WORKLOAD STUDY

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Report to the Arizona Legislature
By the Auditor General
June 1991
91-6

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June 28, 1991

Members of the Arizona Legislature

The Honorable Fife Symington, Governor

Ms. Linda Moore-Cannon, Director
Department of Economic Security

Transmitted herewith is a report of the Auditor General, Workload Study - Child Protective Services. This report is in response to Session Laws 1990, Chapter 237, Section 21.

The report analyzes Child Protective Services workloads in several ways. We found that the average number of cases per worker ranged from 15 to 19; the statewide average was 17 cases. Weighting cases to reflect their relative difficulty showed that 19 percent of the case workers had excessive workloads. Our analysis found that high staffing ratios may result from CPS' inability to fill existing positions and disparities in staff allocations among districts.

We encountered three significant limitations in attempting to determine appropriate long term staffing levels. These limitations include the lack of information about the number of cases that are appropriate for investigation, limited information on the amount of staff time actually spent providing child protective services and the lack of any widely accepted criteria for determining optimum staffing levels. Addressing these limitations requires a joint effort between the Legislature and the Department of Economic Security.

Department of Economic Security staff reviewed the preliminary draft of this report and their comments have been incorporated. We did not request a formal agency response.

My staff and I will be pleased to discuss or clarify items in the report.

The report will be publicly released on July 1, 1991.

Sincerely,

Douglas R. Norton

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SUMMARY

The Office of the Auditor General has conducted a special analysis of Child Protective Service (CPS) workloads within the Department of Economic Security (DES). This study was conducted in response to Session Laws 1990, Chapter 237, Section 21.

The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Child Protective Services recommended that the Legislature direct the Auditor General to conduct this study. The committee was concerned about the lack of information about the number of staff and funding needed to investigate 100 percent of calls deemed appropriate for investigation. The scope of the study was defined by statute. The study included an assessment of the number and type of reports, caseload size, caseload mix, and staffing ratios.

Number And Types Of Reports CPS Receives **(see pages 7 through 11)**

Between August 1, 1990 and January 31, 1991, CPS received 18,113 reports of child abuse or neglect. Approximately 17 percent of the reports (3,000 cases) alleged life-threatening or severe situations. Another one-third (5,918) were defined as moderate physical, sexual, or medical abuse. One-half of the reports (9,195) alleged minor or potential abuse and neglect.

CPS caseworkers investigated 52 percent of the 18,113 reports and recorded 39 percent as "information only" reports. CPS recorded 7 percent of the reports received as "appropriate for investigation but not investigated." However, this figure may actually understate the extent to which CPS does not investigate appropriate cases. Some CPS supervisors indicated that they record cases as "information only" rather than "appropriate for investigation but not investigated" because they lack sufficient staff to investigate these reports. We were unable to determine the extent of this practice because supervisors rarely document their reasons for categorizing reports as "information only."

Caseload Size (see pages 13 through 18)

Caseload size was determined three ways: average caseload for full-time caseworkers, average caseload by type of caseworker, and weighted caseloads, which reflect the degree of difficulty of various cases. Statewide, the average caseload for all full-time caseworkers (including contract staff) was 17 cases. District II[1] had the highest average with 19 cases per caseworker. Districts III and V had the lowest averages with 15 cases per caseworker.

Caseloads also varied for each type of caseworker. CPS uses intake caseworkers to investigate reports of abuse and short term case management. Ongoing caseworkers provide long term case management. The Statewide average for intake caseworkers was 16 cases per caseworker. The average for intake caseworkers ranged from a high of 17 cases in District I to a low of 12 cases in District IV. Ongoing caseworkers averaged 17 cases Statewide. District II averaged 22 ongoing cases per caseworker, and District V had the lowest average caseload of 10 cases per ongoing caseworker.

Since caseload averages alone do not provide a complete workload picture, we also analyzed workloads using a weighting method similar to the system used in New Mexico. The New Mexico system measures workload by the types of cases caseworkers manage. New Mexico determined that the amount of time required to work a case varied depending on the case goal. By weighting cases according to the amount of time various types of cases require, we determined that 19 percent of the caseworkers had caseloads that exceeded the maximum standard of the New Mexico case weighting model. Almost 70 percent of these caseworkers are located in Districts I and II. In addition, several caseworkers had caseloads that were significantly below the maximum standard. This indicates that in all districts some caseworkers may have workloads that could be increased to help reduce other caseworkers' excessive workloads.

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(1) Child Protective Services is a function of the DES Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF). ACYF has six districts: District I-Maricopa County; District II-Pima County; District III-Coconino, Yavapai, Navajo, and Apache Counties; District IV-Yuma, Mohave, and La Paz Counties; District V-Pinal and Gila Counties; and District VI-Cochise, Santa Cruz, Greenlee, and Graham Counties.

Staffing Ratios (see pages 19 through 26)

In addition to reviewing average caseloads, we also analyzed staffing ratios. Unlike caseload size, a staffing ratio considers the portion of time caseworkers devoted to CPS activities. The Statewide average was 17 cases per Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employee. When analyzed by district, some districts appear to have high staffing ratios compared to the statewide average and professional standards. Staffing ratios also are higher in some districts due to vacant caseworker positions. For example, District II FTEs had the largest number of cases with 21 cases per FTE. However, if all positions were filled, each FTE would have had 18 cases. The low ratio of 15 cases per FTE in District V would have dropped to 13 cases per FTE if all vacancies were filled. This pattern was also evident when analyzing ratios for each type of caseworker. Our analysis suggests that high staffing ratios may be in part the result of CPS' inability to fill current positions and disparities in staff allocations among districts.

If CPS were to investigate cases designated as "appropriate for investigation but not investigated," the staffing ratios would increase in Districts I, II, and VI. District II would have the greatest increase as each of its intake FTEs would have to investigate 5 additional cases. If all positions were filled, the increase would be 4 additional cases per FTE.

Distribution Of Cases In The CPS System (see pages 27 through 30)

Our review of active ongoing cases found that no single type of abuse was the predominant cause for cases entering the system. Allegations of minor or potential abuse accounted for 21 percent of the cases. Another 19 percent of the cases (389) alleged parents had not provided the necessities of life or protection for their children. Three additional categories encompassing severe to moderate physical or sexual abuse and medical or physical neglect accounted for another 40 percent (835) of the cases we reviewed.

Once a case is transferred to ongoing case management status, the case plan becomes an indicator of work intensity. Of the ongoing cases we reviewed, 33 percent (812) had a Remain with Family case plan, and 25 percent (614) had a case plan of Return to Family. The remaining 42 percent (1,026) cases had out-of-home case plans such as Adoption, Long-Term Foster Care, or Placement with a Relative.

Conclusions And Recommendations
(see pages 35 through 37)

Our analysis indicates that several steps need to be taken to determine appropriate long-term staffing levels. Three significant limitations prohibited us from more completely addressing our statutory charge to estimate long-term staffing needs for investigating all appropriate reports. First, data about the number of cases that were "appropriate for investigation but not investigated" could not be documented completely. Second, CPS lacks precise information about the amount of staff time actually spent providing child protective services. Although we were able to obtain some of this information for our analysis, this information is based largely on estimates and required extensive time and travel to collect. Third, we were unable to identify any widely accepted criteria for determining optimum staffing levels. Our survey of other states revealed a wide variety of methods for estimating staffing needs.

To determine appropriate staffing levels, CPS must establish a management information system that provides accurate and reliable information about key activities. (See Chapter V, pages 31 through 34 for a discussion of management information.) In addition, workload standards are necessary. Establishing standards will require a joint effort between CPS and the Legislature.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
CHAPTER I: NUMBER AND TYPES OF CPS REPORTS	7
Volume Of Reports Handled By CPS	7
Types Of Reports By Priority	9
Types Of Reports By Nature Of Complaint	11
CHAPTER II: CASELOAD SIZE	13
Caseload Size By Full-Time Caseworker	13
Caseload Size By Type Of Caseworker	14
Follow Up Of District I	16
Case Weighting	16
CHAPTER III: STAFFING RATIOS IN CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES	19
Staffing Ratios In October 1990	20
Staffing Ratios In The Activity Areas	21
FTEs Added In Maricopa County Affect Staffing Ratios	22
Staffing Ratios If Investigations Increased	23
Comparison With Professional Standards	24

TABLE OF CONTENTS (con't)

	Page
CHAPTER IV: THE DISTRIBUTION OF CASES IN THE CPS SYSTEM	27
Proportion Of Intake And Ongoing Cases	27
Findings Of Investigations Resulting In Ongoing Cases	28
Case Plan Goals Of Ongoing Cases	29
CHAPTER V: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES MANAGEMENT INFORMATION	31
CPSCR Data Is Limited	31
Case Counts Contain Discrepancies	33
Potential Data Problems In New Information System	33
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	35
Workload Analysis Provides Limited Staffing Estimates	35
Steps Needed To Determine Staffing Levels	36
Recommendations	37
OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION	39
Length Of Time In System	39
CPS Response Time	42

TABLE OF CONTENTS (con't)

Page

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I A-1

Table Of CPS Report Disposition
By General Characteristics
By District

Table of CPS Report Disposition
By Priority Level
By District

APPENDIX II: Technical Appendix

Introduction A-4

Sampling Methodology A-4

Data Collection. A-6

Data Analysis

Number And
Type Of Reports. A-8

Caseload Size. A-11

Staffing Ratios. A-12

Caseload Mix A-14

Case Weighting A-16

Length Of
Time In System A-20

Response Time. A-22

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1 Location Of ACYF Districts. 4

FIGURE 2 Disposition Of CPS Reports
August 1, 1990 - January 31, 1991 . . 8

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
TABLE 1	Number Of CPS Reports Between August 1, 1990 And January 31, 1991 And Their Disposition By Priority Level	10
TABLE 2	Number Of CPS Reports Between August 1, 1990 And January 31, 1991 And Their Disposition By General Characteristics Of Abuse	11
TABLE 3	Average Caseload Size Of Full-Time Caseworkers In October 1990 By The Number Of Children By District And Statewide	14
TABLE 4	Average Caseload Size Statewide In October 1990 By Type Of Worker And By District.	15
TABLE 5	Results Of Case Weighting By District And Statewide.	18
TABLE 6	October 1990 Staffing Ratios For Cases Of All Types Per CPS-Related FTE Counts	20
TABLE 7	Comparison Of Staffing Ratios Of Cases In Each Activity Area Per FTE By District And Statewide.	22
TABLE 8	District I Comparison Of Staffing Ratios In October 1990 and February 1991 . . .	23
TABLE 9	Comparison Of October 1990 Intake Caseworker Staffing Ratios To Ratios Based On An Increased Investigation Rate	24
TABLE 10	Distribution Of Ongoing Cases Based On The Most Serious Finding Initiating Each Case	28
TABLE 11	Distribution Of All Ongoing Cases Reviewed In October 1990 By Case Plan.	30
TABLE 12	Length Of Time Needed To Close CPS Cases For A Selected Sample Of Closed Cases	41

LIST OF TABLES (con't)

		Page
TABLE 13	Descriptions And Response Times Of CPS Priority Levels.	42
TABLE 14	CPS Report Disposition By General Characteristics Of Abuse For Each District Between August 1, 1990 And January 31, 1991	A-1
TABLE 15	CPS Report Disposition By Priority Level For Each District Between August 1, 1990 And January 31, 1991	A-3
TABLE 16	Description Of Allegations And Response Times Of CPS By Priority Levels And Characteristics	A-10
TABLE 17	Abuse Type And Corresponding Characteristics.	A-11

LIST OF EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT A	Calculations Of CPS Caseworker Time By Activity	A-13
EXHIBIT B	Points Assigned TO Survey Case Plans.	A-19

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Office of the Auditor General has conducted a special analysis of the workload of Child Protective Services within the Department of Economic Security (DES). This study was conducted in response to Session Laws 1990, Chapter 237, Section 21.

This report presents specific information requested by the Arizona State Legislature and includes the number and types of reports received, caseload size, caseload mix, and staffing ratios. The report also presents other information not specifically requested but closely related to the questions raised by Chapter 237.

Program Organization And Functions

Child Protective Services (CPS) is a function of the DES Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF). ACYF is responsible for protecting children from several types of abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and neglect. CPS staff throughout the State receive reports of alleged abuse from a variety of sources: family members, school officials, law enforcement officials, and others who may suspect child abuse. According to ACYF records, CPS received more than 37,928 reports and investigated 20,028 reports during fiscal year 1990.

When an incident of abuse or neglect is reported, CPS staff screen the report to determine if it is within their jurisdiction. If so, the report is ranked for investigation according to its potential seriousness. For example, in life-threatening or emergency situations, such as the death of a child or severe physical abuse, an investigation must be initiated within 2 hours of the report. Reports that involve less serious abuses that can become damaging, such as substandard care, must be investigated within 1 week of the report. A CPS investigator then determines the validity of the allegations and recommends appropriate action. Such action may involve removing the child from the home or initiating services for the family.

