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Performance Audit Division

Performance Audit

Department of Economic Security

Division of Children, Youth and Families
Child Protective Services—Caseloads and Training

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Auditor General

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, investigates possible misuse of public monies, and conducts performance audits of school districts, state agencies, and the programs they administer.

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October 22, 2003

Members of the Arizona Legislature

The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Governor

Mr. David A. Berns, Director
Department of Economic Security

Transmitted herewith is a report of the Auditor General, A Special Performance Audit of the Department of Economic Security—Division of Children, Youth and Families—Child Protective Services—Caseloads and Training. This report specifically addresses a legislative request approved by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee on August 9, 2001, and was conducted under the authority vested in the Auditor General by Arizona Revised Statutes §41-1279.03. This report is being distributed to all members of the Legislature since it provides information on Child Protective Services which is one of the topics of the current legislative special session. I am also transmitting with this report a copy of the Report Highlights for this audit to provide a quick summary for your convenience.

As outlined in its response, the Department of Economic Security agrees with all but one of the findings and for most of the recommendations it plans to either implement them or implement them in a different manner. The Department states that it disagrees with the finding and does not plan to implement the recommendations related to improving the accuracy of its case manager staffing projections.

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

This report will be released to the public on October 23, 2003.

Sincerely,

Debbie Davenport
Auditor General

Enclosure

SUMMARY

The Office of the Auditor General has conducted a performance audit of several areas related to Child Protective Services (CPS). CPS is a program within the Department of Economic Security's Division of Children, Youth and Families (Division). This performance audit specifically addresses a legislative request approved by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee on August 9, 2001, and was conducted under the authority vested in the Auditor General by A.R.S. §41-1279.03.

The legislative request asked auditors to assess five issues: 1) the impact of funding provided to bring CPS caseloads in-line with Child Welfare League of America standards by comparing average CPS caseloads at June 30, 2001, to average caseloads at June 30, 2003, by type of worker, office, and district; 2) the amount and type of training that new case managers received in June 2001 and June 2003; 3) the adequacy of the Department's supervisory training and oversight; 4) the extent of concurrent case planning; and 5) barriers to permanency. Concurrent case planning is a permanency planning practice that simultaneously pursues both family reunification and an alternate plan, such as adoption or legal guardianship, with the intent of moving the foster child to a permanent placement more quickly.

CPS provides or arranges for a variety of services to achieve safety, well-being, and permanency for children, youth, and families. These services include receiving reports about child abuse and neglect through a state-wide, toll-free, 24-hour child abuse hotline, which anyone who wants to report suspected abuse may use. CPS also investigates the allegations and assesses the risk of harm to the children involved in these reports. When an investigation results in a child being removed from his/her home, CPS places the child in an approved foster care setting, such as with a relative or in a licensed foster or group home. Within 72 hours of the removal, CPS must either return the child to his/her home if it is safe to do so, or file a dependency petition with the Juvenile Court to place the child in temporary state custody. For cases in which a child has been removed from home and placed in foster care, CPS usually develops a case plan with a permanency goal of reunification with the family; but the goal can also be adoption, independent living, or long-term foster care, as appropriate. In working with children and their families to achieve the permanency goal, a case manager provides or arranges for services such as medical, dental, and behavioral healthcare for the child, and counseling for the child's family.

Several changes needed to accurately project case manager staffing needs (see pages 9 through 21)

The Division's average CPS case manager caseloads were at or below 12 in both 2001 and 2003. However, the Division's budget request indicated that excessive caseloads were hindering CPS case managers' ability to effectively perform their jobs, and an additional 34 staff were needed in fiscal year 2002 to bring caseloads in-line with the Child Welfare League of America's (CWLA) standards. The request for the additional staff was funded by the Legislature starting in fiscal year 2002.¹ There are some limitations to making direct comparisons between average caseloads and the CWLA standards for two reasons. First, the Division uses three CWLA standards—investigations, ongoing in-home, and ongoing out-of-home—to project its staffing needs, but these standards do not correspond precisely with how work is conducted in Arizona. Second, on October 6, 2003, subsequent to the completion of audit work, CWLA changed its interpretation of its investigative standard from 12 active cases at a point in time to 12 active cases in a month. Despite these limitations, auditors were still able to compute average caseloads before and after the additional staffing was added, and to compute the caseloads by the different types of case managers. Auditors found that on June 30, 2001, the Division's average caseloads for the majority of CPS staff managing cases was 11 or fewer cases. On June 30, 2003, the majority of CPS staff managing cases had caseloads of 12 or fewer cases. However, the average caseloads for CPS case managers working in investigative units was 15 cases due to a significant increase in cases and several unfilled CPS case manager positions. Specifically, since June 2001, the Division's total overall caseload had increased by 30 percent, and in June 2003, the Division reported that 37 case manager positions were unfilled. However, auditors identified 23 case managers working in investigative units with between 30 and 82 cases, and interviewed several of these staff and found that most of the cases had been investigated and just needed to be closed on the system.

To ensure that it can accurately project its CPS case manager staffing needs, the Division needs to modify its case management system to allow it to classify cases according to caseload standards, include in its caseloads only cases that are being actively worked by case management staff, and include all staff who regularly manage cases. Because the Division's case management system does not allow it to classify cases according to the three CWLA caseload standard types it uses (i.e., investigation, ongoing in-home, and ongoing out-of-home), the Division must estimate some case types, such as ongoing in-home cases. Auditors identified some errors in the Division's process for determining the number of cases it has. For example, auditors found that 56 percent of the Division's ongoing in-home cases in June 2003 were being managed by case managers working in investigative units, and auditors' research suggests that many of these cases could be investigations that

¹ According to Joint Legislative Budget Committee staff, the Division received enough monies to fund these positions for three-quarters of fiscal year 2002, and this amount has remained the same in subsequent fiscal years.

were completed but not closed on the case management system. In addition, auditors found open cases that were assigned to case managers who had long since left the Division, and cases that were not assigned to any employee. Finally, auditors found that the Division does not include some staff who regularly manage cases when determining case manager staffing needs.

Despite average caseloads being 12 or fewer, there are several indications that CPS case managers are not able to effectively perform their jobs. For example, in the Division's most current semi-annual report (March 2003), it was noted that CPS case managers were able to make the required monthly face-to-face visit with only 68 percent of the children in out-of-home care. Auditors' interviews with case managers suggested that case manager turnover could be a contributing factor in some case managers carrying high caseloads at certain times. As of May 2003, case manager turnover was 14.6 percent. Therefore, the Division should work to address case manager retention issues. The Division should also evaluate whether it can streamline its processes and eliminate some case management tasks, and whether support staff could handle some tasks currently performed by case managers. For example, some case managers auditors interviewed characterized the amount of paperwork as excessive and difficult to complete, and suggested that support staff could do some of these administrative tasks.

The Division should also assess workload factors to help determine how many cases Arizona case managers should carry because CWLA's standards are intended to be guidelines or starting points only, which an agency may need to adjust to reflect its actual workload. The Division used to regularly conduct formal workload analyses and adjust caseloads based on workload factors, but indicated that this practice was discontinued 3 years ago because it lacked the resources to maintain the process. Therefore, the Division may want to consider assessing workload issues through other means. For example, workload studies have been conducted in two states using methods other than formal analyses, such as conducting focus groups, reviewing policy and procedures, and "shadowing," or observing, a sample of case managers.

Training hours have significantly increased, but other improvements needed (see pages 23 through 28)

The Division's revised training program for new case managers has increased the amount and type of training new staff receive, but it is not yet functioning as envisioned. The Division established this new program, known as the Child Welfare Training Institute, in January 2002 because it felt its existing program did not provide sufficient training to help develop skills. In addition, division budget documents indicate that case managers were often not able to complete training because they were

required to handle cases during training, and that these problems affected its ability to recruit and retain competent staff. The new training program costs approximately \$1.7 million annually, and allows the Division to maintain 47 trainee positions that should not have to carry cases during training.¹ Further, the Legislature added a footnote to the General Appropriation Acts for fiscal years 2002 through 2004 that has the effect of law and reinforces the Division's goal of not assigning case responsibilities to new case managers before they complete the training program.

The new training program has enhanced and expanded the topics covered during the prior program, and it increases classroom training by about 1 week and adds 25 days of structured field exercises, such as observing court hearings as well as accompanying an experienced case manager on an initial investigation and home visit. According to the Division, these structured activities are designed to help the trainee transfer knowledge gained from classroom instruction to the field. However, auditor interviews with 23 case managers and review of a letter written by 20 trainees found that the Division should provide more practical classroom training for tasks such as operating the Division's computerized case management system, writing court reports, making referrals for services, and conducting interviews. Further, even though the Division envisioned the training program as a way to improve retention, auditors' analysis of the first nine training classes held between January 2002 and October 2002 found that 8 percent of the trainees left before they completed training, and 24 percent of the trainees left within 9 months of completing it. Making the classroom training more practical may address some of the retention problem; however, additional efforts may be needed. The Division already asks departing employees to complete an exit interview, and it should continue to use this instrument to identify the reasons new case managers leave and develop potential solutions.

Finally, despite the legislative mandate and division goal to not assign trainees case-load duties before they complete training, the Division has assigned case responsibilities to some trainees. Auditors' analysis of several training classes found trainees were being assigned case responsibilities. Because the practice of assigning case-load responsibilities during training is a violation of current legislative mandate and runs counter to the Division's stated goal, the Division should establish a written policy that prohibits trainees from being assigned as the primary or only case manager on a case and clarifies that trainees may be assigned case tasks only for training purposes. It should also ensure that all appropriate individuals are informed of this policy, and monitor trainees' work assignments.

¹ According to Joint Legislative Budget Committee staff, the Division received enough monies to fund these training positions for half of fiscal year 2002, and this amount has remained the same in subsequent fiscal years.

Steps needed to improve case manager supervisory oversight (see pages 29 through 35)

Although supervisors provide primary case manager oversight, several reviews showed insufficient supervision. Supervisors provide primary oversight of the Division's case managers through various oversight and review processes, such as providing regular case consultation on investigative and ongoing child abuse cases. For example, CPS supervisors must review and approve every child removal decision. However, recent reviews conducted by the Division, as well as by the Council on Accreditation (COA), found inadequate supervisory oversight. As an example, a division internal review conducted in December 2002 found supervisors had failed to fill out the proper case record review guide in 42 to 71 percent of the different types of cases reviewed. Division policy requires the supervisor to use this guide as a checklist for ensuring that case managers adhere to multiple laws and policies. Similarly, the COA found in an onsite review of the Division conducted between August and November 2002 that supervisory oversight needed improvement, such as monitoring family progress and providing the appropriate level of case consultation.

The Division should take several steps to improve supervisory oversight. The Division's case manager-to-supervisor ratio exceeds recommended Child Welfare League of America standards in two of the six districts, although more work is needed to determine how to apply these standards in Arizona. The Division could accomplish this by conducting focus groups with supervisors state-wide to determine the current workload issues impacting effective supervision, such as case manager turnover and experience levels. If additional supervisors are needed, the Division should also take steps to determine if existing resources could fund any new positions.

Further, the Division should take steps to ensure that adequate supervisory training is a high priority because of the supervisor's critical role and because 33 percent of its supervisory staff is relatively new and inexperienced. However, prior to the December 2002 implementation of the Division's Child Welfare Training Institute revised supervisor training curriculum, it failed to offer initial supervisor training for more than 16 months. In addition, the Division has no regular training program for existing supervisors. Other states, such as New Mexico and Tennessee, require supervisors or managers to complete yearly supervisor-specific continuing education classes to improve their competencies. For example, Tennessee requires supervisors to take 40 hours of continuing education with 24 hours of supervisor-specific training. Examples of course offerings include organizational policies and practices for supervisors, and interviewing techniques.

Efforts needed to further improve children's permanency outcomes (see pages 37 through 43)

Many children nation-wide and in Arizona remain in foster care for extended periods of time, despite the high costs of foster care to both children and governments. The Division established concurrent case planning as one strategy for improving foster care children's timely placement to permanent homes. Concurrent case planning is a permanency planning practice that simultaneously pursues both family reunification and an alternate plan, such as adoption or legal guardianship. Studies have found that concurrent case planning can effectively shorten foster care stays. Although the Division implemented a concurrent case planning policy in April 2001, both external and internal CPS reviews since then have determined that concurrent case planning was not being used, which was one factor hindering the children's timely placement.

Although the Division has developed a plan to improve its implementation of concurrent case planning, further efforts are needed for successful implementation. Specifically, the Division needs to improve its concurrent case planning curriculum and ensure all appropriate personnel receive the training. Auditors found that there are no practical exercises on how to use concurrent case planning, and auditors observed that the instructors for the training class did not discuss the assessment tool that should be used to help determine whether this approach is appropriate for a case.

The Division should also continue its efforts to present information on concurrent case planning to stakeholders such as foster home recruitment agencies, juvenile court judges, and the State Foster Care Review Board (FCRB). According to the National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning, stakeholder support is necessary for the successful implementation of concurrent case planning, and the agency must inform the appropriate stakeholders of philosophical and organizational changes for concurrent case planning. Thus far, the Division has presented information about concurrent case planning to FCRB and the Committee on Juvenile Courts.

While the Division needs to improve its implementation of concurrent case planning, it has taken efforts to increase permanency by applying other best-practice techniques, and it should continue these efforts. For example, auditors found that the Division has several units designated solely for placing children in permanent homes, including general adoption units that find permanent homes and help adoptive families obtain services, and three specialized permanency units that focus specifically on finding homes for special-needs children.

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Office of the Auditor General has conducted a performance audit of several areas related to Child Protective Services (CPS). CPS is a program within the Department of Economic Security's Division of Children, Youth and Families (Division). This performance audit specifically addresses a legislative request approved by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee on August 9, 2001, and was conducted under the authority vested in the Auditor General by A.R.S. §41-1279.03.

The legislative request asked auditors to assess five issues: 1) the impact of funding provided to bring CPS caseloads in-line with Child Welfare League of America standards by comparing average CPS caseloads at June 30, 2001, to average caseloads at June 30, 2003, by type of worker, office, and district; 2) the amount and type of training that new case managers received in June 2001 and June 2003; 3) the adequacy of the Department's supervisory training and oversight; 4) the extent of concurrent case planning; and 5) barriers to permanency.

CPS provides child welfare and other services

CPS provides or arranges for a variety of services to achieve safety, well-being, and permanency for children, youth, and families. These services include:

- **Receiving child abuse and neglect reports**—Children are referred to CPS through a state-wide, toll-free, 24-hour child abuse hotline, which anyone who wants to report suspected abuse may use. The hotline is the mechanism through which all reports of abuse or neglect are received, regardless of who is making the report. Centralized hotline workers respond to all calls using a screening process to determine whether the allegations meet the statutory definition of abuse or neglect. According to the Division's semi-annual Child Welfare Reporting Requirements report, between October 1, 2002, and March 31, 2003, the hotline received 17,470 calls that met the statutory definition of abuse or neglect. Of those calls, 14,634 were investigated by CPS; 2,691 were referred to

- **Permanency**—Generally, the placement of a foster child with a family that has a permanent, legal commitment to the child's well-being. Examples include reunification with the original family, adoption, and legal guardianship.
- **Concurrent case planning**—A permanency planning practice that simultaneously pursues both family reunification and an alternate plan, such as adoption or legal guardianship.

Family Builders; and 145 were within the jurisdiction of military or tribal governments and were referred to those jurisdictions.¹

- **Investigating reports**—When CPS determines, based on its screening process, that a CPS investigation is necessary, a trained CPS case manager assesses the risk of harm to the child or children involved and evaluates conditions that support or refute the alleged abuse or neglect. If the child or children are not in immediate harm of maltreatment but risk factors are present, the case manager may allow the children to stay in the home, but recommend ongoing in-home services as discussed below. However, if a child is in imminent danger of abuse or neglect, CPS may temporarily remove the child from his or her home and place the child in an approved foster care setting, such as with a relative or in a licensed foster or group home.² According to the Division's semi-annual report, between October 1, 2002 and March 31, 2003, 2,961 children were removed from their homes.
- **Ongoing services**—If CPS has determined there to be a risk of harm in the home, CPS may open a case for ongoing in-home or out-of-home services.³ In-home services include such things as child care, counseling, and parent aid services. For cases in which a child has been removed from home and placed in foster care, CPS usually develops a case plan with a permanency goal of reunification with the family; but the goal can also be such things as adoption, independent living, or long-term foster care, as appropriate. In working with children and their families to achieve the permanency goal, a case manager provides or arranges for services such as medical, dental, and behavioral health care for the child, and counseling for the child's family. Additionally, for children with a permanency goal of adoption, CPS may file a petition to terminate parental rights and arrange for the recruitment of adoptive parents and the completion of home studies on the prospective adoptive homes. As of March 31, 2003, 6,867 children were in foster care and receiving ongoing services.

