



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Room 146 • State House

Boston, MA 02133-1053

**The House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight
and House Members of the Joint Committee on
Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities’
Review of the Massachusetts Department of Children
and Families**

January 13, 2015

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January 13, 2015

Citizens of the Commonwealth,

The following is a summary of the review of the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) conducted by the House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight and the House Members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities. Upon the discovery of Jeremiah Oliver's disappearance while receiving services from the Department, Speaker Robert A. DeLeo of the House of Representatives instructed the House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight and House Members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities to conduct a review of the Department in order to ensure that the children of the Commonwealth are being provided the services that are in their best interest. Based on our review it was clear that the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families was an agency in crisis that could not ensure the safety and welfare of the children in its care.

The Massachusetts House of Representatives has made the Department, in light of recent events, a top priority of this session both through directive legislation and through appropriations in the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) budget. The agency has begun to redefine its mission and focus on the best interest of the child. It is our hope that with the changes currently being undertaken by the Department as well as some of the recommendations suggested in this report that the state can better serve the children of the Commonwealth and that the tragically short life of Jeremiah Oliver will serve to inspire all of us to do a better job of protecting all the children of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



Chairman David P. Linsky



Chairwoman Kay Khan

In December of 2013, following reports of several troubling stories regarding policy and procedure in the Department of Children and Families (DCF), including the disappearance of Jeremiah Oliver who had previously received services from the Department and was last seen in September, the House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight along with Chairwoman Kay Khan and the House Members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities launched a review of the Department. This review was conducted to examine protocol, structure, and environment to determine if DCF has the necessary resources to ensure the safety of the children under its care, as well as to review the ways in which services are delivered and whether they are allocated, supervised and managed adequately.

On December 27, 2013 the House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight (HPO) requested “any and all documents outlining policy, procedure and regulations pertaining to the Department of Children and Families protocol.” The Committee also requested an overview of the Department’s structure and chain of command. On January 7, 2014, the Committee received all of the information requested from Commissioner Olga I. Roche. Upon review of these documents it was clear that while some policies and regulations have not been updated since 1998, there is a clear protocol for the Department.

On December 30, 2013 the Department released an internal review of Jeremiah Oliver’s case. This consisted of a seven page general overview of the Oliver family case record and the current status of the investigation relative to his disappearance. The report also identified several areas in which the Department had breached or failed to follow through with a case similar to the Oliver’s. Some of these findings included the failure of the supervisor to review the social worker’s dictation and ensure that she/he had followed up with the family. The social worker, supervisor, and manager from the North Central Office that were responsible for overseeing the Oliver case were terminated. Since then, the Department instructed all Directors of Area Offices to immediately report to the Deputy Commissioner of Field Operations to ensure that each family under DCF care was “receiving regular and consistent home visits.”¹ Commissioner Roche also directed the Department to “screen in for investigation and intensive case management any report alleging abuse or neglect about a family with a child five years or younger which presents any, or a combination of, the following risk factors: young parents; or

¹ Massachusetts Department of Children and Families. “Department of Children and Families’ Investigation Report”. December 30, 2013

parents of any age which have a history of substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health issues, or unresolved childhood trauma.”² They also established case reviews of families involved with the Department who had children living at home to mirror those of their foster case review process. The reviews were to be conducted every six months by an area program manager, social workers and supervisors in conjunction with the parents. There has also been an initiative to ensure the collaboration with “other state agencies and providers and increase partnership opportunities to improve services to families for the prevention of child abuse.”³

On January 9, 2014, Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) entered into a contract with the Child Welfare League of America Inc. (CWLA) for “A Quality Improvement Review of Certain Department of Children and Families Practices.”⁴ Under the scope of the original contract, the CWLA was tasked with conducting a quality improvement review to assess “at a minimum the following for appropriateness, comprehensiveness, and consistent with industry-recognized best practices”:

1. The EOHHS – specified investigation, findings, and a report conducted by the CIU with respect to a December 2013 missing child case.
2. The frequency and scope of DCF home visit policies and practices.
3. The quality of the assessment methodology used to conduct the Tier Review Process including decisions around home removal, case management practices, assessment and service planning, and identification of risk factors.
4. The recommendations set forth in the Department of Public Health December 2013 missing child case.
5. DCF’s practices related to 51A reports including training and screening criteria.
6. DCF current intake and case assignment practice.

The Recommendation Report was to be submitted to EOHHS by February 14, 2014 and a final report by March 14, 2014 (or another day if approved in writing). The House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight was informed that the Executive Office of Health and Human Services amended the contract with the Child Welfare League of America. The CWLA Progress Update

² “Department of Children and Families’ Investigation Report”

³ “Department of Children and Families’ Investigation Report”

⁴ “Contract By and Between the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and Child Welfare League of America, Inc. for a Quality Improvement Review of Certain Department of Children and Families Practices”. January 2014

to Governor Patrick and Secretary Polanowicz was released on March 12, 2014, noting that a final report will be submitted to EOHHS by “mid-May.”⁵

The “Progress Update” indicated that in addition to the original contract from January, EOHHS also tasked the CWLA to investigate the agency’s technology, staffing in the North Central Office, medical screenings, Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) background checks, quality improvement/ case review process, caseload and workload, case practice and policy/ case practice model, staff qualifications, training and supervision. Based on their preliminary review, the CWLA recommend that a 15:1 caseload be achieved, technology be upgraded, initial medical screenings and comprehensive medical evaluations be conducted and that case monitoring be heightened.

On December 30, 2013 the House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight requested “any and all 51A reports and any and all 51B assessments regarding the Oliver family of Fitchburg, MA, or any other known geographic location(s) where Massachusetts DCF services were provided” including all reports that were screened out. On January 23, 2014, the House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight along with House Members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities held an oversight hearing on the Department of Children and Families to gain a better understanding of what was the current status of the Department regarding their policies, procedures, administrative management, resources and environment. The two Committees asked Commissioner Roche, along with Department staff, Office of the Child Advocate’s Director Judge Gail Garinger and Deputy Director Elizabeth Armstrong as well as SEIU Local 509 President Peter MacKinnon and Political Director Chris Condon to testify before the Committees.