Many of the reports received by CPS are closed within a few weeks of the initial report, and no further action is needed. However, cases that cannot be resolved quickly are transferred to ongoing status for longer term management. Ongoing cases are managed on the basis of case plans that project a desired outcome. Typical case plans include remaining with the family, returning to the family, adoption, long-term foster care, and placement with a relative. CPS staff provide services to the child, his or her natural family, and foster family or guardians that are consistent with the objectives of the ongoing case plan. CPS reports that, on average, it managed more than 4,000 ongoing cases monthly during fiscal year 1990.

Purpose Of Auditor General Study

The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Child Protective Services recommended that the Auditor General conduct an audit of CPS staff caseload size. The Oversight Committee on Child Protective Services was established in August 1989 in response to a rapid increase in the number of reports of child abuse and numerous concerns voiced by the public, DES, and legislators regarding Arizona's child protective service system. The Committee held several public hearings and met with DES administrators to discuss these concerns.

One concern presented was that because of a significant increase in the number of reports, CPS has been unable to investigate 100 percent of the calls deemed appropriate for investigation. DES proposed a plan that included a request for additional funding to hire more caseworkers to achieve a 100 percent investigation rate. However, DES has been unable to provide the Committee with caseload numbers and other vital statistical information. According to legislative staff, timely information about caseload size was difficult to obtain because CPS does not have a computerized system for tracking the number of cases and caseloads. Also, policies and procedures are not interpreted and applied consistently from office to office.

Although the Committee agreed with the goal of achieving a 100 percent rate of investigation for appropriate reports, without adequate information they were unable to determine the amount of funding necessary to reach this objective. In an effort to obtain information about caseload size, the Committee recommended that the Auditor General conduct an audit of CPS caseloads. This recommendation was incorporated into House Bill 2690, the Omnibus Child Protection Act, which passed in 1990.

Study Scope And Methodology

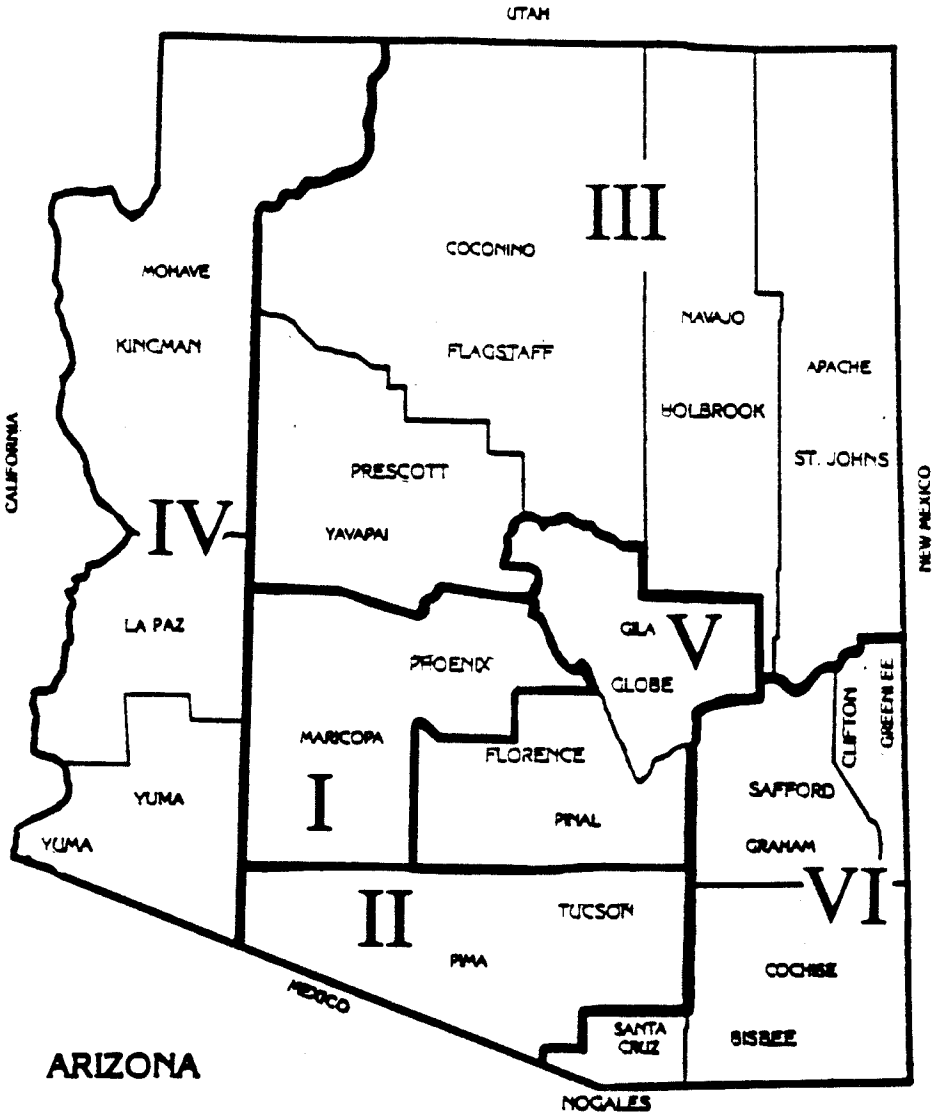
The scope of our study is defined by Session Laws 1990, Chapter 237, Section 21:

> The auditor general shall conduct an audit of the number and type of reports, case load size, case load mix and staffing ratios to ensure that the department of economic security has sufficient staff to investigate all appropriate referrals to child protective services....

The primary methodology for this study was a review of CPS case files. We selected a statistical sample of 236 caseworkers Statewide and reviewed cases that were open at any time during October 1990. We reviewed case files at local offices in every district. (Figure 1, page 4, shows the locations of the six ACYF districts.) Our methodology provided information on the number and type of reports, case load size, case load mix and staffing ratios. Because of data limitations and the lack of clear criteria, we were unable to determine completely the number of staff needed to ensure that all appropriate referrals are investigated. These limitations are discussed more fully on page 36.

FIGURE 1

LOCATION OF ACYF DISTRICTS



Because a significant number of new CPS staff were being hired in District I during the period of our review, we conducted a limited follow-up review of February 1991 caseloads in that district. The information obtained from this follow-up review provides an initial indicator of the impact of new funding provided in fiscal year 1990-91 on CPS caseload size.

Finally, because the amount of time and effort required for each case varies, we weighted all types of cases in order to compare workloads among caseworkers and the districts.

More detailed information about the methodology used in our study is included in the Technical Appendix of this report.

The Auditor General and staff express appreciation to the Director and staff of the Department of Economic Security for their cooperation and assistance during this study.

CHAPTER I

NUMBER AND TYPES OF CPS REPORTS

Each month CPS handles thousands of reports of alleged child abuse or neglect. To determine the number and types of these reports, we analyzed the data in three ways: the number of reports that are investigated or not investigated, the number of reports by priority, and the number of reports by the type of complaint.

We obtained information about the number and type of reports from the Child Protective Services Central Registry (CPSCR). All reports of abuse and neglect dating back to December 1985 are captured in this automated database. The Registry records the disposition of all reports and the findings of resulting investigations. CPS classifies all allegations into one of 23 types of abuse or neglect. (For a complete listing of these categories, see Table 16 on page A-10 of the Technical Appendix.)

Volume Of Reports Handled By CPS

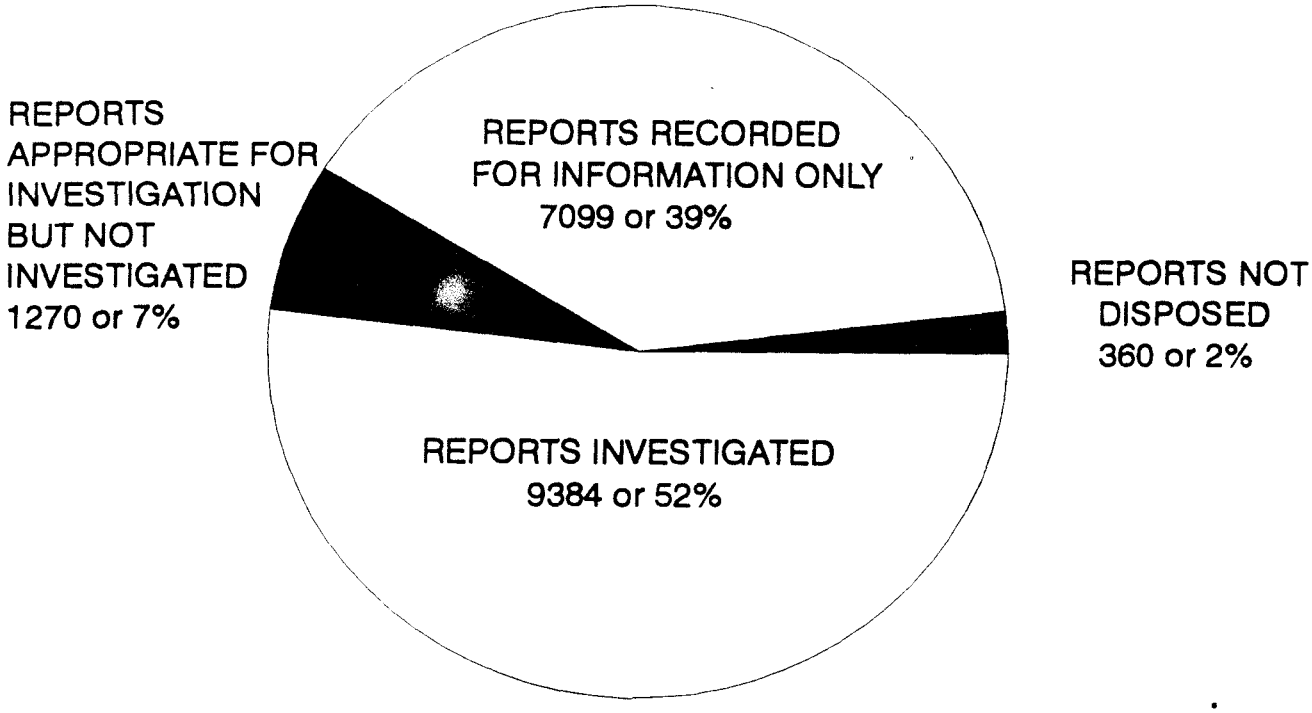
In the 6 months between August 1, 1990 and January 31, 1991, CPS received 18,113 reports of child abuse or neglect involving 30,804 children. The 18,113 reports do not correlate directly to 18,113 occurrences of child abuse. Multiple reports may be made by different sources or even the same source about one incident of abuse. For example, both the physician and law enforcement officials involved in a case may each file a report. According to CPS staff, the reports range from valid life threats to false statements made by angry spouses involved in custody battles.

Disposition of reports - Figure 2 (page 8) illustrates the dispositions of the 18,113 reports. Of the total number of reports, 52 percent were investigated. Another 7 percent were considered appropriate for investigation but, according to CPS staff, were not assigned due to

concerns about the workload of investigative staff. Disposition could not be determined on 2 percent of the reports because a decision to investigate had not been made or the information had not been entered on the Central Registry. The remaining 39 percent of the reports were deemed to be "information only."

FIGURE 2

DISPOSITION OF CPS REPORTS
AUGUST 1, 1990 - JANUARY 31, 1991



Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff analysis of Child Protective Services Central Registry monthly reports for August 1, 1990 through January 31, 1991.

CPS staff consider a report to be "information only" for several reasons. Some reports can be handled by the police without CPS involvement, and others do not require CPS investigation. For example, cases involving runaways or those involving sexual abuse where the perpetrator is outside the home (and therefore not an immediate, recurrent danger to the child) are routinely designated as "information only." Other reports are considered "information only" because CPS lacks sufficient information to locate the family or pursue an investigation.

However, some cases classified as "information only" may be appropriate for investigation. Several supervisors noted that they designate some cases as "information only" rather than "appropriate for investigation but not investigated" because they do not have enough staff to investigate these reports. Because CPS supervisors typically do not document their reasons for categorizing reports as "information only," we were unable to determine the extent of this practice. Nevertheless, inappropriately recording reports as "information only" instead of "appropriate for investigation but not investigated" reduces the accuracy of information needed to make service level and staffing decisions.

Reports investigated - CPS has determined that at least one-third of the reports received by February 1991 and investigated during this fiscal year are valid.(1) This signifies that CPS found some type of abuse or neglect in the home, although not necessarily the particular type alleged in the report. Another 35 percent of the investigated reports were found to be invalid or undetermined (evidence was inconclusive to confirm or refute the allegation). As of April 1991, the Central Registry contained no information regarding investigative findings for the remaining nearly one-third of reports.

Types Of Reports By Priority

The 18,113 reports that CPS received from August 1, 1990 through January 31, 1991, represent a wide range of allegations and associated priority levels. CPS categorizes the twenty-three types of allegations into four priority levels:

- **Priority One** - life-threatening and/or emergency situation
- **Priority Two** - dangerous but not life-threatening
- **Priority Three** - substandard care that is damaging
- **Priority Four** - substandard care that could become damaging

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(1) To obtain the most complete information available about investigative findings, we referred to a fiscal year-to-date summary report rather than our six-month review of monthly reports. However, this summary information is still incomplete due to untimely data entry. Thirty-two percent of the investigated reports did not have investigative findings recorded.

