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OFFICE OF THE
AUDITOR GENERAL

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July 17, 2018

The Honorable Anthony Kern, Chair
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

The Honorable Bob Worsley, Vice Chair
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Dear Representative Kern and Senator Worsley:

Our Office has recently completed an initial followup of the Arizona Department of Child Safety—Staff Retention, Recruitment, and Training regarding the implementation status of the 16 audit recommendations (including sub-parts of the recommendations) presented in the special report released in September 2017 (Auditor General Report 17-111). As the attached grid indicates:

- 3 have been implemented;
- 1 has been partially implemented;
- 4 are in the process of being implemented; and
- 8 have not been implemented.

Our Office will conduct an 18-month followup with the Department on the status of those recommendations that have not yet been fully implemented.

Sincerely,

Dale Chapman, Director
Performance Audit Division

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Attachment

cc: Gregory McKay, Director
Arizona Department of Child Safety

Arizona Department of Child Safety—Staff Retention, Recruitment, and Training Auditor General Report 17-111 Initial Follow-Up Report

Recommendation

Status/Additional Explanation

Chapter 1: Department has experienced turnover

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| 1.1 The Department should consider implementing a quality control check to help ensure the consistency of turnover information across its reports. | Not implemented
As indicated in its response to the report, the Department did not agree that additional quality control checks were necessary. However, auditors reviewed reports for August 2017 through January 2018 and noted some minor discrepancies. |
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Chapter 2: Department taking various actions to improve staff retention

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| 2.1 The Department should continue to explore opportunities to address salary concerns as resources permit. In doing so, it should consider gathering additional state salary information from other states for benchmarking, as it deems necessary. | Implementation in process
Documentation provided by the Department indicates that it is exploring options for additional funding to address salary concerns. |
| 2.2 The Department should carry out its plans to implement a peer support program to support staff facing trauma and burnout. | Implemented at 6 months |

Chapter 3: Department can further enhance its efforts to hire best fit job applicants to promote retention

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| 3.1 The Department should take additional actions to recruit caseworker applicants with backgrounds in social work or related fields by: | |
| a. Revising its minimum caseworker qualifications to at least include a preference for applicants with a social work or related degree and/or previous child welfare experience. The Department should then prioritize its recruitment and hiring of applicants in accordance with this preference. | Not implemented
As indicated in its response to the report, the Department did not agree with changing the minimum qualifications for the caseworker position. Although the Department's caseworker position description indicates a preference for candidates with social work or related degree and previous child welfare experience, its job announcement on its website does not include this preference. |
| b. As resources allow, participating in additional recruiting activities at the universities to recruit applicants earning social work or related degrees who are not part of the tuition assistance program. As needed and as resources permit, the Department could also consider attending recruiting activities at universities in bordering states, such as Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah, to recruit caseworker applicants for rural Arizona cities. | Not implemented
As indicated in its response to the report, the Department does not plan to implement this recommendation. |

Recommendation

Status/Additional Explanation

3.2 The Department should enhance the use of its RJP video to further encourage applicants to watch and reflect on the video and help it assess applicants' job fit. For example, the Department could inform applicants that they will be asked questions about the video in the interview and then ask questions based on the video that help the Department assess the applicants' job fit.

Partially implemented at 6 months

As indicated in its response to the report, the Department did not agree with enhancing the use of the RJP video to further encourage applicants to watch and reflect on the video. Rather, the Department stated that its interview process helped ensure applicants' expectations were aligned with job requirements. The Department also stated that its initial caseworker training was a more effective way of providing insights into the job duties than a video. However, the Department has revised its caseworker interview questions to now ask applicants to identify things that stood out to them from watching the RJP video.

3.3 As the Department continues its efforts to improve its caseworker applicant assessment tools, it should revise or implement additional assessment tools that would help better assess applicants' observational skills and planning and organizing work skills. The Department should also consider whether there would be benefit in taking a similar approach in its assessment of program supervisor applicants.

