State of Arizona Office of the Auditor General

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

FAMILY BUILDERS PROGRAM

Report to the Arizona Legislature
By Debra K. Davenport
Auditor General

November 2001
Report No. 01-30

The Auditor General is appointed by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, a bipartisan committee composed of five senators and five representatives. Her mission is to provide independent and impartial information and specific recommendations to improve the operations of state and local government entities. To this end, she provides financial audits and accounting services to the state and political subdivisions and performance audits of state agencies and the programs they administer.

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Senator Ken Bennett, Chairman
Representative Roberta L. Voss, Vice-Chairman

Senator Herb Guenther	Representative Robert Blendu
Senator Dean Martin	Representative Gabrielle Giffords
Senator Peter Rios	Representative Barbara Leff
Senator Tom Smith	Representative James Sedillo
Senator Randall Gnant (ex-officio)	Representative James Weiers (ex-officio)

Audit Staff

Carol Cullen—*Manager*
and Contact Person (602) 553-0333
Tanya Nieri—Team Leader
Terri Place—Team Member

Copies of the Auditor General's reports are free.
You may request them by contacting us at:

Office of the Auditor General
2910 N. 44th Street, Suite 410
Phoenix, AZ 85018
(602) 553-0333

Additionally, many of our reports can be found in electronic format at:
www.auditorgen.state.az.us

DEBRA K. DAVENPORT, CPA
AUDITOR GENERAL

STATE OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF THE
AUDITOR GENERAL

WILLIAM THOMSON
DEPUTY AUDITOR GENERAL

November 1, 2001

Members of the Arizona Legislature

The Honorable Jane Dee Hull, Governor

Mr. John Clayton, Director
Department of Economic Security

Transmitted herewith is a report of the Auditor General, An Evaluation of the Family Builders Program administered by the Arizona Department of Economic Security. This evaluation was conducted pursuant to Laws 2000, Ch. 23, §2. I am also transmitting with this report a copy of the Report Highlights for this evaluation to provide a quick summary for your convenience.

As outlined in its response, the Department of Economic Security plans to implement all of the recommendations.

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

This report will be released to the public on November 2, 2001.

Sincerely,

Debra K. Davenport
Auditor General

Enclosure

2910 NORTH 44th STREET • SUITE 410 • PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85018 • (602) 553-0333 • FAX (602) 553-0051

SUMMARY

The Office of the Auditor General has completed an evaluation of the Family Builders Program. This evaluation was conducted pursuant to the provisions of Laws 2000, Ch. 23, §2, and provides information regarding the program's effectiveness in achieving its goals.

Family Builders is a family-centered, community-based program that provides early intervention to families with potential- and low-risk child abuse or neglect reports made to Child Protective Services (CPS). The program's goal is to enhance parents' ability to create safe, stable, and nurturing home environments that promote the safety of all family members and healthy child development. CPS refers potential- and low-risk reports of child abuse and neglect to community-based Family Builders contractors. These contractors provide services, such as parenting skills training, counseling, and utilities assistance, aimed at reducing the problems contributing to the potential for abuse or neglect. Participation in the program is voluntary, and families typically participate for about 6 months.

The Arizona Department of Economic Security (Department) is responsible for administering Family Builders. To do this, the Department contracts with eight community-based organizations to provide services to families in ten Arizona counties. Contractors are paid a capitated rate for each of the three program phases completed by a family: referral, assessment, and service plan.

Family Builders received 14,249 referrals between August 1, 1999 and April 30, 2001. In 9,586 of these cases, families completed only the referral phase. In 4,663 cases, families received an assessment. In all but 266 of the assessed cases, families signed a service plan to receive services.

Services Differ but Program Outcomes Comparable to CPS (See pages 13 through 18)

Although the services provided to families differ, Family Builders and CPS had similar outcomes related to subsequent CPS reports. Family Builders offers more services to low-risk families than CPS does, yet evaluators found that the proportion of families served by Family Builders who received subsequent CPS reports was comparable to the proportion of families investigated by CPS who received subsequent reports. Evaluators also analyzed the number of CPS reports per 10,000 persons for areas served by Family Builders and areas served only by CPS and found them to be similar.

Despite these similar outcomes, positive differences exist among program participants. Families who completed the program had fewer subsequent CPS reports than families who did not complete the program. Further, families receiving program services experienced a slight reduction in their risk for child abuse and neglect, as measured by the caseworker-completed Family Risk Scale.

Department Has Made Limited Progress in Monitoring and Oversight (See pages 19 through 24)

Although the Department has taken steps to address monitoring and oversight problems identified in the Auditor General's March 2000 evaluation (see Report No. 00-4), its progress has been limited. The Department still needs to improve its cost data for it to make statements about the type and cost of services delivered and ensure that capitation rates are appropriate. In a random sample of 100 cases, evaluators found many problems, such as missing and miscategorized costs. Although the Department has recently revised its cost category definitions, which had been a primary cause of problems, the database still contains data entered according to old definitions. The Department also still

needs to improve other program data, such as demographic and risk assessment information, and to eliminate problems including missing and duplicative records. Although the Department has taken some steps to address the Family Builders database flaws and other factors contributing to the persistence of data problems, additional effort is needed. Specifically, the Department should develop a data quality assurance plan and conduct a system-wide review of the Family Builders database to eliminate current problems. It should also monitor contractor's use of the recently modified cost categories and program definitions, create a database users' manual, and provide regular training. Finally, the Department should assign the technical resources required to effectively address current problems and maintain the data collection system.

Statutory Evaluation Components (See pages 25 through 35)

As required by Laws 2000, Ch. 23, §2, the Office of the Auditor General has included in this report information on the number of referrals to the program, the number of families served, participants' demographic characteristics, the services delivered, client satisfaction, the cost of services, the contractors who provided services, recommended improvements in program administration, the extent to which program goals and objectives are being met, and the outcomes for families served by the program, including its impact on reducing the risk of child maltreatment.

(This Page Intentionally Left Blank)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Introduction and Background 1

Finding I: Services Differ but Program Outcomes Comparable to CPS 13

Family Builders and CPS Had Similar Outcomes 13

Positive Differences Exist Among Program Participants 17

Finding II: Department Has Made Limited Progress in Monitoring and Oversight 19

Improvement Still Needed on Cost Data 19

Improvement Also Still Needed on Other Program Data 20

Contractors Continue To Need Guidance in Operating Local Advisory Boards 23

Recommendations 24

Statutory Evaluation Components 25

Appendix ..... a-i

Agency Response

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont'd)

Page

Figures

Figure 1 Family Builders Program Contractors by County As of June 2001 3

Figure 2 Family Builders Program Process As of June 2001 5

Figure 3 Family Builders Program Primary Caregivers' Marital Status..... 26

Figure 4 Family Builders Program Primary Caregivers' Highest Level of Education Completed 27

Tables

Table 1 Family Builders Program Statement of Revenues and Expenditures Years Ended or Ending June 30, 2000, 2001, and 2002 (Unaudited)..... 8

Table 2 Family Builders Program Contractors, Number of Referrals, and Percentage of Cases With Assessments and Service Plans August 1, 1999 through April 30, 2001..... 9

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Concl'd)

Page

Tables (Concl'd)

Table 3 — Family Builders Program Families with Subsequent CPS Reports Family Builders Participants vs. Families Investigated by CPS January 1, 1998 through March 31, 2001 16

Table 4 — Family Builders Program Family Risk Scale at Entrance and Exit Scores of Families with Closed Service Plan Cases January 1, 1998 through September 30, 2000 18

Table 5 — Family Builders Program Family Risk Scale Assessment Areas and Scores ..... a-ii

(This Page Intentionally Left Blank)

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Office of the Auditor General has completed an evaluation of the Family Builders Program conducted pursuant to the provisions of Laws 2000, Ch. 23, §2. This is the second evaluation since the program's beginning in 1998. A third evaluation is due in 2004. This report provides information about the program, examines various aspects of the program's effectiveness, and recommends ways to improve its administration.

Family Builders Program History and Background

The Legislature established the Family Builders Pilot Program in the Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth and Families (hereafter referred to as the Department) through Laws 1997, Ch. 223, §2. The pilot program was established to address a backlog of uninvestigated child abuse and neglect reports and to fill a need for early intervention services. During fiscal year 1997, the Department's Child Protective Services (CPS) function did not have enough investigators to respond adequately to an increased number of child abuse and neglect reports. Though high- and moderate-risk reports were being investigated, a backlog of 5,899 reports, most of which were low and potential risk, remained at the end of 1997. The Family Builders Pilot Program was implemented in Maricopa and Pima Counties to respond to these reports and to help prevent subsequent child abuse and neglect through early intervention. Since the inception of Family Builders, the Department has been able to respond to 100 percent of all reports, either by investigating the cases or referring them to Family Builders for services.

The previous evaluation found that program families were as likely as comparison group families to have a subsequent CPS report.

The Office of the Auditor General's March 2000 evaluation found that although families participating in the program showed a slight improvement in their risk for child abuse and neglect, they were just as likely to have a new CPS report after entering the program as were two comparison groups of families not participating in the program.

In October 1999, the Department expanded the original service area of the Family Builders Pilot Program, which comprised only Maricopa and Pima Counties, to include Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Graham, Greenlee, Navajo, Santa Cruz, and Yavapai Counties. Figure 1 (see page 3) shows the counties served by Family Builders and the contractors that serve them. In the five counties that are not served by Family Builders—Gila, La Paz, Mohave, Pinal, and Yuma—CPS investigates all reports received on its hotline. Through A.R.S. §8-816, effective June 30, 2000, the Legislature extended the program for 10 years and renamed it the Family Builders Program.

