

Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability

**Report Presentation
to the**

**Committee on Government Oversight
on**

**“Office of Child and Family Services:
Timeliness of Child Care Payments”**

February 27, 2026

OPEGA Director's Headline Summary

Although 95.5% of invoices in our sample were paid within 30 days, the underlying process leaves much to be desired, in terms of clarity, communication, and consistency of application. Simply put, the limitations noted by OPEGA create risk: risk of significant payment delays if and when matters stray off course.

What Should OCFS Do Now?

- Establish a standardized process;
- Clarify invoice requirements;
- Document that process and the corresponding invoice requirements;
- Communicate the process and requirements to district office clerical workers and providers;
- Train staff accordingly; and
- Improve communication with all parties.

Scope Questions

- By what standards and requirements, if any, is the timeliness of DHHS payments for foster children in child care measured and managed?
- How has DHHS performed relative to any standards and requirements (or in their absence, as the case may be), and as indicated by sampling and testing methodology(ies) for performance timeframes chosen by OPEGA?

Applicable Standards

- 5 MRSA § 1553: 25 *working* days
- DHHS & DAFS Standard Contact Language: 30 *calendar* days
 - OPEGA applied the more stringent standard (30 calendar days) in our subsequent analysis.

When Calculating the Timeliness of Payments It is Essential to Have:

- Date of Invoice Receipt;
- Date of Invoice Payment; and
- Unique Invoice Identifier.

Existing Data Limitations

- There were three primary limitations with OCFS' existing data:
 1. The date that an invoice is received is not captured by OCFS.
 2. OCFS' invoice forms do not have assigned unique identifiers.
 3. OCFS payment data is recorded at the transaction-level and not at the invoice-level.

OPEGA's Search for Data

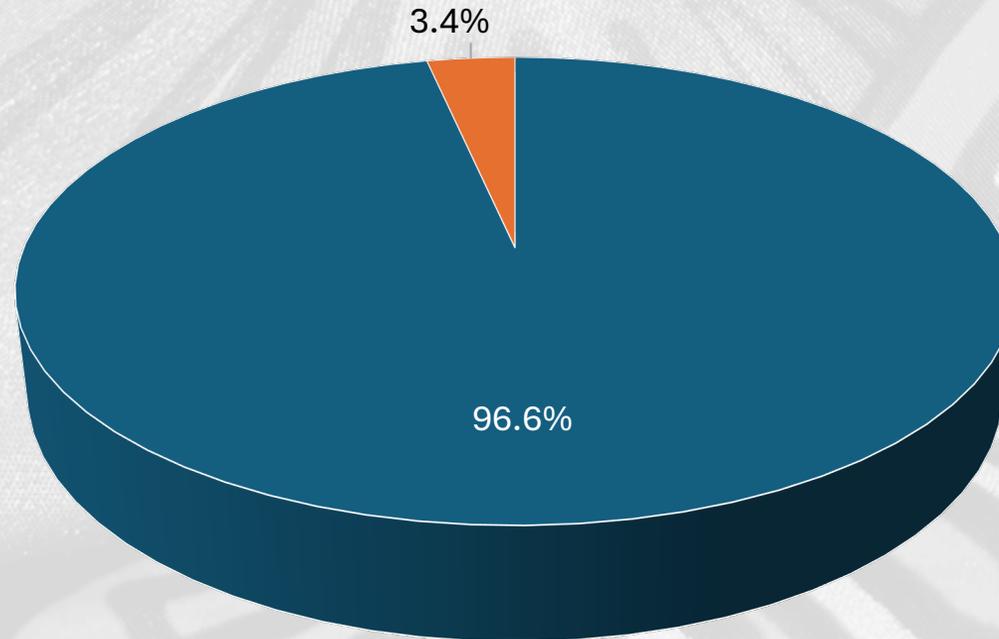
- Invoices are predominantly submitted via email.
- Invoices are to be emailed to specific OCFS email accounts.
- Thirteen specific OCFS email accounts were identified.

Overview of OPEGA's Methodology

- From the larger data set obtained, OPEGA reviewed all of the emails sent to each email account over a three-month period (March, April, and May 2025).
- OPEGA logged all of the invoices submitted within those emails – including the date the email was received.
- OPEGA cross-referenced that information with OCFS' payment data to record payment dates.

Payment Status (for the 2,276 invoices OPEGA logged and reconciled to calculate the timeliness of payments).

