



State of Rhode Island
Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

September 2, 2021

The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi
Speaker of the House
323 State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear Speaker Shekarchi:

In accordance with Article 1 as Amended of Public Law 2021-162, I am enclosing a 60-day report relating to the progress of implementing the accreditation plan filed in accordance with RIGL 42-72-5.3. The document covers the period of July 1, 2021 – August 29, 2021.

Please contact me at 401-528-3540 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Aucoin".

Kevin Aucoin
DCYF Acting Director

Attachments:

60-Day Report (July 1, 2021-August 29, 2021)
Phase One Hiring Plan



Accreditation: 60-Day Report

July 1, 2021 – August 29, 2021

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 2021-162. The report describes progress made in implementing the accreditation plan filed in accordance with RIGL 42-72-5.3 and any includes any projected changes needed to effectuate that plan.

ENGAGEMENT WITH COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION

The Department began re-engaging with the accrediting organization, the Council on Accreditation (COA), on June 25 and has met with them at least biweekly since that time. Major activities with the COA during the reporting period have included:

- Establishing an estimated 36-month timeline for achieving accreditation. This includes time needed to increase staffing levels.
- Setting up an online portal through which DCYF will submit its information throughout the accreditation process (7/8/21).
- Updating the cost estimate for fees associated with working with the COA (7/29/21). The new estimate of \$218,977 is less than the original \$300,000 estimate; COA determined that the readiness assessment step was no longer required given the completion of the accreditation plan filed with the General Assembly in October of 2020.
- Submitting the formal application to the COA (8/24/21). The in-depth application allows the COA to understand the Department's operations and structure so that the accreditation process can accurately assess DCYF's progress toward achieving all relevant standards.

PHASE ONE HIRING PLAN

Department leadership has recognized that the Department needed to take the hiring plans described in the accreditation plan submitted last year in phases. This will allow for DCYF to build the proper infrastructure for accreditation, and also takes into account the capacity of its workforce development (training) unit.

In the first phase, the Department is focusing on immediate increases in frontline and supervisory positions in its Family Service Units (casework) division and Child Protective Services (investigation) division. The Department is also moving forward immediately with infrastructure positions that will help support both the large increase in staff and the

accreditation progress. Infrastructure positions include two additional staff trainers, one additional human resources implementation aide, one policy analyst, and two management and budget staff to support financial management functions such as timely payments for foster parents.

In total, the Department has created a “phase one” hiring plan based on the original accreditation plan that includes 52 staff. The attached phase one hiring plan describes each of the positions in detail. Fifty-one (51) of these staff are union, and none are administrators. Forty-eight (48) of these phase one staff were approved by the Department of Administration on August 17, 2021, and recruitment has begun. DCYF is working to ensure that these staff are onboarded by early November of 2021. A second phase of hiring will be developed and executed in second half of FY22.

It should be noted not all positions in the phase one hiring plan are considered part of the 75 Accreditation FTEs appropriated to the Department in the FY22 Enacted Budget. Some of these positions are backfills for positions that were vacant, and other positions were appropriated in the FY22 budget apart from the accreditation initiative.

Future 60-day reports will capture phase one hiring progress, including workforce diversity data and an accounting of related spending.

CASELOAD INFORMATION

The Department is not far enough along with the accreditation process to have seen a reduction in caseload sizes. Reductions in caseload sizes are expected to be seen a few months after the phase one hires are onboarded this fall. Family Service Units caseload sizes have remained steady over the past three months (~16 cases per worker), and the Child Protective Services investigators are receiving around 10.5 new investigations per month.

Baseline caseload data is included in the enclosed phase one hiring plan.

NEXT STEPS

In the next 60 days, the Department will be submitting fees for the first year of work with COA. This includes the \$2,500 application fee and the first installment of the accreditation fee (25%, or \$48,869). The Department also will be doing its due diligence in reviewing and signing a formal agreement with COA. Once the agreement is in place, the Department will take part in an “intake” meeting — a kickoff meeting where the Department will work with COA to finalize the set of standards that the Department will be responsible to achieve.

