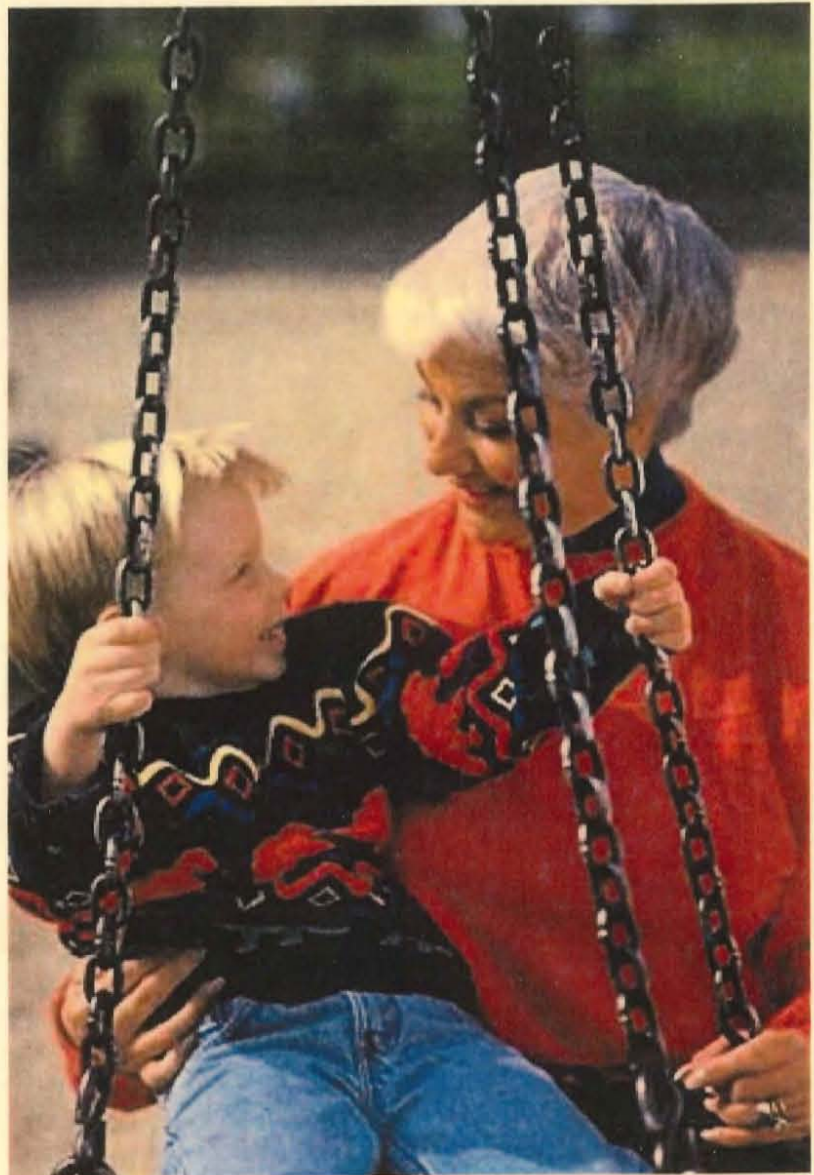
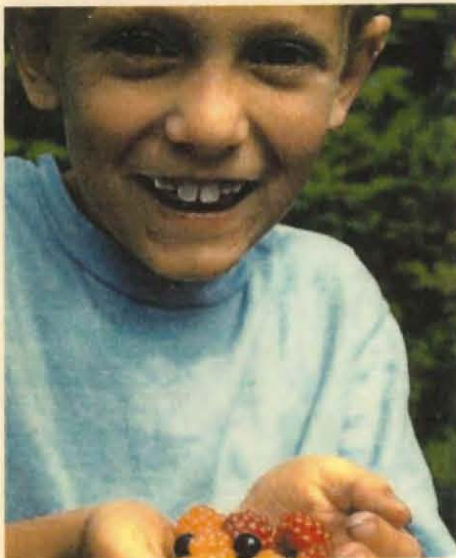
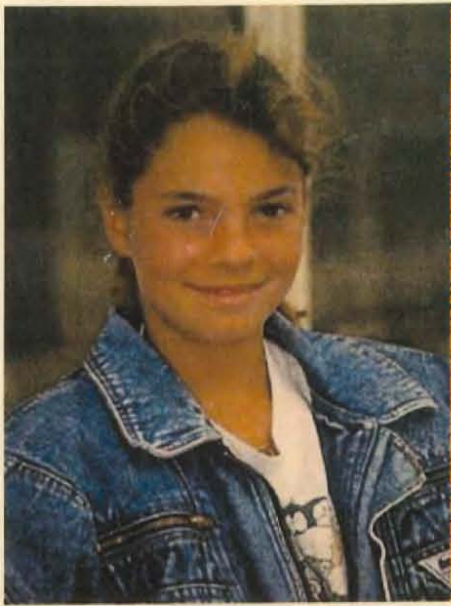


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Annual Report and Reference Guide

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Maine Department of Human Services
Bureau of Child and Family Services

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Keeping Children Safe

Child and Family Services, Maine Department of Human Services, received more than 17,000 new reports of child abuse or neglect in 2002. We look into child abuse reports on behalf of Maine communities, working to keep children safe and to guide families in creating safe homes for children.

Most of the families we see need voluntary, community-based services to develop a safe and more stable home. A smaller number require court intervention, either to order specific action or because the children cannot live where they are without danger of serious harm. When those circumstances arise, our child protective and children's services professionals find a setting for care – places that help a child who has experienced maltreatment and that become the child's bridge to a safe, permanent home.

Maine communities are the essential link for these children. Skilled foster families and other professional resources from Eliot to Fort Kent offer their patience and care. Child and Family Services guide the effort. Our professional staff members work to safely reunify families when possible, to explore options for care with extended family (kinship care), and to evaluate foster and adoptive homes. In our work, Child and Family Services seeks safety, well-being and permanent homes for children, working with professionalism and respecting the dignity of all families.

Our agency is considered a national leader working with older youth in state care and has tripled the number of adoptions in recent years. The agency's strategic goals include increasing family reunifications and expanding the network of family foster homes so more children who need temporary care remain in their home community or home school district.

Additional Information and Notes

This Report and Reference Guide is organized to give Maine people and policymakers reference information about the work of the Maine Department of Human Services' Bureau of Child and Family Services, and the families and children we serve. The agency web site can be found at www.state.me.us/dhs/bcfs. For additional information, contact Michael Norton, division director, public affairs, at (207)-287-5060.

This report also uses shorthand names for the agency, Child and Family Services or CFS, in many contexts. The full agency name is Bureau of Child and Family Services, Maine Department of Human Services.

Child and Family Services Beliefs Statement

Child Safety is Paramount

We have the responsibility to intervene to protect children.

Effectively intervening to keep kids safe depends on a thorough and timely assessment.

Parents Have the Right and Responsibility to Raise Their Own Children

Parents have the right and responsibility to correct issues of abuse and neglect.

Parents have the right and responsibility to develop a plan for the safety and care of their children.

BCFS has the responsibility to support family in the care and protection of their children.

Children Deserve to Live in a Safe and Nurturing Family

Children have the right to be placed in the least restrictive setting.

Placements need to support family and community connections.

Siblings belong together.

All Children Deserve a Permanent Family

Foster care is a temporary arrangement for children.

Permanency for children begins from day one.

Timeliness of case decisions will be made consistent with the urgency of the child's needs for permanency.

Principles of Public Service Will Guide Us in Our Work

Our work with families is objective, unbiased, and based on good practice.

Everyone deserves to be treated with courtesy and respect.

Our staff is our most important asset.

We have the responsibility to use our professional knowledge and skills to promote changes.

Child and Family Services Strategic Plan Goals and Performance Measures

Goal 1: Improve the quality and timeliness of receiving and responding to reports of child abuse and neglect.

- 100% of all child abuse reports will be appropriately triaged for follow-up by July 2003.
- Increase by 5% safety and child and family assessments completed within appropriate timeframes by January 2003. 95 - 100% of assessments completed within appropriate timeframes by July 2004.
- Decrease the use of voicemail at intake by 25% by July 2003, and eliminate the use of voicemail by July 2005.
- Improve the CPS ability to identify repeat maltreatment of child abuse and neglect, flagging cases for close review with the goal of reducing repeat maltreatment. Establish baseline performance and performance target by April 2003.

Goal 2: Broaden family involvement from report to the best outcome for child and family.

- Safely and responsibly increase reunifications by 10% by October 2003.
- Increase in safe and responsible relative placement by 25% by October 2003.
- Establish baseline and performance target for increasing siblings being placed together by October 2002
- Establish baseline and performance target for increasing sibling contact by October 2002.
- Increase by 10% the documented cases in which birth families participated in case planning and decision-making, measured by Quality Assurance, by October 2003.

Goal 3: Improve community connections and collaboration; develop and realign resources as needed to create better outcomes for children and their families.

- Statewide, district by district needs assessment for services completed by November 2002; services/resources realigned and implemented by October 2003.
- Increase the number of family foster homes in the communities/school districts children come from by 10% by October 2003.
- Increase by 10% children served in their home communities/school districts by October 2003.
- Broaden representation on statewide Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC).
- 100% of Adolescents leaving the care of the Department by plan (aging out of care) will have adequate life skills and/or critical community connections.
- Number of children placed with extended family as preferred in ICWA will be increased. (Target date in development.)

Goal 4: Improve the experience of children in care while achieving better and faster permanency outcomes.

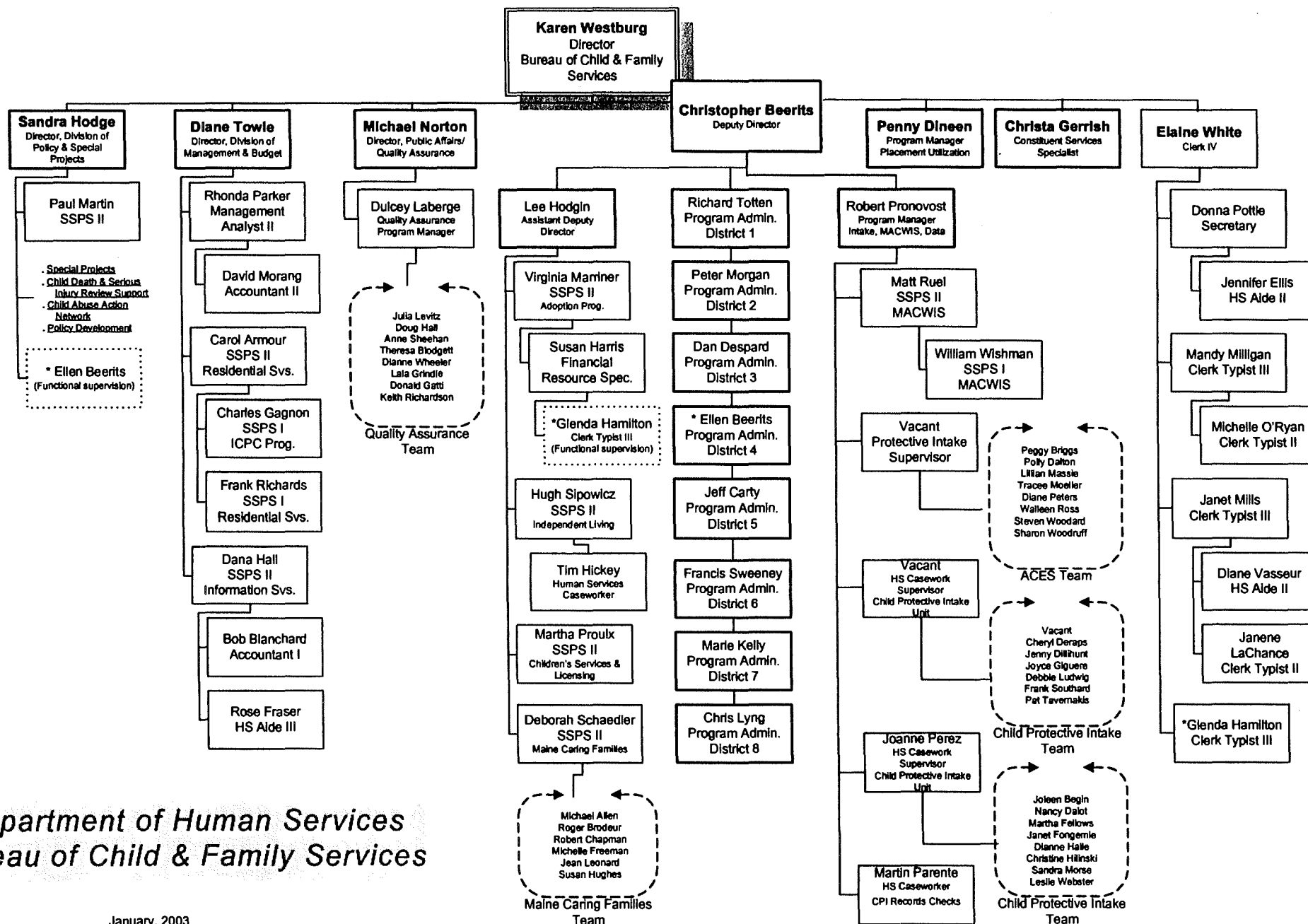
- Reduce the median length of stay in foster care by 3 months by July, 2003.
- Fewer children in residential and group care
- Safely and responsibly reduce the overall number of children in care by 5% by October, 2003. (Legislative requirement)
- 95-100% of safety and well-being reviews are complete. (Legislative requirement)
- 95-100% of licensed foster homes receive license renewal within regulatory time frames. (Legislative requirement)
- Establish baseline data and set performance improvement goal on reducing the number of moves for children. (Target date in development.)
- Improve coordination and integration of services with other human service agencies.

Goal 5: Assert the leadership role of child welfare professionals by providing supports that enhance the professionalism, skills and cultural competency that result in positive outcomes for children and families.