Family Builders: A Family-Centered, Community-Based Alternative to CPS

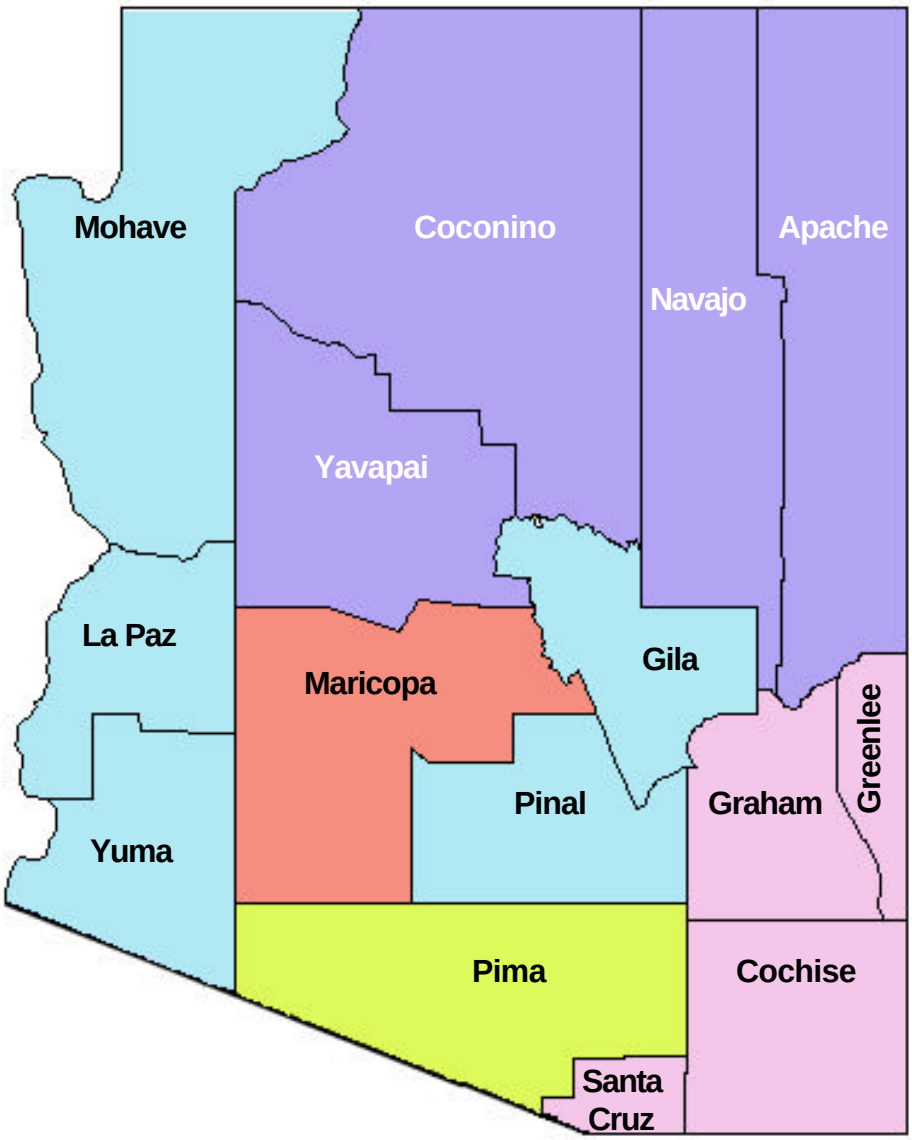
Family Builders' premise is that families with low child abuse/neglect risk require different responses from CPS.

Family Builders is a family-centered, community-based alternative to CPS investigations. It is based on the premise that families with different risk levels for child abuse and neglect require different responses from CPS. While the serious nature of moderate- to high-risk reports often requires a CPS investigation, low- and potential-risk reports can be approached in a positive and supportive manner through the provision of needed treatment and immediate services, without the potentially lengthy and traumatic intervention process.

The Family Builders Program uses a family-centered, strength- and community-based approach. Caseworkers involve all family members in establishing goals for change. They focus on family strengths, rather than problems, and help families to identify and access family and community resources to reduce reliance on formal support systems, such as welfare. For example, rather than focusing on a mother's unemployment, a caseworker would focus on the family's access to a car as a resource that the mother can use to seek and maintain employment. A wide range of services is provided through local networks of community-based agencies. By drawing from these local resources to meet families' needs, the program fosters interdependence between the family and the community.

Figure 1

Family Builders Program
Contractors by County
As of June 2001



Arizona Baptist Children's Services, Arizona's Children Association, Arizona Partnership for Children, Black Family and Child Services, CareNow, and Child and Family Resources

Arizona Partnership for Children

Arizona Partnership for Children, Marana Unified School District, and Our Town Family Center

Child and Family Resources

Counties not covered by the program

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of the Department of Economic Security's Family Builders Request for Proposals and contracts for fiscal year 2000.

Arizona's Family Builders Program has been nationally recognized. In March 2001, it placed as a semifinalist for the 2001 Innovations in American Government Award granted by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Family Builders: How It Operates

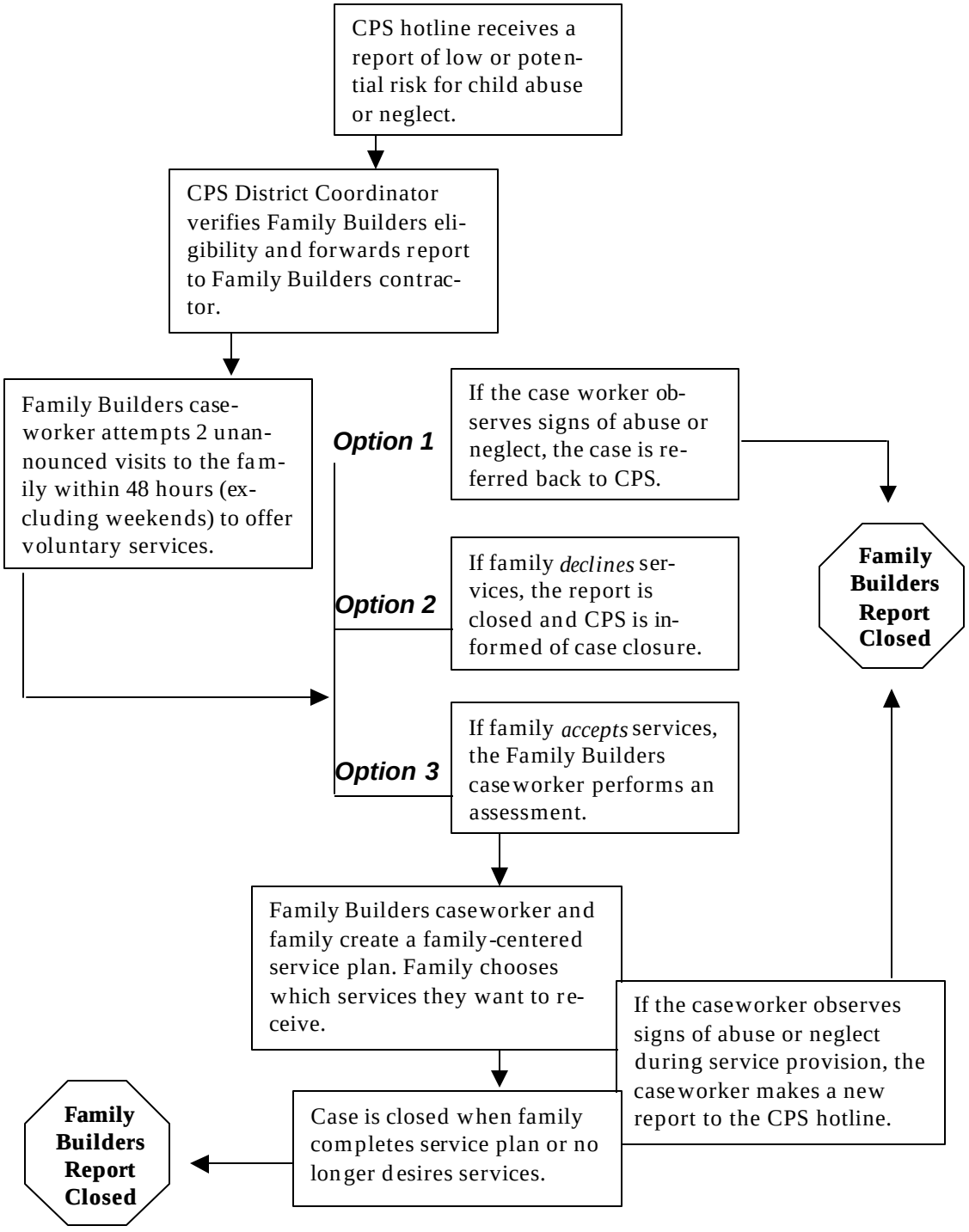
The program targets families with reports of low or potential risk of abuse or neglect.

Family Builders operates within a CPS referral system that monitors child abuse and neglect reports received by the CPS hotline (see Figure 2, page 5). Hotline workers prioritize each report into one of four categories, ranging from potential- to high-risk. Both potential- and low-risk reports are referred to a Family Builders district coordinator at CPS who decides whether the report should remain within CPS for investigation or be assigned to a Family Builders contractor. In order to meet legislative requirements for child safety, certain reports, such as those with allegations of sexual abuse, are ineligible for Family Builders, regardless of their priority. If the report is eligible, the district coordinator refers the reports to a contracted service provider in the family's area. When the contracted service provider receives the referral, a caseworker is assigned to the family. The caseworker visits the family's home within 48 hours of receipt of the referral, excluding weekends. The caseworker informs the family that CPS received a report about them and referred it to Family Builders and offers services.

If the family agrees to participate, the caseworker and family complete an assessment to identify the family's strengths and prioritize their needs. In the third and final program phase, the service plan, the family participates in developing a service plan based on its strengths and resources. During this phase, the family receives various services, such as counseling and vouchers for clothing and food, to address the family's circumstances that resulted in the child abuse report. The service plan phase is an ongoing process. For example, a family who manages to avoid eviction through rental assistance from Family Builders may then set a goal to move to less-expensive housing. Throughout the service plan phase, the caseworker conducts regular home visits to monitor the family's progress and assess the children's safety.

Figure 2

Family Builders Program Process
As of June 2001



Source: Auditor General staff analysis of Family Builders policy and procedures training material.

The program's intent is to close the case when a family completes their service plan goals. However, a family may end contact with the program during any phase for any reason. For example, a family may move out of state or simply decline to participate further.

By statute, Family Builders offers, at a minimum, the following services:

- Family assessments
- Case management
- Parenting skills training
- Parent aide services
- Housing search and relocation
- Emergency services, such as food and rental assistance
- Supportive intervention / guidance counseling
- Intensive family preservation services, such as crisis counseling
- Child daycare
- Transportation
- Respite services
- Shelter service

Families choose which services they want to receive; therefore, not all families receive each of the above services. Typically, families participate in the program for about 6 months and receive case management, counseling, and financial assistance, such as a rent or utilities payment.