On March 26, 2014 State Auditor Suzanne Bump issued an official audit report on the Department of Children and Families based on the Auditor’s ongoing review from July 1, 2010 through September 20, 2012. Findings in the Auditor’s report pointed out that the Department had not updated its Department-wide risk assessment since 2008, was not ensuring that the seven day medical screenings and 30 day medical examinations were being performed, that internal controls over the storage of personally identifiable information were not adequate and that DCF maintained incomplete records of their background checks. Through the two year investigation

⁵ Child Welfare League of America. “CWLA Progress Update to Governor Patrick and Secretary Polanowicz”. March 12, 2014

the Auditor's office concluded "management cannot effectively monitor how it performs some of its most critical functions. Without a commitment to thorough planning and procedure, the audit says, DCF is maintaining a condition where risks can become realities."⁶ The Department responded to the report stating that while staffing constraints have hindered updating Internal Control Plan (ICP), they are in the process of incorporating additional components of enterprise risk management, are revising the risk assessment to include cross-references of identified risks to internal controls and policies, and ensuring that the risk assessment section of the internal control plan is specifically evaluated on an annual basis and that updates are incorporated. In addition, they are addressing the issue of the untimely child medical screenings and examinations by receiving MassHealth medical claims data on a monthly basis that includes data for children in a Managed Care Organization. Due to capacity at the State Archives the Department currently lacks sufficient storage space at area offices and is in the process of exploring Electronic Data Management for storing and receiving records. In regard to background checks, while they do not have what it would consider streamlined access to the Sex Offender Registry database they are working on gaining access and are currently producing monthly reports of all active homes and homes that have recently applied to be foster homes.

On April 29, 2014 Governor Deval Patrick accepted Olga I. Roche's resignation as Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families and announced along with Massachusetts Health and Human Services Secretary John Polanowicz that Deputy Commissioner Erin Deveney was named interim Commissioner.

On May 16, 2014 an exit meeting took place with the Child Welfare League of America, Interim Commissioner Deveney, members of her leadership team, and DCF staff who were concerned integral in the review process.⁷ The League submitted their *Quality Improvement Report* to Governor Patrick and Secretary John Polanowicz on May 22, 2014 in which they outlined several weaknesses of the Department and made recommendations based upon their own "National Blueprint for Excellence in Child Welfare." The report states that under the contract between the CWLA and EOHHS, the CWLA was charged with the task of reviewing information and providing analysis of a variety of topics including the Oliver case, as well as

⁶ Office of the State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump. *Department of Children and Families; for the period July 1, 2012 through September 20, 2012*. March 26, 2014. page 3

⁷ Child Welfare League of America. *Quality Improvement Review*. May 22, 2014. pg. 7

policies and practices within the Department.⁸ The CWLA acknowledges the “thread in discourse about the deaths of children” and the perceived pendulum effect in which there is too much emphasis on preserving families and not enough emphasis on protecting children. The “CWLA believes that this is a false dichotomy.”⁹ They cite their National Blueprint where it states “children’s rights are human rights that it is the right of each child to have decisions made in his/her best interests, and that it is the responsibility of all members of society to uphold the rights of children.”¹⁰ The report also identifies that DCF does not specifically state that it is their responsibility to uphold the rights of children or to act in their best interests. The CWLA’s review of the Department includes an examination of the Jeremiah Oliver case, the findings of six focus groups consisting of 160 members across the state, meeting with the Office of the Child Advocate, speaking with concerned citizens and conducting a 26 question survey for staff that was answered by 1,146 individuals.

CWLA recommendations for the Massachusetts DCF include:

1. DCF should revise its policies, practice guidelines, website, and written materials for consumers to consistently communicate that the agency’s primary responsibility is to protect children and to make decisions in their best interests.

The Committees agree with the revision of policies and practices to protect the best interest of the child.

2. All personnel serving children should be trained in “*Rights of the Child*” as outlined in the *CWLA National Blueprint*.

After reviewing the CWLA National Blueprint, the Committees agree with this recommendation.

3. DCF should develop a handout concerning the negative effects of physical discipline.

The Committees support material highlighting the harmful effects of physical discipline.

4. The Legislature should enact a law making corporal punishment illegal.

There is no definition provided of “corporal punishment” by the CWLA. Currently it is the Legislature’s view that “corporal punishment” can be charged under current assault and battery statutes in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

⁸ Child Welfare League of America. *Quality Improvement Review*. pg. 3

⁹ Child Welfare League of America. *Quality Improvement Review*. pg. 13

¹⁰ Child Welfare League of America. *Quality Improvement Review*. pg. 14

5. Media outlets should raise awareness of each individual's responsibility to protect children from abuse and neglect.

The Committees agree with this suggestion if development and funding is supported.

6. DCF should adopt policies that ensure that foster and adoptive parents are appropriately assessed and evaluated.

The Committees agree with this recommendation.

7. Regulations should adapt to uniform approval processes for kinship and foster/adoptive caregivers.

The Committees agree with this recommendation.

8. DCF and EEC should consistently support approval process, rather than a waiver or variance process.

The Committees agree with this recommendation and outside sections in FY15 that support this.

9. DCF should draft standards in development by American Bar Association, National Association for Regulatory Administration, generations United and Annie E. Casey Foundation.

On October 27, 2014, these organizations released their Model Family Foster Home Licensing Standards, which establish pre-placement licensing standards to ensure the safety of children in foster care, while also providing a framework to enable more relatives and non-related caregivers to become foster parents.¹¹ After reviewing these standards, the Committees agree with this recommendation.

10. DCF Area Directors and Area Clinical Managers should determine which background check waiver homes should have increased monitoring and emphasize that placements should not be disrupted unless continued placement is not in the best interest of the child.

The Committee believes that all homes that have been granted a background check waiver should have heightened monitoring and that there should be clear policies in place and enforced within the Department regarding what that should entail going forward.

¹¹ National Association of Regulatory Administration. *Model Family Foster Home Licensing Standards*. pg. 10

11. MA Regulations 110 CMR 18.0, 102 and 5.0 should be revised to require that if the results of a background check indicate that an applicant has been convicted of any of the following felonies than the application shall be rejected.

