

DECEMBER 2023

The 2023 Planning Report for the First SORS Annual 2024 Performance Report of the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency



The 2023 Planning Report
for the First SORS Annual 2024 Performance Report
of the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency

Table of Contents

Letter from the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee Leadership ----- Page 3

Background ----- Page 4

The Federal Lawsuit and the New Jersey Legislative Mandate

The Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS)

The Camden Coalition

SORS' Approach to the Performance Report

Planning Period Activities: July – November 2023 ----- Page 6

SORS Members Gain Deeper Understanding of Their Role and Priorities

SORS Members Gain Greater Familiarity with Child Protective Services Data

SORS Adopts a 2024 Report Template

Data Inventory, Benchmarking and Measurement Time Periods

Projected Implementation Period Activities: December 2023 – December 2024 --- Page 10

Timeline of Activities

Appendix ----- Page 12

Performance Areas

Example of Current Performance Data

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee Members

The Four Pillars Prototype Template

Main Data Sources and Publication Dates

December 1, 2023

The Honorable Christine Norbut Beyer
Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Children and Families
PO Box 729
Trenton, NJ 08625

The Honorable Phil Murphy
New Jersey State Governor
Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

The Honorable Nicholas Scutari
Senate President
New Jersey Senate
67 Walnut Avenue
Clark, NJ 07066

The Honorable Craig Coughlin
Assembly Speaker
New Jersey Assembly
569 Rahway Avenue
Woodbridge, NJ 07095

We are pleased to submit this 2023 Planning Report that describes the 2023 activities of the Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, and its 2024 proposal for the First Annual Performance Report on the Division of Child Protection and Permanency within the New Jersey Department of Children and Families.

In December 2022, the New Jersey Legislature charged SORS with expanded oversight responsibilities through P.L. 2022, c130. It did so in anticipation of termination of federal jurisdiction over New Jersey's child protection system in *Charlie and Nadine H. v. Murphy*. As part of the litigation, a federal monitor with responsibilities for public oversight had been in place for nearly two decades which helped bring about sweeping system reform.

Over the course of many years, numerous administrations and Department leadership focused on a vast array of practice improvements, training and professionalizing the frontline and supervisory staff, financial investments, and allocation of funds to make more resources available for children and families in the community and data transparency.

New Jersey's current child welfare system is vastly different than the one that existed at the outset of the litigation, and improvements to the system resulted in meeting the requirements and performance metrics of the Settlement Agreement and successor agreements and allowed for the end of federal oversight. This is a tremendous accomplishment, and the culmination of nearly two decades of work to bring about positive change for New Jersey's children, youth and families.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or comments about our proposed plan.

Sincerely,

Marygrace Billek
SORS Co-Chair

Lisa Chapland
SORS Co-Chair

Background

The Federal Lawsuit and the New Jersey Legislative Mandate

In 1999, the State of New Jersey and the Division of Youth and Family Services, now known as the Division of Child Protection and Permanency, of the Department of Children and Families, was sued in federal court based on allegations that the State failed to protect children in the state's protective custody from abuse and neglect. In 2003, the parties reached an initial settlement agreement that directed system reform and resulted in federal court oversight and monitoring via an appointed neutral monitor. Subsequent modified settlement agreements in 2006, 2015 and 2022 provided for ongoing oversight and monitoring until the case was dismissed.

In preparation for the federal court dismissing the case, in December 2022, the Governor signed into law P.L. 2022, c130 expanding the responsibilities of the existing Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee (SORS) of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect to annually review DCF's performance in specified areas and make recommendations to improve child protective services. (See the Appendix for the Performance Areas).

In order to achieve the mandate of the legislation, SORS undertook a plan to create and implement a cogent review of the performance measures outlined in the legislation.¹ This 2023 Report describes the activities SORS has engaged in to: (a) assess the availability of data needed to review the Department's performance; (b) develop a Performance Report template, and (c) develop the processes SORS proposes to undertake in 2024 to complete the First Annual Performance Report.

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee

SORS is one of four subcommittees of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. The Task Force's purpose is to study and develop recommendations regarding the most effective means of improving the quality and scope of child protective and preventative services provided or supported by State government, including a review of the practices and policies used by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency.

