



# Budget Office

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

May 2, 2023

The Honorable Darrell Clarke  
City Council President  
City Hall, Room 490  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Council President Clarke,

This letter is in response to questions raised by Councilmember Gilmore-Richardson regarding the Proposed FY24 Operating and Capital Budget.

**Topic:** Curfew

**Questions:**

1. Please provide an update on the RFP process for the final two curfew centers in East and Northeast?

The Department (DHS) is currently in the silent portion of the RFP review process for the East and Northeast locations for the CERC opportunity. The final award will be posted on eContractPhilly.

2. Please provide updated numbers around how many young people are using our CERCs?

From January 2022 through March 2023, 742 youth have participated in programming and services at the CERCs.

**Topic:** Dependency cases

**Questions:**

1. How does DHS do family finding in a dependency case?

Family Finding occurs on an ongoing basis for all children entering the Child Welfare System. The Department makes every effort to promote the use of Kinship Care when it is necessary to remove a child from their home of origin. In addition to Case Managers engaging families about their family support networks, the Department also contracts with two providers who specialize in a formal Family Finding paradigm. Family Finding works to increase the amount of supports and lifelong connections for children who are currently in the Child Welfare System. Family Finding lays the groundwork by identifying, locating, and engaging relatives and other adults who may be willing to provide ongoing support or ultimately serve as a reunification resource. Referrals are



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made for Family Finding and the contracted providers begin gathering information and identifying extended familial resources.

- a. How do you determine if a family member is eligible to take in a child?

DHS and CUA staff engage Kinship Resources to determine their willingness to support. If willing, there is a formal process to determine eligibility which includes a home assessment, child abuse and criminal clearances.

- b. Do you provide documentation to families as to why a relative is not eligible for placement?

If the potential kinship caregiver is not eligible, they are notified verbally as well as via a notification letter explaining why they were denied.

2. How do you work to ensure siblings are not separated?

The Department makes every effort during the placement referral process to ensure the needs of each youth and keep siblings intact when possible.

- a. How often are siblings separated?

DHS data shows that of the 729 sibling groups placed in foster and kinship care as of December 31, 2022, 59% were placed together. There are instances in which siblings cannot be placed together that consist of availability in the foster/kinship care home and children/youth that may need a higher level of care.

3. Please provide information about the attorney wheel?

The selection, qualifications and training of attorneys who are assigned to the Dependency Court Wheel is solely under the purview of the First Judicial District.

- a. How do attorneys end up on the wheel?

As stated above, the selection, qualifications and training of attorneys who are assigned to the Dependency Court Wheel is solely under the purview of the First Judicial District.

- b. What qualifications do attorneys have to have to represent children or parents in dependency cases?



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Please see response to Question 3a.

- c. Does the City provide training? Are additional funds needed to improve education for those that represent children and families?

Please see response to Question 3a.

- d. What recourse do parents have if they feel that they are not receiving effective counsel, or their child is not receiving effective counsel?

Any information and/or complaints about parents' counsel must be addressed to the First Judicial Court Administration.

- e. When do parents receive information about how they can be assigned an attorney?

At the time of a removal of a child, the parents are provided with the parent handbook that gives parents information on the removal process and next steps. This also includes information about how an attorney will be appointed to represent the parent if the parent cannot afford one.

<https://www.phila.gov/media/20170926145328/DHS-Parent-Handbook-Final.pdf>

#### 4. Please provide information regarding the Family Engagement Initiative (FEI)

- a. How can we expand opportunities for more parents to have advocates or social work supports in this process?

FEI is a PA state initiative to improve engagement of families with child welfare involvement using crisis rapid response meetings, family finding, and enhanced legal representation. DHS and CUA staff participate in crisis rapid response meetings, which are designed to give families a voice and help resolve any emergent safety issues that may lead to children being removed. Parent and Children Advocates are included in this process; they employ social work services as part of the support that they provide.

- b. How has this improved outcomes?

