

## Issue Brief – DCFS Additional Caseworkers

DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

NUMBERDHS-09-16

### DCFS ADDITIONAL CASEWORKERS

The Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) requests an appropriation of \$1,192,100 with \$1,073,400 from the General Fund and \$118,700 from federal funds for 14 additional child abuse/neglect caseworkers, 2 supervisors and 2 support staff (18) for FY 2009. DCFS is requesting approval from the Legislature to purchase 7 vehicles for the new staff. The Analyst recommends that the Subcommittee place \$800,000 from the General Fund and \$29,400 from one-time General Fund on the priority list to hire 14 additional caseworkers. The Analyst does not recommend funding the 2 support staff and 2 supervisors at this time.

### OBJECTIVE

DCFS' primary purpose is to provide child welfare services and to protect children from abuse and neglect. This includes child abuse and neglect investigations, child abuse prevention services, family preservation services, child protective services, shelter care, foster care, residential treatment care, adoption services, independent living programs, and domestic violence related services.

### DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

#### *Projected Caseload Growth*

The Division of Child and Family Services estimates its caseload growth based on a lag using the current fiscal year (FY 2008) first quarter actual history and projections for the last three quarters, and half a year for the next fiscal year. The following table shows the estimated caseload growth in Out-of-Home Care (foster care) and Child Protective Services (CPS) as highlighted in blue:

DCFS History of Caseload Growth								
	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04	FY 05	FY 06	FY 07	FY 08 est	FY 09 est.
Out-of-home	3,687	3,678	3,758	3,860	4,040	4,263	4,350	4,515
In-home	22,173	18,678	18,674	18,404	18,048	17,416	16,650	16,150
Family Pres.	2,488	2,259	2,099	2,254	2,231	1,964	1,960	1,885
CPS	18,517	19,630	20,998	21,149	19,992	20,340	21,250	21,400

#### *David C. Lawsuit*

Under the provisions of the David C. Lawsuit in 2002, the Court, the plaintiffs and DCFS attempted to identify resources needed to bring DCFS closer to realizing the goals of the Milestone Plan. It was decided that the Division needed to substantially increase the number of caseworkers and its training process. The 2003 Legislature appropriated \$1.9 million in additional state funds to DCFS for 51 additional caseworkers and trainers. The 2007 Legislature provided funding for DCFS to hire twelve caseworkers and approved the use of internal savings for another nine caseworkers and three support staff.

The State continues to meet with the judge and the plaintiffs in attempts to make the requirements of the Milestone Plan more reasonable and attainable with the objective of eventually discontinuing the court's oversight. Judge Campbell signed an exit agreement and dismissed the case without prejudice on June 28, 2007. The plaintiff acknowledged that Utah has made significant strides to develop "one of the best child welfare systems in the country."

The exit agreement requires the Division to "continue operating in accordance with the Milestone Conditions until at least December 30, 2010" and that "appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure that the system will sustain positive outcomes for children and families in the absence of on-going federal court oversight and monitoring by Plaintiffs and the court monitor." The Division will be reviewed by the court monitor with regard to the exit stipulations during the period of July through October 2008. A final hearing is scheduled for

December 2008. If the Division has met the stipulations of the exit agreement, the case will be dismissed with prejudice and the court monitoring should come to an end.

### Legislative Auditor General's Report

In September of 2002, the Office of the Legislative Auditor General (OLAG) issued a report (number 2002-05) which established the caseload per caseworker for maximum effectiveness. The 2007 Legislature provided funding for 21 additional caseworkers (12 with General Funds and 9 with internal savings). The 2007 Legislature also approved the internal reallocation to fund 3 additional supervisors for FY 2008. The following table shows that 24.8 additional caseworkers less the 21 funded for FY 2008 are needed to comply with the audit findings:

DCFS Caseload Analysis Based on Projected Needs for FY 2009								
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Program	Average Caseload 1st Quarter of FY 2008	Estimated Growth	Average Caseload and Estimated Growth (B+C)	Current Average Number of Caseworkers (1st Quarter of FY 2008)	Caseload per Caseworker (D/E)	Standard Caseload Recommended by Legislative Audit	Caseworkers Needed Based on Legislative Audit Recommendations (D/G)	Overage/ Shortage (E-H)
Child Protective Services	1,472	58.5	1,531	109	14.0	15	102.1	7.3
Foster Care	2,842	92.4	2,934	201	14.6	12	244.5	(43.5)
In-Home Services	637	49.05	686	49	14.1	15	45.7	2.9
Family Preservation	201	0	201	36	5.5	4	50.3	(13.9)
Generalist	319	0	319	23	14.1	15	21.3	1.4
Total Number of FTEs Short								(45.8)
Less Amount Authorized for FY 2008								21
<b>Net Amount of Caseworkers Needed</b>								<b>(24.8)</b>
Support Staff Needed based on 7:1 Ratio								(4)
<b>Total Staff Needed</b>								<b>(28.4)</b>

DCFS is requesting 14 caseworkers and 2 supervisors and 2 support staff for FY 2009 rather than the 28 FTE (24 caseworkers and 2 support staff and 2 supervisors) because of the projected reduction in In-Home Services and Family Preservation caseloads. DCFS is predicting that with the reduction in these two programs, resources can be reallocated to offset the growth in foster care and child protective services.

### RECOMMENDATION

The Analyst recommends that the Subcommittee place \$800,000 from the General Fund and \$29,400 from one-time General Fund on the priority list to hire 14 additional caseworkers. The Analyst does not recommend funding the 2 support staff and 2 supervisors at this time since three additional supervisors were approved during the 2007 General Session. The Analyst further recommends that the Legislature authorize the Division of Child and Family Services to purchase seven additional vehicles for FY 2009 if the request for 14 additional caseworkers is funded. Finally, the Analyst recommends that the Legislature adopt the following intent language for FY 2009:

*Under Section 63-38-8 of the Utah Code the Legislature intends that any remaining amount of the \$162,123,000 provided in Senate Bill 1, State Agency and Higher Education Base Budget Appropriations (2008 General Session) Item 115, and funding allocated in this item for the Department of Human Services, the Division of Child and Family Services not lapse at the close of FY 2009. It is further the intent of the Legislature that these funds be used for Adoption Assistance and Out of Home Care programs, the purchase of 7 vehicles for the Division of Child and Family Services and the David C. court monitor.*