

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Mission.

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Pete Ricketts, Governor

September 15, 2021

Patrick O'Donnell, Clerk of the Legislature
State Capitol, Room 2018
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Mr. O'Donnell,

Nebraska Revised Statute 68-1207.01 requires the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature outlining child welfare and juvenile services caseloads, factors considered in their establishment, and the fiscal resources needed to maintain them.

Enclosed please find the reporting documentation to fulfill the requirements of Nebraska Revised Statute 68-1207.01 for state fiscal year 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephanie Beasley".

Stephanie L. Beasley
Director
Division of Children and Family Services



Legislative History

In 1990, LB720 required the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services (CFS), to establish standards for child welfare and juvenile service caseloads. Furthermore, LB720 required CFS to report the resources necessary to implement such standards to the Governor and the Legislature every two years. In response, the DHHS Joint Labor/Management Workload Study Committee examined several key factors that workers identified as affecting their workload, including: (1) urban or rural work locations; (2) vacant positions; (3) availability of clerical support; and (4) travel requirements. The Committee summarized their recommendations in the Workload Study Findings and Recommendations Summary Report in July 1992.

In 2005, LB264 required CFS to include in its legislative report information on child welfare and juvenile service workers employed by private entities with which the state of Nebraska contracts for child welfare and juvenile services. The law requires CFS to submit the report annually.

In 2012, LB961 required CFS and the pilot project with PromiseShip, formerly known as Nebraska Families Collaborative (NFC) to utilize the workload criteria from the standards established as of January 1, 2012, by the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA).

Below is a table containing the operational definitions used in accordance with CWLA standards:

Caseload Type	Definition	Caseload Standards	Description	Measurement/ Count
Initial Assessment	Active, open child abuse/neglect investigations conducted by Initial Assessment Worker	1:12 families (urban) 1:10 families (rural)	This means that the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) can only be assigned 10 or 12 new cases each month, if all 10 or 12 cases from the previous month are closed. This is a rolling number and the remaining open cases, from the previous month are included in the total numbers for the current month.	Family
	Mixed; Initial Assessment and On-Going Caseload	1:7 Children Out of Home. (One child = one case) 1:3 Families in home. (One child = one case) 1:4 Families for Initial Assessment. (One child = one case) Total of 14 cases assigned	For Ongoing Case management: In-Home or out-of-home Voluntary or Court-Involved.	Case

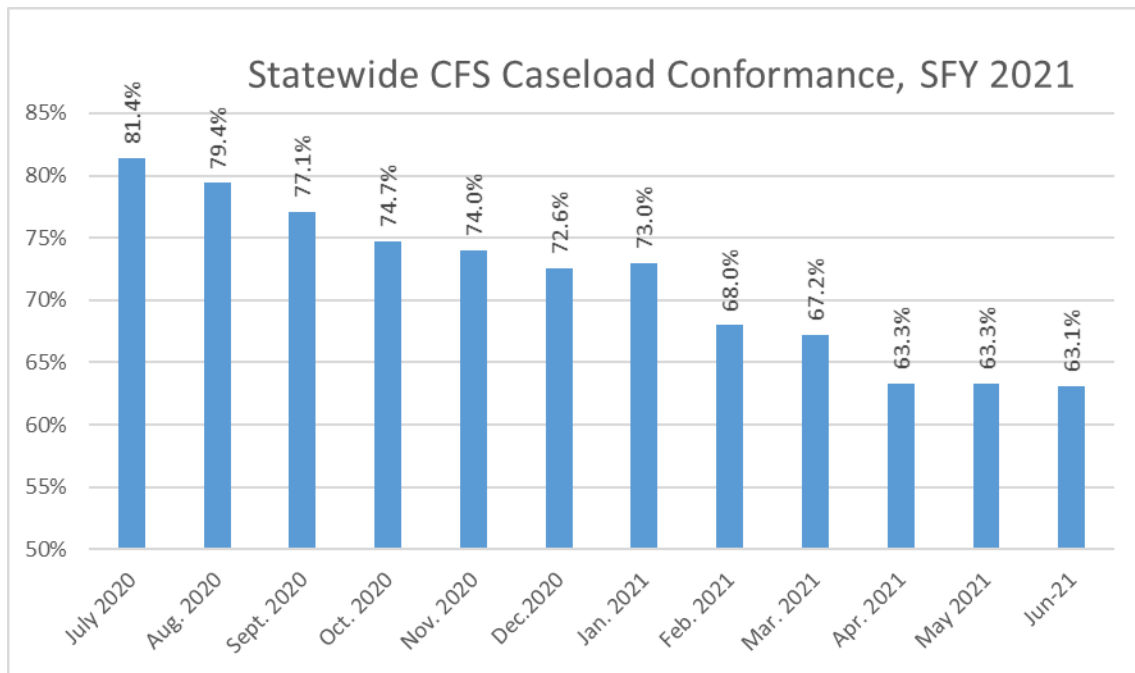
Ongoing: Includes ICPC and Court Supervision	Children residing In-Home=no children have been removed from the home due to CFS involvement	1:17 Families	Open and active voluntary cases with children placed in the home. These children are not removed and placed in foster care and are not court involved.	Family
	*Children residing in a planned, permanent home (parent, adoptive parent, legal guardian)	1:17 Families	Open and active court involved families with the child(ren) in a planned, permanent home. These are children who are still in CFS custody and court involved.	Family
	Mixed; one or more wards in home, one or more wards out of home within the same family	1:10 OOH Wards 1:7 In-Home families Total 1:17	Open and active court involved children. The count include wards only and does not involve non-ward siblings.	Ward = each ward out of the home count as one case Family = any number of wards in the home count as one case
	Children are out of the home	1:16 Children	These are court involved and non-court involved cases where children are placed formally out of the parental/guardian home (This includes voluntary placement agreements).	Child = Each child placed outside the home is counted as one case

