

Arizona Department of Child Safety Caseworker Caseload Standards

Best practice for caseload standards is evolving, and Department does not use caseload standards to manage caseworker workloads; instead, it moves cases or caseworkers in an effort to balance caseworker workloads, overseeing these efforts through management reviews

Audit purpose

To assess the Department's process for determining caseworker caseload standards and compare the Department's caseload standards with best practices and other states' caseload standards.

Key findings

- The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) has historically recommended using caseload standards to help manage caseworker workloads, and child welfare agencies in many states have adopted them. However, the CWLA reported it is moving away from a focus on numerical caseload standards and is instead developing outcome-based workload standards.
- Although reports we reviewed cautioned against comparing caseload standards across jurisdictions because requirements and practices vary, we provide information on caseload standards in 6 states. For example, in accordance with a consent decree, Illinois' caseload standards are no more than 12 to 15 new investigations per month per investigator, 25 families per caseworker providing services to children in foster care, and 20 families per caseworker providing follow-up services to intact families. As specified by state law, Indiana's caseload standards are no more than 12 active investigations, 13 children receiving ongoing services in out-of-home placements, and 12 families receiving in-home services.
- The Department does not use caseload standards to establish maximum caseloads for its caseworkers but instead has implemented practices to move cases or caseworkers within the field in an effort to balance caseworker workloads, a process the Department refers to as "equalization."
- The Department oversees equalization through ongoing management reviews.
- As part of these reviews, the Department uses scorecards for each region and section that included up to 37 performance metrics in fiscal year 2020 related to caseworkers, quality, service level, cost, and process adherence.
- The Department believes its equalization and oversight practices are in line with the CWLA's new direction and has reached out to the CWLA to share its practices.

Key recommendations

There were no recommendations for this report.