

**Department of Human Services
Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget
Response to Department of Legislative Services Budget Analysis**

**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Health and Human Services Subcommittee
Senator Melony Ghee Griffith
Friday, February 28, 2020**

**House Appropriations Committee
Health and Social Services Subcommittee
Delegate Kirill Reznik
Wednesday, March 4, 2020**

Issue #1: DHS should comment on efforts that it is making to improve the safety of youth in its care. (Page 11)

Response to Issue

The system we currently have does not distinguish between maltreatment that occurred before or during the foster care placement episode. Children often disclose prior maltreatment after entry into foster care, particularly when they are receiving trauma informed counseling services.

Ongoing efforts to address the improvement in the safety of youth in care consist of the following:

- Creating a performance data tracking system to capture adequate data via Child Juvenile Adult Management System (CJAMS)
- Providing technology to child welfare staff to improve data collection
- Offering professional development to child welfare staff that focuses on effective engagement and interviewing with children and foster parents
- Continue to monitor and track visitation by social workers to youth in care which is a method used to ensure the safety and well-being of youth
- Use of the Child and Family Services Reviews on an ongoing basis to measure the safety of youth in foster care. This qualitative review is a random sampling of youth every six months. The data from the most recent period shows staff are visiting children and assessing their safety in foster care placement and while visiting with family.



- DHS is committed to ensuring that foster parents have the necessary resources to care for children and youth in out of home placements. DHS procured the newest version of the foster parent training curriculum (PRIDE). The new curriculum is trauma focused and culturally sensitive. The PRIDE training better equips our resource families to appropriately care for our children and youth in out of home placements.
- The implementation of Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), DHS is continuing to focus on evidence based and promising practices across the State to serve birth families and ensure child safety and well-being.

Issue #2: The Department of Legislative Services(DLS) recommends deleting \$1 million of this special fund appropriation as these funds will not be available to support the cost of care. DLS also recommends committee narrative requesting information on the amounts conserved as a result of this legislation. (Page 17)

Response to Issue

The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation and the committee narrative to provide a report requesting information on the amounts conserved.

Issue #3 Although DHS has requested an extension, DLS recommends budget bill language restricting funds until the department submits a copy of the planned new rate structure or a report describing why it decided not to proceed with a change. (Page 18)

Response to Issue

DHS respectfully disagrees with the proposal for budget language restricting funds. The Department will provide the Committee with a report updating on our efforts and timetable for the development and implementation of the new rate structure plan. Restricting these funds will impair the Department's continued engagement with the technical experts necessary to complete the development of the new rate structure.

Issue #4: DHS should comment on the status of any federal approvals required related to QRTPs and the certification of QRTPs. DHS should also discuss whether general funds and federal fund placement costs are currently impacted by the QRTP rules. (Page 24)

Response to Issue

The QRTP plan was submitted to the Children's Bureau for approval in December 2019. DHS received initial feedback and resubmitted requested changes in February 2020. DHS is awaiting final approval from the Children's Bureau.

DHS does not believe that general and federal fund placement costs are impacted by the QRTP rules.

Issue #5: DHS should comment on how it will fund the State share of the evidence-based practices in fiscal 2020 and 2021 and to what extent the funds available from the additional federal allocation will assist the State in this effort. (Page 31)

Response to Issue

The funding for evidence based practice which is now 100% federal funds will be remedied by a fund swap within the Child Welfare budget. In addition, we anticipate that a portion of the \$7.1 million federal grant will be available through the first quarter of FY 2021.

Issue #6: DLS recommends committee narrative requesting the continued provision of data regarding youth in out-of-home placements in hospitals. (Page 33)

Response to Issue

The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation to continue to provide data regarding youth in out-of-home placements in hospitals.

Issue #7: DHS should comment on how the recent increase in vacant positions has impacted the number of filled positions and the ability of the department to meet CWLA standards. (Page 37)

Response to Issue

The Department acknowledges the increase in vacancies in the local departments as well as central office between October 1, 2019 and January 1, 2020. The Department concurs that there is an impact on staff due to the vacancies. DHS is concerned about the vacancies and is actively recruiting to fill these vacancies expeditiously. With our efforts to recruit and retain our workforce we continue to meet the standards that are set by CWLA.

Issue #8: DHS should comment on the frequency of these reviews and whether any reallocation has occurred to these jurisdictions since August 2019. DLS recommends committee narrative requesting that DHS continue the annual reporting of caseload data compared to CWLA standards as well as providing specific plans to address shortfalls in caseworkers and supervisors. (Page 38)

Response to Issue

The Department compiles the caseload ratios monthly. Caseloads are reviewed twice a year for reallocations or as requested by local departments. Yes, PIN reallocations were made to Carroll and Charles Counties since August 2019.

The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation to provide the annual reporting of caseload data compared to CWLA standards as well as providing specific plans to address shortfalls in caseworkers and supervisors.

**Department of Human Services
Social Services Administration
N00B**

Response to Recommended Actions

Recommendation #1

Add language restricting funds until a report on the planned new foster care rate structure is submitted. **(Page 3 and 39)**

Response:

The Department respectfully disagrees with the proposal for budget language restricting funds. The Department will provide the Committee with a report updating on our efforts and timetable for the development and implementation of the new rate structure plan. Restricting these funds will impair the Department's continued engagement with the technical experts necessary to complete the development of the new rate structure.

Recommendation #2

Add language restricting funds until a report on is submitted on the planned uses of adoption savings. **(Page 3 and 39)**

Response:

The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendations to submit a report on the planned uses of adoption savings; however, we respectfully disagree with the budget bill language as recommended as this has the potential to impact delivery of services.

Recommendation #3

Add language restricting funds unless budget detail on spending for youth on hospital placements is provided with the fiscal 2022 budget. **(Page 3 and 40)**

Response:

The Department respectfully disagrees with the restriction of funds to provide the requested report related to plans to utilize the funding for FY 2022 as the FY 2022 budget has not yet been submitted.

Recommendation #4

Delete 2 long-term vacant positions. (Page 3 and 41)

Response:

The Department disagrees with the recommendation. PIN 049804 the position will be filled effective 2/26/2020. This position is responsible for monitoring and tracking child fatalities across the State. PIN 032055 was posted on 2/13/2020. The post will close on 2/26/2020. The Department was granted a hiring exception until 6/11/2020.

Recommendation #5

Adopt committee narrative requesting information on hospital stays by youth in out-of-home placements. (Page 3, 41)

Response:

The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation to provide a report on the hospital stays by youth in out of home placements by January 1, 2021.

Recommendation #6

Adopt committee narrative requesting information on the accounts/trusts opened as a result of Chapters 815 and 816 of 2018. (Page 3 and 42)

Response:

The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation to provide a report on accounts/trusts opened and maintained as a result of Chapter 815 and 816.

Recommendation #7

Add language restricting general funds for Foster Care Maintenance Payments program to that purpose. (Page 3, 42)

Response:

The Department will comply with this perennial budget bill language as recommended.

Recommendation #8

Reduce funds from Cost of Care Reimbursement that will not be available to support foster care payments. (Page 3, 43)

Response:

The Department will comply with the budget bill language as recommended.

Recommendation #9

Add language restricting general fund appropriation for the Child Welfare Services program to that purpose. **(Page 3, 43)**

Response:

The Department will comply with this perennial budget bill language as recommended.

Recommendation #10

Adopt committee narrative requesting information on child welfare caseload and caseworkers. **(Page 3, 43 and 44)**

Response:

The Department concurs with the Analyst's recommendation to provide the requested information on child welfare caseloads and caseworkers.