

Fiscal Highlights

DCFS Responds to Legislator Concerns About Children in Foster Care - Stephen C. Jardine

As part of the 2015 Social Services Appropriations Subcommittee deliberations, Representative Chavez-Houck and Senator Jackson expressed concerns regarding the number of out-of-home (foster care) placements in the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS). Senator Jackson asked the agency, "Given that the DCFS long term goal is to reduce the use of foster care by reducing recurrences of child abuse and neglect and the need for DCFS intervention, please provide FY 2011 - FY 2015 comparison information for In-home Services and Out-of-Home Services both statewide and in particular for the Northern Region where increased in-home efforts have been fully implemented." Representative Chavez-Houck also asked for a comparison of the cost per case for DCFS in-home compared to out-of-home placements in order to assess the trend line of making the shift between these two services.

DCFS responded to these Legislators' questions during the Social Services Appropriations Subcommittee meeting held on June 12, 2015. DCFS stated its vision regarding In-home services and Out-of-home services as: "Safe Children - Strengthened Families - Children must be protected from the trauma of abuse and neglect. When safe to do so, we must also protect them from the compounding trauma of removal from their families by effectively utilizing In-home services." DCFS referred to a program it has launched in its Northern Region called *HomeWorks* and explained the program as enhanced in-home services that are "evidence-based services, strategies, and tools that best support the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and the strengthening of their family." DCFS also indicated that the goal of the *HomeWorks* program is to "enhance parents' capacity to safely care for their children in their home and safely reduce the need for foster care in Utah." DCFS anticipates measuring success by seeing: 1) reduced use of foster care, 2) reduced recurrences of child abuse and neglect, and 3) reduced need for DCFS intervention. DCFS provided the following comparison information to the committee:

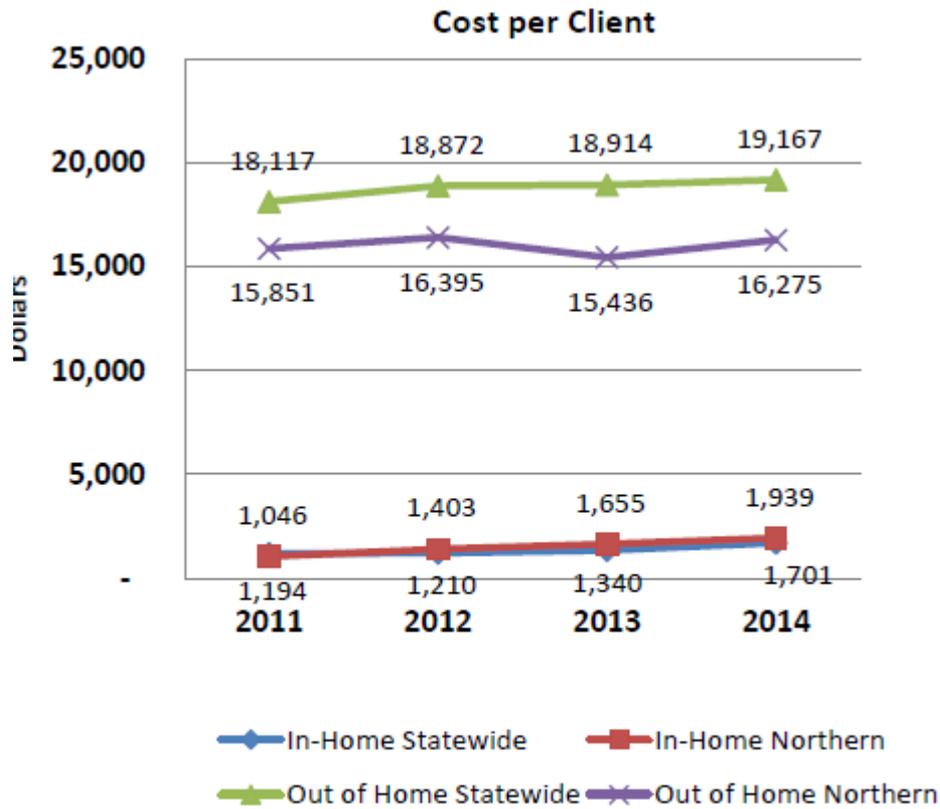
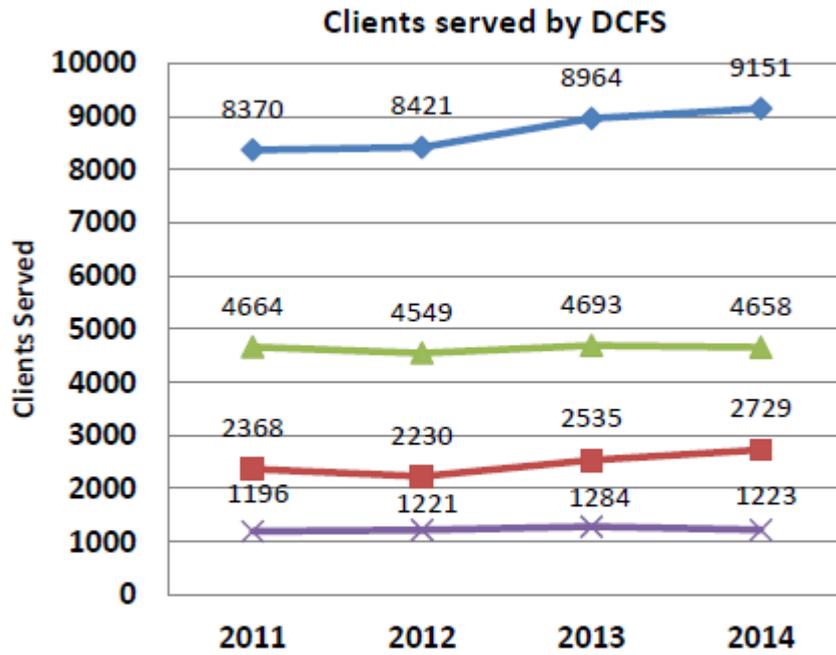


Figure 1

Figure 1 reflects case cost and case count data comparing in-home services and foster care services for the period from FY 2011 - FY 2014 for DCFS Northern Region and statewide. DCFS indicates it will use this data as a baseline period from which to measure future trends as it strengthens its in-home services statewide.

DCFS has indicated that in the last several months, *HomeWorks* initial training has also taken place in the Southwest, Salt Lake Valley, and Eastern regions and the launch of the *HomeWorks* program in its Western Region will occur in November of 2015. DCFS indicated that the practice changes required for *HomeWorks* are significant and require additional post-training supports and coaching in order for caseworkers to fully incorporate it into their day-to-day work with parents and children. DCFS also indicated that *HomeWorks* is being rigorously evaluated through the University of Utah Social Research Institute.