

Sunset Review

Arizona Foster Care Review Board

Foster Care Review Board has taken steps to improve its processes in response to our 2023 sunset review and can further improve in some key areas, including continuing to solicit judge feedback, timely submitting local board reports, and analyzing parent and foster parent attendance at local board meetings



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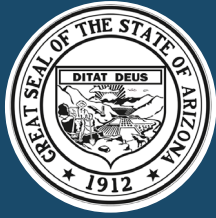
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ARIZONA AUDITOR GENERAL

Lindsey A. Perry, Auditor General

July 14, 2026

Members of the Arizona State Legislature

The Honorable Katie Hobbs, Governor

Administrative Director Byers
Administrative Office of the Courts

Transmitted herewith is a report of the Auditor General, *A Sunset Review of the Arizona Foster Care Review Board*. This report is in response to an October 7, 2025, resolution of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. The performance audit and sunset review was conducted as part of the sunset review process prescribed in Arizona Revised Statutes §41-2951 et seq. I am also transmitting within this report a copy of the Report Highlights to provide a quick summary for your convenience.

As outlined in its response, the Arizona Foster Care Review Board agrees with all the findings and plans to implement all the recommendations. My Office will follow up with the Arizona Foster Care Review Board in 6 months to assess its progress in implementing the recommendations. I express my appreciation to Administrative Director Byers and Administrative Office of the Courts staff for their cooperation and assistance throughout the audit.

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

Sincerely,

Lindsey A. Perry

Lindsey A. Perry, CPA, CFE
Auditor General

Arizona Foster Care Review Board

Sunset Review

Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) has taken steps to improve its processes in response to our 2023 sunset review and can further improve in some key areas, including continuing to solicit judge feedback, timely submitting local board reports, and analyzing parent and foster parent attendance at local board meetings

Audit purpose

To determine whether FCRB implemented outstanding recommendations from our September 2023 sunset review, including improving its local board reports for juvenile court judges, and implementing its plan to recruit new local board members and policies and procedures for handling public complaints; and to provide responses to the 10 statutory sunset factors.¹

Key findings

- ▶ FCRB has taken steps to improve its processes in response to our 2023 sunset review, including making efforts to recruit local board members to fill vacancies and timely investigating all public complaints it received in calendar year 2025. As of June 2026, all 14 recommendations from our 2023 sunset review were in process or implemented.
- ▶ FCRB established a workgroup that made specific recommendations to improve the usefulness of information it provides to judges in local board reports and can improve its annual survey of judges to ensure prior reported issues have been resolved.
- ▶ FCRB finalized a policy to monitor timeliness of local board report submittal to courts but did not submit some priority reports we reviewed within its established time frames.
- ▶ FCRB implemented a plan to improve parent and foster parent attendance at board meetings and plans to conduct an analysis to determine if its efforts are improving attendance.

Key recommendations to FCRB

- ▶ Modify its annual judge survey to solicit feedback on local board report content to ensure previously identified issues are resolved.
- ▶ Revise its policy to include guidance on ensuring timely submittal of rush reports to courts.
- ▶ Continue to track parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews and use attendance data to analyze if its efforts are improving attendance.

¹ The Arizona Auditor General conducted this sunset review of FCRB pursuant to an October 7, 2025, resolution of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. This audit was conducted as part of the sunset review process prescribed in Arizona Revised Statutes §41-2951 et seq.

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INTRODUCTION

The Arizona Auditor General has completed a sunset review of the Arizona Foster Care Review Board (FCRB). This sunset review determined whether FCRB implemented outstanding recommendations from our September 2023 sunset review, including whether it improved its local board reports for juvenile court judges, implemented its plan to recruit new members for local boards, and developed and implemented policies and procedures for handling complaints it receives from the public. It also provides responses to the statutory sunset factors.

FCRB responsible for assisting juvenile court judges in reviewing child dependency cases

FCRB was established in 1978 and consists of a State foster care review board (State board) and 103 local foster care review boards (local boards) responsible for reviewing child dependency cases and a State board to coordinate the local boards' activities.¹

Specifically:

▶ Local boards

Statute requires the presiding juvenile court judge in each county to establish local boards to assist juvenile court judges in their reviews of child dependency cases by reviewing cases of children in out-of-home care at least once every 6 months (see textbox, page 2, for information on out-of-home care and other key terms).² Local board reviews are required by statute to determine what efforts the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) has made to carry out a child's case plan for achieving permanency and provide its findings and recommendations to the juvenile court.³ See textbox, page 3, for more information on what the local boards review and determine during their reviews.

FCRB mission

FCRB is established by Arizona statute to review at least every 6 months the case of each child in foster care. The purpose of these reviews is to determine and advise the juvenile court of the adequacy of efforts and progress toward placement of the child in a permanent home; to encourage and facilitate the return of each dependent child to his/her family whenever possible; to promote and encourage stability in the child's placement; to assist in informing parents and others of their rights and responsibilities regarding a dependent child in foster care; and through the State Board, to make recommendations to the Supreme Court, the Governor, and the Legislature regarding foster care.

Source: Auditor General staff review of FCRB's website.

¹ As of January 2026, the Administrative Office of the Courts reported that there were 103 local boards State-wide.

² Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) §§8-515.01 and 8-515.03.

³ A.R.S. §§8-515.01 and 8-515.03.

▶ State board

Statute establishes the State board to review and coordinate the local boards' activities, such as establishing training programs for local board members.⁴

Key terms

Dependent: Determination by a juvenile court that a child is in need of proper and effective parental care and control. The court must decide on the dependent child's services and placement, including out-of-home care.

Out-of-home-care: The placement and services involving a dependent child who has been removed from their home and placed with a relative, licensed foster home, or in congregate care such as a group home.

Permanency: The permanent, legal placement of a child after the child is removed from their home. The preferred permanency option is safely reuniting the child with family, but other options include adoption, permanent guardianship, or independent living for older children.

Source: Auditor General staff review of statute, juvenile court rules, DCS policy, DCS' website, and the federal Children's Bureau website.

Arizona Supreme Court staff provide administrative support for FCRB

Statute requires the Arizona Supreme Court to employ personnel it deems necessary to carry out the duties of the State and local boards.⁵ Staff from the Arizona Supreme Court, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), assist the State and local boards in fulfilling their responsibilities. As of January 2026, AOC reported that it had 41.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions with 1 vacancy to assist the State and local boards in fulfilling their responsibilities.

Specifically, AOC reported it had:

- ▶ 32.5 FTE (and 1 vacancy) helping facilitate each local board review, such as by gathering and reviewing documentation related to the child's case; notifying DCS and other interested parties of the local board review, such as notifying the DCS caseworker and the child's parents of the date of the local board review and how they can attend; preparing packets of information for board members to review, guiding local boards to ask questions when needed, assisting local boards to formulate their recommendations, answering child welfare questions local boards may have, and taking notes at each local board review; compiling notes from each case at the local board review into a board report; answering phones; and scheduling cases for local board review.
- ▶ 7.0 FTE performing supervisory responsibilities and overseeing FCRB's day-to-day operations.

⁴ A.R.S. §8-515.04.

⁵ A.R.S. §8-515.04(D).

- ▶ 2.0 FTE, which includes AOC Dependent Children's Services Division director's assistant, who performs some work in assisting FCRB such as processing local board member appointments and resignations, and an AOC staff member who is responsible for recruiting local board members.

Local board determinations

During case reviews, the local boards make determinations in 11 different areas to include in findings and recommendations reports (board reports).

These determinations include whether:

- The child's healthcare, developmental, and/or education services are being implemented.
- The child's placement is safe, appropriate, least restrictive, and provides normalcy.
- There is a current, written DCS case plan that includes each case participant's tasks, behavior change goals, and/or services.
- Each case participant, such as the child and/or parent(s), is engaging in tasks, behavior change goals, and/or services outlined in the case plan and/or ordered by the court.
- A successful transition plan from foster care to adulthood has been completed and is being implemented.
- Protocols for identifying, documenting, locating, and providing appropriate responses for children who may be at risk of or are confirmed victims of sex trafficking and/or those who run away from foster care are being implemented.
- Progress is being made toward the primary permanency goal for the child.
- The court-ordered, primary permanency goal for the child is appropriate.
- Continuation of out-of-home placement is necessary for the child.
- There is a documented target date, and ongoing efforts and assessments are being made toward achieving timely permanence.
- Reasonable efforts, or active efforts in an Indian Child Welfare Act case, are being made to implement the permanency goal for the child.

Additionally, board reports indicate which case documents the local board reviewed; which parties attended the case review and information they provided, such as the child's parents or relatives, the child's foster placement, the child's or parents' attorneys, and/or DCS caseworkers; and any local board observations or concerns regarding the case.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of board reports.

State Board and local board members appointed by Arizona Supreme Court and county presiding juvenile court judges

Statute outlines State and local board membership as follows:

▶ State board membership

Statute requires the Arizona Supreme Court to appoint 3 persons to the State board who have knowledge of the problems of foster care.⁶ Additionally, each of Arizona's 15 county's presiding juvenile court judges must appoint at least 1 member from a local board in that county to serve on the State board. As of January 2026, AOC reported that the State board had 21 members, including 3 members appointed by the Arizona Supreme Court and 18 members representing local boards from 15 Arizona counties, and 2 vacancies.⁷

▶ Local board membership

Statute requires each county's presiding juvenile court judge to appoint at least 5 members to each local board they establish within their county.^{8,9} Local board members are volunteers and serve 3-year terms. As of January 2026, AOC reported that there were 103 local boards State-wide, with at least 1 local board in every county and 470 local board members (see Figure 1, page 5, for the number of local boards in each county). AOC reported that local boards conducted a total of 9,187 case reviews of 14,066 children in out-of-home care in fiscal year 2025.¹⁰

FCRB has taken steps to improve its processes in response to issues identified in our 2023 performance audit and sunset review

Our September 2023 FCRB performance audit and sunset review found that FCRB reviewed cases of children in out-of-home care within required time frames, and judges we interviewed reported some information in FCRB's local board reports provided for child dependency case reviews is useful but also reported content and timeliness could be improved to help better advise judges on children's progress toward permanent placement and ensure efficient and effective use of AOC staff and volunteers' time.¹¹ We made 14 recommendations to FCRB, including that it improve the usefulness of the information it provides to judges in board reports by establishing and coordinating the efforts of a workgroup and implementing the workgroup's recommendations to help ensure judges are provided with timely and useful information; establishing a process for regularly soliciting and implementing feedback from judges; and developing a plan to improve

⁶ A.R.S. §8-515.04(A).