- Design and implement leadership training for all staff. (Target date in development.)
 - All caseworkers and casework supervisors receive motivational interviewing training by Jan. 31, 2003.
- Build upon existing initiatives, design and implement a comprehensive strategy for enhancing the cultural competency of all staff.
- All supervisors will be trained and show demonstrated competency in analytic model of supervision by June 2003.
- All supervisors will be trained and demonstrate competency in safety assessments, child and family assessments and child and family reviews by June 2002.
- Convene workload analysis workgroup to develop strategies to make workload manageable.
- Develop a customer service performance measurement baseline and performance improvement target. (Target date in development.)
- Research and develop a comprehensive strategy for increasing staff retention.
- Increase capacity for data utilization and continuous quality improvement.
- Convene caseworker advisory group to provide direct feedback loop to management on the above goals and objectives.

Goal 6: The Bureau will pursue an implementation strategy for all of the above goals via a comprehensive statewide effort in each district, while simultaneously identifying lead districts for more intensive and accelerated efforts.

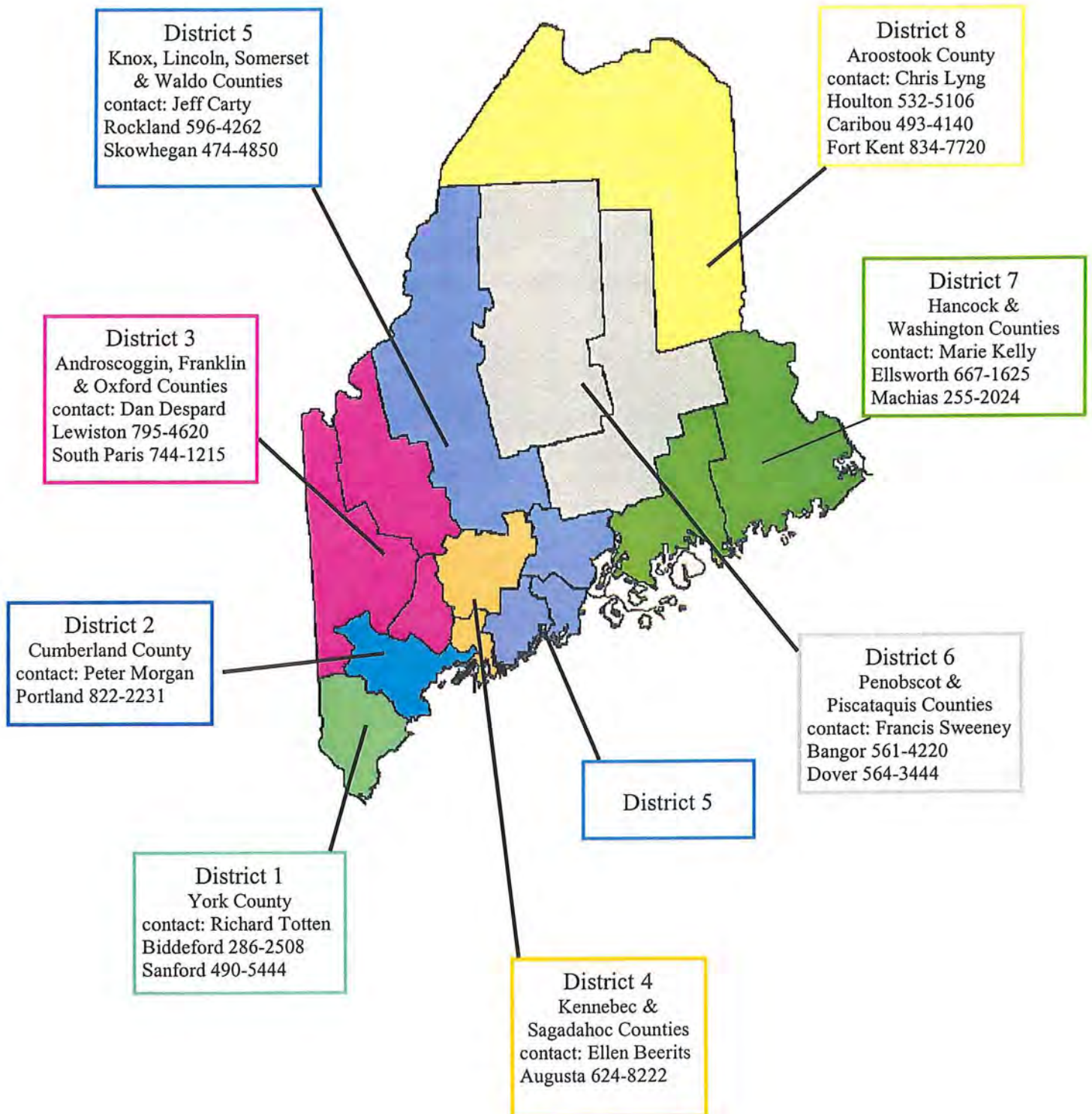
- Statewide implementation plan developed and adopted by September 2002
- Lead District identified September 6, 2002
- Lead district reform plans and accelerated targets developed October 2002.
- Non-lead districts phase in more intensive planning and implementation efforts as lessons are learned from lead districts – ongoing, beginning October 2002.
- Lead District Implementation to begin no later than January 2003.



Department of Human Services
Bureau of Child & Family Services

January, 2003

Child and Family Services District Offices



**Maine Department of Human Services
Bureau of Child and Family Services
Karen M. Westburg, Director**

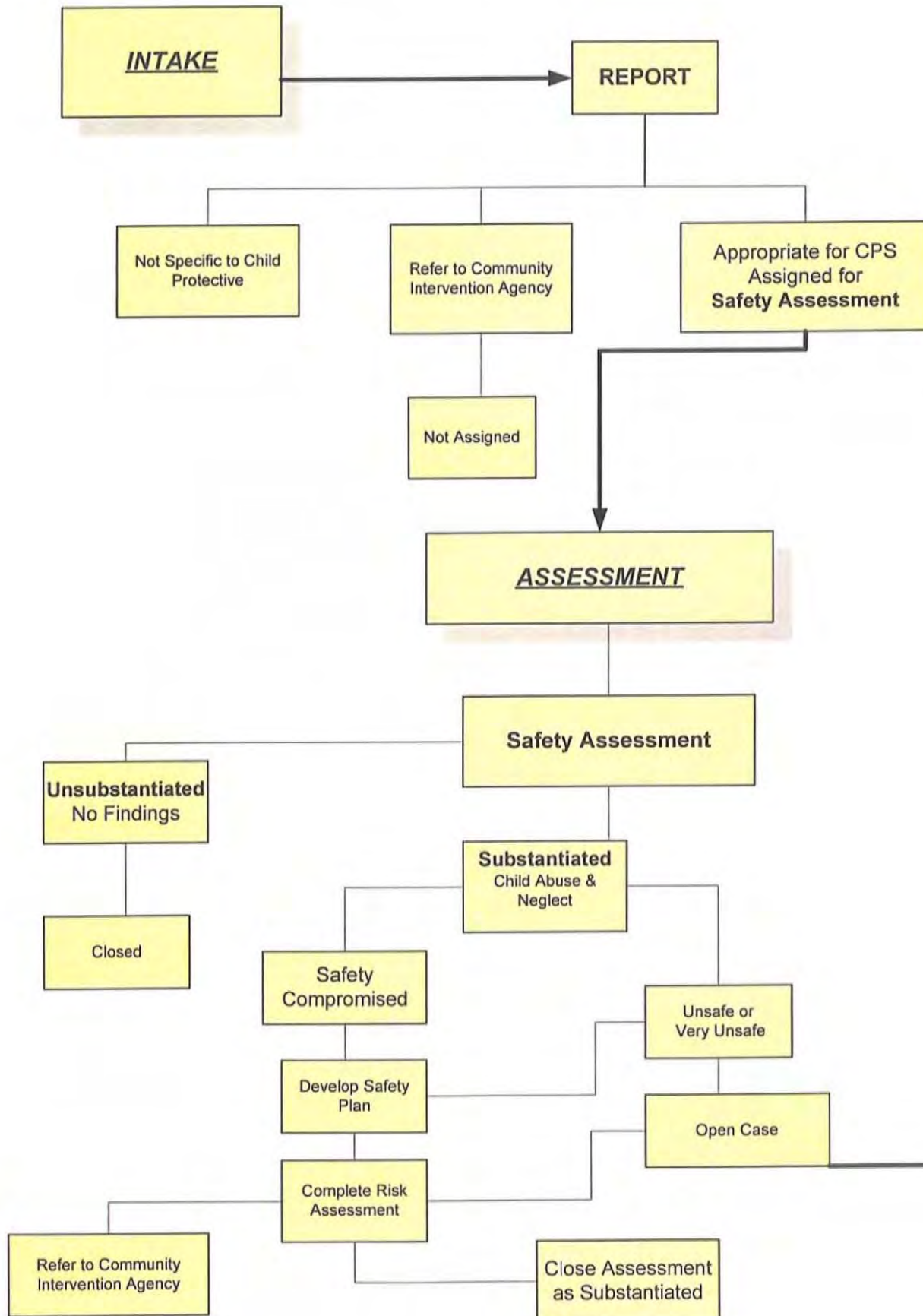
Office/Administrator	Phone #'s TTY #'s	FAX #'s	Counties Covered
District 1			
Richard Totten Program Administrator 208 Graham Street Biddeford, Maine 04005-3350	(207) 286-2508 1-800-322-1919 TTY 286-2402	(207) 286-2527	York
39 St. Ignatius Sanford, Maine 04073-3800	(207) 490-5444 1-800-482-0790 TTY 490-5466	(207) 490-5465	York
District 2			
Peter Morgan Program Administrator 161 Marginal Way Portland, Maine 04101	(207) 822-2231 1-800-482-7520 TTY = 1-800-492-0670	(207) 822-2226 Protective Only - (207) 822-2232	Cumberland

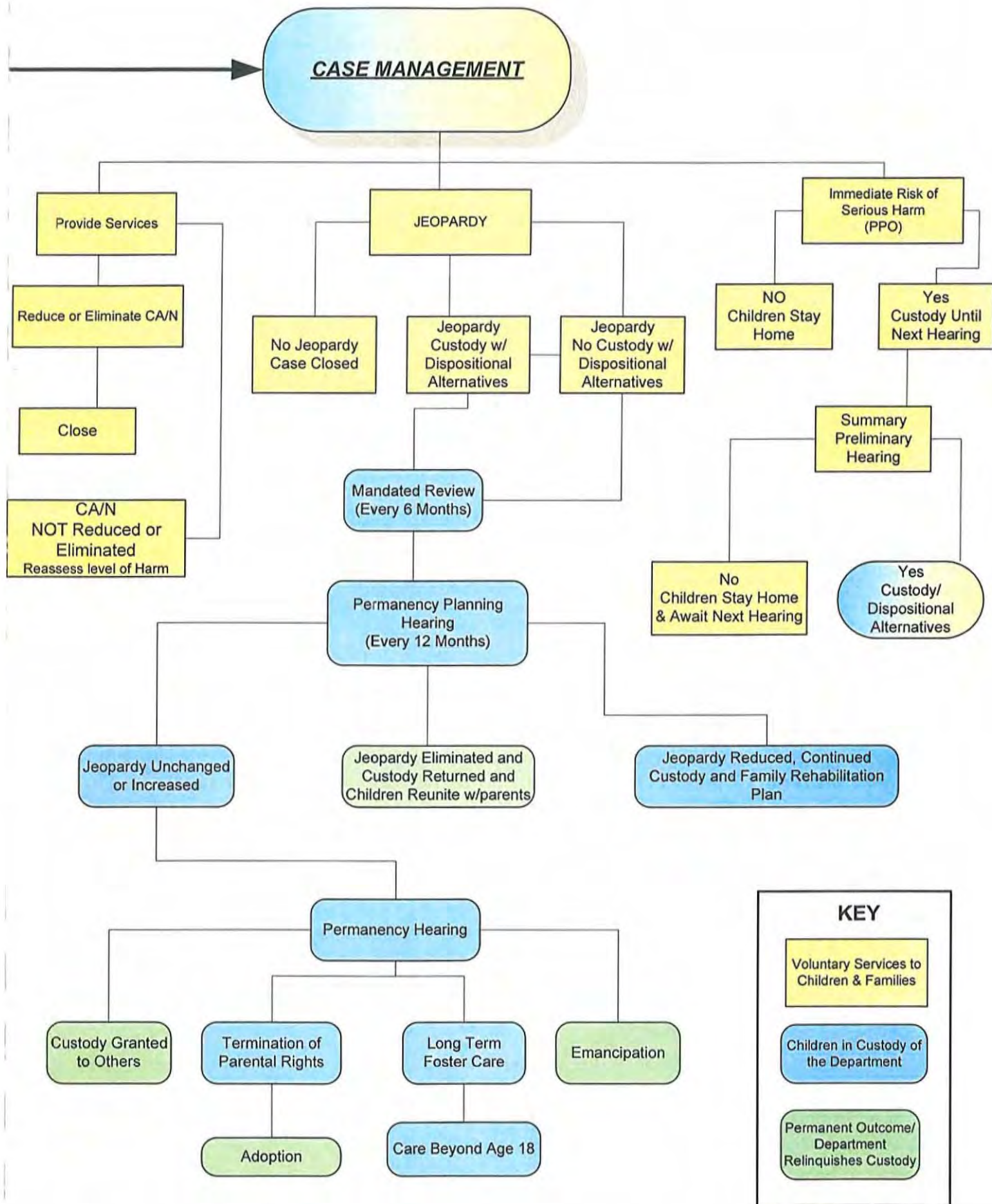
Office/Administrator	Phone #'s TTY #'s	FAX #'s	Counties Covered
District 3			
Dan Despard Program Administrator 200 Main Street Lewiston, Maine 04240-7098	(207) 795-4620 1-800-482-7517 TTY 795-4595	(207) 795-4651	Androscoggin Franklin
243 Main Street, Suite #6 So. Paris, Maine 04281	(207) 744-1215 1-888-593-9775	(207) 743-1698	Oxford
District 4			
Ellen Beerits Program Administrator 2 Anthony Ave., SHS #11 Augusta, Maine 04333-0011	(207) 624-8222 1-800-452-1926 TTY 624-5895	(207) 624-5553	Kennebec Sagadahoc
District 5			
Jeff Carty Program Administrator 360 Old County Road Rockland, Maine 04841-5509	(207) 596-4262 1-800-432-7802 TTY 1-800-432-1680	(207) 596-4261	Lincoln Knox Waldo
98 North Avenue Skowhegan, Maine 04976-1996	(207) 474-4850 1-800-452-4602 TTY 474-4891	(207) 474-4873	Somerset