Organization and staffing

The Division of Children, Youth and Families is part of the Arizona Department of Economic Security. CPS is a program within the Division and provides child welfare

- ¹ The Family Builders Program is a community-based program designed to provide services to families who are the subject of selected low-risk and potential-risk reports. According to the Division's semi-annual report, this program was operating in Coconino, Greenlee, Maricopa, Navajo, Pima, and Yavapai Counties during the October 1, 2002 through March 31, 2003, reporting period.
- ² State law limits the length of time a child may remain in out-of-home care to 72 hours, unless a dependency petition is filed (A.R.S. §8-822). Prior to filing the petition, a Removal Review Team is required to review the removal and assess whether other options exist, such as in-home services (A.R.S. §8-822). Parents or guardians may also request a review of the removal within 72 hours by the Division's Family Advocacy Office, which assesses the circumstances under which CPS removed the child (A.R.S. §8-828).
- ³ Families may voluntarily accept these services or, if necessary, CPS may provide services without family consent by filing a dependency petition with the Juvenile Court to place the child in temporary state custody.

and family preservation services throughout the State. In order to accomplish this, CPS is organized into 61 offices within 6 regional districts (see Figure 1). Further, each office may contain various units that manage different types of cases, such as adoption, investigative, or ongoing cases. The majority of the Division's employees fall within the CPS program and provide the services described above. The remaining employees provide administrative and support services for the Division, such as preparing management and financial reports, developing policies, and coordinating the Division's internal quality control process. In fiscal year 2003, the Division had 1,598 positions, of which 844 were case manager and supervisor positions.¹ As of June 27, 2003, of the 1,214.5 positions in its six districts, 1,148.5 were filled, including 752 of its case manager and supervisor positions.²

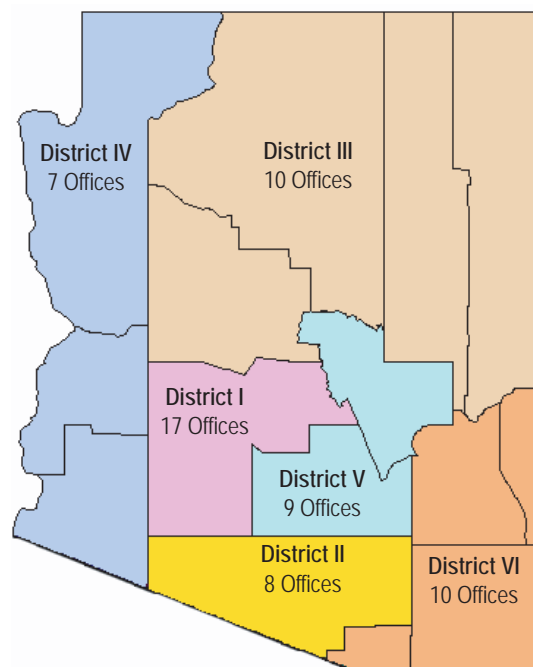
Budget

To provide CPS services, the Division receives both state and federal funding. As illustrated in Table 1 (see page 4), in fiscal year 2003, the Division received an estimated \$300.4 million to operate its programs and provide services to children and families. These monies consisted primarily of State General Fund appropriations (\$69.5 million), and governmental grants and contracts (\$214.6 million).

Audit scope and methodology

This audit focused on the five areas specified in the legislative request. Specifically, the request asked auditors to determine the extent to which additional legislative funding beginning in fiscal year 2002 brought caseloads in-line with standards developed by the Child Welfare League of America by comparing average CPS caseloads at June 30, 2001 to average caseloads at June 30, 2003, by type of worker, office,

Figure 1: Number of Offices by District
Fiscal Year 2003



Source: Auditor General staff analysis of the Division of Children, Youth and Families' directory of Child Protective Services Offices.

- ¹ The 844 case manager and supervisor positions consist of CPS unit supervisors and CPS specialists, including 7 CPS unit supervisors and 42 CPS specialists at the child abuse hotline. This number does not include the 47 CPS specialist positions dedicated for training, nor does it include human service specialist or CPS program specialist positions, although some of these positions do manage CPS cases.
- ² The Division does not have a specific report on the fiscal year 2003 vacancy rate for its administrative and support functions, such as its financial and business operations administration and Comprehensive Medical and Dental Program. Therefore, auditors are unable to provide vacancy information on the Division's remaining 383.5 positions.

Table 1: Arizona Department of Economic Security
 Division of Children, Youth, and Families
 Schedule of Revenues and Expenditures
 Years Ended June 30, 2001, 2002, and 2003
 (Unaudited)

	2001 (Actual)	2002 (Estimated)	2003 (Estimated)
Revenues:			
State General Fund appropriations ²	\$ 97,997,408	\$ 97,299,609	\$ 69,489,200
General administrative activities ³	13,609,647	15,719,696	13,569,200
Government grants and contracts:			
Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	57,529,125	72,088,208	91,210,500
Title IV-E	67,267,522	59,351,210	62,257,600
Social Services Block Grant	14,112,463	19,421,012	21,089,000
AHCCCS capitation ⁴	9,538,381	10,754,014	14,334,500
Title IV-B Part 1 & 2	10,394,492	11,892,146	12,707,600
Other	3,052,362	9,249,109	13,040,200
Miscellaneous ⁵	<u>1,865,808</u>	<u>2,342,511</u>	<u>2,674,400</u>
Total revenues	<u>\$ 275,367,208</u>	<u>\$298,117,515</u>	<u>\$300,372,200</u>
Expenditures:			
Personal services and employee-related	\$ 61,617,425	\$ 65,112,301	\$ 69,301,700
Professional and outside services	3,172,694	2,788,712	2,653,800
Travel	2,743,171	3,097,727	2,734,600
Assistance to individuals and other governments	176,857,375	195,548,536	199,616,200
Equipment	1,338,347	791,112	209,000
Other	5,305,163	5,282,855	4,598,100
Support services costs	<u>24,333,033</u>	<u>25,496,272</u>	<u>21,258,800</u>
Total expenditures	<u>\$ 275,367,208</u>	<u>\$298,117,515</u>	<u>\$300,372,200</u>

¹ This schedule is presented on a budgetary basis, in which expenditures are reported in the budget year incurred.

² Amounts presented are net of reversions to the State General Fund of \$190,370 for 2001, and estimated reversions of \$29,391 for 2002.

³ The Department allocates support service costs to its various divisions. A portion of the Division's allocated support service costs were funded by the Department's Administration Division. Those amounts are reported as general administrative activities revenues in this schedule.

⁴ Consists of monthly premium payments from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) for providing health-care services to eligible foster care children.

⁵ Consists primarily of Social Security and Veteran's Assistance monies collected on behalf of clients; contributions through state income tax designations; surcharges on marriage licenses, divorce filings; donations; and a percentage of court-ordered assessments collected.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of financial information provided by the Arizona Department of Economic Security for the years ended June 30, 2001, 2002, and 2003, from its Financial Management Control System as of September 15, 2003. The amounts for 2002 and 2003 include estimates, as further administrative adjustments are anticipated for those years.

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and district. The request also asked auditors to compare the Division's revised training program for new case managers to the previous program and to review the adequacy of supervisor training and oversight, and the extent to which concurrent case planning occurs, and to identify barriers that impede permanent placements. This report includes the following four findings and associated recommendations:

- The Division should take steps to ensure it accurately projects case manager staffing needs including modifying its case management system so that cases can be classified according to standards and closing out completed cases, and should also address factors that may be hindering case managers' ability to effectively manage their cases, including streamlining its processes and improving case manager retention.
- The Division has increased the amount and type of training new case managers receive, but should take several steps to further improve its training, including developing strategies for enhancing retention, and ensuring trainees are not being assigned primary caseload responsibilities.
- The Division should take steps to improve supervisory oversight by establishing a supervisor-to-staff ratio that is appropriate for CPS, filling vacant supervisor positions, and ensuring that training its supervisors is a high priority.
- The Division should continue its efforts to eliminate barriers to permanency by more effectively implementing concurrent case planning.

Auditors used a variety of methods to study the areas addressed by the legislative request. General methods used for all areas included interviews with division personnel, including interviews with over 100 case managers and supervisors, and officials at public and private child welfare organizations, literature reviews, and reviews of division policies and procedures. Additionally, to the extent possible, auditors used information from other recent division reviews performed internally by the Division and by other organizations, such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The following specific methods were used in reviewing each area specified in the legislative request:

- **CPS caseloads**—To establish baseline measures for average caseloads as of June 30, 2001, and to compare that information to caseload information as of June 30, 2003, auditors analyzed the Division's electronic data downloaded from the Division. Auditors also obtained the Child Welfare League of America's caseload standards and conducted interviews with officials from the organization to learn more about their standards. In addition, because the Division did not have a comprehensive listing of all CPS units in the State, auditors compiled a list of CPS units and their functions to ensure that all appropriate case man-

agers and cases were included in the analyses. Auditors also obtained and analyzed information on the Division's method of reporting caseloads and calculating staffing needs, and analyzed CPS case manager vacancy information to determine the number of vacant positions. In addition, auditors interviewed 24 CPS supervisors and case managers about the size of their caseloads, and 23 additional case managers about the barriers to effectively managing their caseloads.

Throughout the process of analyzing the Division's caseload data, auditors shared their methodology with the Division, such as the type of workers as well as the specific units (or offices) that would be included in the analysis. After auditors completed their work, the Division indicated that auditors should include additional cases in their analysis. Auditors conducted some additional research on these cases and determined that they should not be included in the analysis for several reasons. For example, many of the cases had a case status of "pending closed" on or before June 30, 2003, the date on which auditors' analysis of average caseloads was done. Pending closed means that the case manager's work on the case has been completed and the case is awaiting final supervisory review so it can be closed on the system. In addition, many other cases were assigned to units that do not provide CPS case management services, such as a data processing unit in District II responsible for entering case notes for contracted adoption case managers. Finally, other cases were ones that the Division itself had identified as "stale," meaning there were no case notes or service authorizations for more than 60 days, suggesting the cases had been completed but not closed on the system.

- **Case manager training and retention**—To compare the old CPS case manager training to the new training program that was implemented in January 2002, auditors observed several training classes, conducted a review of the case manager training curriculum, attended four Training Advisory Council meetings, and reviewed evaluations of the training program. In addition, auditors analyzed training and caseload data to determine if, during the training program, the trainees were assigned case management responsibilities. Auditors also interviewed 23 case managers who completed the new training program and reviewed a letter written by 20 trainees in November 2002 that identified various concerns with the training program. Finally, auditors reviewed a report on the Division's training program prepared by Strategic Partners in 1998, and reviewed staff exit interview surveys completed between January 2002 and July 2003.¹

¹ According to a Division budget document, Strategic Partners is a consulting firm experienced in child welfare training.

- **Supervisor training and oversight**—To determine the effectiveness of supervisor training for ensuring compliance with laws and policies and assessing the adequacy of supervisory oversight of case managers, auditors conducted a review of the Division’s supervisory training program, analyzed unit supervisors’ training feedback forms, and interviewed 13 unit supervisors throughout the State on their perceptions of the usefulness of training and factors impacting their ability to effectively supervise staff. Auditors also examined internal and external reviews of the Division, which addressed supervisory oversight, and analyzed personnel data from the Department of Administration to determine the experience level of supervisors and ratio of authorized supervisor positions to authorized case manager positions. Further, auditors examined case manager exit surveys that were completed between January 2002 and April 2003 to determine if supervisory oversight was a factor in case managers’ decisions to leave their current CPS positions. Finally, auditors contacted child welfare agency administrators in seven states to determine their practices for effectively training new and existing supervisors on laws and policies.¹
- **Concurrent case planning and barriers to permanency**—In determining the extent to which concurrent case planning occurs and to identify barriers the Division experiences in achieving timely permanency for children in its custody, auditors evaluated the implementation and effectiveness of corrective actions the Division identified to improve permanency and concurrent case planning. In addition, auditors interviewed personnel from agencies that contract with the State to find adoptive families and an Arizona Superior Court justice to gain an understanding of the barriers to permanency and some of the steps the Division had taken to alleviate those barriers. Auditors also observed a case manager training class and reviewed the case manager training curriculum to determine the adequacy of concurrent case planning training, and conducted several interviews with and reviewed documents provided by an official from Lutheran Community Services Northwest, the organization that was instrumental in developing the model for most concurrent case planning programs around the country.

This audit was conducted in accordance with government auditing standards.

The Auditor General and staff express appreciation to the director and staff of the Department of Economic Security for their cooperation and assistance throughout the audit.

¹ Auditors contacted child welfare agencies in California, Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah. States were selected either because of their close proximity to Arizona or because they were identified as best-practice states by the Child Welfare League of America.

FINDING 1

Several changes needed to accurately project case manager staffing needs

The Division was provided additional case management staff starting in fiscal year 2002 to bring its caseloads in-line with the Child Welfare League of America's (CWLA) caseload standards. Although there are some limitations to making direct comparisons between average caseloads and the CWLA standards, auditors were able to compute average caseloads before and after the additional staffing was added. Auditors determined that the average caseloads for the majority of CPS staff who were managing cases were at or below 12 cases in both 2001 and 2003. To ensure the Division accurately projects its case manager staffing needs, the Division should address several factors, including modifying its case management system so that staff can classify cases according to standards, and closing cases on the system that are open but have been completed. In addition, the Division should evaluate whether it can improve case manager retention and streamline its processes, and should assess workload factors to help determine whether CWLA's caseload standards are appropriate for Arizona.

Most staff average 12 or fewer cases

The Division's average CPS case manager caseloads for most staff were at or below 12 in both 2001 and 2003. However, the Division's budget request indicated that excessive caseloads were hindering CPS case managers' ability to effectively perform their jobs, and an additional 34 staff were needed starting in fiscal year 2002 to bring caseloads in-line with CWLA standards. The request for the additional staff was funded by the Legislature starting in fiscal year 2002.¹ Although there are some limitations to making direct comparisons between average caseloads and the standards, auditors were able to compute average caseloads before and after the additional staffing was added, and to compute the caseloads by the different types of case managers. Auditors determined that the average caseloads for most staff managing cases were 11 or fewer cases on June 30, 2001. On June 30, 2003, audi-

¹ According to Joint Legislative Budget Committee staff, the Division received enough monies to fund these positions for three-quarters of fiscal year 2002, and this amount has remained the same in subsequent fiscal years.

tors determined that the majority of CPS staff managing cases still had caseloads at or below 12 cases. However, case managers working in investigative units managed an average of 15 cases because of a 30 percent increase in the Division's overall caseload and 37 unfilled case manager positions.

Division requested and received additional FTE—Because the Division was concerned that excessive caseloads were hindering CPS case managers' ability to perform their job as required, thus putting children at risk, it requested and received additional staff from the Legislature to bring its caseloads in-line with CWLA standards (see Item 1).¹ The Division noted in its request that case managers were able to make the required monthly, face-to-face visits with only 54 percent of the out-of-home care (that is, foster care) children, and were not always able to meet with in-home clients (that is, families where the children have not been removed from their homes, but the family is receiving services to help prevent abuse and neglect). In addition, the Division's request indicated that high caseloads were resulting in a higher-than-normal case manager turnover rate, 21 percent in fiscal year 2000. Therefore, the Division's budget decision package indicated that 34 additional case management full-time equivalent positions (FTE) starting in fiscal year 2002, at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million annually, would be needed to bring it in-line with CWLA standards.² The request for the additional FTE was funded by the Legislature starting in fiscal year 2002.³

Item 1: CWLA caseload standards

- **Investigation caseload**—12 active cases, per month¹
- **Ongoing in-home caseload**—17 active cases
- **Family foster care caseload** (i.e., ongoing out-of-home care)—12 to 15 children

¹ In October 2003, CWLA revised its interpretation of the investigation standard that was provided to auditors in August 2002 (see text at right for explanation of the revised interpretation).

Sources: Child Welfare League of America. *Recommended Caseload/Workload Standards excerpted from CWLA Standards of Excellence for Child Welfare Practice*. Washington, D.C. May 2003.

Average caseloads not directly comparable to standards—Although auditors were able to analyze the impact of the additional FTE on caseloads, the average caseloads computed by auditors are not directly comparable to CWLA standards for two reasons. First, auditors had to develop comparable caseload standards for case managers working in the Division's ongoing and mixed units (see Item 2, page 11) because the CWLA caseload standards the Division uses to request CPS staff do not correspond precisely with how work is conducted in Arizona, and the standards are both child-based and case-based. For example, CWLA provides one standard for ongoing in-home cases and a separate standard for ongoing out-of-home cases (i.e., family foster care), but the in-home standard is case-based and the out-of-home standard is child-based.⁴ Further, in Arizona, CPS case managers simultaneously handle both types of ongoing

1 CWLA is the oldest and largest national nonprofit organization developing and promoting policies and programs to protect America's children and strengthen its families.

2 The \$1.5 million annual cost for the 34 additional case management positions does not include travel or equipment expenses.

3 According to Joint Legislative Budget Committee staff, the Division received enough monies to fund these positions for three-quarters of fiscal year 2002 and this amount has remained the same in subsequent fiscal years.

4 The case-based in-home standard means that a case manager's caseload is based on the number of cases assigned to the case manager and does not consider whether each case includes only one or multiple children. The child-based out-of-home standard means that a case manager's caseload is based on the number of children in out-of-home placements who are assigned to the case manager, not the number of cases.

Item 2: Types of CPS units in Arizona

Typical units:

- **Investigative**—Case managers in these units respond to reports of child abuse and neglect, including investigating allegations and assessing the need for intervention.
- **Ongoing**—Case managers in these units manage ongoing in-home and out-of-home cases, including developing case plans, assessing the needs of children, parents, and caregivers, identifying placements for children such as foster and adoptive homes, and monitoring service provision.
- **Mixed**—Case managers in these units perform both investigative and ongoing functions.

Specialty units:

- **Administrative**—These units encompass several units that administrative managers oversee. However, some staff in administrative positions will sometimes have cases assigned to them, for example, a high-profile case (i.e., one that is receiving widespread media attention).
- **After-hours investigation team**—These units, located only in District I and II (Maricopa and Pima Counties), are responsible for providing investigative services after normal working hours and on weekends. Case managers in these units only handle cases for a short time before transferring them to regular investigative units.
- **Dually adjudicated youth**—These units, located only in District 1 (Maricopa County), handle ongoing cases where at least one child in the case is under the jurisdiction of both CPS and a Juvenile Probation Office.
- **Family preservation**—This unit, located in District I (Maricopa County), handles only ongoing in-home cases. Case managers in this unit arrange for intensive, time-limited services for at-risk families, use contracted service providers to conduct home visits, and assess families' progress.
- **Young adult program**—These units, located only in District I and II (Maricopa and Pima counties), manage ongoing cases involving foster children who are 16 years of age or older working toward living independently.

Source: Interviews with division personnel and review of division policy.

cases. In addition, some CPS case managers work in mixed units and handle both investigation and ongoing cases. Therefore, to determine whether CPS case managers' average caseloads were in-line with CWLA standards, auditors had to develop comparable standards. To do so, auditors used information provided by the Division on the proportion of in-home versus out-of-home cases and the average number of children per each type of case, and determined that 12 cases per case

manager would be a comparable standard for those case managers who manage both in-home and out-of-home cases. In addition, since the CWLA standard for investigation cases at the time auditors' analysis was being conducted was also 12 cases, auditors reasoned that a comparable standard for CPS case managers working in mixed units would also be 12 cases.

