

# LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

## Department of Children and Families (DCF) Monitoring and Evaluation (2007)

Study Results Focusing on RBA Program Performance Questions  
(Full report at [www.cga.ct.gov/2007/pridata/Studies/PDF/DCF\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.cga.ct.gov/2007/pridata/Studies/PDF/DCF_Final_Report.pdf))

### Scope of PRI Study

- Assess existing internal and external efforts to monitor and evaluate DCF, the state consolidated children’s agency responsible for child protective services, children’s behavioral health, juvenile justice services, and prevention services related to children and families
- Identify ways to make the current accountability system more effective to help DCF improve its performance and meet state goals for children and families

### How Much Did We (DCF) Do?

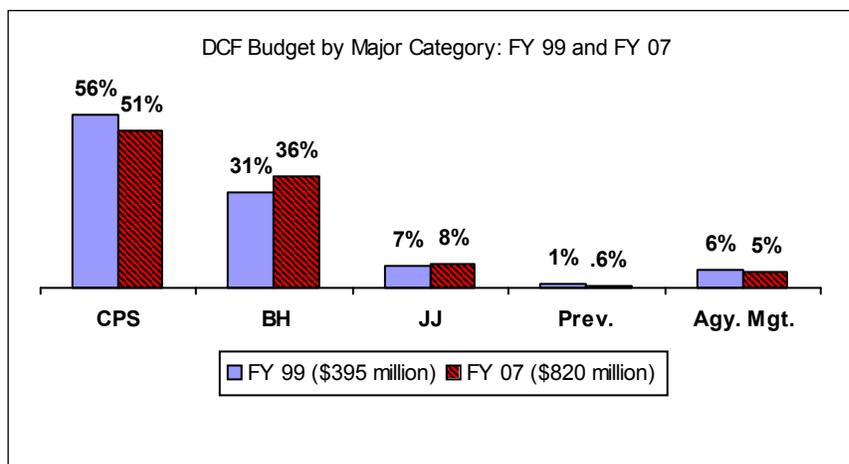
#### Performance Measure 1 – Number of children and families served by DCF

Snapshot of Children and Families Served by DCF (FY 06)		
Total Caseload	17,770	child protective services cases
Abuse/neglect reports	43,500	received
	7,568	substantiated
Foster Care	3,216	average number in care
Adoption	498	adoptions finalized
Juvenile Justice	1,200	delinquents committed
	500	parole cases
	100	juv. training school avg. daily census
Behavioral Health	2,000	community-based program capacity
	874	in residential treatment
	80	psych. hospital avg. daily census

- DCF does not centralize or summarize client information; trend data on key agency client measures are not regularly compiled and reported

#### Performance Measure 2 – Resources allocated by DCF mandate area

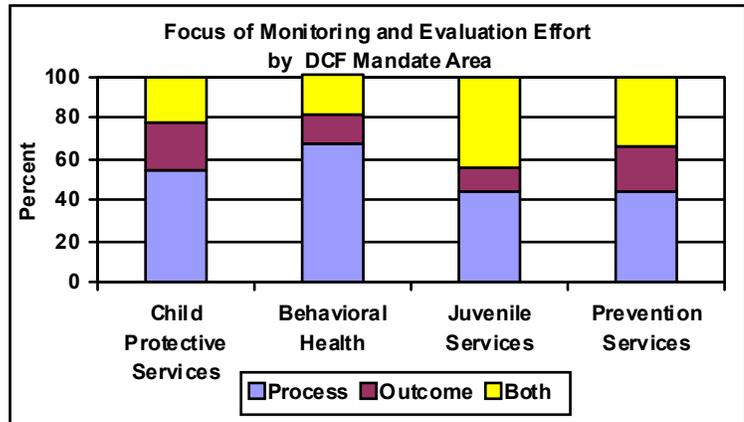
- Child protective services (CPS), which includes 14 area office operations and the bulk of DCF staff, accounted for half of the agency’s \$820 million FY 07 budget.
- Between FY 99 and FY 07, allocations for behavioral health (BH) and juvenile justice (JJ) increased while the portion of the budget spent the CPS and on agency management decreased. Prevention funding remained very small (1 percent or less of total spending.)



