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May 15, 2020

The Honorable Anthony Kern, Chair  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

The Honorable Rick Gray, Vice Chair  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Dear Representative Kern and Senator Gray:

We have recently completed an initial followup of the Arizona Department of Child Safety—Foster Home Recruitment, Licensure, Use, and Retention regarding the implementation status of the 6 audit recommendations presented in the special report released in September 2019 (Auditor General Report 19-113). As the attached grid indicates:

- 5 are in the process of being implemented.
- 1 has not been implemented.

We will conduct an 18-month followup with the Arizona Department of Child Safety on the status of those recommendations that have not yet been fully implemented.

Sincerely,  
Dale Chapman, Director  
Performance Audit Division

cc: Mr. Michael Faust, Director  
Arizona Department of Child Safety

# Arizona Department of Child Safety—Foster Home Recruitment, Licensure, Use, and Retention Auditor General Report 19-113 Initial Follow-Up Report

## Recommendation

## Status/Additional Explanation

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

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|--|---|
| <p>1. The Department should develop and implement a customer service model to improve foster parent recruitment and retention and engage in continuous quality improvement (i.e., systematically obtaining and incorporating feedback) to ensure the model's successful implementation.</p>  | <p><b>Not implemented</b></p> <p>The Department reported that it plans to identify actions to implement a customer service model at its next strategic planning session. This session is tentatively scheduled for June 2020.</p>   |
| <p>2. The Department should, as required by statute, provide foster parents with complete, updated written placement packet information upon placement of children with foster parents. The Department should also monitor caseworker provision of placement packets to foster parents and obtain feedback from foster parents regarding their receipt of complete placement packets through its implementation of Recommendation 1 above.</p>     | <p><b>Implementation in process</b></p> <p>As stated in the report, the Department plans to address this recommendation through the implementation of its new case management system (Guardian). The Department reported that Guardian will allow foster parents to access placement-packet information through an online portal. According to the Department, this phase of Guardian's implementation will occur in December 2020. In the meantime, the Department has continued its medical onboarding process of contacting foster parents within 60 days of receiving a child to check whether the foster parent has received necessary medical information, including placement packet information. Additionally, the Department emailed staff in February 2020 reminding them of the requirements for providing placement packets to foster parents. Finally, the Department reported that the strategic planning session discussed in Recommendation 1 will include identifying actions to monitor provision of placement packets and obtain feedback from foster parents.</p> |
| <p>3. The Department should review the data collection procedures for why foster parents close their licenses and identify and implement opportunities to improve data quality. This should include allowing for more than 1 reason for license closure to be selected, providing more guidance to contractors on how to gather and enter information, and considering other methods of collecting this data, such as an anonymous web survey.</p> | <p><b>Implementation in process</b></p> <p>The Department plans to implement this recommendation through Guardian in December 2020. In November 2019, the Department updated the form that foster parents must fill out to close their license to allow foster parents to select a reason for closure from a list of reasons. Although this form allows foster parents to select more than 1 reason for closure, the Department's current licensing database does not allow for more than 1 reason to be recorded in the database. Therefore, if a foster parent identifies more than 1 reason for closure, the Department's contractor selects 1 of the reasons to record in the system. The Department reported that it reviews the form</p>  |

when closing the license and may contact the contractor if it has questions. According to the Department, Guardian will allow more than 1 reason to be recorded, and that additional guidance will be provided to contractors once this function in Guardian is implemented.

In addition, the Department administers (1) a monthly survey to foster parents who closed their licenses the previous month to obtain information about their reasons for closure and their fostering experience and (2) a semiannual survey to actively licensed foster parents about their foster experience. The Department reported that it plans to begin sharing the results of these surveys with its contractors by the end of May 2020.

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

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

**Implementation in process**

The Department reported that it provided its contractors with best practice standards related to customer service and phone call quality. Additionally, in January 2020, the Department implemented “secret shopper” procedures that include Department staff making anonymous phone calls to contractors and Department phonelines to assess intake practices. The Department made a total of 23 calls in its initial test calls, including 22 calls to contractors and 1 call to the Department. Results from these calls were mixed. For example, the Department made 6 Spanish language calls, and none of the agencies were able to respond in Spanish. However, of the 17 callers who responded to the question on the attitude of the individual who answered the phone, 14 stated that the person they spoke with was warm, welcoming, and encouraging. Additionally, 11 of 15 callers stated that the individual who answered the phone took time to answer their questions. The Department reported that it plans to share results from the first round of calls with contractors by the end of May 2020. It also plans to continue making anonymous phone calls quarterly and share the results with contractors at quarterly meetings.

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

**Implementation in process**

In April 2020, the Department implemented a quarterly review of its contractors’ websites to ensure that the websites contain required information, including a Spanish translation of this information. Based on the Department’s initial review, many of its contractors’ websites did not include all required information. The Department plans to begin sharing the results of its reviews with contractors by the end of May 2020.

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

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

**Implementation in process**

The Department has continued implementing active contract management (ACM) for its contractors, including performing quarterly monitoring visits and requiring contractors to complete monthly workbooks that report information on the contractors' staff, foster families, and various metrics related to contractor activities. For example, contractors are required to report the number of licensed beds in use, the number of requests for respite care met, information about foster-parent-support activities, the number of families completing preservice training, the number of licensed foster homes, the number of monthly license closures, and the number of children transitioned to foster homes from group homes the contractors partner with. The Department then uses the information from the quarterly monitoring visits and monthly workbooks to develop a quarterly evaluation report for each contractor of general and ongoing contractual requirements performed. According to the Department, the first quarterly evaluation reports will be distributed by the end of May 2020. The Department reported that it will likely implement further monitoring activities but has yet to determine them.