Second, subsequent to the completion of audit work, CWLA changed its interpretation of one of the standards used by the Division—the investigation caseload standard—thus preventing a direct comparison of the average caseload for staff managing cases in investigative units (see Item 2, page 11) with the new interpretation of the CWLA investigative caseload standard. In August 2002, auditors contacted CWLA to obtain clarification on how to interpret the CWLA investigative standard and were told it should be interpreted as no more than 12 active cases at any point in time. However, on October 6, 2003, after auditors' work was completed, CWLA provided auditors with a revised interpretation of the investigative caseload standard, which now indicates that an investigative case manager should be assigned no more than 12 active cases within a month. Had this standard not changed, the average caseloads presented by auditors for staff managing cases in investigative units would have provided a good indication of whether caseloads were in-line with CWLA's investigative standard.

Average caseloads 11 or fewer on June 30, 2001—Auditors found that on June 30, 2001, the average caseloads for the vast majority of CPS staff managing cases was 11 or fewer cases (see Table 2, page 14). Specifically, the overall average caseload for CPS' primary case management staff, CPS specialists (see Item 3, page 13), in its typical case carrying units was 10 cases. In addition, although the Division only considers CPS specialists as legitimate case management staff, other staff—human service specialists and CPS program specialists—regularly manage cases as provided for in their job specifications. Auditors determined that the overall average caseload for these staff was six cases. Some CPS supervisors, whose function is to supervise staff managing cases and whose job description does not provide for managing cases, also had some cases assigned to them.¹ Auditors determined that the overall average caseload for those CPS supervisors managing cases at June 30, 2001 was about four cases. Further, because the total number of cases supervisors are managing is small, if these cases were included in the cases managed by CPS specialists in the Division's typical units, the average caseload for CPS specialists would increase by only about a half of a case, from 10.1 to 10.6 cases. As shown in Table 2 (see page 14), the only staff who had caseloads above 12 in 2001 were CPS specialists working in the Division's Family Preservation and Young Adult Program specialty units (see Item 2, page 11). However, auditors' interviews with supervisors in these units found that higher caseloads are appropriate because some of the case management responsibilities are different than those in the typical CPS units. For example, case managers may have fewer responsibilities associated with their cases or fewer children per case.

¹ Auditors' interviews with supervisors found that on occasion the supervisor will be required to actively work cases because of staff absences, such as medical leave, or turnover. To distinguish between case assignments actively being worked by a supervisor and those on which the supervisor is temporarily assigned, auditors included in their case count all cases that are assigned to a supervisor for at least 7 days as part of the supervisor's caseload.

Item 3: Types of CPS Staff

- **CPS specialist**—The Division considers the CPS specialist position to be its primary case management position, and as shown in Table 2 (see page 14), these staff manage the majority of CPS' cases. The minimum level qualification for the entry-level specialist position is a master's degree in social work; or a bachelor's degree in social work or a master's degree in a related field and one year of social service experience; or a bachelor's degree and 2 years of social service experience; or 2 years of experience as a human service specialist I in Child Protective Services.
- **Human service specialist**—Although the Division does not consider these staff to be case managers, experienced staff may manage cases as allowed in their job specifications. The minimum qualification for a level II (experienced) human service specialist is 2 years of experience equivalent to a level I human service specialist, or a bachelor's degree in social work or a related field and 1 year of the required work experience, or a master's degree in social work or a related field.
- **CPS program specialist**—The Division also does not consider the program specialist position to be a case management staff position. However, these staff do handle cases under certain circumstances, such as managing high-profile or conflict-of-interest cases. These staff also provide case consultation and staff training, and may supervise staff, including case managers, as needed. The minimum qualification for this position is 2 years of experience as a CPS specialist III; or a master's degree in social work and 4 years of child protective service experience; or a bachelor's degree in social work and 5 years of child protective service experience.
- **CPS unit supervisor**—The Division does not consider this position to be a case management position, which is consistent with the supervisor's job description. Supervisors typically oversee three to seven case managers and are the primary means for ensuring case managers' compliance with laws and policies (see Finding 3, pages 29 through 35). The minimum qualifications for this position is 2 years experience as a CPS specialist III; or a master's degree in social work and 4 years of child protective service experience; or bachelor's degree in social work and 5 years of child protective service experience.

Source: Division position specifications obtained from the Arizona Department of Administration.

Further, analyses of the caseloads by district and office also found that with only some exceptions, on June 30, 2001, the average caseloads fell at or below 12 cases. For example, by district, the overall average caseloads for CPS specialists working in the typical units ranged from 7 cases in Districts V and VI to 16 cases in District III. However, auditors determined that the high average caseload in District III was due, in part, to several workers who had high caseloads because they had not closed their completed cases on the Division's computerized case management system. See Tables 4 and 5 in the Appendix (pages a-iii through a-xii) for a more detailed breakout of the caseloads by district and office on June 30, 2001.

Table 2: CPS Average Caseloads by Type of Worker
As of June 30, 2001 and 2003

Type of Worker	2001			2003		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
CPS Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	178	1,670	9.4	204	3,141	15.4
Ongoing	244	2,535	10.4	267	2,837	10.6
Mixed	77	817	10.6	79	956	12.1
Specialty Units						
Administrative	2	5	2.5	2	9	4.5
After-hours investigation team	14	67	4.8	16	72	4.5
Dually adjudicated	13	150	11.5	12	161	13.4
Family preservation	6	153	25.5	6	151	25.2
Young adult program	<u>40</u>	<u>618</u>	15.5	<u>38</u>	<u>641</u>	16.9
Total for CPS Specialist	<u>574</u>	<u>6,015</u>		<u>624</u>	<u>7,968</u>	
Human Service Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	2	3	1.5	2	33	16.5
Ongoing	16	88	5.5	13	126	9.7
Mixed	15	102	6.8	13	118	9.1
Specialty Units						
Administrative	—	—		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	1.0
Total for Human Services Specialist	<u>33</u>	<u>193</u>		<u>29</u>	<u>278</u>	
CPS Program Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	4	22	5.5	5	54	10.8
Ongoing	1	11	11.0	3	16	5.3
Mixed	4	28	7.0	4	43	10.8
Specialty Units						
Administrative	<u>7</u>	<u>34</u>	4.9	<u>7</u>	<u>16</u>	2.3
Total for CPS Program Specialist	<u>16</u>	<u>95</u>		<u>19</u>	<u>129</u>	
CPS Supervisor						
Typical Units						
Investigative	26	75	2.9	12	41	3.4
Ongoing	27	109	4.0	19	60	3.2
Mixed	11	55	5.0	6	51	8.5
Specialty Units						
Administrative	2	14	7.0	3	3	1.0
After-hours investigation team	1	2	2.0	2	2	1.0
Dually adjudicated	2	3	1.5			
Family preservation				1	27	27.0
Young adult program				<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	3.0
Total for CPS Supervisor	<u>69</u>	<u>258</u>		<u>44</u>	<u>187</u>	
Total by type of worker	<u>692</u>	<u>6,561</u>		<u>716</u>	<u>8,562</u>	

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of automated case and employee data for June 30, 2001 and June 30, 2003 provided by the Division of Children, Youth and Families

Average caseloads at or below 12 on June 30, 2003—On June 30, 2003, the majority of CPS staff managing cases still had caseloads at or below 12. However, since 2001, the Division’s total overall caseload increased by 30 percent, from 6,561 cases to 8,562 cases. The increase in cases occurred in all districts; however, auditors’ analysis shows that it primarily occurred in the investigations area, with the number of investigative cases nearly doubling since June 2001 (see Table 2, page 14). As a result, on June 30, 2003, CPS specialists working in investigative units managed an average of 15 cases. However, auditors’ analysis also identified 23 CPS specialists in investigative units with caseloads ranging from 30 to 82. Auditors interviewed many of these staff and found that many of their investigative cases were completed but just not closed on the Division’s computerized case management system. However, to be conservative, auditors left all 1,090 cases assigned to these staff in the analysis. Further, auditors determined that even with these completed investigative cases included, if all the vacant CPS specialist positions were filled, the overall average caseload for CPS specialists would be 12 cases. As of June 27, 2003, the Division reported that 37 of its CPS specialist positions were vacant. Thus, all 34 of the new positions CPS received starting in fiscal year 2002 were vacant, as well as 3 additional positions.

Caseloads grew by 30 percent from June 2001 to 2003.

On June 30, 2003, the overall average caseloads for human service specialists, CPS program specialists, CPS supervisors, and CPS specialists working in the Division’s specialty units were similar to what was reported in 2001 (see Table 2, page 14). However, there were 25 fewer supervisors managing caseloads, so the Division is moving closer to its goal of not having supervisors manage cases. See Tables 4 and 6 in the Appendix (pages a-iii through viii and a-xiii through a-xvi) for a more detailed breakout of the caseloads by district and office at June 30, 2003.

Better data needed to accurately determine number of case managers needed

The Division should address several factors to ensure that it can accurately project its staffing needs. First, the Division’s case management system does not allow staff to categorize cases based on the CWLA standards used by the Division. In addition, the Division has cases on its case management system that appear to be completed but have not been closed out, such as cases assigned to staff who are no longer with the Division. Finally, when determining the number of staff needed, the Division should include all staff who regularly manage cases.

Case management system does not capture necessary data—The Division’s computerized case management system does not allow staff to classify cases according to the three CWLA caseload standard types used by the Division (i.e., investigation, ongoing in-home, and ongoing out-of-home). Because this information is not available, the Division cannot reliably project its entire staffing needs.

The Division can determine the number of investigations that have been assigned during the month or year, but it must estimate both types of its ongoing caseloads. Auditors identified several problems with the Division's process for determining its ongoing caseloads, such as including some investigation cases in its ongoing case counts. For example, the Division includes in the ongoing in-home case count any case that has been open more than 30 days without a child in an out-of-home placement. However, auditors found that 56 percent of the ongoing in-home cases in June 2003 were being managed by case managers working in investigative units. This suggests that many of these cases may be investigations that were completed but not closed on the case management system. To ensure it can accurately determine its CPS case manager staffing needs according to CWLA standards, the Division should modify its case management system to classify cases according to the three CWLA standards it uses and ensure staff are required to use these classifications.

Include only cases that are being actively worked—The Division has cases on its case management system that are not being worked. Auditors found open cases that were assigned to workers who had long since left the Division; cases that were not assigned to any employee; and workers with high investigative caseloads, many of which were cases that were completed but not closed on the computerized case management system (see page 15). For example, auditors identified an in-home ongoing case that continues to remain open, but has not had any documented case activity since November 1997. In addition, the only case manager assigned to the case left CPS employment in January 1999. The Division should take steps to ensure that it includes only cases that are actively being worked by active employees. To do so, the Division should consider establishing additional policies as necessary for closing out or transferring cases in a timely manner. For example, although statute and division policy require case managers to document whether the alleged abuse or neglect report should be proposed for substantiation within 21 days, it does not have a policy that establishes the time frame in which an investigation should be closed. The Division should also use computer-generated exception reports to identify and correct issues such as cases assigned to employees who no longer work for the Division, employees with high caseloads, and cases that are not assigned to any employee.

Count all staff positions managing cases—When determining the number of staff needed, the Division does not include all staff who regularly manage cases. Specifically, the Division considers only the job classification of CPS specialist as its case management position. The majority of staff managing cases are hired under this classification. However, as mentioned in Item 3 on page 13, the Division does not consider the job classification of human service specialist as a case management position, even though experienced staff in these positions regularly manage cases. For example, in both 2001 and 2003, auditors' analysis identified staff in this job classification who were managing cases.¹ According to the Division's job specifications, the human service specialist classification provides a means for workers without a bachelor's degree to work toward a case management-designated position. This

¹ The Division maintains 16 FTE for contracted case managers for Districts III and VI. It does count these contracted positions as case-carrying staff when projecting staffing needs, but does not count other human service specialist staff who regularly manage cases.

classification is also used for Arizona State University Master's of Social Work students who intern for the Division. According to division personnel, the interns do mostly shadowing activities their first semester; however, they manage CPS cases their second semester. The Division also does not consider the CPS program specialist classification to be a case management position. Auditors also identified staff in this job classification in 2001 and 2003 who were managing cases. Staff in these positions do manage cases under certain circumstances (see Item 3, page 13) such as managing high-profile and conflict-of-interest cases, or taking on a caseload when a unit is short-staffed. When determining staffing needs, the Division should include all positions that regularly manage cases, and provide justification for excluding any positions whose job description allows them to manage cases.

Factors that may hinder the effective management of caseloads should also be addressed

Despite caseloads being near 12 cases for most staff, there are several indications that CPS case managers are not able to effectively perform their jobs. Therefore, the Division should improve case manager retention and evaluate whether it can streamline its case management processes. The Division should also assess workload factors to help determine how many cases Arizona case managers should carry because the CWLA standards are meant to be guidelines and not formulas for determining staffing needs.

Division not effectively managing caseloads—There are several indications that CPS case managers are not able to effectively perform their jobs. For example, in the Division's most current semi-annual report (March 2003), it was noted that CPS case managers were able to make the required monthly, face-to-face visit with only 68 percent of the children in out-of-home care. In addition, in a review conducted in 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services noted that there is a need for improvement in several areas, such as case planning and achieving permanency goals in a timely manner.¹ Further, three internal reviews completed in calendar year 2002 identified several areas where case managers were not effectively performing their job duties.² For example, in the December 2002 review, the Division found that investigations were not being initiated within the required time frames in 47 percent of the cases reviewed. Also, 39 percent of the cases reviewed lacked adequate case notes and summary documentation. Furthermore, almost half of the 24 case managers auditors interviewed indicated that they could not successfully manage their caseloads for a variety of reasons, even some whose caseloads were

Only 68 percent of children in out-of-home care received required monthly case manager visits.

¹ United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families Pacific Hub. *Child and Family Services Review Final Report*. February 1, 2002.

² The Division conducts a quarterly review of 100 or more randomly selected cases to monitor its performance outcomes in several areas, such as safety, permanency and child and family well-being. These quarterly reviews are a part of the Division's Continuous Quality Improvement process, which, according to the Division, conforms to the national Council on Accreditation standards, and has received federal approval.

fewer than 12 cases. For example, one case manager with 11 cases indicated her caseload was difficult to effectively manage because of all the travel time required and because of a lack of services, which caused her to spend time attempting to locate scarce services. Another case manager with 10 cases indicated that he was having difficulty with his caseload because of the amount of paperwork required for each case, and because the office was experiencing high turnover.

In addition, some stakeholders perceive that CPS case managers are overworked and are having difficulty effectively managing their cases. For example, in a report recently commissioned by the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, stakeholders such as juvenile court judges and community service providers indicated that child abuse and neglect cases are more time-consuming, and require additional investigation and evaluation, and that CPS case managers are overwhelmed, which affects their ability to protect children adequately.¹ In addition, the Children's Action Alliance, a local child welfare advocacy organization, notes that the CPS system struggles to provide the case management services necessary to provide a safe, stable environment for children.²

Division should explore issues hindering effective case management—The Division needs to examine factors, other than caseload size, that may be affecting its ability to effectively manage its caseloads. The following areas should be explored:

- **Retention**—Interviews with case managers throughout the State suggest that turnover and the associated shortage of staff may be a factor in some case managers carrying high caseloads at certain times. Fourteen of the 25 case managers auditors interviewed attributed unmanageably high caseloads to staff shortages, and case managers also cited a staff shortage as the main reason for falling behind in case administrative tasks. According to information provided by the Department of Administration's Human Resources Division, the annualized turnover rate for CPS case managers was 14.6 percent as of May 2003.³

To help address its retention issue, the Division should: 1) investigate the reasons for high turnover rates, 2) attempt to fill vacant case manager positions, and 3) research best practices for enhancing case manager retention. A 2003 review by the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) noted that child welfare agencies are implementing various workforce practices to improve

¹ Cox, S. *In Harm's Way: A Report on Policy Conflict That Fails Children and the System Established to Protect Them*. Prepared for the Honorable Richard Romley, Maricopa County Attorney. March 15, 2003.

² Children's Action Alliance. *Beyond Kissing Babies: Transforming Campaign Sound Bites into Common Sense Solutions for Arizona's Kids and Families*. April 2002.

³ The turnover rate reflects CPS specialist positions only.

retention of case managers, including accreditation and enhanced supervision.^{1,2} Although the Division has addressed the retention of case managers in its 2004 strategic plan by seeking to improve the level of CPS employee satisfaction, and is currently in the process of becoming accredited, it should continue to explore other workforce practices that may improve case manager retention.

- **Streamlining processes**—The Division should explore how its CPS processes could be streamlined, whether some case management tasks could be eliminated, or whether support staff could do some work handled by case managers. For example, several case managers stated that the computerized case management system that is used to track cases is inefficient and time-consuming. In addition, some case managers characterized the amount of paperwork as excessive and difficult to complete, and noted that it kept them from spending the necessary time with children and families. Further, some case managers and supervisors suggested that support staff could perform some administrative tasks. For example, secretaries or clerical workers could enter case data into the computerized case management system.

The Division established a workgroup in October 2002 that provided recommendations for streamlining its investigative process, and plans to do the same for its ongoing case management process. However, it appears this investigative workgroup found mostly minor modifications that could be made. Therefore, in reviewing its ongoing case management process, the Division should also research what other states' child welfare agencies are doing to streamline processes and procedures. For example, the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services is in the process of assessing and improving policies, procedures, business processes, and automated systems.

Division should consider establishing an Arizona caseload standard—The Division should also assess and document workload factors to help determine whether CWLA caseload standards are appropriate for Arizona or whether different standards need to be developed. The Division should consider developing Arizona-specific caseload standards because CWLA standards do not correspond with the way CPS work is conducted in Arizona. Further, the standards are meant to be guidelines or starting points that an agency adjusts to reflect its own workload. Auditors' interviews with 24 case managers identified that some workload factors

Division should establish appropriate caseload standards for Arizona.