*A planned permanent placement is a home that will provide permanency for a child, this includes:

1. Child returns from out-of-home care and resides with a parent.
2. Child resides in a pre-adoptive placement with a signed adoptive placement agreement.
3. Child's permanency plan is guardianship and child lives with identified guardian.

During this reporting period, the Eastern Service Area (ESA) fully transitioned to St. Francis Ministries (SFM) for case management services in Douglas and Sarpy Counties. CFS remains responsible for case management in the Southeast Service Area (SESA), Northern Service Area (NSA), Central Service Area (CSA) and the Western Service Area (WSA). CFS also continues to be responsible for conducting all child abuse/neglect investigations in all five service-areas across the entire state of Nebraska. Youth who are committed to the CFS Office of Juvenile Services for placement at a Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center are also included in the data for CFS.

Based on Legislative input, in January 2018, CFS began using an average caseload during the month metric rather than a point-in-time during the month metric; e.g. first or last day of the month. The table below, as well as, subsequent caseload tables here under, illustrate caseload conformance using the average count of cases during the month methodology. As depicted below, the statewide data indicates in July 2021, 63.1% of Child and Family Services Specialists (CFSS) were assigned caseload sizes in conformance with CWLA standards. On July 2020, 81.4% of the CFSS were assigned caseloads in conformance to CWLA standards. Data excludes the Bridge to Independence program.



The above chart combines DHHS and Saint Francis caseloads. When caseloads are out of compliance, it is due to fewer trained Child/Family Specialists and Saint Francis Case Managers who are eligible to take cases. The COVID-19 pandemic had effected the number of workers at both DHHS and Saint Francis with some workers choosing to stay home because of childcare needs and virtual learning needs for their children.

While Saint Francis had a 24% increase in compliant caseload from January to October 2020, beginning in February 2021, they have had a steady decrease in compliant caseload reaching a low of 31.1% in June 2021. It should be noted that in July 2021, Saint Francis increased the percent of compliant caseloads to 35.2%

Caseload Detail Measures:

The table below depicts caseload results for all types of Child Protective Services case management, including Initial Assessment (IA), Traditional and Alternative Response, Ongoing, and Combined IA and Ongoing Caseloads. On June 30, 2021, 63.1% of the statewide staff with an assigned case were compliant with the CWLA caseload standards. This metric includes Saint Francis Ministries (SFM) staff. Note this data is limited to staff with an assigned case, and in some situations, the assignment could be a supervisor or other individual as necessitated by circumstance. Accordingly, trainee positions or other staff without a case assigned are not included in these counts. Data excludes the Bridge to Independence program.