Table 1 shows the distribution of these reports among the four priority levels. In this table, placement in a priority level is determined by the degree of seriousness of the allegation about any of the children involved. (For a similar analysis by district, see district totals in Appendix I, page A-3.) As expected, generally the higher the priority level, the greater the proportion of cases investigated.

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF CPS REPORTS BETWEEN AUGUST 1, 1990 AND JANUARY 31, 1991 AND THEIR DISPOSITION BY PRIORITY LEVEL

Priority Level	Reported	Investigated	Info Only	Not Investigated(a)	Not Disposed(b)
1	289	266	22	1	0
2	2,711	1,637	980	35	59
3	5,918	3,628	1,678	510	102
4	9,195	3,853	4,419	724	199
All Priorities	18,113	9,384	7,099	1,270	360

(a) Because this information was derived from composite information, we did not identify the specific reports and the reasons they were not investigated. However, we spoke with supervisors to determine why reports, particularly high-priority cases, may be designated as appropriate for investigation but then not investigated. One example cited was that subsequent information may become available that would eliminate the need for an investigation.

(b) Disposition information about these reports is not available on the Registry. Either the supervisor had not made the decision to investigate the report or that decision was not entered into the Registry in a timely manner.

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff analysis of Child Protective Services Central Registry monthly reports for August 1, 1990 through January 31, 1991.

Types Of Reports
By Nature Of Complaint

Another way to view this information is to categorize reports according to the general characteristics of the alleged abuse or neglect. Auditors grouped cases with similar characteristics from the four priority levels. For example, all three priority levels of physical abuse were grouped together under the heading of "physical abuse." Table 2 indicates that the largest category (47 percent) of reports is "potential or minor abuse/neglect allegations." The next largest category (14 percent) of reports is "allegations of sexual abuse." (For an analysis by district, see Appendix I, page A-1 through A-2.)

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF CPS REPORTS BETWEEN AUGUST 1, 1990 AND JANUARY 31, 1991 AND THEIR DISPOSITION BY GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ABUSE

Type of Abuse	Reported	Investigated	Info Only	Not Investigated	Not Disposed(a)
Death of a Child	9	5	4	0	0
Dependent Child(b)	1,193	799	310	41	43
Emotional Abuse	574	294	211	62	7
Lack of Supervision	1,913	984	616	286	27
Physical Abuse, Severe to Moderate	1,995	1,524	309	85	37
Potential or Minor Abuse/Neglect	8,540	3,496	4199	670	175
Neglect, Severe to Moderate	1,205	822	318	47	18
Sexual Abuse	2,490	1,340	1,055	47	48
Other	234	120	77	32	5
All Types	18,113	9,384	7,099	1,270	360

(a) In 2 percent of the reports entered on the CPSCR in this timeframe, either the supervisor had not made a decision about whether or not to investigate the reports, or the decisions were not entered on the CPSCR in a timely manner.

(b) Dependent children are those whose parents do not assume the responsibility of providing the necessities of life or protection for their children because the parents are unwilling, unable, or incapable due to dysfunctional problems.

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff analysis of Child Protective Services Central Registry monthly reports for August 1, 1990 through January 31, 1991.

CHAPTER II

CASELOAD SIZE

Session Laws 1990, Chapter 237, Section 21 directed the Auditor General to determine the caseload size for CPS caseworkers. For purposes of this study, the size of the caseload refers to the total number of cases actually managed by a caseworker for a given time frame. The size of a caseload was determined in three ways: average caseload for full-time caseworkers, average caseload by type of caseworker and weighted caseloads, which reflect the degree of difficulty of the various types of cases.

Caseload Size By Full-Time Caseworker

To determine the average caseload size for full-time caseworkers, we identified the caseworkers[1] in our sample that perform CPS casework activities on a full-time basis. In our sample there were a total of 201 caseworkers Statewide that perform intake and/or ongoing case management activities full-time, including 19 contract workers. (For a discussion of the methodology applied, see page A-11 of the Technical Appendix.) As illustrated in Table 3, page 14, the size of the average caseload varies by district. District II has the highest average caseload of 19 cases per caseworker. Districts III and V have the lowest average caseload of 15 cases per caseworker. Although the average caseload Statewide is 17, 23 caseworkers managed 25 or more cases, and two managed 40 cases.

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(1) Contract caseworkers were counted in the same manner as ACYF employees. Therefore, the information reported includes contract caseworkers' caseloads.

TABLE 3

AVERAGE CASELOAD SIZE OF FULL-TIME CASEWORKERS IN OCTOBER 1990 BY THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER CASELOAD BY DISTRICT AND STATEWIDE

Location		Average Caseload Size	Average Number of Children Per Caseload
District	I	18	38
	II	19	42
	III	15	33
	IV	16	31
	V	15	35
	VI	18	39
Statewide		17	37

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff analysis of October 1990 sample of CPS caseworkers.

A second factor to consider in reviewing caseload size is the number of children served. The average number of children served Statewide per full-time caseworker is 37. As illustrated in Table 3, the average total number of children per caseload varies by district. District II, with 42 children per caseload, served the highest average number of children. District IV, with 31 children per caseload, served the lowest average number of children. Some caseworkers managed an excessively large number of children on their October 1990 caseloads when compared to the average:

- 32 had caseloads of 50 to 74 children,
- six had caseloads of 75 to 99 children, and
- one had a caseload of 102 children.

Caseload Size By Type Of Caseworker

Because an overall average of full-time caseworkers does not provide information by type of caseworker and does not include caseworkers that perform CPS duties part time, we performed an analysis by type of caseworker. We defined four types of caseworkers: intake, ongoing, mixed (those that perform both intake and ongoing case activities), and

other mix (those that may perform intake, ongoing, or both activities in addition to other ACYF duties such as day care licensing).[1] Our sample of 236 caseworkers includes 53 intake only caseworkers, 106 ongoing only caseworkers, 44 mixed caseworkers and 33 other mix caseworkers. Table 4 presents the average caseload size by type of caseworker.

TABLE 4

AVERAGE CASELOAD SIZE STATEWIDE IN OCTOBER 1990 BY TYPE OF WORKER AND BY DISTRICT

	Average Caseload Size(a)						
		District					
Type of Worker	Statewide	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Intake Only	16	17	15	16	12		
Ongoing Only	17	18	22	13	16	10	15
Mixed							
Intake Cases	10			8	10	12	10
Ongoing Cases	9			8	7	9	9
Other Mix							
Intake Cases							2
Ongoing Cases	10(b)			6	7		8

(a) Blanks appear in Table 4 because averages cannot be determined for all categories for the following reasons:

- There were no caseworkers drawn in our sample from the district for this particular category.
- There was an insufficient number of caseworkers in our sample to make generalizations at the district level.

Furthermore, a Statewide average of intake cases managed by other mix caseworkers is misleading because most of these cases are managed by District VI other mix caseworkers. Therefore, we do not report an average for this category.

(b) Other mix caseworkers in District II had higher caseloads than caseworkers in Districts III, IV and VI, thereby producing an average caseload Statewide of 10 cases.

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff analysis of October 1990 sample of CPS caseworkers.

(1) In the rural districts, caseworkers with intake responsibilities may also be required to be on-call for night or weekend emergencies.

Follow Up Of District I

Because a significant number of new caseworkers were being hired in District I during the period of our review, we conducted a limited follow-up review of February 1991 caseloads in that district. The addition of new caseworker positions in District I lowered caseload size. The results of the February 1991 analysis showed that the average size of a caseload decreased by 3 cases per caseworker:

Intake Caseworker - 17 cases in October 1990 decreased to 14 cases in February 1991

Ongoing Caseworker - 18 cases in October 1990 decreased to 15 cases in February 1991

Although hiring additional caseworkers has initially reduced caseloads, ACYF administrators anticipate that caseloads may increase. According to ACYF administrators, hiring additional caseworkers will allow them to investigate cases that are currently not being investigated due to a lack of sufficient staff.

Case Weighting

Because caseload averages alone do not provide a complete picture of CPS workload, we included a case weighting component in our analysis. Many factors influence the amount of time required to manage a case. Recognizing these factors and incorporating them in a case weighting model allows us to assess the relative amount of time or work each caseworker's caseload requires. Applying the model to the October 1990 caseworker sample, we determined that 19 percent of the caseworkers exceeded the model's maximum caseload standard.

Several factors may contribute to making one case more difficult to manage than another case. For example, one case may consist of only one child, while another case may consist of several children. Furthermore, cases involving the courts reportedly require more time than those that do not involve the courts because of required court appearances, additional parties to coordinate with, and required paperwork. Therefore, two caseworkers with the same size caseload may have a considerably different workload.

To ascertain how these factors influence workload, we applied the case weighting method used by New Mexico's Human Services Department, Social Services Division.[1] (For a detailed discussion of the New Mexico model, why it was selected, and how it was applied to Arizona caseloads, see Technical Appendix, page A-16.) Using the New Mexico model we analyzed case plans and determined a rank order based on the amount of time one type of plan required compared to a Return Home case plan (determined to be the most time-intensive case plan). Each case plan was assigned a point value based on its ranking. The point values for all case plans were totaled for individual caseloads to determine a weighted caseload.

New Mexico also established a maximum point value of 2,000 points per caseload. By applying the point values to individual caseloads, New Mexico can determine which caseworkers have excessive caseloads based on the amount of time their respective cases require.

When modified to reflect Arizona caseworker opinions and CPS case plans, 19 percent of the caseworkers exceeded the 2,000 maximum point value established by New Mexico. Using the 2,000 point cap, Table 5 shows that 44 caseworkers had workloads exceeding 2,000 points in October 1990. The majority of these caseworkers are in Districts I (15 caseworkers) and II (15 caseworkers). Five caseworkers had workloads that exceeded 3,000 points. Caseworkers exceeding the cap have an unusually high number of cases, a high number of the most time-intensive cases, or both.

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(1) Although we found the New Mexico model a useful tool to assess workload, we are not recommending that Arizona adopt this method without further study. CPS administrators feel that the model needs to incorporate additional factors to better accommodate Arizona conditions and the CPS system.

TABLE 5

RESULTS OF CASE WEIGHTING BY DISTRICT AND STATEWIDE

	Number of CPS Caseworkers Meeting Percentage of Maximum Standard				
District	Less than 50%	50 - 74%	75 - 89%	90 - 100%	More than 100%
I	17	19	20	16	15
II	1	14	14	3	15
III	11	11	2	5	4
IV	8	7	7	2	2
V	8	2	3	0	3
VI	5	9	7	1	5
Statewide	50	62	53	27	44

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff analysis of October 1990 sample of CPS caseworkers and the application of the New Mexico case weighting model.

New Mexico staff note that their goal is to keep caseloads below the 2,000 point cap rather than having every caseworker at the maximum point value. Because of this, they expect to have the majority of their caseworkers in the 50 to 90 percent range. A New Mexico CPS administrator reports that their average weighted caseload is 14 cases per caseworker. The average weighted caseload would therefore not exceed 1,400 points or 70 percent of the cap. They also expect that there will be some caseworkers with point values below 50 percent of the cap. New caseworkers with fewer and less difficult cases would likely be in this category. Table 5 indicates that all Arizona districts might be able to increase some caseworkers' workloads to help reduce the excessive workloads of others.

CHAPTER III

STAFFING RATIOS IN CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

In addition to a review of the average size of CPS caseloads, Chapter 237 required that we review staffing ratios. Unlike caseload size, a staffing ratio considers the portion of time caseworkers devote to CPS activities.(1) For all Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) caseworkers in our sample, we calculated two sets of staffing ratios. The first set of ratios is based on the positions actually funded, including contract caseworkers and vacancies. The second set of ratios is based on the positions that are actually filled (including contract staff) and excludes vacant positions. We also calculated the same two sets of ratios for the subgroups of intake and ongoing FTE caseworkers. An additional analysis determines what staffing ratios would be if CPS intake caseworkers were to investigate all cases classified as "appropriate for investigation." Finally, we compared the October 1990 ratios to professional standards.

Our staffing ratio analysis is based upon a statistical sample of all caseworkers in the State, including vacant positions.(2) As a whole, the caseworkers selected managed 3,904 cases in October 1990. We obtained a staffing ratio by comparing those 3,904 cases to the number of FTEs. Because many CPS caseworkers perform both intake and ongoing activities or, in some cases, additional non-CPS duties, caseworkers were polled

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(1) To develop meaningful data on actual average caseload sizes, we subdivided caseworkers into groups by type of responsibilities (intake, ongoing, mixed, and other mix). Our analysis of staffing ratios then factors the time any caseworker spends in either intake or ongoing activities and includes that time in an aggregate intake FTE count and an aggregate ongoing FTE count.

(2) For purposes of this review, contract caseworkers are included. These staff are not directly funded positions and, therefore, are not considered FTEs in the conventional sense. However, contract caseworkers provide a considerable portion of case management services and must be included to give a complete picture of staffing. Contracted caseworkers are funded from the ACYF Children Services special line item appropriation, and used in all districts except District I.

individually to determine how they spent their time. This information provided an estimate of the percentage of time caseworkers spent on CPS services in each activity area. (For a more detailed description of the methodology, see the Technical Appendix, page A-12.)