Payment Status as of June 30, 2025

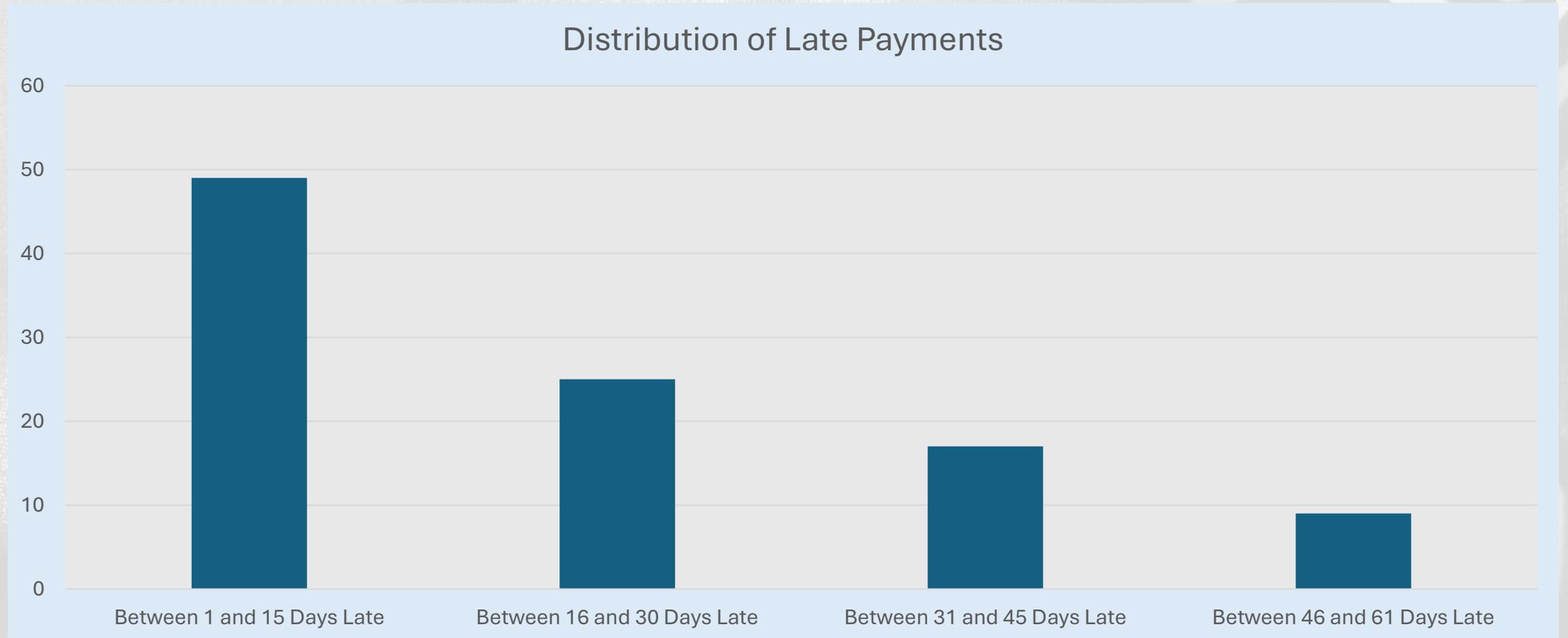


■ Paid ■ Unpaid

Timeliness of Payments



Late Payments



District Office Outlier

Measure	District 8	All Others
Percentage of Invoices Paid Within 30 Days	51.8%	96.1%
Percentage of Total Unpaid Invoices	38.5%	61.5%

Invoice Payment Process Overview



Rejected Invoices

- Invoices may be rejected by either district office clerical workers or DAFS HHS Service Center staff.
- OCFS clerical workers are not allowed to correct or edit certain invoice fields.
- Often, rejected invoices need to be sent back to providers for correction and resubmission.

Child Care Provider Perspectives

- Timeliness of payments;
- Differences between private families and OCFS;
- Communication;
- Rates of Pay; and
- Suggestions for Improvement.