¹ United States General Accounting Office. *Child Welfare: HHS Could Play a Greater Role in Helping Child Welfare Agencies Recruit and Retain Staff*. Report to Congressional Requesters. United States General Accounting Office (report GAO-03-357). March 2003.

² This review included the analysis of 585 exit interview documents completed by former child welfare caseworkers and supervisors from 17 state, 40 county, and 19 private child welfare agencies from across the country; 50 interviews with child welfare practitioners and researchers; and comprehensive site visits in California, Illinois, Kentucky, and Texas.

appear to impact case managers across the State, and others do not. For example, factors such as the complexity of certain cases (for example, sexual abuse) or the documentation required by policy were cited by case managers in all districts; whereas other factors, such as the time spent traveling to visit children, were most often cited by workers in the rural districts. Additionally, the Division should review some other issues that may be impacting case managers' ability to effectively manage their caseloads—problems with case manager training (see Finding 2, pages 23 through 28), and poor supervisory oversight (see Finding 3, pages 29 through 35).

The Division used to regularly conduct formal workload analyses and adjust caseloads based on workload factors, but indicated that this practice was discontinued 3 years ago because it lacked resources to maintain the process. Therefore, the Division may want to consider assessing workload factors through other means. For example, workload studies have been completed in two states using methods other than formal analyses, such as conducting focus groups, reviewing policy and procedures, and shadowing a sample of case managers. In Pennsylvania, the Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth and Families conducted a workload assessment in collaboration with researchers at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Social Work. County officials and researchers from the university used several research methods including focus groups, observations of workers, and a case review to determine the maximum caseload per type of worker.

Whatever standards are chosen, the Division should also ensure that its computerized case management system captures the necessary information that is needed to accurately report case managers' caseloads.

Recommendations

1. The Division should take steps to ensure that it can accurately project its case manager staffing needs. The Division should ensure that:
 - a. Cases can be classified on its computerized case management system according to standards;
 - b. It includes only cases that are being actively worked; and
 - c. It includes all positions that regularly manage cases in its count of authorized case management positions.
2. The Division should also investigate factors that may be hindering its ability to effectively manage its caseloads, including:
 - a. Continuing to investigate reasons for case manager turnover, attempting to fill vacant case manager positions, and researching best practices for enhancing retention; and
 - b. Continuing to assess ways to streamline its case management processes, eliminate tasks, and assign case management tasks to support workers.
3. The Division should establish appropriate caseload standards for Arizona. In doing so, the Division should:
 - a. Assess workload factors through such means as focus groups with staff; and
 - b. Document any factors that are used to justify using CWLA's standards or Arizona-specific standards.

FINDING 2

Training hours have significantly increased, but other improvements needed

The Division's revised training program for new case managers has increased the amount and type of training new staff receive, but it is not yet functioning as envisioned. Because of concerns that inadequate training was making it harder for the Division to retain qualified and competent staff, the Division implemented a new training program in January 2002. In contrast to the old program, this new program was expected to provide trainees with improved classroom and structured field activities before they were given caseload responsibilities. However, recent graduates of the new program identified the need for more practical training and more consistent field activities. Further, nearly one-third of trainees left their positions either prior to completing training or within 9 months of completing it. Finally, even though the legislative mandate and the Division's goal was to establish a program where trainees would not be assigned cases prior to completing training, some trainees continue to receive case responsibilities before their training is completed.

New program expands amount and type of training

The Division established a new training program in January 2002, known as the Child Welfare Training Institute, which increases the amount and type of training new case managers receive. The Division established this new program because it felt its existing program did not provide sufficient training to help develop skills. In addition, division budget documents indicate that case managers were often not able to complete training because they were required to handle cases during training, often starting on their first day. Because the Division believed that these problems affected its ability to recruit and retain competent staff, it established a new training program. This new training program has 47 dedicated training positions that the Division estimates cost approximately \$1.7 million annually.¹ These positions allow trainees to focus solely on acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to perform their case management responsibilities. Further, the Legislature added a footnote to the General

Dedicated training positions cost about \$1.7 million annually.

¹ According to Joint Legislative Budget Committee staff, the Division received enough monies to fund these training positions for half of fiscal year 2002, and this amount has remained the same in subsequent fiscal years.

Appropriation Acts for fiscal years 2002 through 2004 that has the effect of law and reinforces the Division's goal of not assigning case responsibilities to new case managers before they complete the training program.¹ According to the Division's training staff, as of June 30, 2003, 280 new case managers have completed training since the program's inception.

The new training program has enhanced and expanded the topics covered during the prior program as well as increased the number of hours of training, which includes several weeks of structured field activities. Table 3 outlines the differences between the old and new programs. Specifically, the new program expanded classroom training by about 1 week, by adding emphasis to such topics as domestic violence and substance abuse, as well as adding new topics such as after-care plan,

Table 3: Comparison of Old and New Case Manager Training Programs

	Program Prior to January 2002	Program Since January 2002
Format:	Lecture-based classroom training only	Combination of lecture-based classroom training and structured fieldwork activities
Duration:	22 days (138 hours)	28 days (190 hours) of classroom training and 25 days (200 hours) of fieldwork activities
Timeframe:	Training was spread over 6 months, and typically completed within 12 months	Training begins within the first month of employment and is completed within 12 consecutive weeks
Location:	Phoenix	Phoenix and Tucson
Curriculum:	Lecture topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family-centered child protective services 2. Legal aspects in child protection 3. Casework planning 4. Family-centered casework 5. Child development 6. Separation, placement, and reunification in child welfare cases 7. Managing cultural diversity 8. Substance abuse families 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Previous lecture topics enhanced and expanded 2. Emphasis added to the following topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Domestic violence b. Substance abuse 3. New topics added: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. After-care plan b. Behavioral health c. Child safety assessment

Source: Auditor General staff summary of interviews, and training information and materials provided by Division of Children, Youth and Families training officials.

¹ General Appropriation Acts footnote (Laws 2002, Ch. 321, §12; Laws 2002, Ch. 327, §19; and Laws 2003 Ch. 262, §29). "The department of economic security shall provide training to any new child protective services full-time equivalent positions before assigning to any of these employees any client caseload duties." General appropriations law is effective for one fiscal year.

behavioral health, and child safety assessment. In addition, an even more significant change is the adding of 25 days, or 200 hours, of structured field exercises, which include activities such as observing court hearings as well as accompanying an experienced case manager on initial investigations and home visits. According to the Division, these structured activities are designed to help the trainee transfer knowledge gained from classroom instruction to the field. In contrast, the old program did not have a formal fieldwork component; rather, trainees learned by working their assigned cases while attending formal classroom training, generally without a mentor's assistance. The new focus on field exercises and mentoring is in-line with recommendations from Strategic Partners, which according to a division budget document is a consulting firm experienced in child welfare training, which conducted an evaluation of the Division's old training program in fiscal year 1998.

Concerns remain with new training program

In practice, the new training program has not fully addressed the Division's concerns with the old program. Trainees are less than satisfied with the curriculum, and there is still high turnover among new hires. To address these remaining concerns, the Division needs to take steps to further enhance its training curriculum, implement strategies to improve new case manager retention, and develop effective evaluation tools for the new program.

Training curriculum has some inadequacies—Interviews with new training program graduates indicate that they need more practical classroom instruction and the field activities are not being consistently implemented. Auditors interviewed 23 case managers who completed the new training program between March 2002 and January 2003, and reviewed a letter written by 20 trainees in November 2002. Both the interviews and letter indicated that the Division should provide more practical classroom training. Specifically, 20 of the case managers interviewed indicated that they wanted more in-depth practical classroom training for such tasks as operating the Division's computerized case management system, writing court reports, making referrals for services, and conducting interviews. Further, auditors evaluated the concurrent case-planning curriculum and found that it lacked applied exercises that would guide case managers on when and how to properly implement a concurrent case plan (see Finding 4, pages 37 through 43).¹ To ensure the new training program adequately prepares staff to do their jobs, the Division should adopt staff's suggestions to provide more practical classroom exercises.

More practical classroom training and consistent implementation of field exercises needed.

Additionally, the interviews and letter indicated that the experiences provided during structured field activities differ from trainee to trainee. For example, one case manager indicated that she was provided an opportunity to conduct an interview with a client, while another case manager indicated that she was not given this opportunity. The Division has also recognized that there are inconsistencies in the structured field activities and plans to meet with district trainers to evaluate this issue and cre-

¹ Concurrent case planning is a permanency planning practice that simultaneously pursues both family reunification and an alternate plan, such as adoption or legal guardianship.

Twenty-four percent of case manager trainees quit within 9 months of completing training.

ate state-wide expectations for the field activities. The Division should continue to take steps to ensure that the field portion of the training is implemented consistently state-wide.

Turnover high among new trainees—Even though the Division envisioned the training program as a way to improve retention, auditor analysis of the first nine training classes held between January 2002 and October 2002 found that 8 percent of the trainees left before they completed training, and 24 percent left within 9 months of completing it. Making the classroom training more practical may address some of the retention problem. The Division asks departing employees to complete an exit interview survey, which contains questions regarding why an employee chose to leave his or her position.¹ Auditors' review of exit surveys completed between January 2002 and July 2003 found eight surveys from staff who had attended the new training program. Five of the eight staff indicated that the training inadequately prepared them for their job, and three of these five indicated that the availability/sufficiency of the training was a contributing factor to their leaving.² This feedback is similar to another state's experience. A recent Florida report that examined the high turnover of its child protection staff also noted that staff felt that having more practical classroom training would help employee retention.³

However, additional steps may be needed to improve retention. Therefore, the Division should continue to use its exit surveys to identify and develop potential solutions for addressing the high percentage of new case manager turnover.

Division training evaluation mechanisms not effective—Although the Division has established some evaluation tools, they are not working as intended. For example, the Division asks graduates to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the new case manager training program. This assessment includes questions about whether the training provided them with basic knowledge needed to complete job assignments, and if there was enough time provided for different aspects of the training. However, the assessment is not mandatory and as of July 2003, the Division reports receiving only nine assessments back. Division training officials indicated that the Division is in the process of evaluating all of its evaluation tools. In doing so, the Division should make certain that trainees are informed of the importance of their feedback for ensuring an effective training program and are strongly encouraged or required to provide feedback. In addition, the Division should adopt a suggestion made by its training advisory committee to collaborate with the Arizona State

1 Examples of questions found in the exit interview include: "Is salary a primary reason for leaving your position?" and, "How much did factors related to the nature of the work itself contribute to your leaving your current position?"

2 Several of the eight survey respondents also identified stress-related factors such as "job pressure/stress" and "demands of the job" as having contributed to their resignation.

3 The Florida Senate. *Child and Families Committee Interim Project Report 2003-110*. January 2003.

University School of Social Work to evaluate its training program evaluation forms.¹ The Division already collaborates with the school on a program to recruit social work students for CPS case manager positions. Finally, the Division should examine the use of additional mechanisms identified by Strategic Partners, such as obtaining feedback from new trainees' supervisors and mentors through either questionnaires or focus groups to ensure that the training program is as effective as possible.

Division not complying with legislative mandate

Despite the legislative mandate and the Division's goal to not assign trainees caseload duties before they complete training, the Division has assigned case responsibilities to some trainees. Specifically, in the first five classes held between January 2002 and June 2002, 38 percent of the trainees were assigned some caseload duties, with two trainees carrying full caseloads. When auditors informed division management about this practice, they indicated that it was not in keeping with their stated goal. However, auditors' analysis of training classes that took place even after division management had been notified showed the practice was still occurring. Auditor interviews with supervisors assigning caseload responsibilities to trainees found various explanations for this practice, including the need to cover staff shortages, unclear expectations regarding trainee case responsibilities, and the perception that such responsibilities provided a valuable training opportunity.

Because the practice of assigning caseload responsibilities during training is a violation of current legislative mandate and runs counter to the Division's stated goal, the Division should stop assigning cases to trainees and take steps to ensure future trainees are not assigned caseload responsibilities until completing their training. However, because the current legislative mandate does not define "caseload duties," the Division may be permitted to allow trainees to complete some case tasks for training purposes, such as learning how to use the Division's computer system. Auditors' analysis found that trainees were assigned different case responsibilities ranging from being assigned as the primary worker responsible for the outcome of the case to being assigned as a support worker responsible for completing specific tasks, such as entering case notes onto the Division's computer system. However, to ensure trainees are not assigned as the primary or only case manager on a case and are assigned case tasks only for training purposes, the Division should establish a written policy and ensure that all appropriate individuals are informed of this policy. In addition, it should develop and implement a mechanism or process to routinely monitor its trainees' work assignments.

The Division needs a policy prohibiting trainees from being assigned as the primary or only case manager on cases during training.

¹ The advisory committee was established in 2002 to participate in assessing the Division's training program. This committee comprises division staff, and representatives from organizations such as the Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections, Arizona State University School of Social Work, Attorney General's Office, Child Help, Children's Action Alliance, Intertribal Council of Arizona, Maricopa County Attorney's Office, Mesa Juvenile Court, and Our Town Family Center.

Recommendations

1. The Division should revise its training curriculum to include additional practical classroom exercises for the computerized case management system, writing court reports, making referrals for services, and conducting interviews.
2. The Division should continue to take steps to ensure that the field portion of the training is implemented consistently state-wide.
3. The Division should continue to use its exit interview surveys to assess why new case managers are leaving and develop strategies for addressing poor retention of new case managers.
4. The Division should continue with its plans to revise its training evaluation forms. In doing so, the Division should:
 - a. Make certain that trainees are informed of the importance of their feedback for ensuring an effective training program and are strongly encouraged or required to provide feedback.
 - b. Consider collaborating with the Arizona State University School of Social Work to help revise its forms.
 - c. Examine using additional mechanisms to evaluate its new case manager trainee program, such as obtaining feedback from new trainees' supervisors and mentors through either questionnaires or focus groups.
5. To ensure that the Division complies with the legislative mandate regarding not assigning caseload duties to trainees, it should:
 - a. Establish a written policy that prohibits trainees from being assigned as the primary or only case manager on a case, and clarifies that trainees may be assigned case tasks only for training purposes.
 - b. Ensure that all appropriate individuals are informed of this policy.
 - c. Develop and implement a mechanism or process to routinely monitor its trainees' work assignments.

FINDING 3

Steps needed to improve case manager supervisory oversight

The Division needs to improve its supervisory oversight of case managers. Although supervisors provide the primary means for overseeing case managers' compliance with laws and policies, reviews have found inadequacies with the level and amount of supervisory review. For example, many files lack evidence that supervisory review was completed on important processing steps and decision points. Some additional supervisory staff may be needed, although the Division should conduct additional work to determine what the appropriate staffing level should be. The Division also needs to strengthen its training programs for new and existing supervisors, because many supervisors have limited experience and little opportunity for training.

Supervisory oversight lacking

Although supervisors provide primary case manager oversight, several reviews have found supervision lacking. Supervisors provide primary oversight of the Division's case managers through a variety of oversight and review processes, such as providing regular case consultation on investigative and ongoing child abuse cases. However, recent reviews conducted by the Division, as well as the Council on Accreditation (COA), found inadequate supervisory oversight.

Supervisors provide primary oversight—CPS supervisors provide the primary means for overseeing case managers' compliance with laws and policies. A 2003 review by the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) found that supervisors are critical to providing case managers direction and guidance in various case management decisions.¹ In Arizona, CPS supervisors are required by both administrative rule and division policy to perform a variety of critical oversight tasks (see Item 4, page 30).

¹ This review included the analysis of 585 exit interview documents completed by former child welfare caseworkers and supervisors from 17 state, 40 county, and 19 private child welfare agencies from across the country; 50 interviews with child welfare practitioners and researchers; and comprehensive site visits in California, Illinois, Kentucky, and Texas.

Item 4: Examples of CPS supervisor responsibilities

- **Review and approve every child removal decision**—The CPS supervisor must review and approve every child removal decision. To do so, the supervisor should discuss the child abuse report and investigative information with the case manager to determine if the circumstances meet Arizona’s removal standards—imminent harm—which are outlined in law and rule.
- **Review and approve all CPS case plans**—The CPS supervisor must review and approve all CPS case plans. Case plans outline the goals for the child/family such as return to the family, the services that the child/family needs to meet the case plan goals, and timelines for meeting these goals.
- **Provide individual case consultation**—The CPS supervisor must provide case managers individual case consultation and guidance, as well as conduct a variety of personnel-related activities, such as staff training and evaluations.

Source: Auditor General staff summary of CPS supervision responsibilities as described in the Division’s *New Supervision Handbook*, Children’s Services manual, and Arizona Administrative Code R6-5-5514.

Supervisory oversight found inadequate—Internal and external reviews have identified several problems with the adequacy of supervision. Specifically,

- **Insufficient documentation of supervisory review**—The Division conducts its own review of 100 randomly selected cases on a quarterly basis, and the three reviews it completed in calendar year 2002 showed that supervisors were not completing all the required supervisory reviews, as evidenced by lack of proper case file documentation.¹ For example, in the December 2002 review, the Division found supervisors had failed to fill out the required supervisory case record review guide in 67 percent of adoption cases, 71 percent of foster care cases, 62 percent of in-home cases, and 42 percent of the investigation cases. Division policy requires the supervisor to use this guide as a checklist for ensuring that case managers adhere to multiple laws and policies. Conducting this review is especially important because the same internal reviews also disclosed inadequacies in how well case managers were documenting their cases.
- **Inadequate consulting with case managers**—Internal and external reviews have also found problems with the extent of case managers’ supervisory consultation. For example, a December 2002 internal review assessed whether supervisors were implementing a new supervisory oversight requirement, the Clinical Supervision conference. This conference is designed to monitor case activity at key decision points, consistency of policy application, and the implementation and appropriateness of services. The review found these conferences were not conducted in 60 percent of the applicable cases. Similarly, when the Council on

Between 42 and 71 percent of the different types of cases internally examined lacked required supervisory documentation.