FEI aims to ensure more children remain safely in their own home or are placed with family by enhancing meaningful family involvement, increasing collaboration between Court and DHS, and focusing on child and family wellbeing. Baseline outcome measures were collected for Calendar Year 2020 (CY20) to understand, of the crisis rapid response family meetings (CRRFM) held, how many resulted in children being kept safely in their own homes and how many resulted in children being placed with kin. Of the 36 children who were home at the time of their CRRFM in CY20, 72% remained in the home or were placed



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with kin, and 28% were placed with non-kin. **In Calendar Year 2022 (CY22), the percentage of children who remained at home or were placed with kin increased by 18%, and the percentage of children placed with non-kin decreased by 19%.**

Specifically of the 1,182 children who were home at the time of the CRRFM in CY22:

- 80% of children remained in the home (n=950)
- 10% remained with kin (n=123)
- 9% were placed with non-kin (n=109).

**Topic:** Homeless services

**Questions:**

1. Data from the Office of Homeless Services shows that 40% of those coming to emergency shelter, temporary housing, and safe haven are families with children and that in 2022, they served a total of 6,049 persons in a household with at least one adult and child with an average household size of three people.

- a. How does OCF work with the Office of Homeless Services to ensure we are supporting our families experiencing homelessness?

The DHS Housing team receives a weekly report of new families that are entering the OHS shelter system to see if they are eligible for any housing programs at DHS. In addition, we meet monthly with OHS leadership to problem solve and target housing vacancies for families in need. Finally, when we receive child welfare focused vouchers, we ensure that OHS is allocated at least 25% of these programs for direct referrals from OHS.

- b. What services do we provide specifically for these families?

DHS funds contract providers to provide the following housing support to families: pre-leasing activities such as housing search and landlord interviews support, financial support with moving, first/last month rent, benefits enrollment, childcare referral and connection, adult education and life skills, parenting skill groups, mental and physical health care connections, and career/job coaching. In partnership with the Office of Homeless Services (OHS), Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA), and community based providers, we provide housing assistance to families through the Family Unification Program, which provides a housing voucher and support for families where housing presents a risk for placement or barrier to reunification; Fostering Youth Independence, which provides a



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housing voucher and support for up to 3 years for young adults ages 18-23 who aged out of foster care and are now experiencing or at risk of becoming homeless; and Rapid Rehousing for Reunification, which is a program that eliminates barriers to reunification by providing housing support for up to 12 months and assistance for finding housing for families with children in placement, so they can return home.

- c. How do our services continue once we get a family rehoused?

DHS funded housing support extends for up to 18 months after the family is housed for PHA funded housing. For the Rapid Rehousing program, the supportive services are available for up to 12 months but can be extended if needed.

**Topic:** PJJSC

**Questions:**

1. I see that you've requested funding for 37 additional positions at the JJSC.

- a. How are you working to advertise these opportunities?

DHS has ongoing advertising campaigns that run year-round through different platforms that include Monster-digital job postings, SEPTA Bus Advertisements, digital Bus Shelters, and Digital Platform screens, YouTube, and LinkPHL advertising through digital kiosks. DHS has participated in multiple job fairs as well as hosted a job fair in collaboration with the Office of Human Resources (OHR). From September of 2022 until present there have been various job fairs in which information and interviews were held with potential candidates. DHS has also participated in a job fair at the Community College of Philadelphia and will continue to partner with CCP and other colleges as a form of recruitment.

- b. How are you working with the state to address the credentialing issues that were creating hiring barriers?

DHS requested a waiver on October 11, 2022, that has been granted under PA Code Chapter 3800, Regulations to allow a substitution of two years' experience working directly with children in programs with juvenile offenders in lieu of the completion of 60 credit hours of study at an accredited college or university. This waiver was granted for one year; however, DHS will be requesting another waiver.



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- c. What other ways can we address staffing and workforce issues at the JJSC?

DHS implemented a hiring bonus of \$1,000 for employees. We have also developed a mentoring initiative program for new hires that takes place during the first 6 months of the probationary period.

2. We've heard that Family Court leadership has recently issued an order to the judges in the unit to start sending children committed to state placements to the Rites of Passage program in Texas when recommended by Probation. Are out of state placements for Philly youth really on the table?

We are not aware of a blanket order issued by Family Court Leadership in this regard. Pennsylvania DHS has contracted with Rite of Passage in Texas for secure residential placement for youth committed to Pennsylvania DHS custody. These youth must meet certain criteria and be accepted by the program before a court can consider this placement option.

- a. How would we ensure they follow our DHS regulations if young people are placed there?

Pennsylvania DHS has assured Philadelphia DHS that Rite of Passage will follow all Pennsylvania laws and regulations regarding placement of youth. Currently Philadelphia DHS conducts in person and virtual visits with youth placed at state facilities, and DHS will also do this with the youth if they are placed at Rite of Passage.