Office/Administrator	Phone #'s TTY #'s	FAX #'s	Counties Covered
District 6			
Francis Sweeney Program Administrator 396 Griffin Road Bangor, Maine 04401-3095	(207) 561-4220 1-800-432-7825 TTY 561-4403	(207) 561-4298	Penobscot
125 Summer Street Dover-Foxcroft, Maine 04426	(207) 564-3444	(207) 564-0064	Piscataquis
District 7			
Marie Kelly Program Administrator 17 Eastward Lane Ellsworth, Maine 04605-1718	(207) 667-1625 1-800-432-7823 TTY 667-1639	(207) 667-8692	Hancock
13 Prescott Drive Machias, Maine 04654-9984	(207) 255-2024 1-800-432-7846 TTY 255-6866	(207) 255-8896	Washington
District 8			
Chris Lyng Program Administrator Rte. 2, Box 8700 Caribou, Maine 04736-9600	(207) 493-4140 1-800-432-7366 TTY 493-3041	(207) 493-4168	Central Aroostook
11 High Street Houlton, Maine 04730-2012	(207) 532-5106 1-800-432-7338 TTY 532-5001	(207) 532-5116	Southern Aroostook
92 Market Street Fort Kent, Maine 04743-1447	(207) 834-7720 1-800-432-7340 TTY 834-7702	(207) 834-7701	Northern Aroostook

January, 2003

Child and Family Services Case Flow Continuum





Child Protective Services

Overview

The Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworker follows up when a report alleges risk to a child posed by a parent or fulltime caregiver. Their work is a child-centered and family-focused social service. The primary goal is protecting children. They also keep an important focus on supporting and assisting families so the parents can safely care for and protect their children. Child protective supervisors decide the next step when they receive a report from the Intake unit. They have two options:

- They can refer the report to a community intervention agency, private agencies contracted to Child and Family Services, Department of Human Services. These agencies offer services or coordinate services designed to reduce the risk of child abuse or neglect – such as counseling, substance abuse treatment or parenting education.
- When risk is severe, supervisors assign a child protective caseworker from Child and Family Services. Caseworkers do a safety assessment, looking specifically at whether each child in the home is safe and, if not, what must be done to keep each child safe. Before this work begins, caseworkers provide A Handbook for Parents, explaining the rights of parents and children and key points about safety assessment.

The safety assessment and other follow-up assessments identify parental behaviors and family factors that influence the likelihood of a child being abused. Research shows that understanding these factors produces the most accurate decisions about child safety and potential for future maltreatment.

A District Court petition is required before a child can be removed from parental care. A preliminary order by the court can be sought in situations where harm to a child or children is considered imminent and a hearing on such an order must be scheduled within 10 days. It is important to recognize that Child and Family Services, Department of Human Services, seeks court intervention in the minority of situations – about 15 percent of reports annually. Most child protective work involves work with families to voluntarily reduce risk to children.

Assessment

As noted, safety assessment is the initial and most essential work of child protective professionals. This work begins with the information gathered at central Intake and continues with gathering and analyzing more information about the situation.

Child protective supervisors follow Child and Family Services Policy and Practice Guidelines to determine which reports require an immediate response and those reports that must be assigned to casework staff for further investigation and safety assessment. Assignments to caseworkers must be made within seven days of receipt of the report. In

responding to reports where less risk is apparent, the child protective supervisor also has the options of assigning a Community Intervention Agency. This network of contracted private agencies was developed in late 1998 to respond to the growing number of child abuse and neglect reports. In addition to providing voluntary services in situations initially evaluated as low to moderate risk, these agencies can provide follow-up assistance to families that have been assessed by the Child Protective Services unit.

Safety assessment requires face-to-face contact with so-called “critical case members” – essentially people closest to the situation. These include:

- alleged victim(s)
- sibling(s) or other children living in the home
- the parents or caregivers
- the alleged abuser
- other adults living in the home

Before interviewing the child, the caseworker must notify the custodial parent or caregiver of their intention to interview. Child protective is authorized to conduct an initial interview of a child without parental notification in two limited circumstances found in 22 M.R.S.A.4021 (3) (A):

- When the department (BCFS/DHS) has reasonable grounds to believe that prior notice would increase the threat of serious harm to the child or another person.
- When the child contacts the department or a person providing services puts the child into contact with the department, one initial interview may be conducted without parental notice.

In addition, Child and Family Services policy directs child protective caseworkers to talk with the person who made the report and others may have relevant information, such as police officials, school personnel and health care providers.

Safety assessment work is often the first contact that a family has with a child welfare caseworker. Resistance is normal and expected. The intrusion into family life by a stranger vested with authority and seen as challenging their capabilities as a parent, is almost always experienced as a threat no matter how well intentioned or skilled the caseworker. The caseworker’s presence may signal to the parent that a significant change in their life is coming. Even when parents want change, the prospect may be both daunting and threatening.

The expertise of child protective professionals in these dynamics is highly valuable, as is the underlying organizational belief that parents have the right and responsibility to raise their own children. Timely, effective and respectful engagement with a family is the prerequisite to successfully completing an assessment and addressing and ameliorating the concerns that brought on the initial inquiry.

Two Assessment Models

Child Protective Services uses two assessment models to get a full and uniform evaluation of suspected child abuse and neglect:

Safety Assessment determines if abuse and neglect has occurred (or is threatened to occur), the level of safety for each child, and the changes or interventions needed to make or keep a child safe. If it is determined that a child's safety is compromised, the caseworker assists the parent/caregiver in developing a safety plan focused on actions that will make the child safe. If this plan is likely to provide safety, Child and Family Services may determine that continued involvement with the family is unwarranted.

A Child & Family Assessment is completed when the safety plan is unlikely to provide for the safety of the child beyond two weeks without the continued involvement of child protective. The Child and Family Assessment determines how likely it is that a child will be abused or neglected in the foreseeable future and the parent's capacity and willingness to change. The focus is information about the underlying causes of the abuse and neglect and the impact of the abuse and neglect on the child. This assessment process must be completed within three weeks of completing the safety assessment.

Both the safety and child & family assessments identify parental behaviors, contributing factors and child characteristics that decrease safety and influence the likelihood that a child will be abused. Research has demonstrated that identifying and understanding the inter-relationship among these different factors results in the most accurate decisions related to child safety and possible future maltreatment. These assessments include gathering information about parents' capacity to protect their child or children and their other strengths.

Substantiation Decision

Child and Family Services makes an official determination about whether allegations of child abuse and/or neglect are substantiated or unsubstantiated after the appropriate assessments are done. The decision is based on whether a preponderance of the evidence establishes that abuse or neglect occurred or is threatened to occur. If abuse or neglect has not occurred and is not threatened to occur, the report is unsubstantiated and the involvement of Child and Family Services ends. The record of unsubstantiated reports is expunged after 18 months by law.

If abuse or neglect has occurred or is threatened to occur, the assigned caseworker sends a letter to the affected individual within 10 calendar days. The letter must inform him/her of the decision including the specific finding(s) and his/her right to request an appeal of the decision. It should be noted that there is no appeal available to a person named as a party in a child protection proceeding or to a person for whom a criminal proceeding has resulted in his/her conviction as a perpetrator of child abuse or neglect on charges related to the substantiation.

Considerations After Abuse and Neglect Substantiated

When the Child and Family Services substantiates child abuse and neglect, the caseworker and supervisor determine how to proceed. The options considered are:

Close the Case

Safety is compromised, however, the parents/caregivers clearly understand and recognize the safety issues and are actively engaged in services and the caseworker and supervisor believe the likelihood of future abuse and/or neglect is low to moderate. **OR**, safety is compromised and the parents/caregivers refuse to engage in developing a family plan to address the identified behaviors or conditions that compromise the child's safety.

Close the Case and Refer the Family to the Local Community Intervention Agency

Safety is compromised and the parents/caregivers are engaged in services or are willing to engage in services. The caseworker and supervisor believe the likelihood of future abuse and/or neglect is low to moderate, however, they also believe the family will need additional support to address identified concerns.

Develop a Safety Plan with the Family

The plan must address any identified behavior or conditions that are making a child unsafe and changes that will allow the child to remain in the family home.

The Plan might include the following services:

- Counseling for Parents and Children
- Homemaker Services
- Day Care
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Family Violence Programs
- Temporary Shelter for Teens
- Parent Education
- Public Health Nursing
- Short Term Family Services
- Voluntary Care

Voluntary Care

Voluntary care is available to families who find themselves in temporary crisis. It is intended to be a short-term option no longer than 180 days based on a reasonable expectation that the child can be safely returned to his/her family at the end of the time period. Parents must be available for necessary services related to planning and preparing for their child to return home and related to resolving the problems that made temporary foster care necessary. There must be a voluntary care agreement signed by both the parents and Child and Family Services casework professionals. Voluntary care agreements do not affect custody.

File a Child Protection Order with the Court

The child is unsafe because of serious harm and/or threats of serious harm that cannot be influenced or managed by parental or caregiver protective capacities. The district court, in making its determination, must find by a preponderance of the evidence that the child is in circumstances of jeopardy, that remaining in the home is contrary to the welfare of the child and that Child and Family Services has made reasonable efforts to prevent the removal of the child from the home. The child remains with the parents/caregivers until the court hears the evidence and makes a finding. If the court finds jeopardy, the law provides a number of dispositional options, including custody determinations, supervision, removing of an abuse perpetrator from the home and/or appropriate services.

File a Preliminary Protection Order with the Court

The child is very unsafe when serious harm and/or threats of harm are both present and imminent and cannot be immediately influenced or managed by the parent or caregiver's protective capacities in order to quickly and significantly improve upon that child's safety. A child is at immediate risk of serious harm. Child and Family Services may request an Order of Preliminary Protection under these circumstances. This request may be made on an ex parte basis. A summary hearing on this matter must be scheduled within fourteen, but not less than seven days, to allow the parents to be heard.

Relative Placement and Kinship Care

Child and Family Services policy regarding Relative Placement and Kinship Care directs that relatives be given priority consideration as a resource when children are ordered into temporary care. Relative Placement refers to the use of relatives as a temporary place for children to live while in legal custody of Child and Family Services and while the child and parent(s) are engaged in the rehabilitation/reunification process. Child and Family Services is required to inform the court at the time of the summary preliminary hearing (or within ten days of filing a petition if there is no request for a preliminary order) about the availability of relatives to care temporarily for the child. Child and Family Services recognizes that the placement of a child with relatives can offer the child familiarity, comfort, acceptance, continuity and a sense of belonging to a family. These benefits often help mitigate the traumatic effects of abuse and neglect of the child and removal from their home. Casework staff explore and assess the appropriateness of all relatives.

Kinship Care refers to the placement of a child with a relative on a permanent basis when district court or the family have determined that the child will not be returning to the home and care of the parent(s).

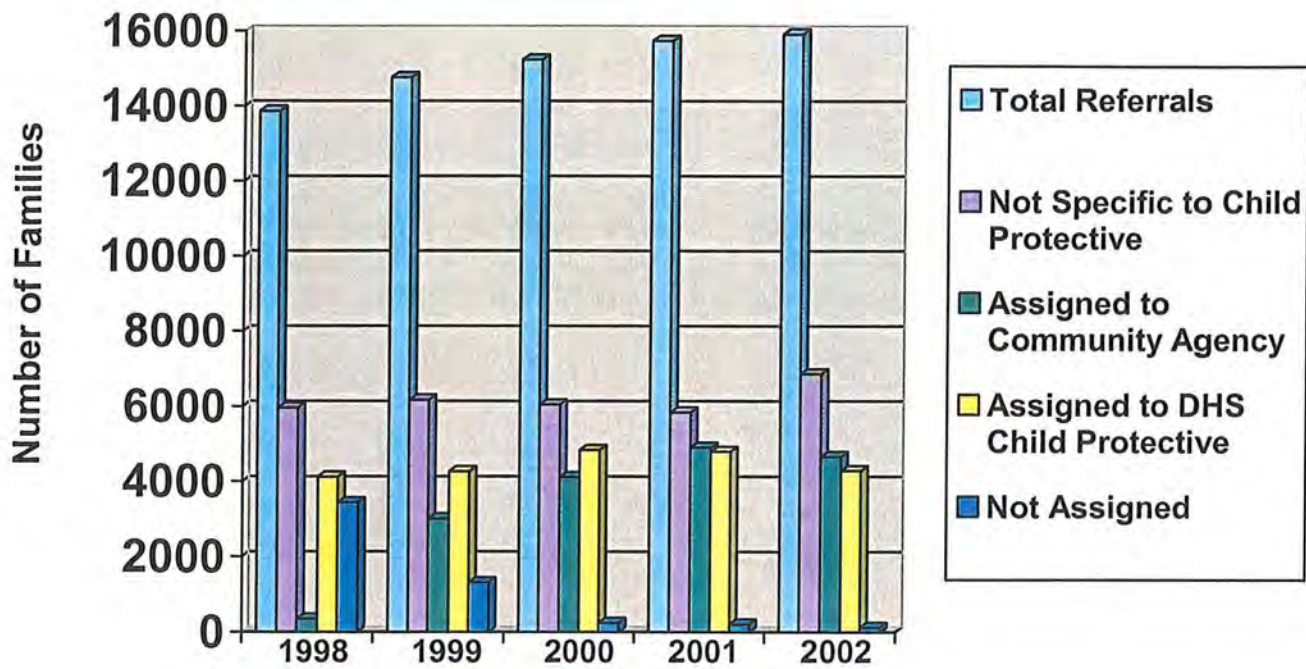
Parents and Children's Right to Representation

Parents and custodians are entitled to legal counsel in child protection proceedings except a request for a preliminary protection order. In addition, a guardian ad litem shall be appointed for the child in all child protection matters. The guardian ad litem, either an attorney or a lay court appointed special advocate, acts in pursuit of the best interests of

the child. They must be given access to all reports and records relevant to the case and must investigate to ascertain the facts and present a written report to the court and the parties.