Implementation in process

The Department revised its caseworker interview questions and written assessment in December 2017. The revised interview questions and written assessment help assess applicants' key competencies, including observational skills and planning and organizing work skills. According to the Department, it does not plan to implement any additional assessment tools. The Department also reported that it plans to revise its program supervisor applicant process as part of its fiscal year 2019 strategic plan.

3.4 The Department should ensure that, when possible, program supervisors participate in the interview for caseworker applicants for positions in their units.

Implemented at 6 months

Chapter 4: Department now monitors compliance with tuition assistance program requirements and should evaluate the program

4.1 The Department should continue to implement its new processes for monitoring participants' compliance with its tuition assistance program and collecting repayment from participants who do not meet their employment obligations.

Implemented at 6 months

4.2 Consistent with federal requirements, the Department should evaluate its tuition assistance program beyond monitoring participants' compliance with employment obligations for internal management purposes.

Not implemented

The Department reported that it has not taken actions to implement this recommendation beyond tracking employee turnover.

Chapter 5: Department should expand current efforts to strengthen child welfare staff training

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| 5.1 | The Department should continue its efforts to address the issues it identified regarding the consistency and quality of support provided to caseworker trainees. It should also monitor and assess whether its efforts result in improved support for trainees and, if not, identify and take additional steps to improve trainee support, as needed. | Not implemented
Although the Department has established a standard work document that indicates supervisors' duties include mentoring new caseworkers, it did not provide documentation that this mentoring occurs or indicating whether other mentors will be assigned to new hires. Additionally, the Department did not provide documentation or plans indicating that it has taken or will undertake other efforts to ensure it addresses the issues it identified regarding the consistency and quality of support provided to trainees. The Department also did not provide any documentation indicating that it is monitoring and assessing whether its efforts result in improved support for trainees. |
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| 5.2 | The Department should carry out its plans to revise its core supervisor training. As part of this effort, the Department should (1) incorporate mentoring into the supervisor core training and (2) increase opportunities for supervisors to interact with one another. | Implementation in process
The Department has identified leadership competencies for aspiring leaders and first-time managers and is in the process of developing training curriculum for these competencies. However, department staff reported that the Department does not plan to incorporate mentoring or additional opportunities for supervisors to interact with one another into its training at this time. |
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| 5.3 | The Department should develop a formal training program for its program managers that includes mentoring and networking opportunities. | Not implemented
The Department reported that it has not yet begun implementing this recommendation because it has prioritized Recommendation 5.2 for implementation, which is focused on developing a training program for first-time leaders. The Department reported that this training program will lay the groundwork for developing a training program for its program managers. |
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| 5.4 | Consistent with federal requirements, the Department should develop and implement a continuous training requirement and document this requirement in policy. In doing so, the Department should determine the amount of training its staff should complete on an ongoing basis, such as a minimum number of annual training hours, and how to track this training's completion. | Not implemented
The Department reported that it does not plan to develop or implement a formal continuous training requirement. However, as was the case during the audit, the Department provides some ongoing training opportunities for staff and can track training completion using its Learning Management System. |
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Recommendation

Status/Additional Explanation

5.5 The Department should identify and implement additional accountability mechanisms that ensure (1) staff responsible for tracking and monitoring training completion do so in accordance with department processes and (2) all staff comply with the Department's training requirements for their positions.

Not implemented

As indicated in its response to the report, the Department did not agree that it was necessary to identify and implement additional accountability mechanisms to ensure staff complete their required training. The Department reported that its current process, which was in place during the audit, allows for supervisors, managers, and administrative staff to access its Learning Management System to review whether staff are completing required trainings. However, audit work conducted during the audit indicated that this process may not adequately ensure staff complete required training within the Department's designated time frames.

5.6 The Department should continue to develop and implement its training evaluation processes, such as the quarterly and annual training reviews and training audits. It should also continue to identify and assess opportunities for further developing its training evaluation efforts.

Implementation in process

The Department has developed a list of training courses to be audited but has not assigned audit dates for the majority of the courses. It has also developed a tool to help guide the audit process and has conducted audits of some of its trainings using this tool. However, the tool has not been used consistently for the training audits auditors reviewed.