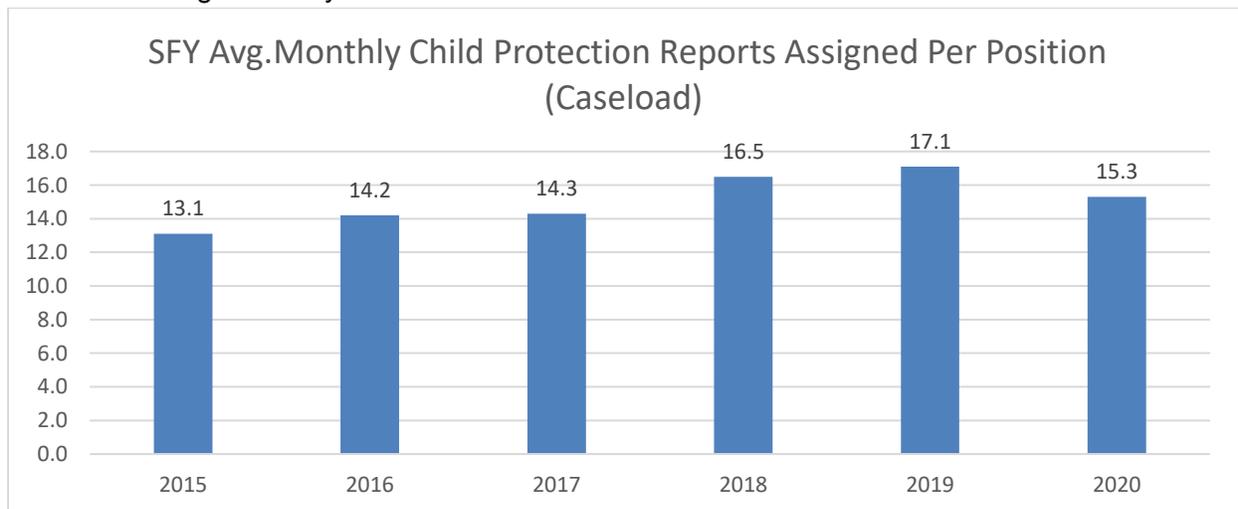
Table 1: CPS Supervisor to Worker Ratio

Region	May 2020 Supervisor: FTE Worker Ratio	Supervisor Positions Allocated	July 1, 2020 Supervisor: FTE Worker Ratio
KC	12/79 = 1: 6.6	1	13/79 = 1:6
Northeast	6/47 = 1: 7.8	2	8/47 = 1: 5.8
Northwest	7/42 = 1: 6	1	8/42 = 1: 5.3
Southeast	7/39 = 1: 5.6	1	8/39 = 1: 4.9
Southwest	8/54 = 1: 6.6	1	9/54 = 1: 6
Wichita	12/71 = 1: 5.9	1	13/71 = 1: 5.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>1:6.58</i>	7	<i>1:5.6</i>

DCF has diligently worked to fill these positions. Since 2018, DCF has dedicated \$400,000 in recruitment and retention funds for job advertisements, payment of license fees, and CEU training for employees. As of September 20th, 2020, 5% of child protection related frontline positions were vacant. This is down from 8% of such positions being vacant on November 19, 2019.