Child Protective Intake

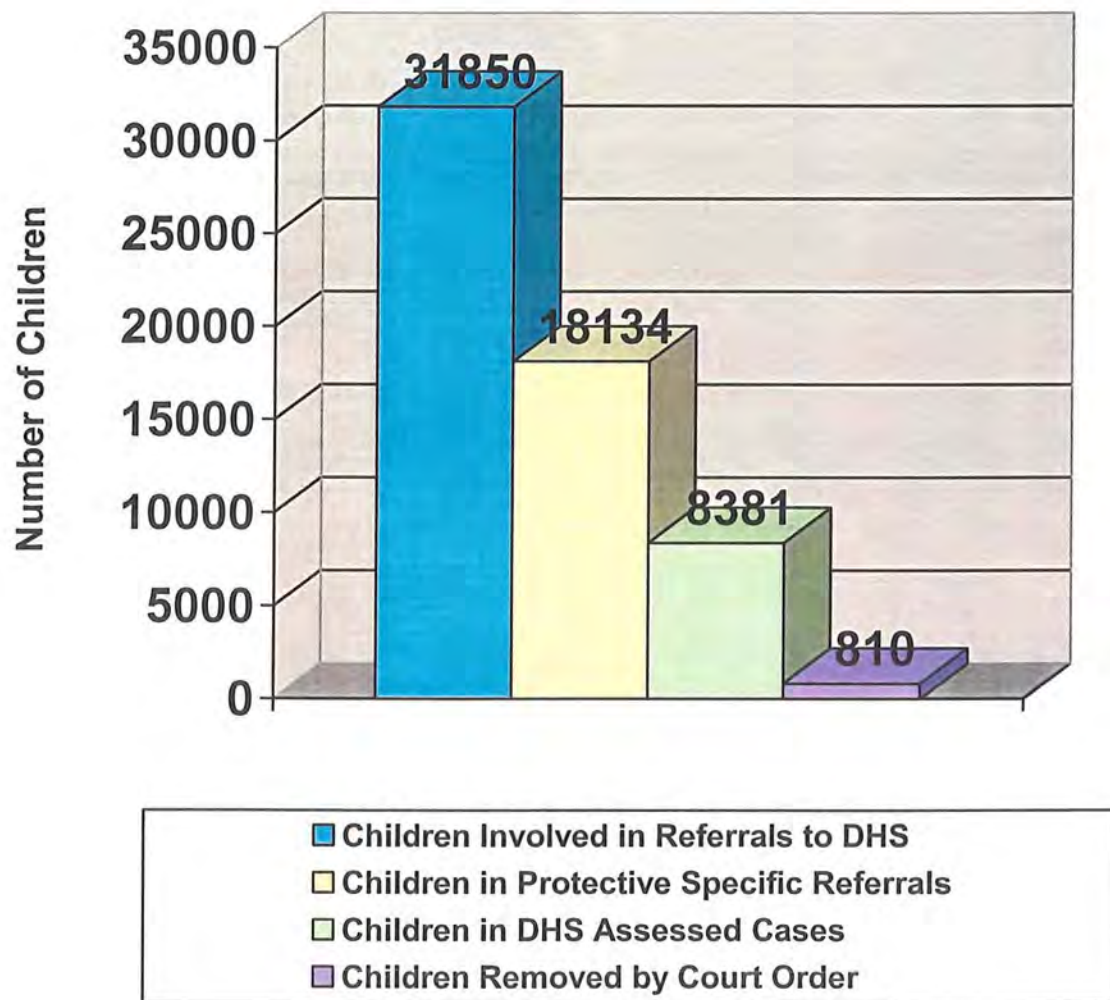
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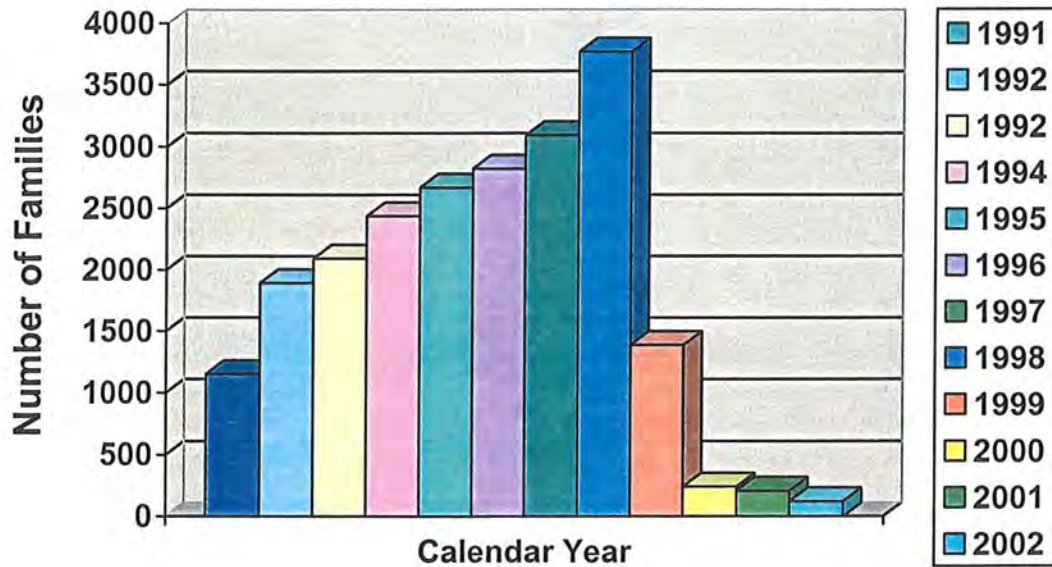
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Total Referrals	13870	14760	15234	15742	15925
Not Specific to Child Protective	5958	6167	6044	5839	6858
Assigned to Community	353	3012	4116	4901	4660
Assigned to DHS Child	4121	4263	4833	4795	4284
Not Assigned	3438	1318	241	207	123

Children Brought to Attention of CFS Through Child Protective Intake

2002



Protective Specific Referrals Not Assigned



Calendar Year	Number Of Families
1991	1152
1992	1894
1993	2093
1994	2438
1995	2669
1996	2823
1997	3095
1998	3770
1999	1390
2000	241
2001	207
2002	123

Child Protective Services Completed Assessments: Cases Substantiated

Case Substantiation for Completed Assessments

Office	Completed	Substantiated	Unsubstantiated	Substantiation Rate
Portland	684	282	402	41%
Sanford	143	68	75	48%
Biddeford	487	229	258	47%
Lewiston	629	320	309	51%
Augusta	691	293	398	42%
Rockland	282	180	102	64%
Skowhegan	141	86	55	61%
Bangor	768	410	358	53%
Ellsworth	224	136	88	61%
Machias	198	112	86	57%
Houlton	127	67	60	53%
Caribou	140	73	67	52%
Fort Kent	44	21	23	48%
CPS Total	4561	2296	2265	50%

Substantiated Victims by Age and Sex

Male	Sexual Abuse	Physical Abuse	Neglect	Emotional Abuse
0-4	77	206	514	369
5-8	83	159	343	298
9-12	94	143	291	270
13-15	34	73	136	126
16-17	8	14	30	27
Total	296	595	1314	1090

Female	Sexual Abuse	Physical Abuse	Neglect	Emotional Abuse
0-4	132	169	533	388
5-8	111	112	281	269
9-12	130	125	264	275
13-15	96	85	162	164
16-17	37	20	42	43
Total	506	511	1282	1139

2001 data/2002 data report in April

Children's Services

Overview

There are more than 500,000 children nationwide living outside of their homes because of child welfare concerns. In Maine, the number of children in care declined in 2002, from 3,174 to 3,080 most recently. Either because of a court order or a voluntary care agreement, these children live in family foster homes, group homes, residential treatment homes, with relatives, or other placements.

Children's Services (CS) supervisors and caseworkers work toward specific goals for each child. In some instances, this involves dual planning – working to reunify a child with family and exploring other permanent options if reunification is not possible. At all times, it is work that requires great coordination and professionalism. Children in care have experienced both loss and the trauma of abuse and neglect. The challenge is in meeting each child's needs with as much continuity of care as possible and focus on permanency goals.

The strategic plan of Child and Family Services, developed with consulting support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, has brought renewed focus to the permanency goals of Children's Services. Among the strategic plan's goals:

- A 25 percent increase in child placements with relatives.
- Safely and responsibly decreasing the number of children in care by 5 percent.

Maine also benefits from a sound foundation in children's services. The state is considered a national leader in its work with older youth in care. In 2002, more than 80 older youth in care were taking part in post-secondary education. Foster children were represented on virtually every campus of the University of Maine and Maine Technical College Systems, as well as Maine Maritime Academy, St. Joseph's College, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and many other private colleges.

Court Findings

Before transferring custody of a child to Child and Family Services, a District Court must find by a preponderance of the evidence that the child is in circumstances of jeopardy or in immediate risk of serious harm. The law also requires a finding that Child and Family Services made reasonable efforts to prevent the petition for removal.

When filing a petition with the District Court, or shortly after, Child and Family Services must give the court a case plan that describes a reunification plan or a decision not to reunify, efforts made to prevent the removal of the child from the home, and information about the availability and appropriateness of a relative placement. This plan is reviewed by the court and must be provided to the family and all parties.

When the custody of a child is granted to Child and Family Services, the law and established policies guide continued work with the child and family. For example, Child and Family Services must provide a stable living situation for the child, and in most instances provide rehabilitation and reunification services to the family, or develop an alternative if rehabilitation and reunification is not possible. In order to ensure the child's need for permanent home is met in a timely manner, casework staff may concurrently develop an alternative while also vigorously pursuing reunification.

Reunification and Rehabilitation Efforts

Plans for reunification are intended to be a cooperative effort between professional casework staff and the parents. The District Court oversees these efforts. The rehabilitation and reunification plan must include among other provisions, the reasons for removal, changes that must occur for the child to return home, services that must be completed, visitation schedules and timeframes. Parents are responsible for resolving problems that prevent the return of a child to the home and must take part in the rehabilitation and reunification plan, maintain meaningful contact with the child, cooperate with the agency in developing and pursuing the plan and engage in appropriate services such as:

- Counseling for Parent and Children
- Psychological Evaluation and Parental Capacity Evaluations
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Family Violence Treatment Programs
- Parent Education

Child and Family Services reviews this plan with the child's parents every three months to assess progress and make appropriate modifications. The court and all involved parties will review this plan every six months or sooner.

Commencing of Ceasing Reunification Efforts

The court may order that Child and Family Services not start or cease reunification efforts if it finds that specific requirements in the child protection statute are met. The reasons for this action include the existence of an aggravating factor or that continuation of reunification efforts is inconsistent with the permanency plan for the child.

Judicial Review

The court that has found jeopardy (issued a Jeopardy Order) must review the matter at least every six months or sooner if requested by a party. All parties must receive notice of this Judicial Review. At the review, the court hears evidence and considers the original reason for the adjudication and disposition, the events that have occurred since, the efforts of the parties, and the effect of a change in custody on the child. Foster parents, relatives providing care and any pre-adoptive parents are entitled to notice and the right to be heard at all Judicial Reviews and Permanency Hearings.

Guardian *ad Litem*

The court appoints a Guardian *ad litem* for the child in every child protection proceeding. The Guardian *ad litem* must meet qualifications established by the Supreme Judicial Court. A Guardian is charged with acting in the best interest of the child. They are a party to the child protection proceeding and have access to all reports and records. The Guardian must see the child within seven days of their appointment and every three months thereafter. Guardians must independently investigate the circumstances of the child and family and report to the court and the parties on a regular basis.

Permanency-Planning Hearings

Recognizing that children need permanency in their life, the court conducts a legally required Permanency Planning hearing to determine a permanency plan for the child within 12 months of the time a child is considered to have entered foster care and every 12 months thereafter. If the court's jeopardy ruling includes a finding of an aggravating factor, the court may order that Child and Family Services cease reunification, in which case a Permanency Planning Hearing commences within 30 days. The Permanency Plan must have determinations about whether and when a child will be returned to the parent, placed for adoption, referred for legal guardianship or placed in another permanent living arrangement. The wishes of a child 12 years or older shall be considered by the court.

State law requires all child protective proceedings to be closed to the public, unless ordered otherwise by the judge. This provision reflects federal requirements and serves to protect the privacy of children and families.

The Child

The Child's Plan

Child and Family Service's policy requires that a "Child Plan" be developed to address the specific needs of the child. This plan must be updated every six months. This plan, among other things, identifies conditions that must be addressed for the child to be safe in returning home. The plan may include:

- Special Placement Issues
- Medical/Dental/Medication Needs
- Mental Health Needs
- Education Placement/Needs
- Independent Living (if appropriate)
- Peer Relationships
- Child's Permanency Wishes

Apart from the requirements of the plan, every child in Child and Family Services care must have a medical exam within ten days. In those cases when children are not expected to be returned home within ten days, mental health counseling maybe deemed appropriate.

Placement Options for Children

When a child must be removed from his/her own home, Child and Family Service's policy requires that the child live in the least restrictive and most family-like setting available in close proximity to the parents' home and consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child. Child and Family Services policy regarding Relative Placement and Kinship Care mandates that relatives be given priority consideration as a resource for care. When relatives are not available or appropriate, the child will be placed in a licensed foster home or other facility. In the case of out-of-state relatives, Child and Family Services must request that the other state's child welfare agency assess the family to determine the appropriateness of the child's placement in that home. This evaluation can take from two to six months, depending on the state and circumstances.