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## **Performance Measure 3 – Amount of internal and external monitoring and evaluation of DCF**

- PRI study analyzed over 100 different monitoring and evaluation documents produced during the previous three to five years; sources included internal quality assurance and contracted research studies and various external oversight efforts (e.g., by federal agencies, courts, legislative committees, Office of Child Advocate (OCA), mandated advisory groups)
- Nearly half of all efforts analyzed focused on DCF child protective services mandate
- Little attention on agencywide mission, broad goals of safety, permanency, and improved well-being (only 7 percent of all efforts)
- More than half of all monitoring and evaluation efforts focused solely on service delivery (process); much less emphasis on end results for clients (outcomes)

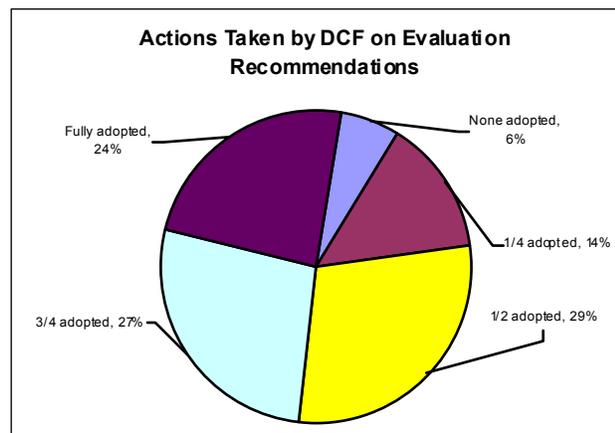


**PRI Recommendations:** Focus more attention on outcomes throughout the DCF accountability system; DCF dedicate staff resources to integrating, analyzing, and reporting on outcomes related to all goals and mandate areas

## **How Well Do We (DCF) Do It?**

### **Performance Measure 3 – Use of results from internal and external monitoring and evaluation**

- Overall, DCF adopted between 50 to 75 percent of recommendations from all types of monitoring and evaluation efforts
- Corrective actions recommended by external sources including courts and federal agencies had highest rates of adoption
- Areas of strength in using results data to improve agency performance:
  - *Juan F.* exit plan process
  - On-site independent monitors at DCF facilities
  - Revised internal special review process (for child fatalities/critical incidents)
  - Agency licensing process



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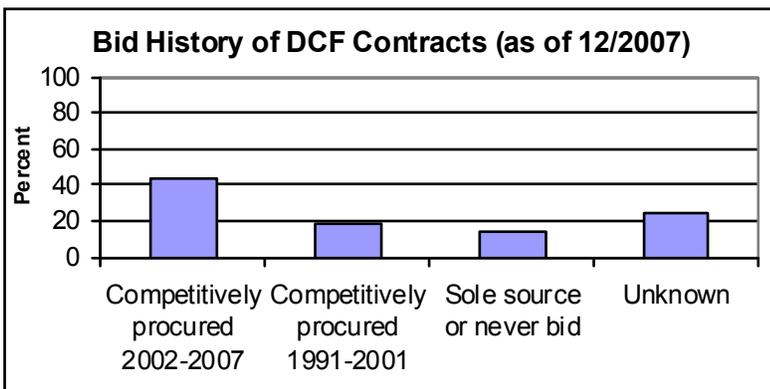
- Major weaknesses in DCF accountability system:
  - Quality improvement efforts fragmented; regular integration and analysis of results data lacking
  - Information systems within DCF and OCA inadequate; some obsolete, many incompatible
  - DCF contracting procedures provide little accountability for poor performance (see below)
  - Ineffective use of important feedback from OCA investigations, various internal quality assurance reports and contracted evaluations
  - Noncompliance with statute concerning abuse and neglect reports about delinquent children
  - Possible deficiencies with DCF's internal process for handling abuse/neglect reports filed against staff

**PRI Recommendations:** DCF make better use of results information to improve performance; specifically: centrally collect all information; expand internal capacity for analysis; establish strong research relationships with academic partners, require formal responses to results-based findings such as those produced by Office of Child Advocate; consider ways to integrate and upgrade automated information systems

OCA investigate adequacy and integrity of DCF process for responding to allegations of child abuse and neglect involving DCF employees; also examine compliance with C.G.S. Sec. 17a-103c (re: abuse/neglect reports about committed delinquents)

### **Performance Measure 4 –Implementation of Best Practices for Contractor Monitoring**

- DCF performance-based contracting ineffective; best practices not in place:
  - Data reporting requirements vague or not specified in contract documents
  - Monitoring of contractor performance haphazard; site visits rare
  - Consequences for poor performance seldom imposed
  - Inadequate follow up and support for contracted providers to address deficiencies



- Almost one in five active contracts (18%), with total annual value of \$193 million, last went out to bid in 2001 or earlier
- Bid status “Unknown” (meaning DCF could not provide date when contract last went out to bid) for 24 percent, which had total annual value of \$13.5 million

**PRI Recommendations:** DCF adopt and implement contract management best practices such as: specifying required outcome data; team approach for working with contractors; aggregating and analyzing data received from providers; and holding providers accountable for expected contract outcomes (e.g., withhold payments for unsatisfactory work); also consider reallocating some contracting staff from accounting functions to performance monitoring

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## **Performance Measure 5 – Utilization of statutorily required reports and advisory groups for feedback on progress toward goals**