SORS' responsibility had originally been focused on reviewing staffing levels of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency to develop recommendations regarding staffing levels and the most effective methods of recruiting, hiring and retaining staff within the Division. The state law passed in December 2022 expanded SORS' responsibilities to review, analyze and make recommendations regarding DCF's performance in additional areas regarding children, families, staff and administration, including, for example: the quality of investigations of abuse and neglect; the provision of comprehensive, culturally responsive services to address children's and families' needs; and if children are removed from their families, that they remain in their communities and be placed with or maintain contact with their siblings and relatives.

¹ More specifically, the statute requires SORS to "review the department's performance in the areas identified in this paragraph (1) of subsection c. of this section, and shall issue a report with its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature". Read the statute here: [P.L. 2022, c130](#).

The state law also directed the Task Force to appoint at least 15 members to SORS that meet specific criteria. For example, members must include a representative of a state-based child advocacy organization, an individual who formerly lived in foster care in New Jersey, and an attorney who represents parents involved in child protection services. The Task Force worked with SORS leadership to identify any missing stakeholders from the subcommittee and invite and confirm new members to participate. Consequently, almost one third (5 out of 17) of current SORS members are new to the subcommittee as of spring 2023. (See the appendix for a list of current SORS members). As of this writing, SORS has one vacancy for an attorney representing the indigent, and while SORS' leadership works to recruit this member, three of the attorneys currently on SORS represent families and children who are indigent in their day-to-day work.

Camden Coalition

This summer, SORS retained the Camden Coalition as an independent contractor to help SORS carry out its new oversight responsibilities. Founded in 2002, the Camden Coalition is a multidisciplinary, community-based nonprofit working to improve care for people with complex health and social needs in the city of Camden, across New Jersey, and around the country. The Camden Coalition serves as one of New Jersey's four Regional Health Hubs working with New Jersey's Medicaid office, and other state agencies to expand data-sharing and collaboration among organizations. In addition, the Camden Coalition's National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs seeks to coalesce the emerging field of complex care by bringing together a broad range of clinicians, researchers, policymakers, and consumers who are developing, testing, and scaling new models of team-based, integrated care.

The DCF renewed the Camden Coalition's contract through December 2024 to support SORS in publishing its first Annual 2024 Performance Report.

SORS' Approach to the Performance Report

This 2023 Planning Report is divided into two major sections. The first section describes the activities SORS has been engaged in from June to November 2023 to develop a 2024 comprehensive performance report template. The second section describes the processes SORS proposes to undertake in 2024 and a timeline to complete the First Annual Performance Report.

SORS has made great progress in the last half of 2023 developing a template for its first Annual 2024 Performance Report. This Planning Report describes its progress in detail, and the expected performance template for the 2024 report. It is significant for New Jersey to transition from having a federal monitor provide oversight of the State's child protective services for the last 20 years to having SORS review and report on the state's performance. It is also significant for SORS to transition from reviewing and reporting solely on staffing issues to reviewing and reporting on staffing issues as well as the well-being of children and families and the administration of the Division overall.

The scope of the SORS review will be different from the scope and reporting of the federal monitor. The monitor was directed by the federal court to monitor DCF compliance with a legal settlement agreement, and the SORS is charged with reviewing the performance and staffing

levels of DCF. Although the statute identifies areas of review for the SORS, it also has flexibility in determining its scope and metrics to assess performance. In meeting this different charge, SORS will report on some of the measures the federal monitor reported on, but it has also been directed by the statute to report on new and different measures. Further, SORS is charged with, and is committed to, publishing an Annual Performance Report with data and analysis that is transparent and easy for the public to understand and use. A standard model for a report of this kind does not exist, therefore, SORS is creating a robust roadmap to fulfill its charge, the plan for which is described further below.