- b. What financial impact will these placements have, both in terms of any contracted fee and when considering that each child's family will be entitled to FOUR airfare tickets to visit their children, along with lodging expenses? How many children have been recommended for placement at the Rites of Passage program in Texas?

The question about financial impact is best addressed by Pennsylvania DHS, as they have the contract with Rites of Passage. In terms of the number of youth recommended for placement at Rite of Passage, this question is best answered by the Juvenile Probation Department, probation is responsible for making referrals for placement of delinquent youth.

**Topic:** Juvenile Justice

**Questions:**

1. As of the census on April 1, 2023, what is the average age of children in detention, along with representation according to race/ethnicity, crimes alleged, and whether the youth is detained for their first offense?



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As of April 1, 2023, the average age of youth confined at the PJJSC was 16 years old. Below is the ethno-racial makeup of youth confined at the PJJSC:

African American / Black:	81.8%
Hispanic / Latino (of any race)	10.3%
White	3.9%
Unavailable	3.4%
Multiple	0.4%

Data regarding the number of offenses that a youth has been charged with is maintained by the First Judicial District as well as the District Attorney’s Office.

2. During the COVID emergency, youth who could be safely maintained at home on GPS monitoring were prevented from entering detention or were released following review of individual cases. This resulted in a decrease of youth detained at intake and post-adjudication placements. What problems, if any, have been encountered in the use of GPS since that time? How will DHS ensure that youth who can safely remain in the community will remain there?

These questions are best directed to the Philadelphia Juvenile Probation Department as they are responsible for monitoring youth on GPS and maintaining data on its use and effectiveness. DHS will continue to work with Juvenile Probation, the Court, and our juvenile justice stakeholders to ensure that quality alternative to detention programs are available for youth that the Court determines can be safely supervised in the community while on probation or awaiting an adjudicatory hearing.

3. Also, during the COVID emergency, cases of youth already in juvenile placement were reviewed every day to determine readiness for discharge. How often are they being reviewed currently? What is the current protocol for review of youth in juvenile detention or residential placement?

This question is best directed to the First Judicial District as they oversee the scheduling of delinquent cases.

**Topic:** Additional child welfare

**Rationale:**

**Questions:**

1. Philly has a 4.8% entry rate into foster care - almost twice the rate of other urban areas in PA and statewide (both have rates of 2.5%). The top five reasons for removal in Philadelphia are: Parental drug abuse; Neglect; Caretaker’s inability to cope; Child’s behavior problem; and



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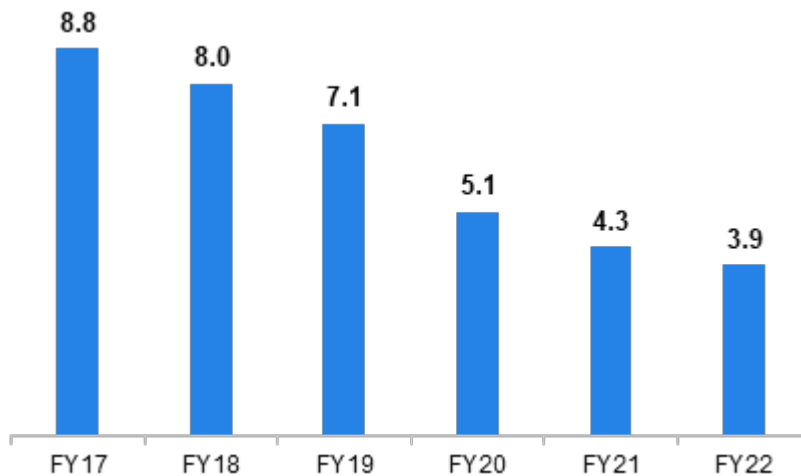
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Inadequate housing. All these conditions warn that families are struggling with poverty and inability to access resources.

- a. It is our understanding that concrete resources were provided to address these issues in Philadelphia, so if that is the case, why is the rate of child removals still so high and for these same reasons?

The Department does not remove children based on the lack of concrete resources. Placement decisions are based on the assessment of safety. Since FY17, the rate of children entering out of home placement per 1,000 children has decreased each fiscal year (see Figure 1). **In FY22, the entry rate into out of home care was 3.9 per 1,000 children compared to the national average of 2.9 per 1,000 children.** This is lower than the 4.8% entry rate being quoted above (3.9 per 1,000 children would equal 0.39% of children).