- State or federal felony conviction of assault and battery on a child with injury
- Assault with intent to rape
- Forcible rape of a child/assault with intent to rape a child
- Rape and abuse of child aggravated by age
- Rape and abuse of child by previous offenders
- Posing or exhibiting child
- Incest
- Indecent assault and battery
- Inducing a minor to prostitution
- Murder
- Rape
- Unnatural acts with a child under 16
- Enticement of a child under 18 prostitution
- Human trafficking

In addition any state or federal felony conviction for physical assault, battery, or a drug-related offense within the past five years of the application would serve as an automatic disqualifier.

The Committee agrees that there should be automatic exclusions on foster care placement waivers and concurs with the CWLA. The FY15 Budget under line item 4800-0015, Section 218 adds to the list a state or federal felony conviction for assault and battery on a child, assault with intent to rape, forcible rape of a child or assault with intent to rape a child, rape and abuse of a child aggravated by age, posing or exhibiting a child, indecent assault and battery, human trafficking, unnatural acts with a child under 16. The Department also rejects applicants for foster care placement if a record check indicates a state or federal felony conviction for physical assault, battery, or a drug-related offense committed in the past five years. The Committees also suggest that the Legislature review recommendations included in the Model Family Foster Home Licensing Standards regarding automatic exclusions for these crimes.

12. DCF and EEC regulations should be revised to require that for any foster care, adoption or kinship applicant whose background check indicates conviction for any crimes other than those that are on Table A CMR 18.00 that DCF or the licensed provider should be required screening by a mental health or criminal justice professional outside of agency and that their opinion should be reviewed by two licensed clinical staff.

The Committees agree on this recommendation.

13. The DCF and EEC should revise their regulations regarding applicants that have committed crimes that are not outlined as exclusionary.

The FY15 Budget contained language relative to foster placement stating that if an applicant for foster placement was convicted of a crime(s) other than those listed as exclusionary, the Department must consider several factors to determine the suitability of the applicant, including: (1) the type of crime; (2) the number of crimes; (3) the nature of the offenses; (4) the age of the individual at the time of conviction; (5) the length of time that has elapsed since the last conviction; (6) the relationship of the crime and the capacity to care for children; (7) the current and future needs of the child to be placed and the probable effect that the misdemeanor would have on the applicant's ability to fulfill those needs; (8) the relationship between the individual and the child in question; (9) evidence of rehabilitation; and (10) the opinions of community members concerning the individual in question.

14. DCF and licensed placement providers should ensure compliance with current policy relative to retaining all records of any criminal background checks they undertake for applicant for foster care, adoption or kinship placement.

The Committees agree with this policy, despite the obstacles presented to the Department. At this time DCF has stated that they continue to make this a priority and are in the process of identifying possible electronic options to bring them into compliance.

15. The Executive Branch and the Legislature should carefully consider potential ramifications that any changes to background checks for foster and kinship resources might have on background check completion.

While the Legislature is aware of how the recommendations are already affecting delays in placement, they have made it their priority to ensure that all children currently being

served by the Department are placed in homes that are best for their well-being as well as help to decrease the number of disrupted placements which harm the children during an already difficult transition in their lives.

16. DCF should evaluate clear protocols for evaluating children living at home, including risks from household members who are not the child's parents. Structured Decision Making tools and safety assessments should be used in these areas.

The Committees agree with the importance of these evidence and research based systems in order to ensure that children are being reassessed at pivotal points in their development in order to ensure they are receiving the best care possible.

17. DCF should increase the availability of substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health specialists and pediatric nurse practitioners to assist staff in evaluating the potential risk to children who remain at home. Staff should be provided with training.

The Committee agrees with this recommendation and believes it is currently in the best interest of the Department that the Medical Director, once appointed, be responsible for implementing this.

On May 28, 2014 Secretary Polanowicz and Interim Commissioner Erin Deveney held a press conference on the release of the CWLA report, which had been completed six days prior. Linda Spears, CWLA's Vice President of Policy and Public Affairs explained the League's findings and the Department announced their formation of the "Kitchen Cabinet" which would consist of "child welfare advocates, experts, community leaders and state policy-makers" who would help the Department transition towards more streamlined and effective policies. The first meeting of the Department's "Kitchen Cabinet" met on Friday, June 6, 2014, where the members of the group were briefed on their role. The membership of the "Cabinet" consists of:¹²

- Senator Mike Barrett (Designee: Rosie Hunter-Chief of Staff)
- Suzin Bartley, *The Children's Trust* (Designee: Maureen Ferris-Public Policy Director)
- Erin Bradley, *Children's League of Massachusetts*
- Representative John Fernandes, *State Representative on behalf of Speaker Robert A. DeLeo*
- Gail Garinger, *Office of the Child Advocate*

¹² Department of Children and Families Legislative Director Leah Robins. "DCF Kitchen Cabinet Members – July 2014". (personal communication, August 8, 2014)

- Representative Kay Khan (Designee: Lisa Rosenfeld-General Counsel)
- John Laing, *Family Representative/ DCF Senior Staff Member*
- Bill Lyttle, *Key Program, Inc.*
- Marie “Sandy” Matava, *Moakley Center for Public Management at Suffolk University*
- Mary McGeown, *Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC)*
- Maria Mossaides, *Cambridge Family and Children’s Services*
- Andrew Pond, *Justice Resource Institute*
- Carla Saccone, *Children’s Friend and Family Services, Inc.*
- Earl “Skip” Stuck, *Family Continuity*
- MaryLou Sudders, *Boston College Graduate School of Social Work*
- Barry Zuckerman, M.D., *Boston Medical Center*
- John Polanowicz, *Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services*
 - Kathy Betts, *Assistant Secretary at EOHHS*
 - Claudia Henderson, *Chief of Staff at EOHHS*
- Erin Deveney, *Interim Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families*
 - Mary-Leah Assad, *Deputy Chief of Staff*
 - Ryan FitzGerald, *Chief of Staff*
 - Paul Fitzsimons, *Deputy Commissioner, Field Operations*
 - Christina Joyce, *Deputy Commissioner, Clinical & Program Services*
 - David O’Callaghan, *Chief Financial Officer*
 - Andrew Rome, *General Counsel*

The initiative outlined the Department’s commitment to restoring confidence in the organization through the implementation of new effective reforms and initiatives. The Cabinet met, excluding a brief summer hiatus, weekly to help develop and assist in implementing a 60-day plan and to develop other reforms.