It is important to note that child welfare is an evolving field. What was considered best practice two decades ago is not necessarily where the field is today. Over the course of the lawsuit, DCF became a national leader in some of the significant child welfare practice shifts focused on, for example, keeping children with their natural families whenever possible, and when that was not possible, ensuring children could live with kin. As best practices evolve, the metrics that SORS tracks will change; new metrics may be added, and metrics that are no longer relevant or useful to collect will be discarded. Similarly, as continuous quality improvement practices in child welfare and health and human services mature, it is possible that SORS, in consultation with DCF, will adopt new oversight methods and/or join new processes adopted by DCF. This is all to say that child welfare is not a static field or practice, and SORS will adapt its own activities to reflect this in furtherance of its legislative mandate to develop recommendations regarding the Department's performance, staffing levels and the most effective methods of recruiting, hiring and retaining staff within the Division.

Planning Period Activities: July – November 2023

The most important activity for SORS between July and November was to review the various child welfare data sources related to DCF and identify both the metrics it would track for annual public reporting and any quality assurance processes it would undertake on its own or with DCF. The following describes the activities undertaken by SORS to accomplish this.

SORS Members Gain Deeper Understanding of Their Role and Priorities

Camden Coalition staff conducted one on one interviews with all SORS members to further familiarize members with the areas they would be reporting on, to identify which of these areas members deemed priority and to identify any other areas they thought were important to examine.

SORS members identified several over-arching themes essential to integrate into the annual report:

- *Report on the quality of child protective services.* It was important to SORS members to know whether the services provided were appropriate and useful to assist children and families achieve their desired outcomes. Understanding and reporting the number of children receiving specific services and the percentage of children that received the services in a timely manner were also key, but the subcommittee members emphasized the importance of knowing and reporting whether children, parents and staff are getting what they need.

- *Report on the impact of child protective services on different groups of children and families.* Namely, the DCF has acknowledged and reported that there is a disproportionate share of children who are Black and Hispanic involved in child protective services. SORS will report on equity by including more detailed, disaggregated data when available by race, ethnicity, income, gender and gender identity, for example, in the report.
- *Report input and feedback from individuals involved in child protective services such as youth, biological parents, foster parents and staff.* Integrating insights from individuals involved and frontline staff will help contextualize and exemplify the other data in the report.

Among the specific areas SORS has been asked to report on, members identified the following areas as priority:

- The quality of child abuse and neglect investigations and an understanding of how staff differentiate between poverty and child neglect
- The connection families have to relevant, culturally responsive services to address the reasons and factors many families become involved in child protective services, including receipt of public benefits (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families or TANF, child care subsidy, food stamps, etc.), housing, substance use disorder treatment and mental health treatment
- The use of kin placements for children removed from their families
- The quality of interactions and case planning between case workers, children, their families, and other providers
- Ensuring that practices are in place to strengthen and sustain appropriate permanency and adoption placements
- Ensuring that practices are in place for children to safely exit child protective services and not return
- Ensuring appropriate staffing levels and effective staff recruitment, hiring, and retention
- Ensuring appropriate, comprehensive staff training

SORS members also identified several other areas to obtain more information about, and possibly report on, depending on what the research revealed. These areas are listed below. Some of the areas overlap with the priority areas listed above, and some may overlap with the priority areas of the other subcommittees of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. In the case of the latter, SORS will defer to the relevant subcommittee to address the area. In early 2024, SORS will make a final decision about whether to pursue additional research and undertake a special project in any of these areas, and if necessary, secure permission from the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect to do so.

- DCF's Collaborative Quality Review processes (CoQI)
- Children who re-enter child protective services after having been previously discharged

- The availability of key services across the state to address the top needs of children and families (such as public benefits, housing, substance use treatment, mental health services) and utilization of these services
- County-based performance on key child and family measures
- The high share of unsubstantiated reports of child neglect and efforts to divert callers who made those reports to other relevant services

SORS Members Gain Greater Familiarity with Child Protective Services Data

The December 2022 legislation that charged SORS with publishing an Annual Performance Report also established a new composition of SORS' members, and as a result, almost one third of SORS members were new as of spring 2023. Members participated in several activities to further familiarize themselves with and increase their understanding of existing measures, data, and data sources in DCF and the Division of Child Protection and Permanency which included:

- Two educational sessions on the DCF's new Collaborative Quality Improvement processes
- An educational session on DCF's Monthly Commissioner's Report
- One on one discussions between SORS members and Camden Coalition staff about the areas the subcommittee needs to report on
- A half day, in-person planning meeting for SORS members to examine and provide feedback on the data that currently exists to measure the areas SORS needs to report on

Regarding the Collaborative Quality Improvement processes (CoQI), DCF invited SORS members to participate in two program initiatives. One is to participate in the process of parent and youth interviews to learn about their involvement with child protective services. The second initiative includes observing the annual CoQI processes with staff from the Division of Division of Child Protection and Permanency to understand how DCF uses and quantitative data to identify areas for improvement, implement improvement planning processes, and monitor and evaluate progress and success of the plans. At least one SORS member is participating in each of the CoQI initiatives.

Data Inventory, Benchmarking and Measurement Time Periods

In October, SORS members convened for a half day meeting to determine whether relevant and appropriate data were available to measure the areas about which it is expected to report. SORS concluded that the majority of quantitative data currently exists, and that its assessment of qualitative data would necessarily evolve over time as DCF made its new CoQI reports available.

In preparation for this meeting, the Camden Coalition inventoried and reviewed over a dozen data sources recommended by DCF to identify data that aligns with the SORS reporting areas. Many of these areas are similar to federal measures that the New Jersey DCF – and all state child protective agencies – already report to the federal government. These federal performance measures and benchmarks exist to allow a comparison of New Jersey to other states and the nation.

To date, it appears that SORS will secure most of the quantitative data it needs to complete its first 2024 Annual Performance Report from the following sources: the Commissioner's Monthly Report, the New Jersey Child Welfare Data Hub and from federal reports - the Child and Family Services Plan, the Annual Progress and Services Reports, and reports and data related to the Children and Family Services Review.

SORS expects to secure most of the qualitative data for its report from briefing papers DCF will publish in December 2023 and in 2024 as part of its Collaborative Quality Improvement processes. By December 2023, the Department announced it would publish separate papers on investigations of child abuse and neglect, the educational experience of children in child protective services, and the experience of older youth in child protective services.

As stated above, SORS will also interview individuals involved in child protective services such as youth, biological parents, foster parents and staff and include their input and feedback in the Annual Report to provide context and exemplify other data in the report such as information on equity. Further, if SORS does not believe the pending CoQI reports provide sufficient information to assess quality, SORS will confer as a subcommittee whether other ways are needed to secure the necessary qualitative information. The areas that require an assessment of quality are:

- Investigations and assessments
- Safety and risk assessments
- Individualized planning and relevant services, including physical and behavioral health needs
- Continuous reviews and adaptations
- Engagement with youth
- Engagement with parents
- Working with family teams and outside providers
- Ensuring safe and sustained transition from DCF

Each of the data sources are published at different times with different frequency. Consequently, the time periods for the measures SORS will report on will vary according to when the data are available. (See the Appendix for the list of Main Data Sources and Publication Dates). For example, SORS will report on the stability of children's placements in foster care and expects to measure that by reporting the number of children who lived in one or two foster homes within the first 12 months of being removed from their families. This data is reported at the Federal Children's Bureau Child Welfare Outcomes Data Site and is available on an annual basis. SORS will also report on caseworkers meeting with families, and SORS will measure this by reporting on the percentage of families who meet with their caseworker in a timely manner which is reported in the DCF Commissioner's Monthly Report as well as by the quality of the meetings which will be reported in future CoQI briefs. SORS will provide clear information about the source and dates of the data provided in its report.