Also, the Department is developing the project management structure for the initiative. DCYF is pursuing an RFP to contract with a project manager who has subject matter expertise in supporting states in achieving human services accreditation. The Department is currently developing and finalizing an RFP to purchase these services. If the proposals submitted render suitable project management resources, then the Department will enter into a contract for the services.

Accreditation: Phase One Hiring Plan

First 120 days (July-October 2021)

Frontline Investments for COA (42 staff)

Position: Social Caseworker II

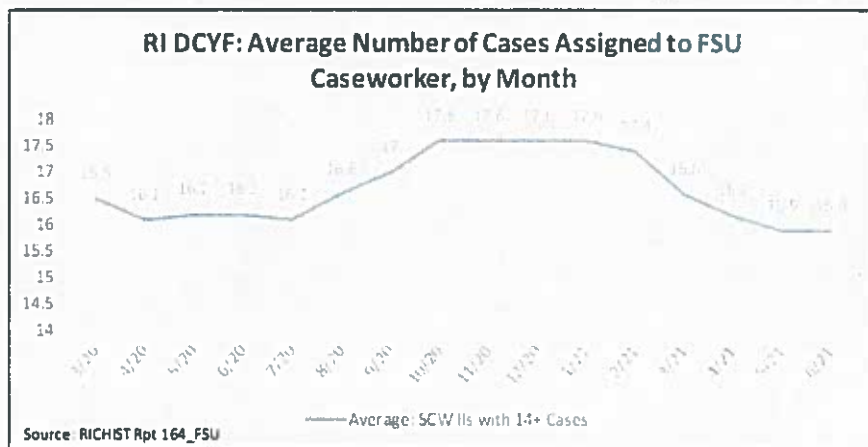
Grade: 24A

Needed: 20

Division/Unit: Family Service Units, regions 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Justification: The proposal is to bring the Department closer to the accreditation standards for FSU caseloads by adding one unit for each of the four FSU regions. That would mean 10 additional caseworkers in Providence, and 5 each based in our Bristol and Wakefield offices. The current average caseload size for fully active caseworkers is 15.9 (see chart below).

Chart 1. Average Number of Cases Assigned to FSU Caseworker, by Month



These average caseload sizes vary by region, as show in the table below:

14 case Threshold							
Region 1		Region 2		Region 3		Region 4	
Mean	16.0	Mean	15.5	Mean	15.2	Mean	15.3
Median	15	Median	15	Median	10	Median	13
Max	19	Max	20	Max	18	Max	18
Min	15	Min	15	Min	15	Min	15
No Cases	8	No Cases	5	No Cases	4	No Cases	4
1 to 9	2	1 to 9	0	1 to 9	7	1 to 9	6
10 to 15	11	10 to 15	22	10 to 15	22	10 to 15	20
16 to 20	14	16 to 20	8	16 to 20	2	16 to 20	10
21 +	0	21 +	0	21 +	0	21 +	0
Total	27	Total	30	Total	31	Total	36

Also, as of July 1, there was an average of 21.2 Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) cases per worker (106 court-approved VEC participants across 5 workers).

COA's Child and Family Services Standard 2.09 calls for "no more than 15-17 families receiving in-home services and no more than 12-15 children in out of home care." The Department will need clarification from COA on how to apply this standard given that FSU workers have a mixed caseload, as well as how to apply the standard to VEC.

The additional worker will not only allow us to reduce caseloads but to begin to improve practices in alignment with many other COA standards. For example, the Department will need to:

- complete family service plans within 30 days of case opening
- complete treatment planning for children within the first 30 days of out-of-home care
- Ensure monthly caseworker meetings with children, parents, and, if applicable, out-of-home providers
- "Due diligence in identifying and notifying all adult relatives of a child's separation from his or her family within 30 days."
- Regularly assess the independent living skills of youth.

