



AUDIT SUMMARY

Department of Children and Families' Kinship Practices Performance Audit

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Fiscal Years Ended June 30, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022

BACKGROUND

Kinship care is full-time care of children by relatives or close family friends when the child's parents are unable to provide care. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is responsible for supporting kinship caregivers in Connecticut.

ABOUT THE AUDIT

We have audited certain operations of the Department of Children and Families' Kinship Practices. The scope of our audit included, but was not necessarily limited to, the fiscal years ended June 30, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. The objectives of our audit were to evaluate:

1. The efficiency and effectiveness of the Department of Children and Families in complying with its statutory obligations related to kinship practices.
2. Whether sufficient controls and practices are in place to ensure the Department of Children and Families is identifying and supporting relatives/kin caregivers by assisting them in finding and accessing the services they need; and
3. The Department of Children and Families Kinship Care Ombudsman/Office of Community Relations' role in helping kin guardians access services.

We conducted this performance audit 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.

[Link to full report](#)

12 Total Findings

Our audit identified internal control deficiencies; instances of noncompliance with laws, regulations, or policies; and a need for improvement in practices and procedures that warrant management's attention.

NOTEWORTHY FINDINGS



Findings

1

Department of Children and Families (DCF) regional offices did not consistently search for kin across field offices and appropriately monitor efforts to identify kin.

2

DCF is not yet meeting its aspirational goal of placing 70% of children in care with kin caregivers. Kin placement rates have been fairly flat since 2015.

3

DCF's Caregiver Support Team contractors did not meet their contractual deadlines. DCF does not appear to use collected data to monitor contractor performance.



Recommendations

DCF should:

- a. Develop effective strategies and policies to standardize procedures for diligent and comprehensive relative and kin searches. The department should document and produce summary reports on the extent and results of its search efforts.
- b. Seek to amend Section 17a-10b of the General Statutes to require it to identify fictive kin caregivers and notify them of the child's removal.

DCF should create a specific, deadline driven implementation plan with measurable outcomes and supportive tools to meet its strategic goal to increase kin caregiver placements.

DCF should:

- a. Assess why contractors are not meeting contractual deadlines and develop solutions to address the issues. DCF could reassess contract performance measures to ensure they are reasonable based on historical agency performance.
- b. Revise client outcome measures to include reasonable and comparable benchmarks based on professional standards or actual contractor experience to objectively assess their performance.
- c. Assess if there are significant disparities in treatment outcomes based on race and appropriately address any disparities.
- d. Regularly meet with contractors to discuss performance measures, and document outcomes of these meetings.
- e. Include an assessment of the achievement of performance measures in annual provider evaluations, as required by statute.