Total Staff			
Average of June 2021			
<u>Service Area</u>	<u>Total Staff</u>	<u>Staff In Compliance</u>	<u>Percent In Compliance</u>
Central	55	47	85.5%
Eastern	134	62	46.3%
Northern	56	35	62.5%
Southeast	91	57	62.6%
Western	57	47	82.5%
State	393	248	63.1%
Green indicates improvement from prior month			
Red indicates regression from prior month			

- Required caseload per worker out-of-home youth standard <=16
- Required caseload per worker in-home families standard <=17
- Required caseload per worker initial assessment Standard <=12

The table below illustrates the percentage of compliance with caseloads assigned only for Initial Assessment (IA) using the average caseload methodology. IA cases include both Traditional and Alternative Response cases. On June 30, 2021, 81.6% of the statewide staff with IA-only assigned cases were compliant with the CWLA caseload standards. Initial assessment workers in the Eastern Service Area do not provide ongoing case management. Initial assessments workers in the Central, Northern, Southeast and Western Service Areas may have combined caseloads of initial assessment and ongoing case management. Data excludes the Bridge to Independence program.

IA Only			
Average of June 2021			
<u>Service Area</u>	<u>Total Staff</u>	<u>Staff In Compliance</u>	<u>Percent In Compliance</u>
Central	8	8	100.0%
Eastern	44	35	79.5%
Northern	12	10	83.3%
Southeast	18	13	72.2%
Western	6	6	100.0%
State	87	71	81.6%
Green indicates improvement from prior month			
Red indicates regression from prior month			

- Required caseload size <= 12 cases per worker for initial assessment and alternative response cases. Cases defined as a family or investigation.

The table below illustrates the percentage of compliance with the caseload standards for combination caseloads of initial assessment and ongoing case management. On June 30, 2021, 67.7% of the staff with combination cases were compliant with the CWLA caseload standards. The Eastern Service Area is the only service area that does not have combined IA & Ongoing caseloads because all IA Investigations and Alternative Response cases in the Eastern Service Area are managed by Children and Family Service IA staff, while ongoing cases are managed by St. Francis Ministries. Data excludes the Bridge to Independence program.

IA & Ongoing			
Average of June 2021			
<u>Service Area</u>	<u>Total Staff</u>	<u>Staff In Compliance</u>	<u>Percent In Compliance</u>
Central	15	14	93.3%
Eastern	na	na	na
Northern	24	13	54.2%
Southeast	33	21	63.6%
Western	27	19	70.4%
State	99	67	67.7%
Green indicates improvement from prior month			
Red indicates regression from prior month			

- Out-of-home children standard <=16
- In-home families standard <= 17
- Initial assessment standard <= 12

The table below illustrates the percentage of compliance standard for staff with ongoing caseloads of in-home families and/or out-of-home youth excluding initial assessment cases. On June 30, 2021, 53.4% of the staff with ongoing cases were compliant with the CWLA caseload standards. Data excludes the Bridge to Independence program.

Ongoing Only			
Average of June 2021			
<u>Service Area</u>	<u>Total Staff</u>	<u>Staff In Compliance</u>	<u>Percent In Compliance</u>
Central	33	26	78.8%
Eastern	90	28	31.1%
Northern	19	12	63.2%
Southeast	40	23	57.5%
Western	24	21	87.5%
State	206	110	53.4%
Green indicates improvement from prior month			
Red indicates regression from prior month			

- Required caseload size <= 17 cases per worker for in-home cases, cases are defined as a family
- Required caseload size <= 16 cases per worker for out-of-home youth

Fiscal Resources Necessary to Maintain Caseloads

The following table displays the amount of fiscal resources CFS needs to maintain its active staff, staff in training, and filling vacant positions. The table does not include the amount of fiscal resources for staff from the ongoing case management contractor, St. Francis Ministries, in the Eastern Service Area. The table displays only the amount of fiscal resources CFS needs to maintain its own direct case management staff as of June 30, 2021. This count includes all staff with the position title of CFSS or CFSS Trainee, which includes Adult Protective Services, Bridge to Independence, Hotline, as well as Protection and Safety Children Family Service Specialists (Ongoing and Investigation). This data excludes all levels of supervision and excludes staff whose position does not include front-line case management activities.

CFS CFSS Positions June 30, 2021					
DHHS CFSS Positions	Total	Average Salary	Benefits	Total Annual Cost Per CFSS	Total Costs
Child/Family Services Specialist	322	\$ 40,695.34	\$ 14,170.12	\$ 54,865.46	\$17,666,676.79
Child/Family Services Specialist Trainee	99	\$ 33,529.77	\$ 11,675.07	\$ 45,204.83	\$ 4,475,278.50
Vacancies	33	\$ 40,695.34	\$ 14,170.12	\$ 54,865.46	\$ 1,810,560.04
Totals	454				\$23,952,515.34

*Benefits - calculated using a factor of 34.82%.