On June 26, 2014, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) held a public event to release their report, *If Not Now, When? A call to action for systemic child welfare reform in Massachusetts*. The report outlined a number of recommendations for the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families based on their consultation with an advisory committee of state and national child welfare experts. These individuals “who have led large child welfare and other family serving agencies, provided technical assistance to child welfare agencies, worked

with advocates in other states to develop and implement successful reforms, and of individuals who have substantial experience with Massachusetts child welfare system from many different perspectives.”¹³ The MLRI stated that their report planned to build upon recommendations made by the CWLA and was meant to help “look beyond DCF itself to building an integrated, aligned system of care.”¹⁴ The main message throughout their review was “we need to invest in front-end services to keep children safely at home and prevent DCF involvement and out-of-home placements whenever possible” and that doing such “involves, cross-agency coordination of multiple programs, services and supports that affect family and child safety, stability and well-being.”¹⁵ The report outlined and provided much data regarding the interrelation of keeping children safe and integrating families. They highlighted their five main recommendations for “building an integrated, aligned and effective child welfare system in Massachusetts.” The MLRI’s five recommendations include:

1. Invest in key preventive and family stabilization services through an integrated and aligned system of care.¹⁶
 - a. Appoint an ongoing Inter-Agency Child Welfare Commission to design and implement a coordinated system of care for the Commonwealth’s most vulnerable children and families.
 - b. Require Children’s Impact Statements for proposed cuts in child welfare, substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, and family homelessness services.
 - c. Invest in services to keep and return children safely home with their families whenever possible.
 - d. Invest in Family Resource Centers.
 - e. Coordinate services to implement a two-generation strategy for children at greatest risk by promoting the economic well-being of their families.
 - f. Enforce DCF’s duty to keep homeless children safely with their families.
2. Use, share, and evaluate data effectively to identify what services and interventions work.

¹³ Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. *If Not Now, When? A call to action for systemic child welfare reform in Massachusetts*. June 2014, pg.5

¹⁴ Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. pg. 5

¹⁵ Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. pg. 5

¹⁶ Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. pg. 16

- a. Define and publicize the outcomes necessary for DCF to fulfill its core mission; maintain, assess and make publicly available the data needed to measure DCF's progress in achieving those outcomes.¹⁷
 - b. Make DCF and provider data, as well as data from consumer and external partners, available to a research institute for sophisticated analysis and reports to identify trends, disparities and service gaps and to develop best practices.
 - c. Report data to public in timely, user friendly and accessible manner.
 - d. Use data to explain DCF policy, share stories of success, and make the case for needed funding.
 - e. Integrate the Child Welfare Institute, DCF's training arm, with the research institute in order to use this data and analysis to identify training needs, design training for staff, and serve as an innovation hub for best practices.
 - f. Review DCF's current reporting requirements to ensure they target the data that is most important and that it be presented in a meaningful and comprehensive manner. Eliminate reporting requirements that are not useful.
3. Cultivate strong agency leadership, management, and front-line social workers.¹⁸
- a. The Governor should have full confidence in the leadership and management skills of his or her Commissioner, and in the Commissioner's demonstrated commitment to the mission of child welfare.
 - b. The Commissioner must communicate effectively to gain public support.
 - c. Management staffing should be thoroughly reviewed.
 - d. DCF's Social Worker account must be sufficiently funded to bring caseloads to the 15:1 ratio, which DCF negotiated with the union.
 - e. Consider re-instituting the teaming approach.
 - f. If DCF is committed to Structured Decision Making and safety mapping tools to improve safety and risk decision making, it should negotiate the full implementation with the union and ensure adequate training and supervision, as well as consistent utilization in every area office.

¹⁷ Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. pg. 18

¹⁸ Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. pg. 19

- g. Social workers, supervisors and agency staff at all levels need to ongoing training, coaching and support.
- 4. Adequately fund the Department of Children and Families and the preventive services of other state agencies serving at-risk and low-income children and families.¹⁹
 - a. Restore DCF to its FY09 funding level of \$934.7 million, adjusted for inflation, and ensure accountability.
 - b. Funding should be targeted to investing in a strong continuum of care.
 - c. Require accountability for funding allocations by imposing and enforcing clear reporting requirements that measure progress towards clearly defined outcomes.
- 5. Ensure that children who need to be in foster care can live in the least restrictive, most family-like setting possible and ensure safety, permanency and well-being.²⁰
 - a. Ensure that the trauma of separation is mitigated in foster care by placement with kin and siblings when possible, frequent family contact, stable placements and prompt, safe and effective family reunification when possible. Review federal and state data, to determine where additional attention and practice or policy reform may be needed.
 - b. The risk to children and teens associated with aging out of foster care with no permanent home has been well documented. Accordingly, it is critical that the entire child welfare system take responsibility for ensuring meaningful progress toward permanency (including reunification) for all children.
 - c. In general, having a significant population of young people aging out of foster care with no permanent home reflects a failure in achieving the fundamental goals of our child welfare system, particularly given the grim outcomes for youth who age out. All young people, regardless of where they live, need the support and presence of caring adults in their lives as they enter into early adulthood. The preferred outcome is for youth to find permanent homes through reunification, adoption or guardianship.