⁷ As of January 2026, AOC reported 2 State board vacancies: 1 representative appointed by Greenlee County's presiding judge and 1 representative appointed by La Paz County's presiding judge.

⁸ A.R.S. §8-515.01(A) requires each county's presiding juvenile court judge to establish 1 local board for every 100 children in their county who are placed in out-of-home care. If the number of children in out-of-home care exceeds 100, the presiding juvenile court judge is not required to create an additional board until the number of children exceeds 149.

⁹ A.R.S. §8-515.04(A) allows each county's presiding juvenile court judge to appoint 1 alternate member for each board.

¹⁰ AOC reported that sibling groups may be reviewed in a single case review. Some of the 14,066 children who received a case review in fiscal year 2025 may have been part of case reviews more than once during the fiscal year.

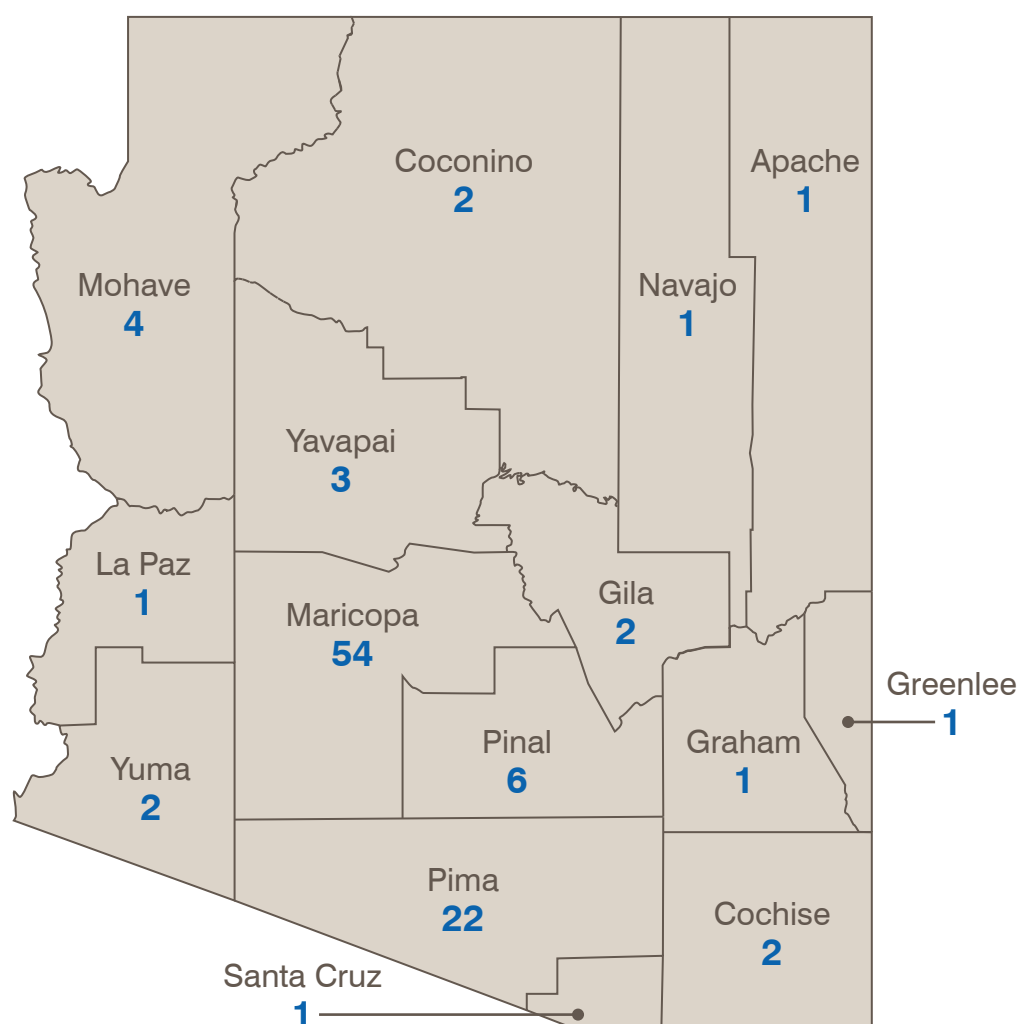
¹¹ Arizona Auditor General report 23-112 *Arizona Foster Care Review Board—Performance Audit and Sunset Review*.

parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews. At the time of our initial followup in September 2024, FCRB had implemented 3 of 14 recommendations.¹²

During this audit, we followed up on the 11 outstanding recommendations and found that FCRB has implemented or partially implemented 7 recommendations and had made progress toward implementing the remaining 4 recommendations. We also identified additional steps FCRB can take to fully implement the remaining 4 recommendations, resulting in new and modified recommendations in Sunset Factor 2 (see pages 7 through 14). For more information on the status of the 11 outstanding recommendations from our 2023 performance audit and sunset review, see Appendix A, pages a-1 through a-7.

Figure 1

As of January 2026, Arizona had 103 local boards with each county having at least 1 local board



Source: Auditor General staff analysis of AOC-provided information.

¹² Arizona Auditor General report 23-112 *Arizona Foster Care Review Board—Initial followup report 23-112*.

FCRB's revenues consisted mainly of State General Fund appropriations, and its expenditures were mainly for payroll and related benefits

FCRB receives most of its revenues from a State General Fund appropriation. As shown in Table 1, in fiscal year 2026, FCRB's estimated revenues totaled approximately \$5.2 million, including approximately \$3.7 million in State General Fund and \$1.5 million in other State and federal monies. In addition, as shown in Table 1, in fiscal years 2024 through 2026, most of FCRB's expenditures or estimated expenditures were for payroll and related benefits, building rent, and other operating expenditures.

Table 1
Schedule of revenues and expenditures

Fiscal years 2024 through 2026
(Unaudited)

Revenues and expenditures	2024 (Actual)	2025 (Actual)	2026 (Estimate)
Revenues¹			
State General Fund appropriations	\$3,419,200	\$3,507,700	\$3,680,500
Other State and federal ²	1,560,410	1,470,777	1,543,771
Total revenues	\$4,979,610	\$4,978,477	\$5,224,271
Expenditures			
Payroll and related benefits ³	\$3,536,053	\$3,650,076	\$3,827,509
Building rent ⁴	960,900	960,900	960,900
Other operating ⁵	287,551	266,918	275,105
Professional and outside services ⁶	3,140	119,945	111,800
Travel	12,215	10,982	10,002
Total expenditures	\$4,799,859	\$5,008,821	\$5,185,316

¹ Revenues reflect FCRB's annual appropriated expenditure authority, and annual allocations of State and federal monies are from AOC. Any revenues that are unused at the end of the fiscal year are not retained by FCRB and revert back to AOC.

² Other State and federal revenues include allocations from AOC to FCRB from the Criminal Justice Enhancement Fund, which consists of penalty assessments for criminal offenses and civil motor vehicle statute violations; Juvenile Probation Services Fund, which consists of State General Fund monies; and a federal Title IV-E Foster Care grant.

³ Payroll expenditures increased in fiscal year 2026 due to salary increases.

⁴ Building rent consisted of a portion of the Phoenix and Tucson building leases that the Legislature appropriated to FCRB.

⁵ Other operating costs consisted of office supplies, postage, translation and interpreter services, and IT-related costs.

⁶ Professional and outside services increased during fiscal year 2025 because it contracted with a software developer to work on multiple IT projects that required developing, implementing, and testing IT applications, such as needing to gather juvenile dependency case data from Maricopa County's court information system for AOC's new IT system. AOC reported this contract will expire on June 30, 2026.

Source: Auditor General staff analysis of the financial activity prepared by AOC for fiscal years 2024 through 2026 and AOC-reported explanations.

Pursuant to A.R.S. §41-2954, the legislative committees of reference shall consider but not be limited to the following factors in determining the need for continuation, consolidation, modification, or termination of FCRB.¹

Sunset factor 1: The key statutory objectives and purposes in establishing FCRB.

As discussed in the Introduction (see page 1), FCRB consists of the State board and 103 local boards as of January 2026. The State board is responsible for reviewing and coordinating the activities of local boards, including establishing training programs for local board members.² The local boards are established by the presiding juvenile court judge in each county for the purpose of assisting judges in their reviews of child dependency cases by reviewing cases of children in out-of-home care at least once every 6 months to determine what efforts DCS has made to carry out a child's case plan for achieving permanency and providing its findings and recommendations to the juvenile court.³

Federal law requires states to review cases of children placed in out-of-home care at least once every 6 months.⁴ A.R.S. §8-847 requires the juvenile courts in Arizona to meet this requirement by holding periodic review hearings for children in out-of-home care at least once every 6 months, and A.R.S. §8-515.03 requires local boards to review cases of children in out-of-home care and provide information to juvenile court judges within 30 days of the local board review.

Sunset factor 2: FCRB's effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling its key statutory objectives and purposes.

FCRB has taken steps to fulfill its key statutory objectives and purposes in 1 area we reviewed and could improve its processes in other areas to better fulfill its key statutory objectives and purposes.

Specifically, FCRB:

- ▶ **Continued its efforts to recruit local board members to fill vacancies, resulting in a decrease in local boards with 1 or 2 members since our September 2024 initial followup**

¹ As part of our work to answer the statutory sunset factor questions, we reviewed FCRB's progress in implementing the outstanding recommendations from our September 2023 performance audit and sunset review of FCRB since our September 2024 initial followup. See Arizona Auditor General reports 23-112 *Arizona Foster Care Review Board—Performance Audit and Sunset Review* and *Arizona Foster Care Review Board—Initial followup report 23-112*.

² A.R.S. §8-515.04.

³ A.R.S. §§8-515.01(A) and 8-515.03(A).

⁴ 42 USC 671(a)(16) and 675(5)(B).