SORS Adopts a 2024 Report Template

SORS is charged with and is committed to publishing an Annual Performance Report with data and analysis that is easy for the public to understand and use. To that end, SORS organized the areas it needs to report on into three main sections: children and families, staff, and

administration. SORS further subdivided the children and family's section into four subsections or 'Pillars' for ease of reading and understanding. This framing is based on a reporting framework used by the Washington DC Child and Family Services Agency (see the report [here](#)). The pillars are described below, and they represent the sequential phases children experience in child protective services. The descriptions are not a list of definitions of what subject matter each pillar will include, but instead a list of the values and vision of an ideal state each pillar represents. The quantitative and qualitative data will be reported using these divisions, and the quantitative data will be presented in a chart format. (See the Appendix for a prototype of the four pillars chart). The four pillars are:

- 1) Front Door: Child protective services get involved only when families cannot take care of children themselves. Child protective investigations are timely and of high quality. Services and supports are provided to families to safely prevent the use of foster care placement.
- 2) Temporary Placement: Foster care placement is used as a safety intervention temporarily, and only as a last resort. While in care, children are placed in the least restrictive setting, with kinship settings prioritized. Children experience stability and safety in their living situations, and family and community connections are preserved.
- 3) Well-Being: Children in foster care are provided with a nurturing home environment that supports healthy growth and development, good physical and mental health and academic achievement. Services for specific needs of children in foster care and their families are available and of high quality.
- 4) Exit to Permanence: Children exit foster care as quickly as possible for a safe, well-supported, family environment or other planned permanent living arrangements.

Projected Implementation Period Activities: December 2023 – December 2024

Timeline of Activities

SORS will continue to meet regularly over the next year to review and analyze the available data it will use in its report. See the chart below for the projected timeline of SORS' activities in 2024.

2024 Timeline of Activities	
Date	Action
Monthly meetings	Review and analyze available current and baseline data
January - April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Participate in the DCF Collaborative Quality Improvement initiatives * Decide whether to undertake research on a special project * Track publication of data sources and begin inserting the data into the 2024 Annual Performance Report template

May - August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Participate in the DCF Collaborative Quality Improvement initiatives * Continue inserting the data into the Report template and analyze its implications
September 15	Complete first draft of the 2024 Annual Performance Report and distribute to SORS members
October 1	Submit comments and edits to the Camden Coalition
November 1	Complete near final draft of the 2024 Annual Performance Report and distribute to SORS members
November 15	Submit final comments and edits to the Camden Coalition
December 1	<p>Release final Report to the Governor, Legislature and general public</p> <p>Promote the findings and recommendations in the Report</p>

Appendix

Performance Areas

New Jersey law [P.L. 2022, c130](#) directs SORS to report on the following areas – including assessing quality in section (b):

- (a) maintaining a case management information and data collection system that allows for the assessment, tracking, posting or web-based publishing, and utilization of key data indicators with consistent definitions and methodology, along with ensuring the accuracy of published data
- (b) implementing and sustaining a case practice model comprising a continuous set of activities that emphasizes quality investigation and assessment, which model shall include:
 - performing safety and risk assessments;
 - engaging with youth and families;
 - working with family teams;
 - providing individualized planning and relevant services;
 - performing continuous review and adaptation;
 - and ensuring safe and sustained transition from the department
- (c) guaranteeing that the operation of the department's State Central Registry ensures that allegations of child abuse and neglect are received by the department's field offices in a timely manner and investigations are commenced within the required response time identified by the State Central Registry
- (d) providing the most appropriate and least restrictive placements when out-of-home placement is necessary, and in so doing allowing:
 - children to remain in their own communities, be placed with or maintain contact with siblings and relatives, and have their educational needs met;
 - precluding children under age 13 from being placed in shelters;
 - precluding children from being placed in out-of-State behavioral health facilities without written approval from the Assistant Commissioner for the Children's System of Care;
 - and maintaining an adequate number and array of family-based placements to appropriately place children in family settings
- (e) providing comprehensive, culturally responsive services to address the identified needs of the children, youth, and families the department serves, including but not limited to:
 - services for youth age 18 to 21;
 - services for LGBTQI+ youth;
 - mental health, and domestic violence services for birth parents whose families are involved with the child welfare system;
 - preventive home visitation programs;
 - trauma-informed care; and
 - an adequate Statewide network of Family Success Centers
- (f) providing medical care to children and youth residing in resource family care, including:

- appropriate medical assessment and treatment, pre-placement, and entry medical assessments under Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT);
- guidelines, dental examinations;
- up-to-date immunizations;
- follow-up care and treatment and mental health assessment and treatment, where appropriate;
- behavioral health treatment provided in the least restrictive setting for children and youth; and
- evaluating the sufficiency of funding for these medical services