**Figure 1.** Entry Rate of Children into Out of Home Care per 1,000 Philadelphia Children, by Federal Fiscal Year (Data reflects the federal fiscal year which runs from 10/1 to 9/30. This was done so that DHS could compare data to other jurisdictions.)



- 2. What is DHS doing to assure that families that come to DHS’ attention get priority access (not just a referral) to other services they need to prevent the removal of their children, e.g., food, housing, behavioral health, or medical services?

The Department has an emergency fund that assists with concrete goods (bedding and other household items) as well as financial support with mortgage/rent arrears and utility reconciliation. We use these funds to prevent placement, to assist with reunification and to support kinship





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caregivers. All behavioral health concerns are referred to Community Behavioral Health/DBHIDS, and we collaborate with our colleagues to ensure that children and youth are prioritized.

- a. How much funding in the DHS budget is used to address financial reasons that result in children being taken from their parents, and how many families were given these resources in the last year?

For FY-24 the emergency fund is in the amount of \$2.8 million. In FY 22, this fund assisted 1,378 children. DHS has also secured additional federal funding from the Children's Bureau which we are using to expand the existing concrete goods fund that helps families that come to the attention of DHS with concrete resource needs. This additional funding will specifically be used to enhance prevention and provide financial support to families to address the most common non-safety reasons that put children at risk of entering placement.

- b. How is DHS working with DBH to prioritize parents for services that are needed to keep the family intact, and how many families have received these services?

The Department collaborates with DBHIDS/CBH to assess the level and urgency of care for children, youth and families and prioritizes their need for available services accordingly.

3. What investment is needed from the City to draw down sufficient state and federal dollars so that families that come to the attention of DHS can quickly get the support they need to avoid further involvement in the child welfare system?

In the FY24 proposed budget, the department has proposed significant increases in the concrete goods funds for dependent and delinquent known youth.

4. Since the CUA transformation began in 2013, the agency seems to have not reduced its overall staffing complement although as of 2016, nearly every case was transferred to a CUA. In fact, the complement has grown. The same goes for the DHS budget. Can you explain why the complement has not been reduced so that savings could be directed to reducing the CUA caseloads?

While cases were transferred to CUAs, many social work services managers and supervisory staff were moved to other positions to support the work needed to accomplish the goals of Improving Outcomes for Children. These included investigators, family team conferencing, program evaluation and monitoring positions. Additionally, the DHS budget has increased so that the Department can offer more prevention services and serve additional families in the community.



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5. What investment is needed from the City to draw down sufficient state and federal dollars to pay the CUAs enough to be able to decrease their caseloads so that families get better services?

Pending approval, as part of the FY24 budget, the administration allocated additional funding for DHS to increase the CUA staff salaries to support workforce retention. The increase across the ten (10) CUAs was \$5.6M, which includes \$830k in general fund and \$4.7M in state and federal funding.

6. Regarding child welfare prevention services, what are the indicators of success and how successful have they been? What about foster care services?

Child Welfare Operations Diversion Program outcomes are measured by the programs' diversion rates, *or the percentage of families who completed a diversion program that did not have a formal child welfare service in the following 12 months*. DHS evaluated Family Empowerment Services (FES), Family Empowerment Centers (FEC), Family Case Coordination Program (CAPTA) and Rapid Service Response (RSR). The diversion rate for all diversion programs have increased or remained high in each fiscal year since FY 2019. **For families who completed a diversion program in FY 2021, nearly all (between 96% and 98%) did not receive a formal child welfare service within 12 months of completing a diversion program.**

DHS also evaluates its contracted foster care providers annually and publishes findings in an annual foster care report. Providers are evaluated on both compliance and quality indicators and are scored using a combination of administrative data, provider narratives, and resource parent and staff files. The most recent Foster Care Report is located here:

[https://www.phila.gov/media/20220316122547/2021\\_Foster\\_care\\_report.pdf](https://www.phila.gov/media/20220316122547/2021_Foster_care_report.pdf)

7. What indicators are being used to measure child and family well-being for the CUAs?

The Department aims to prioritize the well-being of children and families who are open for formal and voluntary DHS services. The fourth goal of Improving Outcomes for Children, *"Improved child, youth, and family functioning,"* captures well-being as a priority.