Our 2023 performance audit and sunset review of FCRB found that most local boards did not have 5 appointed members as required by statute, which could result in local board reviews missing additional citizens' perspectives on cases of children in out-of-home care, and we recommended that FCRB develop and implement a plan to prioritize recruiting new members for local boards with 1 and 2 members.⁵ As of our September 2024 initial followup, FCRB had revised its policies and procedures to include a process for prioritizing the recruitment of new members for local boards with 1 and 2 members, and we reported that 13 local boards in the State had 1 or 2 members as of its May and June 2024 vacancy reports.

During this audit, we found that FCRB developed and is in the process of implementing a 26-month recruitment plan to help recruit local board members throughout the State, resulting in a further reduction in the number of local boards with 1 or 2 members since our initial followup. Specifically, as part of its recruitment plan, FCRB first prioritized recruiting local board members for counties that had a high vacancy rate and/or any local boards with 3 or more vacancies. FCRB then shifted to focus its recruitment efforts on any other local boards with vacancies. As part of the recruitment plan, FCRB generates monthly reports of vacancies across all local boards in each county. The plan also outlines its specific recruitment efforts, such as publishing press releases, posting on social media, and encouraging current local board members to share by word of mouth.

According to FCRB's January 2026 vacancy reports, of the 103 local boards in the State:

- 67 boards had 5 members.
 - 35 boards had 3 or 4 members.
 - 1 board had 2 members.⁶
- **Established a workgroup that considered and made recommendations to improve the usefulness of information it provides to judges in board reports, including developing a new report format and soliciting feedback from judges about the new format through an annual survey, but could improve its annual survey to ensure prior issues judges reported with board reports have been resolved**

During our 2023 performance audit and sunset review, most judges we interviewed reported that some information in the FCRB's board reports were not useful or could be improved. For example, some judges indicated that local board recommendations were not useful or that some information in board reports was outdated, which could impact their usefulness.⁷ To address these issues, we recommended that FCRB establish and coordinate the efforts of a workgroup to consider other states' practices and assess and

⁵ A.R.S. §8-515.01(A) requires that local boards consist of at least 5 members, and Ariz. R. P. Loc. Fos. Care Rev. Board 1 requires at least 3 board members to be present for a review to occur unless the local board receives special permission to conduct a review with 2 members.

⁶ According to this local board's calendar year 2026 attendance sheet, in January 2026, a substitute member from another local board assisted with the board's January 2026 review to ensure 3 board members were present, in accordance with FCRB rules. Additionally, according to the attendance sheet, 2 new members were appointed, and as of February 2026, this board had 4 members.

⁷ Fifteen of 25 interviewed judges indicated that local boards' answers to standard determinations were either not helpful or only helpful when the answer was no, and 5 of 25 interviewed judges indicated that some local board recommendations were not useful.

make recommendations regarding the board report format, the most valuable information that local boards can provide to judges, what frequency to conduct case reviews, and the timeline for submitting board reports to judges after local board reviews. We also recommended that FCRB establish a process for regularly soliciting and implementing feedback from judges, including on board report usefulness in assisting judges with their reviews of child dependency cases. Our September 2024 initial followup found that FCRB formed a workgroup composed of juvenile court judges, local board members, and AOC staff who met multiple times from February to August 2024 and developed a draft for local board reports with form and content changes intended to ensure all juvenile court judges receive information that is important for them to consider during dependency hearings. Additionally, the workgroup developed various recommendations regarding processes for informing the juvenile court of local board reviews and regularly soliciting and implementing feedback from juvenile court judges who did not participate in the workgroup.

During this audit, we found that the workgroup finalized its recommendations in September 2024, which included establishing the new board report template that addressed feedback from judges who participated in the workgroup. For example, the new board report template includes the status of FCRB's prior recommendations to DCS and the next scheduled court hearing date, which is information that the prior board report template did not include. FCRB began implementing the new board report in October 2025.⁸

Additionally, the workgroup determined that FCRB should solicit feedback from judges by sending an annual survey. FCRB sent its first annual survey in November 2025, which generally solicited judge feedback about the format of the new board report. The results of the survey were discussed with judges during the January 2026 Committee on Juvenile Courts (COJC) meeting.⁹ According to the survey results, 22 of 55 judges, or 40%, responded to the November 2025 survey, and the survey results were generally positive. Specifically, the judges generally agreed that the format of the new board report template is easier to review compared to the prior board report template.

For example, of the responding judges:

- 95% agreed that the board's findings are summarized in a manner that gives the judges a quick visual summary.
- 95% agreed that recommendations being separated into sections based on to whom they are directed gives the judges the ability to identify which recommendations are relevant to them.
- 100% agreed that the addition of an interested party attendance grid provides the judges a quick summary of how and if an interested party was invited to the board meeting and how they participated.

⁸ According to FCRB, it began using the new report format in October 2025 when its new IT system for all juvenile court information was implemented.

⁹ The COJC is an entity composed of juvenile court judges, court staff, and members of the public who discusses juvenile court matters. Additionally, the COJC assists in developing and implementing policies intended to address access to the courts and the efficiency of court operations.

In addition, FCRB reported that the survey deliberately did not solicit input on the usefulness of completed board reports to judges because at the time of the survey, FCRB had been using the new template for approximately 1 month, so some judges may not yet have had the opportunity to receive and use a completed report for a case that used the new template. As a result, FCRB has not yet determined whether some of the issues judges had reported during the 2023 performance audit and sunset review have been resolved. For example, 1 judge we interviewed in the 2023 audit had indicated that board report recommendations were not always useful because they included duplicative information found in other reports, such as the DCS court report and the Court Appointed Special Advocate report (see Sunset Factor 3, pages 15 through 16, for more information on potential duplication between board reports and Court Appointed Special Advocate reports). Additionally, 15 of 25 judges we interviewed in the 2023 audit indicated that local boards' answers to standard determinations were either not helpful or only helpful when the answer was no. FCRB reported that it plans to update its November 2026 survey to solicit judge feedback about the content of the board reports.

Further, 2 of 14 questions in the November 2025 survey were open-ended—which are questions that do not limit responses to predetermined options and allow respondents to provide a response in their own words—and 1 of 14 questions was multiple choice and allowed respondents to select “other” and leave comments.¹⁰ According to the Pew Research Center, survey responses to open-ended survey questions can better reflect the respondents' views, which may not always align with the predetermined options offered to survey respondents to answer multiple-choice questions.¹¹ Of the remaining 11 questions, 3 requested background information from the judges, such as their county and how long they have heard dependency cases, and 8 questions had predetermined answers to select, such as agree or disagree, and did not allow comments to further explain answers.¹² For example, the survey asked judges to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how strongly they agree or disagree that the child(ren) information section in the new board report template is concise and displays relevant information but did not offer respondents the ability to provide further explanation of their answers, such as commenting on information they felt was either relevant or irrelevant. FCRB reported that it anticipates editing the questions each year based on feedback received, including when it develops its November 2026 survey. Similarly, FCRB plans to discuss the survey results with judges during the first COJC meeting in calendar year 2027.

¹⁰ The 2 questions that were open ended asked the judges if there was anything FCRB could do to add more value to the report or if there were any unique things happening in their county that FCRB should know about or how FCRB could help the judges.

¹¹ Pew Research Center. (n.d.). *Writing Survey Questions*. Retrieved 2/19/2026 from <https://www.pewresearch.org/writing-survey-questions/>

¹² The 8 questions with predetermined answers that did not allow comments included 1 yes-or-no question and 7 statements asking judges to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement.

► **Finalized a policy requiring supervisors to monitor staffs’ timeliness for submitting board reports to the courts sooner than 30 days after a board review, but did not always timely submit some reports to the courts we reviewed and could further revise its policy**

Our 2023 performance audit and sunset review found that FCRB lacked written procedures or guidance for supervisors to monitor whether AOC staff were timely submitting board reports that need to be submitted to the courts sooner than the 30 days required by statute because a court hearing was scheduled less than 30 days from the local board review. During our September 2024 initial followup, FCRB had developed a draft policy to require AOC staff supervisors to monitor whether AOC staff were tracking information about and timely submitting local board reports to the courts.

During this audit, we found that FCRB finalized its draft policy in April 2025, requiring supervisors to monitor whether AOC staff track information about and timely submit “rush” reports to the courts at least 1 week before the next court date (see textbox for definition of “rush” reports). If the court date is less than 48 hours after the board review, FCRB policy states its goal is to provide the report to the court prior to the hearing day and time.

Rush report definition

According to FCRB policy, a board report is considered a rush report if the scheduled court date is set to occur within 30 days of when the local board reviews the case.

Source: Auditor General staff review of FCRB policy.

However, our review of data for all 12 rush reports from 4 local board reviews held between January 18, 2026 and February 14, 2026, found that AOC staff did not submit 3 of these rush reports to the courts at least 1 week before the court date.^{13,14} Instead, AOC staff submitted the reports to the courts on the day of the hearing, 1 day prior to the hearing, and 4 days prior to the hearing, respectively, increasing the risk that the judges were not provided with timely information to assist them in reviewing the child’s dependency case. For example, several judges who participated in the workgroup reported they generally prepared for a court hearing a few days before the scheduled hearing, and 25 of 28 judges interviewed during our 2023 audit reported they reviewed board reports prior to the court hearing.

FCRB reported the 3 rush reports were untimely submitted to the court because an AOC staff member did not meet performance expectations. Further, FCRB provided documentation to demonstrate that the staff member’s supervisor was aware of the rush report deadlines, monitored the staff member’s progress to submit the rush reports before the court hearings, and subsequently reminded the staff member about the upcoming deadlines. However, the supervisor did not take any further action to ensure the reports were submitted 1 week prior to the hearing, such as reassigning the work or providing

¹³ We judgmentally selected 4 local boards—2 of 50 in Maricopa County and 2 of 22 in Pima County—based on which boards conducted the most case reviews between January 18 and February 14, 2026.