**Vacancy costs projected using the planned average salary for a trained CFSS.

Total Staff and Tenure of CFS Children and Family Service Specialist (CFSS)

The following table displays the count of CFSS employed by CFS on 6/30/2021. This count includes all staff with the position title of CFSS or CFSS Trainee, which includes Protection and Safety, Adult Protective Services, Bridge to Independence & Hotline.

CFS CFSS Filled Positions June 30, 2021								
DHHS CFSS Positions	B2i	CSA	ESA	Hotline/RD	NSA	SESA	WSA	Total
Child/Family Services Specialist	7	54	46	35	47	79	54	322
Child/Family Services Specialist Trainee	1	9	26	5	19	28	11	99
Totals	8	63	72	40	66	107	65	421

The following table illustrates the average position tenure, in years, for all CFSS employed by CFS on 6/30/2021.

Average Years in Position by Position and Service Area 6/30/2021								
CFS CFSS Positions	B2i	CSA	ESA	Hotline/RD	NSA	SESA	WSA	Total
Child/Family Services Specialist	8.7	3.8	5.5	6.8	4.6	3.7	4.6	4.7
Child/Family Services Specialist Trainee	0.25	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.7	0.5

Total Staff and Tenure of St. Francis (SFM) Children and Family Service Specialists (CFSS)

The following table displays the count of CFSS employed by Saint Francis Ministries (SFM) as of 7/1/2021. This count includes case manager trainees, case managers, and case manager supervisors employed by Saint Francis Ministries.

Saint Francis Ministries (SFM) Filled Positions 6/30/2021	
Job Title	Count
Child/Family Specialist Trainee - SFM	35
Child/Family Specialist - SFM	78
Chi/d/Family Services Specialist Supervisor - SFM	11
Total	124

Outcomes of cases by CFS services areas and statewide

State Wards Exiting Care in State Fiscal Year 2021 Includes In-Home and Out-of-Home*						
Service Area	Reunification	Adoption	Independent Living	Guardianship	Other Reason	Grand Total
Central	198	50	10	28	5	291
	68%	17%	3%	10%	2%	100%
Eastern	464	158	27	45	57	751
	62%	21%	4%	6%	8%	100%
Northern	146	36	4	27	13	226
	65%	16%	2%	12%	6%	100%
Southeast	203	101	16	16	21	357
	57%	28%	4%	4%	6%	100%
Western	190	58	4	35	9	296
	64%	20%	1%	12%	3%	100%
State	1201	403	61	151	105	1921
	63%	21%	3%	8%	5%	100%

**Youth placed in the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC) are not included due to YRTC staff providing case management.*

***Youth exiting to the Bridge of Independent program are included under independent living.*

A primary goal of CFS’ child welfare and juvenile services staff is to protect children and youth from abuse and neglect, to promote safety, permanency and stability in their living situations by serving more children in their own homes and by safely reducing the number of children and youth in state custody, and by promoting community safety.

As displayed in the chart above, during SFY 2021 CFS discharged 1,921 children and youth from state care into some form of permanency. CFS helped find permanency through adoption for 403 children, which was 21% of the children. The majority (63%) of children exiting care were safely reunified with their parents/guardians. The proportion of youth exiting to independent living were 3% of all youth achieving permanency. Finally, the percent of youth exiting to ‘Other Reason’ represented 5% of the population achieving permanency. The ‘Other Reason’ category accounts for multiple discharge reasons including achieving the age of majority and the transfer to other state agencies.

Training cost by service areas and statewide

The table below depicts the cost of training CFSS employed by the state of Nebraska and those providing direct services to children and families under contract with the state of Nebraska.

Training continues to be provided through a partnership between the CFS and the Center on Children, Families and the Law (CCFL) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Expenses for CFS, St. Francis Ministries and PromiseShip are as follows:

CFS Training Costs SFY 2021	
CFS Funded for CFS Staff:	
\$1,835,344.87	Direct CCFL
\$315,833.88	Indirect CCFL
\$6,228,850	Indirect CFS
\$8,380,028.75	Total
CFS Funded for SFM Staff:	
\$683,851.22	Direct CCFL
\$170,644.47	Indirect CCFL
\$854,495.69	Total
Saint Francis Ministries Funded:	
\$5,992.80	Direct
\$752,789.26	Indirect
\$758,782.06	Total

This concludes the Department’s SFY 2021 annual report regarding child welfare/juvenile services caseloads. The Department appreciates the opportunity to share this information each year and welcomes continued review by the Legislature and the public.