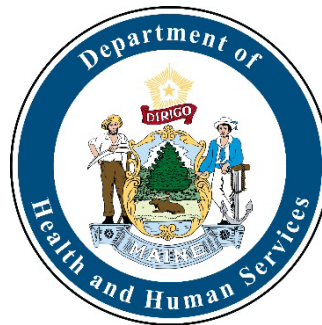


Office of Child and Family Services Recommendation Status Update

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Director

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Front Line Staff

<p>Recruit and retain more case aides</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Legislature approved the budget initiative to increase pay for these positions in recognition of the complexity and critical nature of this work. The vacancy rate in these positions recently dropped from 25% to ~10% and OCFS continues to work diligently to recruit and retain these staff.</p>
<p>Address burnout, turnover, vacancies, and workload</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>OCFS has undertaken a number of initiatives to both directly and indirectly address workload, burnout, and turnover. These including increasing the pay for caseworker and supervisor positions, establishing Supervisor Trainer positions to support new and established staff’s training needs, strengthening the internal management structure and support for frontline staff both through a reorganization of the child welfare division and a comprehensive review of decision-making processes at all levels of OCFS, and establishing ongoing opportunities for discussion between child welfare leadership and frontline staff. These efforts have already decreased the vacancy rate by about 50%.</p>
<p>Provide specific coaching/mentoring opportunities</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<p>OCFS sought and was granted in the budget 8 new Supervisor Trainer positions, one per District. These staff provide in-district support for training and onboarding of new staff as well as support opportunities for ongoing training for more established staff.</p>
<p>Increase and enhance ongoing training opportunities, including job shadowing</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<p>See above: the work of the Supervisor Trainer positions will include enhancing and increasing job shadowing opportunities (among other things). OCFS is also partnering with the Cutler Institute on training development, working with subject-matter experts on specific curriculum topics, and continuing to survey new workers at the completion of Foundations Training and implement changes based on their input and recommendations.</p>
<p>Create special teams to deal with complex cases</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<p>OCFS is in the process of establishing a cross-office complex case protocol. Much of this work is already being done in an informal manner but the protocol will formalize the process and the various members of the team OCFS staff can access when working on complex cases.</p>

Child Safety

<p>Address Department struggles to determine the safety of children at the beginning of involvement during child protective investigations and when deciding whether or not to reunify children with their parents</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>This is being address via multiple pathways to ensure the greatest success possible. Many initiatives touch on this including efforts to update and improve Foundations Training, provide training support via the new Supervisor Trainer positions, update policy and practice expectations, support strong supervisory oversight through the Supervisory Framework, training for supervisors and managers, efforts to comprehensively review decision making processes and establish a framework to support and empower staff to make well-supported decisions, and the implementation of Safety Science reviews of critical incidents, among others.</p>
<p>Share Safety Science recommendations with stakeholders and implement systemic recommendations</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>OCFS has an established annual Safety Science report, and the latest version will be published in the coming months.</p>
<p>Make consultation with child abuse pediatricians more routine in the child protective intake process and investigations</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<p>As part of OCFS' efforts to review and update policy we are ensuring that consultation with child abuse pediatricians is a practice expectation at all appropriate junctures.</p>
<p>Join the National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention's Case Reporting System</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>OCFS announced they had joined the National Partnership for Child Safety and National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention's Case Reporting System in early 2024. Work is currently underway to establish the formal MOU required to share OCFS data with the NCFRPC</p>
<p>Support the current child abuse pediatricians and hire more child abuse pediatricians through appropriate financial support from the state in addition to the pre-existing contract with the Department</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>In the last contract renewal, the organization that provides Maine's child abuse pediatrician services received a substantial increase. The program now has two certified child abuse pedestrians on staff as well as other clinical staff to provide support.</p>

Services for Families

<p>Improve Family Team Meetings</p>	<p>In Process</p>	<p>OCFS is currently considering the best path forward to both improve Family Team Meetings and create a process for ongoing evaluation and improvement. OCFS is reviewing the current model and the many changes that have occurred within it since it was implemented in 2002 and seeking the input of national partners with expertise in child welfare to ensure that any framework that OCFS implements has had success in other jurisdictions.</p>
<p>Conduct an outside evaluation of the family team meeting model and create a structure for ongoing quality assurance monitoring</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<p>A bill to fund an outside evaluation of the Family Team Meeting (FTM) process did not become law last session. As such, OCFS is currently considering the best path forward to both initially improve Family Team Meetings (FTMs) and create a process for ongoing evaluation and improvement. OCFS is seeking the input of national partners with expertise in child welfare to ensure that the framework OCFS implements has had success in other child welfare jurisdictions while also reviewing the current model and the many changes that have occurred within it since it was implemented in 2002 to help establish a path forward to meaningful improvement.</p>
<p>Increase access to mental health, behavioral health, substance use disorder, domestic violence, and other services for families as well as housing and transportation</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>This is and will continue to be an ongoing effort between OCFS, other DHHS offices, and community partners who provide these services and supports. OCFS has been a partner with CDC in launching https://bethereforme.org/ which provides support to parents and caregivers in connecting to existing resources and support.</p>
<p>Greater supports for new mothers with substance use disorder</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>The Maine MOM program and OCFS' efforts related to the Plan of Safe Care for infants and their caregivers when infants are born affected by substances are efforts to improve supports for substance use disorder (SUD). Additionally, OCFS has invested in co-located SUD Consultants for each district to provide assessment, consultation, support and connection to resources.</p>
<p>Implement the Nurse Family Partnership model of public health nursing to prevent child maltreatment</p>	<p>Outside OCFS</p>	<p>This recommendation is directed to the Maine CDC which oversees public health nursing.</p>