Provider Perspectives: Timeliness

Reported Timeliness of Payments

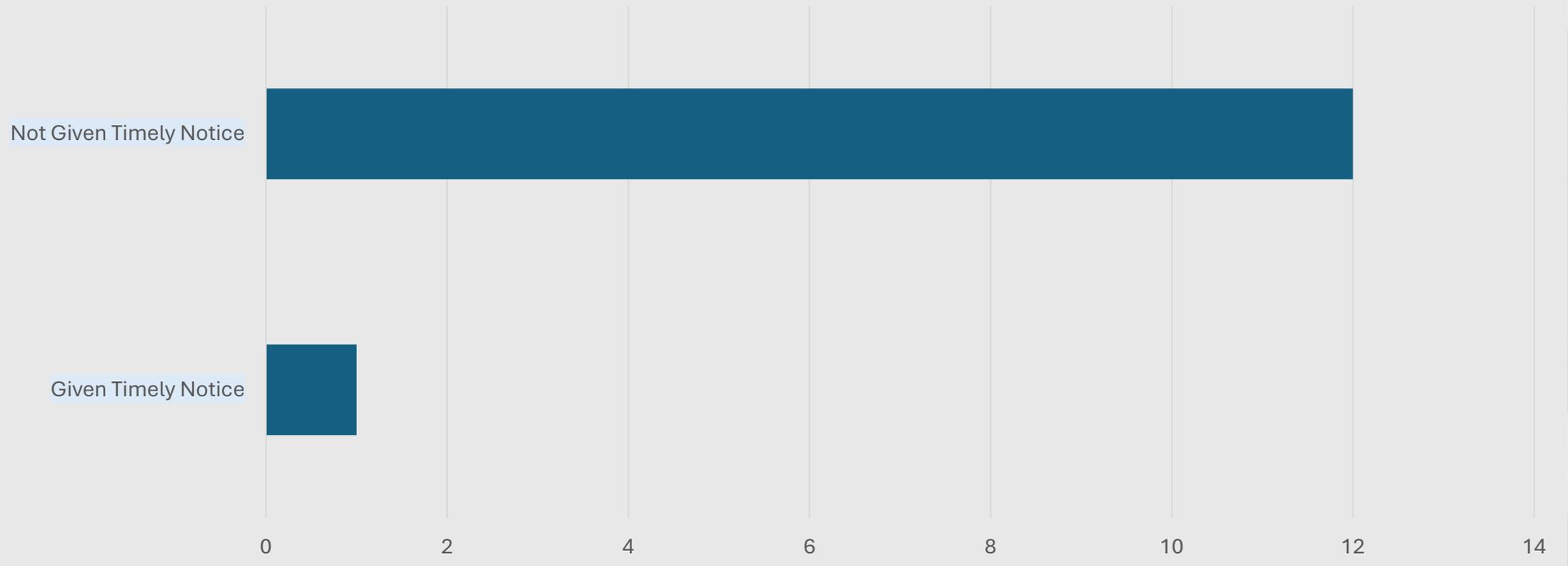


Provider Perspectives: Differences Between Private Families and OCFS

Private Families	OCFS
Pay in advance of services rendered	Pays after services are rendered
Pay late fees	Does not pay late fees
Will sign contracts	Will not sign contracts
Must provide a two-week notice	Often doesn't provide a two-week notice
Pay registration or enrollment fees	Does not pay registration or enrollment fees