(g) maintaining a comprehensive training program for child welfare staff and supervisors, including specialized training for investigators which training shall include pre-service training covering the case practice model and permanency planning, adoption training, and training on case management systems, and mechanisms for staff completing training to demonstrate competency on required areas of training

(h) making flexible funds available for use by caseworkers in crafting individualized service plans for children, youth, and families to:

- meet the needs of children and families;
- facilitate family preservation and reunification where appropriate;
- ensure that families are able to provide appropriate care for children; and
- avoid the disruption of otherwise stable and appropriate placements

(i) adjusting support rates for resource family care, adoption assistance, and independent living to ensure alignment with the United States Department of Agriculture estimates for the cost of raising a child or adolescent in the urban Northeast, the U.S. Department Housing and Urban Development Fair Market Value for average rent in New Jersey, the Internal Revenue Service estimates for monthly food and household expenses, and other appropriate State and national benchmarks identified by the subcommittee

(j) strengthening and sustaining appropriate permanency and adoption practices for the children and youth the department serves, recognizing that the department's permanency work begins at intake and encompasses the elements of the case practice model

(k) generally beginning the process of preparing a child for adoption and seeking and securing an adoptive placement as soon as the child's permanency goal becomes adoption, but in no case later than as required by federal law; conducting five-month and 10-month placement reviews for children in custody; commencing the adoption process as soon as a diligent search process has been completed and has failed to identify the location of both parents or a suitable family placement; and developing a child-specific recruitment plan for all children with a permanency goal of adoption needing the recruitment of an adoptive family, as well as evaluating the sufficiency of funding for such processes.

Example of Current Performance Data

Note: While SORS currently has access to an extensive amount of quantitative data, which is sampled below, SORS will prioritize the review of qualitative data for the 2024 Annual Report.

Big Picture

At a point in time at the end of 2022, a total of approximately 31,000 children were involved in New Jersey's child protective services operated by the Division of Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P).²

Who are the children?

Of the 31,000 total DCP&P involved children:

- Most children are age 12 or younger: ages 0-5 (34%), 6 –12 (37%) ages 13 – 17 (25%) and ages 18 and over (5%).
- Children of color comprised 69% of all children – almost three times as many children of color as children who were white. Children were Hispanic (34%), Black (31%), white (26%) and another race (4%).
- Children who were Black were involved in DCP&P at a rate more than two times their proportion in the general population (31% and 14% respectively). Children who were white were involved at a little more than half the rate of their proportion in the general population (26% and 44% respectively).³
- Half the children were identified as male and half as female.

Where are the children?

- Most children, 90% (or 28,050) lived at home; 10% (or 2,946) lived in foster care.
- Of the 2,946 children living in foster care, nearly half, or 45%, lived with a family member (kinship care), 43% lived with non-kin, nearly 10% lived in an institution (congregate care) and 2% lived independently on their own.

Why are children involved in child protective services?

- In 2022, just over 3,000 children were identified as maltreated (3,186), and most or 66% were identified as neglected, 14% as sexually abused, 11% as experiencing multiple types of abuse and 9% as physically abused.
- In 2020, among all children involved with DCP&P, parent/caregiver substance use was the top household challenge, followed by parent/caregiver mental health issues, poverty, child mental health issues, and housing challenges.⁴

² All data in this section is from the following source unless otherwise noted. New Jersey Department of Children and Families and the Institute for Families at the Rutgers University School of Social Work. New Jersey Child Welfare Data Hub. [NJ Child Welfare Data Hub | Data Hub \(rutgers.edu\)](https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/103-child-population-by-race-and-ethnicity?loc=32&loct=2#detailed/2/32/false/1095/68,69,67,12,70,66,71,72/423,424)

³ Annie E. Casey Foundation. Kids Count Data Center. Child Population by Race and Ethnicity in New Jersey. 2022. <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/103-child-population-by-race-and-ethnicity?loc=32&loct=2#detailed/2/32/false/1095/68,69,67,12,70,66,71,72/423,424>

⁴ New Jersey Department of Children and Families. 2023 Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR). 2022. Page 136. [2023.APSR.pdf \(nj.gov\)](https://www.nj.gov/children-families/2023-apsr.pdf)

How do children get involved in child protective services?