¹ These internal reviews are part of the Division’s Continuous Quality Improvement process, which allows it to look at activities, performance, and outcomes and create plans for improvement. According to the Division, this process conforms to the national Council on Accreditation standards, and has received federal approval.

Accreditation conducted onsite reviews of the Division between August and November 2002, it found that improvements were needed in supervisory oversight, such as monitoring of the families' progress and providing the appropriate level of case consultation.

- **Poor supervisory oversight and guidance**—Auditors' review of 77 division case manager exit interviews from January 2002 to April 2003 found that poor supervisory practices and skills were identified as a contributing factor in decisions to leave. For example, 23 percent of the case managers identified the amount of direct support from their supervisor as a factor in leaving. Similarly, the March 2003 GAO report on recruiting and retaining child welfare staff found that strong supervisory support motivated case managers to stay despite the stress, while lack of support was a critical factor in case managers' decisions to leave. Given the high levels of turnover that continue to exist among case managers, (see Finding 1, pages 9 through 21, and Finding 2, pages 23 through 28), attention to this matter seems increasingly important.

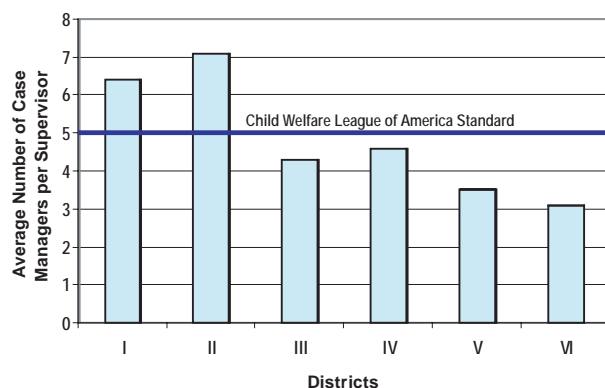
Review of 77 exit interviews found 23 percent indicated poor supervisory support was a contributing factor in employees' decisions to leave.

Factors contributing to poor supervisory oversight should be addressed

The Division should take several steps to improve supervisory oversight. First, it should do some additional work to determine if more supervisory positions are needed. Further, because supervisory oversight is critical both to effective management and staff retention, the Division should ensure that adequate supervisory training is a high priority.

Some additional supervisors may be needed—The Division's case-manager-to-supervisor ratio exceeds recommended Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) standards in two of the six districts, as shown in Figure 2.¹ However, the Division needs to do more work to determine how these standards should be applied in Arizona. CWLA recommends one supervisor for every five case managers as a result of the critical nature of supervisory responsibilities, but it also indicates this recommendation is a guideline that should be adjusted based on an agency's specific workload factors. Auditors reviewed the Division's authorized full-time supervisor and case manager positions for fiscal year 2003 and found that although there are fewer than five staff per supervisor in the four rural districts, the Division's

Figure 2: Comparison of Supervisor Ratios As of January 2003



District I	Maricopa County
District II	Pima County
District III	Apache, Coconino, Navajo, and Yavapai Counties
District IV	La Paz, Mohave, and Yuma Counties
District V	Gila and Pinal Counties
District VI	Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, and Santa Cruz Counties

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of the Division of Children, Youth and Families authorized full-time employee positions from the Regular Positions Work Sheet for fiscal year 2003, as of January 23, 2003.

¹ Child Welfare League of America. *Standards of Excellence for Services for Abused or Neglected Children and Their Families*, revised edition. Washington, D.C.: Child Welfare League of America, 1999.

Supervisors' workload should be assessed in determining need for more supervisors.

case-manager-to-supervisor ratio exceeds the CWLA standard in both of its metropolitan districts. Division officials explained that the rural districts have fewer case managers to supervisors than the recommended CWLA standard because rural offices have fewer case managers, but still require a supervisor.

The Council on Accreditation (COA) has also developed supervisor-to-staff ratios, with its standards dependent on the experience levels of the staff supervised. COA's standards call for one supervisor to oversee no more than seven experienced and professionally trained workers, or five workers who have less professional education and experience. A recent COA review of the Division reported that only two districts were in full compliance with the COA supervisor-to-staff ratio. This further suggests the necessity of reviewing the current supervisory workload and determining the impact of workload factors, such as employee turnover. According to information provided by the Department of Administration's Human Resources Division, the annualized turnover rate for CPS case managers was 14.6 percent as of May 2003 (see Finding 1, pages 9 through 20). In addition, auditors interviewed 13 supervisors state-wide and found that many reported supervising more staff than standards recommend. Supervisors also reported barriers such as supervising inexperienced staff, case manager turnover, and lack of placements. As a result, over half of the supervisors interviewed indicated that they did not have sufficient time to complete their assigned tasks.

To determine if the CWLA supervisor-to-case manager ratio is appropriate for Arizona, the Division should assess and document workload factors impacting its supervisors. The Division could accomplish this by conducting focus groups with unit supervisors state-wide to determine the current workload issues impacting effective supervision, such as case manager turnover. If additional supervisors are needed, the Division should take steps to determine if any new positions could be funded with existing resources, because the costs may be substantial. For example, if the Division believes that CWLA standards are appropriate for Arizona, it would need to hire an additional 25 supervisors, all to be placed in District I and District II. Specifically, District I would require 16 supervisors and District II 9 supervisors to meet CWLA standards. The Division reported the starting salary for a CPS unit supervisor is \$34,307, with an additional \$8,000 needed for employee-related expenses.

However, the Division should consider whether there is a way to reallocate some of the supervisor positions from Districts III through VI to District I or II to improve supervisor-to-case manager ratios in the metropolitan areas. If reallocating positions is not practical, the Division should determine if any of the additional positions could be funded from its existing budget. Regardless, the Division should also work to fill existing vacancies state-wide. As of June 2003, the Division reported that 6 of the 119 authorized supervisory positions in Districts I through VI were vacant.¹ However, filling vacancies will not improve the ratio because auditors' analysis was done on

¹ The Division also has seven supervisor positions assigned to the hotline, which receives and screens reports of child abuse and neglect.

authorized positions, although it should improve actual workloads for existing supervisors who have taken on additional responsibilities for the unfilled positions.

Inexperienced supervisors and retention efforts should be addressed—One reason the Division may want to hire some additional supervisors is that its supervisory staff is relatively new and inexperienced and may benefit from a reduced workload. For example, a review of the personnel data from April 2003 shows that 17 percent of the CPS supervisors were promoted to their current position within the last year, and 33 percent within 2 years. Additionally, a division official noted that the level of case management experience prior to supervisory promotion has declined from 6 to 3 years. The official noted that, as a result, supervisors may be unable to adequately mentor new case managers because they themselves have not had sufficient time to learn the intricacies of the CPS function.

In addition to the Division considering lower workloads for supervisors in the metropolitan areas, it should continue its efforts to improve retention. The March 2003 GAO report notes that state officials in two states that have become fully accredited through the Council on Accreditation have reported improved supervisory retention as a result of meeting and maintaining COA standards. Several factors, such as a more manageable supervisor-to-case manager ratio and a focus on recruiting qualified applicants, were attributed to the improvement. Although the Division is currently undergoing the accreditation review process, it does not have a target date for correcting the deficiencies the Council noted in their fall 2002 review.

Initial supervisor training should be held—The Division's Child Welfare Training Institute should hold regular initial supervisor training. Prior to the December 2002 implementation of the Institute's revised supervisor training curriculum, the Division failed to offer initial supervisor training for over 16 months.¹ Division personnel indicated that the supervisor training was halted because it needed to focus on the new case manager training and was revising the supervisor curriculum. Supervisors were provided only generic courses offered through the Department's Office of Organization and Management Development, such as ethics and positive discipline. In December 2002, the Institute began offering its revised supervisor core training to all supervisors who did not attend the supervisor core training since their promotion. This totaled 49 of the Division's 126 CPS supervisors. However, in April 2003, according to division personnel, due to the class size and budget constraints, the new supervisor training was again halted midway through the required courses. This training was resumed in September 2003, as well as training being provided to a new group of 30 supervisors. Because the Division has a relatively new and inexperienced supervisory staff, a consistent and comprehensive training program becomes even more critical to ensuring supervisors are equipped with the skills to complete their job. The Division should ensure sufficient resources are available to provide consistent training to new supervisors.

¹ The Division's previous supervisor core curriculum consisted of seven 3-day modules spread over a 7-month period. The last supervisor training offered by the old supervisor curriculum began in November 2000 and ended in July 2001.

Division should improve its supervisor training and develop a continuing education program for supervisors.

Curriculum changes needed—In addition to making initial supervisor training a high priority, the Division should also make some curriculum changes. Although the Division recently revised the supervisor core training, additional changes are needed. The revised supervisor core curriculum/training, which was implemented in December 2002, includes two new modules—clinical supervision and policy training—which attempt to address deficiencies identified with past training. However, over 30 percent of the course evaluations for the clinical supervision module showed that the course did not meet supervisors’ training needs. Specifically, some supervisors noted that it lacked sufficient information on the practical application of clinical supervision and its implementation based on division policy and procedure. For example, one supervisor stated that the content needs to focus on the tools and materials approved for use in Arizona. Similarly, another supervisor stated that the course needs to be drastically modified to meet the needs of the field; for example, how to do clinical supervision as it pertains to division policy and procedure. The Division has established a supervisor training workgroup that functions as a sounding board for training needs and works to put suggestions into practice. It should continue to use this group to make recommendations on how to improve supervisory training, including enhancing the clinical supervision module.

Continuing supervisor education needs improvement—The Division also needs to develop a continuing education program to meet the needs of new and existing supervisors. The Division recognized in its budget request prepared in September 2002 for the Training Institute that a continuing education program is critical for supervisors to carry out several vital functions, including mentoring new employees, ensuring adherence to division policy and procedure, making case-planning recommendations, and providing assistance to the staff they supervise. The Division identified the need for an in-house continuing education program for supervisors and requires all staff to complete 12 hours of ongoing training annually. However, auditors’ review of the specialized training offered in 2002 and the first quarter of 2003 shows that no classes have been offered that specifically address the needs of the CPS supervisor. Further, interviews with 13 CPS unit supervisors throughout the State revealed that none had been offered supervisor-specific continuing education training through the Institute. However, close to half of the supervisors interviewed indicated the need for additional training in several supervisor-specific topic areas, including employee relations, legal processes, and clarification on new policies and procedures.

Other states, such as New Mexico and Tennessee, require supervisors or managers to complete supervisor-specific continuing education classes yearly to improve their competencies. For example, Tennessee requires supervisors to take 40 hours of continuing education with 24 hours of supervisor-specific training. Examples of course offerings include organizational policies and practices for supervisors, and techniques for interviewing prospective staff.

Recommendations

1. The Division should determine an appropriate supervisor-to-case manager ratio for Arizona by assessing and documenting workload factors impacting its supervisors, such as turnover and staff experience level.
2. Once the Division has determined an appropriate supervisor-to-staff ratio for Arizona, the Division should:
 - a. Explore the feasibility of reallocating existing supervisors' positions within the districts to ensure that all districts meet the approved standards; and,
 - b. Determine if any new positions could be funded from its existing budget.
3. The Division should take steps to fill vacant supervisor positions.
4. The Division should develop and implement strategies for increasing CPS supervisor retention, including continuing the accreditation process through the Council on Accreditation.
5. The Division should deliver a comprehensive training program to new and existing CPS supervisors to ensure they are equipped with the appropriate level of skills to complete their job. To do so, the Division should:
 - a. Ensure the consistent delivery of the supervisor core curriculum to newly promoted CPS supervisors.
 - b. Continue to use its supervisor workgroup to identify ways to improve the supervisory training.
 - c. Develop a centralized continuing education program specifically focused on the CPS supervisors' professional development needs.

FINDING 4

Efforts needed to further improve children’s permanency outcomes

The Division needs to make better use of concurrent case planning as a tool in achieving permanent placements for foster children. Concurrent case planning involves simultaneously pursuing both family reunification and an alternate plan, such as adoption or legal guardianship, as options for placing a foster child with a family that has a permanent legal commitment to the child’s well-being. This approach has been found to reduce the length of time that children spend in out-of-home care, and for 2 years, the Division has had a policy calling for its use. However, the Division has made limited progress in putting this policy into practice. To ensure better use of concurrent case planning, the Division needs to improve its staff training related to this approach, as well as its efforts to present information about this approach to stakeholders, such as foster-home recruitment agencies and juvenile court judges. The Division has made efforts to increase permanency by applying other techniques besides concurrent case planning, and should continue these efforts.

Lengthy out-of-home care is costly and may be damaging to children

Many children remain in out-of-home care for long periods, despite changes designed to expedite permanency. Lengthy out-of-home care is costly for governments and, according to some studies, can be harmful to children. Lack of concurrent case planning is one of many barriers that have been identified as hindering timely placements.

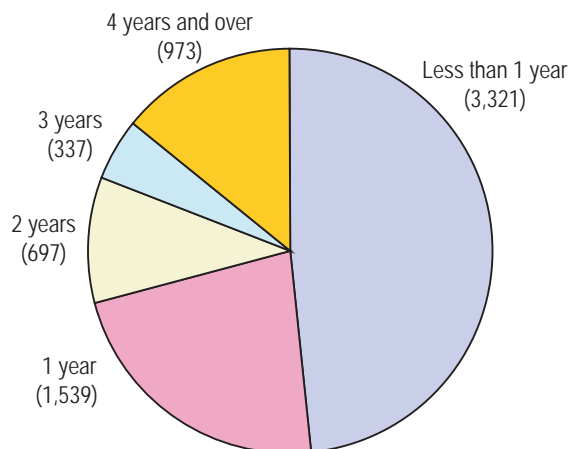
Many children remain in costly out-of-home care—Efforts to expedite permanent placements of foster children, both nationally and in Arizona, have met with limited success. In response to concerns that some children were languishing in tem-

In March 2003, 29 percent of Arizona's foster children had been in care 2 years or more, compared to the most recent (2001) national estimate of 44 percent.

porary foster care, Congress enacted the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) in 1997. ASFA sought to expedite permanency for these children by changing child welfare requirements and creating adoption-related funding sources. Despite the changes made by ASFA, many children nation-wide and in Arizona remain in foster care for extended periods of time. According to division data, as of March 31, 2003, 29 percent of Arizona's foster children had been in care for 2 years or more (see Figure 3). The national percentage is even higher, as the most recent estimate indicated that, as of September 30, 2001, 44 percent of the children in foster care across the United States had been in care for 2 years or more.¹ This problem is further illustrated by the results of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) recent Child and Family Services Reviews, which evaluate states' child welfare systems and outcomes. In federal fiscal years 2001 and 2002, DHHS reviewed 32 states, including Arizona. None of the states reviewed were found to be in substantial conformity with the measure for permanency of children in their living situations.²

Lengthy out-of-home care is costly for governments and may be harmful to children. The Division estimated the average monthly cost of out-of-home care to be between \$1,200 and \$2,897 per case, per month, depending on the placement setting.³ In addition, based on information provided by the Division, it spent more than \$60 million from the General Fund and other appropriated funds on foster care children in fiscal year 2003.⁴ Further, although research on the impact of long-term foster care on children's lives is mixed, some studies suggest that long-term foster care may be harmful to children's health and future self-sufficiency.

Figure 3: Percentage of Children in Foster Care by Length of Time As of March 2003 (Unaudited)



Note: 6,867 children were in foster care as of March 2003.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of data obtained from the Division of Children, Youth and Families on May 23, 2003.

Division-estimated costs for out-of-home care range from \$1,200 to \$2,897 per month per case.

Several barriers to permanency have been identified—The difficulty in making greater progress toward permanency is linked to a number of barriers, according to various studies conducted nationally and in Arizona. Some of the cited

- 1 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, Report #8: Preliminary FY 2001 Estimates as of March 2003.
- 2 Results based on the first of the two permanency outcomes. DHHS' Child and Family Service Reviews measure two Permanency Outcomes: a) Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations, which measures performance in such areas as adoption, appropriateness of permanency goals, and other planned permanent living arrangements; and b) Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children, which focuses primarily on family preservation in foster care.
- 3 The Division's cost-per-case estimates were developed in October 2002 and include an average monthly case management cost, maintenance payment, and a personal and clothing allowance.
- 4 The Division's reported amount of appropriated expenditures encompasses all types of expenditures for out-of-home care including case management costs, maintenance payments, and costs for medical and dental services provided through the State's Comprehensive Medical and Dental Program (CMDP). CMDP expenditures are through the end of fiscal year 2003, and all other expenditures are through the end of May 2003.

obstacles center on the characteristics of the children themselves. These include difficulties in placing older children and children with severe mental health issues, as well as inadequate support services for children with severe mental health issues. For example, a major finding of a 2001 report by Arizona's Foster Care Review Board was that children with mental health problems are not well supported, and their mental health problems may prevent them from achieving permanency.¹

Other barriers are related more to the CPS system itself, including the lack of concurrent planning. Other system-related examples include delays in terminating parental rights, delays in conducting administrative tasks (such as performing background checks on potential adoptive families), and delays in identifying an adoptive parent. Some of the Division's internal reviews have linked delayed attempts to identify an adoptive parent with a lack of concurrent case planning.²

Division needs to better implement concurrent case planning

Although the Division established concurrent case planning as one strategy for improving the timely placement of foster care children in permanent homes, its implementation of that strategy has been limited. Studies have found that concurrent case planning can effectively shorten foster care stays. However, while the Division implemented a concurrent case planning policy in April 2001, external and internal CPS reviews since then have determined that concurrent case planning was not being used, which was one factor hindering the timely placement of children. Although the Division has since identified and partially implemented steps to improve its use of concurrent case planning, additional actions are still needed.

Concurrent case planning can result in timelier placements—

Concurrent case planning has been found to be an effective strategy for reducing the time a child spends in foster care. Concurrent case planning simultaneously pursues both family reunification and an alternate plan; whereas the traditional sequential planning approach to case planning pursues alternate plans only after reunification efforts fail. Studies have identified several positive impacts of concurrent case planning, including decreasing the length of time a child spends in foster care, reducing the number of placements experienced by a child while in foster care, and increasing permanency placements. For example, a study of Minnesota's concurrent case planning program found that concurrent case planning helped reduce the length of time children were in out-of-home care by almost 30 days, reduced the number of moves children experienced in foster care, and increased the number of children

¹ Foster Care Review Board. *Permanency for Children in Long-Term Foster Care: 2001 FCRB Report and Recommendations*. 2001.

² Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth, and Families, *Peer Record Review Quarterly Summary Report-Statewide*, for the quarters ending June 30, 2002, and September 30, 2002.

leaving foster care for a permanent home.¹ Similarly, a study of the Colorado Department of Human Services' implementation of concurrent case planning found that in two counties that used concurrent case planning, the percentage of children placed in a permanent home within 12 months was higher than for children who did not receive concurrent case planning. Specifically, in one county, 84 percent of the children receiving concurrent case planning services were placed into permanent homes within 12 months, compared to 57 percent of the comparison group.²

Division has not adequately implemented concurrent case planning—Although the Division established a concurrent case planning policy on April 1, 2001, implementation has been limited. According to division policy staff, the current policy was developed in response to federal encouragement and to studies identifying concurrent case planning as a “best practice.” However, various reviews have since indicated that the Division has not fully implemented this approach. For example, a 2002 federal review found the Division was still employing sequential permanency planning rather than concurrent planning, which was one factor contributing to delays in the length of time to achieve adoption.³ In addition, recent internal reviews found a lack of concurrent case planning, which was one factor contributing to delays in timely adoptions.⁴

Additional actions needed to fully implement concurrent case planning—Although the Division has developed a plan to improve its implementation of concurrent case planning, further efforts in two main areas are needed for successful implementation:

- **Training**—The Division needs to improve its concurrent case planning training curriculum and ensure all appropriate personnel receive the training. Although the Division has included the topic of concurrent case planning within its training program for new case managers, its training on this topic needs to be enhanced. A representative from Lutheran Community Services Northwest, the organization that was instrumental in developing the model for most concurrent case planning programs around the country, indicated that effective training is the number one key to the successful implementation of concurrent case planning. As such, it provides an all-day training that is focused solely on concurrent case planning. In contrast, auditors observed one training session and found

Effective training is key to successful implementation of concurrent case planning.

¹ Minnesota Department of Human Services, Children's Services. *Evaluating Concurrent Planning: Report on Outcomes and Fiscal Impact*. Report to the 2001 Minnesota Legislature. January 2001.

² Kelly, Carol M., Patricia Schene, and Melinda Taylor, *Implementation of HB-94-1178: Expedited Permanency Planning*. Colorado Department of Human Services and Colorado Judicial Branch. December 31, 1997. Auditors used this study because it provides a comparison group, while recent reports present only the percentage of children who achieve a permanent placement within 1 year of removal from their homes.

³ United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families Pacific Hub. *Arizona Child and Family Services Review Final Report*. February 1, 2002.

⁴ Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth and Families. *Peer Record Review Quarterly Summary Report-Statewide*, for the quarters ending June 30, 2002, September 30, 2002, and December 31, 2002.

that the Division's concurrent case planning training comprises only 10 minutes of a 2-day training class for new case managers, along with a brief video explaining innovations to expedite permanency. Further, auditors found that there are no practical exercises on how to use concurrent case planning, and the instructors for the training class auditors observed did not discuss the assessment tool that should be used to help determine whether concurrent case planning is appropriate for a case.

Existing case managers and supervisors also need to be trained on how to use concurrent case planning. Although consultants of the National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning provided an all-day training about concurrent case planning for existing staff in May 2001, shortly after the policy was established, according to division training staff and auditors' estimates, only approximately one-quarter of the existing case managers attended this training. Division training staff indicated that the training took place over a 3-day period and was offered only in three locations, which may have contributed to some staff not attending. The Division indicated that it plans to collaborate with two national resource centers to develop and conduct additional concurrent case planning training for existing staff. However, it also needs to take steps to ensure that staff attend the training.

- **Presentations to stakeholders**—The Division should also present information on concurrent case planning to appropriate stakeholders, such as assistant attorneys general, foster-home recruitment agencies, juvenile court judges, attorneys who represent parents and children in dependency cases, and the State Foster Care Review Board (FCRB). According to the National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning, stakeholder support is necessary for the successful implementation of concurrent case planning, and the agency must inform the appropriate stakeholders of philosophical and organizational changes for concurrent case planning. A representative from the Committee on Juvenile Courts, whose membership consists of the presiding juvenile judges of each county, indicated that although juvenile judges are endorsing the idea of concurrent case planning, each judge has his/her own definition of what concurrent case planning is. Thus far, the Division presented information about concurrent case planning to FCRB in September 2002, and to the Committee on Juvenile Courts in September 2003.

Division should continue to apply other strategies that increase permanency

The Division has made efforts to increase permanency using other techniques, and should continue these efforts. For example, the Division has several units designated solely for placing children in permanent homes, including general adoption units

The Division has implemented several strategies designed to increase permanency for children.

that find permanent homes and help adoptive families obtain services, and three specialized permanency units that focus specifically on finding homes for special-needs children. Several states have similarly focused staff on permanency, resulting in increased placements, even for special-needs children. Although a formal evaluation of Arizona's permanency units has not been conducted, division personnel indicate that these units have contributed to increased permanency. Further, when contracting for the recruitment of adoptive families, the Division uses performance-based contracts to promote increased recruitment efforts for traditionally hard-to-place children. In 1999, the Division also worked with the Legislature to streamline Arizona's adoption certification process, resulting in legislation that improved time requirements and eliminated many unnecessary steps for licensed foster parents and certain family members to adopt children in their care.¹

Another example of the Division's efforts to increase permanency was its participation in the state-wide implementation of Model Court, which lessened barriers to permanency related to the judicial process. Although the Model Court pilot was initiated by the Pima County Juvenile Court in 1997 to improve the timeliness and content of child-welfare judicial proceedings, the Division assisted in the state-wide implementation of the project, beginning in 1999.² Model Court changed the role of juvenile courts in the permanency process by shortening judicial time frames, mandating expedited service delivery for dependent children and their families, and requiring courts to provide substantially more oversight on dependency matters. The Arizona Supreme Court initiated a 2-year study in 1999 to determine Model Court's impact. The results found substantial improvements to the permanency process, including a 43 percent reduction in the average time to complete the permanency process; the ability to render permanency determinations within 18 months for 93 percent of the cases, versus 63 percent prior to the project; and a 56 percent decrease in the length of stay in out-of-home placement. Further, the study found that the project saved nearly \$1 million in placement costs in the four sites studied.

1 Laws 1999, Chapter 347.

2 Maricopa County was granted a partial waiver allowing the court to phase in implementation.

Recommendations

1. The Division should enhance concurrent case planning within its new case manager training to include the assessment tool that should be used to help determine whether concurrent case planning is appropriate. In doing so, it may want to review the curriculum developed by Lutheran Community Services Northwest.
2. The Division should provide additional state-wide training on concurrent case planning to all existing case managers and supervisors, and ensure that they attend this training.
3. The Division should continue to seek technical assistance from the national resource centers to develop and conduct concurrent case planning training for existing staff.
4. The Division should provide information on concurrent case planning to stakeholders such as assistant attorneys general, foster-home recruitment agencies, and juvenile court judges.
5. The Division should continue to research and apply other best-practice strategies that increase permanency.

APPENDIX

**Table 4: CPS Average Caseloads by District
As of June 30, 2001 and 2003**

District I—Maricopa County	2001			2003		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
Type of Worker						
CPS Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	108	947	8.8	123	1,706	13.9
Ongoing	153	1,446	9.5	162	1,559	9.6
Mixed						
Specialty Units						
Administrative	1	2	2.0	1	2	2.0
After-hours investigation team	8	29	3.6	10	56	5.6
Dually adjudicated	13	150	11.5	12	161	13.4
Family preservation	6	153	25.5	6	151	25.2
Young adult program	26	388	14.9	22	372	16.9
Human Service Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative				2	33	16.5
Ongoing	2	10	5.0	1	10	10.0
Mixed						
CPS Program Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative						
Ongoing	1	11	11.0	3	16	5.3
Mixed						
Specialty Units						
Administrative	2	4	2.0	2	3	1.5
After-hours investigation team						
Dually adjudicated						
Family preservation						
Young adult program						
CPS Supervisor						
Typical Units						
Investigative	14	24	1.7	7	27	3.9
Ongoing	14	65	4.6	10	31	3.1
Mixed						
Specialty Units						
Administrative	2	14	7.0	2	2	1.0
After-hours investigation team	1	2	2.0	1	1	1.0
Dually adjudicated	2	3	1.5			
Family preservation				1	27	27.0
Young adult program						

Table 4: (Cont'd)

District II—Pima County	2001			2003		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
Type of Worker						
CPS Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	44	456	10.4	51	742	14.6
Ongoing	59	693	11.8	66	893	13.5
Mixed	1	24	24.0	1	21	21.0
Specialty Units						
Administrative	1	3	3.0			
After-hours investigation team	6	38	6.3	6	16	2.7
Dually adjudicated						
Family preservation						
Young adult program	14	230	16.4	16	269	16.8
Human Service Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	1	1	1.0			
Ongoing	8	29	3.6	3	3	1.0
Mixed						
CPS Program Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	1	1	1.0	1	11	11.0
Ongoing						
Mixed						
Specialty Units						
Administrative	2	6	3.0	1	2	2.0
After-hours investigation team						
Dually adjudicated						
Family preservation						
Young adult program						
CPS Supervisor						
Typical Units						
Investigative	7	16	2.3	3	4	1.3
Ongoing	8	26	3.3	3	10	3.3
Mixed						
Specialty Units						
Administrative						
After-hours investigation team				1	1	1.0
Dually adjudicated						
Family preservation						
Young adult program				1	3	3.0

Table 4: (Cont'd)

District III—Apache, Coconino, Navajo, and Yavapai Counties	2001			2003		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
Type of Worker						
CPS Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	5	78	15.6	10	185	18.5
Ongoing	11	212	19.3	16	157	9.8
Mixed	28	423	15.1	31	399	12.9
Human Service Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	1	2	2.0			
Ongoing				4	47	11.8
Mixed	4	22	5.5	1	9	9.0
CPS Program Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative				1	30	30.0
Ongoing						
Mixed	3	16	5.3	3	32	10.7
Specialty Units						
Administrative	1	22	22.0	1	3	3.0
After-hours investigation team						
Dually adjudicated						
Family preservation						
Young adult program						
CPS Supervisor						
Typical Units						
Investigative	1	1	1.0			
Ongoing	2	5	2.5	1	5	5.0
Mixed	3	18	6.0	2	23	11.5
Specialty Units						
Administrative				1	1	1.0
After-hours investigation team						
Dually adjudicated						
Family preservation						
Young adult program						

Table 4: (Cont'd)

District IV—La Paz, Mohave, and Yuma Counties	2001			2003		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
Type of Worker						
CPS Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	10	128	12.8	8	387	48.4
Ongoing	12	105	8.8	12	127	10.6
Mixed	15	129	8.6	13	169	13.0
Specialty Units						
Administrative				1	7	7.0
After-hours investigation team						
Dually adjudicated						
Family preservation						
Young adult program						
Human Service Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative						
Ongoing	3	27	9.0	2	30	15.0
Mixed	2	14	7.0	2	20	10.0
CPS Program Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative						
Ongoing						
Mixed						
Specialty Units						
Administrative				3	8	2.7
After-hours investigation team						
Dually adjudicated						
Family preservation						
Young adult program						
CPS Supervisor						
Typical Units						
Investigative	1	8	8.0	2	10	5.0
Ongoing	1	1	1.0	3	4	1.3
Mixed	2	4	2.0	2	3	1.5

Table 4: (Cont'd)

District V—Gila and Pinal Counties	2001			2003		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
Type of Worker						
CPS Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	11	61	5.6	12	121	10.1
Ongoing	7	54	7.7	10	93	9.3
Mixed	12	105	8.8	11	133	12.1
Human Service Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative						
Ongoing	2	15	7.5	2	26	13.0
Mixed	2	17	8.5	2	21	10.5
CPS Program Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative	3	21	7.0	3	13	4.3
Ongoing						
Mixed	1	12	12.0	1	11	11.0
Specialty Units						
Administrative	1	1	1.0			
After-hours investigation team						
Dually adjudicated						
Family preservation						
Young adult program						
CPS Supervisor						
Typical Units						
Investigative	3	26	8.7			
Ongoing	2	12	6.0	2	10	5.0
Mixed	3	26	8.7	2	25	12.5

Table 4: (Concl'd)

District VI—Cochise, Graham, Greenlee and Santa Cruz Counties	2001			2003		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
Type of Worker						
CPS Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative						
Ongoing	2	25	12.5	1	8	8.0
Mixed	21	136	6.5	23	234	10.2
Human Service Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative						
Ongoing	1	7	7.0	1	10	10.0
Mixed	7	49	7.0	8	68	8.5
Specialty Units						
Administrative				1	1	1.0
After-hours investigation team						
Dually adjudicated						
Family preservation						
Young adult program						
CPS Program Specialist						
Typical Units						
Investigative						
Ongoing						
Mixed						
Specialty Units						
Administrative	1	1	1.0			
After-hours investigation team						
Dually adjudicated						
Family preservation						
Young adult program						
CPS Supervisor						
Typical Units						
Investigative						
Ongoing						
Mixed	3	7	2.3			

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of automated case and employee data for June 30, 2001 and June 30, 2003 provided by the Division of Children, Youth, and Families.

Table 5: CPS Average Caseloads by Office
As of June 30, 2001

	2001											
	CPS Specialist			Human Service Specialist			CPS Program Specialist			CPS Supervisor		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
Ajo												
38 W. Plaza St.	1	24	24.0									
Apache Junction												
2066 W. Apache Trail	7	43	6.1							2	21	10.5
Benson												
549 W. 4 th St.	3	15	5.0									
Bisbee												
207 Bisbee Rd.	3	31	10.3	1	7	7.0				1	2	2.0
209 Bisbee Rd.							1	1	1.0			
Bullhead City												
2601 Hwy. 95	7	49	7.0							1	1	1.0
Casa Grande												
1377 E. Florence Blvd.	7	57	8.1	1	7	7.0	1	11	11.0	1	5	5.0
2510 N. Trezell Rd.							1	1	1.0			
Clifton												
300 N. Coronado Blvd.				1	4	4.0						
Coolidge												
1155 N. Arizona Blvd.	2	9	4.5	1	9	9.0				1	2	2.0
Cottonwood												
1500 E. Cherry St.	6	52	8.7	1	7	7.0				1	1	1.0
Douglas												
1140 F. Ave.	2	12	6.0	1	7	7.0						
Eloy												
109 N. Sunshine Blvd.	1	2	2.0				1	5	5.0			
Flagstaff												
397 Malpais Ln.	9	172	19.1							2	3	1.5
220 N. Leroux							1	22	22.0			

Table 5: (Cont'd)

	2001											
	CPS Specialist			Human Service Specialist			CPS Program Specialist			CPS Supervisor		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
Fredonia												
100 E. Cowboy Dr.	1	6	6.0									
Glendale												
5800 W. Glenn Dr.	21	143	6.8							3	5	1.7
Globe												
605 S. 7 th St.	3	13	4.3	1	8	8.0	1	5	5.0	2	12	6.0
Kearney												
331 Alden Rd.	2	17	8.5	1	8	8.0	1	12	12.0	1	16	16.0
Kingman												
519 Beale St.	8	98	12.3	1	11	11.0						
Lake Havasu												
232 London Bridge Rd.	4	50	12.5							1	3	3.0
Lakeside												
5658 Hwy. 260	5	120	24.0	1	5	5.0	1	1	1.0			
Mammoth												
228 Main St.	3	39	13.0									
Mesa												
1818 E. Southern Ave.	27	184	6.8							3	8	2.7
5634 E. Main St.	12	108	9.0							2	4	2.0
Nogales												
480 N. Grand Ave.	2	7	3.5	2	11	5.5						
Page												
679 Lake Powell Blvd.	2	10	5.0									
Parker												
1032 Hopi Ave.	1	8	8.0	1	6	6.0						
Payson												
122 E. Hwy. 260	5	40	8.0							1	8	8.0

Table 5: (Cont'd)

	2001											
	CPS Specialist			Human Service Specialist			CPS Program Specialist			CPS Supervisor		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
Phoenix												
13450 N. Black Canyon	59	816	13.8				1	11	11.0	6	16	2.7
2345 E. University Dr.	45	559	12.4							3	5	1.7
4020 N. 20th St.	42	319	7.6	1	1	1.0				7	19	2.7
10640 N. 28 th Dr.	24	224	9.3									
4635 S. Central Ave.	13	131	10.1							1	7	7.0
4620 N. 16 th St.	8	75	9.4									
3839 N. 3 rd St.	6	43	7.2							1	12	12.0
2346 N. Central	4	49	12.3									
3221 N. 16 th St.	1	2	2.0				2	4	2.0	1	5	5.0
Prescott												
1509A W. Gurley St.	7	118	16.9	1	2	2.0				1	3	3.0
Prescott Valley												
8128 E. Highway 69	7	81	11.6				1	9	9.0			
Safford												
1938 Thatcher Blvd.	3	23	7.7	1	9	9.0						
Sierra Vista												
820 E. Fry Blvd.	5	41	8.2							1	3	3.0
2981 E. Tacoma	4	28	7.0	1	10	10.0				1	2	2.0
Somerton												
432 Main St.	3	22	7.3	1	8	8.0						
St Johns												
395 S. Washington	4	88	22.0	1	1	1.0	1	6	6.0	1	2	2.0
Tempe												
5002 S. Mill Ave.	41	271	6.6	1	9	9.0				4	25	6.3

Table 5: (Concl'd)

	2001											
	CPS Specialist			Human Service Specialist			CPS Program Specialist			CPS Supervisor		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
Tolleson												
9550 W. Van Buren	12	191	15.9							2	2	1.0
Tucson												
1075 E. Fort Lowell	35	445	12.7				1	1	1.0	3	3	1.0
1700 E. Broadway	28	297	10.6							4	13	3.3
6840 E. Broadway	24	292	12.2	1	1	1.0				2	4	2.0
2750 S. 4 th Ave.	24	276	11.5							3	9	3.0
432 S. Williams Blvd.	12	107	8.9	1	11	11.0				3	13	4.3
400 W. Congress	1	3	3.0	7	18	2.6	2	6	3.0			
Wilcox												
256 S. Curtis	1	4	4.0	1	8	8.0						
Winslow												
319 E. 3 rd St.	3	66	22.0	1	9	9.0				1	15	15.0
Yuma												
3780 S. 4 th Ave.	14	135	9.6	2	16	8.0				2	9	4.5

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of automated case and employee data for June 30, 2001 and June 30, 2003 provided by the Division of Children, Youth, and Families.