Contractors are required to establish local advisory boards that include representatives from local community agencies and

families. The boards are intended to help Family Builders contractors provide oversight to the program and strengthen their resource network by identifying service providers and enlisting their support.

Appropriations and Contracting

The Legislature appropriated approximately $9.5 million to the Department for Family Builders in fiscal year 2000. Approximately $8 million was appropriated each year for fiscal years 2001 and 2002. These amounts include both General Fund and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) appropriations (see Table 1, page 8). Although the overall appropriation for the program has remained constant the last 2 years, the Department has received TANF monies in place of most of its General Fund monies.

In addition to funding services for families, the appropriations pay for two full-time Family Builders Program specialists who are responsible for administrative tasks, including training contractor staff and monitoring service provision and data collection on a quarterly basis. The specialists conduct quarterly Statewide Partnership meetings with contractors to discuss program updates and policy changes. The appropriations also fund one full-time contract specialist who monitors program contracts.

There are 8 Family Builders contractors that provide services to families in 10 of Arizona's 15 counties. Contractors are paid a capitated rate, a set amount for each of the three program phases, which they use to provide services to clients in collaboration with local community agencies participating on a contractual, fee-for-service, or in-kind basis.

Family Builders received 14,249 referrals between August 1, 1999 and April 30, 2001. As of April 30, 2001, in 9,586 cases (67 percent), the family had completed only the referral phase. In 4,663 cases (33 percent), the family received an assessment. In all but 266 of the assessed cases, the family signed a service plan. Table 2 (see page 9) shows for each contractor the total number of

Table 1

Family Builders Program
Statement of Revenues and Expenditures
Years Ended or Ending June 30, 2000, 2001, and 2002
(Unaudited)

	2000 (Actual)	2001 (Actual)	2002 (Estimated)
Revenues:			
Appropriations: [1]			
State General Fund	$6,573,700	$2,771,600	$1,804,300
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	2,922,400	5,227,400	6,200,000
Total Revenues	$9,496,100	$7,999,000	$8,004,300
Expenditures and other uses:			
Personal services and employee-related	182,093	208,839	210,000
Travel, in-state	1,082	86	100
Aid to individuals [2]	9,226,031	7,782,445	7,786,550
Other operating	1,655	7,630	7,650
Total expenditures	9,410,861	7,999,000	8,004,300
Reversions to the State General Fund [3]	85,239		
Total expenditures and reversions to the State General Fund	$9,496,100	$7,999,000	$8,004,300

[1] Amounts are the final appropriations for the Family Builders Program, including all supplemental appropriations and authorized appropriation transfers.

[2] Amounts are payments made, or estimated to be made, to service providers. The 2001 amount includes $46,877 obligated to providers, but not paid at August 13, 2001.

[3] Department-estimated reversions to the State General Fund for 2000. Since lapsing appropriations are not closed until 2 years after the end of the fiscal year, actual reversions were not available at the time of this report.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of the *State of Arizona Appropriations Report* and various reports of the Arizona Department of Economic Security Financial Management Control System for the years ended June 30, 2000 and 2001, and Division estimates of financial activity for the year ended June 30, 2002, as of August 31, 2001.

Table 2

Family Builders Program
Contractors, Number of Referrals, and Percentage of Cases
With Assessments and Service Plans
August 1, 1999 through April 30, 2001

Contractor	Referrals[1]	Assessment	Service Plan
Arizona Baptist Children's Services	3,170	28%	27%
Arizona's Children Association	1,575	25	24
Arizona Partnership for Children (2 contracts)	4,646	39	37
Black Family and Child Services	910	33	32
CareNow	1,372	38	34
Child and Family Resources (2 contracts)	957	33	31
Marana Unified School District	258	22	22
Our Town Family Center	1,356	28	24
Total	14,244 [2]	33%	31%

[1] Includes open and closed cases.

[2] Total referrals for the period were 14,249; however, because of missing contractor data, 5 referrals were omitted from this analysis.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of Family Builders data for cases referred between August 1, 1999 and April 30, 2001.

Family Builders referrals received, and the percentage of cases with assessments and service plans. In developing the program budget, the Department anticipated that at least 34 percent of the cases referred to contractors would progress to the service plan phase. As of April 30, 2001, only two contractors, Arizona Partnership for Children and CareNow, met or exceeded the expected rate of families who signed service plans (see Table 2). Overall, the total percentage of cases in which a family signed a service plan was below the Department's expected rate. However, the percentage is higher than the percentage reported in the previous evaluation (28 percent) (see Report No. 00-4). Further, more contractors and the program as a whole may yet meet or exceed the expectation since some of the cases remain open and families may progress to higher stages of the program.

Scope and Methodology

This evaluation focused on program effectiveness and administration and presents findings and recommendations in two areas:

- Although services provided to families differ, Family Builders and CPS had similar outcomes.

- The Department should take additional steps to improve program monitoring and oversight.

Evaluators used multiple methods in the evaluation, including:

- **Analysis of Family Builders Participants**—Evaluators analyzed Family Builders program data to describe the demographic characteristics of Family Builders families who signed a service plan and whose referring CPS report date was between August 1, 1999 and April 30, 2001. This period was selected to follow up from the previous evaluation, which reported on families whose referring CPS report date was between January 1, 1998 and July 31, 1999.

- **Analysis of Subsequent CPS Reports**—To determine the program's effectiveness in preventing subsequent child abuse and neglect, evaluators collected and analyzed CPS involvement data on families investigated by CPS and families in Family Builders.

  - **Families investigated by CPS**—Families investigated by CPS were eligible for Family Builders but not referred because the program was not available in the counties where they live. This group includes families who live in Gila, La Paz, Mohave, Pinal, or Yuma County, where the Family Builders program is unavailable (see Figure 1, page 3) and whose referring CPS report date was between January 1, 1998 and September 30, 2000. The group also includes families who live in Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Graham, Greenlee, Navajo, Santa Cruz, or Yavapai County and whose referring CPS report date was between January 1, 1998 and May 30, 1999, during which time Family Builders was unavailable in those counties.

- **Families in Family Builders**—Family Builders families were divided into three groups: those who signed and completed a service plan, those who signed and did not complete a service plan, and those who were assessed only. These families had a referring CPS report date between January 1, 1998 and September 30, 2000, and a closure date on or before September 30, 2000. The time period was selected to capture subsequent CPS reports, if any, for a minimum of 6 months following families' involvement with the program.

Evaluators compared the Family Builders families' and CPS families' rates of subsequent CPS reports and analyzed whether the reports were substantiated, unsubstantiated, or referred to Family Builders.

- **Analysis of Statewide CPS Report Rates**—Evaluators examined statewide rates of CPS reports to determine whether there was a difference over time in the report rates in areas served by Family Builders and areas served only by CPS.

- **Risk Data Analysis**—To determine the program's effectiveness in reducing the risk for child abuse and neglect, evaluators analyzed data on Family Builders families that either signed and completed a service plan or signed and did not complete a service plan. Risk data came from two assessment tools: the Family Risk Scales and the Brief Family Assessment Scale (see Appendix, page a-i through a-vii). Evaluators compared the families' risk at program entrance to their risk at program exit to assess change due to program participation.

- **Database Validation**—To verify the accuracy and completeness of the cost and participant information contained in the Family Builders database, evaluators analyzed 100 randomly selected case files in 2 separate reviews, and compared the files to the Family Builders database. They also corrected the identified errors, where possible, and otherwise excluded fields and cases to prepare the data for analysis.

- **Document Review**—Evaluators reviewed Family Builders program contracts and brochures to describe the participating community agencies, the geographical areas served, and the services provided. Evaluators also reviewed the Family Builders program manual and training materials to assess the technical assistance provided by the Department. To evaluate the Department's monitoring, evaluators reviewed monitored case files and compared Family Builders Specialists' monitoring reports to contractors' responses, known as correction plans. Finally, evaluators examined membership lists and meeting minutes from each contractor's local advisory board meetings to assess their compliance with legislative requirements.

- **Site Observation**—Evaluation staff visited each Family Builders contractor and accompanied staff on home visits to program clients to observe the program as implemented. To assess compliance with legislative requirements, evaluators also attended local advisory board meetings and meetings between participating community agencies, known as collaborators' meetings.

Acknowledgements

The Auditor General and staff express appreciation to the director of the Department of Economic Security, the staff of the Department's Division of Children and Family Services, and the Family Builders program supervisors and staff for their cooperation and assistance throughout the evaluation.

FINDING I

SERVICES DIFFER BUT PROGRAM OUTCOMES COMPARABLE TO CPS

Although the services provided to families differ, Family Builders and CPS had similar outcomes related to subsequent CPS reports. Family Builders offers more services to low-risk families than CPS does, yet the proportion of families served by Family Builders who received subsequent CPS reports was comparable to the proportion of families investigated by CPS who received subsequent reports. However, families completing the program did have fewer subsequent reports than families who did not complete the program. Furthermore, participants reduced their risk for abuse and neglect.

Family Builders and CPS Had Similar Outcomes

While Family Builders provides more services to low-risk families than CPS provides, many program participants received subsequent CPS reports. The proportion of program families who received subsequent reports was similar to the proportion of families served by CPS who received subsequent reports. In addition, CPS report rates over time were similar in areas of the State served by Family Builders and areas served only by CPS.

Program families receive more services—Family Builders offers a larger scope of services to families than CPS does. For instance, although Family Builders could provide a family with car repair services, CPS could not. Its services are limited to those within CPS and the Department, many of which are available only to families whose child has already been removed from the home. Furthermore, the CPS intervention is not characterized by a family-centered, strength-based approach, as Family Builders is.

Finally, while all Family Builders families receive case management throughout the program, CPS families generally receive case management only after an investigation.

Many participating families received subsequent reports— Although they received more services, 40 percent of program families received subsequent CPS reports, a greater percentage than in the previous evaluation. Families served by the program include families who signed and completed a service plan and families who signed but did not complete a service plan. Typically, these families received 2 subsequent reports within 22 months of the referring report. Subsequent reports could be substantiated, unsubstantiated, or referred to Family Builders.

Substantiated reports—represent cases in which an investigation concluded that abuse or neglect had occurred.

Unsubstantiated reports—represent cases in which abuse or neglect was alleged but not substantiated in an investigation.

Referrals to Family Builders—represent cases in which abuse or neglect was alleged but services were offered in lieu of an investigation.