¹⁹ Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. pg. 21

²⁰ Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. pg. 21

FY 2015 Budget Review

The House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight and the House Members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities identified several major areas within the Department of Children and Families that required immediate funding, directives and stronger accountability mechanisms. These recommendations were presented to the House Committee on Ways and Means and included in the Fiscal Year 2015 House budget proposal. The FY15 budget adds \$48 million for the operation of the Department of Children over FY14, for a total appropriation of \$827 million. The budget includes critical fiscal and oversight initiatives designed to strengthen policies, training, clinical support services and quality control at all levels of the Department of Children and Families. Specific line items relative to providing adequate resources and services include:

Caseloads: 4800-1100, 4800-0015

The final FY15 budget allocates \$185.5 million to mitigate social worker caseloads in Area Offices with the highest statewide caseloads to move toward a 15:1 caseload standard statewide. This funding allows DCF to hire front-line social workers and investigators to work towards the 15:1 ratio recommended by the CWLA and agreed to in the Commonwealth's caseload agreement with the Alliance/Local 509 SEIU. The Department must provide the Caseload Forecasting Office with monthly data on children receiving services and other items related to line items 4800-0038 and 4800-0041. The Legislature calls for DCF to maintain existing services for the aging out population of staff, "to the extent feasible within existing appropriations." The budget allows the Department's Commissioner to transfer funds from line item 4800-1100 into line item 4800-0015 in order to maintain appropriate caseload levels. The Commissioner must notify the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means fifteen days prior to the transfer of funds.

Technology: 4800-0015, Section 217

The FY15 budget requires the Chief Information Officer, a new position, to develop an information technology plan for the Department of Children and Families, detailing the means by which critical technological improvements can be accomplished. The plan must address the following goals: (1) providing social workers with portable communication devices to facilitate

communication with supervisors and emergency personnel; (2) the development of a platform for DCF employees to enter and access real-time data that documents home visitation and the associated reports; and (3) ensuring that photos of children in the Department's care are uploaded and annually updated into the Massachusetts statewide automated child welfare information system. The Office of Information Technology must submit a report to the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities and House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means by September 30, 2014.

DCF is also required to expend available capital funds to upgrade its information technology. The Office of Information Technology must consult with DCF and approve the use of these funds. The FY15 budget appropriates \$1 million in line item 4800-0015 for "mobile technology solutions." On July 27, 2014 the Department rolled out the new version of FamilyNet and on July 31, 2014, deployed 2,300 iPads to give front-line social workers remote access the iFamilyNet database, communicate with other staff members, record information, and track families. Funding for portable technology will improve reporting by eliminating the existing lag time in processing reports.

Medical: 4800-0015, Section 203

The budget mandates DCF to hire a licensed, professional medical staff member in each DCF regional office. Medical staff will provide initial medical screenings for all children who enter the Department's care within 72 hours. The budget also appropriates \$250,000 for a Director of Medical Services to manage, oversee and coordinate medical staff members in providing timely medical screenings and other medical services for children served by the Department.

Background Checks: 4800-0015, Section 218

Line item 4800-0015 allocates \$200,000 for state and national fingerprint-based background checks on all individuals filing a registration of interest for foster care placement and their household members 15 or older. The Department must also conduct comprehensive background checks on all current pre-adoptive or foster parents by January 1, 2016, as well as during the licensing renewal process. These background checks are not required for foster care providers providing temporary, emergency housing for children.

The FY15 budget mandates DCF to reject applicants for foster care placement if a record check reveals a state or federal felony conviction for assault and battery on a child, assault with intent to rape, forcible rape of a child or assault with intent to rape a child, rape and abuse of a child aggravated by age, posing or exhibiting a child, indecent assault and battery, human trafficking, or unnatural acts with a child under 16. The Department must also reject applicants for foster care placement if a record check indicates a state or federal felony conviction for physical assault, battery, or a drug-related offense committed in the past five years.

If an applicant for foster placement was convicted of a crime other than those described above, the Department must consider several factors to determine the suitability of the applicant, including: (1) the type of crime; (2) the number of crimes; (3) the nature of the offenses; (4) the age of the individual at the time of conviction; (5) the length of time that has elapsed since the last conviction; (6) the relationship of the crime and the capacity to care for children; (7) the current and future needs of the child to be placed and the probable effect that the misdemeanor would have on the applicant's ability to fulfill those needs; (8) the relationship between the individual and the child in question; (9) evidence of rehabilitation; and (10) the opinions of community members concerning the individual in question.

Licensure and Training: 4800-0091, Section 39

The Commissioner must ensure that all social workers employed by the Department have obtained a license as a social worker by January 1, 2014. Additionally, all social workers must obtain a license within the first nine months of employment and participate in thirty hours of paid professional development training annually. Section 39 allows the Commissioner to grant social workers a one-time, six-month hardship waiver from the licensing requirement to “ensure access for underserved populations.” The budget permits DCF to expend \$2,094,902 in federal reimbursements received under Title IV-E of the federal Social Security Act during FY15 for the creation of a training institute for professional development within the Department.

Runaway Unit: 4800-0015

Includes \$500,000 to fund the establishment of a runaway unit pilot program at one DCF regional office to help identify at risk youth, provide preventative services and implement a runaway recovery response policy for the Department.

Childcare Subsidies Research: 3000-1050, 4800-0015

Line Item 3000-1050 allocates \$385,000 for a nonprofit research organization to assess the business practices, service delivery and financial systems of state-subsidized childcare programs. Line Item 4800-0015 requires DCF to provide any data and information needed to assist in the organization's research efforts. The organization must submit its preliminary findings to the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means by March 4, 2015.

DCF services funded in the FY15 budget include the following:

Foster Care Review Services: 4800-0025

Funds foster care review services. **\$3,028,757**

Transitional Employment Program: 4800-0016

Permits DCF to expend from revenues collected from various state, county and municipal government entities and state authorities for the operation of the transitional employment program. **\$2,000,000**

Lead Agencies: 4800-0030

Funds the continuation of services provided by Lead Agencies through purchase-of-service contracts. **\$6,000,000**

Sexual Abuse Intervention: 4800-0036

Line item 4800-0036 funds the operation of a sexual abuse intervention network program administered in conjunction with the District Attorneys. **\$698,700**

Family Preservation: 4800-0040

Appropriates funding for family preservation, reunification and service coordination services. These services must include family support and stabilization services provided by DCF.