The October 1990 sample included 236 caseworkers with a caseload, 18 vacancies, and four new hires with no caseload. While this constitutes 258 positions, due to part-time positions and positions that entail responsibilities outside CPS case management, these positions equate to only 244 FTEs performing CPS functions. Of the 244 FTEs in our sample, contract staff account for 28 FTEs.

Staffing Ratios In October 1990

The Statewide average number of cases per filled FTE was 17 in October 1990. If CPS were fully staffed, including contract caseworkers, the staffing ratio would decrease to 16 cases per FTE. Table 6 indicates that staffing ratios at the district level, including intake and ongoing cases, range from a low of 13 cases per funded FTE to a high of 18 cases per funded FTE. The staffing ratio of cases per FTE filled with a caseworker ready to manage cases is higher than the ratio of funded FTEs in all districts except District IV.

TABLE 6

OCTOBER 1990 STAFFING RATIOS FOR CASES OF ALL TYPES PER CPS-RELATED FTE COUNTS

District	Cases Per Funded FTE	Cases Per Filled FTE
I	16	18
II	18	21
III	14	15
IV	15	15
V	13	15
VI	16	17
Statewide	16	17

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff analysis of CPS staffing patterns and caseloads based on the October 1990 sample of caseworkers.

Staffing Ratios In The Activity Areas

While the number of cases per FTE in general terms is important, the staffing ratios for intake and ongoing functions are more meaningful for comparison against professional standards. Because many caseworkers outside the larger metropolitan regions of the State perform both intake investigations and ongoing case management services, those FTEs split their time and, therefore, a portion of their time is counted in each activity area.

Our analysis shows that Statewide in October 1990 each filled FTE handling intake cases managed 17 cases and each filled FTE handling ongoing cases managed 18 cases. If CPS were fully staffed, the staffing ratios would decrease to 16 cases for both types of FTE. Table 7 illustrates the variances between the funded FTEs and those FTEs that are actually filled with caseworkers ready to manage cases. FTEs managing intake cases in District V manage an additional 5 cases because of vacancies. FTEs managing ongoing cases in District II manage 4 additional cases because of vacancies. These differences suggest that in some districts improved recruitment and retention might be used in lieu of additional positions to lower the ratio of cases per FTE. For example, we found that there were sufficient positions in District I to operate at 16 cases for each FTE managing ongoing cases. However, in October 1990, due to vacancies and new hires without caseloads, FTEs handling ongoing cases managed 18 cases. The agency's goal of 17 cases per ongoing FTE would have been met if District I had fewer vacancies.[1]

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(1) We did not compare agency goals and the calculated staffing ratios for intake FTEs because the agency goal is based on new cases per intake caseworker per month, and the sample analysis was based on the total number of cases per intake caseworker per month. Therefore, a direct comparison could not be made.

TABLE 7

COMPARISON OF STAFFING RATIOS OF CASES IN EACH ACTIVITY AREA PER FTE BY DISTRICT AND STATEWIDE

District	Intake Cases		Ongoing Cases	
	Per Funded Intake FTE	Per Filled Intake FTE	Per Funded Ongoing FTE	Per Filled Ongoing FTE
I	16	18	16	18
II	15	15	21	25
III	15	15	13	15
IV	18	18	12	13
V	19	24	11	12
VI	14	16	17	17
Statewide	16	17	16	18

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff analysis of CPS staffing patterns and caseloads based on the October 1990 sample of caseworkers.

FTEs Added In Maricopa County Affect Staffing Ratios

Additional caseworker positions in District I have changed the staffing ratios for that district. We realized that October ratios in Maricopa County would be changing due to the addition of 38 caseworker positions funded for fiscal year 1991. By October 1990 these FTEs were only beginning to be phased in. To obtain a more up-to-date picture, we calculated the staffing ratios for District I based on February 1991 caseloads and staff. The number of cases dropped to 13 per funded FTE. (For a comparison between the October 1990 and February 1991 ratios for District I, see Table 8, page 23.)

TABLE 8

DISTRICT I
COMPARISON OF STAFFING RATIOS IN OCTOBER 1990 AND FEBRUARY 1991

	Cases Per Funded FTE		Cases Per Filled FTE	
	October 1990	February 1991	October 1990	February 1991
All cases	16	13	18	15
Ongoing cases	16	14	18	15
Intake cases	16	13	18	14

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff review of cases and staffing patterns based on the October 1990 and February 1991 caseworker sample for District I.

Although additional positions have initially reduced staffing ratios, ACYF administrators, anticipate ratios may increase. According to ACYF administrators, additional caseworkers will allow them to investigate reports that are currently not being investigated due to the lack of sufficient staff.

Staffing Ratios If Investigations Increased

As noted in Chapter I, CPS does not investigate 100 percent of the reports its caseworkers consider appropriate for investigation. If CPS were to investigate those cases currently designated as "appropriate for investigation but not investigated," the October 1990 staffing ratios would increase.(1) Table 9 (see page 24) indicates that the number of cases per FTE would increase in Districts I, II, and VI. The number of cases per FTE would increase the most in District II. Each intake FTE

(1) Because we suspect not all cases appropriate for investigation are being classified as such, this analysis provides a minimum expected increase. As noted in Chapter I, interviews with unit supervisors indicated that some supervisors classify cases as "information only" rather than "appropriate for investigation but not investigated." The analysis presented in Table 9 and discussed in this section is based only on the number of cases that are specifically identified by supervisors as "appropriate for investigation but not investigated."

TABLE 9

COMPARISON OF OCTOBER 1990 INTAKE CASEWORKER STAFFING RATIOS TO RATIOS BASED ON AN INCREASED INVESTIGATION RATE

District	Intake Cases Per Funded FTE		Intake Cases Per Filled FTE	
	October 1990	Increased Rate	October 1990	Increased Rate
I	16	18	18	20
II	15	19	15	20
III	15	15	15	15
IV	18	18	18	18
V	19	19	24	24
VI	14	15	16	17

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff analysis based on October 1990 staffing patterns and caseloads.

would have to investigate an additional 5 cases; if completely staffed, the increase would be 4 additional cases per FTE.

Comparison With Professional Standards

To determine if Arizona CPS staffing ratios are comparable to those in other states and professional standards, we surveyed several states and reviewed the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) standards. However, we were unable to develop meaningful comparisons between Arizona CPS staffing ratios and those of other states because of varying operational methods and recordkeeping systems. Therefore, we were limited to a comparison to CWLA standards.

We selected 16 states[1] for our survey because of their location (the western/southwestern United States), because their client populations are similar in number to those in Arizona, or because these states have been

(1) The 16 states surveyed were California, Colorado, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Washington.

cited as having good CPS programs. Interviews with CPS staff in these states indicated that comparisons would be difficult to make. The following includes a few of the reasons inhibiting program comparison:

- Case Definition - Arizona generally defines a case in terms of the family unit. However, adoption cases and some independent living cases are generally defined in terms of the individual child. In comparison, eight of the states surveyed define a case in terms of the family and three states define a case in terms of the child. Five states define a case in terms of both methods. For example, in Utah cases are considered in terms of the family when investigated, but if the allegation is substantiated, the case is then defined in terms of the child. In Washington State cases are also defined in terms of the child if the child is in an out of home placement but in terms of the family if the child remains at home.

- Unit of Measurement for Standards - Arizona standards are measured by the number of cases per intake or ongoing caseworker. Ten states also measure standards using the number of cases per caseworker. However, the recommended standard number of cases varies considerably among states. For example, Kentucky has a standard of 25 cases per caseworker regardless of activity. California has four different caseload standards, each based on the type of case. Two states have a point value/case weighting standard, two measure standards by the number of hours and type of activity, and two reported having no standards.

- Caseloads by Type of Caseworker - Because we wanted to compare Arizona caseloads for intake, ongoing, mixed, and other mix caseworkers, we requested caseload information for these types of caseworkers. Only four states were able to provide this information, and three offered estimates. The remaining states did not have this information readily available or were unable to prepare it. In addition, three states have county-based CPS programs and do not maintain staffing and caseload information at a statewide level.

Because we were unable to make meaningful comparisons among states, for comparative purposes, we were limited to using the standards recommended by CWLA. The CWLA recommends a standard of 12 intake investigations per caseworker per month. Based on the October 1990 staffing ratios, all districts would have exceeded this intake standard even if CPS had been completely staffed (see Table 7, page 22). When vacancies are factored into the staffing ratio, some districts exceeded the standard by several cases. District V intake FTEs managed twice as many cases as the recommended CWLA standard.

Comparing Arizona CPS staffing ratios against the CWLA standard for ongoing FTEs, it appears that most districts have sufficient positions to meet the standard. CWLA recommends 17 active cases per month per ongoing caseworker. With no vacancies CPS meets this standard in all districts but District II. Considering vacant positions, District I exceeded the standard by 1 case per FTE in October 1990, and District II exceeded the standard by 8 cases.

CHAPTER IV

THE DISTRIBUTION OF CASES IN THE CPS SYSTEM

Session Laws 1990, Chapter 237, Section 21 directed the Auditor General to review the mix of CPS cases. To effectively characterize how the system works, this review provides the following descriptive analyses of active cases:

- A proportional breakout of the number of active intake and ongoing cases each month
- An analysis of the investigative findings that brought cases into ongoing case management services
- An analysis of the October 1990 case plan goals for active ongoing cases

Although our sample of cases active in October 1990 is not a statistical sample, it does constitute over one-half of the 6,907 cases that ACYF estimates were active during that month.

Proportion Of Intake And Ongoing Cases

Approximately two-thirds of the cases active in October 1990 that we reviewed were ongoing cases, and approximately one-third of these cases were intake investigations. Although our analyses reviewed active cases for only one month, ACYF information indicates a monthly volume of CPS cases with the ratio of two active ongoing cases to one intake investigation. It is important to note that while the ongoing cases are primarily the same cases that remain active from month to month, the majority of the intake investigative cases each month are new. Hence, annually more investigations are handled than ongoing cases. ACYF estimates that 20 percent of all reports investigated advance to ongoing case status.

Findings Of Investigations Resulting In Ongoing Cases

A broad range of investigative findings[1] can initiate an ongoing case. No single investigative finding was found to be the reason precipitating the majority of the ongoing cases we reviewed. Although minor or potential abuse or neglect and dependent[2] children were the cause of more ongoing cases than the other categories, findings were distributed fairly evenly among categories of abuse. Table 10 shows the distribution of ongoing cases based on the most serious initial finding in each case.

TABLE 10

DISTRIBUTION OF ONGOING CASES BASED ON THE MOST SERIOUS FINDING INITIATING EACH CASE

Finding Initiating Case	Number of Ongoing Cases	Percentage of Total
Minor or Potential Abuse/Neglect	440	21.1%
Dependent Child	389	18.6
Physical Abuse, Severe to Moderate	325	15.6
Sexual Abuse, Severe to Moderate	290	13.9
Medical or Physical Neglect, Severe to Moderate	220	10.5
Lack of Supervision	180	8.6
Undetermined or Invalid Findings	160	7.7
Emotional Abuse	61	2.9
Other	14	0.7
Death of a Child	7	0.3
All Cases Reviewed	2,086	100.0%

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff file review of CPS cases.

As Table 10 illustrates, some cases with undetermined or invalid investigative findings are transferred to ongoing status. A caseworker involved with these families may be aware of potential problems that preventive services might address or that may need to be monitored even though the alleged abuse or neglect is not apparent at the time of the investigation. According to one caseworker, this is often true with

(1) This analysis is based on the most serious finding of abuse or neglect against any of the children involved. Although multiple abuses on multiple children may have been documented, the case is grouped by the most serious finding on that report.

(2) Dependent children are those whose parents do not assume the responsibility of providing the necessities of life or protection for their children because the parents are unwilling, unable, or incapable due to dysfunctional problems.

allegations of physical neglect. The consequences of neglect may not be physically evident until the situation has become serious enough for the child to be diagnosed medically as "Failure to Thrive". Parenting skills training or other services may be offered on a voluntary basis. If the family accepts those services, the case is transferred to ongoing status.

Case Plan Goals Of Ongoing Cases

According to the ACYF Program Administrator, once a case in transferred to ongoing case management status, the importance of priority codes decreases. For ongoing cases, the case plan is a better indicator of the type of case and what services may be required. Therefore, the case plan can be used as an indicator of work intensity.(1)

We documented case plan goals of over one-half the ongoing cases CPS estimates were active in October 1990. (For a description of the case plan goals, see page A-15 of the Technical Appendix.) Although a case may involve multiple children with different case plans, each child has only one case plan. Of the 2,452 cases we reviewed, 205 had more than one case plan, but for the purpose of obtaining a frequency distribution, cases are grouped by the most time-intensive case plan for the caseworker as determined by our Statewide survey of caseworkers.(2) (For a discussion of the Statewide survey and the results, see the Technical Appendix, pages A-18 through A-20.) In a hypothetical case example involving two children relinquished by their natural mother, each child has a different case plan goal. Each child also has a different father. One child has a father who wishes to work for the return of his child to him. The other child is to be placed in an adoptive home. This example would be grouped under the case plan Return to Family because the point value of that plan is greater than that of adoption. Table 11, page 30, shows the distribution of all ongoing cases by the most work-intensive case plan.