¹⁴ The local board reviews associated with these 3 reports were held between 13 and 18 days prior to the court date.

assistance to the staff member. According to FCRB, at the time this incident occurred, AOC was transitioning between 2 IT systems, which added additional stress and time to complete tasks in its overall processes for completing and submitting reports, and may have contributed to the untimely submission of these 3 rush reports. Although FCRB's policy requires supervisors to monitor whether AOC staff are tracking information about and timely submitting board reports to the courts, it does not include guidance on what supervisors should do if a board report will not meet the required deadline or staff are at risk of a late report submission to the courts, such as reassigning the work to another staff member to help ensure timely submittal of reports. According to FCRB, once it has fully transitioned to its new IT system, it plans to provide supervisors with additional guidance on how to handle these situations when possible.

► **Manually compiled DCS responses to local board recommendations for 4 counties and plans to use automated reports to analyze DCS responses State-wide beginning in July 2026 using its new IT system**

Our 2023 performance audit and sunset review found that FCRB did not have a process to compile State-wide information on and review DCS' planned implementation of all its local boards' recommendations to identify common reasons why DCS does not plan to implement certain recommendations. For example, recommendations to DCS can include recommendations that the DCS case manager establish a realistic case plan target date, document it in a progress report, and forward the progress report to FCRB prior to the next review, or recommendations that the DCS case manager request a change to the child's permanency goal based on the facts of the case. We recommended that FCRB develop and implement a process to compile DCS' responses to its recommendations and assess the impact and usefulness of and improve its recommendations to DCS. As of our September 2024 initial followup, FCRB had met with DCS to discuss collecting data on whether DCS plans to implement local board recommendations.

During this audit, we found that FCRB manually tracked DCS responses to FCRB recommendations on a spreadsheet for 4 counties—Maricopa, Gila, Cochise, and Coconino—from September 2023 to August 2025 for 75 local board review cases.^{15,16,17} According to the spreadsheet, during this time frame, FCRB found that DCS disagreed with 4.5% of the recommendations in Maricopa County, and the most common reason was disagreement with the local board's recommendation regarding the target date for permanency.^{18,19} According to FCRB, it stopped this manual tracking in October 2025 because doing so was time consuming for AOC staff.

¹⁵ FCRB reported that it tracked DCS' responses for Maricopa, Gila, Cochise, and Coconino Counties and not other counties because it wanted to test the feasibility of manually tracking DCS' responses to its recommendations.

¹⁶ The responses were not consistently tracked across the entire time period. For example, FCRB did not track any DCS responses in Maricopa County from February 2024 to September 2024.

¹⁷ Each case can have multiple recommendations for DCS. For the 75 cases, FCRB made 234 recommendations to DCS.

¹⁸ The target date is the date when FCRB believes permanency can be achieved for a child.

¹⁹ In all 6 cases where there was disagreement, FCRB stated the target date for permanency was unrealistic and recommended that DCS identify a realistic target date. DCS disagreed for different reasons in these 6 cases, such as stating they did not believe the legal requirement was met to change the case plan or stating that case plans, which includes a target date, is reassessed at every 6 months or as ordered by the court, in line with DCS policy, and a new target date would be determined at that time if necessary.

Since October 2025, FCRB has continued to take steps to facilitate receiving DCS responses and plans to begin tracking the responses in a new IT system. Specifically, we found that when FCRB updated its local board report in October 2025, it included a section to more clearly identify and number its recommendations to DCS to facilitate receiving a response from DCS on whether it agrees with the local board's recommendations or plans to not implement them.²⁰ Further, in October 2025, AOC's IT division implemented a new IT system that FCRB reported it plans to use to collect DCS responses and run automated reports to analyze how many recommendations DCS disagreed with and the reasons why. According to FCRB, as of October 2025, it has begun to manually input all DCS responses into this new IT system, but the IT system does not yet have the capability to generate the automated reports. FCRB reported that this report generation capability is expected to be available in July 2026. By compiling this information State-wide for all local board recommendations made to DCS, FCRB would have information to identify common reasons why DCS does not plan to implement its recommendations. FCRB could then assess the impact and usefulness of its recommendations to DCS, including working with DCS to discuss disagreements and identify potential solutions, to timely return children, find permanent plan arrangements for all children, and discourage unnecessary changes in placement.

► **Has implemented a written plan to improve parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews, but has not yet established a baseline attendance rate or conducted an analysis to determine if its efforts are improving attendance**

During our 2023 performance audit and sunset review of FCRB, 9 of 25 interviewed judges indicated that statements made by parent and foster parents who attend local board reviews were the most useful information in board reports, but we found that few reports contained these statements because parents and foster parents did not attend the reviews.²¹ Further, we found that although AOC had started implementing some initiatives for improving parent and foster parent attendance, it had not developed a written plan for improving parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews or developed a baseline attendance rate that it could use to determine whether its efforts were improving performance.

To address these issues, we recommended that FCRB develop and implement a written plan for improving parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews, including establishing a baseline rate and conducting additional analysis to determine if its efforts are improving attendance. During our September 2024 initial followup, we found that FCRB developed and began implementing a written plan for improving parent and foster parent attendance as of November 2023. Further, although FCRB tracked interested parties that attended local board reviews in each county, its attendance counts did not specifically identify the number of parents or foster parents who attend local board reviews. As a result, FCRB lacked the information needed to establish a baseline attendance rate for

²⁰ According to A.R.S. §8-515.03, DCS is required to provide the local boards with a written notice within 10 business days of receiving the recommendations on whether it plans to accept or not implement the local board's recommendations.

²¹ During our 2023 audit, we reviewed 158 board reports from local board reviews held on 2 days in June and July 2022 and 4 dates in February 2023 and found that approximately 94% lacked statements from the child's parent(s) and approximately 73% lacked statements from the child's foster parent(s) because the parents or foster parents did not attend these local board reviews.

parents and foster parents to assess the effectiveness of its planned initiatives. FCRB reported at the time that it planned to develop a process to specifically track parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews by the end of fiscal year 2025.

During this audit, we found that FCRB updated its written plan in calendar years 2025 and 2026 for improving parent and foster parent attendance and outlined additional initiatives, such as a plan to implement a text reminder system for upcoming local board reviews for interested parties, encouraging parents' attorneys to invite them to board reviews, and reaching out to additional agencies that support parents to provide them with the FCRB flyer.²² Further, FCRB reported it began tracking parent and foster parent attendance in October 2025. However, FCRB stated it identified and is addressing calculation errors in its parental attendance rate data and has not yet determined a baseline attendance rate to assess and determine the effectiveness of its written plan. FCRB reported it will finish correcting the calculation errors in its parental attendance rate data by April 2026.

Recommendations to FCRB

1. Further modify its annual survey to solicit feedback from judges who hear dependency cases, including incorporating more open-ended questions and/or providing respondents with the opportunity to provide explanations for their answers, to solicit input on the board report content and usefulness to ensure prior identified issues have been resolved.
2. Establish a process for implementing feedback received from judges.
3. Revise and implement its policy for supervising AOC staffs' report submittal timeliness to include guidance on the actions supervisors should take when staff are at risk of or have not met the required time frame for submitting rush reports to the courts, such as a procedure for expediting the transmittal of the report to the court as soon as possible.
4. Continue to compile State-wide information on whether DCS plans to implement its local boards' recommendations.
5. Review the common reasons why DCS does not implement the local boards' recommendations and assess the impact and usefulness of and improve its recommendations to DCS, including working with DCS as needed.
6. Continue to track data on parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews, and use the attendance data to establish a baseline attendance rate and conduct an analysis to determine if its efforts are improving attendance.

FCRB response: As outlined in its [response](#), FCRB agrees with all the findings and will implement the recommendations.

²² FCRB reported it has developed a process to verify the accuracy of interested party phone numbers provided by DCS by using DCS data and its remote access to DCS' case management system, Guardian, and that these phone numbers are generally accurate (see Appendix A, page A-4, for more information about FCRB's remote access to Guardian). However, FCRB reported it is continuing to verify and update interested party phone numbers in its IT system to prepare for the implementation of its text reminder system.

Sunset factor 3: The extent to which FCRB's key statutory objectives and purposes duplicate the objectives and purposes of other governmental agencies or private enterprises.

Our review did not identify other governmental or private entities that duplicate FCRB's key statutory objectives and purposes of conducting reviews of child dependency cases to assist juvenile court judges.

We did identify 1 other State program, the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program, responsible for providing some information to the juvenile courts that is potentially duplicative of some information in FCRB's board reports.²³ Specifically, CASA program volunteers are responsible for gathering independent, factual information and assessing if DCS made reasonable efforts to prevent the removal of the child from their home or to reunite the child with their family to help the courts make decisions that are in children's best interests.²⁴ According to data from DCS and the CASA program, as of March 2026, approximately 17% of children in foster care have an assigned CASA volunteer.²⁵

Based on our review of 3 CASA reports from February and April 2026, the CASA reports provided to the courts generally contain:

- ▶ The CASA's perspective and assessment on the child(ren)'s placement, services received, education, and treatment.
- ▶ The CASA's perspective on the progress the parent(s) has made toward achieving permanency plan goals.
- ▶ Statements from CASAs on whether they believe DCS has made reasonable efforts toward the permanency plan.
- ▶ The CASA's opinions and/or concerns based on the information they have gathered.
- ▶ Recommendations to the court, such as whether the child should remain in their current placement or if the case plan should be modified.

In contrast, as discussed in the Introduction (see page 3), local boards are required to provide information to the juvenile courts about DCS' and the families' progress toward establishing permanency for the child(ren), and it does so through the local board reports. The local board reports make determinations in 11 different areas from the local board's perspective and include information not present in CASA reports based on our review, including:

²³ A.R.S. §8-523 establishes the CASA program within AOC, and A.R.S. §8-522 authorizes the presiding judge of a juvenile court to appoint a CASA volunteer for a child who is the subject of dependency action. According to the Arizona State Constitution, the presiding judge in each county exercises general administrative supervision over the court and the judges.

²⁴ A.R.S. §8-522.

²⁵ According to DCS' April 2026 *Monthly Operational and Outcome Report*, as of March 2026, 7,130 children were in foster care. Additionally, according to the CASA program's March 2026 *State of the State Report*, as of March 2026, 1,223 children had an assigned CASA volunteer.

- ▶ Specific statements and/or updates from various parties, including DCS caseworkers, parent(s), and foster parents.
- ▶ Whether the case plan is current.
- ▶ Whether there is a documented permanency target date.
- ▶ Whether progress is being made toward achieving permanency by the target date.

