

Arizona Department of Child Safety

Young Adult Program

Initial Followup of Special Audit Report 24-106

The July 2024 Department of Child Safety (Department) special audit on its young adult program found that the Department has implemented some extended foster care (EFC) success coaching program requirements but needs to improve its program planning and contractor monitoring, and has not consistently developed youth transition plans or systematically evaluated the young adult program's performance, limiting its ability to ensure youth successfully transition to adulthood. We made **16** recommendations to the Department.

Department's status in implementing 16 recommendations

Implementation status	Number of recommendations	
 Implemented	1 recommendation	
 In process	13 recommendations	
 N/A	No longer applicable	1 recommendation
 Not implemented	1 recommendation	

We will conduct a 24-month followup with the Department in calendar year 2026 on the status of the recommendations that have not yet been implemented.

Recommendations to the Department

Chapter 1: Department has implemented or is implementing several Extended Foster Care (EFC) success coaching program requirements and should make some process improvements to help

1. Develop and implement a written program implementation plan for the EFC success coaching program to ensure the Department meets its goals for referring all eligible youth in EFC to the EFC success coaching program and that contractors hire an adequate number of coaches to provide services, including establishing steps to meet its goals and facilitate program implementation, specifying staff roles and responsibilities for implementing the steps, identifying timelines for when steps will be initiated and completed, and revising the plan, as needed.

- ▶ Status: **Implementation in process.**

The Department developed a written program implementation plan for the EFC success coaching program in October 2024. Our review of this plan found that it includes program goals and steps for implementing these goals, and steps and descriptions for initial planning, provider training, referral actions, hiring EFC success coaches, and program monitoring and evaluation. The plan also includes timelines for when these various steps will be initiated and completed, and the staff tasked with completing the steps. We also found that the Department has completed many of its initial action steps, including planning meetings, preparing teams, and onboarding coaches. As of January 2026, the Department reported completing all action steps in its plan with the exception of items it performs on a continuing basis, such as providing weekly updates on the hiring and availability of coaches to accept new referrals and monitoring the completeness of EFC documentation uploaded in Guardian, the Department's case-management system. Finally, the Department reported that as of October 2025, EFC contractors have hired 67 success coaches, exceeding its staffing goal of 65 success coaches, and is in the process of hiring 9 more coaches. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation during our next followup.

2. Further revise and/or develop and implement written procedures for overseeing and monitoring the success coaching contractors to ensure they meet contractual and EFC success coaching program requirements, including procedures for ensuring success coaches report accurate and consistent information and do not engage with youth prior to completing required training.

- ▶ Status: **Implementation in process.**

The Department updated its EFC success coaching fidelity-monitoring plan in March 2025 to require biannual site visits of the 5 coaching contractors providing EFC success coaching. Additionally, the updated fidelity-monitoring plan requires monitoring of the 5 coaching contractors to include the use of a standardized review tool to assess transition plan quality, random file sampling to review performance measures and contract compliance, and procedures for ensuring success coaches report

accurate and consistent information. However, the fidelity-monitoring plan does not include procedures for ensuring success coaches do not engage with youth prior to completing required training. According to Department documentation, the Department completed its initial biannual visits and monitoring of the 5 coaching contractors using its March 2025 fidelity-monitoring plan in November 2025. In its report on these visits and monitoring, the Department indicated that the 5 coaching contractors had made improvements in meeting contract requirements and regularly updating transition plans. Additionally, the Department has developed a separate written plan to monitor the implementation of its coaching fidelity plan for monitoring the EFC success coaching program's staffing levels.

Although the Department reported that its staff monitor each coach's assigned youth and the number of active youths they serve, the Department's monitoring procedures do not require verification that coaches are maintaining caseloads at or below the contractual maximum of 20 youth. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation during our next followup.

- 3.** Establish and implement a process to periodically evaluate the written procedures and/or guidance for overseeing and monitoring success coaching contractors and revise them as needed.