Child and Family Services will not send a child out of state without a recommendation from the state where the child would live and, in most instances, without an agreement by that state to supervise the child in their new living situation. These home studies and evaluations are coordinated through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). The ICPC is an agreement between among states that describes the home studies and support for a child in state care who is being considered for an out-of-state home.

Safety/Well-Being Interviews

It is expected Child and Family Services caseworkers will meet with all children in custody alone at their placement at least once every three months. The worker is required to interview the child to determine his/her experience in the placement and assess the child's safety. For children in out-of-state placement, this expectation can be met by having the Maine caseworker interview multiple children at the facility where they are present. However, the caseworker assigned to the child must personally see the child every six months. It is expected that caseworkers, when visiting a child in his/her placement, will observe the physical environment, including the child's sleeping area. When a report is received of alleged child abuse and or neglect of a child in state care, the report is directed to the Institutional Abuse Unit and the child's caseworker. The Institutional Abuse Unit is responsible for investigating the report. The Children's Service's caseworker, as legal guardian, needs to respond immediately to assess the child's safety.

When Reunification is Not an Option

When the court orders rehabilitation and reunification efforts to cease, Child and Family Services must immediately develop a permanent plan for the child. The first determination is whether to file a petition to terminate the parental rights. At the same time, caseworkers and supervisors must continue to consider permanency options for the child, such as adoption, court-ordered custody to a relative, and other planned permanent living arrangement.

Termination of Parental Rights

Maine Law mandates that Child and Family Services file a termination of parental rights petition with the court if a child has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22

months or a court order includes the finding of an aggravated factor and an order of cease reunification. Exceptions include:

- Child and Family Services has not provided services necessary for the child's safe return to the home consistent with the time period in the case plan
- Child and Family Services has chosen to have the child cared for by a relative, or
- Child and Family Services has documented to the court a compelling reason for determining that filing such a petition would not be in the best interest of the child

The court may order the termination of parental rights if it finds, by clear and convincing evidence, that the statutory requirements for a termination have been met.

Adoption

When a return of a child to his/her parents is not possible, adoption is considered the best alternative for the child. Adoption creates a permanent and stable legal relationship. Child and Family Services works diligently to find adoptive homes for children with relatives and others.

Long-Term Foster Care

Child and Family Services may consider long-term foster care when, among other considerations, it is determined that the child is not likely to return to his/her parents and it is not likely that the child can be adopted. The prospective foster parents must meet the standards established for long term foster care. There also must be a signed agreement between Child and Family Services and the foster family that outlines responsibilities and authorizations. Long-term foster care does not necessarily require the termination of parental rights.

Transition Programs

Independent Living Program

The Chafee Foster Care Independent Living Program offers older youth in care both formal and informal life skills learning experiences tailored to their individual needs. The program challenges them to develop their talents and pursue their educational aspirations in preparation for adulthood. These services are viewed as an expansion of Child and Family Service's permanency planning initiatives. The Chafee Foster Care Independence Act, enacted in 1999, requires that a written independent living case plan be developed with each youth in care, at least by the age of 16. This case plan describes the services that will help the youth prepare for transition from foster care to the community.

All of the Child and Family Service's contracted foster care agencies, as well as group and residential care agencies are required to use a standard life skills assessment and case planning format with respect to work with foster youth in their programs. There is also a quality assurance oversight with respect to the provision of these specific services. Life Skills Educators work with older youth in care to develop networks of both adults and peers to support youth in care as they near the time of leaving care so that they will not

live in isolation as young adults. A primary focus of life skills work with older youth is planning for and pursuing post-secondary education career aspirations.

The Foster Care Youth Leadership Advisory Team is an important component of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. This team is comprised of more 50 older youth in care statewide who advocate for the needs of all children in foster care. They make public presentations to a variety of groups, including local and national conferences, State Legislative Committees, to foster care providers, child welfare staff, child welfare staff in training and other groups. They have helped draft policies that affect children in foster care. Maine's Youth Leadership Advisory Team is recognized as being one of the best in the country.

Extended Care Agreement

When a foster child reaches age 18 and there is mutual agreement with Child and Family Services that ongoing care is needed, state law authorizes care until the youth reaches 21 years of age. Child and Family Service's policy allows a youth and their caseworker to negotiate and enter into a written agreement outlining expectations about education, employment, living arrangement, medical and mental health needs. This policy was revised in 2001 with the assistance of the Youth Leadership Advisory Team and professional casework staff and supervisors.

Education Beyond High School

Child and Family Services provides financial assistance for post-secondary education to youth in state care, or the extended care program. This assistance supplements available federal student grant and scholarship assistance. There is also a foster care tuition waiver for those youth who plan to attend one of the University of Maine system colleges, one of the state's Vocational Technical colleges, or Maine Maritime Academy. These youth submit an application for the tuition waiver to the Finance Authority of Maine along with other required documentation. The Foster Care Tuition Waiver Law was enacted by the State Legislature in 1999, was amended in 2000, and went into effect in the fall of 2000. Child and Family Service's provision of post-secondary financial assistance is subject to the department's policy and procedures criteria and the availability of both federal and state funds. In the 2001-2002 academic year, the department provided varying levels of post-secondary financial assistance to 82 youth. This represents an increase of nearly 20 youth over the previous year. This may be due to youth in care taking advantage of the foster care tuition waiver and the work of this agency's Life Skills Educators who work directly with youth around their college planning.

New Initiatives

Levels of Care System

Child and Family Services are working with the foster care community to develop a new Levels of Care structure. The focus of this work is offering a continuum of care and an initial assessment so children coming will have the most appropriate, least restrictive option. A Levels of Care Committee is establishing the assessment matched with new levels of care structure. The intent of this work is to improve permanency by increasing

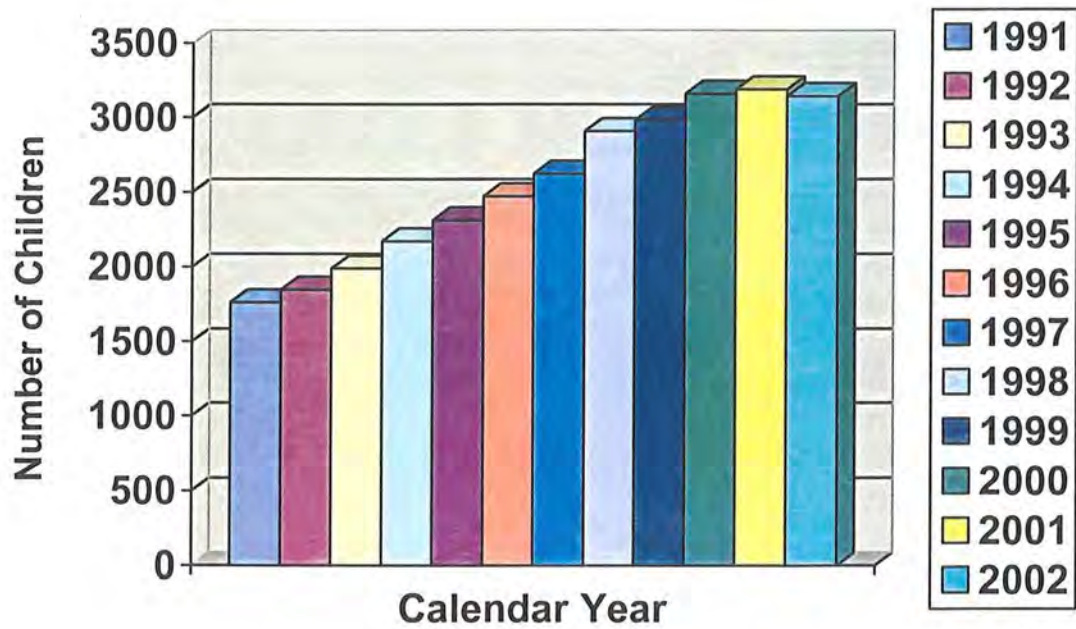
the likelihood that an initial placement will be the most appropriate and least restrictive available. The Levels of Care Committee is comprised of both Child and Family Services professional staff and key stakeholders including, foster parent representatives, a representative from both foster/adoptive parent support agencies, a representative from the Foster Family Treatment Association and a representative from the Maine State Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee.

Sibling Initiative

The Youth Leadership Advisory Team approached its Child and Family Services liaison about developing a sibling policy to specifically address the needs of siblings in the foster care system. Our agency embraced this idea, based on the organization's belief that all attempts to place siblings together, when it is safe and in their best interest, should be made. The Youth Leadership Advisory Team helped draft a policy that encourages placement of siblings together whenever possible and more frequent visitation when siblings cannot live together. In addition to a new policy, an initiative is under way to bring Camp-To-Belong to Maine. Camp-To-Belong is a summer camp experience that reunites siblings separated in foster care for a week at camp.

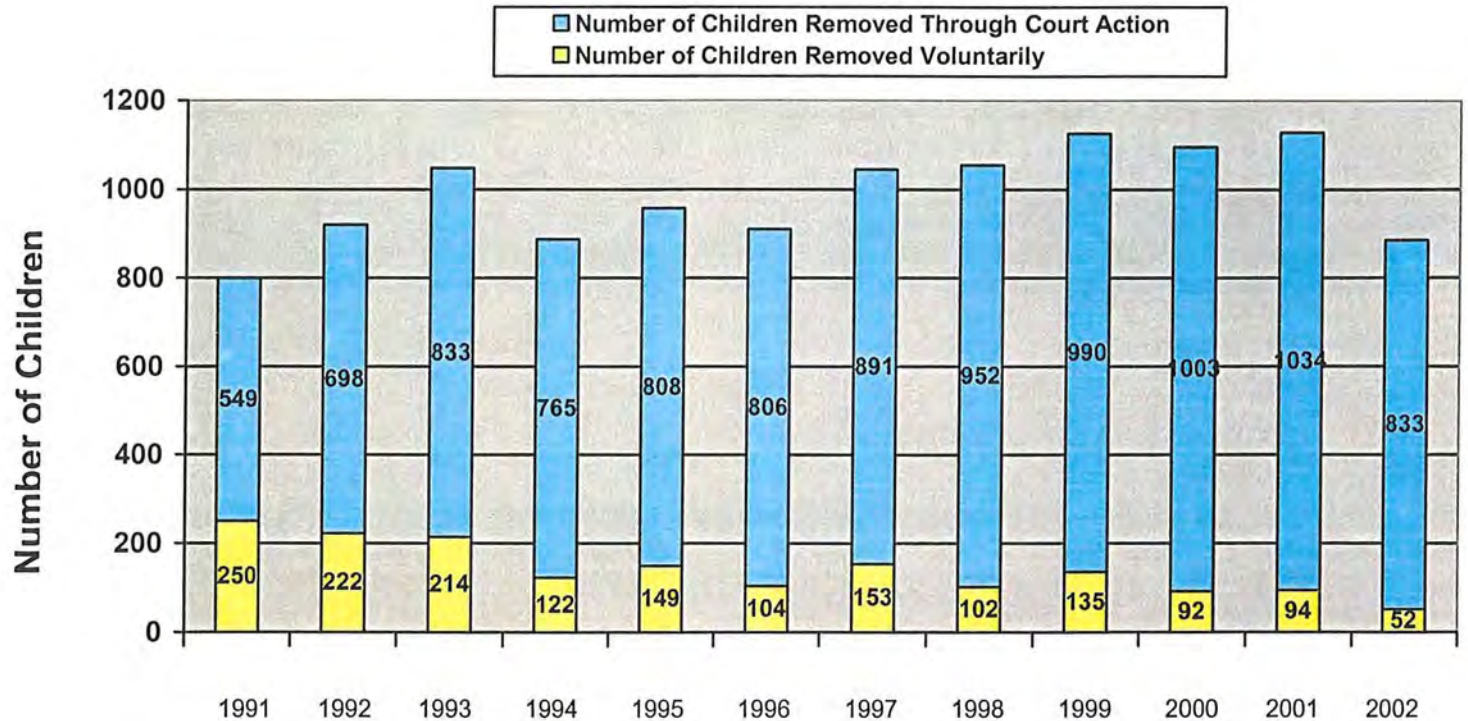
Children in CFS Care

1991-2002



Calendar Year	Number of Children
1991	1763
1992	1847
1993	1989
1994	2172
1995	2312
1996	2472
1997	2623
1998	2908
1999	2982
2000	3161
2001	3190
2002	3146

Number of Children Removed From Home



YEAR	Number Of Children Removed Voluntarily	Number Of Children Removed Through Court Action
1991	250	549
1992	222	698
1993	214	833
1994	122	765
1995	149	808
1996	104	806
1997	153	891
1998	102	952
1999	135	990
2000	92	1003
2001	94	1034
2002	52	833

Children Leaving CFS Care

Outcomes in 2000 and 2001

	2000	2001	2002
Custody Returned to Parent	327	438	353
Custody to a Relative	60	102	46
Child Adopted	298	214	244
Child 18 and Left DHS/CFS Care	49	113	75
Voluntary Extended Care Goal Reached (Age 18+)	41	65	38
Voluntary Extended Care Goal Not Reached (Department Terminated)	37	82	83
Voluntary Extended Care Goal Not Reached (Young Adult Withdrew)	19	33	26
Death of Child	0	4	2
Child Emancipated	2	4	1
Custody to Another Agency	3	7	13
Custody to Indian Tribe/Nation	4	2	1
Custody to Maine Adoption Agency	0	0	1
Custody to Another State	0	1	0
Custody Non-Relative	4	6	3
Total Leaving CFS Care	844	1071	866

Adoption

Overview

Child and Family Services primary permanence goal is reunifying families when possible. When the District Court finds that children cannot be returned to their birth parents, adoption is the next preferred permanency plan.

Child and Family Services is required to actively promote the adoption of children into stable families. The agency provides a range of adoption services to children who are legally freed for adoption and to those children's birth, foster and adoptive families. The number of children who required adoption-related services declined slightly from 735 in 2001 to 677 in 2002. Child and Family Services saw a corresponding decline in the number of legally adopted children from 423 in year 2000 to 302 in year 2001 and 294 in 2002.