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(1) Case plans are the indicators used in the New Mexico case weighting model. See the analysis of weighted caseloads on page 16.

(2) Any other case plans involved in the 205 documented multiple case plan cases are not reflected in this grouping. Therefore, these results cannot be assumed to be the demographic breakout of case plans for all the children included.

TABLE 11

DISTRIBUTION OF ALL ONGOING CASES REVIEWED IN OCTOBER 1990 BY CASE PLAN

Case Plan Goal	Number of Cases	Percentage of Total
Remain with Family	812	33.1%
Return to Family	614	25.0
Long-Term Foster Care	279	11.4
Interstate Compact Placed Children	205	8.4
Adoption	172	7.0
Severance and Adoption	168	6.9
Placement with a Relative	125	5.1
Legal Guardianship	42	1.7
Independent Living	35	1.4
Total	2,452	100.0%

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff file review of CPS cases.

CHAPTER V

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

During our review of the CPS workload, we observed problems with the information maintained by ACYF about Child Protective Services. The Child Protective Services Central Registry (CPSCR), a system designed to track reports of abuse or neglect but not cases receiving services does not provide data needed for estimating workload. Although some CPSCR data can be used as an indicator of intake staffing requirements, there are problems with the quality of this data. To date, manual counts of active cases and clients served have been the only source of workload information. However, we also found discrepancies in manual case counts submitted to the central office. Similar problems may reduce the usefulness of the new ACYF automated data system.

CPSCR Data Is Limited

At the present time, the ACYF automated data systems provide no direct information for measuring CPS workload. Although the CPSCR tracks the number of reports and their results, it does not combine duplicate reports about the same incident or family into cases. The system also does not track any information about the reports after an investigation is completed so it cannot provide information about ongoing services. In addition, CPSCR data accuracy is limited due to classification problems and inconsistent coding.

Shortcomings as a measurement of workload - CPSCR data cannot be used to measure CPS caseloads because the CPSCR only records reports, their disposition, and the results of investigations. Caseload is measured by the number of cases investigated or managed by a CPS caseworker. Further, some of the reports recorded on the CPSCR are multiple calls involving the same case. A single incident reported by a family member, a school official, and a physician is recorded as three separate reports on the CPSCR. Thus, CPSCR data can not be used to count CPS investigations. The number of reports investigated would be an overstatement of the number of intake cases actually investigated by CPS workers.

CPS ongoing staff workloads are affected by the number of cases transferred to ongoing status. Although the system tracks whether or not reports result in an ongoing case, this data is also of limited use because of the problem of multiple reports of a single case. Thus, Registry data does not provide a reliable basis for estimating the number of reports that become unique ongoing cases managed by CPS caseworkers.

Despite its limitations as a basis for measuring workload, the Registry provides reasonably accurate information about the number and type of reports received and is the only centralized source of information about the number of reports that are investigated. Thus, we were able to use CPSCR data for these two purposes. (See Chapter I, page 7.)

Classification problems - During field interviews, we identified inconsistencies in the manner in which some reports are classified by CPS staff. One important inconsistency is in the use of the "for information only" and "appropriate for investigation but not investigated" categories. Supervisors acknowledge that some reports classified "for information only" would have been investigated if staff were available. One CPS report notes that the percentage of reports recorded as appropriate for investigation dropped 12 percent between fiscal years 1987 and 1988, while the number of reports recorded as "information only" increased by an unspecified amount. We were unable to determine the extent of this problem because CPS supervisors do not typically document why they categorize reports as "information only." However, these inconsistencies in the classification of reports lessen confidence in the system's use as a complete means for measuring potential CPS investigative workload.

Inconsistent coding - We also observed problems with inconsistent coding of information. For example, we identified cases which were miscoded as being "closed" after an intake investigation, when these cases had actually been transferred to ongoing status. One supervisor noted that he routinely coded cases in this manner. This type of miscoding affects CPS' ability to accurately count the number of reports that result in ongoing cases.

Case Counts Contain Discrepancies

Since the CPSCR was not designed to be a complete source of information about workload, manual case count data must be used as a supplemental source of information. Case count sheets, completed monthly, are added together manually to determine the total number of active cases each month. The case count sheets provided a starting point for our review. As part of that review we verified the counts with CPS staff and their supervisors and discovered the following discrepancies:

- Some workers recorded all children in the family as their caseload, others recorded only the children directly served.

- Some offices inappropriately transferred intake cases to ongoing status. One office recorded intake cases open on the last day of the month as both intake and ongoing cases regardless of the fact that the case activity was not that of an ongoing case. Another office in the same district automatically transferred all intake investigations open longer than 21 days to ongoing status. In both instances these actions inflate case counts.

  In one office, a worker with responsibility for both intake and ongoing cases recorded all cases handled as ongoing cases.

- Closed cases are incorrectly included on the end-of-the-month case counts, thereby distorting end-of-the-month counts. Although errors may be corrected by the end of the following month, new errors continue to reduce the reliability of the monthly case counts. These errors are particularly confusing when monthly reports are compared, because the case count at the end of one month does not match the count at the beginning of the next month.

Although we did not quantify the extent of these problems, their existence raises questions about the accuracy of CPS case counts.

Potential Data Problems In New Information System

The types of problems with policy interpretation and follow through that we observed may also limit the usefulness of the new ACYF data system, ASSIST, which is intended to provide better information about child protective service workloads as well as perform other ACYF functions. These problems appear to result from the lack of a well-defined policy about how data should be recorded, inadequate training, and ineffective

supervisory review. Unless ACYF ensures more consistent, accurate data collection, the use of ASSIST may result in similar information problems.

Although we did not attempt to definitively trace the causes of these problems, several possible reasons became apparent during our file review. We found that CPS staff differed in their understanding of how information should be recorded. Although CPS staff were able to articulate their understanding of how they should handle data, not all shared the same understanding. Staff also noted that caseworkers have not been given sufficient training to help them record information about cases consistently and accurately. Finally, the nature of many errors, such as the inclusion of inactive cases in case counts, indicates that supervisors did not always check the reports submitted by their staff and follow up on them, thus eliminating an important control over the accuracy of information.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

How many staff are needed to investigate all appropriate reports of child abuse? Our review of CPS workloads found that this question cannot be fully answered because key information is currently unavailable. We were able to develop some workload estimates as part of the review; however, this information is too limited to serve as the basis for completely determining CPS staffing needs. ACYF needs to take several steps to compile the information needed for establishing staffing levels.

Workload Analysis Provides Limited Staffing Estimates

By reviewing case files at CPS offices throughout the State, our methodology enabled us to document reliable estimates of CPS workloads for October 1990. We were also able to identify certain case management requirements by using a case weighting model and applying professional organization standards to the workloads identified. This analysis identifies a number of considerations for evaluating CPS staffing needs.

- CPS's ability to recruit and retain caseworkers directly affects caseloads. We found that filling all vacant positions would have reduced intake caseloads by 6 percent and ongoing caseloads by 11 percent in October 1990. (A recent DOA study noted that CPS had a Statewide turnover rate of 14 percent which was comparable to the average turnover rate for all State employees. However, some districts had considerably higher rates for specific types of caseworkers.)

- When staffing ratios are compared to professional standards, it appears CPS has a greater need for additional intake staff than ongoing staff. CPS staffing requirements for ongoing cases in most districts appear to be adequately addressed through the use of contract caseworkers and full-time staff. Thus, ACYF may choose to transfer full-time ongoing caseworkers to intake activities.

- Our analysis also indicates that staffing disparities exist among ACYF districts and offices. These disparities could be addressed by reallocating positions and transferring staff among districts and offices.

- Contract staff accounted for 11 percent of the FTEs in our sample. CPS administrators interpret their statutes as prohibiting them from assigning intake cases to contract staff or transferring contracted caseworkers to intake positions. Consequently, this reduces CPS's ability to equalize caseloads through its use of contract caseworkers. Therefore, the Legislature may wish to increase ACYF flexibility by creating full-time State positions from the funding now being used for contract workers.

However, our review methodology produced information that is limited to a specific time frame and, therefore, does not provide a basis for estimating long-term staffing needs for investigating all appropriate reports. In developing our analysis, we encountered three significant limitations:

- Data about the number of cases that were appropriate for investigation but not investigated could not be fully documented. Thus, a key element for determining the number of staff needed remains unavailable.

- ACYF lacks information about the amount of time staff spend in actually providing child protective services. Some staff spend substantial portions of their time in activities not related to child protection. However, ACYF does not record this time in any systematic way. Our analysis relies on estimates provided by individual caseworkers about the amount of time they actually spent performing protective service functions.

- We were unable to identify any widely accepted criteria for assessing the adequacy of staffing. Contacts with other states documented a variety of methods for estimating staff needs. Although we used a New Mexico weighting model and standards developed by the Child Welfare League of America to compare CPS workloads, we found no criteria for establishing an optimum staffing level. Determining the optimum staffing level is a policy decision to be made by the Legislature with input from agency staff.

Steps Needed To Determine Staffing Levels

Determining the number of staff needed to investigate and manage all appropriate reports of child abuse requires accurate data and objective workload standards. Once the information and standards are in place, ACYF will be more able to manage present staff and request additional staff, if needed.

ACYF must establish a management information system that provides accurate and reliable information about key activities. Establishing

this system requires a policy that specifies and defines the information to be reported. ACYF should inform all staff of this policy. ACYF also needs to train staff in how to report information. Supervisors should ensure that the required information is reported in a timely, accurate manner. Finally, central office staff should conduct periodic quality control reviews to ensure the accuracy of reporting.

Accurate data alone will not be sufficient to determine the number of staff required, although it is a necessary first step. Workload standards are also necessary in order to translate activity requirements into staffing levels. Such standards must establish caseloads for staff and distinguish among the different types of cases that can make up these caseloads. Establishing standards requires a joint effort between ACYF and the Legislature. ACYF's role is to demonstrate how different options for selecting standards meet the goals for managing child protective service objectives and to estimate the costs of implementing these options. In assuming this role, ACYF must provide objective research and analysis to document its recommended choices. The Legislature's role is to select the option it thinks is most appropriate within its established funding constraints. In the absence of this type of joint effort, determining the appropriate staffing levels will not be possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ACYF should continue its efforts to develop a management information system that provides accurate, reliable data on child protective service activities. The system should include well-defined policies on reporting requirements, staff training, and adequate staff supervision.

2. ACYF should use the information provided by its management information system to develop and analyze options for staffing CPS functions. The options should include recommended staffing standards and the justification for them.

3. The Legislature should consider establishing appropriate staffing standards based on the information provided by ACYF. In doing so, the Legislature may also wish to consider providing additional full-time staff with funds that are now being used for contract staff.

4. ACYF should use the staffing standards to evaluate its current staffing patterns and reassign staff as needed.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION

During the audit we developed other pertinent information regarding the length of time cases remain in the CPS system and how quickly CPS responds to reports of abuse and neglect.

Length Of Time In System

The length of time a child remains in the CPS system varies from one day to several years. Most of the ongoing cases active in October 1990 that we reviewed had entered the system within the past 2 years. Of the closed cases we reviewed, most were intake investigations that closed within a few weeks of the initial report. However, the cases that closed after transfer to ongoing status remained in the system an average of 1 year or more, depending on the type of case plan.

We looked at the length of time cases remained in the CPS system in two ways. Neither way is statistically precise because each is based on cases that were originally selected for the purpose of evaluating caseworker caseloads. We looked at the length of time that 2,179 ongoing cases active in October 1990 had been in the system. We also looked at the length of time between the opening and closure of 1,516 cases that closed while we were conducting file reviews. In categorizing these cases for our analysis, we recorded the case plan at the time of closure and did not include any information about previous case plans. (For a complete discussion of the methodology used for this analysis, see page A-20 of the Technical Appendix.)

Age Of Active Cases

Most of the 2,179 active ongoing cases in our October 1990 caseworker review had been in the system 2 years or less. Of the active ongoing cases in our review, 66 percent had entered the system during the preceding 24 months.

Few long-term cases were identified during our file review. We found less than 10 percent (203) of the ongoing cases had been in the system more than 5 years, and less than 1 percent (17) had been in the system more than 10 years. According to CPS staff, some cases remain in the system for several years because a child may be removed from his/her home and the family situation does not improve sufficiently to allow the child's return. Although CPS may work for the child's adoption, factors such as age, special needs, or availability of placements may preclude an adoption. If other case goals, such as legal guardianship with a relative, are not an option, long-term foster care may be the best option available. Consequently, the child may remain under CPS supervision until he or she reaches age 18.

Age Of Closed Cases

Our analysis of closed cases indicates that the length of time a case remained in the system varied considerably between cases that closed at intake and those that became ongoing cases. Most cases are closed after a short intake investigation.

Intake cases - The majority of closed cases in our sample were closed after a short investigation. According to CPS staff, cases closed at intake are either invalid or if valid, the child did not appear to be at risk of future abuse. Cases closed at intake constituted 82 percent of the 1,516 closed cases that we reviewed. The average length of time needed to close these cases was 22 days; however, the majority were closed within 15 days of the initial report.