► Status: **Implementation in process.**

The Department has developed draft written policies and procedures that include a process for periodically evaluating the written procedures and/or guidance for overseeing and monitoring success coaching contractors and anticipates finalizing the draft policies and procedures in March 2026. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation during our next followup.

- 4.** Work with Arizona State University (ASU) to establish the expectations for its evaluation of the EFC success coaching program and amend the contract to reflect these expectations, as necessary.

► Status: **Not implemented.**

Effective July 1, 2025, Laws 2024, Ch. 217, repealed the statutory requirement for the Department to contract with a public university to evaluate the EFC success coaching program. Prior to the repeal of this requirement, the Department had already contracted with ASU to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vendor's delivery of the EFC success coaching program, and as of November 2025, this evaluation was in process. Despite the repeal, the Department will complete the initial contracted evaluation and ASU's final outcome report is due in June 2026.

However, the Department reported that as a result of the repealed requirement to contract with a public university for an evaluation of the EFC success coaching program, it opted not to implement our recommendation to establish additional expectations for the evaluation and to reflect those expectations in its contract with ASU. By not establishing expectations, the Department risks that ASU's work may not

provide helpful information regarding the success coaching program's effectiveness, which could limit its ability to make future program improvements. The Department also reported it will not continue to contract with ASU to evaluate the EFC success coaching program after it receives ASU's final outcome report. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation during our next followup.

5. Develop and implement a written plan to monitor ASU's EFC success coaching program evaluation contract, including assigning staff responsibility for monitoring contract requirements, verifying ASU has met expectations, and time frames for doing so.

- ▶ Status: **Implemented at 18 months.**

As explained in recommendation 4, Laws 2024, Ch. 217, repealed the statutory requirement for the Department to contract with a public university to evaluate the EFC success coaching program. Although the Department reported it will no longer contract with ASU after ASU completes the current evaluation and issues its report, the Department has developed a written action plan to monitor ASU's EFC success coaching program contract. The plan includes steps and time frames for conducting monthly check-in meetings with ASU, developing a monitoring checklist, and conducting midyear and final reviews of ASU's performance. From January 2025 to October 2025, the Department conducted 8 monthly check-in meetings with ASU and intends to continue these check-ins through the receipt of ASU's final evaluation report in June 2026.¹

6. Update and implement written guidance to ensure the quality review committee (Committee) follows applicable requirements of Laws 2023, Ch. 141, including confirming youth meet eligibility requirements and that youth have a case and transition plan that supports the youth's identified goals.²

- ▶ Status: **Implementation in process.**

The Department has developed EFC quality review policies that require the Committee to identify and verify youth's EFC eligibility, maintain accurate and up-to-date youth records such as case and transition plans, and complete reports in accordance with Department policies and State and federal requirements. Our review of the June and September 2025 EFC quality review reports found that they contained information as required by Department policy, such as reporting on person-centered case and transition plans, housing stability, and education. However, Department policies and the reports do not address all areas required by Laws 2025, Ch. 241, such as reporting on health insurance coverage for young adults in the EFC program and mentoring opportunities. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation during our next followup.

¹ The Department did not have a monthly check-in meeting in July 2025.

² Although the requirements of Laws 2023, Ch.141, were repealed, Laws 2025, Ch. 241, reinstated these requirements.

7. Request information from the EFC quality review committee and the chair of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC) to update performance measures in required quarterly reports.

► Status: **Implementation in process.**

In December 2024, the Department requested information from the Committee regarding performance measures for its required quarterly reports. The Committee recommended 3 new performance measures related to the youth enrolled in the EFC success coaching program focused on education progress, housing stability, and employment. The Department incorporated the education progress and housing stability performance measures into its June 2025 and September 2025 quarterly reports to the JLBC. Additionally, the Department added the Committee-recommended employment performance measures to its September 2025 quarterly report. The Department also reported adding a program engagement/participation measure to its EFC database but determined that it needs at least 2 full 6-month review cycles of data before the measure can be included in the quarterly reports. As of January 2026, the Department has collected some data related to program engagement/participation measures but reported that data collection is ongoing. Finally, the Department reported requesting additional information from the JLBC to update performance measures in required quarterly reports but as of December 2025, had not received a response from the JLBC regarding any additional recommendations for the reports. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation during our next followup.