Of the 3,135 families served by the program, 8.9 percent received at least 1 substantiated subsequent report, 27.5 percent received at least 1 unsubstantiated subsequent report, and 17.6 percent received at least 1 subsequent report that was referred to Family Builders.[1] The proportion of families with subsequent reports is greater than the proportion that evaluators found in the last evaluation (see Report No. 00-4). Previously, evaluators found that 32 percent of families served by the program received subsequent reports.[2]

[1] Because some families receive multiple reports, each of which can be substantiated, unsubstantiated, or referred to Family Builders, they may be counted in more than one category. Therefore, the percentages cannot be summed.

[2] The current reporting period is longer and contains many of the same families analyzed in the prior reporting period, plus many new families who have since entered Family Builders.

Seven percent of Family Builders completers received subsequent substantiated CPS reports, as compared to 9 percent of families investigated by CPS.

Proportions of families with subsequent reports were comparable in Family Builders and CPS—Family Builders participants did not have fewer subsequent reports than the low-risk families investigated by CPS. As Table 3 (see page 16) indicates, 34.8 percent of the families investigated by CPS received subsequent CPS reports, as compared to the 35.6 percent of families who completed the Family Builders program and received subsequent reports. When examining only subsequent substantiated reports, the proportions were lower for both groups. As indicated in the table, 8.9 percent of families investigated by CPS received subsequent substantiated reports, as compared to 6.6 percent of families who completed the program. This difference was statistically significant. However, when analyzing the families investigated by CPS separately by CPS district, there were no statistically significant differences between families in three of the four districts served by CPS compared to families completing the program. Finally, among families with no prior CPS reports, 5.5 percent of families who completed Family Builders had subsequent substantiated reports, whereas 8.1 percent of families investigated by CPS had subsequent substantiated reports.[1]

[1] There were 1,349 families that completed service plans and 5,931 families investigated by CPS who had no prior CPS reports.

Table 3

Family Builders Program
Families with Subsequent CPS Reports
Family Builders Participants vs. Families Investigated by CPS[1]
January 1, 1998 through March 31, 2001

Group	Percentage of Families With Subsequent Reports	
	Substantiated Reports[3]	Total Reports[2]
Families referred to Family Builders		
Service plan completers (N=1,847)	6.6%	35.6%
Service plan noncompleters (N=1,288)	12.3	46.3
Families assessed only (N=369)	11.7	40.7
Families investigated by CPS (N=6,805)	8.9	34.8

1 Includes four CPS districts that did not have the Family Builders Program during the entire time period from January 1, 1998 through March 31, 2001.

2 The difference between service plan completers and families investigated by CPS was not statistically significant. The differences between the different groups of families referred to Family Builders were statistically significant at the $p<0.05$ level. This means that the probability that the differences in proportions were due to chance is less than 5 in 100.

3 The difference between service plan completers and families investigated by CPS was statistically significant at the $p<0.05$ level. However, when comparing each of the four districts separately to service plan completers, there was no statistically significant difference for three of the four districts. The differences between the different groups of families referred to Family Builders were statistically significant at the $p<0.05$ level.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of Child Protective Services data from January 1, 1998 through March 31, 2001.

Report rates were comparable in program areas and areas served by CPS—Evaluators also compared the number of CPS reports per 10,000 persons for areas served by Family Builders and areas served only by CPS and found them to be similar. Although the number of reports declined in 1998 after the inception of Family Builders, this decline also occurred in areas where Family Builders was not available and, therefore, could not be attributed to Family Builders. Further, the rates of reports in all areas of the State stabilized in 1999 and remained stable through the end of

the analysis period. The patterns of rates over time for Family Builders and CPS areas are similar.

Positive Differences Exist Among Program Participants

Although Family Builders and CPS had similar outcomes, positive differences exist among program participants. In particular, families that completed the program had fewer subsequent reports than families who did not complete the program. Furthermore, families receiving services experienced a slight reduction in their risk for child abuse and neglect, as measured by the caseworker-completed Family Risk Scale. The results from the family-completed Brief Family Assessment Scale (BFAS) used to measure a family's perception of stress and the resulting risk for child abuse and neglect were inconclusive due to a low response rate.

Service plan completion resulted in fewer subsequent reports— Although over two-thirds of the families referred to Family Builders never accepted services, those families that completed service plans received fewer subsequent CPS reports than the other families. As Table 3 indicates (see page 16), 35.6 percent of the families who signed and completed a service plan had subsequent reports, as compared to 46.3 percent of the families who signed but did not complete a service plan and 40.7 percent of the families who were assessed but did not go on to sign a service plan. Service plan completers also had fewer subsequent substantiated reports (6.6 percent) than families who did not complete their service plans (12.3 percent) and families who were assessed only (11.7 percent). These differences may be attributed to the length of time families spent in the program, the number of services they received, or the families' own motivation to complete the program or decrease their risk for abuse or neglect.

Families receiving services reduced their risk for child abuse and neglect—Although results from the BFAS were inconclusive, results from the Family Risk Scale indicate that program families receiving services experienced a slight reduction in risk regardless of whether they completed their service plans. The Family Risk Scale, a caseworker-completed assessment of the family's

child-centered, parent-centered, and economic risk for child maltreatment (see Appendix, pages a-i through a-vii), was conducted at program entrance and exit on 2,958, or 94 percent, of the 3,135 families served by Family Builders. Scores range from one to six with one indicating low risk. Although families had low risk levels at program entrance, their risk still declined slightly in each of the three measured areas (see Table 4).

Table 4

Family Builders Program
Family Risk Scale at Entrance and Exit
Scores of Families with Closed Service Plan Cases
January 1, 1998 through September 30, 2000

	Average Risk Score		
Risk Assessment Area	**Entrance**	**Exit**	**Change[1]**
Child-centered risk	1.54	1.33	-0.21
Parent-centered risk	1.63	1.45	-0.18
Economic risk	1.62	1.36	-0.27

[1] For all three risk areas, the reduction is statistically significant at the $p<0.05$ level. This means that the probability that the change in risk scores occurred by chance is less than 5 in 100.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of pre- and post-scores on Family Risk Scales as compiled in the Family Builders database.

The results from the family-completed BFAS were inconclusive due to a low response rate. The BFAS measures a family's perception of stress and the resulting risk for child abuse and neglect (see Appendix, pages a-i through a-vii). Only 611, or 19 percent, of the 3,135 families who signed service plans completed pre- and post-tests. Therefore, although results from the BFAS indicate that participants' risk declined from program entrance to exit, they cannot be used to assess the outcomes for the entire program since not all families are represented. However, the Department has made an effort to improve the response rate by encouraging caseworkers to collect the data and by gathering information on the reasons they do not collect the data. Consequently, the percentage of completed assessments has more than doubled since the Auditor General's previous evaluation (see Report No. 00-4).

FINDING II DEPARTMENT HAS MADE LIMITED PROGRESS IN MONITORING AND OVERSIGHT

Although the Department has taken steps to address monitoring and oversight problems identified in the Auditor General's previous evaluation, its progress has been limited. The Department still needs to improve its cost data in order to make statements about the type and cost of services delivered. In addition, other program data is often inaccurate or incomplete. Finally, contractors continue to need guidance in operating their local advisory boards.

Improvement Still Needed on Cost Data

The Department has attempted to address the problems with its cost data that were identified in the Auditor General's previous evaluation. However, problems, such as missing and miscategorized costs, persist. The data still need improvement if the Department is to rely on them to make statements about the cost of program services and the types of service most commonly provided.

Department has taken steps to address identified problems— The Department has taken steps to address problems identified in the previous evaluation. The Auditor General's March 2000 evaluation (see Report No. 00-4) found that the Department lacked the necessary information to determine if contractors were delivering adequate services and being paid at appropriate rates. Specifically, it found that the Department's reimbursement rates were well above contractors' costs, yet needed services were not being provided. In addition, the evaluation also found that the Department lacked complete and accurate information on the type, number, and cost of services delivered.

Since the previous evaluation, the Department's program specialists have begun to review contractors' cost records during their quarterly monitoring visits. In addition, the Department convened a work group to review and revise cost categories and their definitions. It also modified its reimbursement rates in its fiscal year 2001 contracts to reduce the difference between the rates and recorded costs.

Evaluators found problems, such as missing and miscategorized costs.

Reliable cost data still not available—Despite the Department's efforts to improve cost data, problems persist. In a random sample of 100 cases, evaluators found many problems, such as missing and miscategorized costs. For example, the costs of services provided during the referral or assessment phases were often recorded as costs of the service plan phase. Some costs, such as those for case management, were not recorded at all in some cases. A primary cause of problems has been inadequate cost category definitions, which allowed contractors to interpret the categories in several ways and, consequently, to inconsistently report costs across categories. Although the Department's work group recently revised definitions, the database still contains data entered according to the old definitions. Without accurate and complete cost information, the cost of program services and the types of service most commonly provided still cannot be reliably determined.

Improvement Also Still Needed on Other Program Data

The Department still needs to improve its other program data to eliminate problems, such as missing and duplicative records, and ensure its validity. Although several factors, including flaws in the Family Builders database and inadequate training, system monitoring, and technical support, have contributed to the persistence of data problems, the Department has made an effort to address them.

Problems remain in other program data—Evaluators identified several problems in the other program data, including those previously identified in the last evaluation. In the same random sample of 100 cases, evaluators found missing, inaccurate, and duplicative program data, such as missing demographic and

risk assessment data, duplicate records, and cases with indistinguishable identifying information. For example, in numerous instances, a single case was recorded in the database under multiple CPS report numbers or two different contractor names. These findings are consistent with those in the Auditor General's previous evaluation, which found that the information collected on program participants was incomplete and inaccurate.

Several factors explain the persistence of data problems—Data problems persist due to several factors associated with the Department's data collection system. Specifically,

- **Family Builders database needs redesign, user's manual**—The Family Builders database contains many design flaws. For example, the database inefficiently requires that the same information, such as the report date, be entered numerous times, potentially allowing for increased errors in the data. Also, the database's data entry screens do not match the program's forms, which can make data entry confusing and allow for errors in interpretation. In addition, although the 2000 evaluation recommended that the Department create a database user's manual, it has not done so.

- **Training is inadequate**—The Department does not offer regular training focused on the database. Furthermore, existing training does not sufficiently address common data collection and entry problems and frequent errors, and is not tailored to the program staff's differing needs.

