



DEBRA K. DAVENPORT, CPA
AUDITOR GENERAL

STATE OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF THE
AUDITOR GENERAL

MELANIE M. CHESNEY
DEPUTY AUDITOR GENERAL

February 14, 2018

The Honorable Anthony Kern, Chair
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

The Honorable Bob Worsley, Vice Chair
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Dear Representative Kern and Senator Worsley:

Our Office has recently completed a 30-month followup of the Arizona Department of Child Safety—Child Safety, Removal, and Risk Assessment Practices regarding the implementation status of the 9 audit recommendations (including sub-parts of the recommendations) presented in the special report released in September 2015 (Auditor General Report No. 15-118). As the attached grid indicates:

- 4 have been implemented;
- 2 have been partially implemented; and
- 3 are in the process of being implemented.

Unless otherwise directed by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, this concludes our follow-up work on the Arizona Department of Child Safety's efforts to implement the recommendations from the September 2015 special report.

Sincerely,

Dale Chapman, Director
Performance Audit Division

DC:ka
Attachment

cc: Gregory McKay, Director
Arizona Department of Child Safety

Arizona Department of Child Safety—Child Safety, Removal, and Risk Assessment Practices Auditor General Report No. 15-118 30-Month Follow-Up Report

Recommendation

Status/Additional Explanation

Chapter 2: Department has inadequately implemented critical components of its child safety and risk assessment process

2.1 The Department should review the efforts that other child welfare agencies have taken, including those agencies that participated in the BSC and Vermont's revised training program, to improve their child safety and risk assessment practices and determine whether similar actions would improve the Department's child safety and risk assessment practices.

Implemented at 30 months

2.2 The Department should continue its efforts to modify or replace its safety and risk assessment tool and should ensure the new tool effectively facilitates and guides caseworker safety and risk assessments and decision making through the use of a structured approach, standardizes information collected and reported by caseworkers, and results in usable data that the Department can analyze to assess its decision-making system and make informed changes for improvement. In developing a new safety and risk assessment tool, the Department should consider the following:

- Using automated and standardized checkboxes and/or prompts to ensure the appropriate level of detail, consistency, accuracy, and usefulness of safety and risk assessment data, and supplementing these checkboxes and/or prompts with narrative fields within the tool as necessary for caseworker use;
- Bulleting out the specific risk factors, safety threats, and safety criteria within the tool to help guide caseworkers' decision making by allowing them to go step-by-step through the assessment process and increase consistency in information gathering; and
- Including specific instructions and parameters within the tool itself on what type of information and level of detail is needed for areas where a narrative response would provide additional helpful information.

Partially implemented at 30 months

The Department has taken some steps to modify its safety and risk assessment tool to better guide caseworkers in the assessment of safety and risk. For example, the modified tool helps to standardize caseworkers' assessment by requiring them to assess and document family functioning within six specified domains, including general parenting practices, daily child functioning, and behavior management. In addition, the modified safety and risk assessment tool includes definitions and descriptions of key terms, such as "present danger" and "impending danger," to better guide caseworkers' assessment of safety and risk.

In addition to these changes, the Department reported that it plans to replace its case management system sometime in fiscal year 2019. The Department reported that with a new case management system, it will be able to make more extensive changes to its safety and risk assessment tool, such as using automated and standardized checkboxes and/or prompts to better ensure the appropriate level of detail, consistency, accuracy, and usefulness of safety and risk assessment data.

Recommendation

Status/Additional Explanation

2.3 The Department should develop and implement policies and procedures that would direct and guide an analysis of safety and risk assessment data to identify trends, assess the appropriateness and results of decisions, and then revise any relevant child safety and risk assessment processes and protocols accordingly.

Implemented at 30 months

2.4 The Department should reduce the waitlists for in-home services in order to improve safety planning by analyzing the availability of funding for in-home services, assessing whether it has contracted with sufficient providers, and conducting a gap assessment to determine the level of services available and the level of services still needed, and identifying available funding and/or resources to address this gap.

Implemented at 30 months

2.5 In addition to its initial staff training, the Department should develop and implement continual training on TDMs for all relevant department staff, including caseworkers, supervisors, and TDM facilitators to ensure that department staff are consistently and appropriately using TDMs. The continual training should reemphasize the core purpose of TDMs as a collaborative process to reach critical decisions regarding child safety, placement, and services.

Partially implemented at 30 months

The Department has implemented a fidelity monitoring and coaching process to evaluate Team Decision Making (TDMs) meetings through monthly observations. As part of the observation process, TDM facilitators receive one-on-one feedback and coaching on their performance to help ensure TDMs are being implemented appropriately. In addition, the Department reported that supervisors may receive some training on TDMs during monthly management meetings and that caseworkers may receive training during one-on-one sessions with supervisors; however, the trainings provided to supervisors and caseworkers are informal and the content may not be consistent across the State.

2.6 The Department should ensure that caseworkers and supervisors receive sufficient training related to assessing child safety and risk by:

- a. Developing and implementing a plan that ensures new staff have access to mentors and are able to complete all of their training requirements, including those mentoring and coaching requirements indicated as part of field training, prior to conducting safety and risk assessments unsupervised;
- b. Augmenting its training curriculum for supervisors by incorporating a field training component to allow for mentoring and shadowing opportunities for new supervisors regarding child safety and risk assessment;

Implemented at 30 months

Implementation in process

The Department began revising its supervisor training curriculum in January 2018 and reported that it plans to identify milestones for completing this project during February 2018.

In addition, a 2017 Office of the Auditor General special report of the Department's staff retention, recruitment, and training includes recommendations related to the Department's caseworker and supervisor training. During follow-up work for this special report, auditors will further assess the Department's progress with respect to its training programs.

Recommendation**Status/Additional Explanation**

- c. Developing training on the new safety and risk assessment tool, once it is developed and implemented, to ensure that the tool is used correctly and consistently across the State; and

Implementation in process

The Department has developed additional training for caseworkers that correspond to the modifications made to its safety and risk assessment tool (see explanation for Recommendation 2.2). For example, the Department has developed participant workbooks that help train new caseworkers on evaluating family functioning. However, as noted in Recommendation 2.6b, the Department is in the process of revising its supervisor training program.

- d. Ensuring that all relevant staff, such as caseworkers and supervisors, receive the new or revised training.

Implementation in process

See explanations for Recommendations 2.6b and 2.6c.
