

Janet T. Mills  
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.  
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Child and Family Services  
11 State House Station  
2 Anthony Avenue  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011  
Tel.: (207) 624-7900; Toll Free: (877) 680-5866  
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay); Fax: (207) 287-5282

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability  
**FROM:** Office of Child and Family Services, Maine DHHS  
**DATE:** July 18, 2022  
**SUBJECT:** Responses to Questions from June 15, 2022 GOC Meeting

---

### 1. Updated Hiring Data

	January – March 2021	January – March 2022
<i>Total Applications</i>	106	187
<i>Qualified Applicants</i>	96	102
<i>Hired</i>	31 (29% of total applicants)	24 (13% of total applicants)

	April – June 2021	April – June 2022
<i>Total Applications</i>	180	230
<i>Qualified Applicants</i>	124	150
<i>Hired</i>	31 (17% of total applicants)	40 (17% of total applicants)

### 2. SDM override data for investigation and permanency tools (Sen. Libby)

Please see attached analysis of SDM override data at the end of this memo.

### 3. Concrete number of cases per new caseworker (Sen. Libby)

Data were captured for caseworkers who completed Foundations Training between 6/18/21 – 2/18/22, representing 5 training cohorts. The median number of assignments to an investigation caseworker in the first complete month following training was 3 investigations (50% caseload) and increased to a full caseload between months 2-3. Assignments for permanency caseworkers, which are captured differently, averaged 1-2 new case assignments per month beginning with the first full month following the completion of training. There were some district differences noted. Districts 2 and 3 assigned at a higher rate than Districts 5, 7 and 8. There may be some correlation between districts with a higher number of vacancies assigning at a higher rate during that time.

### 4. Data on how often/many times the 35-day timeline is extended. How often does the 35-day clock completely start over? (Sen. Timberlake)

In order to gather data to determine the impact of add-on reports to the time it takes to complete an investigation, OCFS would be required to complete a manual review of cases. There is information readily available on the number of investigations where an add-on report is received, which occurs in less than 10% of cases. The data also show that, in aggregate, those

investigations with add-on reports are open longer than those without. This appears to indicate that, in general, additional time is being provided for these cases if and when appropriate.

**5. Base salary for caseworker (Rep. Blier)**

Effective 7/3/22, the starting salary for caseworkers is \$27.65 - \$32.87/hr (Employees in this classification begin at Step 3 of the Pay Scale). This hourly rate includes a \$5.00/hr. recruitment and retention stipend. This equates to an annual salary of \$57,512 - \$68,370.

**6. One chart that tracks monthly (not rolling) turnover/attrition, hiring, and vacancy rates (Sen. Libby)**

Point in Time*	July 2021	Aug 2021	Sept 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022
Total Positions	415	415	415	415	415	415	425	425	425	425	425	425
Total Vacancies	21	27	34	32	30	36	46†	50	54	56	47	45
% Total Vacancies to Total Positions	5.1%	6.6%	8.3%	7.8%	7.4%	8.8%	11.0%	11.8%	12.7%	13.2%	11.1%	10.6%
Monthly Turnover Rate**	2.9%	4.4%	4.7%	3.4%	4.4%	3.4%	3.8%	3.1%	3.1%	3.5%	1.6%	3.8%

\*Data from last monthly vacancy report

\*\*Includes individuals who have been promoted to other positions at OCFS

†Includes vacancies of newly established positions

**7. Could we do the Field Instruction Unit with community college students? Is there a plan to expand to that group with so many students starting with the free community college? (Sen. Keim)**

The Field Instruction Program (FIP) is not an option for students attending Community Colleges as the program requires that students be in their last year of a bachelor’s program and expected to complete a field experience to obtain their degree. The OCFS Recruitment and Retention Specialist is connecting with Maine’s Community Colleges to determine how best to support students leaving the Community College system to transfer into a qualifying bachelor’s degree program at the University of Maine. OCFS will also explore other opportunities to collaborate with Community Colleges and promote employment within child welfare.

As noted below, a bachelor’s degree is a minimum requirement for licensure as a social worker.

**8. What are the minimum requirements to be a caseworker? What are the minimum requirements to be a LSW? (Sen. Deschambault, Reps. Arata, Stover)**

OCFS provides the minimum requirements for a caseworker position in the job bulletin for these positions:

- “Minimum Qualifications: In order to qualify, you must have a Bachelor’s Degree from an accredited education institution in Social Work/Social Welfare, or a Bachelor’s Degree from an accredited educational institution in a field related to social work/social welfare as determined by the Maine State Board of Social Work Licensure.”

- “Necessary Special Requirement: Applicants must have or be eligible for conditional or full licensure at the Licensed Social Worker (LSW) level as issued by the Maine State Board of Social Work Licensure. An LSW requires an earned BA/BS in social work/social welfare. An LSW-Conditional requires an earned BA/BS in a field related to social work/social welfare.”
- “Chapter 10 of the Maine State Board of Social Worker Licensure regulations defines a field related to social work or social welfare as including but not limited to: behavioral science, social and behavioral sciences, childhood development, education and human development, mental health and human services, psychology, psychology/educational psychology, rehabilitation services, and sociology”
- “The board will consider degrees in other areas on an individual basis. For additional information on degree requirements, contact the Maine Board of Social Work Licensure at (207) 624-8603.”

**9. What if you have come from another state where licensure doesn’t require these but you have extensive experience – can there be leniency there? (Rep. Arata)**

The Maine State Board of Social Worker Licensure determines the qualifications for LSW and LSW-C. As noted above, the Board is willing to consider degrees in other areas on an individual basis.

**10. How are standards determined? (Rep. Arata)**

The standards for LSW and LSW-C are set by the Maine State Board of Social Worker Licensure. OCFS has a longstanding practice of requiring an LSW or LSW-C for caseworker staff.