Table 6: CPS Average Caseloads by Office
As of June 30, 2003

	2003												
	CPS Specialist			Human Service Specialist			CPS Program Specialist			CPS Supervisor			
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	
Ajo													
38 W. Plaza St.	1	21	21.0										
Apache Junction													
2066 W. Apache Trail	8	57	7.1				1	9	9.0	1	8	8.0	
Benson													
549 W 4 th St.	2	21	10.5	2	15	7.5							
Bisbee													
207 Bisbee Rd.	3	19	6.3	2	19	9.5							
209 Bisbee Rd.				1	1	1.0							
Bullhead City													
2601 Hwy. 95	8	82	10.3								1	1	1.0
Casa Grande													
1377 E. Florence Blvd.	8	109	13.6	1	16	16.0	1	3	3.0	1	2	2.0	
Clifton													
300 N. Coronado Blvd.				2	18	9.0							
Coolidge													
1155 N. Arizona Blvd.	3	41	13.7	1	12	12.0							
Cottonwood													
1500 E. Cherry St.	8	84	10.5								1	2	2.0
Douglas													
1140 F. Ave.	2	21	10.5										
Eloy													
109 N. Sunshine Blvd.	1	12	12.0				1	1	1.0				

Table 6: (Cont'd)

	2003											
	CPS Specialist			Human Service Specialist			CPS Program Specialist			CPS Supervisor		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
Parker												
1032 Hopi Ave.	1	19	19.0	1	10	10.0						
Payson												
122 E. Hwy. 260	4	33	8.3									
Phoenix												
13450 N. Black Canyon	66	908	13.8				2	15	7.5	4	34	8.5
4020 N. 20 th St.	48	495	10.3	2	36	18.0				5	7	1.4
2345 E. University Dr.	40	578	14.5				1	1	1.0			
10640 N. 28 th Dr.	27	240	8.9							2	4	2.0
4635 S. Central Ave.	14	167	11.9									
3802 N. 53 rd Ave.	12	173	14.4							1	1	1.0
4620 N. 16 th St.	9	70	7.8									
3839 N. 3 rd St.	6	46	7.7							2	14	7.0
2346 N. Central	5	36	7.2									
3221 N. 16 th St.	1	2	2.0				1	2	2.0	1	1	1.0
Prescott												
1509A W. Gurley St.	9	117	13.0	1	13	13.0						
Prescott Valley												
8128 E. Hwy. 69	7	75	10.7				2	29	14.5			
Safford												
1938 Thatcher Blvd.	3	33	11.0	1	11	11.0						
Sierra Vista												
820 E. Fry Blvd.	5	46	9.2									
2981 E. Tacoma	5	61	12.2									
Somerton												
432 Main St.	2	55	27.5	1	10	10.0						

Table 6: (Concl'd)

	2003											
	CPS Specialist			Human Service Specialist			CPS Program Specialist			CPS Supervisor		
	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload	Workers	Cases	Average Caseload
St Johns												
395 S. Washington	4	78	19.5	1	9	9.0						
Tempe												
5002 S. Mill Ave.	40	441	11.0				1	1	1.0	2	5	2.5
Tolleson												
9550 W. Van Buren	13	182	14.0							2	16	8.0
Tucson												
6840 E. Broadway	35	384	11.0							2	2	1.0
1700 E. Broadway	34	394	11.6				1	2	2.0	-		
1075 E. Fort Lowell	31	436	14.1				1	11	11.0	1	3	3.0
2750 S. 4 th Ave.	26	522	20.1							2	4	2.0
432 S. Williams Blvd.	13	184	14.2							3	9	3.0
400 W. Congress				3	3	1.0						
Wilcox												
256 S. Curtis	2	28	14.0	1	7	7.0						
Winslow												
319 E. 3 rd St.	2	30	15.0							1	21	21.0
Yuma												
3780 S. 4 th Ave.	12	295	24.6	1	19	19.0				3	11	3.7
350 W. 16 th St.	1	7	7.0				3	8	2.7			

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of automated case and employee data for June 30, 2001 and June 30, 2003 provided by the Division of Children, Youth, and Families.

AGENCY RESPONSE



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

1717 W. Jefferson, P.O. Box 6123, Phoenix, Arizona 85005

Janet Napolitano
Governor

David A. Berns
Director

Debbie Davenport
Auditor General
Office of the Auditor General
2910 North 44 Street, Suite 410
Phoenix, Arizona 85018

Dear Ms. Davenport:

The Department of Economic Security is providing the enclosed comments to supplement the Child Protective Services Caseload and Training Audit Report issued by your office in October 2003 as Report No. 03-09. As requested by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, our comments address each of the recommendations in the report.

Under the leadership of Governor Napolitano, we have devoted most of this calendar year to an in-depth statewide study of our Child Protective Services system. Through the outstanding and tireless efforts of community and staff representatives, several major recommendations were made. One of the primary and recurring comments made by committee participants was the need for additional Child Protective Services case managers in Arizona.

The statistical data provided by your office regarding staffing ratios and percentages is appreciated. While we view these staffing estimates as an important evaluative criteria, the focus on the "quality" of the child protective and case management services provided to Arizona's vulnerable children is essential for the safety and well-being of our children. The quality of services provided is directly related to the workload and expectations placed upon our Child Protective Services case managers.

As acknowledged by the Office of the Auditor General, the high rate of staff turnover in Child Protective Services is a substantial barrier to the effective delivery of quality services to Arizona's children and their families. Activities such as the thorough documentation of case notes and other vital case-specific information in our automated case management system is required; however, these functions are many times delayed while the case managers fulfill other required duties and

responsibilities. The ability of supervisors to consistently provide quality case-specific oversight to their case managers is also affected by the staffing shortages, high turnover rate, and supervisor-to-case manager ratios that exceed the standards.

As a result, staff are frustrated, as they do not have sufficient time to provide the level of case management services needed by our children and families. Staff know that in order to ensure the safety and well-being of the children being served, quality and timely case management services must consistently be provided. This requires additional direct service staff.

One of the most frequent comments we receive from our case managers is "... what I need is more time to manage my case....". It is imperative that we view and assess the complexities and responsibilities placed upon Arizona's child protective services case managers when determining the need for additional direct service staff. Arizona's diverse population, multi-cultural communities, and vast rural areas have a direct impact upon the time required by the child protective services case manager for case management services.

We appreciate the time and efforts extended by staff of the Office of the Auditor General in evaluating our levels of direct service staffing; but regret that more emphasis was not placed upon the complexities of the current child maltreatment cases throughout Arizona. We wish the Auditor's Report also focused more on the extraordinary collaborative efforts required by child protective services case managers when investigating report of child maltreatment in many of Arizona's transient communities.

Please feel free to call me at (602) 542-5678 if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

David A. Berns

Enclosure

**ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY'S RESPONSE TO THE
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT ON
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES CASELOADS AND TRAINING
October 2003**

The Department of Economic Security (DES) is pleased to provide the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) with the following comments regarding each of the recommendations suggested in the report entitled *Child Protective Services - Caseloads and Training*. This report was issued as Auditor General Report 03-09 in October 2003. In addition, the Department has provided comments prior to the finding responses regarding the Summary and Introduction and Background sections of the report.

Comments to the Summary Section:

Page i:

In addition to not providing sufficient funding to annualize the case manager positions appropriated in FY 2002, the Joint Legislative Budget Committee did not annualize an additional 23 support staff that were appropriated as part of the comprehensive staffing package in FY 2002. These support positions included CPS Unit Supervisors, Human Service Workers and Secretaries. The total number of FTE which the Department did not receive annualization funding for was 104. The appropriations report for FY 2002 indicates that the funding received for these positions was between one-half to three-quarters of the year. The Department's reconciliation of the funding received indicates that the funds received provide for only 70% of the required amount to fully fund these FTE.

Page iii:

The report indicates that there are several indications that CPS case managers are not able to effectively perform their jobs. The Department agrees, and attributes this to high turnover, high stress and high caseloads. In order to allow the CPS case manager to effectively perform their job, the Division has already worked with the Governor's Office to develop a comprehensive first step to alleviating these factors. A request for additional staffing and resources to provide needed services has been developed and will be debated during a special session of the legislature beginning on October 20, 2003. This package addresses retention issues by requesting adequate compensation and resources for staff, additional case management positions (along with support staffing) to reduce caseloads, additional training for case managers and supervisors, and funding for permanency and family services. By providing the case worker with the services needed to assist families, the case worker will not be required to "chase down" a needed service.

Page iv:

The training institute provides case workers with the knowledge and skills which will aid in retention once they have completed the program. The Institute also serves as an important process in assisting new case managers in understanding what being a CPS case manager requires. Many times this understanding provides the new case manager with the realization that they are not cut out to be a CPS worker. By making this determination prior to handling a caseload, the Division is able to provide stability to families by not having a new case worker quit two weeks after becoming the family's case manager. This, in turn, provides continuity of service delivery.

Page v:

The Department agrees that, due to high caseloads and the unit supervisors having to handle a caseload, supervisory oversight may be lacking. The Department believes that, with the requested staffing, the supervisors will not have to handle a caseload and will be able to more effectively manage their units. This will also allow the supervisor more time to provide mentoring to new case managers and review cases for the case managers. This finding seems to be contradictory to indicating that the Division should include unit supervisors as case carrying for the purpose of determining how many staff are needed to handle the caseload. When supervisors carry caseloads it detracts from their supervisory functions.

Comments to the Introduction and Background Section:

Page 5

The report indicates that the Division does not have a comprehensive listing of CPS units. The Division does maintain a listing of all DCYF units in its automated system. While this listing may not have the specific unit function associated with it, the list does comprise all units within the Division.

Page 6

The report indicates that there were cases included in the Division's caseload that were either contained in the stale case report, or had a status of pending closure. The Division would be interested in receiving a list of the cases that the Auditor General has identified as still being included in the caseload, but also appear as "stale" cases. The Department has previously outlined the basis for the stale case listing, but will describe the report for the purposes of clarification for readers of the response. The stale case report is used to identify cases where DCYF no longer has an ongoing case management responsibility, but due to the lack of sufficient staff to manage its caseload, the case has not been fully closed in the automated system. The cases that appear on this report do not reflect cases where the case manager has not been monitoring an open case.

Page 10

The report indicates that, subsequent to the Auditor's completion of the field work, that CWLA changed its interpretation of the investigation standard. The Department does not believe the CWLA changed its interpretation of the standard for investigation, but rather provided clarification on how the standard should be interpreted.

THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSES TO THE INDIVIDUAL REPORT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

DES COMMENTS REGARDING FINDING 1: PAGES 9 THROUGH 20

Finding 1, Recommendation 1:

The Division should take steps to ensure that it can accurately project its case manager staffing needs. The Division should ensure that:

- (a) Cases can be classified on its computerized case management system according to standards;
- (b) It includes only cases that are being actively worked; and
- (c) It includes all positions that regularly manage cases in its count of authorized case management positions.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is not agreed to and the recommendation will not be implemented.

While the Division agrees that the most accurate and timely information is vital to being able to determine caseload staffing needs, the Division has taken steps to insure that the information used as a basis for determining the required staffing needed to attain CWLA standards is accurate.

In addition, the Division believes that the use of June 2001 and June 2003 as the analysis points is not representative of the workload the Division has on an average monthly basis. June is historically a lower workload month due in part to children not being seen by many of the mandated reporting sources (i.e. teachers, bus drivers, counselors, etc.). As a comparison, the month of January 2003 was 20% higher in the number of investigations completed than in June 2003 (January 2003 – 2,720 Investigations; June 2003 – 2,182 Investigations). Using the Auditor General's methodology of 12 cases per worker, the Division showed 10,758 Cases in active status in January 2003, in June 2003 that number was down to 9,951.

As the Auditor General has pointed out, the Division's caseload increased by 30% between June 2001 and June 2003. This caseload growth has continued into FY 2004, and has been a leading cause of case worker turnover. The caseload has increased to an average monthly number of cases in FY 2004 (through August) of 10,248 cases. The Division's current caseload information indicates that, based upon CWLA standards, the following case manager to caseload ratios will exist in FY 2004:

Investigation per worker	1:15.8	(CWLA Standard is 1:12)
In-Home Cases	1:22.4	(CWLA Standard is 1:17)
Out-of-Home Children	1:21.9	(CWLA Standard is 1:15)

The Division's caseload as of July 2003 indicates:

- Investigations – 2,306 – CWLA Standards Indicate a Need of 192 Case Managers
- In-Home Cases – 2,895 – CWLA Standards Indicate a Need of 170 Case Managers
- Out-of-Home Children – 7,207 – CWLA Standards Indicate a Need of 480 Case Managers
- Total Case Managers Needed – 842
- Authorized Case Managers – 671.5
- Contracted FTE – 16
- Total Available Case Managers – 687.5
- Need – 155.5

Below are specific responses to the three recommendations that the Auditor General has made as a result of audit finding number one:

- a) The Division agrees that the classification of the case in the automated system is the preferred methodology in determining the type of case that the worker is handling. This change to the automated system will take time and additional resources to implement. In the mean time the Division will continue to use its methodology to determine the number of staff needed to attain CWLA standards. The Division believes that its use of the CWLA standards more closely identifies the need for case managers and conforms to the application of the standards as CWLA intended.
- b) The Division has already taken steps to insure that only cases that are open and actively being worked are included in the case count used as a basis for the staffing needed to attain CWLA standards. The Division will continue to refine its data extraction to insure that only those cases which require CPS staff involvement are included in the counts to determine staffing needs. The Division believes that the timeliness of data entry will improve with sufficient staffing to handle the caseloads that currently exist. When outside entities have identified that CPS case workers are having difficulty managing their caseloads, it speaks volumes about the need to provide adequate staffing to address caseload issues.
- c) The Division currently includes all case carrying FTE which SHOULD be carrying cases. The inclusion of CPS Unit Supervisors and CPS Program Specialists in the caseload ratios has artificially lowered the cases to case worker ratio. These staff do not carry full caseloads, and in most instances are only carrying cases due to staffing shortages or due to high profile issues involved in the case. By including these staff as full time, case carrying FTE, the ratio of cases to workers is lower than if these staff were pro-rated or eliminated all together. In determining the number of staff required to attain the CWLA standards, the Division includes authorized CPS Specialist positions and contracted case managers. This process insures that the Division does not request FTE's due to not being able to fill vacancies, etc. The Division does not believe that utilizing CPS Unit Supervisors as case carrying staff is applicable and goes against best practice standards. CPS Unit Supervisors oversee a unit of anywhere from 7-10 staff. Their time should be used to provide case consultation for the CPS Specialist, provide mentoring to new CPS Specialists, and managing the daily operations for their units. When these managers are required to carry a caseload, the entire organization suffers from not having adequate

oversight of staff who are involved in daily case management. The Division will continue to insure that supervisors or other specialized staff are not required to carry a caseload. It is detrimental to the well being of children and families to have supervisors carrying cases and not providing oversight and mentoring to CPS Specialists.

Finding 1, Recommendation 2:

The Division should also investigate factors that may be hindering its ability to effectively manage its caseloads, including:

- a. Continuing to investigate reasons for case manager turnover, attempting to fill vacant case manager positions, and researching best practices for enhancing retention; and
- b. Continuing to assess ways to streamline its case management processes, eliminate tasks, and assign case management tasks to support workers.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the recommendation will be implemented.

The Division agrees that further investigation of factors that hinder the ability of case managers to effectively manage their case loads is needed.

- a) The cause of high turnover and problems recruiting and retaining staff is a priority for the Division. To this end, the Division has already developed a request for additional resources to appropriately compensate CPS staff. This request will be considered during a special session of legislature that will commence on October 20, 2003. The Division will continue to conduct exit interviews with CPS staff who are leaving the Division for other employment opportunities. The results of these interviews are analyzed to determine more effective recruitment and retention initiatives to enhance the Division's ability to recruit and retain professional staff.
- b) The Governor's commission report on CPS has identified a need to streamline CPS processes and procedures (action steps 4.0, 4.1, 4.6, 5.2 and 5.3) in order to recruit and retain professional staff. The governor has outlined a timeline that the Division will be required to implement this action plan. By July 2004, the Division will be required to have completed its analysis and have implemented process improvements. The Division is currently developing an action plan to address the Governor's commission report. Several avenues for collecting feedback on what processes or procedures could be streamlined were developed during the monthly program managers meeting (a monthly meeting of district managers and Division management team members) held in October 2003.

Finding 1, Recommendation 3:

The Division should establish appropriate caseload standards for Arizona. In doing so, the Division should:

- (a) Assess workload factors through such means as focus groups with staff, and
- (b) Document any factors that are used to justify using CWLA's standards or Arizona-specific standards.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and a different method of dealing with the recommendation will be implemented.

The Division agrees that the most applicable way to determine staffing requirements is to develop a modified CWLA standard that is specific to the way Arizona approaches child protective services. The Division believes the development of this standard will illustrate a higher number of case managers required than what is developed using the base CWLA standards. Due to the complexity of cases that Arizona CPS workers carry, model court requirements, the high level of cases which involve substance abuse and the geographic challenges related to service provision the Division believes that the ratio of case managers to cases will be lower than what is proposed by CWLA as a standard.