- Twelve different DCF advisory groups established in statute, some with overlapping or unnecessary functions
- Effectiveness of State Advisory Council for Children and Families (SAC), primary group for stakeholder input and oversight, limited by unclear role, lack of support
- Seventeen different monitoring reports required in statute but many never produced and others obsolete or duplicative

Status of Mandated Reports	
Not done	4
Done once	4
Fulfilled	3
Underway	6

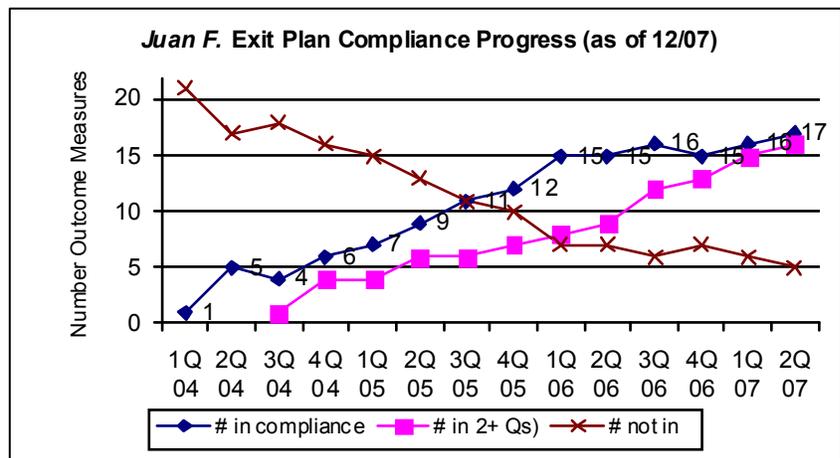
**PRI Recommendations:** Streamline advisory groups and strengthen roles of those providing critical stakeholder input and external accountability (i.e., SAC, area and facility advisory group); eliminate redundant/ineffective reporting requirements

## **Is Anyone Better Off?**

### **Performance Measure 6 -- Evidence that DCF Monitoring and Evaluation Efforts Improve Outcomes for Connecticut Children and Families**

- Beyond the exit plan process for federal *Juan F.* child welfare consent decree, no systematic tracking of progress in achieving the state's desired results for Connecticut children and families
- Regarding *Juan F.* compliance:

- DCF reached targets for 17 of the 22 exit plan outcome measures as of Dec. 2007
- For 15 outcome measures, DCF sustained compliance for 2 or more consecutive quarters
- Most exit plan measures indicate compliance with process goals (e.g., timeliness) and do not reflect quality of services provided



- DCF performance well below benchmarks for two areas most critical to well-being of children and families: appropriate treatment planning and meeting needs

**PRI Recommendation:** DCF and Judicial Department undertake a pilot program that integrates the agency and the court treatment planning processes to promote fuller participation by all parties and more consistent, comprehensive, and higher quality plans

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- Available outcome data compiled during PRI study from monitoring and evaluation documents indicated some positive trends as well as areas of continuing challenge for DCF; for example, reported agency outcome information showed:
  - Improvements at CT Juvenile Training School (CJTS) over its initial five years of operation, specifically:
    - Decreased use of restraints and seclusions
    - More treatment provided for substance abuse, clinical, and vocational needs
  - More work needed to lower the 35 percent recidivism rate at CJTS (22 percent return, 13 percent go on adult criminal justice system)
  - Juveniles in detention system increasingly diverted away from residential placements to community settings in response to *Emily J.* settlement agreement
  - System gridlock in behavioral health treatment system for children a continuing problem *but*:
    - Availability of community-based services, including evidence-based models, expanded after DCF managed care program (KidCare) established
    - Most children in crisis served by KidCare Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services avoided residential/inpatient care
  - Numbers of foster homes decreasing despite stepped-up recruitment and retention efforts
  - Substantial improvement in timeliness of investigations by DCF “Hotline” (abuse and neglect reporting system)
  - Connecticut showed substantial compliance in last two federal foster care eligibility reviews *but*:
    - DCF continues to struggle to meet other federal foster care and adoption standards
  - Preliminary evaluation results for some prevention services appear promising (e.g., The Wilderness School program); others seem less successful (e.g., Positive Youth Development initiatives targeted at preventing or reducing substance abuse)
- After 30 years as a consolidated children’s agency, DCF mandates remain “siloe”; outcome information and automated systems still not integrated across bureaus, results data not always shared throughout the department
- DCF lacks well-defined agencywide goals and established benchmarks which would allow comparisons of performance across programs, over time, and to national standards

***PRI Recommendations:*** *Establish in statute an ongoing, comprehensive, strategic planning process with vision and mission statements and goals developed in consultation with community/stakeholders that reflect the full scope of all department mandates; track and regularly report progress to legislature and public*

*DCF reinforce and expand role of its Service Evaluation and Enhancement Committee, to better integrate all monitoring and evaluation efforts, initiate proactive interventions, and to ensure results information is used to reach strategic plan goals*