**11. Can OCFS hire part-time caseworkers? (Sen. Keim)**

Currently, OCFS does not have any part-time child welfare caseworker or supervisor positions. Under current HR rules and guidance, OCFS has the option to create a “job sharing” arrangement on a full-time caseworker line. Given that the position is shared by two caseworkers, this creates a reduction in the salary, benefits, and hours available to work. One example is that these positions are not overtime eligible. Creation of a job share on a full-time line would require at least two employees who are willing to work part-time and receive a graduated amount toward their benefits. Some caseworker positions are more suitable for this type of arrangement. Any such requests would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**12. Update on Specific Resource Parent Payment Concerns (Sen. Keim, Reps. Fay, Arata)**

OCFS is aware of a small number of circumstances where payments to resource parents have been delayed. While rare, we recognize that the impact to individual families can be significant. There is no universal reason for such a delay, but OCFS has identified the primary causes of these delays to be staff error, extended processing time for state-required vendor forms at DAFS, and user error in completing the forms. When staff become aware of a delay in payment, they have been directed to work diligently to resolve the issue. We continue to address these situations on a case-by-case basis, both within OCFS and with our resource parents and DAFS to expedite resolutions to these issues.

### 13. Daily Board Rates for Resource Parents based on the Levels of Care Assessment:

A determination about the level of care for each child is made based on rules promulgated by the Department (10-148, Chapter 14).

Level of Care	Daily Board rate
Unlicensed	\$ 18.50
A	\$ 25.00
B	\$ 35.00
C	\$ 45.00
D	\$ 60.00
E	\$ 75.00
Medical	\$ 70.00

## Analysis of SDM Tool Override Usage

### CPS Intake Screening & Response Assessment

This assessment tool uses two different overrides, one for the screening decision and one for the response priority timeframe. Given that there have been two different version of this assessment in use, data from the tools was combined to generate annual percentages.

### Screening Decision Overrides

- An **override to screen in** from an initial recommendation of screen-out may be due to a response required by a court order or other factor.
- **Overrides to screen out** from an initial recommendation of screen in are used when there is insufficient information to locate a child or family, another agency such as law enforcement, probation or court has jurisdiction, a referral contained only historical information or other factors.

Year	No Override	Override	Override
		to Screen In	to Screen Out
2018	96.08%	3.42%	0.50%
2019	96.98%	2.33%	0.70%
2020	95.91%	2.94%	1.15%
2021	96.04%	3.28%	0.67%

## Response Priority Overrides

- **Increase to 24-hour response**, due to one of the following reasons:
  - Law enforcement requests an immediate response.
  - Forensic considerations would be compromised by a slower response.
  - There is reason to believe that the family may flee.
  - Vulnerable child with parent/caregivers who have significant history of abuse and/or neglect.
  - Prior child death in the household due to abuse or neglect or under suspicious circumstances.
- **Decrease to 72-hour response**, due to one of the following reasons:
  - Child safety requires a strategically slower response.
  - The child is in an alternative safe environment.
  - The alleged incident occurred more than 6 months ago, and no maltreatment is alleged to have occurred since.
- **Discretionary override** are overrides (either to increase or decrease response time) that occur for any reason other than those listed above. These overrides require supervisory approval.

Year	No Override	Discretionary Override	Increase to 24 Hour Response	Decrease to 72 Hour Response
2018	98.22%	0.35%	0.49%	0.94%
2019	98.26%	0.28%	0.58%	0.88%
2020	97.67%	0.49%	0.78%	1.06%
2021	98.13%	0.45%	0.62%	0.80%

## Risk Assessment

The risk assessment tool allows for two types of overrides - policy and discretionary.

- The **Policy Override** may be used for:
  - Non-accidental injury to a child younger than 2.
  - Sexual abuse case and the perpetrator is likely to have access to the child.
  - Severe non-accidental injury to a child.
  - Parent/caregiver's action or inaction resulted in the death of a child due to abuse or neglect.
- The **Discretionary Override** is used to increase the risk level by one level and requires supervisory approval.

Year	No Override	Discretionary Override	Policy Override
2019	98.85%	0.72%	0.43%
2020	98.98%	0.73%	0.28%
2021	98.87%	0.72%	0.40%

*\*62 assessments were incomplete and excluded from the analysis.*

### **Reunification (Permanency) Assessment**

This assessment allows for a policy or discretionary override on a per-child basis, meaning that there may be multiple children involved in a case requiring a permanency decision, and each could potentially have a different decision or override.

The following permanency decision may be made as guided by this tool:

- **Reunify Home**
  - Overrides in this category include decisions to return a child to their home when the tool recommends not returning or to not return a child to their home when the tool recommends that they return.
- **Continue Family Reunification Services**
  - Overrides in this category include decisions to continue services when the tool does not recommend continuing services or to discontinue services when the tool recommends that services continue.
- **Change Permanency Goal; Implement Concurrent Plan**
  - Overrides in this category include decisions to change a child’s permanency goal in contradiction to the permanency goal recommended by the tool.
- The **Policy Override** may be used for:
  - Circumstances when a child has been in care the last 15 of 22 months. (Change Permanency Goal)
  - The decision tree leads to Continue FR, but conditions exist to recommend changing the permanency goal. (Change Permanency Goal)
  - The decision tree leads to change permanency goal and it is the 12-month hearing or before, but the parent/caregiver has made changes and there is the probability of reunification within 12 months. (Change to Continue FR)
- The **Discretionary Override** is used when unique circumstances exist that warrant an alternative decision; supervisor approval is required.

Year	No Override	Reunify Home Override	Continue Family Reunification Services Override	Change Permanency Goal Override
2021	91.21%	1.33%	7.04%	0.60%