\$44,610,551

Congregate Care: 4800-0041

DCF can expend \$216.4 million on community based services in FY15, including stabilization and in-home support services to children who would otherwise be placed in a congregate setting. DCF must also oversee Area Review Teams responsible for evaluating the feasibility of maintaining children in the community in this manner whenever possible before recommending placement in congregate care settings. **\$216,417,590**

Alternative Placement for Delinquent Youths: 4800-0151

Provides funds for a program to provide alternative overnight placements for status offenders and nonviolent delinquent children up to age seventeen to prevent the use of juvenile cells in police stations. **\$504,388**

Family Resource Centers: 4800-0200

Funds the support and maintenance of family resource centers statewide. **\$5,227,963**

Shelter Services: 4800-1100

Line item 4800-1100 funds shelters and support services for people at risk of domestic violence and for the operation of the New Chardon Street homeless shelter. **\$185,551,997**

Guardianship, Adoption, Foster Care, Family Preservation and Kinship services: 4800-0038

This line item funds a range of services related to substance abuse treatment, shelters, education and counseling services, young parent programs, family preservation efforts, kinship, adoption, guardianship and foster care. This line item also appropriates funds to support the operation of the following organizations: Weymouth Teen Center (\$50,000), Children's Advocacy Center of Bristol County (\$250,000), Plymouth County Children's Advocacy Center (\$100,000) Children's Cove Cape and Islands Advocacy Center(\$140,000), Catholic Charities Labourer Center and its Recovery Connections Program (\$75,000) Julie's Family Learning Program, Inc. in South Boston (\$150,000), Fragile Beginnings Program (\$100,000), College Bound Dorchester Inc, (\$224,953), and South Boston En Accion (\$75,000), the Planned Learning Achievement for Youth Program in Amherst (\$25,000). **\$261,553,353**

Legislative Oversight: 4800-0015

The Department must report to the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means and the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities on the following subjects:

Report due by November 3, 2014

Rules and Regulations: DCF must detail any changes to rules, regulations or guidelines established by the Department in the previous fiscal year to carry out its duties. The report must include any changes to the following policies: (1) criteria used to determine whether a child has

been abused or neglected; (2) guidelines for removal of a child from the home; and (3) standards to determine what reasonable efforts are made to keep a child in the home.

Report due by February 24, 2015

Personnel: The number of medical and psychiatric personnel under contract with DCF and their level of training

Foster Care Reviews: The number of foster care reviews and the average length of time in which each review is completed.

Contracts: The number of the Department's contracts reviewed by the State Auditor.

Corrective Action Plans: The number of corrective action plans issued and the number of corrective action plans entered into by the Department.

Education & Licensure: The number of social workers and supervisors who earned a Bachelor's or Master's degree in social work.

Fair Hearings: DCF must document Fair Hearing requests filed with the Department in FY15, stating for each hearing request: (1) the subject matter of the appeal; (2) the number of days between Fair Hearing requests and the first day of the hearing; (3) the number of days between the first day of the hearing and the hearing officer's final decision; (4) the number of days between the hearing officer's decision and the agency's final decision; (5) the number of days of continuance granted at the appellant's request; (6) the number of days of continuance granted at the request of DCF or the hearing officer; and (7) whether the departmental decision that was the subject of the appeal was affirmed or reversed. The Department must also provide information pertaining to fair hearing requests filed prior to FY15 that continued for more than 180 days.

Quarterly Reports

Caseloads: DCF must report on the caseloads of residential placements, congregate care, foster care, therapeutic foster care, adoption, guardianship, 51A reports, substantiated 51A reports, the number of children who die in the care and custody of the Department, the number of children

currently eligible for supportive child care and the number of children presently receiving supportive childcare and the number of medical and psychiatric consultation requests made by DCF's social workers. The Department must also provide caseload data on the following topics:

- *Foster Placements:* The number of approved foster care placements.
- *Medical:* The number of children in psychiatric hospitals and community-based acute treatment programs who remain hospitalized beyond their medically necessary stay while awaiting placement and the number of days each case remains in placement beyond what is medically necessary. The reports must also detail the number of children who are served in medical or psychiatric care through other publicly- funded sources.
- *Visitation Centers:* The number of children served by supervised visitation centers and the number of those children who are reunited with their families.
- *Children Served by DCF:* The total number of children served by DCF, their ages, the number of children served in each service plan, the number of children in out-of-home placements and the number placements each child has had before receiving an out of home placement.
- *Kinship Guardianship:* The number of kinship guardianship subsidies provided in the quarter and the number for which federal reimbursement was received.

Additional Quarterly report topics include the following:

Reunification Services: The total spending on services other than case management services provided to families at each Area Office, for the purposes of keeping a child with the child's parents or reunifying the child with her/his parent, spending by type of services and the number of families that receive the services.

Shelter Services: For each Area Office, the total number of families residing in shelters paid for by the Department, a list of where the families are sheltered, the total cost and average cost per family, and a description of how DCF determines if a family qualifies for a shelter.

Voluntary Services: The number of requests for voluntary services each area offices receives, broken down by the type of services requested, whether the request was approved or denied, the reasons for denying the service, the number of families that are denied voluntary services and receive a 51A report, and what, if any, referrals were made for services by other agencies or entities.

51A Reports: The number of families receiving multiple 51A reports within a ten-month period, the number of cases reopened within 6 months of being closed and the number of children who return to the home and then re-enter an out-of-home placement within 6 months.

Family Preservation: DCF must report on the number of children and families served by the family resource center by area and provide an evaluation of the services provide and their effectiveness.

Additional Legislative Mandates: 4800-0015

Kinship care: When a child is removed from the home, the Department must place the highest priority on placing the child with a family resource within a child’s family or kinship circle. DCF is required to provide the adequate services and support necessary to help the family meet the child’s needs.

Early Education: DCF must work with the Department of Early Education and Care to maintain a centralized list detailing the number of children eligible for supportive childcare services, the number of slots filled and the number of supportive slots available. There cannot be a waiting list for these services.