Additionally, although FCRB does not have an oversight role for DCS, the information the local boards are required to provide can help judges exercise oversight and accountability for DCS to ensure it is following all requirements for the family, not just for the individual child. Further, FCRB makes specific recommendations to DCS that DCS is required by statute to indicate whether it plans to accept.

However, information in board reports may also have some overlap with the information provided by CASAs, such as whether the child(ren)'s healthcare, developmental, and/or education services are being implemented and whether children and parents are engaging in tasks and/or services outlined in the case plan and/or ordered by the court. Additionally, in our September 2023 performance audit and sunset review, 1 judge we interviewed indicated that they did not find local board recommendations helpful because they found them to be duplicative of information in other reports, such as the CASA report. Although FCRB reported that judges have indicated that receiving information from various sources ensures they are getting accurate information and provides different perspectives, assessing judges' perspectives on potential duplication between local board and CASA reports in its annual surveys could help FCRB in determining whether additional changes to board reports could be helpful or whether most judges find the information from different perspectives useful for their reviews.

Recommendation to FCRB

7. Solicit feedback from judges who hear dependency cases as part of its annual survey on potential duplication between the information in local board and CASA reports to help it determine whether additional changes to local board reports to eliminate duplicate information would be helpful or whether judges find the information from different perspectives useful for their reviews.

FCRB response: As outlined in its [response](#), FCRB agrees with the finding and will implement the recommendation.

Sunset factor 4: The extent to which rules adopted by FCRB are consistent with the legislative mandate.

A.R.S. §8-515.04(C) provides the Arizona Supreme Court with general rulemaking authority for FCRB so that it may adopt necessary rules related to the functions and procedures of the State board and local boards. However, statute does not require the Arizona Supreme Court to adopt specific rules for FCRB. Staff from the Supreme Court's AOC reported the Supreme Court has established the rules it deems necessary for FCRB to meet its legislative mandate.

Sunset factor 5: The extent to which FCRB has provided appropriate public access to records, meetings, and rulemakings, including soliciting public input in making rules and decisions.

FCRB has provided appropriate public access to meetings we reviewed but has not had any proposed rule changes since our 2023 performance audit and sunset review and does not receive records requests.

Specifically, FCRB:

- ▶ **Has not had proposed rule changes in the last 2 years and thus has not needed to provide public access to rule changes**

Although AOC is not subject to statutory requirements to solicit public input prior to making rules, it must follow Arizona Supreme Court rules that require it to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on proposed rule changes.²⁶ As of October 2025, the Arizona Supreme Court had not proposed any changes to FCRB's rules since our 2023 performance audit and sunset review.

- ▶ **Is not subject to the State's public records laws, but it is required to follow court policies and procedures for responding to subpoenas**

A.R.S. §8-519 states that all records and information in FCRB's possession regarding children and their parents or relatives are deemed confidential, and the FCRB reported that the records it generates goes to the court file. According to the FCRB, any subpoenas for records are directed to DCS or the local county court but that if it receives a subpoena, it follows the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration requirements for responding to a subpoena, including forwarding the subpoena directly to AOC's legal department.²⁷ As of January 2026, FCRB estimated it receives 1 subpoena for records approximately every 2 to 3 years.

²⁶ As a program of the Arizona Supreme Court, FCRB is not subject to requirements in the Arizona Administrative Procedures Act, which includes rulemaking requirements. Instead, when adopting rules, the Supreme Court's AOC must follow Arizona Supreme Court Rule 28, which requires AOC staff to file a petition to adopt or amend a court rule that includes an explanation for the proposed rule change and a draft of the proposed rule change, and provide the public an opportunity to comment on the proposed rule change.

²⁷ According to the Arizona Supreme Court's website, the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration is a compilation of policies and procedures for the administration of all Arizona courts.

► **Complied with the court’s open meeting policy for the meetings we reviewed, including posting meeting minutes that contained the results of all votes taken**

The State board is required to comply with the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration’s open meeting policy (open meeting policy), which was established to promote openness in government to ensure the public has an opportunity to attend meetings of judicial branch entities (see textbox for examples of open meeting policy requirements). We reviewed the meeting materials and minutes for the 2 State board meetings held in February and June 2025 and found that FCRB complied with the open meeting policy requirements we reviewed.

For example, both of the notices and agendas included all items required by the open meeting policy, such as the date, time, and location of the meeting and each item that was going to be discussed. Additionally, the meeting minutes for both meetings had all information required by the open meeting policy, such as the meeting’s date, time, and location, the matters considered, and the results of all votes taken.

Examples of open meeting policy requirements

The open meeting policy requires judicial branch agencies to:

- Post a notice in the State court’s building and on the Arizona Supreme Court’s website at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.
- Include the date, time, and location of the meeting in the meeting notice, including a statement of how a persons with a disability may request reasonable accommodations.
- Include the date, time, and place of meeting; members attending; matters considered; and results of all votes taken in the meeting minutes.

Source: Arizona Auditor General report 23-112 *Arizona Foster Care Review Board—Performance Audit and Sunset Review*.

Sunset factor 6: The extent to which FCRB timely investigated and resolved complaints that are within its jurisdiction.

FCRB has timely investigated complaints it received, in accordance with its complaint-handling policy. Specifically, although statute does not require FCRB to investigate and resolve complaints, as of March 2024, FCRB has established a complaint-handling policy to outline its process to investigate and resolve any concerns complainants may have regarding FCRB. Complainants can use FCRB’s website to submit complaints or contact FCRB via email or by phone. According to FCRB’s policy, AOC staff should review submitted complaints and follow up with the complainant within 2 business days. Our review of all 8 complaints FCRB received in calendar year 2025 found that AOC staff followed FCRB policy by contacting all complainants within 2 business days of receiving the complaints (see textbox, page 19, for more information about these 8 complaints).

FCRB received 8 complaints in calendar year 2025

The 8 complaints FCRB received in calendar year 2025 were mostly regarding DCS' actions and FCRB's meetings and local board reports.

Specifically:

- Three complainants disagreed with actions taken by DCS and/or the courts, such as a complainant who believed DCS and the court ignored FCRB's recommendations. In these complaints, AOC staff provided education on the dependency process or other steps the complainants could take related to their concerns, including referring a complainant to the Arizona Ombudsman Citizens' Aide office (Ombudsman).
- Three complainants contacted FCRB about a specific local board meeting or information included in a local board report. For example, 1 complainant stated that they believed a local board report concerning their child only included information provided by DCS, and another complainant stated they were muted during a meeting and thus were unable to provide statements to the local board. In these complaints, AOC staff provided education on how the complainant could provide information to be included in the local board reports for these meetings.
- One complainant alleged a local board volunteer spoke as an FCRB member outside of an FCRB meeting. For this complaint, AOC staff spoke with the volunteer to discuss their role as a volunteer and how their actions were inappropriate.
- One complainant asked for assistance in reuniting with their children. For this complaint, AOC staff conducted research and identified that the complainant did not have an actively open case with FCRB and that the children had turned 18 years old or were adopted, and referred the complainant to the Ombudsman.

Source: Auditor General staff review of FCRB's complaint files.

Further, although FCRB's policy does not include a time frame or goal for resolving complaints, our review found that AOC staff took between 1 and 4 business days to resolve each of the 8 complaints it received in 2025.

Sunset factor 7: The extent to which the level of regulation exercised by FCRB is appropriate as compared to other states or best practices, or both.

This factor does not apply because FCRB is not a regulatory agency.

Sunset factor 8: The extent to which FCRB has established safeguards against possible conflicts of interest.

FCRB complied with statutory conflict-of-interest requirements we reviewed and has implemented several recommended practices for ensuring compliance with these statutory requirements.

The State's conflict-of-interest requirements exist to remove or limit the possibility of personal influence from impacting a decision of a public agency employee or public officer.²⁸ Specifically, statute requires public agency employees, including local board members, to avoid conflicts of interest that might influence or affect their official conduct.^{29,30} These laws require public agency employees to disclose substantial financial or decision-making interests in a public agency's official records, either through a signed document or the agency's official minutes. Statute further requires that public agency employees who have disclosed conflicts refrain from participating in matters related to the disclosed interests. Finally, A.R.S. §38-509 requires public agencies to maintain a special file of all documents necessary to memorialize all disclosures of substantial interest and to make this file available for public inspection.

Additionally, in response to conflict-of-interest noncompliance and violations investigated in the course of our work, such as employees/public officers failing to disclose substantial interests and participating in matters related to these interests, we have recommended several practices and actions to various school districts, State agencies, and other public entities.³¹ Our recommendations are based on recommended practices for managing conflicts of interest in government and are designed to help ensure compliance with State conflict-of-interest requirements by reminding employees/public officers of the importance of complying with the State's conflict-of-interest laws.³² Specifically, conflict-of-interest recommended practices indicate that all public agency employees and public officers complete a disclosure form annually. Recommended practices also indicate that the form include a field for the individual to provide an "affirmative no," if applicable. These recommended practices also indicate that agencies develop a formal remediation process and provide periodic training to ensure that identified conflicts are appropriately addressed and help ensure conflict-of-interest requirements are met.

²⁸ A.R.S. §38-502(8) defines "public officer" as all elected or appointed officers of a public agency established by charter, ordinance, resolution, State Constitution, or statute. According to the *Arizona agency handbook*, public officers include directors of State agencies and members of State boards, commissions, councils, and committees—whether paid or unpaid.

²⁹ A.R.S. §38-503; Arizona Attorney General. (2018). *Attorney General's agency handbook 8.2.1*. Retrieved 3/10/2026 from <https://www.azag.gov/office/publications/agency-handbook>

³⁰ According to the Supreme Court's Arizona Judicial Code of Conduct, judicial employees are subject to the State's conflict-of-interest law, and its definition of judicial employees includes volunteers.

³¹ See, for example, Auditor General reports 24-211 *A performance audit of Concho Elementary School District*, 21-404 *Wickenburg Unified School District—Conflict of interest, fraudulent schemes, and forgery*, 19-105 *A special audit of the Arizona School Facilities Board—Building Renewal Grant Fund*, and 17-405 *Pine-Strawberry Water Improvement District—Theft and misuse of public monies*.