- a) The Division will work with the six district program managers to develop a procedure to analyze the caseloads and how best to determine an appropriate caseload ratio for CPS staff. The Department has also enlisted its own audit and management services unit to assist the Division in this process. Audit and management services will provide technical assistance and analyze the Division's recommended caseload to determine if it approaches caseload standards in a method that conforms to CWLA standards and includes best practice guidelines.
- b) By including the audit and management service unit, the Division will be able to rely on the experience and expertise of these staff to provide documentation and justification on how the Arizona specific standards are developed. The Division will also incorporate the vast knowledge which exists within its own staff to document why the Arizona standards were developed and how the case practice in Arizona is better measured using the standards that will be developed out of this process.

DES COMMENTS REGARDING FINDING 2: PAGES 23 THROUGH 27

Finding 2, Recommendation 1:

The Division should revise its training curriculum to include additional practical classroom exercises for the computerized case management system, writing court reports, making referrals for services, and conducting interviews.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation is being implemented.

As part of the Department's practice improvement process for the Training Institute, the comments from CWTI's trainee evaluations, the Division's Case Review Process, and the Division's Continuous Quality Improvement Process are used to modify and upgrade the CWTI curriculum and delivery of training.

Using the information gleaned from the Division's review and analysis of the trainee evaluation forms, in addition to an ongoing analysis of the pre-training and post-training test results, the Division made modifications to the initial curriculum and process.

- The Case Planning curriculum has been redesigned, and is now being trained by a team. In addition, the training provides more hands-on use of the social services computer program used for documentation of case management activities.
- A tool was developed to assist new and current case managers on the concurrent case planning process.
- Plans are underway to implement forensic interviewing in both case management core and ongoing training. This training will assist case managers in increasing their skills in interviewing children and adults.
- The forensic training is also being designed to assist with documentation and report writing.
- Training staff have been reassigned to curriculum that better meets their training expertise.

Finding 2, Recommendation 2:

The Division should continue to take steps to ensure that the field portion of the training is implemented consistently statewide.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation is being implemented.

The DES Division of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) statewide Management Team will continue to assure that trainees are engaged in activities that assist them in practicing the concepts and knowledge imparted in the classroom. The DCYF Training Supervisors have developed a comprehensive list of "field work activities" which are expected of case manager trainees to perform during field days/weeks in both urban and rural Arizona communities.

The full implementation of this recommendation is contingent upon supervisors and case managers statewide having manageable workloads in order to attend to the learning needs of new and current staff.

Finding 2, Recommendation 3:

The Division should continue to use its exit interview surveys to assess why new case managers are leaving and develop strategies for addressing poor retention of new case managers.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendations are being implemented.

The DES DCYF conducts exit interviews and surveys with employees who leave the agency to glean information and trends regarding staff retention and turnover. Through analysis of these exit interviews, DES is aware of the primary reasons for staff turnover.

The turnover rate for Child Protective Services case managers was 23.5% on 12/31/02. Even though the turnover rate decreased to 17.96% on 6/30/03, the children and families whose case manager did leave the Agency still experience a significant negative effect due to case manager turnover. Children and families establish and build upon a “trust” with their designated case manager. This trust and relationship greatly assists in expediting permanency for children, thus, reducing the amount of time a child spends in foster care. When there is a change in a family’s case manager (staff turnover), there are many times breaks in the continuity and progress of the case and court activities necessary for achieving the child’s case plan goal. The family must re-build a trust and working relationship with the new case manager. It is unfortunate for the children and families, as case manager turnover often results in the “life” of a case being extended.

PLEASE NOTE: *The 23.5% and 17.96% turnover rates only include child protective service case managers who leave state service. These percentages do not take into consideration the many child protective services case managers that accept a promotional opportunity within DES or accept employment with another state agency.*

DES will continue using the information gleaned from exit interviews and surveys to further enhance our strategy for addressing staff recruitment and retention issues. Several of the primary reasons for staff leaving the Agency are the following (according to exit interviews reviewed):

- low salaries;
- the feeling of not being “valued” by the agency and community;
- the frustrations of dealing with meager resources and services to support families and children; and
- The lack of a progressive salary structure provided to most employees in private and public sector “career” positions.

Finding 2, Recommendation 4:

The Division should continue with its plans to revise its training evaluation forms. In doing so, the division should:

- a. Make certain that trainees are informed of the importance of their feedback for ensuring an effective training program and are strongly encouraged or required to provide feedback.
- b. Consider collaborating with the Arizona State University School of Social Work to help revise its forms.
- c. Examine using additional mechanisms to evaluate its new case manager trainee program, such as obtaining feedback from new trainees' supervisors and mentors through either questionnaires or focus groups.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendations are being implemented.

- a) The Division consistently reinforces to trainees the importance of their candid input regarding the format and curriculum of the training provided. DCYF discusses the evaluation forms and specific evaluation items at the beginning of the training. This aids trainees in their focus during the classroom sessions. DCYF uses the information obtained from trainee evaluation forms for improvements and changes in the training program. In addition to having the trainees complete an evaluation form immediately after completing the CWTI, DES also asks the trainees to complete an evaluation survey after three months of field employment. The information gleaned from this post-training evaluation provides excellent feedback regarding the usefulness of the training when on-the job.
- b) The Division has greatly enhanced our collaborations with the Arizona State University School of Social Work. The DES and ASU partnership has benefited and expanded our advanced education program (Masters of Social Work Program) for staff, in addition to providing our Division and staff with consultation and technical assistance from many of the University professors. Our collaborations with the University's School of Social Work includes a review of forms for several of our program areas.
- c) Supervisors, mentors, and others have a voice and ability to comment on training through the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Process, the training work group, advisory group, and monthly administrative meetings. In October 2003, the DES added the use of focus groups of recent CWTI graduates to further enhance our evaluation process.

Finding 2, Recommendation 5:

To ensure that the Division complies with the legislative mandate regarding not assigning caseload duties to trainees, it should:

- (a) Establish a written policy that prohibits trainees from being assigned as the primary or only case manager on a case, and clarifies that trainees may be assigned case tasks only for training purposes.
- (b) Ensure that all appropriate individuals are informed of this policy.

- (c) Develop and implement a mechanism or process to routinely monitor its trainees' work assignments.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and a different method of dealing with the finding will be implemented.

- a) For the most part, trainees in the CWTI are not designated as the primary or only case manager on a case; however, under close supervision and monitoring, the Division believes that certain case managers in the CWTI are qualified to perform case management duties. Frequently, the Division hires and enrolls in the CWTI child protective services case managers that are new to Arizona, however, have many years of previous child protective services experience. These staff are viewed as highly experienced and qualified to perform case management functions under close supervision and monitoring while completing the CWTI. The Division also relies upon this group of experienced and qualified CWTI participants to assume case management function due to our resource limitations and staffing shortages.

In order for these case managers to expeditiously receive case-specific information and alerts through the Division's automated system, their system's profile must be designated as "primary" case manager; however, as previously stated, their duties and responsibilities are closely supervised and monitored.

In addition to the staff referenced above, the Division will specify that other trainees may be assigned specific case tasks as an on-the-job supplement to their current training curriculum. The carrying-out of certain case activities is considered an integral part of core training and adult education.

Many national experts concur that the best and most appropriate way to train our workforce is to have trainees carry a small workload under close supervision with careful oversight attention to learning needs. This caseload should be gradually increased in accordance with the individual's proficiency in carrying out their duties.

- b) The above methodology and process will be conveyed to the Division's Management Team. It is essential that classroom training is supplemented by actual field work, performed under close supervision and monitoring.
- c) The Division's Management Team will develop/enhance a process that will better assure that a trainee's work assignments are within the appropriate scope of work, and closely supervised.

DES COMMENTS REGARDING FINDING 3: PAGES 29 THROUGH 31

Finding 3, Recommendation 1:

The Division should determine an appropriate supervisor-to-case manager ratio for Arizona by assessing and documenting workload factors impacting its supervisors, such as turnover and staff experience level.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented, contingent upon appropriate resources.

The DES DCYF acknowledges that an appropriate case manager-to-supervisor ratio is essential for stabilizing workload issues and providing supervisors with the time needed to support and mentor case managers. To effectively provide the case management services necessary for optimal child welfare and child protective services, the supervisor-to-case manager ratio must be realistic.

The Department requested and received detailed information from the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) regarding a supervisor-to-case manager ratio. The ratio recommended by the CWLA is one-to-five, which is one supervisor for five case managers. While we would like to implement this ratio throughout Child Protective Services in Arizona, due to resource and funding limitations, we feel that a one-to-six ratio (supervisor to case manager) is more feasible at this time.

Finding 3, Recommendation 2:

Once the Division has determined an appropriate supervisor-to-staff ratio for Arizona, the Division should:

- (a) Explore the feasibility of reallocating existing supervisors positions within the districts to ensure that all districts meet the approved standards; and
- (b) Determine if any new positions could be funded from its existing budget.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and, wherever feasible, the recommendation will be implemented-- contingent upon available resources.

- a) The DES DCYF routinely assesses the feasibility of reallocating case manager and supervisor positions from one office/area to another. Predominately in the urban areas, as populations significantly grow in an area, the staffing composition for the office(s) in that area is reviewed. This can result in a supervisor-to-case manager ratio exceeding a one-to-six ratio. Due to the great distance between many offices in the rural areas, it is not practical to have a supervisor and case managers in every office. It is more efficient allocation of resources to have one supervisor provide oversight and leadership for more than one office. This can result in a supervisor-to-case manager ratio which is under a one-to-six ratio.

Even using the above-mentioned staffing management processes, the critical need for additional support staff, case managers, and office space remains.

- b) The DES DCYF continuously assesses the use of current funding for needed resources. Requests for additional direct service and supervisory positions for child protective services are for positions that are not currently funded through the existing budget appropriation.

The Auditor General's Report indicates that many supervisors throughout the state are "carrying cases". This observation appears to further support the need for additional staff.

Finding 3, Recommendation 3:

The Division should take steps to fill vacant supervisor positions.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented as resources become available.

DES is aware of the ongoing need to recruit and retain CPS supervisors and consistently tries to expeditiously fill every vacant supervisory position. Barriers such as the enormity of the workload, job-related stress, inability to pay "time-and-one-half" overtime compensation, and the lack of a progressive salary system has resulted in an insufficient pool of staff who is interested in becoming supervisors. Due to the high volume workload, experienced case managers can earn greater annual compensation as a case manager than through promotion to a supervisor. (Supervisors are not eligible for the time-and-one-half hourly overtime compensation that case managers earn when the work week exceeds 40 consecutive work hours.)

Finding 3, Recommendation 4:

The Division should develop and implement strategies for increasing CPS supervisor retention, including continuing the accreditation process through the Council on Accreditation.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation will be implemented as resources become available.

A current and ongoing focus of DES DCYF is staff retention, both at the supervisory level and the case management level. The present salary structure and range, combined with the high level of educational degree requirements many times poses a barrier to our ability to retain qualified supervisors.

DES DCYF has taken the following measures to improve the retention and training of supervisors:

- The entire Supervisory Core Curriculum and Training was rewritten and implemented in December 2002. However, due to budget constraints, training classes were placed on hold and resumed in September 2003. During this interim period, the DES DCYF continued to examine the curriculum, increase the number of trained trainers, and enhance the delivery of classroom content.
- The National Resource Centers have committed to working with Arizona on a workload analysis process, which has tremendous potential for supervisors and the case managers regarding workload management, family strengths assessments, and matching resources to family needs. This work will commence in early 2004.

- The Division also established a supervisory workgroup whose members are selected by their colleagues to serve one year terms and functions as a sounding board for training needs, training plans and works to put suggestions into practice
- We have already delivered Management for Effective Leadership in many of our Districts and we are now working on how to reinforce those leadership concepts and implement them throughout the Division.

Finding 3, Recommendation 5:

The Division should deliver a comprehensive training program to new and existing CPS supervisors to ensure they are equipped with the appropriate level of skills to complete their job. To do so, the Division should:

- a. Ensure the consistent delivery of the supervisor core curriculum to newly promoted CPS supervisors.
- b. Continue to use its supervisor workgroup to identify ways to improve the supervisory training.
- c. Develop a centralized continuing education program specifically focused on the CPS supervisor's professional developmental needs.

DES Response:

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

- a) The Division has rewritten and reformatted the CPS Supervisor Core Training Program. Through input received by management, staff, training advisory committee members, and etc., the CPS Supervisor Core Curriculum addresses the issues, responsibilities, and duties of the newly promoted supervisor in a consistent delivery structure and format. Policy, approval, oversight, and quality assurance issues are addressed, as relevant to the supervisory role, in addition to personnel, legal, and leadership knowledge and expectations.

We are pleased to have received favorable comments from the participants of Supervisor Core Training regarding the curriculum and delivery of the training.

- b) As stated above, the input of many interested parties is used in developing and revising the curriculum used for Supervisor Core Training. Input from workgroup members, management team, continuous quality improvement teams, and advisory groups are used in assessing curriculum content.
- c) The Division is continuously pursuing advanced education programs and trainings for supervisors. The Division has strengthened our partnerships with Arizona State University and the University of Arizona, and is continuing to bring national child welfare experts to Arizona in an effort to provide continuing education to staff and supervisors.

The Division is pleased to have implemented training curriculum regarding "Effective Leadership" and "Developing a High Performance Organization". This continuing education curriculum greatly benefits supervisors and is rated well by the attendees.

DES COMMENTS REGARDING FINDING 4: PAGES 37 THROUGH 41

Finding 4, Recommendation 1:

The Division should enhance concurrent case planning within its new case manager training to include the assessment tool that should be used to help determine whether concurrent case planning is appropriate. In doing so, it may want to review the curriculum developed by Lutheran Community Services Northwest.

DES Response:

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

The DES DCYF is assessing the concurrent case planning training and assessment tools that are used in training and providing in the ACYF Policy Manual, both as policy and as an Assessment Tool (ACYF Policy Manual Exhibit 9). The policy and tool are now provided to new case managers as part of training.

As part of our current collaborations with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the DCYF is being provided with technical assistance on the concurrent case planning training and assessment tools used by agencies such as Lutheran Community Services Northwest, the National Resource Center on Permanency, and the National Resource Center on Family-Centered Practice. The Division welcomes the opportunity to review curriculum and tools used throughout the country.

Finding 4, Recommendation 2:

The Division should provide additional statewide training on concurrent case planning to all existing case managers and supervisors, and ensure that they attend this training.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation is being implemented.

During May 2001, Concurrent Case Planning Training was provided for direct service staff statewide, in three (3) locations. In Phoenix, 90 staff attended this training; in Tucson, 85 staff attended, and in Flagstaff, 60 staff attended the training. This training was coordinated with national experts, through a federally-contracted National Resource Center. The DES DCYF has incorporated the concepts of this training into the CWTI Case Manager Core Training.

The DES DCYF will continue to provide concurrent case planning training to current direct service staff during the current and upcoming year. We will use various means of adult education training, such as Computer-Based-Training (CBT) and Video-Tape training to educate staff on concurrent case planning. Video-tape training has received favorable comments from Agency staff as they can view the video at unit meetings, pause the tape, discuss the content, role play, and continue the video until completion.

Finding 4, Recommendation 3:

The Division should continue to seek technical assistance from the national resource centers to develop and conduct concurrent case planning training for existing staff.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation is being implemented.

The Department is continuing our collaborative efforts with our federal child welfare partners, including experts from National Resource Centers. Conference calls, on-site training presentations, and correspondence between DCYF and the National Resource Centers have occurred throughout this calendar year, with future sessions already scheduled.

The DES DCYF has recently been recognized by our federal partners as being innovative, as we “combined” the expertise of three national resource centers in developing our policy, training, and tools. The three resource centers offered expertise in family-centered practice, permanency and foster care, and child maltreatment.

Concurrent case planning is a difficult concept for many case managers to implement, and as such, the Department plans to continue emphasizing this concept in future trainings. The Division plans on using the skills of current staff who are familiar with the concepts of concurrent case planning to assist in the training.

Finding 4, Recommendation 4:

The Division should provide information on concurrent case planning to stakeholders such as assistant attorneys general, foster home recruitment agencies and juvenile court judges.

DES Response:

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

During September 2003, the DES DCYF provided training to Arizona's juvenile court judges during a statewide forum near Tucson, Arizona. Positive feedback was received from the juvenile court judges regarding this training.

The Division plans on providing information regarding concurrent case planning to the Assistant Attorneys General and appropriate contract providers.

Finding 4, Recommendation 5:

The Division should continue to research and apply other best-practice strategies that increase permanency.

DES Response:

The finding of the Auditor General is agreed to and the audit recommendation is being implemented.

The DES DCYF is continuing to research and apply other best-practice strategies in an effort to increase permanency for children in out-of-home placement. DES DCYF has established a working relationship with an excellent network of nationwide child welfare experts, and benefits from ongoing consultation with this network regarding best-practice issues.

Performance Audit Division reports issued within the last 12 months

02-03	Department of Economic Security—Kinship Foster Care and Kinship Care Pilot Program	02-12	HB2003 Children’s Behavioral Health Services Monies
02-04	State Parks Board—Heritage Fund	02-13	Department of Health Services—Office of Long Term Care
02-05	Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System—Member Services Division	03-L1	Competitive Electric Metering, Meter Reading, and Billing and Collections
02-06	Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System—Rate Setting Processes	03-01	Government Information Technology Agency—State-wide Technology Contracting Issues
02-07	Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System—Medical Services Contracting	03-02	Registrar of Contractors
02-08	Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System—Quality of Care	03-03	Water Infrastructure Finance Authority
02-09	Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System—Sunset Factors	03-04	State Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers
02-10	Department of Economic Security—Division of Children, Youth and Families, Child Protective Services	03-05	Department of Economic Security—Child Protective Services—Foster Care Placement Stability and Foster Parent Communication
02-11	Department of Health Services—Health Start Program	03-06	Arizona Board of Appraisal
		03-07	Arizona State Board for Charter Schools
		03-08	Arizona Department of Commerce

Future Performance Audit Division reports

Arizona Tourism and Sports Authority

HB2003 Behavioral Health Services Monies for Adults with Serious Mental Illness