The Office of the Child Advocate: 0411-1005, Section 219

The FY15 budget allocates \$700,000 for the operation of the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA). The OCA is mandated to use \$200,000 of these funds to conduct an emergency review and analysis of the Department of Children and Families in consultation with the Inspector General. The report must include an analysis of DCF’s office management, recordkeeping and background check policies, as well as management and best practice recommendations. The OCA, subject to appropriation, may hire an, “independent, third party expert or a consultant” to assist in the emergency review. A preliminary report was due to the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities by July 31, 2014. Additionally, the OCA must prepare and distribute a survey to clients and employees of the Department of Children and Families. The Office must review the survey to identify the issues clients and employees experience with the Department. These results, as well as any drafts of legislation it feels will improve the operations of DCF must be submitted to the Clerks of the House and Senate by April 1, 2015.

On July 8, 2014, the House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight along with Chairwoman Kay Khan and the House Members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities held a follow-up hearing with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families and Local SEIU 509 with the addition of the Child Welfare League of America. Acting Commissioner Erin Deveney testified about the changes being adopted at the Department, the steps they are taking for long-term investments and agency restructuring, as well as improving working conditions for front-line social workers. Linda Spears, representing the CWLA, also spoke to their recommendations and expressed the sense of commitment that the League perceives from DCF. Local SEIU 509 provided testimony regarding how the changes proposed by the Department are affecting front-line social workers. They relayed their feelings that since Acting Commissioner Deveney took over there has been a “sense of true hope” in the Department.

On September 11, 2014 the Center for the Study of Social Policy released their report prepared for the Boston Foundation and Strategic Grant Partners *The Unity of Trouble, From Crisis to Opportunity: Child Welfare Reform in Massachusetts*. The report highlights five main areas, which they refer to as “Levers for Change” that outline what they believe to be “key factors that must exist within child welfare agencies in order to promote and implement public policy that support child and family well-being with a focus on creating opportunities for those left behind.”²¹ The first lever for change as outlined by the Center is **A Leadership Team with Vision, Talent and Experience**. The Center believes that successful child welfare leaders “need to take risks in an environment that is overwhelming risk averse and in which there is little public trust. The leaders need to successfully communicate (both internally within the agency and externally to community providers and the public at large) what they intend to achieve, why it is important, the partners they will work with in designing and carrying out the change and perhaps most essentially, their willingness to measure and be held accountable for the results.”²² This coupled with leadership “embraces a climate of accountability backed up with honesty, willingness to ask and resolve difficult questions, and by broad consultation and partnership within and outside of the agency” and with other governmental and private agencies help to

²¹The Center for the Study of Social Policy. “The Unity of Trouble, From Crisis to Opportunity: Child Welfare Reform in Massachusetts. September 11, 2014. pg. 8

²²The Center for the Study of Social Policy. pg. 9

create and sustain effective partnerships within families, providers, and the communities.²³ Their second lever for change is the **Effective Use of Reliable Data to Drive Change**. The report states that “accurate, current, and reliable quantitative and qualitative data are necessary to assess a system’s performance and determine where efforts to improve failing outcomes should be focused.”²⁴ They point out that many child welfare agencies across the country use technology to support their social workers to enter real time data with handheld devices or tablets in the field. The Massachusetts Department of Children and Families has launched iPads with a newer and more mobile ready version of their FamilyNet software titled iFamilyNet. Another suggestion in this lever is to use information sharing protocols, methods, and software to integrate data from multiple public and private sources.²⁵ The third lever proposed by the Center is for **Strategic Workforce Investments**. Keeping caseloads at a manageable level while improving training, supervision, supports for workers, relationships with private providers and the court, and the overall climate and culture of the work environment coupled with clear job descriptions and routine evaluations helps with employee retention.²⁶ **Aligning the Service Array with Child/Family Needs and Outcomes** is important in developing individual service plans for each child and family, specific to their individual needs. Finally, **Accountability for Outcomes** is important because services and interventions should only be purchased or provided if they can demonstrate that they are producing results. Outcomes and indicators used to track progress must be “clearly defined, commonly understood and consistently measured.”²⁷ The Center also emphasizes the need for these actions to occur simultaneously as each is essential for constructing successful and lasting reform.

Recommendations by the Committees

The five main areas that the Members of these Committees found to be the most important in helping the agency move forward were: 1) bringing caseloads to manageable levels, 2) adequate and well supported management and supervisory staff, 3) increased portable and stationary technology, 4) continuing education and training for workers, and 5) policies and

²³The Center for the Study of Social Policy. pg. 9

²⁴The Center for the Study of Social Policy. pg. 10

²⁵The Center for the Study of Social Policy. pg. 11

²⁶The Center for the Study of Social Policy. pg. 13

²⁷ The Center for the Study of Social Policy. pg. 16

procedures that are uniform and more adequately address best interests of the child. Mandates through the FY15 budget combined with the initiatives of DCF have already shown great progress within the Department.

Actions Taken by the Department of Children and Families

The Department developed a 60-day plan based upon the CWLA report on May 28, 2014. The following lists actions the Department has taken to date.^{28 29}

- With feedback from stakeholders and staff from all levels of DCF's organization, the Department developed a new vision statement, and revised its mission statement and priority objectives to clarify that its primary purpose is to protect children and its decisions are intended to reflect the best interests of children.
- The Department completed a 60-day review to determine which homes with children in care, currently approved through a background check waiver process, should be subject to heightened case monitoring or oversight. No placements were identified as requiring the removal of a child. The Department determined that 8% of the reviewed homes warranted increased observation or supervision and has deepened its level of engagement with these homes as a result.
- The Department has developed a new case-closing policy that will require workers to conduct a risk reassessment before closing cases. This will help ensure case-closings are in the best interest of the child, and that if cases stay open, any necessary changes have occurred to support child safety.
- Per the CWLA's recommendation and language in the FY15 Budget, the Department has implemented lifetime and 5-year bans on prospective kinship providers, foster parents

²⁸ Department of Children and Families. *Final CWLA Matrix – 60 Day Action Items*. <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/DCF/cwla-60-day-matrix.pdf>, accessed September 11, 2014

²⁹ Department of Children and Families. "HPAO Update FINAL". Email message to House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight, December 4, 2014

and adoptive parents, who have been convicted of specific felony offenses by a court of competent jurisdiction. The Department is working on draft background record check regulations.