³² Recommended practices we reviewed included The World Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, & United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2020). *Preventing and managing conflicts of interest in the public sector: Good practices guide*. Retrieved 3/10/2026 from <https://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2020/Preventing-and-Managing-Conflicts-of-Interest-in-the-Public-Sector-Good-Practices-Guide.pdf>; Francis, M. A., et al. (2025). *10 Tips for handling conflicts of interest: The year in governance*. American Bar Association. Retrieved 3/10/2026 from https://www.americanbar.org/groups/business_law/resources/business-law-today/2025-may/10-tips-for-handling-conflicts-of-interest-the-year-in-governance/; Dobie, K. (2023). *Conflict of interest handbook*. The Ethics Institute. Retrieved 3/10/2026 from https://www.tei.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Conflict-of-Interest-Handbook_eBook.pdf; New York State Authorities Budget Office. (n.d.). *Conflict of interest policy for public authorities*. Retrieved 3/10/2026 from <https://abo.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2025/05/conflictinterestpolicy.pdf>; and Kaplan, J. & Walker, R. (2022). *Conflicts of interest: Best compliance practices*. Navex. Retrieved 3/10/2026 from <https://cdn.navex.com/image/upload/v1649889769/resource%20documents/conflict-of-interest-best-compliance-practices-whitepaper-2022.pdf>

During our 2023 performance audit and sunset review, AOC developed a conflict-of-interest process for local board members by developing and distributing a new conflict-of-interest form to all active local board members and requiring them to complete it. We also found that AOC lacked a special file to store all disclosures of substantial interest, as required by statute. We recommended that FCRB implement its new conflict-of-interest form, including developing a process to ensure all local board members sign the form and that it store all substantial interest disclosures in a special file available for public inspection. During our September 2024 initial followup, we found that FCRB adopted a policy and procedure requiring local board members to complete 2 conflict-of-interest disclosure forms upon appointment and reappointment—1 that requires the disclosure of relationships that may influence decision making during a local board review and 1 that requires the disclosure of financial interests. Both of these forms require an “affirmative no,” consistent with recommended practices.

During this audit, our December 2025 review of a random sample of 15 of 302 local board members who were appointed or reappointed since June 2024 found that all 15 local board members had completed both required conflict-of-interest disclosure forms. Additionally, FCRB developed an annual training in January 2025 for its local board members, which also reminds them of the conflict-of-interest requirements and that local board members should complete a disclosure form if their circumstances change, consistent with recommended practices. Further, FCRB’s policy and procedures outlines its process for reviewing completed conflict-of-interest disclosure forms to determine whether a disclosed conflict constitutes a substantial interest and should be stored in a special file available for public inspection, as required by statute. As of February 2026, FCRB reported that it has not received any substantial interest disclosures from local board members as of February 2026, which is consistent with our review of the 15 conflict-of-interest disclosure forms we reviewed of local board members as of December 2025.

Sunset factor 9: The extent to which changes are necessary for FCRB to more efficiently and effectively fulfill its key statutory objectives and purposes or to eliminate statutory responsibilities that are no longer necessary.

We did not identify any changes that are necessary to help FCRB more efficiently and effectively fulfill its key statutory objectives and purposes or to eliminate statutory responsibilities.

Sunset factor 10: The extent to which the termination of FCRB would significantly affect the public health, safety, or welfare.

Terminating FCRB could affect the public's welfare if its responsibilities were not transferred to another entity. Specifically, if FCRB were terminated, it would end the citizen review component of Arizona's foster care review system although the juvenile court would still be statutorily required to review the cases of children in out-of-home care at least once every 6 months to meet the periodic review requirement in federal law.³³ Additionally, as discussed in Sunset Factor 2 (see pages 8 through 10), FCRB has been coordinating and working with judges on how it can improve the information it provides in the local board reports to make it more useful for judges. As a result, if FCRB were terminated, judges would no longer benefit from the improvements that have been made as a result of that process.

³³ A.R.S. §8-847 and 42 USC 671 and 675.

The Arizona Auditor General makes 7 recommendations to FCRB

Click on a finding, recommendation, or its page number to the right to go directly to that finding or recommendation in the report.

Recommendations to FCRB

SUNSET FACTORS	7
1. Further modify its annual survey to solicit feedback from judges who hear dependency cases, including incorporating more open-ended questions and/or providing respondents with the opportunity to provide explanations for their answers, to solicit input on the board report content and usefulness to ensure prior identified issues have been resolved.	14
2. Establish a process for implementing feedback received from judges.	14
3. Revise and implement its policy for supervising AOC staffs' report submittal timeliness to include guidance on the actions supervisors should take when staff are at risk of or have not met the required time frame for submitting rush reports to the courts, such as a procedure for expediting the transmittal of the report to the court as soon as possible.	14
4. Continue to compile State-wide information on whether DCS plans to implement its local boards' recommendations.	14
5. Review the common reasons why DCS does not implement the local boards' recommendations and assess the impact and usefulness of and improve its recommendations to DCS, including working with DCS as needed.	14
6. Continue to track data on parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews, and use the attendance data to establish a baseline attendance rate and conduct an analysis to determine if its efforts are improving attendance.	14
7. Solicit feedback from judges who hear dependency cases as part of its annual survey on potential duplication between the information in local board and CASA reports to help it determine whether additional changes to local board reports to eliminate duplicate information would be helpful or whether judges find the information from different perspectives useful for their reviews.	16

Prior recommendations

FCRB has implemented 7 of 11 outstanding recommendations from our September 2023 performance audit and sunset review

Our September 2023 performance audit and sunset review found that FCRB reviewed cases of children in out-of-home care within required time frames, and judges we interviewed reported some information in FCRB’s local board reports provided for child dependency case reviews is useful, but content and timeliness could be improved to help better advise judges on children’s progress toward permanent placement and ensure efficient and effective use of AOC staff and volunteers’ time.¹ We made 14 recommendations to FCRB, 3 of which FCRB had implemented at the time of our initial followup in September 2024.²

During this audit, we followed up on the 11 outstanding recommendations FCRB had not fully implemented as of our September 2024 initial followup.

FCRB’s status in implementing 11 outstanding recommendations

Implementation status	Number of recommendations
 Implemented	6 recommendations
 Implemented in a different manner	1 recommendation
 No longer applicable—superseded by new recommendation(s)	4 recommendations

FCRB has implemented or partially implemented 7 recommendations. The remaining 4 recommendations are no longer applicable because we identified additional steps FCRB could take to fully implement the recommendations, resulting in new and modified recommendations in Sunset Factor 2 (see pages 8 through 14).

¹ Arizona Auditor General report 23-112 *Arizona Foster Care Review Board—Performance Audit and Sunset Review*.

² Arizona Auditor General report 23-112 *Arizona Foster Care Review Board—Initial followup report 23-112*.

Recommendations to FCRB

Finding 1: Most judges we interviewed reported that board reports provide some useful information for child dependency reviews but identified multiple shortcomings that can impact reports' usefulness

1. FCRB should improve the usefulness of information it provides to judges in board reports by:
 - a. Establishing and coordinating the efforts of a workgroup to determine what changes should be made to board reports and the frequency for holding local board reviews to help ensure that local boards provide judges with timely and useful information to make child dependency case decisions. The workgroup should, at a minimum, comprise judges who hear child dependency cases, local board members, and AOC staff.

► Status: **Implemented at 30 months.**

Our September 2024 initial followup found that FCRB established a workgroup composed of juvenile court judges, local board members, and AOC staff who met multiple times in February to August 2024 to discuss and consider various topics, including the format of and the information found in other states' citizen review board reports, information that judges find the most valuable, and the judges' preferred timeline for receiving board reports after local board reviews. The workgroup had developed a draft for local board reports with form and content changes to ensure all juvenile court judges receive information that is important for them to consider during dependency hearings.

During this audit, we found that the workgroup finalized its recommendations in September 2024, which included establishing a new board report template that addressed feedback from judges who participated in the workgroup. For example, as discussed in Sunset Factor 2 (see page 9), the new board report includes the status of FCRB's prior recommendations to DCS and the next scheduled court hearing date. Additionally, the workgroup considered the timeline for submitting local board reports to the juvenile court but did not recommend any changes to the frequency of local board reviews.³ The workgroup also made recommendations on when reports should be submitted to the courts, concluding that reports should be sent to the court 5-14 days before the hearing and that rush reports should be submitted as soon as possible (see Sunset Factor 2, pages 11 through 12, for more information on rush reports). See recommendation 1c for additional information on FCRB's implementation of the workgroup's recommendations.

³ The workgroup did identify a pilot process to provide the court with information of the initial review by developing a process to provide information to the judges' judicial assistants. However, following the recommendation, FCRB and 2 judges chosen to participate in the pilot process identified the process would create additional work for AOC and court staff and determined not to move forward with the pilot process.

- b.** Working with the workgroup to consider other State practices and assess and make recommendations regarding:

- ▷ The most valuable information that local boards can provide judges.
- ▷ The format for providing information to judges.
- ▷ The frequency with which local boards should conduct case reviews, such as reviewing certain children's cases every 3 months instead of every 6 months or taking other steps to better align the timing of court hearings and local board reviews, including pursuing statutory changes, as necessary.
- ▷ The timeline for submitting board reports to judges after local board reviews.

- ▶ Status: **Implemented at 30 months.**

See explanation for recommendation 1a.

- c.** Implementing the workgroup's recommendations to help ensure that local boards provide judges with timely and useful information to make child dependency case decisions.

- ▶ Status: **Partially implemented at 30 months.**

As discussed in Sunset Factor 2 (see page 9), the workgroup finalized its recommendation for establishing a new board report template that FCRB implemented in October 2025. Additionally, the workgroup made recommendations related to when FCRB should send board reports to the court, including a modified time frame for what is considered rush reports—when a local board review is held within 30 days of a court date. Based on our review of data related to 36 board reports from January 18, 2026 to February 14, 2026, we found that FCRB complied with the workgroup's recommendation for submitting the 24 regular board reports to the court within 5-14 days but did not timely submit 3 of 12 rush reports in line with the workgroup's recommendation and FCRB policy. We made a new recommendation in Sunset Factor 2 related to FCRB submitting rush reports related to its supervisory oversight discussed in recommendation 5 (see Sunset Factor 2, page 14, recommendation 3).