- In New Jersey, everyone is a mandated reporter. Anyone who has “reasonable cause” to believe that a child has been abused or neglected is required to make a report to the state’s child abuse hotline.⁵
- In 2022, the hotline received nearly 58,000 reports of alleged abuse and neglect representing approximately 91,000 children.
- DCP&P conducted investigations for all 91,000 children. Approximately 3,200 of these children (3.5%), were confirmed maltreated; 96.5% of the children (approximately 88,000) were not found to be abused or neglected.

Detailed Picture: Children Removed from Their Families

- In 2022, 1,523 children were removed from their families.
- New Jersey has the lowest rate of children removed from their families in the nation.⁶ Over the last eight years the total number of children removed from their families decreased by 68% (4,736 children in 2015 and 1,523 children in 2022).
- The share of children who are Black and in foster care in the United States is the lowest it’s been in two decades, yet they are overrepresented relative to the general child population.⁷ Nearly every state has a disproportionate number of Black children in foster care. In New Jersey in 2022, the rate of children who were Black in foster care was four times higher than the rate for children who were white (4.0 and 0.5 respectively).

⁵ An excerpt of the New Jersey mandatory reporter law is on the New Jersey Department of Children and Families website: [DCF | NJ Law](#)

⁶ US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau. Child Welfare Outcomes 2019 Report to Congress. 2022. Page 15. [Child Welfare Outcomes 2019 Report to Congress \(hhs.gov\)](#)

⁷ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Black Children Continue to Be Disproportionately Represented in Foster Care. 2023. [Black Children Continue to Be Disproportionately Represented in Foster Care - The Annie E. Casey Foundation \(aecf.org\)](#)

Staffing and Oversight Review Subcommittee Members

Name	Statutory Category	Affiliation
Amanda Melillo	Representative of a NJ legislator	Office of Sen. Joseph Vitale, 19th Legislative District and Chair of the Senate Health, Human Services Committee
Amy Fischer	Additional Public Member #3	Superior Court of NJ, Monmouth Vicinage
Angie Waters	Additional Public Member #1	Court Appointed Special Advocate of NJ (CASA)
Corinne Lebaron	Representative of a State-wide organization that supports resource and kinship parents	embrella
Garnett Roberts-Batson	Parent who has previously had involvement with DCPD	Parent advocate with lived experience
Gina Hernandez	Representative of a State-based child abuse prevention focused organization	Prevent Child Abuse NJ
Joshua Levy	Parent who has previously had involvement with DCPD	Parent advocate with lived experience
Katie Stoehr	DCF Commissioner or Designee	DCF
Laura Jamet	DCPD Assistant Commissioner	DCF
Linda Porcaro	Additional Public Member #2	Somerset Office of Youth Services
Lisa Chapland (Co-Chair)	Additional Public Member #4	Kinship Resource Parent
Mary Coogan	Representative of a State-based child advocacy organization	Advocates for Children of NJ
Mary Hallahan	Resource family parent who is currently licensed by the State	Foster and Adoptive Kinship Parent
Marygrace Billek (Co-Chair)	County Human Services Director	Director, Mercer County Human Services
Robyn Veasey	Attorney regularly engaged in the representation of parents in child protection matters	Office of the Public Defender
Scout Hartley	Alumni of the State's resource family care system	National Foster Youth Institute/Doctoral Student/Adjunct Professor OCC
Vacant	NJ Office of the Attorney General	
Traci Telemaque	Attorney regularly engaged in the representation of children in out of home placement	Office of the Law Guardian

The Four Pillars

(Note: This is a prototype template. SORS has not yet finalized the breadth and depth of these particular metrics and will do so in early 2024).

#1: Front Door

Child protective services get involved only when families cannot take care of children themselves. Child protective investigations are timely and of high quality. Services and supports are provided to families to safely prevent the use of foster care placement.