- **System monitoring is insufficient**—The Department's monitoring does not include sufficient system-wide analysis to address errors. For example, the Department does not examine whether the data is complete and consistent across tables in the database and across contractors. Existing monitoring efforts focus on case-by-case errors and are, therefore, unlikely to detect and address system-level errors and their causes.

- **Additional technical support is needed**—Additional technical support is needed because the Department's two program specialists do not have the technical knowledge and skills needed to address many of the problems, and a man-

agement analyst assigned to assist them is only available part-time.

The Department established a task force to review data collection forms and program definitions.

The Department has made an effort to address problems—The Department has attempted to address data problems and eliminate their causes. It established a task force, comprising the Family Builders program specialists and contractors, to review data collection forms and program definitions. The Department also allowed the management analyst to temporarily work primarily with Family Builders to reduce database design flaws, install a newly revised Family Builders database at contractors' sites, and provide database training as part of a full-day workshop for contractors. More recently, when the analyst position was vacated, the Department hired a consultant to improve the Family Builders database. In addition, the Department added language about contractors' data collection responsibilities to its fiscal year 2002 contracts.

The Department should take additional steps to improve its cost and program data—To improve the data collection system, the Department should develop a data quality assurance plan detailing measures that will allow for the ongoing review and improvement of the data collection system. It should also conduct a system-wide review of the Family Builders database to eliminate current problems, such as duplicate records and cases with multiple identification numbers, and modify the database to prevent such problems in the future. To ensure that recently modified program definitions and cost categories are interpreted correctly and result in valid data, the Department should monitor their use by contractors. In addition, the Department should create a database users' manual and reinforce its contents in trainings held at regular intervals. Training should explain proper data collection and verification procedures and be tailored to meet the needs of the different audiences who handle program data: caseworkers, data entry clerks, and program supervisors. Finally, the Department should assign to the program the technical resources required to effectively address current problems in the short term and maintain the data system over the long term.

Contractors Continue To Need Guidance in Operating Local Advisory Boards

Despite the Department's efforts to assist, contractors need additional guidance in operating their local advisory boards in accordance with statute. The boards have ongoing membership and productivity problems and are not adequately monitored by the Department.

Local advisory boards still not fulfilling their responsibilities— The Department has not made certain that local advisory boards are meeting their statutory responsibility to ensure service availability, provide program direction, and represent the community. As in the previous evaluation period, evaluators found that the boards have problems meeting membership requirements and providing guidance to contractors. To assist with membership recruitment, the Department gave contractors lists of community organizations from which they might recruit board members. Yet, contractors continue to have difficulty recruiting board members. For example, although contractors are to include Family Builders families on the boards, three of the eight contractors did not have family representatives as board members. Furthermore, members' attendance at meetings continues to be inconsistent for most local boards.

Few local advisory boards set goals or assigned tasks to address service gaps.

Although the Department created a self-monitoring tool for contractors to use to make board meetings more effective in addressing the boards' statutory responsibilities, most boards continue to have little impact on the program. Evaluators observed at least 1 advisory board meeting for each contractor and reviewed minutes from 25 board meetings. They found that although boards generally provided information on local services and identified some gaps in services, few boards set goals or assigned tasks related to addressing those gaps. Some contractors have indicated that much of the information exchanged at board meetings is already exchanged among the collaborating agencies that serve program families. This overlap and the difficulty in involving board members has led some contractors to question the boards' utility. Many contractors have indicated that they need more guidance on how to run an advisory board.

The Department still does not adequately monitor local advisory boards—Although the 2000 evaluation recommended that the Department monitor board activities to ensure that legislative requirements are met, the Department does not adequately do so. For example, although the program specialists attend advisory board meetings, they do not systematically review minutes or membership lists or provide feedback on board activity to ensure that the boards fulfill their responsibilities.

Recommendations

1. The Department should develop a data quality assurance plan for the ongoing review and improvement of the data collection system.

2. The Department should conduct a system-wide review of the Family Builders database to eliminate problems, such as duplicate entries, and modify it to prevent future problems.

3. The Department should monitor the use of the new program definitions and cost categories, modifying them as needed, to ensure that they are interpreted correctly and produce valid data.

4. The Department should create a database users' manual.

5. The Department should provide regular training on the data collection system and tailor it to the needs of the different audiences who handle program data.

6. The Department should assign the program the technical resources required to effectively address problems and maintain the data system.

7. The Department should monitor local advisory board activities to ensure that they meet their statutory responsibilities.

STATUTORY EVALUATION COMPONENTS

Pursuant to Laws 2000, Ch. 23, §2, the Office of the Auditor General is required to include the following information in the Family Builders Program evaluation.

B.1. Information on the number of reports referred to the program.

Between August 1, 1999 and April 30, 2001, Family Builders received 14,249 CPS reports concerning 31,892 children. Seventy percent of the reports came from Maricopa County. Twenty-one percent came from Pima County, and 6 percent came from Apache, Coconino, Navajo, and Yavapai Counties, collectively. The remaining 3 percent came from Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, and Santa Cruz Counties, collectively.

B.2. Information on the number of families who received services.

Information on the number and characteristics of program participants was available for families with CPS reports dated August 1, 1999 through April 30, 001. Specifically:

- 14,249 families were referred;
- 4,663 families were assessed; and
- Families signing service plans represented 11,117 children.

B.3. Demographic information on the families served.

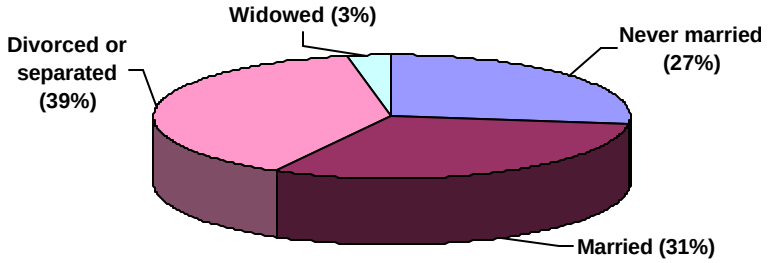
Demographics are reported on families in the 4,397 cases that signed a service plan to receive services.

- **Caregivers**—The majority of primary caregivers in the program (93 percent) were female, and 7 percent were male. In 95 percent of the cases, the caregivers were the parents of the children. In almost all of the remaining cases, other relatives cared for the children. The average age of primary caregivers was 34. The average age of female primary caregivers was 33, and the average age of male primary caregivers was 39.

- **Caregivers' Marital Status and Living Arrangements**—Of the families served, fewer than one-third of primary caregivers were married (see Figure 3). Forty-eight percent of primary caregivers reported living alone with their children, while 35 percent reported living with a spouse or significant other. Eleven percent of primary caregivers reported living with parents or other relatives. The remaining 6 percent lived with nonrelatives or in other arrangements.

Figure 3

Family Builders Program
Primary Caregivers' Marital Status

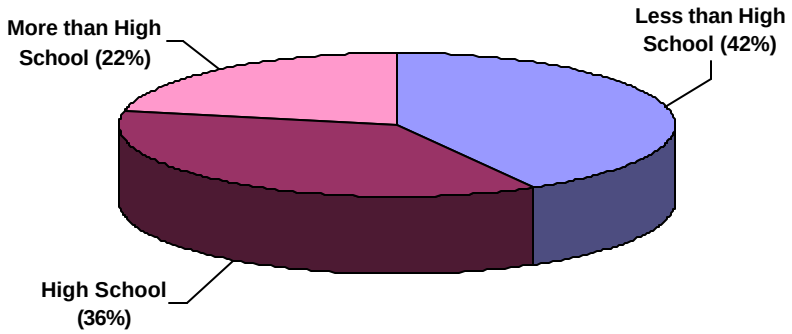


Source: Auditor General staff analysis of Family Builders data on families who were referred to the program and signed a service plan between August 1, 1999 and April 30, 2001.

- **Caregivers' Education and Employment**—Education data was missing on 28 percent of the families served. Of the cases for which education data was available, most of the primary caregivers had a high school education or higher (see Figure 4). Forty-six percent of female primary caregivers and 68 percent of male primary caregivers were employed either full- or part-time.

Figure 4

Family Builders Program
Primary Caregivers' Highest Level of Education Completed[1]



[1] Percentages were calculated on the 72 percent of families for whom education data was available.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of Family Builders data on families who were referred to the program and signed a service plan between August 1, 1999 and April 30, 2001.

- **Caregivers' Ethnicity**—Ethnicity among primary caregivers varied. Approximately 60 percent were white, 26 percent were Hispanic, 7 percent were Black, and 4 percent were American Indian. The remaining primary caregivers were either of mixed ethnicity or belonged to an ethnic group that is not widely represented and, therefore, is categorized as "other."

- **Family Size**—One-quarter of the families served had only one child. Twenty-nine percent had two chil-

dren, 23 percent had three children, and the remaining 22 percent had four or more children.[1]

B.4. Type of services provided and families' satisfaction with the services.

- **Services Delivered—**All contractors are required to offer 12 services: assessment, case management, child care, housing search and relocation, parenting skills training, supportive intervention and guidance counseling, transportation, emergency, intensive family preservation, parent aide, respite, and shelter services. Because the Family Builders database contains missing and inaccurate information (see Finding II, pages 19 through 24), the specific type of services provided for all cases cannot be determined. The Auditor General's previous evaluation (Report No. 00-4) found that all families received case management, 29 percent received counseling services, 31 percent received parenting skills training or parent aide services, and 56 percent received emergency services, such as food or clothing, or utilities, rent, and phone payments. Anecdotal data from the Department and Family Builders contractors and evaluators' observations from case file reviews indicate that the services provided during the current evaluation period were comparable to those provided in the past.

- **Client Satisfaction—**Family Builders caseworkers provided families with a confidential survey to measure their satisfaction with the services they received, the program, and the caseworkers. Families were also given a postage-free return envelope to mail the completed survey to the Office of the Auditor General. The satisfaction survey was available in both English and Spanish. Although 966 surveys were completed, many had missing information about the client or the contract. Consequently, only 676 of the surveys could be linked to the 4,397 families who received services during the evaluation period, making the response

[1] Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding.

rate 15 percent. The majority of 676 families whose surveys were analyzed reported that they were satisfied with Family Builders. For example, 97 percent indicated that the caseworkers treated their family and their culture with a great deal of respect. Sixty-seven percent said that they felt a great deal better able to care for their children as a result of the program, while 23 percent said that they were somewhat better able to care for their children. Fifty-nine percent reported that the program met a great deal of their family's important needs, and 33 percent said that the program only somewhat met their important needs. Finally, only 2 percent of the respondents reported that they were not better off as a result of Family Builders.