Currently DHS evaluates CUAs on the completeness of documentation and assessments which capture child wellbeing. These assessments measure well-being in terms of children's physical and behavioral health status, family stability and caregiver strengths and needs, education, child development, and for older youth, life skills and transition planning.

To support the creation of an equitable, systems-based definition and measures of well-being, DHS is creating a framework using best practices research and systems-thinking models. Through this work we aim to answer the question: **What are the key components of child well-being**

**when involved in the child welfare system, and how do we best measure these key components?** This work will be divided into phases with the first phase focusing on refining our



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measurements in child and youth well-being and assessing how accurately and completely these measurements are collected in DHS administrative data. Phase one is currently wrapping up and will soon be reviewed by DHS leadership.

8. What has the trend been regarding numbers of shared cases between child welfare and juvenile justice over the last two years, and how many are shared between the two divisions now?

While relatively low, the number of youth with shared cases between child welfare and juvenile justice has fluctuated over the last two years. As of today, there are 221 youth with shared case status between child welfare and juvenile justice.

9. What is DHS doing to increase the number of children in care that attend school every day? How do CUA caseworkers get connected to information from the school district regarding attendance so they can help ensure children attend school?

The Department and CUA case management teams work closely with the Office of Children and Families' Education Support Center who serve as liaisons between the School District and the Department in the effort to address the educational needs of dependent youth.

The School District of Philadelphia sends attendance data for DHS-involved youth on a monthly basis. The Office of Children and Families' Education Support Center reviews attendance information and coordinates additional supports for families and children (if necessary) with the assigned DHS/CUA case management teams to identify and mitigate the attendance barriers identified. The Education Support Center also reviews attendance data in relation to when students have changed placements and/or changed schools to ensure that the School District's transportation supports (if necessary) are in place. Resources and supports offered through the Education Support Center range from providing uniforms, tuition cost, transit passes, and hosting interagency meetings to support best interest determination for student enrollment and needs.

The OCF Prevention Division provides three tiers of support for families to improve school attendance and divert families from entering the child welfare system. Our goals are to improve school attendance, divert families from Regional Truancy Court and ultimately divert children from entering formal child welfare services by providing case management services to families and students in partnership with the school. OCF funds this service through 8 sub-contracted providers that provide these Truancy Case Management services to all schools. Ninety-Four (94) schools receive dedicated support through early intervention services with an assigned case manager to their school. OCF works closely with SDP to develop provider standards of services and programs to support the removal of any barriers to daily school attendance. Each provider has a budget for Emergency Funds to support with the removal of barriers like uniform vouchers, temporary transportation support, food gift cards, purchases of beds and utility or rental



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assistance. The OCF truancy staff support monitoring, quality assurance, contract compliance, court support and data reporting.

Planning is underway to request additional funding from the state to expand this work in School Year 2023-2024. The expansions would include additional case managers in current early intervention schools with high demand for services and high schools not currently receiving any level of Early Intervention services.

10. How many children in the care of DHS have more than one placement in their lifetime? What is DHS doing to stabilize youth placements?

In order to understand trends in placement moves for children in foster and kinship, DHS examines the placement stability for youth receiving foster care and/or kinship care services. To calculate the placement stability rate, PMT multiplies the following calculation by 1,000:

- **Numerators:** The total number of placement moves during FY22 for all children in the denominator
- **Denominators:** Total foster care and/or kinship care days during FY22 as of the last day of FY22 for all three lengths of stay indicated above.

**For youth who had been in foster or kinship care for less than twelve months, the rate of placement moves was 2.9 moves per 1,000 days (Table 1).** The mean rate of moves decreased as children remained in care longer, meaning placement stability increases as children are in placement for a longer time.

Table 1: Rate of placement moves per 1,000 days spent in care for all Children in Foster and Kinship Care Services by Length of Stay for FY22

	< 12 Months	12-24 Months	> 24 Months
Mean	2.9	1.6	1.5
Median	2.5	1.5	1.0
Minimum	0.0	0.0	0.0
Maximum	7.2	6.2	12.0

11. Given the recent RFP for CUA services, how many of the existing CUA agencies submitted bids to continue these services?

