

DCFS report in response to HCR 25 (2016 R.S.)

Initiatives DCFS will take to ensure a more efficient operation for fiscal year 2016-2017 and beyond:

1. Department wise Initiatives:

a. Reorganization and Refocus of DCFS: Service delivery

The reorganization of DCFS in 2010 consolidated the management of child welfare and family support programs under one division: the Division of Programs. It also merged the operations of these programs in the fields under a single entity: the Division of Operations. While there have been some benefits to consolidating programs and operations, the reorganization of 2010 has also negatively affected the quality of services and productivity of employees. One of the main issues has been that supervisors with no background in child welfare supervised family support staff and vice versa.

In FY 2016-2017, DCFS will implement the reorganization of the department included in Act 90 of the 2016 legislative session. The Division of Programs and the Division of Operations will be replaced by the Division of Child Welfare-led by the Assistant Secretary of Child Welfare-and the Division of Family Support- headed by the Assistant Secretary of Family Support. Each division will manage its own staff and resources.

The rationale behind the reorganization of 2016 is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of programs by having programs run by executives, managers and supervisors who have experience and expertise in these programs.

b. Reorganization and Refocus of DCFS: Administration and Finance

For various reasons, programs managers have had limited knowledge and understanding of the budgets associated with their programs in the past.

We believe program managers will be able to make better decisions for their programs and be more efficient if they had a better understanding of their budgets and were able to effectively track their expenditures during the course of the fiscal year.

Therefore, the office of the Undersecretary will be working with the Division of Child Welfare and the Division of Family Support in FY 2016-2017 to inform programs about their budgets and develop tools for them to track their expenditures.

c. Elimination of the Council on Accreditation (COA) Accreditation

While we will continue to implement the best practices recommended by the Council on Accreditation, we will cease to seek re-accreditation in FY 2016-2017. Beside the application cost of \$400K, re-accreditation requires hundreds of hours of work from staff in the state offices and fields. At a time when resources are drastically limited, this money and this time will be better used to provide services to the population we serve.

2. Child Welfare:

a. Review and improvement of Home Certification processes

Title IV E is a major source of federal funding for DCFS, which is used to recover administrative and maintenance costs associated with maintaining children in certified relative homes.

DCFS report in response to HCR 25 (2016 R.S.)

Federal dollars are only available to children residing in certified home (or licensed institutions) however. If a child is not residing in a certified home, administrative cost associated with managing this child's case management is entirely funded with state funds. The saturation rate measures the percentage of children in foster care who are IV E eligible. It is currently slightly higher than 40 percent. The goal of DCFS is to raise the saturation rate to 50 percent by the end of FY 2016-2017, resulting in an increase of \$5 to \$7 million in federal funding for the following fiscal year.

A task force has been established that is reviewing the cases of children residing in non-certified homes, working with field offices to certify homes that could be certified, and train staff to promote and implement certification.

b. Review and improvement of Child Eligibility procedures

When a child comes under the custody of DCFS, delays in the determination of this child's eligibility to benefit from federal program, such as Title IV, Medicaid, or Social Security Income, are costly. Furthermore, some actions by DCFS and others during this process may even prevent DCFS from drawing any federal dollars for that child while is in state custody. Because of an outdated computer system and excessive caseloads, the eligibility determination process for some children has taken months, rather than 30 days it should take.

Until a new child welfare computer system is available to staff and the caseload of social workers declines, there will be delays in processing eligibility determination for some children. However, the number of cases delayed could be reduced significantly if a new process from tracking eligibility determination cases is established.

The Division of Child Welfare will be working in FY 2016-2017 on establishing a process to track eligibility determination for children coming in the custody of the state. State office will collaborate with field offices to identify cases that are falling behind and correct issues that affect these cases.

c. New Child Welfare System

Whether one considers, Home Certification processes, Child Eligibility procedures or most other activities performed by child welfare staff, the productivity and efficiency of workers is hampered by an antiquated computer system. Unless a new child welfare computer system is made available to staff soon, the department will only be able to make marginal productivity gains.

Several reports and reviews of the department have identify the existing child welfare computer system as a major risks for the department, a critical factor in explaining high turnover among social workers, and a main reasons why we are unable to draw down federal dollars we could otherwise have received.