B.5. The average cost of services provided.

As discussed in Finding II (see pages 19 through 24), the Department still cannot produce reliable data on the cost of services provided. Auditor General staff conducted a review of Family Builders case files to verify data collected in the Family Builders database. They found problems in the data, such as missing and miscategorized costs. Because costs estimates were reported in the previous Family Builders evaluation (see Report No. 00-4), evaluators decided to wait until the Family Builders database was more reliable before developing new cost estimates.

B.6. Information on providers.

There were eight Family Builders contractors, two of which held two contracts each. All contractors provided services in Pima and Maricopa Counties. In addition, two contractors provided services in eight other counties, as illustrated in Figure 1 (see page 3). Contractors provide services to clients in collaboration with community health and social service agencies that participate in the program on a contractual, fee-for-service, or in-kind basis. Contractors generally provide case management services internally and provide other services, such as counseling, ex-

ternally through community agencies. However, some community agencies also provide case management to Family Builders clients.

The Department anticipated that fewer than 65 percent of the cases would progress beyond the referral phase, 1 percent would progress to, but not beyond, the assessment phase, and that at least 34 percent of the cases referred to contractors would progress to the service plan phase. As of April 30, 2001, only two contractors, Arizona Partnership for Children and CareNow, met or exceeded the expected rate of families who signed service plans (see Table 2, page 9). However, more contractors may yet meet the requirement since some of the cases remain open and families may progress to higher stages of the program.

- **Arizona Baptist Children's Association**—Arizona Baptist Children's Association serves northwestern Maricopa County. It works with 18 service providers, including Blazing Saddles Equestrian Academy, Calvary Rehabilitation Center, Christian Family Care Center, Crisis Nursery, JobNet, The Bridge, and St. Mary's Food Bank. In addition, Arizona Baptist Children's Services employs 11 Family Builders caseworkers and 1 contract case manager to perform assessments and provide services to their clients. Arizona Baptist Children's Services performed assessments on 28 percent of all families referred to them and provided service plans to 27 percent of all families referred.

- **Arizona's Children Association**—Arizona's Children Association serves southwestern Maricopa County. Their four service providers are Florence Crittenton, Southwest Human Development, Tumbleweed, and Southwest Behavioral Health. Five caseworkers conduct assessments and provide services to Family Builders clients. Arizona's Children Association performed assessments on 25 percent of all families referred to them and provided service plans to 24 percent of all families referred.

- **Arizona Partnership for Children (AZPaC)**—Arizona Partnership for Children holds two contracts. The first contract represents service to families in southeastern Maricopa County and northeastern Pima County. Under this contract, their 22 participating service providers include Catholic Social Services of Central and Northern Arizona, Devereaux Arizona, Catholic Community Services, Open Inn, Parent's Anonymous, and Save the Family. Twenty full-time (and one part-time) Family Builders caseworkers conduct assessments and provide services to clients. AZPaC's second contract represents service to families in Yavapai, Apache, Coconino, and Navajo Counties. Under this contract, the five participating service providers include Arizona Baptist Children's Services, Arizona's Children Association, Yavapai Catholic Social Services of Central and Northern Arizona, Parent's Anonymous of Arizona, and Open Inn. Ten caseworkers conduct assessments and provide services to Family Builders clients. Through both contracts, Arizona Partnership for Children performed assessments on 39 percent of the families referred and provided service plans to 37 percent of the families referred.

- **Black Family and Child Services, Inc.**—Black Family and Child Services serves families in south-central Maricopa County. There are 14 participating service providers, including Goodwill, YMCA, Sojourner Center, Phoenix Day Child Development Center, and Maricopa Skills Center. There are three Family Builders caseworker positions. Black Family and Child Services performed assessments on 33 percent of all families referred to them and provided service plans to 32 percent of the families referred.

- **CareNow**—CareNow serves families in northeastern Maricopa County. Four service agencies participate, including Westside Social Services, Youth ETC., Valle del Sol, and Jewish Family and Children's Services. A fifth agency, called Prehab, and its three caseworkers withdrew from program participation during fiscal

year 2000, leaving 13 caseworkers to conduct assessments and provide services to Family Builders clients. CareNow performed assessments on 38 percent of all families referred to them and provided service plans to 34 percent of the families referred.

- **Child and Family Resources**—Child and Family Resources holds two contracts. The first contract represents service to families in Central Phoenix. Under this contract, there are 11 service providers, including Maricopa County Parent Support Center, Crisis Nursery, TERROS, and Mountain Park Health Center. Four Family Builders caseworkers conduct assessments and provide services to clients. Child and Family Resources' second contract represents service to families in Graham, Greenlee, Cochise, and Santa Cruz Counties. Under this contract they have three participating service providers: Arizona Children's Association, Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services, and John Kelliher, PC. Currently, three caseworkers conduct assessments and provide services to Family Builders clients. Previously, Child and Family Resources of Southeast Arizona had nine caseworkers, but it reduced its case management staff to adjust to fewer referrals in fiscal year 2000. One part-time program supervisor also provides services to clients. Through both contracts, Child and Family Resources performed assessments on 33 percent of all families referred to them and provided service plans to 31 percent of the families referred.

- **Marana Unified School District**—Marana Unified School District serves families in northwestern Pima County. The one participating service provider is Marana Health Center. One caseworker and one program supervisor conduct assessments and provide services to Family Builders clients. Marana Unified School District completed assessments for 23 percent of the families referred and provided service plans to 22 percent of all families referred.

- **Our Town Family Center**—Our Town Family Center serves families in southeastern Pima County. It has five participating service providers, including Arizona's Children Association, Casa de los Niños, Child and Family Resources, and Jewish Family and Children's Services. Nine Family Builders caseworkers conduct assessments and provide services to clients. Our Town Family Center performed assessments on 28 percent of all families referred to them and provided service plans to 24 percent of the families referred.

B.7. Recommendations regarding program administration.

As discussed in Finding II (see pages 19 through 24), the Department should improve its program oversight by:

1. Developing a data quality assurance plan for the ongoing review and improvement of the data collection system and data validation;

2. Reviewing and modifying the Family Builders database to eliminate current problems and prevent future ones;

3. Monitoring the use of new program definitions and cost categories and modifying them as needed to ensure the proper interpretation and collection of valid data;

4. Creating a database user's manual;

5. Providing regular training that is specific to data collection and the Family Builders database, tailored to the different needs of program staff, and emphasizes consistency and accuracy in data collection;

6. Assigning the program the technical resources required to effectively address current problems and maintain the data system; and

7. Monitoring advisory board activities to ensure compliance with legislative requirements.

B.8. Information concerning the extent to which the goals and objectives of the program are being met.

The Department has one goal for the program: to enhance parents' ability to create safe, stable, and nurturing home environments that promote the safety of all family members and healthy child development. It established two objectives: to increase the safety of children in their family home and to increase parenting competence or effectiveness. These objectives are associated with the following yearly targets: fewer than 5 percent of families will be referred back to CPS with a substantiated report within 6 months of receiving services; and at least 99 percent of families will reduce their risk scores in at least one risk area. Only 3.1 percent of families served by the program received subsequent substantiated reports within 6 months of the closure of their Family Builders case. However, the percentage of Family Builders families with subsequent substantiated reports within 6 months was less than 5 percent regardless of whether a family completed the program. This indicates that a goal of less than 5 percent may be more appropriate for the 6-month reporting period. Furthermore, as the statistics in Finding I (see page 13 through 18) indicate, over a longer period of time, the proportion of families with subsequent substantiated reports increases to more than 5 percent. Table 3 (see page 16) shows the proportion at 6.6 percent for families who completed their service plan, 12.3 percent for families who signed but did not complete their service plan, and 11.7 percent for families who were assessed only. Therefore, it may be appropriate for the Department to adopt an additional goal for a longer reporting period. On average, families receiving services slightly reduced their risk scores on the Family Risk Scale in all three risk areas (see Table 4, page 18), thereby meeting the program target.

B.9. The outcomes for families served by the program, including impact of the program in reducing the risk of child maltreatment.

Finding I (see pages 13 through 18) provides information on two outcomes for Family Builders families: subsequent CPS reports and risk for child abuse or neglect. The outcome data indicate that there was no difference in effectiveness between Family Builders and CPS. Family Builders families had comparable outcomes to those of families investigated by CPS, although Family Builders offers more services. Evaluators found no statistically meaningful differences between the proportion of families who completed Family Builders with subsequent reports (35.6 percent) and the proportion of families investigated by CPS with subsequent reports (34.8 percent). Furthermore, the statewide rates of CPS reports were similar over time in areas served by the program and areas served only by CPS.

Although Family Builders and CPS have similar outcomes, positive differences exist among program participants. In particular, program completers had fewer subsequent reports than program dropouts, and the priority of their subsequent reports was lower than that of the dropouts. Furthermore, families served by Family Builders experienced a slight improvement in their risk for child abuse and neglect. Risk was measured by two assessment tools; however, results were available for only one tool. The caseworker-completed Family Risk Scale results show that risk scores declined in all three risk areas from program entrance to exit. The results from the family-completed BFAS were inconclusive due to a low response rate, although the Department has taken steps to increase completion of the assessment.

(This Page Intentionally Left Blank)

APPENDIX

Assessment Tools

- **Family Risk Scale**—Based on their observations and interaction with the family, Family Builders caseworkers complete the Family Risk Scale to assess the family's risk for child abuse and neglect. The Family Risk Scale is completed by the caseworker at participants' program intake and exit. The Family Risk Scale emphasizes "parental characteristics and family conditions that are believed to be predictors or precursors of maltreatment." [1]

  The Family Risk Scale is designed to measure risk in three separate summary scales: child, parent, and economic risk. The Family Risk Scale contains 26 individual dimensions that assess the family's adequacy and risk for the component being measured (see Table 5, page a-ii). Eight dimensions of the Family Risk Scale apply to child-centered risk, 12 apply to parent-centered risk, and 4 apply to economic-centered risk. Three items are not categorized in any one risk area. The caseworker provides a score for each dimension, using either a 4-point, 5-point, or 6-point response scale. Within these scales, "1" represents the highest degree of adequacy (and lowest degree of risk) and higher numbers represent decreasing degrees of adequacy. In addition, if a child in the family is also a parent, caseworkers rate that child on two of the parent dimensions.

