



**ARIZONA**  
DEPARTMENT  
*of* CHILD SAFETY

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Mike Faust, Director  
Douglas A. Ducey, Governor

September 27, 2019

Ms. Lindsey Perry, CPA, CFE  
Auditor General  
Arizona Office of the Auditor General  
2910 North 44th Street, Suite 410  
Phoenix, Arizona 85018

Re: Auditor General's special report of the Arizona Department of Child Safety – Foster Home Recruitment, Licensure, Use, and Retention

Dear Ms. Perry:

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide this response to the Auditor General's special report of the Arizona Department of Child Safety's – Foster Home Recruitment, Licensure, Use, and Retention. The Department will continue to demonstrate its commitment to the experiences of foster families and the children of Arizona.

The Department agrees with the findings and will implement the recommendations as indicated in the enclosed response. The collaborative effort of the Auditor General's staff as well as the consideration of the Department's feedback throughout the audit process is greatly appreciated. The Department looks forward to productively working with the Auditor General's staff on future audits.

Sincerely,

Mike Faust  
Director

Enclosure: DCS Recommendation Response

**Finding 1:** Foster parent feedback indicates a need for improved Department customer service and more information about children in their care, which could help improve foster home recruitment and retention

**Recommendation 1:** The Department should develop and implement a customer service model to improve foster parent recruitment and retention and engage in continuous quality improvement (i.e., systematically obtaining and incorporating feedback) to ensure the model's successful implementation.

Department Response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department agrees there is an opportunity to improve staff interactions with contracted foster parents and licensing agencies. Just as the Department improved the foster parent experience by restructuring the licensing process, it has already begun and will continue to improve foster parent recruitment, licensing and retention by restructuring customer service models, incorporating additional child welfare practice standards into the Department's existing strategic initiatives, and using appropriate continuous quality improvement tools to do so.

**Recommendation 2:** The Department should, as required by statute, provide foster parents with complete, updated written placement packet information upon placement of children with foster parents. The Department should also monitor caseworker provision of placement packets to foster parents and obtain feedback from foster parents regarding their receipt of complete placement packets through its implementation of Recommendation 1 above.

Department Response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department agrees that, as provided by statute, it should provide complete, updated placement packets to foster parents upon placement of dependent children. The Department also agrees it should provide timely, pertinent available information to foster parents in accordance with policy and will continue to provide foster parents with placement packets. The Department will continue to conduct closed loop feedback on information conveyed to foster parents (including the receipt of placement packets) through the Department's Comprehensive Medical and Dental Plan (CMDP) Onboarding outreach. The development of a foster care portal in the new information management system (Guardian) will provide foster parents direct access to pertinent information about a child in their care.

**Recommendation 3:** The Department should review the data collection procedures for why foster parents close their licenses and identify and implement opportunities to improve data quality. This should include allowing for more than 1 reason for license closure to be selected, providing more guidance to contractors on how to gather and enter information, and considering other methods of collecting this data, such as an anonymous web survey.

Department Response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department is in the process of implementing an improved data collection methodology utilizing basic surveying software to collect additional information and data to more accurately assess why foster families close their licenses. The Department will also evaluate the need to develop a fixed frequency survey (annual/bi-annual) of open and recently closed foster families' experiences utilizing statistically relevant sampling and methodology that includes appropriate outreach practices. This will allow the Department to collect sufficient information to inform future strategic planning initiatives. Additionally, the new Foster and Adoption Support (FAS) contract includes a requirement for contractors to administer a survey to capture broader reasons for closure.

**Finding 2:** Department's and contractors' inadequate intake practices could impede foster home recruitment efforts

**Recommendation 4:** The Department should develop and implement procedures—such as establishing expectations, guidance, and monitoring activities—to ensure contractors and Department staff adequately handle intake in English and Spanish, including answering or returning phone calls in a timely manner and meeting Department expectations for call quality.

Department Response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The Department has implemented internal strategies to reduce or eliminate delays in responding to potential foster families. These strategies include processes and expectations for response timeliness and follow up standards. The Department has also begun implementing additional processes and oversight of the contractors' intake processes to ensure they meet call quality expectations.

**Recommendation 5:** The Department should develop and implement procedures to ensure contractors maintain websites with information about how to become a foster parent in Spanish.

Department Response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: As described in the Department's rollout plan, implementation of Active Contract Management (ACM) will ensure contractors maintain their websites with information on how to become a foster and/or adoptive parent in English and Spanish as required in the FAS contract. Process implementation has already begun with the new FAS contract as planned.

**Finding 3:** Department's monitoring of prior foster home recruitment and support contracts did not ensure contractors fulfilled several contract requirements

**Recommendation 6:** The Department should continue implementing ACM for its new foster home recruitment and support contracts to help ensure that its contractors adequately perform core contract requirements, such as providing access to respite care and other requirements the Department deems critical to the contracts' success.

Department Response: The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented.

Response explanation: The implementation of ACM has been ongoing within the Department since 2018 following development in 2017 with technical support from Harvard Government Performance Lab and the Capacity Building Center for States. Process implementation has already begun with the FAS contract to provide oversight and ensure contract requirements are met.