The adoption staff assigned to work toward the adoption permanence goal includes 45 caseworkers, 8 supervisors, and 1 adoption program specialist statewide. Primary services include:

- Assessing and preparing the child for adoptive placement
- Assessing and educating foster parents transitioning to adoption
- Recruiting and educating new adoptive families
- Matching and placing children with families
- Supporting and stabilizing the adoptive family system and post-legalization support services

Adoption Services works with children who live in a range of setting including: family foster care homes (with relatives and non-relatives), therapeutic foster care homes, residential care facilities and group homes, as well as relative adoptive care, foster parent adoptive care, legal risk and traditional adoptive placements.

Family Standards

Child and Family Services recruitment plan for foster and adoptive families has combined foster and adoptive care standards into one set of guidelines covering the initial inquiry to approval and licensing. This redesigned family standards approach was implemented June 1, 2000.

After an initial application, education and screening process to determine eligibility standards, an in-depth home study gathers information on family history, background, relationships and values. Applicants must be able to meet the following core standards of foster/adoptive care:

- Commitment
- Acceptance of and respect for a child's prior/current relationships
- Constructive relationships
- Established lifestyle
- Understanding of a child's developmental and individual needs
- Capacity to meet a child's intensive needs
- Positive approach to discipline

Applicants also complete pre-service training, offered by the Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI), a collaborative effort between Child and Family Services and the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School.

Implications of the Adoption and Safe Families Act

The federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) was enacted in 1997 to promote permanency planning for children and to prevent children from languishing in foster or other temporary care settings. Maine's work to comply has included changes in MRSA Title 22 to meet the Adoption and Safe Families Act requirements and required a focused effort to meet both the technical aspects and the spirit of the law. Child and Family Services continued efforts in this area include:

- Building into our child welfare informational system the capacity to document the efforts to locate, place and legalize a permanent family for children in our custody.
- Providing educational sessions regarding ASFA to groups of adoptive and foster parents, therapeutic agencies and social work groups.
- Implementing an adoption-tracking tool that aids in managing the flow of a child through the adoption process.
- Funding child specific as well as general recruitment services. Our electronic photo listing/web page, done in partnership with the National Adoption Exchange, has been in place since October 1999. Child and Family Services has placed more than 30 children and received numerous general inquiries through this tool.
- Reduce inter-jurisdictional and geographic barriers by contracting services with the private sector. This also allows the CFS professional staff to be more responsive to the needs of children and families managing adoptions across county and state lines.

Changes and Challenges

A significant agency focus and philosophy is the timeliness of adoption services to children and families. Child and Family Services has implemented a management plan to set time frames for the movement of children/families in the adoption process. Management expects the foster parent adoption process to be completed nine months from the time the child is legally cleared for adoption and enters the adoption unit. This will help professional casework staff meet the National Standard time frame of 24 months [to move from entry into foster care to legalize adoption] for children whose goal is adoption.

Studies of the adoptive families, by CFS staff or the private sector contractors, must be complete in four months and with all required documents in the case record. Each caseworker is expected to meet a minimum goal of eight legalized adoptions per year. Child and Family Services believes that good practice is timely practice. The increased movement and number of adoptions already show positive initial results. The adoption-tracking tool will help the management group in holding staff accountable for their results.

Short-term goals are:

- To increase the rate of permanency through increased adoption legalizations
- To increase the rate of relative adoptions
- To increase the rate of foster parent adoptions from 75% to 80% of total legalizations
- To decrease time in foster care before adoption
- To increase placement stability [including legalized adoptive families]
- To increase the pool of adoptive families to reflect the racial, ethnic, national origin and cultural composition of children in our care

Long-term goals are:

- To emphasize permanency planning for older and disabled children and teens
- To expand support services for adoptive families post-legalization
- To strengthen and build our capacity through partnerships with private adoption agencies

Public and Private Partnerships

Maine Adoption Guides

Beginning in 1998, the Child Welfare Demonstration Project has allowed Child and Family Services to expend funds in the area of post-legalization adoption services, not normally covered by Title IV-E funding. This is a partnership of the Maine DHS, Casey Family Services and the University of Southern Maine. Maine's project, named the Maine Adoption Guides Project, is now in its fourth year and is in full statewide implementation. Project goals are to:

- Increase the number of special needs adoptions
- Decrease the average length in foster care
- Decrease the rate of adoption disruptions
- Increase family functioning

Outcomes were fully met in the first three years of the project. The first and second year included training 260 providers serving adoptive families on adoption competencies. This is having significant impact on the provision of services to all adopting families in Maine as measured by the research on this phase of the demonstration project.

The second phase of the project is delivery of post-legalization adoption services, which started with a pilot run in York and Cumberland Counties on October 1, 1999 and will conclude March 31, 2004.

The core principle of this program is that adoption is different. The dynamics of a family created by adoption are different from the dynamics of a family created by birth. Adoption is life-long and its impact creates unique opportunities and challenges for families and communities. Adoption is mutually beneficial to parent, child and society. Society is responsible for supporting and aiding integration and preservation of adoptive families.

Participants are recruited from the overall population of families adopting children with special needs from the Maine Department of Human Services (DHS) foster care system managed by CFS. Every year for four years, 140 children and their families are recruited into the project. At the time that families meet with adoption caseworkers to plan for federal Title IV-E subsidy arrangements, about three months prior to legalization, families are invited to participate in the project. Families are then randomly assigned to either the Standard Services (control) group or Guided Services (experimental) group.

Standard Services families receive the normal sets of supports and subsidy from Maine's adoption casework staff. Guided Services families receive the normal supports and subsidies and have access to a Maine Adoption Guide social worker from Casey Family Services. All families who participate in the project commit to a set of interviews once every six months. Families in the Guided Services group commit to being contacted by their assigned social worker at least once every six months. This case-management type of service delivery model is delivered statewide and is provided through a partnership of DHS and Casey Family Services.

The Guided Services intervention is a community-based delivery of service program designed to be family driven. The adoptive parent or parents are viewed as the expert on their child. The social worker assigned to the family functions as a guide who consults with the family through the expected and normal crisis in the life of an adoptive family. The long-term plan, based on the positive outcomes of this study, is that these same guided services could be expanded to the general population of adoptive families.

The research design is a longitudinal control group design with random assignment and observations both before the intervention and then conducted every six months for the duration of the study. There will be four cohorts observed in the study. The outcome evaluation assesses to what extent the children/families who received the Guided Services Model (experimental group) and the children/families who received Standard Services (control group) differ in regard to a number of outcome measures. The outcome measures include:

- Rates of adoption dissolutions
- Number of days child in the home/displacement rates
- Assessment of family functioning

- Assessment of child functioning/well being
- Assessment of access to and utilization of services

Contracted Services

Child and Family Services and the Department of Human Services have offered the opportunity of a public/private partnership with all of the non-profit private adoption agencies in Maine. Child and Family Services operates with a lead contractor, International Adoption Services Centre, Inc. This arrangement provides oversight of the sub-contracted agencies and keeps the standards of services consistent. These private sector resources allow CFS to expand its capacity in the provision of timely services to children and their families. The agency began contracting for home study services in 1996. Through contracting, adoption caseworkers are more able to concentrate their efforts on securing permanent adoptive placements and preparing children for the transition.

Maine DHS contract for the following services:

- Study/Assessment of Foster and Adoption Families
- Statewide Post Legalization Adoption Services: This continuum of services includes advocacy, family education, information and referral, community supports, medical/genetic research and other search issues, mediation and problem solving, recommendations and referrals.
- Purchased Services from private [not for profit] adoption agencies that have developed and approved adoptive parents who wish to adopt children from the DHS foster care program.
- Recruitment and Retention of foster and adoptive families: An effort to develop foster/adoptive and kinship families who reflect the racial, ethnic, national origin and cultural composition of the children in our care. This project is called “A Family for ME” and has built a solid first year foundation of efforts that include a standard packet of information for adoptive and foster families, Thursday’s Child bi-weekly TV recruitment, radio and newspaper ads and visibility in all regional districts.

New Initiatives

The federal Adoption 2002 Initiative challenged States to double the amount of legally adopted children between 1998 and 2002. Maine has increased the number of adoption legalizations from a baseline of 112 children in FFY 1998 to 361 children in federal fiscal year 2001—more than a 200 percent increase. Maine won a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Adoption Excellence Award in December, 2000.

Child and Family Services adoption assistance program currently supports 1600 children and their families through financial subsidies, Medicaid and non-reoccurring adoption expenses. As part of an ongoing effort to educate and support adoptive families about the adoption assistance program and post legalization adoption services, CFS created a revised Adoption Assistance Handbook and a new Maine Post-Adoption Resource Guide. Completed in 2002, the guide is expected to be used by CFS caseworkers and all private adoption agency staff

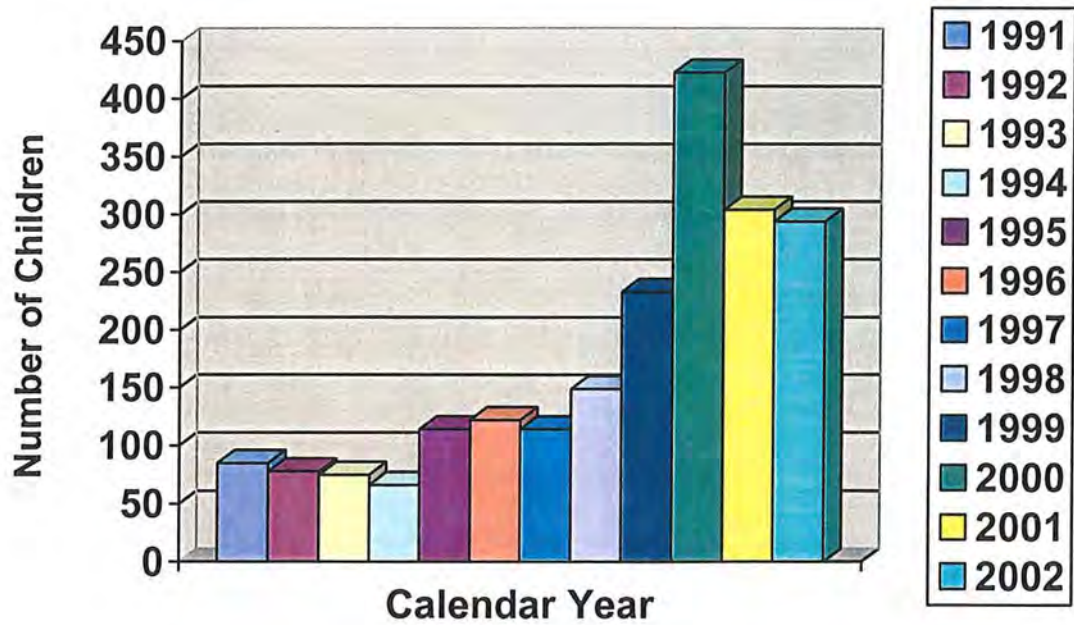
and families. This resource guide is also located on the web at www.adopt.org/me and on www.cwti.org.

Adoption Services actively solicits feedback from our adoptive families to support continuous improvement. In 2001, Adoption Services directed researchers at the University of Southern Maine to undertake a survey of parents who have children receiving adoption subsidy payments. All of these families were contacted through a one-time mail out questionnaire. Parents were not asked to provide their name and there was no identifying information provided to the researcher; the sample was anonymous. A total of 382 surveys were returned for a 44% response rate.

The survey provides detailed information about the status and needs of the adoptive child, the families' needs, pre-legalization experiences with adoption agencies, and post-legalization service utilization. This report is available to those who are more interested in detailed descriptions. A quick summary of one core result: 86 percent reported being satisfied/very satisfied with the adoption experience. Asked if they would adopt this child again, 71 percent said yes and 15 percent stated they probably would adopt. A total of 77 percent of the respondents stated that they would recommend adoption to others.

Adoptions Statewide

1991-2002



Calendar Year	Number of Children
1991	85
1992	78
1993	75
1994	66
1995	114
1996	122
1997	114
1998	149
1999	233
2000	423
2001	304
2002	294

ADOPTIONS

Adoption Finalizations by Years

AS OF 1/1/03

Office	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Pending*
Biddeford/ Sanford									63	32	49	10
Portland	17	13	21	34	27	19	32	46	57	31	38	10
Lewiston	26	15	5	18	9	17	30	49	70	28	35	16
Augusta	15	22	10	29	26	32	17	50	92	80	53	11
Rockland											12	3
Bangor	12	16	14	18	35	21	26	30	64	54	49	11
Ellsworth/ Machias						10	29	31	47	60	39	7
Houlton	8	9	16	15	25	15	15	17	30	19	19	7
TOTAL	78	75	66	114	122	114	149	223	423	304	294	75

Adoption Finalizations by Month

AS OF 1/1/03

Month	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002 as of 1/1/03
January	9	1	0	9	5	4	6	9	31	26	25
February	5	9	4	7	15	5	8	17	17	23	12
March	9	7	4	2	18	10	8	17	31	23	23
First Quarter	23	17	8	18	38	19	22	43	79	72	60
April	10	3	15	7	5	9	8	12	36	15	23
May	6	2	12	8	12	6	16	14	44	31	33
June	6	1	8	20	11	10	5	27	22	34	35
Second Quarter	22	6	35	35	28	25	29	53	102	80	91
July	6	10	1	8	13	8	16	28	35	18	28
August	5	6	5	5	13	16	15	13	34	24	19
September	7	10	4	6	10	8	11	11	35	30	31
Third Quarter	18	26	10	19	36	32	42	52	104	72	78
October	5	11	1	17	7	20	15	15	33	25	22
November	5	8	1	12	4	2	18	9	43	22	25
December	5	7	11	13	9	16	23	51	62	33	18
Fourth Quarter	15	26	13	42	20	38	56	75	138	80	65
TOTAL	78	75	66	114	122	114	149	223	423	304	294

*Pending means that the Commissioner has signed consent, but finalization has not taken place or has not yet been reported.