[1] Magura, Stephen, Beth Silverman Moses, and Mary Ann Jones. *Assessing Risk and Measuring Change in Families: The Family Risk Scales.* Washington, D.C.; Child Welfare League of America, 1987.

Table 5

Family Builders Program
Family Risk Scale Assessment Areas and Scores

Risk Assessment Area	Range of Scores[1]
Child-centered areas	
Parent's attitude to preventing placement	1-4
Emotional care and stimulation of child age 2 and older	1-5
Child's mental health	1-5
Child's school adjustment	1-6
Child's delinquent behavior	1-6
Child's home-related behavior	1-5
Child's cooperation with agency (if also a parent)	1-4
Child's preparation for parenthood (if also a parent)	1-4
Parent-centered areas	
Adult relationships in household	1-4
Parent's mental health	1-5
Knowledge of child care and development	1-4
Parent's substance abuse	1-5
Parent's motivation for problem solving	1-5
Parent's cooperation with agency	1-4
Preparation for parenthood	1-4
Supervision of child under age 10	1-4
Parenting of child age 10 and over	1-4
Physical punishment of child	1-5
Verbal discipline of child	1-4
Emotional care and stimulation of infant under age 2	1-4
Economic risk factors	
Habitability of family residence	1-5
Suitability of living conditions	1-5
Financial problems	1-4
Physical needs of child	1-4

[1] For all three summary scales, a "1" represents the highest degree of adequacy (and lowest degree of risk) and higher numbers represent decreasing degrees of adequacy.

Source: The Family Risk Scales developed by the Child Welfare League of America and published by Stephen Magura, Beth Silverman, and Mary Ann Jones in *Assessing Risk and Measuring Change in Families: The Family Risk Scales*, Washington, D.C.; Child Welfare League of America, 1987.

- **Brief Family Assessment Scale (BFAS)**—The BFAS is a questionnaire completed by the family at program intake and exit. The BFAS measures the family's perception of their own strengths, resources, and problems in the following seven areas:

  Personal Stress

  Family Support

  Economic Stress

  Aggressive Behavior

  Problems with My Child

  Drug Use

  Alcohol Use

  The seven subscales comprise 76 individual statements. The family is asked to indicate how often they experience the situation described in the statement using the following scale:

  1 None of the time

  2 Very rarely

  3 A little of the time

  4 Some of the time

  5 A good part of the time

  6 Most of the time

  7 All of the time

  X Does not apply

  For questions that apply to only one family member, families are asked to respond based on the family member for whom

the item most applies. For instance, if the person completing the assessment never becomes hostile and threatening, but another family member exhibits that behavior a good part of the time, then the person should respond with a "5" to the statement related to that issue.

Analysis of Subsequent CPS Reports

To assess the impact of Family Builders on subsequent CPS reports, evaluators analyzed CPS data from January 1, 1998 to March 31, 2001, using several statistical methods. They examined three groups of families referred to Family Builders: service plan completers, service plan noncompleters, and families assessed only. They also analyzed families investigated by CPS. They used the Chi-Square test, the z test of proportional differences, and analysis of variance to determine whether there were significant differences between groups. They also analyzed the Phi statistic to assess the intensity of the association between variables and determine whether any identified statistically significant differences were meaningful and practical. Finally, evaluators conducted multivariate regressions where appropriate to assess the influence of factors, such as a family's risk level, number of children, and history of reports. Overall, they found no meaningful differences between groups. Reported below are detailed results from the more informative analyses.

- **Analysis of total subsequent CPS reports—**Evaluators analyzed whether there were differences between groups in the proportions of families with any subsequent CPS reports. In a comparison of the four groups, the Chi-Square test of significance yielded statistically significant differences (Chi-Square=64.997, df=3, N=10,309, p=0.000). However, the intensity of the relationship between participating in Family Builders and receiving a subsequent CPS report was weak (Phi = 0.079). Evaluators conducted the same analysis disaggregating the families investigated by CPS and analyzing them by the CPS district in which they reside. Of the six CPS districts in Arizona, four were not served by Family Builders during all or some of the period of analysis: Districts 3, 4, 5, and 6. See the Introduction and Background (page 3) for a

map showing coverage of the state by Family Builders. The Chi-Square result of the district analysis yielded statistically significant (119.908, df=6, N=10,309, p=0.000) but not meaningful differences (Phi=0.108). Relative to the 35.6 percent of families who completed Family Builders and had subsequent CPS reports, 39.9 percent of District 3 families, 29.7 percent of District 4 families, 34.7 percent of District 5 families, and 39.8 percent of District 6 families had subsequent reports.

The z test yielded no significant difference between families who completed Family Builders and families investigated by CPS (z=0.68, p=0.4966). However, the z test yielded statistically significant differences in the proportions of families within Family Builders who received subsequent reports. Specifically, families who completed a service plan had fewer subsequent reports than families who signed but did not complete a service plan (z=6.25, p=0.000) and families who completed only an assessment (z=-1.90, p=0.0247).

- **Analysis of subsequent substantiated CPS reports—** Evaluators analyzed the proportions of families who received subsequent substantiated CPS reports. The Chi-Square test revealed statistically significant (33.991, df=3, p=0.000) but not statistically meaningful differences (Phi=0.057) between the four groups. The z test yielded a significant difference between families investigated by CPS and families who completed service plans (z=-3.486, p0.000).

  However, when the same analysis was conducted with families investigated by CPS disaggregated by district, the z test yielded statistically significant differences between families in only one district, District 6, and Family Builders families (z=7.27, p=0.000). The proportions of families investigated by CPS in the other districts were not significantly different than the proportions of families completing Family Builders. The results for District 3 were z=1.33, p=0.1836. The results for District 4 were z=-0.36, p=0.7188. The results for District 5 were z=1.16, p=0.246.

- **Analysis of demographics characteristics—**Evaluators analyzed the primary caregiver's age and sex and the family's number of children to identify differences between the

groups of families. No statistically significant differences were found between service plan completers and families investigated by CPS in the average primary caregiver's age. However, service plan completers had a higher proportion of female primary caregivers (92.5 percent), relative to families investigated by CPS (88.4 percent) (Chi-Square=24.314, df=1, N=8,551, p=0.000). In addition, service plan completers had a smaller proportion of white primary caregivers (62.3 percent) than did families investigated by CPS (69.2 percent). No other ethnic differences were found. No reliable data on number of children was available for families investigated by CPS; therefore, no comparison was made.

The average primary caregiver's age in families who completed service plans (34.1) was statistically significantly higher than the average primary caregiver's age in families who signed but did not complete service plans (32.1) (p=0.00). However, there was no difference in average age between service plan completers and families assessed only or between noncompleters and families assessed only. No statistically significant differences were found between the Family Builders groups in the distribution of primary caregivers by sex or ethnicity. Similarly, no differences were found between groups in the average number of children in the household. The median number of children for each group was two.

- **Analysis of families with no prior CPS reports**—As reported in Finding I (see pages 13 through 18), when looking only at families whose first involvement with CPS during the period examined was through the referring CPS report, the analysis showed that there was a small difference between the proportion of families served by Family Builders (29 percent) and the proportion of families investigated by CPS (33 percent). The Chi-Square result was 204.396 (df=6, N=14,599), p=0.00 and the Phi was 0.118. Again, there was a statistically significant but weak association.

- **Analysis of families referred to but not participating in Family Builders**—In addition to the groups described above, two additional groups were included in the analysis of subsequent reports. The first group included 5,265 families who

were referred to Family Builders but declined to participate. The second group included 2,333 families who were referred to Family Builders but could not be located by the assigned caseworkers. Families in these groups had a referring CPS report date between January 1, 1998 and September 30, 2000, and their cases were closed by September 30, 2000. Both groups had a smaller proportion of families with subsequent reports than the proportions of families served by Family Builders and families investigated by CPS with subsequent reports. The differences in proportions of families with subsequent reports were statistically significant (Chi-Square= 229.535, df=6, N=17,907, p=0.000); however, the intensity of the relationship was too weak (Phi = 0.113) to have meaningful significance.

- **Analysis of CPS report priority of originating report**— Potential- and low-risk reports are eligible for the Family Builders program, but low-risk reports involve more serious allegations of child abuse and neglect. The proportion of families who completed Family Builders and had low-risk originating reports (40 percent) was significantly smaller than the proportion of families who were investigated by CPS and had low-risk reports (58 percent). The Chi-Square result was 475.624 (df=18, N=17,907, p=0.00), indicating statistical significance. However, the relationship between report priority and program participation was weak (Phi=0.163).

Analysis of CPS Report Rates

Evaluators analyzed CPS data on all reports of child abuse and neglect received in the state between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 2000. The rates indicate the statewide number of CPS reports made per month. Evaluators compared three sets of rates: CPS Districts 1 and 2, served by Family Builders for the entire analysis period; CPS Districts 3 and 6, served by Family Builders beginning October 1, 1999; and Districts 4 and 5, served only by CPS for the entire analysis period. They expected the rate of reports in districts served by Family Builders to decline over time and to be lower than the rate in districts served only by CPS. However, the patterns of rates over time in all three areas were similar.

(This Page Intentionally Left Blank)

Agency Response

(This Page Intentionally Left Blank)

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY
1717 W. Jefferson, P.O. Box 6123, Phoenix, Arizona 85005

Jane Dee Hull
Governor

John L. Clayton
Director

Ms. Debbie Davenport, CPA
Office of the Auditor General
2910 North 44th Street, Suite 410
Phoenix, Arizona 85005

Dear Ms. Davenport:

The Department wishes to thank the Office of the Auditor General for the opportunity to respond to the recently completed audit of the Family Builders Program.

The Department is pleased that the Auditor General has recognized the continued 100 percent response rate to reports of child abuse and neglect utilizing a combination of investigations by Child Protective Services and referrals to Family Builders. The report shows the goal and objectives of the program were met by achieving the following outcome results. Ninety-seven percent of program families who completed the program did not have a subsequent validated report of child abuse and neglect within six months of receiving program services. The Family Risk Scale assessment results indicate program families experienced a statistically significant decrease in risk in each of the three measured areas: economic; parent-centered and child-centered.