Position: Child Support Technician

Grade: 22A

Needed: 4

Division/Unit: Family Service Units

Justification: These technicians support the FSU units in ensuring that children and parents have the support they need with regard to transportation to appointments, visitation supervision, and other critical case activities.

Position: Casework Supervisor II

Grade: 28A

Needed: 4

Division/Unit: Family Service Units, regions 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Justification: To maintain the 5:1 caseworker to supervisor ratio required by the COA and by Department policy, 4 FSU supervisors will be needed to support the 20 additional caseworkers.

Position: Casework Supervisor II

Grade: 28A

Needed: 1

Division/Unit: Family Service Units, regions 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Justification: To accommodate the assignment of a sixth social caseworker to the VEC unit due to increase in the number of VEC cases.

Position: Child Protective Investigator

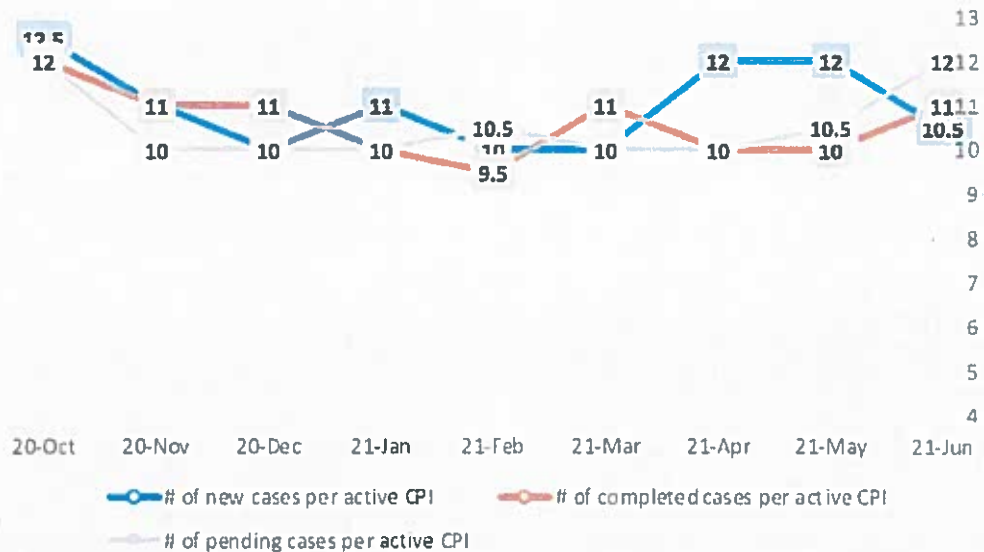
Grade: 26A

Needed: 10

Division/Unit: Child Protective Services

Justification: The proposal is to bring the Department closer to the accreditation standards for CPS caseloads by adding two investigation units (10 investigators) to Child Protective Services. The current average caseload size is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Median caseloads (new, completed, and pending investigations per active CPI*), by month.



Data notes: Source-RPT 259, 500

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

The COA caseload standard requires no more than 12 active investigations at a time for a given investigator and no more than 8 new investigations for a given investigator per month. Currently, DCYF is generally meeting the 12 active investigations standards, but the median new investigations per worker per month is 10.5.

During the development of the COA plan, it was clear that these reduced caseloads would have benefits for children and families, including:

- Giving investigators more time to spend engaging with each family
- Better adherence to the S.A.F.E. Practice Model
- Better adherence to investigation timeframes as per current policy

Position: Supervisor-Child Protective Investigator

Grade: 31A

Needed: 3

Division/Unit: Child Protective Services

Justification: To maintain the 5:1 investigator to supervisor ratio required by the COA and by Department policy, 2 CPS supervisors will be needed to support the 10 additional caseworkers.

Infrastructure Investments (6 staff)

Position: Senior Human Services Policy and Systems Specialist

Grade: 28A

Needed: 1

Division/Unit: Policy & Legislative Affairs

Justification: The Policy office, overseen by the Deputy Director Deb Buffi and Policy Director Sarah St. Jacques, will need at least one additional staff person to oversee the policy reviews and updates that will be required of COA accreditation. The Policy office is currently a one-person shop — it was reduced by one position at the end of 2018. It is recommended that this be a permanent state position rather than a contracted position, as the Policy office is already in need of additional capacity and would contribute to projects beyond accreditation.

