

The September 2019 Arizona Department of Child Safety special report found that the Department engages in recommended recruitment practices, but foster parent feedback indicates a need for improved customer service and more information about children. We made 6 recommendations to the Department, and its status in implementing the recommendations is as follows:

## Status of 6 recommendations

Implemented	3
<b>Not implemented</b>	<b>3</b>

The Department has implemented 3 of the recommendations directed to it but has not implemented the remaining 3 recommendations. Because the Department has not made further progress toward implementing these 3 recommendations since the 24-month followup and did not outline a plan and/or estimated time frame for doing so, we do not see further benefit in continuing to follow up with the Department. Therefore, unless otherwise directed by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, this report concludes our follow-up work on the Department's efforts to implement the recommendations from the September 2019 report.

### Finding 1: Foster parent feedback indicates a need for improved Department customer service and more information about children in their care, which could help improve foster home recruitment and retention

1. The Department should develop and implement a customer service model to improve foster parent recruitment and retention and engage in continuous quality improvement (i.e., systematically obtaining and incorporating feedback) to ensure the model's successful implementation.

**Not implemented**—Although the Department agreed to implement this recommendation in its response to our audit report, as of September 2022, it has not developed and implemented a customer service model and reported it does not plan to do so. However, the Department reported that it believes developing some components of a customer service model, such as prioritizing the customer, i.e., potential and existing foster parents, and increasing support to foster parents, will improve foster home recruitment and retention. As a result, the Department reported that it plans to develop some components of a customer service model. For example, in order to improve foster parents' fostering experience, the Department plans to develop and implement new criteria that will help it identify and select foster home recruitment and support contractors who excel in prioritizing the needs of potential and current foster parents and discontinue working with contractors who have not prioritized these needs. The Department did not provide an estimated time frame for implementing some components of a customer service model.

2. The Department should, as required by statute, provide foster parents with complete, updated written placement packet information upon placement of children with foster parents. The Department should also monitor caseworker provision of placement packets to foster parents and obtain feedback from foster parents regarding their receipt of complete placement packets through its implementation of Recommendation 1 above.

**Not implemented**—The Department reported that it provides hard copy placement packets to foster parents for a child's initial placement after being removed from their home and makes packets for subsequent placements available to foster parents through an online portal. Additionally, the Department has periodically sent emails to its staff reminding them about the importance of providing placement packets to foster parents. However, although

the Department asks foster parents whether they have received a placement packet, it has not obtained their feedback regarding the usefulness of the placement packets they received nor did it provide an estimated time frame for doing so as part of implementing Recommendation 1 (see explanation for Recommendation 1). As a result, the Department lacks information to determine if the placement packets it provides to foster parents are complete and up-to-date.

3. The Department should review the data collection procedures for why foster parents close their licenses and identify and implement opportunities to improve data quality. This should include allowing for more than 1 reason for license closure to be selected, providing more guidance to contractors on how to gather and enter information, and considering other methods of collecting this data, such as an anonymous web survey.

**Not implemented**—The Department has not made further progress toward implementing this recommendation since the 24-month followup. Specifically, as reported in our 24-month followup, although the Department updated the form that foster parents complete to close their license to allow foster parents to select the reason(s) for closure from a list of reasons, its licensing database does not allow for more than 1 reason to be recorded. Additionally, the Department reported that it plans to fully implement this recommendation through its case management system, Guardian, but does not have an estimated time frame for doing so.

## **Finding 2: Department’s and contractors’ inadequate intake practices could impede foster home recruitment efforts**

4. The Department should develop and implement procedures—such as establishing expectations, guidance, and monitoring activities—to ensure contractors and Department staff adequately handle intake in English and Spanish, including answering or returning phone calls in a timely manner and meeting Department expectations for call quality.

**Implemented at 24 months**

5. The Department should develop and implement procedures to ensure contractors maintain websites with information about how to become a foster parent in Spanish.

**Implemented at 24 months**

## **Finding 3: Department’s monitoring of prior foster home recruitment and support contracts did not ensure contractors fulfilled several contract requirements**

6. The Department should continue implementing ACM for its new foster home recruitment and support contracts to help ensure that its contractors adequately perform core contract requirements, such as providing access to respite care and other requirements the Department deems critical to the contracts’ success.

**Implemented at 24 months**