Ongoing cases - The remaining 18 percent of closed cases in our sample were ongoing cases. For our analysis, we divided these cases into two groups:

- In-Home - These were cases that had a Remain with Family case plan at the time of closure. The average length of time necessary to close this type of case was approximately 1 year; however, one-half of these cases closed in 8 months or less.

- Out-of-Home - These were cases that had a Return to Family or one of the out-of-home placement case plans at the time of closure. The average length of time necessary to close this type of case was approximately 3 years; however, one-half of these cases closed in approximately 2 years.

Table 12 shows the length of time the closed cases in the sample remained in the system based on the three types of cases.

TABLE 12

LENGTH OF TIME NEEDED TO CLOSE CPS CASES FOR A SELECTED SAMPLE OF CLOSED CASES

	Intake	---Ongoing Cases---		
		In-Home	Out-of-Home	Total
1 to 180 days	1,237	77	11	1,325
181 days to 1 year	3	66	8	77
More than 1 year but less than 2 years	0	47	13	60
More than 2 years	0	22	32	54
Total number of cases	1,240	212	64	1,516

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff file review of CPS cases.

CPS Response Time

CPS responds to most reports of alleged child abuse within the time frame established by its policy. However, in some cases response time significantly exceeds policy requirements.

CPS has established policies that specify the time in which workers must respond to reports. When reports involve potentially severe or life-threatening situations, investigations must begin within 2 hours after a case is assigned. Investigations of minor problems and less harmful situations must begin within 1 work week. Table 13 describes the four investigative priority levels of child abuse and the associated time frame for a response to each. (For a complete description of the priority levels, see pages A-10 of the Technical Appendix.)

TABLE 13

DESCRIPTIONS AND RESPONSE TIMES OF CPS PRIORITY LEVELS

Priority Level	Description	Response Time After Assignment
One	death, severe physical abuse, life-threatening medical neglect, immediate danger/child left alone	2 hours
Two	serious physical abuse, serious or severe sexual abuse, serious physical or medical neglect	48 hours
Three	moderate physical/medical neglect or sexual abuse, emotional abuse, inadequate supervision	2 work days
Four	minor abuse and neglect, potential abuse or neglect, exploitation, substance exposed newborn	1 work week

Source: Arizona Department of Economic Security, ACYF Policy and Procedures Manual.

Delays appear to occur not only in performing the investigation but also in assigning cases for investigation. We reviewed CPS response time in two ways. We measured the time between the initial report and the onset of the investigation without regard to assignment. Using this measure, we found CPS responded in a timely manner in 83 percent of the cases we reviewed. However, CPS administrators said that they base the timeliness of responses on the date or time a case is assigned to a caseworker. Using the CPS measure, CPS responded in a timely manner in 92 percent of the cases we reviewed.

CPS staff noted that some delays occur for the following reasons:

- A supervisor may delay assigning a report for investigation because staff resources are limited and other priorities take precedence.
- Lower priority cases may not be transmitted from central telephone intake until the day after they are received or longer and, therefore, the amount of time before a case is assigned to a caseworker is increased.
- A supervisor may try to obtain more information before assigning a case.

Although CPS responded in a timely manner in the majority of cases we reviewed, the untimely responses in some cases involved serious allegations. We identified 17 "priority one" reports where investigations were not initiated within 2 hours of the report.(1) Thirteen of these reports were not assigned to a caseworker for 2 or more days after the report was received; however, once assigned, they were investigated in a timely manner. These cases were usually postponed less than 5 days; one case was delayed 11 days. Three of the 17 cases were assigned on the day the report was received; however, investigations were not initiated within the recommended time frames. One of these cases was not assigned for 2 days and was not investigated for another 6 days.

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(1) We identified another 20 "priority one" cases where there was an apparent 1-day delay. However, because response time was not included in our statutory charge we had not recorded the time of day the report was received when we collected our data. Not knowing the time of day the cases were received, it is possible that CPS met its response criterion in these 20 cases.

We were unable to determine why these specific delays occurred. For several cases we contacted the supervisor to determine the reason for the delays. Because some of these cases had been in the system a few years, had been transferred from caseworker to caseworker, and the reasons for delay had rarely been documented, supervisors were not able to provide an explanation. In two cases the supervisor indicated that the intake caseworker may have recorded the incorrect date, thereby causing it to appear as if there had been a delay. In one case CPS delayed assigning the case although action had been taken on this case before it was assigned to a caseworker.(1)

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(1) This case involved an abandoned infant that had been taken to the hospital and could be released only to CPS custody. Although CPS had taken action, the case was not assigned to a caseworker until the hospital was ready to release the infant.

APPENDIX I

TABLES OF CPS REPORT DISPOSITION BY DISTRICT

TABLE 14
CPS REPORT DISPOSITION BY GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ABUSE FOR EACH DISTRICT
BETWEEN AUGUST 1, 1990 AND JANUARY 31, 1991

	Reports Received	Information Only	Appropriate For Investigation But Not Investigated	No Disposition Recorded On CPSCR	Investigated
DISTRICT I					
Death of Child	2	0	0	0	2
Dependent Child	692	180	19	36	457
Emotional Abuse	175	78	13	2	82
Lack of Supervision	935	406	165	20	344
Other	171	50	28	5	88
Physical Abuse	678	54	15	25	584
Potential/Minor Abuse/Neglect	4,879	2,752	320	133	1,674
Severe - Moderate Neglect	414	78	10	13	313
Sexual Abuse	1,315	606	21	32	656
Total	9,261	4,204	591	266	4,200
DISTRICT II					
Death of Child	4	3	0	0	1
Dependent Child	244	86	10	5	143
Emotional Abuse	252	114	45	4	89
Lack of Supervision	451	150	114	7	180
Other	22	14	4	0	4
Physical Abuse	816	227	68	9	512
Potential/Minor Abuse/Neglect	1,291	630	314	24	323
Severe - Moderate Neglect	573	219	37	4	313
Sexual Abuse	755	370	16	10	359
Total	4,408	1,813	608	63	1,924
DISTRICT III					
Death of Child	2	0	0	0	2
Dependent Child	37	5	0	0	32
Emotional Abuse	36	6	0	0	30
Lack of Supervision	137	15	0	0	122
Other	19	6	0	0	13
Physical Abuse	108	8	0	0	100
Potential/Minor Abuse/Neglect	485	212	2	4	267
Severe - Moderate Neglect	41	6	0	0	35
Sexual Abuse	85	18	0	1	66
Total	950	276	2	5	667
DISTRICT IV					
Death of Child	1	1	0	0	0
Dependent Child	100	16	0	1	83
Emotional Abuse	37	4	0	1	32
Lack of Supervision	187	20	0	0	167
Other	8	2	0	0	6
Physical Abuse	143	9	0	1	133
Potential/Minor Abuse/Neglect	808	314	0	5	489
Severe - Moderate Neglect	66	4	0	1	61
Sexual Abuse	134	29	0	0	105
Total	1,484	399	0	9	1,076

TABLE 14 Con't
CPS REPORT DISPOSITION BY GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ABUSE FOR EACH DISTRICT
BETWEEN AUGUST 1, 1990 AND JANUARY 31, 1991

	Reports Received	Information Only	Appropriate For Investigation But Not Investigated	No Disposition Recorded On CPSCR	Investigated
DISTRICT V					
Death of Child	0	0	0	0	0
Dependent Child	42	10	0	1	31
Emotional Abuse	32	6	0	0	26
Lack of Supervision	64	13	0	0	51
Other	7	2	0	0	5
Physical Abuse	71	6	0	2	63
Potential/Minor Abuse/Neglect	594	173	0	8	413
Severe - Moderate Neglect	43	8	0	0	35
Total	937	235	0	15	687
DISTRICT VI					
Death of Child	0	0	0	0	0
Dependent Child	78	13	12	0	53
Emotional Abuse	42	3	4	0	35
Lack of Supervision	139	12	7	0	120
Other	7	3	0	0	4
Physical Abuse	139	5	2	0	132
Potential/Minor Abuse/Neglect	483	118	34	1	330
Severe - Moderate Neglect	68	3	0	0	65
Sexual Abuse	117	15	10	1	91
Total	1,073	172	69	2	830
STATEWIDE TOTAL	18,113	7,099	1,270	360	9,384

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff analysis of Child Protective Services Central Registry monthly reports between August 1, 1990 and January 31, 1991.

TABLE 15
CPS REPORT DISPOSITION BY PRIORITY LEVEL FOR EACH DISTRICT
BETWEEN AUGUST 1, 1990 AND JANUARY 31, 1991

District	Priority Level	Reports Received	Information Only	Appropriate For Investigation But Not Investigated	No Disposition Recorded On CPSCR	Investigated
DISTRICT I	One	19	2	0	0	17
	Two	1,360	564	13	39	744
	Three	2,591	740	220	73	1,558
	Four	5,291	2,898	358	154	1,881
Total		9,261	4,204	591	266	4,200
DISTRICT II	One	18	7	0	0	11
	Two	961	375	17	12	557
	Three	2,052	760	270	26	996
	Four	1,377	671	321	25	360
Total		4,408	1,813	608	63	1,924
DISTRICT III	One	53	4	0	0	49
	Two	68	10	0	1	57
	Three	314	44	0	0	270
	Four	515	218	2	4	291
Total		950	276	2	5	667
DISTRICT IV	One	98	5	0	0	93
	Two	137	17	0	2	118
	Three	392	51	0	1	340
	Four	857	326	0	6	525
Total		1,484	399	0	9	1,076
DISTRICT V	One	32	3	0	0	29
	Two	68	6	0	4	58
	Three	222	48	0	2	172
	Four	615	178	0	9	428
Total		937	235	0	15	687
DISTRICT VI	One	69	1	1	0	67
	Two	117	8	5	1	103
	Three	347	35	20	0	292
	Four	540	128	43	1	368
Total		1,073	172	69	2	830
STATEWIDE		18,113	7,099	1,270	360	9,384

Source: Office of the Auditor General, staff analysis of Child Protective Services Central Registry monthly reports between August 1, 1990 and January 31, 1991.

APPENDIX II

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Introduction

This appendix describes the methodological design and procedures used to determine caseload size, caseload mix, staffing ratios, and the number and type of reports CPS received.

ACYF is organized into six districts Statewide. The following list identifies each district, the location of each district administrative office, and the counties that constitute each district.

District I:	Phoenix	- Maricopa County
District II:	Tucson	- Pima County
District III:	Flagstaff	- Coconino, Yavapai, Navajo, and Apache Counties
District IV:	Yuma	- Yuma, Mohave, and La Paz Counties
District V:	Casa Grande	- Pinal and Gila Counties
District VI:	Bisbee	- Cochise, Santa Cruz, Greenlee, and Graham Counties

At the outset of the study we met with numerous DES ACYF staff to become familiar with CPS operations. We visited offices in five of the six ACYF districts and interviewed program managers, assistant program managers, supervisors, caseworkers, and telephone intake staff in the six districts. We accompanied caseworkers as they performed investigations and case management activities and met with telephone intake staff during the time they received calls from the public. In addition to our meetings with CPS staff, we also met with central office administrators to gain an understanding of policies and procedures, Statewide goals, and administrative concerns regarding CPS operations.

Sampling Methodology

The research design for determining caseload size, caseload mix, and staffing ratios was based on a Statewide sample of caseworkers and a file review of their cases that were active during October 1990.

From our visits to local offices and interviews, we concluded that a Statewide sample was needed. Staff identified several factors

peculiar to their office or district that may affect case management. Of particular concern was the differences between urban and rural offices, such as the availability of placements and traveling long distances to visit children in rural areas. In addition, we identified differences in operations not only among districts but also among local offices that may affect caseload. We concluded that each district must be represented in the study.

Because the primary information requested by the Legislature concerned the number of cases handled by a caseworker, we selected the caseworker as the unit of analysis. Although numerous ACYF employees are involved in CPS activities, we defined the population to include only those caseworkers that investigate reports of abuse and directly perform ongoing case management functions. Our definition excludes telephone intake staff, parent aides, day care, foster home and adoptive home licensing staff, and night/weekend staff and supervisors that may manage some cases.

We also excluded the adoption and young adult program units in Maricopa County from our study population. When we initially defined the population, we viewed these units as organizationally separate from the typical CPS units. However, during the course of the study we concluded that their exclusion may influence the result of certain analyses, such as the length of time cases remain in the system. For this reason, we later collected information from the population of the adoption and young adult program units to supplement selected analyses.

To determine the population of caseworkers, we identified caseworkers appearing on ACYF organizational charts. We then contacted unit supervisors or area program managers to confirm that those caseworkers were working in their respective units in October 1990, to ascertain their specific duties, if they were contract or State employees, and to identify any additional caseworkers. The defined population, including contract caseworkers, totaled 391 caseworkers Statewide.

The size of the sample was calculated by using the generally accepted confidence level of 95 percent with a reliability factor of plus or minus 4 percent. The required sample size totaled 236 caseworkers. Recognizing that some caseworkers selected in the sample may have to be

replaced because of vacancies or for other reasons, we elected to over-sample by 35 caseworkers, which resulted in a total sample of 271 caseworkers. Caseworkers were then randomly selected and identified by district and unit. The sample adequately represents the caseworker population by district.