Measure	Time Period	Current Value	Previous Value	Federal Performance Measure
Outcome 1: Families stay together safely.				
Investigations of abuse and/or neglect initiated in a timely manner				
Children remain safely in their home				
Individualized planning and relevant services				
Caseworker engagement with youth and families who remain at home				

#2: Temporary Placement

Foster care placement is used as a safety intervention temporarily, and only as a last resort. While in care, children are placed in the least restrictive setting, with kinship settings prioritized; children experience stability and safety in their living situations, and family and community connections are preserved.

Measure	Time Period	Current Value	Previous Value	Federal Performance Measure
Outcome 1: Children and youth are placed with families whenever possible.				
Placement with kin				
Placement with siblings; maintaining an adequate number and array of family-based placements				
Child contact with siblings when not placed with siblings				
Placement of adolescents in kinship, non-kinship, congregate care and independent living				
Child contact with parents				
Children abused and neglected in foster care				
Children under age 13 in shelter				
Outcome 2: Planning for permanency begins the day a child enters child protective services.				
Caseworker engagement with youth				
Caseworker engagement with parents				

Caseworker engagement with family teams				
Commencement of adoption process as soon as a diligent search process has been completed and has failed to identify the location of both parents or suitable family placement				
Children have stability in their living situations				
#3: Well-Being				
Children in foster care are provided with a nurturing home environment that supports healthy growth and development, good physical and mental health, and academic achievement. Services for specific needs of children in foster care and their families are available and of high quality.				
Measure	Time Period	Current Value	Previous Value	Federal Performance Measure
Outcome 1: Children and youth in <u>foster care</u> maintain good physical and emotional health.				
Nurse vacancies and nurse to child ratios in the Child Health Units in the DCP&P Local Offices				
Outcome 2: Children and youth in <u>foster care</u> get an appropriate education and meet expected milestones.				
Children currently in DCP&P custody ages birth to 5 get a timely developmental screening				
#4: Exit to Permanence				
Children exit foster care as quickly as possible for a safe, well-supported family environment or other planned permanent living arrangement.				
Measure	Time Period	Current Value	Previous Value	Federal Performance Measure
Outcome 1: Children and youth leave the child welfare system quickly and safely.				
Time to reunification				
Time to guardianship				
Time to adoption				
Youth who age out of foster care				
Ensure safe and sustained transition from agency - that children do not re-enter child protective services.				

Main Data Sources and Publication Dates		
Sources	Frequency of Publication	Approximate Time of Production
Commissioner’s Monthly Report	Published monthly	On the 15 th of each month for the previous month
Child Welfare Data Hub	Updated quarterly	January - March: available June 30 April - June (includes outcomes data): available Sept 30 July - Sept: available December 31 Oct - Dec (includes outcomes data): available April 30
Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) and related Targeted Plans (Federal report)	Published annually	DCF publishes in Sept./Oct. (after first submitting to the federal government in June)
Children and Families Service Plan (CFSP) (Federal report)	Published every 5 years.	2025-2029 CFSP will be published in September/October 2024 (after submitting to federal government in June and obtaining approval)
Collaborative Quality Improvement (CoQI) Briefs		
Investigations Brief	Published annually	October 2023; 2024 production schedule TBD
Education, Older Youth and CoQI Briefs		December 2023; 2024 production schedule TBD
DCF Annual Reports	Published annually	2019, 2020 and 2021 by December 2023 2022 and 2023 in 2024
Additional Data Sources and Publication Dates		
Additional Data Sources	Frequency of Publication	Approximate Time of Production
DCF Policy Manual	Updated as needed	As needed
YRS and Adolescent Services Website	Updated as needed	As needed
Child Maltreatment Report (Federal report)	Published annually	Published second Jan./Feb. after the end of the federal fiscal year. Example: The federal fiscal year 2021 report was published in Feb. 2023.
Child Outcomes Report (Federal report)	Published annually	Published approx. every 3 years (May-Sept.) after the end of federal fiscal year. Example: The federal fiscal year 2019 report was published Sept. 2022.
Child Outcomes Website (Federal website)	Periodically updated	“As reviewed and analyzed by the federal Children’s Bureau.”
Children and Families Services Review Report (CFSR) (Federal report)	Every 5-8 Years	2025