8. Adopt rules to implement Laws 2023, Ch. 141.

► Status: **No longer applicable at 18 months.**

Effective July 1, 2025, Laws 2024, Ch. 217, repealed Laws 2023, Ch.141, including the requirement to adopt rules and the EFC success coaching program. Although Laws 2025, Ch. 241, reinstated the EFC success coaching program, it did not include a requirement for the Department to adopt rules.

Chapter 2: Department has not consistently developed youth transition plans as required by federal law and Department policy, which may impact youths' successful transition to adulthood

9. Develop transition plans for each youth in its care starting at age 14 and finalize transition plans for these youth during the 90 days before they turn 18 years old, or 21 years old for youth in extended foster care, as required by federal law and Department policy. Youths' transition plans should include specific long-term goals for successfully transitioning to adulthood and identify short-term steps with measurable completion time frames and relevant resources to help the youth achieve their long-term goals, consistent with the plans' purpose, Department guidance, and recommended practices.

► Status: **Implementation in process.**

To help ensure the Department develops a transition plan for each youth in its care within required time frames, the Department has developed a draft transition-planning tool for developing transition plans, but the tool does not include some recommended elements and has yet to be finalized. Specifically, the tool identifies various objectives and/or goals for youth transitioning to adulthood that should be included in their transition plans. Although not identified as long-term goals or short-term steps, these objectives and/or goals include developing skills related to social connections, such as communication skills and boundaries, the basics of rent and preparing to care for a home, and personal care skills. However, the tool does not identify how staff will measure completion time frames or consistently include relevant resources needed to help the youth achieve the objectives and/or goals specified in their transition plans. By not including this information in youths' transition plans, youths' ability to identify needed actions and resources to help them successfully transition to adulthood could be impacted. The Department reported finalizing the transition planning tool in September 2025 and providing it to all contracted coaches and caseworkers in December 2025. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this tool and development of transition plans for each youth in its care during our next followup.

- 10.** Develop and implement a written action plan that outlines key steps it will take to help ensure that its staff develop transition plans for youth in its care as required by federal law and Department policy, including associated completion deadlines for each step. Its written action plan should include steps and deadlines for:
 - a.** Reviewing its transition planning policies, procedures, and guidance to identify and implement needed revisions to its transition planning processes.
► Status: **Implementation in process.**

The Department has developed a written action plan that includes various steps to help ensure its staff develop transition plans for youth in its care as required by federal law and Department policy. These steps include reviewing and revising transition-planning policies and procedures and developing transition-planning training and coaching for case workers and supervisors, monitoring processes, and tracking tools. Additionally, each step in the action plan includes deadlines and the applicable staff responsible for implementing each step. The action plan steps and the Department's status in implementing the steps are as follows:

- The plan required Department staff to review transition planning-related policies, procedures, and guidance, and develop recommendations for revisions to these policies, procedures, and guidance. The written action plan further required supervisory review and approval of recommended revisions and then revising the policies accordingly. As of December 2025, the Department reported conducting its review and determining that no updates were needed to its policies and procedures but identified needed updates to its guidance. These included changes to its guidance in the areas of transition plan resources, transition-planning management, and youth goals and activities.