- 2.** FCRB should establish a process for regularly soliciting and implementing feedback from judges who hear dependency cases, including input on board report usefulness in assisting judges with their reviews of child dependency cases.

- ▶ Status: **No longer applicable—superseded by new recommendation(s).**

Our review found that FCRB established a process to regularly solicit feedback from judges who hear dependency cases through an annual survey that it first sent in November 2025. As discussed in Sunset Factor 2 (see page 10), FCRB reported that the November 2025 survey deliberately did not solicit input on the usefulness of completed board reports to judges because at the time of the survey, FCRB had been

using the new template for approximately 1 month, so some judges may not yet have had the opportunity to receive and use a completed report for a case that used the new template. However, as a result, FCRB has not yet determined whether some of the issues we identified in our September 2023 performance audit and sunset review have been resolved. For example, 15 of 25 judges we interviewed in the 2023 audit indicated that local boards' answers to standard determinations were either not helpful or only helpful when the answer was no. FCRB reported that it plans to update the November 2026 survey to solicit judge feedback about the content in the local board reports. We made new recommendations in Sunset Factor 2 that incorporate this original recommendation (see Sunset Factor 2, page 14, recommendations 1 and 2). Therefore, this recommendation is no longer applicable.

3. FCRB should continue to work with DCS to provide feedback on automated information exchange issues and to ensure that the address information for parents and foster parents it receives from DCS for local board reviews is accurate and complete.

► Status: **Implemented at 30 months.**

Legislation enacted in the 2023 legislative session requires DCS to provide case information for local board reviews through direct, remote access to its case-management system. As a result, as discussed in our September 2024 initial followup, in January 2024, AOC signed a memorandum of understanding with DCS that provides AOC staff with remote access to DCS' case management system, Guardian. FCRB reported during our initial followup that since this change, it primarily uses this access to Guardian to obtain documents needed for local board reviews. Further, FCRB also reported during the initial followup that DCS developed and began implementing an automated process for providing it with accurate and complete parent and foster parent information, including address information, in July 2024 and that the accuracy of the information it receives through this process has improved.

During this audit, in October 2025, FCRB reported that it has continued to see improvements in the accuracy and completeness of parent and foster parent information provided by DCS. AOC staff further reported in March 2026 that parent and foster parent information it retrieves from this automated process is generally accurate, but there are some exceptions such as when parents are homeless or move to a new residence and do not inform DCS, or when DCS case managers do not update Guardian with the most recent address information. However, we observed AOC staff in March 2026 perform additional processes to locate the most recent parent and foster parent information, including using their remote access to Guardian and judicial minute entries.⁴ Finally, FCRB reported that interested party phone numbers provided by DCS are generally accurate, which it continues to verify and update within its IT system to prepare for the implementation of a text reminder system (see Sunset Factor 2, page 14, for more information about the text reminder system).

⁴ A minute entry is an official record of what takes place in court that is made available to the parties.

4. FCRB should develop and implement a written plan for improving parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews, including establishing a baseline rate and conducting additional analysis to determine if its efforts are improving attendance.

▶ Status: **No longer applicable—superseded by new recommendation(s).**

Our review found that FCRB updated its written plan in calendar years 2025 and 2026 to improve parent and foster parent attendance and outlined its initiatives, such as a plan to implement a text reminder system of upcoming local board reviews and encouraging parents' attorneys to invite them to board reviews. Our review of FCRB's attendance-tracking spreadsheet found it began tracking parent and foster parent attendance independently from other interested parties in October 2025 but that it identified and was addressing calculation errors in its parental attendance rate data and has not yet determined a baseline rate to assess and determine the effectiveness of its written plan. We made a new recommendation in Sunset Factor 2 that incorporates this original recommendation (see Sunset Factor 2, page 14, recommendation 6). Therefore, this recommendation is no longer applicable.

5. FCRB should develop and implement written procedures or guidance for supervisors to monitor whether AOC staff are tracking information about and timely submitting board reports to the courts that need to be submitted sooner than 30 days after a local board review.

▶ Status: **No longer applicable—superseded by new recommendation(s).**

Our review found that FCRB began implementing a policy as of April 2025 requiring supervisors to monitor whether AOC staff are tracking information about and timely submitting board reports to the courts that need to be submitted sooner than 30 days after a local board review. In February 2026, we observed an AOC supervisor's process for monitoring rush reports in line with the policy requirements to ensure reports are submitted timely, including monitoring a planning application used by AOC staff and tracking the dates of local board reviews, court hearing dates, and when the reports were distributed to the court. However, our review of data related to 12 board reports from January 18, 2026 to February 14, 2026, found that FCRB did not timely submit 3 of 12 rush reports and that 2 of these reports were submitted to the court the day before or the day of the hearing, increasing the risk that the judges were not provided with timely information to assist them in reviewing the child's case. FCRB reported that these 3 reports were untimely submitted to the court due to an AOC staff member not meeting performance expectations and provided documentation to demonstrate that the staff member's supervisor was aware of the deadlines and had monitored the staff member's progress. However, FCRB's policy does not include guidance on what supervisors should do if a board report will not meet a required deadline or is at risk of late report submission. We made a new recommendation in Sunset Factor 2 that incorporates this original recommendation (see Sunset Factor 2, page 14, recommendation 3). Therefore, this recommendation is no longer applicable.

Sunset Factor 2: FCRB's effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling its key statutory objectives and purposes.

6. FCRB should develop and implement a plan to prioritize recruiting new members for local boards with 1 and 2 members.

► Status: **Implemented at 30 months.**

As previously discussed in Sunset Factor 2 (see pages 7 through 8), our review found that FCRB has developed and is implementing a recruitment plan for its efforts to recruit local board members throughout the State. As part of its plan, FCRB first prioritized recruiting local members in counties that had a high vacancy rate and/or any local boards with 3 or more vacancies. FCRB then shifted its efforts to focus on recruiting local members for any vacancies. FCRB's plan outlines its specific recruitment efforts, such as publishing press releases and posting on social media. According to FCRB's January 2026 vacancy reports, of the 103 local boards, there was only 1 board that had only 2 members while 67 local boards were fully filled and 35 local boards had 3 to 4 members. This is an improvement compared to our September 2024 initial followup, which found that 13 local boards had 1 or 2 members as of its May and June 2024 vacancy reports.

8. FCRB should develop and implement a process to compile State-wide information on and review DCS' planned implementation of all its local boards' recommendations to identify common reasons why DCS does not plan to implement the recommendations and assess the impact and usefulness of and improve its recommendations to DCS.

► Status: **No longer applicable—superseded by new recommendation(s).**

FCRB manually tracked DCS responses to FCRB recommendations in 4 counties on a tracking spreadsheet—Maricopa, Gila, Cochise, and Coconino Counties, from September 2023 to August 2025, but it did not consistently track responses across this entire time period.⁵ According to FCRB, it stopped manually tracking in the spreadsheet as of October 2025 because it was time consuming for AOC staff. According to our review of the spreadsheet, FCRB found that DCS disagreed with 4.5% of the recommendations in Maricopa County from September 2023 to August 2025, with the most common reason being disagreement with the local board's target date for permanency.

Subsequently, AOC's IT division implemented a new IT system, and FCRB reported it plans to use this system to collect DCS responses and run automated reports to analyze how many recommendations DCS disagrees with and the reasons why. FCRB reported it manually enters DCS responses to local board recommendations into the system as of October 2025, but the system does not yet generate automated reports and anticipates this feature being available in July 2026. We made new recommendations in Sunset Factor 2 that incorporate this original recommendation (see Sunset Factor 2, page 14, recommendations 4 and 5). Therefore, this recommendation is no longer applicable.

⁵ The responses were not consistently tracked across the entire time period. For example, FCRB did not track any DCS responses in Maricopa County from February 2024 to September 2024.

Sunset Factor 3: The extent to which FCRB serves the entire State rather than specific interests.

- 10.** FCRB should store all substantial interest disclosures, including disclosure forms and meeting minutes, in a special file available for public inspection.

▶ Status: **Implemented at 30 months.**

FCRB's policy and procedures outline its process for reviewing completed conflict-of-interest disclosure forms to determine whether a disclosed conflict constitutes a substantial interest and therefore should be stored in the special file available for public inspection, as required by statute. As of February 2026, FCRB reported it had not received any substantial interest disclosures from local board members, which is consistent with our review of the 15 conflict-of-interest disclosure forms we reviewed of local board members as of December 2025.

Sunset Factor 6: The extent to which FCRB timely investigated and resolved complaints that are within its jurisdiction.

- 12.** FCRB should provide information on its website about how the public can submit complaints and develop and implement policies and procedures for receiving, tracking, and resolving any complaints it receives from the public.

▶ Status: **Implemented at 30 months.**

Our September 2024 initial followup found that FCRB updated its website to include instructions for how members of the public can submit a complaint, such as the types of complaints the public can submit and how members of the public can submit a complaint through an online survey. FCRB also developed a complaint-handling policy as of March 2024 that includes procedures for receiving and tracking complaints. According to FCRB's policy, AOC staff should review submitted complaints and follow up with the complainant within 2 business days. Our review of all 8 complaints FCRB received in calendar year 2025 found that AOC staff followed FCRB policy and initiated contact with all complainants within 2 business days of receiving the complaint. Additionally, although FCRB's policy does not include a time frame requirement or goal for resolving complaints, our review found that AOC staff resolved all 8 complaints within 1 to 4 business days.

Scope and methodology

The Arizona Auditor General has conducted a performance audit and sunset review of FCRB pursuant to an October 7, 2025, resolution of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. The audit was conducted as part of the sunset review process prescribed in A.R.S. §41-2951 et seq.

We used various methods to address the audit's objectives. These methods included reviewing applicable State statutes, Arizona Supreme Court rules, the Arizona Code for Judicial Administration, FCRB policies and procedures, federal law, AOC's website, prior Auditor General reports about FCRB, and local board reports; and interviewing AOC staff who support FCRB.