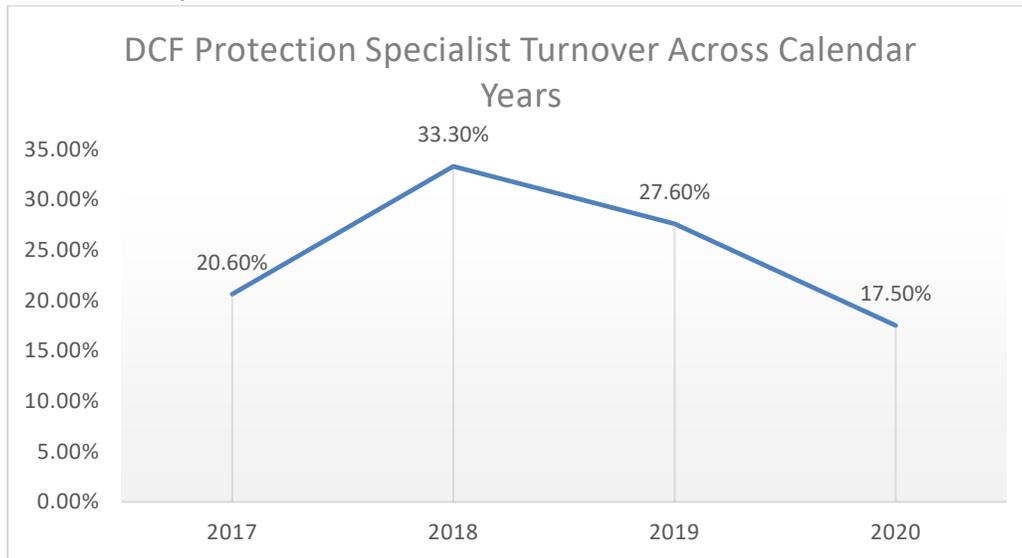
Investments in increasing frontline staffing have yielded good results. As you can see in Chart 1, while the average monthly caseload assigned to a CPS investigator for child reports increased between Fiscal Year 2017 and Fiscal Year 2019, it decreased in Fiscal Year 2020. This was possible thanks to the additional positions available to respond to reports and slightly fewer reports received in the month of March compared to prior fiscal years. Standards for child protection caseload size takes into consideration the development or tenure of a front line practitioner and acuity of the presenting situation in the report. Generally a caseload of 10-15 reports monthly is recommended and the DCF target is an average of 14 or fewer reports per worker.

Chart 1: Average Monthly CPS Caseloads



DCF has also achieved an increase in child protection workforce retention over the last two calendar years. Turnover in states' child protection workforce can vary widely, but a turnover rate at or below 10-15% is regarded as the best practice standard in the general child welfare workforce. As you can see below in Chart 2, turnover has decreased from 33.3% in calendar year 2018 to 17.5% for calendar year 2020 thus far.

Chart 2: Protection Specialist Turnover rate



Workforce supports implemented over the past year and a half that may have attributed to this increased retention. For one, DCF employees began teleworking full time whenever possible this past April due to COVID-19. This came after DCF implemented a telework policy prior to the pandemic providing an option for workforce in service centers to base their work from home 2 days each week. This telework option supports efficiencies in travel and scheduling, lifts morale and supports responsiveness in communities. Telework options will continue beyond COVID-19. Additionally, DCF employees may be approved for up to 4 hours of administrative leave weekly to attend approved academic coursework in fields that support promotion or their career path at DCF.

Other supports available to DCF employees include up to 6 weeks paid parental leave, the option to bring your child (up to 6 months of age) to work, and student loan forgiveness options.

In order to further develop Kansas' child welfare workforce, DCF has partnered with Kansas Strong to implement KanCoach, a skills-based coaching and development program for public and private supervisors across all child welfare programs. As of July, the program was expanding to include offices in the East and Wichita DCF regions.

Additional coaching and management supports have been implemented via new practice models.

DCF also partners with universities to offer semester-long practicums for college students pursuing degrees related to social work. These paid internships offer students an opportunity to get a taste of the work DCF does before entering the workforce. 51 students are currently participating in practicums for the Fall 2020 semester. In previous years these practicums have resulted in several students transitioning to full-time DCF employment after graduations.

DCF is aware of the extra stresses that employees may be feeling at this time due to COVID-19. Essential frontline staff that worked outside the home during state office closures and while DCF service centers were closed to the public recently received pandemic bonus payments. Additional flexibilities for those needing time off from work for health or childcare related reasons were also provided to employees.

As we move forward through this pandemic and beyond DCF will continue to look for and advance opportunities to strengthen the child welfare workforce. Thank you for the opportunity to address this important issue. I am happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.