An additional benefit of the program is families who completed the voluntary Brief Family Assessment Scale showed a decline in risk from program entrance to exit. Participating families are given a client satisfaction survey upon their exit from the program and 97 percent indicated that the caseworkers treated their family and their culture with a great deal of respect. Only 2 percent of the respondents reported that they were not better off as a result of Family Builders.

The Department has made efforts to address monitoring and database problems and will continue to do so. The Department convened a work group consisting of agency and community provider personnel to address program issues. This group continues to meet and as a result of their work, many changes to forms and the data base have been and will continue to be made.

Once again, in March 2001, the Family Builders Program received national recognition. The program placed as a semifinalist for the 2001 Innovations in American Government Award granted by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

The recommendations pertaining to each finding will be implemented as discussed in our accompanying response. We would like to express our appreciation for the time and effort you have invested in this important evaluation. We wish to specifically recognize Tanya Nieri for her dedication during the evaluation process.

If you have any questions or need additional information please contact Anna Arnold, Assistant Director of the Division of Children, Youth and Families at 602-542-3598, or me at 602-542-5678.

Sincerely,

John L. Clayton

Enclosure

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY
RESPONSE TO THE
FAMILY BUILDERS PROGRAM EVALUATION

FINDING I: Services Differ But Program Outcomes Comparable to CPS

The Auditor General's report shows the goal and objectives of the program were met by achieving the following outcome results. Just under 97 percent (96.9%) of program families did not have a validated report of child abuse and neglect within six months of receiving program services. The Family Risk Scale assessment results indicate that program families experienced a statistically significant decrease in risk in each of the three measured areas: economic; parent-centered and child-centered. Further, families who completed the voluntary Brief Family Assessment Scale showed a decline in risk from program entrance to exit.

The Department agrees with the Auditor General's statement that families completing the Family Builders program had fewer subsequent reports than families that did not complete the program. The report further shows that these participants reduced their risk for child abuse and neglect. During the period of January 1, 1998 through March 31, 2001, 8.9 percent of families investigated by CPS received subsequent substantiated reports. Family Builders participants who completed their service plan had a 6.6 percent substantiation rate during the same time period. When rates of subsequent substantiated reports are looked at for program families within a period of six months from the time they last received program services, the rate drops to 3.1 percent.

There are no recommendations under this finding.

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY
RESPONSE TO THE
FAMILY BUILDERS PROGRAM EVALUATION

FINDING II: Department Has Made Limited Progress In Monitoring and Oversight

The Department agrees with the Auditor General that steps to address problems identified in the previous evaluation were made. The Department's Family Builders Program Specialists review contractor's cost records during their quarterly monitoring visits and compare them to the database for accuracy. The Department also modified the reimbursement rates paid to providers based on the difference between the rates and recorded costs. In addition, the Department convened a work group that has met multiple times to review and revise cost categories and their definitions. This group has assisted in updating program forms and has offered suggestions about changes to the database.

As programmatic issues are raised, the Department responds by addressing the concern in new worker training, during the quarterly site monitoring visits of providers, and at the quarterly partnership meetings of providers. The Department is committed to ensuring providers fulfill the requirements of their contracts, so in turn, program families receive appropriate services. These services are provided to families to assist them in creating a safe, stable and nurturing home environment that promotes safety of all family members and healthy child development.

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the following audit recommendations will be implemented.

1. The Department should develop a data quality assurance plan for the ongoing review and improvement of the data collection system.

The Office of Prevention and Family Support, Family Builders Program has been authorized to begin a Family Builders Program Database Project, which will address the Family Builders Pilot Program database issues. The Project will include a data quality assurance plan which will address current problems and how to avoid future problems. The Project team will design a process which will improve the data collection system and allow for ongoing data review. The Project will begin with a review of the strengths and weaknesses of the current databases. The Project team will complete a system-wide analysis to address errors and determine a means to ensure completeness and consistency across tables and providers. The analysis will attempt to eliminate the current database problems. If it is determined a new database is necessary, a project team will be assembled to determine the design of the new database based on this analysis. The stakeholders and users will be asked to provide guidance to the project team in the development of the database and manuals. This project team will be involved in the design, testing, and installation of the database. The team will be involved in the development of the technical manuals required to support the database and users. The project team, stakeholders and users will sign off on the final project and oversee the installation of the database.

2. The Department should conduct a system-wide review of the Family Builders database to eliminate problems, such as duplicate entries, and modify it to prevent future problems.

The Department recognizes the Family Builders Pilot Program Database has many design flaws. The Project team will conduct a system-wide review of the Family Builders Pilot Program Database. The team will correct as many errors as feasible in an effort to preserve the historical data as accurately and completely as possible.

If it is determined a new database is needed, the system-wide review will provide the direction for the design and development of a new Family Builders Program database that will contain data which is complete, accurate and has integrity. The project may culminate in a historical database and a new database supported by technical manuals.

3. The Department should monitor the use of the new program definitions and cost categories, modifying them as needed, to ensure that they are interpreted correctly and produce valid data.

The Department convened a work group that has met multiple times to review and revise cost categories and their definitions. The Department's Family Builders Program Specialists review contractor's cost records during their quarterly monitoring visits and compare them to the database for accuracy. To ensure the integrity of the cost data, the Department will design and implement a more detailed monitoring process, which will focus on individual case errors as well as system level error detection and their causes. The process will be used to monitor the provider's use and understanding of the current cost categories and program definitions. The monitoring will include a systematic database review for errors and omissions. When monitoring detects problems, training will be made available to address any problem the user may be experiencing. This training will occur at regular intervals and on an as-needed basis. The monitoring will be designed to ensure the program data is valid and that definitions and cost categories are interpreted consistently.

4. The Department should create a database user's manual.

The Project team will develop technical manuals, which will support the database and users. The content of the manuals will be reinforced in regular ongoing training.

5. The Department should provide regular training on the data collection system and tailor it to the needs of the different audiences who handle program data.

The Department's Family Builders Program Specialists have conducted programmatic training multiple times since the inception of the program. Although the majority of the training focuses on programmatic details, the importance of an accurate database is stressed. The Department has provided technical support to providers on database issues and will continue to do so. To further enhance the providers' ability to accurately collect and input data, the Project team will develop additional training to support the database and meet the users' needs. The Department will offer regular training focused on the database. The training will include proper data collection and verification procedures. The training will be tailored to meet the needs of the different audiences who handle the program data, such as caseworkers, data entry staff, and program supervisors. The training will address common data collection and entry problems. The training will focus on ensuring program data is accurate, complete, error-free and appropriately categorized.

6. The Department should assign the program the technical resources required to effectively address problems and maintain the data system.

The Department is committed to developing an effective database which is supported and maintained by technically competent staff. Technical resources will be made available to effectively address the current problems in the short-term and maintain the data collection system over the long-term.

If a new database is needed, the Department's goal is to retire the current database and launch the new database with technical manuals by January 1, 2003.

The Project will be a concurrent effort, which will culminate in a historical database, and if necessary, a new database, which is reliable, accurate, and complete.

The projected target dates include:

- *Correct and preserve the historical information currently contained in the Family Builders District Coordinators Database (Main) and the Family Builders Provider Database by January 31, 2002;*
- *Review the needs and requirements of a new database and/or changes to be made to the existing database to make it effective and recommend project approval to the executive management team by April 1, 2002;*
- *Design the database and technical manuals based on user need and requirements by September 1, 2002;*
- *Test the database by October 30, 2002;*
- *Provide training to the users by November 30, 2002;*
- *Install the new database or updates to the existing database to the users by December 15, 2002;*
- *Follow-up and provide technical assistance by January 1, 2003.*

7. The Department should monitor local advisory board activities to ensure that they meet their statutory responsibilities.

The Department created a self-monitoring tool for providers to use to make advisory board meetings more effective in addressing the boards' statutory responsibilities. To assist with membership recruitment, the Department gave providers lists of community organizations from which they might recruit board members. The Department will continue to monitor local advisory boards by providing training, attending meetings, and giving feedback. The providers will again be trained on their statutory responsibility as it relates to the function of the advisory board. Meeting notes and membership lists will be reviewed by Program Specialists and when gaps in services are identified, Specialists will work with the provider to ensure they have a plan on how these gaps will be addressed. In addition, the Department will give providers guidance on how to engage and encourage family members to become involved. Specialists will also provide guidance on how to encourage current board members to remain involved and attend meetings on a consistent basis.

Other Performance Audit Reports Issued Within the Last 12 Months

01-1 Department of Economic Security—Child Support Enforcement
01-2 Department of Economic Security—Healthy Families Program
01-3 Arizona Department of Public Safety—Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) Program
01-4 Arizona Department of Corrections—Human Resources Management
01-5 Arizona Department of Public Safety—Telecommunications Bureau
01-6 Board of Osteopathic Examiners in Medicine and Surgery
01-7 Arizona Department of Corrections—Support Services
01-8 Arizona Game and Fish Commission and Department—Wildlife Management Program
01-9 Arizona Game and Fish Commission—Heritage Fund
01-10 Department of Public Safety—Licensing Bureau
01-11 Arizona Commission on the Arts
01-12 Board of Chiropractic Examiners
01-13 Arizona Department of Corrections—Private Prisons
01-14 Arizona Automobile Theft Authority
01-15 Department of Real Estate
01-16 Department of Veterans' Services Arizona State Veteran Home, Veterans' Conservatorship / Guardianship Program, and Veterans' Services Program
01-17 Arizona Board of Dispensing Opticians
01-18 Arizona Department of Corrections—Administrative Services and Information Technology
01-19 Arizona Department of Education—Early Childhood Block Grant
01-20 Department of Public Safety—Highway Patrol
01-21 Board of Nursing
01-22 Department of Public Safety—Criminal Investigations Division
01-23 Department of Building and Fire Safety
01-24 Arizona Veterans' Service Advisory Commission
01-25 Department of Corrections—Arizona Correctional Industries
01-26 Department of Corrections—Sunset Factors
01-27 Board of Regents
01-28 Department of Public Safety—Criminal Information Services Bureau, Access Integrity Unit, and Fingerprint Identification Bureau
01-29 Department of Public Safety—Sunset Factors

Future Performance Audit Reports

Perinatal Substance Abuse Program

Homeless Youth Intervention Program