In addition, we used the following specific methods to meet the audit objectives:

- ▶ To assess FCRB efforts in developing and implementing a recruitment plan for local board members, we reviewed FCRB's 26-month recruitment plan and various documents related to its implementation, including promotional flyers, social media posts, and State-wide member vacancy reports for local review boards.
- ▶ To assess FCRB's efforts to improve the usefulness of information it provides to judges in board reports and its efforts to solicit feedback from judges, we reviewed the board report template that was finalized and implemented in October 2025, including examples of the board report template in use. Additionally, we reviewed FCRB's November 2025 survey and its survey results, including the meeting agenda for the January 2026 Committee on Juvenile Courts meeting where the survey results were discussed. Finally, we reviewed recommended practices for writing survey questions from the Pew Research Center.¹
- ▶ To assess whether FCRB submitted local board reports to the courts in line with FCRB policy and workgroup recommendations, we judgmentally selected and reviewed the date of the board review and the date the local board report was sent to the court from 4 local boards from Maricopa and Pima Counties because these counties review the most cases. Specifically, we judgmentally selected 4 local boards—2 of 50 in Maricopa County and 2 of 22 in Pima County—based on which local boards conducted the most case reviews between January 18, 2026 and February 14, 2026. Additionally, we also observed an AOC supervisor's processes in February 2026 for monitoring whether AOC staff are timely submitting board reports to the courts.
- ▶ To determine FCRB's efforts to continue working with DCS to provide feedback on automated information exchange issues and to ensure that the address information for parents and foster parents it receives from DCS for local board reviews is accurate and complete, we observed AOC staff in March 2026 perform processes to locate parent and foster parent address information, including using their remote access to Guardian and the judicial minute entry.

¹ Pew Research Center. (n.d.). *Writing Survey Questions*. Retrieved 2/19/2026 from <https://www.pewresearch.org/writing-survey-questions/>

- ▶ To assess FCRB's efforts in compiling information on local board review recommendations to DCS in Maricopa, Gila, Cochise, and Coconino Counties, we reviewed and analyzed FCRB's spreadsheet for tracking the number of recommendations provided to DCS, the number of recommendations DCS disagreed with, and the reason for disagreement from September 2023 to August 2025.²
- ▶ To assess FCRB's efforts in developing and implementing a written plan to improve parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews and assessing whether its efforts are improving attendance, we reviewed FCRB's written plans for calendar years 2025 and 2026 and FCRB's tracking of parent and foster parent attendance as of October 2025.
- ▶ To assess the extent to which FCRB's key statutory objectives and purposes duplicate the objectives and purposes of other governmental agencies or private enterprises, we reviewed the Arizona Governor's Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting's Master List of State Programs and 3 CASA reports from February and April 2026.
- ▶ To assess FCRB's compliance with the Arizona Supreme Court's open meeting policy, we reviewed the meeting materials and minutes for 2 State board meetings held in February and June 2025.
- ▶ To assess whether FCRB timely investigated and resolved complaints that are within its jurisdiction, we reviewed FCRB's complaint-tracking spreadsheet and complaint documentation for all 8 complaints that FCRB received in calendar year 2025.
- ▶ To assess FCRB's compliance with State conflict-of-interest requirements and alignment with recommended practices, we reviewed statute and State requirements, recommended practices, and FCRB's conflict-of-interest policy.³ We also reviewed the conflict-of-interest disclosure forms for a random sample of 15 of 302 local board members as of December 2025 that were appointed or reappointed since June 2024. Additionally, we reviewed FCRB's annual training materials and its tracker as of April 2026 of local board members that attended the training. Finally, we reviewed FCRB's tracker as of January 2026 that it uses to assess and monitor disclosures to determine whether they contain a substantial interest.
- ▶ To obtain additional information for the Introduction, we obtained information from FCRB on the number of filled and vacant FTE positions as of January 2026 and the number of State and local board members as of January 2026 and compiled and analyzed unaudited financial information provided by AOC for fiscal years 2024 through 2026. In addition, we

² FCRB reported that it tracked DCS' responses for Maricopa, Gila, Cochise, and Coconino Counties and not other counties because it wanted to test the feasibility of manually tracking DCS' responses to its recommendations.

³ Recommended practices we reviewed included The World Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, & United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2020). *Preventing and managing conflicts of interest in the public sector: Good practices guide*. Retrieved 3/10/2026 from <https://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2020/Preventing-and-Managing-Conflicts-of-Interest-in-the-Public-Sector-Good-Practices-Guide.pdf>; Francis, M. A., et al. (2025). *10 Tips for handling conflicts of interest: The year in governance*. American Bar Association (ABA). Retrieved 3/10/2026 from https://www.americanbar.org/groups/business_law/resources/business-law-today/2025-may/10-tips-for-handling-conflicts-of-interest-the-year-in-governance/; Dobie, K. (2023). *Conflict of interest handbook*. The Ethics Institute. Retrieved 3/10/2026 from https://www.tei.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Conflict-of-Interest-Handbook_eBook.pdf; New York State Authorities Budget Office. (n.d.). *Conflict of interest policy for public authorities*. Retrieved 3/10/2026 from https://abo.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2025/05/conflict_of_interest_policy.pdf; and Kaplan, J. & Walker, R. (2022). *Conflicts of interest: Best compliance practices*. Navex. Retrieved 3/10/2026 from <https://cdn.navex.com/image/upload/v1649889769/resource%20documents/conflict-of-interest-best-compliance-practices-whitepaper-2022.pdf>

also reviewed FCRB-provided information on the number of local boards in each Arizona county as of January 2026.

Our work on internal controls, including information system controls, included, where applicable, reviewing FCRB's policies and procedures and testing FCRB compliance with these policies and procedures, and assessing compliance with statutes. We reported our conclusions on applicable internal controls in Sunset Factors 2, 5, 6, and 8.

We selected our audit samples to provide sufficient evidence to support our findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Unless otherwise noted, the results of our testing using these samples were not intended to be projected to the entire population.

When relying on FCRB-provided data to support our findings and conclusions, we performed certain tests to ensure the data was sufficiently valid, reliable, and complete to meet the audit objectives. Unless otherwise noted, we determined FCRB-provided data was sufficiently valid, reliable, and complete for audit purposes.

We conducted this performance audit of the FCRB in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

We express our appreciation to AOC Administrative Director Byers and AOC staff who support FCRB for their cooperation and assistance throughout the audit.

The subsequent pages were written by the FCRB to provide a response to each of the findings and to indicate its intention regarding implementation of the recommendations resulting from the audit conducted by the Arizona Auditor General.



Supreme Court

STATE OF ARIZONA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

ANN A. SCOTT TIMMER
CHIEF JUSTICE

DAVID K. BYERS
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE COURTS

June 22, 2026

Lindsey Perry, Auditor General
2910 N. 44th St., Ste 410
Phoenix, Arizona 85018

Dear Ms. Perry:

We have reviewed the Arizona Auditor General's performance and sunset audit of the Foster Care Review Board and accept the recommendations made, with our response and comments enclosed, as applicable.

The Foster Care Review Board appreciates the partnership of the Office of the Auditor General and the professionalism of the team assigned to this audit and looks forward to continuing to refine its processes to better serve Arizona's children and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave K. Byers", is written over a horizontal line.

Dave K. Byers

cc: Caroline Lutt-Owens, Dependent Children's Services Division, Director

Sunset factor 2: FCRB's effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling its key statutory objectives and purposes.

FCRB established a workgroup that considered and made recommendations to improve the usefulness of information it provides to judges in board reports, including developing a new report format and soliciting feedback from judges about the new format through an annual survey, but could improve its annual survey to ensure prior issues judges reported with board reports have been resolved.

FCRB response: The Auditor General's finding is agreed to.

Recommendation 1: Further modify its annual survey to solicit feedback from judges who hear dependency cases, including incorporating more open-ended questions and/or providing respondents with the opportunity to provide explanations for their answers, to solicit input on the board report content and usefulness to ensure prior identified issues have been resolved.

FCRB response: The audit recommendation will be implemented.

Recommendation 2: Establish a process for implementing feedback received from judges.

FCRB response: The audit recommendation will be implemented.

FCRB finalized a policy requiring supervisors to monitor staffs' timeliness for submitting board reports to the courts sooner than 30 days after a board review, but did not always timely submit some reports to the courts we reviewed and could further revise its policy.

FCRB response: The Auditor General's finding is agreed to.

Recommendation 3: Revise and implement its policy for supervising AOC staffs' report submittal timeliness to include guidance on the actions supervisors should take when staff are at risk of or have not met the required time frame for submitting rush reports to the courts, such as a procedure for expediting the transmittal of the report to the court as soon as possible.

FCRB response: The audit recommendation will be implemented.

FCRB manually compiled DCS responses to local board recommendations for 4 counties and plans to use automated reports to analyze DCS responses State-wide beginning in July 2026 using its new IT system.

FCRB response: The Auditor General's finding is agreed to.

Recommendation 4: Continue to compile State-wide information on whether DCS plans to implement its local boards' recommendations.

FCRB response: The audit recommendation will be implemented.

Recommendation 5: Review the common reasons why DCS does not implement the local boards' recommendations and assess the impact and usefulness of and improve its recommendations to DCS, including working with DCS as needed.

FCRB response: The audit recommendation will be implemented.

FCRB has implemented a written plan to improve parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews, but has not yet established a baseline attendance rate or conducted an analysis to determine if its efforts are improving attendance.

FCRB response: The Auditor General's finding is agreed to.

Recommendation 6: Continue to track data on parent and foster parent attendance at local board reviews, and use the attendance data to establish a baseline attendance rate and conduct an analysis to determine if its efforts are improving attendance.

FCRB response: The audit recommendation will be implemented.

Sunset factor 3: The extent to which FCRB's key statutory objectives and purposes duplicate the objectives and purposes of other governmental agencies or private enterprises.

Information in board reports may have some overlap with the information provided by CASAs, such as whether the child(ren)'s healthcare, developmental, and/or education services are being implemented and whether children and parents are engaging in tasks and/or services outlined in the case plan and/or ordered by the court.

FCRB response: The Auditor General's finding is agreed to.

Recommendation 7: Solicit feedback from judges who hear dependency cases as part of its annual survey on potential duplication between the information in local board and CASA reports to help it determine whether additional changes to local board reports to eliminate duplicate information would be helpful or whether judges find the information from different perspectives useful for their reviews.

FCRB response: The audit recommendation will be implemented.