- The plan includes steps for developing, scheduling, and providing training on transition-planning policies, procedures, and guidelines to Department caseworkers and supervisors. In an October 2025 workshop, the Department provided training to its supervisors that addressed State, federal, and Department transition-planning requirements and the process and tools available to assist with youth transition plan development. As of January 2026, the Department has provided transition-planning training to groups of case workers in September, November, and December 2025 and has scheduled additional training for the end of January 2026.
- The plan requires the Department to develop a quality assurance process and conduct monthly reviews of transition plans. Specifically, the written action plan requires the Department to develop procedures and tools to evaluate transition plans for accuracy, quantifiable objectives, and the identification of support, services, and resources a youth needs by December 2025. Additionally, beginning in January 2026, the plan requires the Department's quality assurance staff to conduct monthly random samples of transition plans and provide feedback on transition plan compliance with federal regulations and Department policy to its case workers and their supervisors. However, the written action plan does not specify that the quality assurance process ensures that transition plans identify short-term steps with measurable completion time frames and relevant resources for achieving the objectives.
- The plan also requires the Department to develop a tool to track the status of transition plans, identify obstacles in transition plan development, and monitor transition plan completion rates by the end of February 2026.

Finally, although the Department's written action plan does not include steps for leveraging and/or expanding the use of its existing resources to help improve its transition-planning processes, the Department reported leveraging its existing resources to further improve these processes. This includes engaging staff with expertise in transition planning to help provide training on its transition planning processes and providing information on transition planning to case-management supervisors during regularly scheduled quarterly meetings. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation during our next followup.

- b.** Developing and implementing additional training for caseworkers and their supervisors on transition planning.
 - Status: **Implementation in process.**

See explanation for recommendation 10a.

c. Leveraging and/or expanding the use of its existing resources to help improve its transition-planning processes, such as assigning Department staff with expertise in transition planning to help train and coach its caseworkers and supervisors on developing transition plans and/or to review and revise its transition-planning policies, procedures, and guidance.

► Status: **Implementation in process.**

See explanation for recommendation 10a.

d. Developing and implementing a quality assurance process for monitoring the completion of comprehensive transition plans that are consistent with federal requirements and recommended practices, including ensuring that transition plans include specific long-term goals and identifying short-term steps with measurable completion time frames and relevant resources for achieving those goals.

► Status: **Implementation in process.**

See explanation for recommendation 10a.

e. Developing and implementing a process to track completion of transition plans for all applicable youth in its care, including management reports for supervisors, managers, and Department leadership to monitor transition plan completion rates.

► Status: **Implementation in process.**

See explanation for recommendation 10a.

Chapter 3: Department has not systematically tracked or evaluated the performance of its young adult programming, limiting its ability to ensure youth successfully transition to adulthood.

11. Develop and implement a comprehensive performance measurement system for its young adult programming, including processes for:

- Tracking relevant performance measures, including outcomes, for all components of its young adult programming.
- Developing written procedures for conducting periodic evaluations of young adult programming to assess the extent to which youths currently and formerly in its care benefit from the Department's service array and to identify areas for potential improvement.
- Defining responsible parties and timelines for implementing the comprehensive performance measurement system.

► Status: **Implementation in process.**

In July 2025, the Department created a framework to help develop and implement a comprehensive performance measurement system for its young adult programming

that includes identifying and tracking performance measures, written procedures for conducting periodic evaluations of youth programming, gathering feedback from staff and stakeholders about performance measures, and defining responsible parties and timelines for implementing the comprehensive performance measurement system.

As of October 2025, the Department reported it has begun the process of developing and implementing the performance measurement system, with full implementation anticipated by June 2026. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation during our next followup.

12. Continue to work with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to fully implement the recommendations related to using National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) data to assess and evaluate the Department's young adult programming.

► Status: **Implementation in process.**

The Department contacted DHHS in April 2024, October 2024, and July 2025 regarding DHHS' assessment of how the Department addressed the recommendations made in DHHS' 2018 report using NYTD data to assess and evaluate the Department's young adult programming.³ However, as of October 2025, the Department reported it has not received a response from DHHS. We will further assess the Department's implementation of this recommendation during our next followup.

³ The 2018 report recommended that the Department comprehensively evaluate its NYTD data submission to help determine what services led to improved outcomes for youth. According to the Department's response to DHHS' 2018 report, it reported implementing processes to analyze its NYTD data in conjunction with other data on its young adult programming to help determine what services led to improved outcomes for youth, and examining its NYTD outcome survey administration practices to identify potential improvements for administering the survey.