The financial impact of an antiquated child welfare computer system should not be underestimated. For instance, Arkansas and Alabama-two states with adequate child welfare computer system-have saturation rate of over 60 percent, compared to a rate slightly higher than 40 percent for Louisiana. It is not a coincidence.

DCFS report in response to HCR 25 (2016 R.S.)

DCFS has already contacted federal authorities (ACF) to revise its plan to update its computer systems. Our goal is to be able to start implementing a new child welfare computer system by FY 2018, rather than 2021 as previously expected. The new system would be funded at 50 percent level by federal funds.

A new project manager has been assigned to the DCFS Transformation Project leading our effort to modernize computer systems. In FY 2016-2017, her team will be in charge of preparing all the documents necessary to secure federal funding for a new child welfare system in FY 2018.

Based on numbers from FY 2014, this new system could increase federal funding and reduce the need for state fund, by at least \$8 to \$10 million per fiscal year.

3. Family Services

a. National Accuracy Clearinghouse (NAC) Project

Louisiana is part of a consortium of five states that utilizes advanced linking technology and identity analytics to detect whether Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applicants are receiving benefits in another state.

After development and testing, the system will be implemented by DCFS in Louisiana to thwart cross-border, dual participation in the SNAP program by detecting fraud in real time.

b. Implementation of new fraud detection tools

The Internal auditors of DCFS carry out monthly tests to detect fraud in SNAP and other welfare programs by matching databases of recipients to other databases from DCFS and other agencies (LDH for instance). If cases of fraud are suspected, they are reported to the fraud unit of division of Family Support for investigation.

Internal auditors will continue in FY 2016-2017 to implement new tests (using new data bases) to identify and root out fraud in SNAP and other welfare programs.

c. Implementation of new collection tools for Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program

The CSE program has implemented one of the nation's most expansive set of tools and procedures to collect child support due to custodial parents.

One of the few avenues to increase the amount of child support collected by DCFS is to make new forms of payment available for non-custodial parents. In fiscal year 2016-2017, the CSE program will study the possibility to expand payment methods for child support to include new instruments such as Paypal or electronic transfers of funds.

d. Reduction or elimination of training contracts

The CSE program and Economic Stability program have a long standing contract with LSU to develop training materials and provides some training to DCFS staff. The programs will review this contract and identify activities that could be done internally, rather than through the contract.

DCFS report in response to HCR 25 (2016 R.S.)

4. Administration and Finance

a. Review of Random Moment Sample (RMS) survey and cost allocation plan

The allocation of costs across units and programs of DCFS is based on a monthly survey of staff activities (Random Moment Sample survey) and a cost allocation plan.

Both the RMS survey and cost allocation plan have been recently revised and are working well. Through some improvements to the survey and the plan and through (re-)training, it may be possible for DCFS to capture more federal dollars the department is entitled to receive.

As the reorganization of the department unfolds, the cost allocation plan will be revised to reflect the changes brought about by the reorganization. Once the reorganization of the department is completed, DCFS will review the RMS survey to clarify some items and add some items, which may allow the department to capture more federal funds.

DCFS will also conduct a review of the use of the RMS survey by staff. This review will be used to implement additional training for staff. Additional training may allow DCFS to capture more federal dollars.

b. Identification of new Certified Public Expenditures (CPE)

As state general funds have become limited, identifying certified public expenditures is critical for DCFS to fund the state share of the costs of various programs.

In FY 2016-2017, In addition to new expenditures by state agency, DCFS will be working on certifying local and other expenditures to draw down additional federal dollars.

5. Emergency preparedness

a. Contract with Louisiana Military Department (LMD)

Staffing for Emergency Preparedness positions on the field is provided through a contract with the Louisiana Military Department (LMD).

DCFS is renegotiating this contract to reduce the number of regional coordinators from 7 to 5 across the state. Changes to the contract have been accepted by the LMD and will be implemented in FY 2016-2017.

b. Emergency Preparedness shelter contracts

DCFS has begun, and will continue in FY 2016-2017, to renegotiate 2 of his leases for emergency shelters.

Discussions with the lessor of the "Madison" shelter in Bastrop are advanced and a final agreement should be reached soon.

Next, DCFS will address the cost of the Westpark shelter, located in Shreveport. This lease is expiring in November 2016, and it may be necessary to find a new, less expensive, space for the shelter by then.