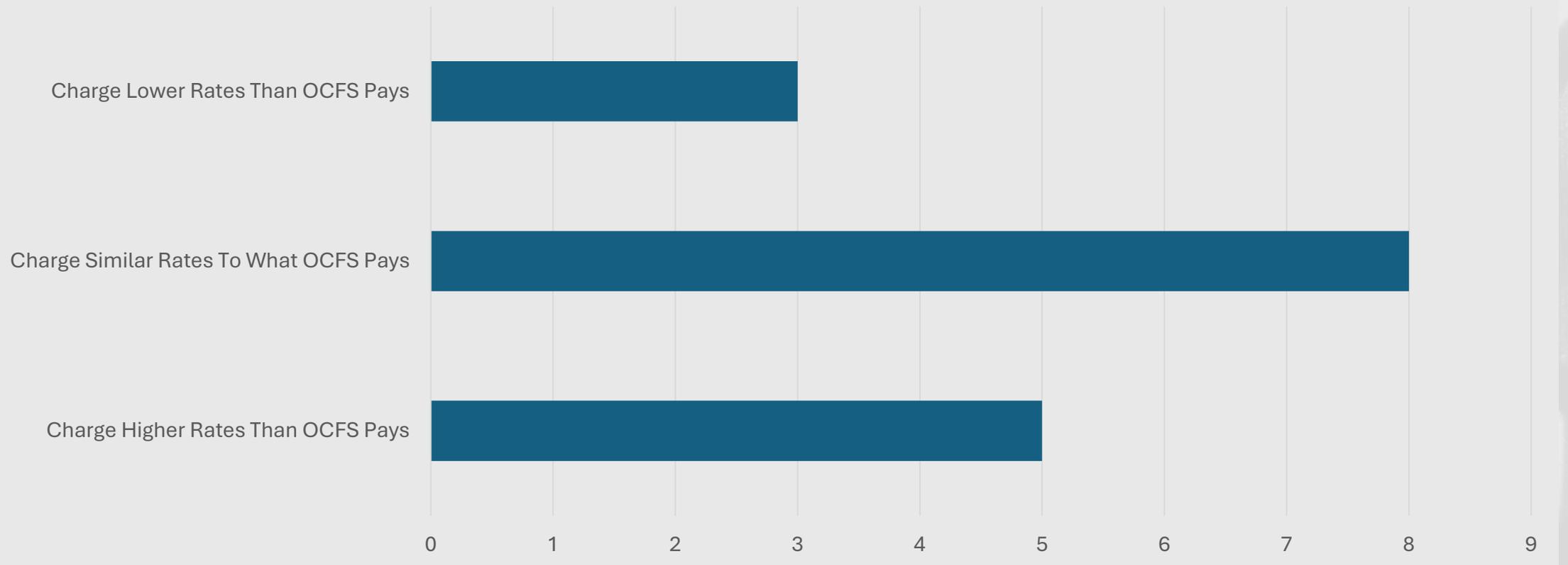
Provider Perspectives: Communication

Communication During a Change in Custody



Provider Perspectives: Rates of Pay

Child Care Provider Rates vs. OCFS Market Rates



Provider Perspectives: Suggestions

- Online system for invoicing.
- Better communication, specifically when there is a change in a child's custody.
- Timing of payments.
- Adjust market rates.
- Allow providers to bill resource parents (for the difference) when OCFS market rates are lower than the provider's standard rates.

Fundamental Process Issues

1. There is no single, established child care invoice payment process among the district offices.
2. Communication among process participants is often ineffective.

Issue 1: No established process.

- Areas of Practice Variation:
 - Funding Requests.
 - Generic Email Accounts and Receiving Invoices.
 - Invoice Form, Requirements, and Review.
 - Understanding of Specific Processes.
 - Market Rate Exceptions.
 - Payment of Late Fees.

Funding Requests

- Duration of Funding Requests
- Supervisory Approvals

Generic Email Accounts and Receiving Invoices

Generic Email Example	Specific Staff Email Example
DistrictOfficeBilling@maine.gov	FirstName.LastName@maine.gov

- Coverage of Invoice Receipt and Processing Duties

Invoice Form, Requirements, and Review

- Various “standard” invoice forms
- Different understandings of what is required on the form
- Varying levels of quality control

INVOICE

Provider Name: _____ SSN#: _____
 OR
 Business Name: _____ EIN#: _____
 Physical Address: _____ PHONE: _____
 Mailing Address: _____

Please use Monday-Friday
dates as the week start/ending.

BILL TO

OCFS Augusta Billing
 35 Anthony Avenue, SHS #11
 Augusta ME 04333-0011
 Email: AugustaOCFSBilling.DHHS@maine.gov Fax: 207-624-5553

Child(ren) Name	Week Start Week Ending	Weekly Hours Attended	\$ Amount	A# (for office use only)
Invoice Total			\$	

Provider Signature: _____ Date: _____

Understanding of Specific Processes:

- Market Rate Exceptions
- Payment of Late Fees

Issue 2: Ineffective Communication.

- Central Office Process Expectations
- DAFS HHS Service Center Invoice Requirements
- Changes in a Child's Custody

Other Considerations: Use of Free Shared Mailboxes

- Emails deleted from these accounts cannot be recovered beyond 30 days.
- Upon learning of this, OCFS upgraded these accounts.
- OPEGA does not know the extent to which these accounts with limited recoverability are used throughout State government.

Recommendations

1. Establish and document a standardized process.
2. Clarify and communicate current invoice requirements.

Rec 1: Establish a standardized process.

- Develop a uniform and well-defined process for receiving, reviewing, and approving child care invoices for payment.
 - OCFS should work with OPEX to conduct a process improvement project.
- The process should address the conditions identified in the report, particularly:
 - Market Rate Exceptions.
 - Payment of Late Fees.
 - Communication of Changes in Custody.
- Document resulting process.
- Develop a training plan for staff.

Rec 2: Clarify and communicate current invoice requirements.

- Coordinate with DAFS HHS Service Center to better understand current invoice requirements.
- Document those requirements.
- Disseminate and communicate those requirements to district office staff and child care providers.

From all of us in OPEGA, we thank the Government Oversight Committee and the Maine Legislature for the opportunity to be of assistance in this matter.

And I am pleased to field any further questions the Committee may have at this time. (And the agency response to our report may be found at and after page 32 of the report).



Peter Schleck

**Director, Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability
Maine State Legislature**

peter.schleck@legislature.maine.gov