We also performed a follow-up analysis in District I for February 1991. At the time of our original data collection, District I was in the process of hiring several new caseworkers and reorganizing offices. CPS administrators said that most new employees should be hired by January 1991. Because of the influx of new caseworkers, we felt that caseload size might be influenced. Therefore, we decided to collect data a second time to determine the initial impact that additional employees might have on caseload size. We followed the same procedures in determining the population. Once the population was confirmed, we randomly selected 88 caseworkers and an additional 20 caseworkers in the event we needed to replace any of the staff initially selected.

Data Collection

Data collection began in early November 1990 and continued through January 1991. Data was collected for cases that were active during October 1990. According to ACYF administrators, October 1990 was a good month to sample because it adequately represented an average month for reports. It is not a month that typically has an unusually high number of calls, such as September because of the start of school or the summer months that typically have fewer reports. A month time frame was also considered an adequate period of time to encapsulate caseload information. To identify active cases, we used the case count summary completed at the end of the month by each caseworker. This summary lists all cases handled by the caseworker during the month.

Before reviewing case files, Auditor General staff took steps to verify that case count summaries were accurate. If available, auditors reviewed supervisor logs to ensure that all cases that had been assigned by the supervisor appeared on the case count summary. Because not all units

maintain supervisor logs and not all logs are kept in the same manner, we were unable to review supervisor logs in every unit. Auditors also compared the summary against the actual case file to ensure that all appropriate cases in the caseworker's possession had been listed and that all cases listed could be accounted for.

Auditors reviewed each caseworker's cases for the month and collected the following information for each case:

- Caseworker identification information - name, location, sample number, and type of worker
- Dates - date of report, date of case assignment, date of initial contact, date case was transferred to ongoing status, and date of case closure
- Priorities at the time of telephone intake and after report investigation
- Characteristics of the case - intake or ongoing, new case in October 1990, open or closed in October 1990, and transferred to another caseworker
- Case plan as of October 1990
- Number of children served

During the file reviews auditors also verified that cases appearing on the summaries were open in October 1990. For example, even though a case appeared on the October 1990 end-of-the-month summary, the information in some files stated that the case had been closed in September 1990. In these instances, the case was not included in our database. There were also instances in which the documentation in a file indicated no work had been done on the case for several months. In these instances, auditors spoke with the caseworker or supervisor to determine if recent contact had been made on the case or if it should have been closed. If it should have been closed, the case was not included in the database.

In addition to a file review, we also surveyed caseworkers to obtain the information needed for the analysis. We obtained information regarding their type and length of employment with CPS; estimates of the amount of time they spent on intake, ongoing, or other ACYF functions during October 1990, and if they were full-time or part-time employees.

After completing the data collection phase, we spent several weeks verifying information, collecting missing forms or information, and locating cases that had not been entered into the database. We also tested the internal consistency of the information (such as intake caseworkers' cases that should have been designated as intake rather than ongoing cases) and verified questionable entries. In total we reviewed various files that contained information from more than 5,000 cases.

For the follow-up analysis of Maricopa County, we collected data for February 1991. We obtained this follow-up information from cases that were active in February 1991 and performed the same general procedures as we did for the initial collection effort.

DATA ANALYSIS

Number And Type Of Reports

To determine the number and types of reports, we compiled numbers from CPS Central Registry reports from August 1, 1990 through January 31, 1991. Central Registry reports contain information about each incident of abuse reported to CPS. We compiled this information to determine the number and types of incidents reported, the priority assigned to each at the time the incident was reported, and the disposition of each report.

Because we were aware that some data fields in the Central Registry are not reliable, we performed a limited test of the specific fields we would be using. We collected intake forms at local offices and then compared these forms to the Central Registry information. We did this to confirm that the information had been entered correctly into the Central Registry. Although we identified a few errors, we were reasonably assured that the number of reports received and initial priority characteristics assigned to data fields were accurately recorded.

However, the "after investigation" field does not appear to be complete. We found that 32 percent of the reports did not have an "after investigation" finding entered. This limited our ability to accurately determine the number of valid or invalid reports.

To determine the type of report, we used CPS priority codes to identify the types of abuse cases reported to CPS. We performed two analyses for each type of report. The first analysis identified and segregated reports in terms of the priority level assigned to the case. The priority code is outlined in DES ACYF policy and determines the amount of time within which a caseworker must respond to a report. Table 16 provides a list of the CPS priority levels, a description of the allegations, and the prescribed response time for each.

TABLE 16

DESCRIPTION OF ALLEGATIONS AND RESPONSE TIMES OF CPS BY PRIORITY LEVELS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Priority Level	Characteristic	Description of Allegation	Response Time After Assignment
One	01	Death of a Child	2 hours
	02	Severe Physical Abuse	
	03	Life-Threatening Medical Neglect	
	04	Reserved	
	05	Immediate Danger/ Child Left Alone	
	06	Infant Doe - (child younger than 12 months being deprived of necessary medical care or nourishment)	
Two	07	Serious Physical Abuse	48 hours
	08	Serious Physical/ Medical Neglect	
	09	Severe Sexual Abuse	
	10	Serious Sexual Abuse	
Three	11	Moderate Physical Abuse	2 work days
	12	Moderate Physical/ Medical Neglect	
	13	Moderate Sexual Abuse	
	14	Emotional Abuse	
	15	Reserved	
	16	Inadequate Supervision	
	17	Dependent Child Under Age 12	
Four	18	Minor Abuse and Neglect	1 work week
	19	Potential Abuse or Neglect	
	20	Dependent Child Over Age 12	
	21	Exploitation	
	22	Substance-Exposed Newborn	
	23	Delinquent/Incorrigible Child Under Age 8	

Source: Department of Economic Security, ACYF policy and procedures manual.

By priority level, we calculated the total number of reports, the total number investigated, and the disposition.

The second analysis identified the number and type of reports by type of abuse. We grouped cases with similar characteristics from the four priority levels. For example, the sex abuse category includes characteristic numbers 9, 10, and 13. We then calculated the number of reports, the number investigated and the disposition based on abuse type. Table 17 lists the abuse types and the corresponding priority characteristics.

TABLE 17

ABUSE TYPES AND CORRESPONDING CHARACTERISTICS

Abuse Types	Corresponding Characteristics
Death	1
Dependent Child	17, 20
Emotional Abuse	14
Lack of Supervision	5, 16
Physical Abuse	2, 7, 11
Potential and Minor Abuse/Negligence	18, 19
Neglect	3, 8, 12
Sex Abuse	9 10 13
Other	4, 6, 15, 21, 22, 23

Caseload Size

We determined the size of the average CPS caseload in two ways: for all full-time caseworkers and for each type of caseworker, i.e., intake and ongoing caseworkers. To identify caseworkers that have an excessive number of cases or an excessive number of the most difficult types of cases, we applied a case weighting component. (See page 16 for the results of the case weighting.)

Caseload size for full-time caseworkers - Of 236 caseworkers in the sample, we identified 201 performing case management activities full-time. To determine average caseload size for full-time caseworkers, we calculated the total number of cases these caseworkers managed in October 1990 and then divided this figure by the total number of full-time caseworkers. We determined the average caseload for full-time caseworkers Statewide and also by district.

Caseload size for the types of caseworkers - To determine average caseload size by type of caseworker, we grouped caseworkers by the type of case they manage. For purposes of this study, we grouped caseworkers into four categories: intake, ongoing, mixed, and other mix.

- Intake caseworkers primarily perform investigative activities and initiate services. An intake caseworker may also assess the child's and family's situation and their ability to change, and make recommendations to the court. Intake cases that are not sent to ongoing status are typically closed within 2 to 3 weeks.
- Ongoing caseworkers primarily perform case management services for cases that remain in the system from several months to several years. An ongoing caseworker coordinates services and the activities of the parties involved, monitors and assesses the child's and family's progress, and makes recommendations to the courts.
- Mixed caseworkers manage both intake and ongoing cases and perform functions appropriate for each type of case.
- Other mix caseworkers may manage intake, ongoing, or both intake and ongoing cases in addition to performing other ACYF functions such as licensing.

The following steps were taken to determine caseload size.

1. For each caseworker group, we calculated the total number of cases handled by these caseworkers during October 1990.

2. We then divided the total number of cases for each group by the total number of caseworkers in each group. We determined the average caseload size for each group of caseworkers by district and Statewide. In some districts because there were so few mixed and other mix caseworkers, a figure for average caseload size was not meaningful; therefore, this figure is not presented.

3. We repeated the analysis for a February 1991 sample in District I.

Staffing Ratios

The staffing ratio analysis is similar to the caseload size analysis. However, this analysis factors in the percentage of time all sampled caseworkers devoted to intake and ongoing activities. Factoring in the

amount of time the 236 sampled caseworkers spent on CPS activities allows us to determine the number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) caseworkers and the ratio of cases to each FTE.

To determine the amount of time caseworkers devoted to CPS duties and other ACYF functions, we asked sampled caseworkers to estimate the time they spent in intake, ongoing, and other ACYF activities such as licensing functions for October 1990. We also considered if they were full- or part-time caseworkers.

To determine staffing ratios we calculated the following:

1. the total number of intake and ongoing cases by district

2. the amount of time FTEs spent on intake and ongoing activities. (For caseworkers that performed not only intake and ongoing functions, but also other ACYF activities, we included in our calculation only the portion of FTE time that was related to intake and ongoing activities.) The following steps describe the specific calculations and Exhibit A illustrates the calculations described.

   - the total FTEs (column 2 in Exhibit A)
   - total portion of FTE time spent on intake activities (column 5)
   - total portion of FTE time spent on ongoing activities (column 6)
   - total portion of FTE time spent on CPS activities (column 7)

3. total number of cases for each category divided by the total number of FTEs for each category of caseworker. For example, the total number of intake cases was divided by total number of intake FTEs .

4. repeated the analysis of data for District I for February 1991

EXHIBIT A

CALCULATIONS OF CPS CASEWORKER TIME BY ACTIVITY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Caseworker	FTE	Intake Percentage of Time	Ongoing Percentage of Time	Intake Portion FTE	Ongoing Portion FTE	Intake/Ongoing Portion Combined FTE
A	0.5	0%	100%	0.0	0.5	0.5
B	1.0	100	0	1.0	0.0	1.0
C	1.0	60	40	0.6	0.4	1.0
D	1.0	40	30	0.4	0.3	0.7

We performed a similar analysis by district to determine what staffing ratios would be if CPS investigated 100 percent of reports considered

appropriate for investigation. This analysis is based on estimates of the number of additional cases CPS caseworkers would have handled if all reports designated as "appropriate for investigation but not investigated" had been investigated. However, because we suspect that not all cases appropriate for investigation are being classified as such, this analysis provides a minimum expected increase in staffing ratios.

To determine staffing ratios for an increased investigation rate, we took the following steps.

- CPS monthly reports from August 1, 1990 through January 31, 1991 were reviewed to document the number of reports investigated and the number of reports recorded as "appropriate for investigation but not investigated."
- A ratio of the reports designated as "appropriate for investigation but not investigated" to those that were investigated was calculated for each district.
- Each district's ratio was converted to a multiplier.
- The multiplier was applied to each district's actual volume of investigations managed by the sample caseworkers for October 1990. The number of cases which would have been investigated by this group with an increased investigation rate was extrapolated.
- The previously described staffing ratio analysis was repeated; however, the number of extrapolated cases rather than the number of cases actually managed was used.

Caseload Mix

The caseload mix analysis describes the makeup of active cases. We analyzed caseload mix three ways: a proportional breakout of the number of active intake versus ongoing cases; an analysis of the investigative findings that brought the case to ongoing case management services; and an analysis of October 1990 case plans for active ongoing cases.

To determine the proportion of intake and ongoing cases, we took the following steps.

- We identified cases that appeared twice in the database. Because we did not want to double count these cases, we determined which record should be excluded from the analysis. For example, a case may have been an intake case and was transferred to another intake caseworker. In this instance we included only one intake record for this analysis.

- We identified both intake and ongoing cases. We calculated totals for both types of cases and determined that 35 percent of the active cases in our sample for October 1990 were intake cases and 65 percent were ongoing cases.

- We reviewed monthly CPS reports of case count summaries. Because our review was not a statistical sample of cases, we wanted to ensure that the proportion in our review sample was comparable to CPS records. The months we reviewed confirmed the approximate breakout by month of one-third intake cases and two-thirds ongoing cases.

To determine the type of abuse that brought cases to ongoing services, we identified the ongoing cases in our review sample. The type of abuse is identified by the abuse finding that was assigned to the case based on the investigation. The analysis is based on the most serious finding of abuse or neglect against any of the children involved.

We took the following steps to determine case mix by investigative finding for ongoing cases active in October 1990.

- We identified duplicates in the database as previously described.

- We identified ongoing cases active in October 1990. There were 2,225 ongoing cases. (This excludes Interstate Compact on the Place of Children cases because they originated in another state. Courtesy supervision cases were also excluded because investigative findings and dates were not always in the file maintained by the supervising caseworker.)

- Of the 2,225 cases we identified 139 cases that did not include the "after investigation" characteristic.