Resource Family and Other Placement Support

Ensure placement options exist other than in hotels or hospital emergency departments	Ongoing	OCFS hired a dedicated hotel and emergency department coordinator and is engaged in the national dialogue regarding this topic as it is being experienced in jurisdictions throughout the country. Some of the solutions will continue to be pursued in partnership with other DHHS offices and community service providers as we seek to ensure there are appropriate behavioral health treatment opportunities, including residential where appropriate, for all youth (including youth in State custody).
Improve home-based therapeutic and other resource family resources and supports	Ongoing	This is and will continue to be an ongoing effort between OCFS, other DHHS offices, and community partners who provide these services and supports. This includes therapeutic foster care investments in the 2024 supplemental budget.
Expand financial support to resource families and ensure timely reimbursements for appropriate expenditures	Ongoing	OCFS has established a workgroup to review and ensure the process for addressing any delay in reimbursement to resource parents is quickly and efficiently addressed. OCFS has also established a single point of contact email address for all resource parent payment concerns.

Department Management, Plans, and Reporting

<p>Task the new director with an improvement plan containing short, medium, and long-term strategies and metrics with regular public updates on progress and challenges</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<p>OCFS is currently working to develop this plan, working from a comprehensive list of over 200 recommendations OCFS has received from the Legislature, Citizen Review Panels, and other partners. A comprehensive child welfare improvement plan is in development and OCFS intends to begin providing regular updates on the status of action items once the plan is finalized.</p>
<p>Require outcomes data</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<p><i>See above</i> re: improvement plan.</p>
<p>Require specific public reporting on any hospital, hotel, or Department office stays</p>	<p>Under Discussion</p>	<p>OCFS is considering inclusion of these metrics in its work and is currently reviewing whether such metrics could accelerate appropriate placements for children.</p>
<p>Improve culture and job satisfaction</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>OCFS has undertaken several initiatives to both directly and indirectly address workload, burnout, and turnover. These including increasing the pay for caseworker and supervisor positions, establishing the Supervisor Trainer positions to support new and established staff’s training needs, working to strengthen internal management structure and support for frontline staff both through a reorganization of the child welfare division and a comprehensive review of decision-making processes at all levels of OCFS, and establishing ongoing discussion between child welfare leadership and frontline staff. These efforts have already decreased the vacancy rate by about 50%.</p>
<p>Review and assess informal policies and practices</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	<p>OCFS is working methodically to review and update all existing policies which includes reviewing related informal practices that may have been established over the years and determining whether they need to be included in the policy. Recognizing that no policy can address the myriad situations staff encounter, and that policy is intended to support quality decisions and casework practice, Leadership has comprehensively reviewed decision making processes at all levels of OCFS to establish a framework to support and empower staff to make well-supported decisions.</p>

Courts, Statutes, and Technology

<p>Improve access to courts for children and families</p>	<p>Outside of OCFS</p>	<p>OCFS works in partnership with the courts but cannot control the specific level of access for cases involving children and families.</p>
<p>Improve child and family access to legal services</p>	<p>Outside of OCFS</p>	<p>This is the role of the Maine Commission on Public Defense Services.</p>
<p>Initiate a review of statutes relevant to child protection</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>This session OCFS has introduced legislation that includes changes to the Child and Family Services and Child Protection Act. OCFS has consistently brought forward bills to improve statutes where appropriate and ensure we adapt to changes in federal law and policy, as well as best practice.</p>
<p>Fix issues with critical Department technology (Katahdin)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Information Services (IS) team has established a process to regularly survey supervisors and caseworkers about their experience with Katahdin, as well as meeting with District offices to discuss experiences and concerns. The IS team has engaged in focus groups with both staff and external partners, collaborated with the Training Unit to address training-related concerns, and worked with OCFS' Quality Assurance staff to identify system-related feedback they have gathered in their work. In conjunction with this information gathering the IS team is continually working on updates, enhancements, and improvements to the system to address established child welfare priority items (many of which are the result of the feedback work outlined above).</p>

Questions

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Office of Child and Family Services