Position: Clinical Training Specialist

Grade: 30A

Needed: 2

Division/Unit: Performance Improvement/Workforce Development

Justification: Within the Division of Performance Improvement, the Workforce Development Unit currently has an administrator (Kevin McKenna, soon to be retiring), and two trainers, Jan Smith and Lori Geiselman. The current team was already in need of expansion to support the new worker training and the ongoing education for all DCYF staff. The proposal is to build the unit so that it has a total of 4 staff trainers (clinical training specialists) who can not only meet the immediate need to expand the frontline staff for accreditation purposes but also expand capacity for the Department's ongoing education programming, including mission-critical topics such as family engagement and race equity. For those reasons, it is recommended that these positions be permanent state positions rather than contracted.

Position: Implementation Aide

Grade: 22A

Needed: 1

Division/Unit: Human Resources

Justification: The overall hiring of up to 91 new staff could increase our overall DCYF staff by 10-15% for the long term. Implementation Aides support the administrator (Colleen Walters) in coordinating all human resources activity, including: recruitment, interviewing, hiring paperwork, RMTS program, administrative hearings, overtime tracking, termination and all other human resource functions. One additional implementation aide is being proposed to give the unit additional capacity to handle the larger staff size that the Department anticipates for the long term. It is recommended that this position be a permanent state position rather than contracted.

Position: Economic and Policy Analyst I

Grade: 30

Needed: 1

Division/Unit: Management & Budget

Justification: This position will assist the Department with the development of the Cost Allocation Plan, Random Moment Time Studies and Residential Time Studies. Furthermore, collaboration with a third-party contractor to assist with revenue streams from Federal Reimbursements for Medicaid and Title IV-E claiming, and the utilization of Transition Assistance of Needy Families, and Social Services Block Grant, which was most recently recommended during the State of Rhode Island Single Audit Report. This position will support the distribution of M&B workload with our current staff shortage and this division and allow for the solid structure needed for accreditation.

Position: Human Services Business Officer

Grade: 22A

Needed: 1

Division/Unit: Management & Budget

Justification: This position will assist the Department with invoicing for services such as foster care, congregate care, daycare and home and community-based services provided to Rhode Island's children, youth and families. This position includes processing all operational needs of the department and following all procurement rules. This position will support the distribution of M&B workload with our current staff shortage and this division and allow for the solid structure needed for accreditation.

Miscellaneous Position Requests Not Directly Associated with COA standards (3 staff)

Position: Social Caseworker II

Grade: 24A

Needed: 1

Division/Unit: Community Services & Behavioral Health

Justification: This utilization management position is not directly associated with the accreditation standards and was part of the Governor's original budget recommendation. The position within CSBH would support the review of children who are placed in out-of-state and other congregate settings to ensure they are being stepped down to less restrictive settings as soon as appropriate. Susan Lindberg (administrator) says that the other utilization management works are classified as Social Caseworker II. She expects that this would be a lateral bid into the position. She would like to fill this position as soon as possible because she has another utilization management worker who is taking educational leave starting in September. Note: This lateral bid will likely result in another vacancy to either an FSU or RF SCWII position.

Position: Paralegal Aide

Grade: 14A

Needed: 2

Division/Unit: Legal

Justification: These paralegal positions are not directly associated with the current standards and were part of the Governor's original plan. They will help add much-needed capacity in the legal services unit (under administrator Pat Hessler). This will help children, families, and the state by helping with the internal processing of and supporting

Position: Office Manager

Grade: 23A

Needed: 1

Division/Unit: Legal

Justification: This office manager position was a result of an incumbent position for child protective services and family services unit in a large state department, to serve in a responsible position under administrator Patricia Hessler in coordinating, directing, and performing operations and other administrative support services and related work as required.