- We prepared distributions by "after investigation" characteristics to determine the mix of cases requiring ongoing services. The distributions were prepared Statewide.

- We grouped investigative findings into similar abuse-type categories.

For ongoing cases, the case plan is a more descriptive indicator of type of case than priority level characteristics. The case plan is the stated goal of the case and directs case management. CPS policy lists seven major case plans: Remain with Family, Return to Family, Placement with Relatives, Adoption, Legal Guardianship, Long-Term Foster Care, and Independent Living.

For purposes of this study we have used additional case plan codes. Caseworkers frequently use a case plan of Severance and Adoption when the case goal is adoption but the rights of the parents have not yet been severed. We also recorded children from other states that are supervised by Arizona caseworkers as an Interstate Compact on the Place of Children case plan. Also, cases that originate and are maintained in one Arizona district but are supervised by a caseworker in another district are termed a Courtesy Supervision case plan. In addition, we also designated intake cases with an Intake case plan rather than one of the seven case plans listed. We did so because we wanted to distinguish intake cases from ongoing cases in certain analyses.

We took the following steps to determine case mix by case plan for all active ongoing cases.

- We reviewed cases based on case plan. For cases with multiple case plans, only the most time-intensive case plan was selected. (Based on a caseworker survey, we determined which case plans typically require the most work. For a description of the survey results, see page A-19.)
- We identified the ongoing cases in October 1990. Twelve of the 2,464 cases did not have a case plan.
- We prepared a Statewide distribution by case plan.

Case Weighting

Because caseload averages and staffing ratios alone do not provide a complete picture of caseload size, due to the many factors involved in cases, we included a case weighting component to the analysis. The degree of difficulty of a case or the amount of time required to manage a case can be influenced by several factors. One case may consist of only one child, another may consist of several children. Siblings may be placed in more than one foster home; thus, a caseworker may be required to visit more than one location. Court requirements for dependent children may also place additional work on caseworkers. To further assess caseload size and mix, we used case weighting to account for the various factors and to provide a more complete picture.

During the initial phase of the study we reviewed case weighting methods used within CPS and in other states. We selected the model used by

New Mexico because it has established caseload standards, is easily adaptable to Arizona, and was recommended by experts in the field of child protective services.

We are not specifically recommending that Arizona CPS adopt the New Mexico model. Rather, we are using this model as a method of comparison to illustrate that Caseload A consisting of X number of cases is not necessarily equal to Caseload B with the same number of cases.

New Mexico Model - New Mexico developed a caseload formula to comply with a consent decree of the Federal court. A formula was developed to determine maximum caseload size for mixed caseloads. (Mixed caseloads in this instance refers to the different types of case plans such as Return Home, Adoption, Long-Term Foster Care, etc.) The formula was developed by conducting extensive interviews to determine the activities involved in each case plan and the percentage of time those activities required. The Return Home case plan was determined to be the most time-intensive case plan and became the standard against which to compare other case plans.

In addition, New Mexico staff assumed that while other case plans might require equivalent amounts of time, no case plan would require more time than the Return Home case plan. For example, New Mexico determined that a case plan with the goal of Adoption requires the same amount of time as a case plan with the goal of Return Home. A Long-Term Foster Care case plan requires only 40 percent of the time it takes to handle one Return Home case plan. Case points were then established based on the percentage of time assigned to each case. Return Home and Adoption case plans were assigned 100 points, and the Long-Term Foster Care case plan was assigned 40 points.

The court decree also dictated maximum caseload standards. A caseload could not consist of more than 20 families (as defined by the court decree) or contain more than 35 children in out of home placements. Using these standards, the New Mexico model established a 2,000 point limit per caseload. This was determined by multiplying 20 families by 100 points assigned the Return to Home case plan.

We determined that the New Mexico model could be customized using Arizona case plans. Due to time limitations of our study, we were not able to conduct extensive interviews to determine activities and the percentage of time associated with those activities as did New Mexico. However, from the interviews we conducted during the initial phase of our study, we concluded that, like New Mexico, Arizona's Return to Family case plan is the most time-intensive. We then established a Return to Family case plan as the model case plan and assigned it 100 points.

To establish the relationship of other case plans to the model case plan, we surveyed caseworkers selected in our original sample that had recent experience with ongoing cases. We explained the New Mexico model to them and then asked them to estimate the proportion of time each case plan required compared to the model case plan. We asked caseworkers to base the estimates on their overall experience with the majority or typical cases under each case plan rather than extreme cases. If they had no experience with a particular case plan, we asked them to mark it as "not applicable." For intake caseworkers, we requested that they fill out the survey only if they had managed ongoing cases within the last year or if they functioned as an intake/ongoing caseworker.

We conducted statistical analyses of the responses and, based on the responses, selected weighting factors for each case plan that best summarized the caseworkers' experience. We reviewed the results with our methodologist and discussed which measure of central tendency (mean, median, or mode) would most accurately measure the caseworkers' normal experiences. The mode (the value occurring most frequently) and the median (the value in a distribution in which 50 percent of the values lie above and 50 percent lie below it) were selected. We selected these measures of central tendency over the mean (the average) because outlying responses at both ends of the distribution distort the mean. In most cases, the mode and median were identical or differed only slightly. For those case plans in which the difference was greater than a few points, we selected the mode because we felt it most accurately represents the majority of caseworkers' responses. In cases where the majority opinion was unclear (bi-modal distributions), we selected the median value at the center of the distribution, which fell between the modes.

After the data was compiled, we met with ACYF administrators and reviewed the results with them. We also asked a small group of supervisors and area program managers to review the results and assign an appropriate point value to the Adoption case plan because we had not asked caseworkers to do this in the original survey. Although there was no consensus on the number of points assigned to all case plans, the reviewers generally agreed with the results or disagreed only by a few points. The Long-Term Foster Care and Independent Living case plans and Intake had the greatest diversity of opinion. We consulted our methodologist and concluded that the dissenting opinions did not present sufficient reasons to override the survey results. We elected to use the original survey results and the reviewers' point value for Adoption case plan as presented in Exhibit B.

EXHIBIT B

POINTS ASSIGNED TO SURVEY CASE PLANS

Case Plan	Points
Return to Family	100
Severance and Adoption	100
Intake	100
Remain with Family	80
Placement with Relative	80
Adoption	75
Legal Guardianship	60
ICPC/Courtesy Supervision	60
Long-Term Foster Care	50
Independent Living	50

Application of case weighting model to Arizona caseloads - To apply a case weighting model to Arizona caseloads, we collected data on case plans as of October 1990 and also data for case plans in District I as of February 1991. Some cases with multiple children may have multiple case plans. For example, a case with three children may have as many as three case plans: one child may have a Remain with Family case plan, the second

child may have a Placement with Relative case plan, and the third child may have a Return to Family case plan. Because the case weighting formula is designed to use the most time-intensive case plan, we used the case plan with the highest point value for our calculations.

To determine the weighted caseload, we took the following steps.

1. We applied the respective point values to each case on every caseworker's caseload and totaled the points.

2. We compared each weighted caseload to the maximum point value. For a full-time CPS caseworker the maximum point value was 2,000 points per caseload. For caseworkers that were less than full-time CPS caseworkers, the point value was standardized based on the percentage of time spent on CPS activities. For example, if an other mix caseworker spends 75 percent of his/her time on CPS, then we adjusted the cap to 75 percent of 2,000 points or 1,500 points.

3. We developed ranges based on the percentage of the cap and determined the number of caseworkers by district and Statewide that fell within those ranges. For example, 50 caseworkers carried weighted caseloads that equaled less than 50 percent of the cap. Forty-four caseworkers exceeded the cap.

<u>Length Of</u>
<u>Time In System</u>

To determine the length of time each case has been in the CPS system we performed various analyses. We concluded separate analyses should be performed for intake and ongoing cases because the majority of intake cases are closed within a few weeks and those cases passed to ongoing status typically take several months, even years to resolve. A determination of the average length of time each case remains in the system would be distorted by the extreme nature of the two categories.

In addition, the majority of cases we reviewed were open at the time of our review. The analysis provides information on the length of time active ongoing cases have been in the system but provides no information about the length of time necessary to resolve a case. Therefore, we performed a separate analysis of the cases that closed during our review in an attempt to obtain some information about the length of time cases remain in the CPS system.

The case longevity analyses are not statistical; therefore, the results cannot be inferred on the population of cases. Because the caseworker was the primary unit of analysis, the sample drawn was based on caseworkers and not cases. However, in reviewing caseworkers' files we reviewed over 3,600 cases; over 2,100 active ongoing cases and over 1,500 closed cases. Because of the number of cases reviewed, we think our analysis does provide some indication of the length of time cases remain in the system even though it lacks statistical precision.

To determine the length of time active ongoing cases remain in the CPS system, we performed the following steps.

1. We identified duplicate cases in the database, as previously described, so as not to double count them in this analysis.

2. We defined the entry date of a case as the date of the report or the date of the incident that opened the current case. A family may have many contacts with CPS over several years, and once a case is opened, subsequent reports may also be made and investigated by CPS. However, during our file review, we identified the report that brought the case into CPS but had not been resolved as of October 31, 1990. All dates collected are based on the report for that episode.

3. We identified the number of ongoing cases (2,179) and determined the length of time each case had been in the CPS system.

4. We prepared a distribution of cases by year and month and then determined ranges.

The second analysis examined cases that had closed during the time of our review. For this analysis the time frame is not the same for each office visited. Cases were selected because they were active in October 1990 (and February 1991 in District I) but could have closed at any time during our review. For example, when we visited the Page office in mid November 1990, we captured the dates of the cases that had closed up until the time of our visit. However, we visited the Show Low office in mid January 1991. It is possible that we may have captured a larger number of closed cases there because these had two additional months to close.

In addition, we included closed cases from the District I adoption and young adult program units. As noted previously, these units were

excluded from our caseworker sample. However, because these cases have the potential of being in the system for a longer period of time, they should be considered in an analysis of the length of time cases remain in the CPS system. Therefore, we collected information on the cases that closed in the units in October 1990 and included them in our analysis of closed cases.

To determine the length of time required to close a case, we took the following steps.

1. We identified all closed cases (1,516).
2. We determined the total number of days the cases remained in the CPS system before closure (the date of closure minus the date of the report).
3. We distributed the number of days the cases remained in the system into three categories: intake cases, ongoing in-home cases (cases with a Remain with Family case plan), and ongoing cases with out-of-home placement case plans (based on the case plan at the time of closure.)

These analyses are reported Statewide only and not by district because of the inconsistent time frame, the addition of District I adoption and young adult program unit cases, and the number of closed cases in some categories of cases was too small to provide meaningful district information.

Response Time

To determine how quickly CPS responds to allegations of abuse, we compared the date of contact against the date a report was made and against the date a case was assigned to a caseworker.

CPS policy dictates how quickly investigations of reports of abuse should be initiated. The following list briefly states the required response times. (For more information on priorities and required response times, see page A-10.)

- **Priority One** - immediate response but no longer than 2 hours.

- **Priority Two** - prompt response but no longer than 48 hours.
- **Priority Three** - prompt response but no longer than 2 work days.
- **Priority Four** - prompt response but no longer than 1 work week.

To determine how quickly investigations are initiated, we took the following steps.

1. We identified duplicate cases in the database so as not to double count them in the analysis.
2. We identified case records that did not contain the information necessary to include them in the analysis. Any case file that did not include the priority characteristic, the date of report, or the date of the contact was excluded.
3. We identified the cases for analysis and determined response time for each (the date of the contact minus the date of the report). For Priority Three and Four cases to accurately reflect the number of working days, the program excluded weekends.
4. We identified the total number of cases that were out of compliance.
5. We divided the number of cases that were out of compliance by the total number of cases.
6. We determined the percentage of investigations that exceeded established policy. (The percentage may be slightly over-estimated or underestimated because we did not collect time-of-day data. Therefore, it is possible that a Priority One allegation was reported at 11 p.m. on one day and investigated at 1 a.m. the next day. Although it is within the ACYF policy guideline of 2 hours, in our analysis it would be counted as outside policy guidelines. Our analysis calculated by day only. Likewise, a Priority One call may have been received at 9 a.m. but not investigated until 12:30 p.m. In this case our analysis would have considered the investigation as timely and in compliance with policy because the unit of our analysis was by day, not by hour.

According to CPS administrators, CPS measures response time from the time a case is <u>assigned to a caseworker</u> and not from the time the report is received. For example, a Priority Two allegation is received at 8:30 a.m. by a CPS telephone intake caseworker. The case is sent to the appropriate local office and reviewed by a supervisor. The supervisor determines that the report is appropriate for investigation and assigns it to a caseworker at 4:30 p.m. the same day. It is from this time that the investigation must be initiated within 48 hours.

To determine the response time based on CPS practice, we took the following steps.

1. We reviewed all out-of-compliance cases identified by the calculations described above.

2. We determined which cases would be in compliance if the calculation had been based on the assignment date rather than the report date. (If the case was late based on the report date and the assignment date could not be determined, the case was not considered late for this analysis.

3. We divided the number of cases out of compliance by the total number of cases to determine the number of cases out of compliance with CPS practice.