Foster Care

Overview

Every child has the right to be with his or her biological family provided that the child is safe in their home. When a child is removed from their home because the family situation meets legal standard describing serious harm or a threat of serious harm to the child, Child and Family Services is normally mandated to provide rehabilitation and reunification services to the family. CFS also provides a temporary home for the child – a foster home.

Foster care is not generally viewed as a permanent plan for a child. For those children who cannot be returned to their biological parents or relatives, adoption is the preferred plan. Foster care plays an essential role in both providing a temporary home and care for children and assisting in a child's transition to permanency. The emphasis is meeting each child's individual needs and providing permanency plans through rehabilitation and reunification services to families.

Foster parents play a critical role in the child welfare. They provide stability, a home and a sense of community for the child in their care. Foster parents are expected to assist and support reunification efforts between the child and their parents. Foster parents often provide important information about the child to the court and the parties involved in a child protection proceeding. They have the right to notice of these proceedings and the right to attend and present testimony.

Caseworkers attempt to find the most appropriate foster care match for each child and develop a case plan outlining a process to achieve the child's needs. This careful matching of foster home and child is not always possible when more children need foster homes than the community, region or state can supply. A major emphasis in the CFS strategic plan is developing more family foster homes. This is an especially challenging goal in many regions.

Family Standards

Child and Family Services works to assure that each child in care has a family that meets his or her needs for safety, permanency and well-being. Prospective foster/adoptive parents must possess the skills to meet these needs. To achieve this goal, the CFS has established standards that require finding a family for each child, rather than finding a child for each family. Through the use of this one set of family standards for both foster and adoptive families, the agency strives to provide an adequate number of foster/adoptive families that reflect the diverse racial, ethnic and minority status of the children in care. All applicants applying to become a foster and/or adoptive resource go through an initial application and screening process to ascertain whether they meet eligibility requirements of the family standards. Then, an in-depth home study gathers information on family history, background, relationships and values. Applicants must be

able to meet the following core standards of foster/adoptive care:

- Commitment
- Acceptance of and respect for child's prior/current relationships
- Constructive relationships
- Established lifestyle
- Understanding of child development and needs
- Capacity to meet the intensive needs of a child
- Positive approach to discipline

Applicants must also complete pre-service training, offered by the Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI), a collaborative effort between Child and Family Services and the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School.

Foster Parent Training

CFS contracts with CWTI to offer Introductory and In-service training to foster and adoptive parents. A 24-hour, competency-based Introductory training offers prospective foster and adoptive parents the necessary foundation to work effectively with children, children's birth families and other professionals with whom they will interact as caregivers. This training fulfills the Family Standards training requirement. Introductory training encourages participants to explore their motivations for fostering and/or adopting and provides information on the system, the impact of abuse and neglect on children, and the importance of the birth family.

In-service training provides training and support to experienced foster and adoptive parents, assisting them in their professional development, providing respite and recognition and contributing to the retention of trained and effective caregivers. CWTI, in conjunction with Maine Caring Families—the Child and Family Service's statewide therapeutic foster care program—works to design training to meet core requirement needs and develop curricula responsive to the changing needs of caregivers. Training is offered on 17 topics, including Enhancing Self-Esteem in the Foster/Adoptive Family, Alternative Discipline for Foster and Adoptive Parents, and Promoting Healthy Sexual Development. A variety of training formats and delivery methods encourage increased access/participation in training. CWTI is currently working towards offering web-based In-Service training.

Curricula from Introductory and In-Service training are reviewed to ensure continued effectiveness and the training process is evaluated to gather feedback and ensure sufficient transfer of knowledge.

Foster Care Licensing

Federal law requires that all foster homes be licensed in order for a state to be eligible for Federal funding. The authority for licensure is left to the state. CFS has adopted

licensing rules and strives to promote quality out-of-home foster care for Maine's children through equitable licensing practice.

Applicants must meet licensing requirements, for which they undergo Child Protective screenings, screenings for fire and safety violations, criminal history and checks through the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. A full license is issued for two years. A temporary license may be issued when a foster family affiliated with a Child Placing Agency moves to allow the continuation of services to the child(ren) currently placed with the family. A temporary license shall not exceed 120 days. A conditional license may be issued when an individual fails to comply with applicable laws and DHS specifies in writing the corrections that must be made. The law provides that a license may be revoked at any time the licensee fails to comply with the law or with rules and regulations. Licenses may be renewed, subsequent to an updated assessment of the family and their ability to meet licensing rules and regulations, a site visit, an updated DMV check and an updated criminal history search.

There are two categories of foster home licenses: Family Foster Homes for Children and Specialized Children's Foster Homes. To become a specialized foster home, the primary caregiver must have verifiable experience working with moderately to severely handicapped children and at least one course dealing with the special needs of moderately to severely handicapped children. Specialized licenses are only used for foster homes providing therapeutic foster care either through Maine Caring Families or independent child-placing agencies.

Foster Parent Recruitment

CFS makes diligent efforts to recruit potential foster and adoptive parents, who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children in custody. The recruitment design includes providing potential foster and adoptive families throughout Maine information about the characteristics and needs of the available children, the nature of the foster care and adoption process, and the supports available to foster and adoptive families.

The agency is aware, however, of the need for more foster homes, particularly for children not requiring high-level therapeutic foster care. The lack of sufficient numbers of local foster homes results in children being moved away from their schools and communities. CFS aims to increase the number of family foster homes through collaboration, and in some cases, contracts with A Family For ME, Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, local communities and Maine media. In addition, Family Standards outlines specific principles, goals and objectives for recruitment, including:

- Establishing a statewide foster and adoptive care committee of key stakeholders to serve as a resource
- Implementing a statewide plan for foster and adoptive care promotion, advertising and public relations
- Developing quality assurance mechanisms to measure recruitment outcomes
- Providing culturally competent services at inquiry, intake and informational meetings

Retention is believed to be responsible for 90 % of recruitment. As experienced foster and adoptive families are responded to and supported, they share their positive experiences. Parents need to be rewarded, respected and most of all, their opinions need to be heard and valued. Defined activities for increased retention are:

- Conducting exit interviews with foster and adoptive parents
- Providing increased support to all members of foster/adoptive families
- Improving matching of children and parents
- Involving foster and adoptive parents directly in activities

Federal Review Findings

The federal Administration for Children and Families conducted a pilot Child and Family Services Review in 1999. They found that too many children—especially young children—had long-term foster care as a goal. Reviewers' findings included:

- Approximately one-third of children in placement were in therapeutic homes, often because regular foster homes are not available.
- Maine did not have consistent criteria for referral to therapeutic care.
- Maine lacked a mechanism to monitor progress of children in therapeutic care and thereby to assess whether the therapeutic care continued to be warranted.

As a result of the pilot review, CFS developed both a program improvement plan and later a strategic plan that incorporated the full range of strategic issues. These plans targeted desired outcomes. Steps to improve foster care included:

- Work toward institutionalizing a process to ensure permanency earlier in all cases through concurrent planning.
- Developed statewide criteria for when children should be placed in a therapeutic home.
- Established clear goals for children's therapeutic care.
- Completed policy on long-term foster care to limit its use and train staff to implement policy and practice expectations related to "compelling reasons."

In addition, the collaborative Therapeutic Network Team (TNT) meets regularly to address issues concerning therapeutic care.

Therapeutic Network Team

This collaborative group is made up of one representative (staff member or foster parent) from each treatment foster care agency and representatives from Child and Family Services. In 1996, when the TNT was formed, the team developed the Program Standards for Treatment Foster Care in Maine as well as policy for exceptions to the two-child limit in treatment-level foster homes. In January 2000, CFS instituted changes for standardization and clarification, which necessitated the revision of the Program Standards. The TNT formed subcommittees, which included foster parents, addressed

specific issues and established Program Standards, effective January 1, 2001. The team continues to meet monthly and upcoming projects include resolving day care payment issues and maintaining consistency between programs.

New Initiatives

Foster Care Licensing Rules

CFS completed its implementation of new foster care licensing rules in 2002. These rules, which regulate the licensing of Specialized Children's Foster Homes and Family Foster Homes for Children, are designed to ensure the safety and well being of children placed in foster homes. The changes in the rules included adding on going training requirements for family foster, increasing the ongoing training requirements for specialized foster homes, limited the number of children placed in specialized foster homes, updating the rules to come into compliance with the Program Standards for Treatment Foster Care in Maine and including new federal guidelines regarding applicants with certain criminal histories. The proposed rules were distributed for comment to the Child Placing Agencies to be shared with their staff and foster parents. They were also sent to both Foster/Adoptive Parent agencies, the Youth Leadership Advisory Team and other parties who had expressed an interest. The comments received as well as comments received from those attending the Public Hearings and those who responded during the written comment period were reviewed. Changes were made based upon these comments.

Recruitment/Retention

CFS has begun a new recruiting and retention campaign called A Family For ME. This campaign is designed to recruit and retain foster, adoptive and kinship families who reflect the racial, ethnic, national origin and cultural composition of the children in our care. A Family For ME has built a solid first year foundation of efforts that include a standard packet of information for adoptive and foster families, Thursday's Child bi-weekly TV recruitment, radio and newspaper ads and high visibility in all 8 DHS Districts in Maine. Retention activities have included recognition efforts as well as exit interviews of families leaving the foster/adoptive care system.

Foster/Adoptive Parent Advisory Council

CFS has developed a foster/adoptive parent advisory council. The agency recognizes and values input from key stakeholders and this committee is another avenue to increase stakeholder participation in child welfare functions and decisions. The role of this committee will be twofold:

- 1) to provide an avenue for foster/adoptive parents to express concerns and opinions to CFS staff directly involved in policy and practice decisions, and
- 2) to provide CFS with direct access and a "feedback loop" to the foster/adoptive parent community. Major issues and policy changes will be discussed with this group. The composition will consist of one foster and one adoptive parent, chosen by the foster/adoptive parent community, from each of the eight DHS Districts.

Child and Family Services

Number of Children and Cost by Level of Care-April 2002

Regular Foster Homes - Level of Care	Number of Children	Per Diem Authorized	Annualized	Average Per Child Per Year
I	306	\$4,568	\$1,667,148	\$5,448
II	120	\$1,909	\$696,898	\$5,807
III	211	\$3,605	\$1,315,927	\$6,237
IV	210	\$3,724	\$1,359,307	\$6,473
Total - Regular Foster Homes	847		\$5,039,281	\$5,950
Specialized Foster Care Rate Homes - Score				
0-2	18	\$324	\$118,278	\$6,571
3	16	\$331	\$120,775	\$7,548
4	33	\$763	\$278,444	\$8,438
5	32	\$832	\$303,680	\$9,490
6	13	\$366	\$133,674	\$10,283
7	13	\$395	\$144,244	\$11,096
8	10	\$329	\$120,184	\$12,018
9	7	\$251	\$91,637	\$13,091
10	5	\$190	\$69,376	\$13,875
11	5	\$205	\$74,920	\$14,984
12	1	\$43	\$15,553	\$15,553
13	2	\$93	\$33,770	\$16,885
15	1	\$50	\$18,290	\$18,290
16	1	\$53	\$19,309	\$19,309
Total - Specialized Foster Care Rate Homes	157		\$1,542,132	\$9,822
Exceptional Medical Rate Foster Homes	13	\$805	\$293,825	\$22,602
Correctional Rate Foster Homes	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Maine Caring Families	136	\$4,760	\$1,737,400	\$12,775
Child Placing Agency Foster Homes - Treatment Rates	792	\$61,402	\$22,411,595	\$28,297
Total	1,945		\$31,024,234	\$15,951
Out of State Residential Facilities	42	\$6,353	\$2,318,852	\$55,211
In State Children's Residential Facilities	723	\$51,405	\$18,762,679	\$25,951
Residential Schools	2	\$185	\$67,704	\$33,852
Emergency Shelters	7	\$635	\$231,790	\$33,113
Independent Living Apartment Program	9	\$771	\$281,594	\$31,288
Total	783		\$21,662,619	\$27,666
Overall Total	2,728		\$52,686,852	\$19,313

Regular Foster Homes

Specialized Foster Homes

Therapeutic Foster Homes

Residential Services

Oversight and Accountability

Child and Family Services is responsible for promoting the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families through the provision of social, regulatory and purchased services on a continuum from prevention to protection. CFS is guided in these efforts by federal laws and regulations, the law and the courts of Maine, agency rules and internal agency policies. What follows is a brief outline of the areas of oversight and accountability as applied to CFS in connection with these services.

Child and Family Services Review

The federal government, through the Department of Health and Human Services - Administration for Children and Families, conducts reviews of all State Child Welfare programs. These reviews, which focus on issues relating to the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families, are conducted every three years. CFS participated in a voluntary pilot review in 1999. Maine is scheduled to participate in its first non-voluntary review in 2003. The extensive reviews include a complete review of case records selected at random. The review team conducts interviews of people identified in the case record which may include; CFS staff, biological parents, foster parents, children when appropriate, service providers, guardian ad litems, judges, attorneys, law enforcement and school personnel. In addition to the case reviews, focus groups of critical constituencies are convened to look at how CFS meets the needs of the children and families it serves in both community relations and service delivery. Based on the findings of the review, States are required to develop a Program Improvement Plan to address any needed changes.

Federal IV-E Audit

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act mandates this federal audit. The audit is performed to determine the state's continued eligibility for federal dollars based on a number of very specific criteria designed to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families. The audits are conducted every three years. Maine's most recent audit was concluded in March of 2001. The next one is scheduled to begin in 2003. In determining whether a state meets the federal requirements for continued Title IV-E funding, the audit looks at numerous criteria for compliance including: the financial eligibility of a family, the reasonable efforts to prevent the removal of a child from their home, the timeliness of court reviews and the placement of children in licensed facilities. There are significant fiscal sanctions for failing to pass the audit.

Office of the Inspector General

The Office of the Inspector General has the authority to conduct reviews of States receiving federal dollars through the Title IV-E program. Such reviews determine compliance with the specific federal provisions required for Title IV-E funding. Most

recently the Office of the Inspector General reviewed Maine's foster home license renewals.