- Since January 2014, the Department has hired more than 501 qualified social workers, supervisors and managers to address the ongoing caseload issue. This hiring effort has enabled the Department to mitigate the impact of attrition in the workforce. As of November 15, 2014, the Department had 243 more social workers on staff than it did in January 2014.
- 2,280 iPads have officially been deployed out into the field as of October 1, 2014. The Department has supported the rollout on schedule with 90 training sessions at 30 offices, as well as an independent assessment from a private vendor who will provide the Department with recommendations and observations on challenges and opportunities for the use of mobile technology moving forward.
- A new consumer contact dashboard for social workers, supervisors and managers is now available to provide information “at a glance” for workers about the status of home visits to the children and families in their caseload. The consumer contact dashboard tool will also help supervisors and managers provide oversight and compliance with visit requirements. In addition, a new field guide is being developed for social workers: Promoting Safety and Wellbeing through Quality Visits and Contacts with Families, to ensure consistent and valuable observations from each visit.
- All Integrated Case Practice Model (ICPM) training and guidance materials are currently undergoing review and updates. CWLA worked with DCF staff and managers on identifying best practices from other states and providing technical assistance on the redesign of the ICPM. The Clarus Group, a change management consulting firm, is currently engaged, through funding from Casey Family Programs, to support management assessment, communication and alignment strategies for the case practice model. As part of this ongoing effort, the Department also established a Case Practice

Model Steering Committee with members representing a diversity of expertise from all levels of the Department to oversee this initiative and guide the refinement of the Case Practice model.

- The Department completed its development of a new case transfer policy, which requires face-to-face meetings among staff for case transfers within and between area offices. Negotiations with SEIU 509 on this policy have concluded. Plans for policy training and rollout are underway with trainings anticipated during December, 2014 and January, 2015 with an effective start date targeted for early in 2015.
- A brief assessment tool to measure risk of children running away, and vulnerabilities if missing from care, has been drafted utilizing national research on best practices. New policies and procedures for locating missing children have been drafted and reviewed with input from the Massachusetts State Police, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), the Mass. Clearinghouse for Missing Children (MCMC), the CWLA and other stakeholders. The Department has drafted and is in the process of finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding among DCF, NCMEC, and MCMC to join their new, multi-state project that will create a stronger collaboration among the organizations and a more efficient and consistent statewide reporting process. To further advance work in this area, the Department is also participating in a federal grant to work with partners to seek to develop sustainable methods for preventing trafficking of minors, identifying victims and connecting exploited youth to support and services.
- The Department is collaborating with the University of Massachusetts Medical School to fill a new Medical Director position for the Department in FY15. The duties of the Medical Director shall include, but not be limited to, implementing a system that will facilitate and support the Department's Medical Services Policy that requires timely medical screening and comprehensive evaluations for all children entering foster care, as well as ensuring that all children in cases open with the Department are receiving well child visits and immunizations according to American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) standards; developing performance metrics to ensure compliance with the Department's

Medical Services Policy; providing consultation in complex medical cases as needed in the Department; developing a state-wide protocol for accessing pediatric child abuse specialists (available at six hospitals in Massachusetts) when appropriate; overseeing the development and implementation of a policy for monitoring psychotropic medications in foster care youths; and developing relationships, communication, and educational programming with health care providers and health care institutions state-wide. The Department's Medical Director also will be responsible for completing its efforts to date to establish an expert panel of medical doctors to advise the Department on medically complex cases. The Department solicited input from consulting doctors, physicians from major medical centers throughout the Commonwealth, and child abuse pediatricians to inform how the panel should be implemented and operate. A list of final recommendations on the structure, make-up, and function of an expert panel of medical doctors has been developed. The membership and function of the expert medical panel will be finalized once this position is filled and the new Director can inform this process and offer feedback. The Department recently hired a Director of Integrated Health Services and a Central Office Nurse/Health Care Analyst to serve as part of the Integrated Health Services team. This unit will bring together staff involved in medical services, substance abuse and mental/behavioral health to support an integrated and evidence-based practice approach across the Department and with our community partners.

- The Department continues to offer Employee Assistance Program services for employees and family members 24/7, unlimited phone consults with supervisors and managers and on-site debriefings for crisis situations in addition to the 17 scheduled Employee Assistance Program sessions provided in the area offices during the months of May and June 2014 to help staff cope with secondary trauma and workplace stress. The Massachusetts Child Welfare Institute plans to offer trauma-informed resilience trainings in the coming months through The Bridge Training Institute and the Center for Professional Innovation. Based on best practices, a proposed structure for peer support teams and recommendations on how to implement them in every area office have been finalized and will be put into operation in FY15.

- The Department established an Innovations in Supervisory Practice Workgroup that delivered preliminary recommendations for a new supervisor model and training plan to pilot in FY15. The Department created two new positions within its training institute: (1) one to lead the implementation of an enhanced supervision model and training program in FY15; (2) the second to focus on the licensure of social workers and staff to ensure compliance with new legislation passed in the FY15 budget.
- The Department has made strides in decoupling area offices to establish an individual Area Director at each office as recommended by the CWLA, in order to strengthen management and oversight. Two of the largest office pairings have been split and three more were anticipated by the end of November 2014.
- The Department has committed to offering ten (10) social worker license test prep courses for up to 600 staff between January and May 2015 all across the state. Space for these courses has been provided with cooperation and support from SEIU Local 509. Additionally, as a result of a collaboration with Director Sandy Matava from the Moakley Center for Public Management at the Sawyer School of Suffolk University, 150 study guides have been provided to allow the Department to issue five (5) guides to each area office for staff to use in study groups. In addition, many area offices have independently created and supported at the local level study groups to assist staff in their exam preparation.

Based upon the research ranging from policy and procedure manuals, individual service plans, on-site visits to DCF offices, Committee meetings, detailed lists of questions and public hearings, the Members of the House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight and the House Members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities recommend that the Department continue to develop uniform and clear policies and procedures that work to promote the best interest of the child and ensure compliance with the legislative directives implemented in the FY15 budget. The Members however would also caution the Department, Administration, Legislature and public that the Department has a long way to go and that continued focus and commitment to helping this agency succeed is essential in

protecting the children of the Commonwealth and their families who so greatly depend on the services that the Department of Children and Families provides.