State Plan

In order to be eligible for payment under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act and the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), states must submit an annual plan of their child welfare services program. The required plan is very comprehensive. Among the many areas that must be detailed in the plan are an overview of the state's child welfare program in relation to federal requirements and a detailed plan for achieving specified administrative and programmatic goals. The state plan is reviewed to ensure substantial conformity with federal requirements and to help states improve child welfare services and outcomes for families and children who receive services.

The Child Welfare Outcomes Annual Report

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requires that the Department of Health and Human Services collect data from individual States regarding child abuse and neglect and issue an annual report. The report includes national data on child abuse and neglect. In addition, the report reviews the performance of individual states to determine whether a state meets the needs of children and families who come into contact with the child welfare system, focusing specifically on the "outcomes" or results, for these children. The identified outcomes are as follows:

- Reduce the recurrence of child abuse and neglect
- Reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect in foster care
- Increase permanency for children in foster care
- Reduce time in foster care to adoption
- Increase placement stability
- Reduce placements of young children in group home or institutions

The outcome measures are calculated using two national data collection systems currently in operation: the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). States are required to submit specific data for these reports. This data is used to determine if a state is in compliance with the provisions of the Titles IV-B and IV-E and with the identified outcomes. Federal funding is tied to successful state performance.

Maine Law and the State Courts and Agency Rules

The Child and Families Services and Child Protection Act, 22 M.R.S.A. 4001 et. seq. sets forth the authorizations and obligations of CFS in relation to its child welfare practice. The Act authorizes CFS to provide services to families at risk and to protect children from abuse and neglect inflicted by persons responsible for their care. The Act is designed to balance the rights of parents to be free from undue government intrusion into

their family affairs, against the right of children to be safe in their own homes. There are important statutory safeguards in the law for both children and parents. District courts throughout the state hear all child protection matters and render their decision based on the application of law, the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure and Maine Rules of Evidence. CFS is held accountable for its action and inaction in relation to the law as applied by the courts. The Supreme Judicial Court sitting as the Law Court hears all appeals from Jeopardy Orders, Termination of Parental Rights Orders and Medical Treatment Orders. In addition, CFS has promulgated Rules pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act in a number of areas. These Rules are judicially enforceable and describe the agency's procedures or practices in a number of areas.

Quality Assurance

The Case Review and Quality Assurance Unit located within CFS provides ongoing internal assessment, data collection and feedback of the agency's compliance and performance regarding federal law and regulations, state law and agency policy. The Unit is comprised of eight managers located in districts throughout the state. In addition to the reviews outlined below, the unit often responds to specific and special requests for studies and reviews. The managers perform the following functions:

Internal Reviews

The unit managers conduct monthly reviews of randomly selected Child Protective and Children's Services cases, analyzing these cases to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of children in the foster care system. Reviews also are conducted in the area of Children's Services for the purpose of reviewing the safety assessment process as well as case progress. Written reports of the findings and recommendations are made available to program administrators, supervisors and caseworkers. In addition, the data is collected on a grid that tracks all state and federal protections required in a case.

Long-Term Foster Care Agreement Recommendations

In all cases where a district is considering long-term foster care as the permanent plan for a child unit, managers conduct a review. The unit managers review the case files, assess the permanency plan and review the appropriateness of the plan for the individual child. The final recommendation is reduced to writing and provided to the district supervisor and program administrator for consideration.

Administrative Case Reviews

The unit managers conduct an annual review for all children who have a long-term foster agreement in place. These reviews consider the continued appropriateness of the placement for the child. In addition to ensuring the continued well-being of the child, these reviews are required by federal regulation.

Therapeutic Foster Care Agency Reviews

In order to insure that children in therapeutic foster care settings are receiving quality care and the most appropriate services, the unit conducts reviews of therapeutic treatment foster care agencies. Fifteen agencies have been reviewed as of June of 2000,

representing the total number of child placing agencies. The initial review consists of an interview with agency staff, a selection of 20% of the cases served by the agency for record review, in-home interviews with foster parents about their experiences with the agency, and interviews with CFS staff who had worked with the agency. The information is summarized in a report that documents the findings regarding the agency's strengths, needs and recommendations. This report is provided to appropriate CFS staff and a letter summarizing the report is sent to the agency. The Unit conducts a follow-up review of these agencies. This review focuses on the individual child's progress in the program in relation to their safety, permanency and well-being, the transition that the agency provided for children who were moved to another placement during the year, and the agency's ability to assist children who are moving to adoption. This review includes the addition of two cases selected by the agency. These cases are assessed through a network meeting which may be comprised of services providers, the caseworker, the child's guardian ad litem, the parents and the foster parents, to ensure that the plan provided by the agency is the most appropriate plan for the child. A written report outlines the findings and includes agency's strengths, needs and recommendations. A summary of the report is provided to the agency. The agency has 30 days to address how it plans to respond to the recommendations.

Community Intervention Program Reviews

Community Intervention Programs provide services to families through a contract with Child and Family Services. CFS makes referrals to these agencies of those families with low to moderate risk reports of abuse and neglect. The review includes: the timeliness of the referral and the appropriateness of the referral, the services provided by the agency and the timeliness of the services provided and the level of the family's cooperation with the agency. A written report is then provided to the agency. In addition to specific case reviews, the unit conducts quarterly reviews of statewide intake reports to consider the appropriateness of the referrals to Community Intervention Programs.

Training and Professional Development

Overview

Child and Family Services has a strong commitment to training and professional development for all staff as part of its effort to provide the best child welfare services to children and families in Maine. CFS and the University of Southern Maine jointly created the Maine Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI) in 1990 to maximize resources and maintain state-of-the-art training and development opportunities. CWTI provides child welfare-specific, competency based training. This training is based on research conducted with staff from Maine's system to identify performance and organizational goals. Under the auspices of the University of Southern Maine's Institute for Public Sector Innovation (part of the Edmund S. Muskie School for Public Service), CWTI has access to all university resources and national academic and research findings to promote current practice models. Training programs through CWTI are also open to tribal representatives and the Native American communities in Maine.

Determining Training Plans for CFS Professional Development

Child and Family Services has a comprehensive training plan for each fiscal year outlined in a cooperative agreement between CFS and CWTI. The plan allocates time and money to provide trainings that are required through licensing regulations, federal guidelines for funding and statutory compliance. These trainings also promote the achievement of the agency mission and objectives under its federally required Child and Family Service Plan and its strategic plan and goals. The cooperative agreement encompasses staff training in the following areas:

- Pre-service training for new casework staff
- Ongoing training and Specialized Program training for all staff
- Innovations in Child Welfare Practice
- Graduate education and allocations for workshops, books and journals

Consideration is given to mandatory trainings for all staff based on policy and practice enhancements, training required for all state employees, and other professional development opportunities to allow for an average of nine days of training per staff person. Implementation of a new Safety Assessment tool is an example of practice enhancement related training. This enhancement required a two-day training in both using the tool and in conducting an assessment.

Each staff member has, as part of his or her evaluation, a training and professional development plan. The individual plan reflects training and professional development goals tailored to performance needs and strengths. All staff members whose position requires a valid Social Work License are subject to licensing rules related to training. According to those rules, social workers at the LSW level must complete at least 25 hours of board-approved training every two years.

Pre-service Training for New Casework Staff

All new caseworkers are required to complete a 23-day residential Pre-service Training Program prior to carrying cases. As of October 1, 2000, new workers are also required to complete additional “core training programs” during the first two years of employment. This is in addition to any training initiatives required for all CFS professional casework staff.

The Pre-service Training Model is based on the Maine Caseworker Competency Model. This approach encompasses job knowledge, casework skills, and interpersonal competencies that make workers successful with families and children. The five-week residential portion of Pre-service training includes a job-shadowing component. Each newly hired worker has a meeting with his/her supervisor and a trainer prior to and just after the residential five-week program for self-assessment and feedback about performance in training and future goals. In the event that a worker demonstrates any behavior that would indicate difficulty in carrying out the role of caseworker, that behavior is reported to the supervisor and district program administrator. New workers successfully completing Pre-service training are required to return to training (within two years) for the seven core training programs identified as critical for success in the child welfare field.

Ongoing Staff Training and Specialized Program Training

CWTI provides extensive training for all staff on an ongoing basis, complemented by workshops offered by the Staff Education and Training Unit (SETU). Core training programs are open to all staff, with space reserved for new caseworkers. In addition, the Staff Training Committee convenes quarterly to identify topics of interest to staff in all programs and all job classifications. Specific workshops are offered for staff depending on work experience. Ongoing staff training also includes workshops that can be designed for and delivered to a district, a program area, or a unit that assists supervisors and program administrators in addressing specific issues.

Specialized Program Training serves staff whose jobs and roles fall outside of traditional casework while still requiring them to keep up on casework and specialized skills. Staff members in these categories identify training needs through smaller committee structures. New supervisors are offered a one-on-one course on supervision delivered during their first year. In addition, they may take graduate courses in supervision. During the last fiscal year, 967 staff participated in 6,408 hours of staff training in these two categories.

Innovative Practices in Child Welfare

Child and Family Services operates within a legal and policy framework incorporating both state and federal mandates. Each year, CFS requires additional training programs designed to address current practice, policy, and legal issues. Topics for required training vary each year according to organizational goals and priorities. In recent years, changes

to law and policy on both the state and national levels have resulted in changes in CFS practice and policy. Training to introduce relevant staff to new practice and policy is necessary for compliance with the law and with funding programs.

All staff are invited to participate in the annual fall conference on Child Welfare Practice. Recent conferences have brought national experts to Maine to discuss best practices in the field. More than 400 professional staff participated in each of the past two annual conferences, with presentations focused on the importance of clear documentation in casework and the value of engaging families.

Professional Development Activities

A wide range of professional development resources that support staff excellence stem from national professional organizations and activities, books, journals, and academic programs. The professional development aspect of the training and development program is led by a committee including CFS and CWTI staff, representatives from the University of Maine at Orono School of Social Work, the University of New England School of Social Work, the University of Southern Maine School of Social Work, the University of Maine at Presque Isle Social Work Department, and the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

In addition to 'in-house' training and graduate courses sponsored directly by CFS, CWTI or SETU, district program administrators and the Bureau Director receive annual allocations to fund workshop registrations, books, journals, and organization memberships. These allocations allow staff the flexibility to attend workshops on a wide range of topics that are not sponsored directly by CFS. In total, 258 staff attended 67 different workshops and conferences, in the previous fiscal year. The allocations accounts were also used to purchase 171 books, journals, and memberships. The program is coordinated through CWTI and each registration request requires supervisory approval.

Graduate Education Opportunities

In the past ten years, CFS has implemented a tuition reimbursement program for graduate studies in Social Work and Child Welfare. The program was developed in collaboration with University of Southern Maine, the University of Maine, the University of New England and the Child Welfare Training Institute. Through this program, CFS staff have taken thousands of courses and upon successful completion, have been reimbursed their tuition.

In 1992, CWTI and the University of Maine collaborated to develop and deliver a successful graduate course in Social Work Supervision. The course was delivered in Augusta in a block format and focused specifically on Supervision in Child Welfare Practice. It is now offered annually and attendance is strongly encouraged for all new and existing supervisors. An advanced course is offered every two years for those who complete the first course. This course is open to non-DHS supervisors as well.

Commissioner Concannon requested that an on-site MSW program be implemented. Currently, both the University of Maine and the University of New England offer courses in CFS offices and via interactive television, enabling staff in many district offices to work towards their Masters Degree. This program is coordinated through CWTI. During the past fiscal year, 72 staff completed a total of 1,940 credit hours in on-site graduate programs.

Maine Automated Child Welfare Information System

In its efforts to better serve children and families, Child and Family Services has implemented a number of technology initiatives. The use of e-mail and voicemail systems has enhanced the effective transfer of information, enabling caseworkers to respond more quickly to families and to meet enhanced documentation requirements. Central Intake voicemail is able to route callers to speak directly to a person in emergency situations. Last year, CFS created capacity in its information system to record, store, and retrieve interviews with children, meeting a new requirement.

Casework staff members also have cellular telephones, pagers, and voice recorders. Mobile communication equipment has reduced response time on urgent cases, made more efficient use of caseworker time and provided for the quick transfer of information to ensure the safety of a child and in some instances a caseworker. Recently, voice-recording equipment has supported the requirement to record child interviews.

The technology initiative with the greatest impact has been the development of the Maine Automated Child Welfare Information System (MACWIS). In 1986, Congress required each state to collect and report on adoptive and foster care data. This is known as the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) requirement. States were also required to submit child abuse and neglect data. The information is then forwarded to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. There are penalties for non-compliance. Presented with these federal reporting requirements, CFS began exploring compliance options. Congress provided the answer in 1993 when it approved enhanced federal funding to states for the development of Child Welfare Information Systems. In May 1997 CFS contracted with a developer and borrowed a "model" system from Indiana. In May 1998, CFS deployed the MACWIS application.

Immediate, 24-Hour Access

MACWIS provides immediate access to needed case information from anywhere in the state, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It enables case information to travel electronically between offices in 17 locations statewide. MACWIS currently supports almost 1,000 users from Child Protective Services, Children's Services, Adoption Services, ASPIRE, Bureau of Family Independence and others. MACWIS performs 75,000 daily transactions, provides for 17,000 yearly intake reports, tracks 4,700 open child protective cases, as well as the approximately 3,000 children in the State's custody. In addition, MACWIS processes over \$5,000,000 each month in payments for foster care.

There are many benefits to having the MACWIS system. However, to fully utilize the capabilities of MACWIS, information must be entered into the application. Once the information is entered it is available for future automated use. MACWIS is able to provide necessary information for quality assurance purposes. Quality assurance reviewers as well as program administrators and supervisors can quickly access case files. Federally required information is immediately "captured" for reporting and

reimbursement purposes. MACWIS has supported the achievement of federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS), its primary initial purpose. Most importantly, the system now provides immediate access and transfer of case information and records.