We are currently in the silent portion of the 4 CUA RFP Opportunities. Since we are still in the review process, we do not share information regarding any Applications to open RFPs. We will



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post Notices of Intent to Contract for each of these RFPs on eContractPhilly. When these Notices are posted, the identities of the Awardees and of all of the Applicants will be publicly available, as will the basis for each award.

12. How much is the risk of liability exposure associated with some of the CUA agencies not submitting a bid in the more recent RFP? How are other cities or jurisdictions that have similarly contracted out these services managing the liability issues?

We are not in a position to ascertain why/or why not an entity would apply for an RFP posted by DHS. Additionally, while we are not familiar with the situations of other cities and jurisdictions as it relates to liability, we can say that the cost of insurance is a national issue and liability is often based on specific state laws.

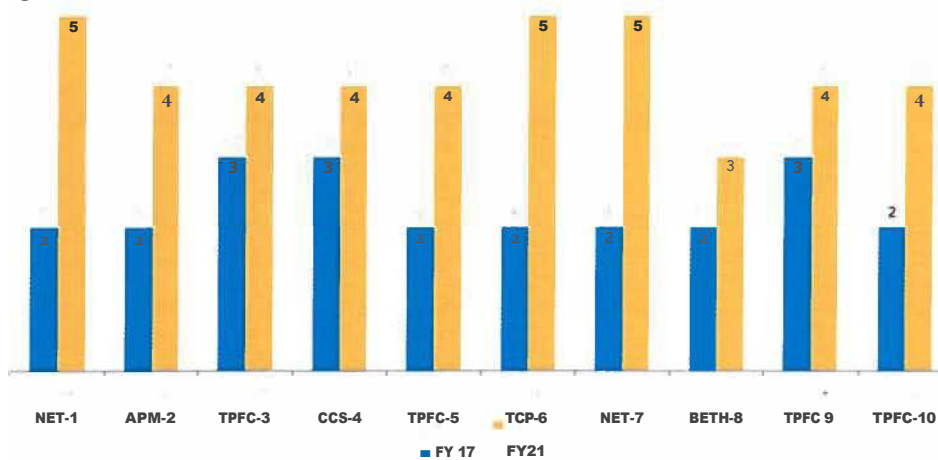
13. Child fatalities due to abuse and neglect have increased steadily over the last decade, as has the average length of stay in foster care in Philadelphia. What is the process to evaluate whether privatization was a good decision, and how will DHS involve Council in that?

DHS evaluates the CUA agencies via the CUA scorecard. The CUA Scorecard has been an invaluable tool for IOC, creating the blueprint for monitoring CUA performance and the roadmap to achieve IOC goals. First published as a Baseline in 2017, the CUA Scorecard recognizes areas in which CUAs are doing well and identifies areas for improvement. The CUA Scorecard reflects our commitment to transparency as the best way to provide accountability, to learn and grow as government and providers, and to continue improving outcomes for children, youth, and families receiving child welfare services.

- **The CUA Scorecard measures quality of service to ensure that children and youth are safe in their homes and, if in our care, that they receive the necessary services and are safe and well cared for.** It also measures progress on reunification or other permanency efforts. Many of the activities measured relate to specific federal and state mandates that focus on improving outcomes for children, youth, and families.
- **The Scorecard uses rigorous methods to evaluate performance.** DHS reviews over 2,000 CUA case files a year. A Comprehensive Case-File Review Tool is used to ensure consistent and methodologically sound results. Every quarter, 15% of each CUA's cases are reviewed using the Case file review tool. Both in-home and placement cases are reviewed proportional to how many of each type of case CUAs currently have. **In FY21, 2,177 Case File Reviews were completed for CUAs including 1,027 for the Turning Points for Children CUAs.** To supplement the Case-File Review, DHS also uses CUA administrative data in the Permanency, Visitation, Court Finance, and Workforce domains.

Since Fiscal Year 2017, all 10 CUAs showed overall performance improvement by at least one bell level. Three CUAs have improved from FY17 by two bell levels from two bells in FY17 to four bells in FY21. Three CUAs have improved three bell levels from two bells in FY17 to five bells in FY21. In Fiscal Year 2021, 3 CUAs were in the 5 Bell (Superior) range, 6 CUAs are in the 4 Bell (Proficient) range, and 1 CUA is in the 3 Bell (Competent) range. Figure 2 below displays CUAs overall Bell level in fiscal year 2017 (baseline) and fiscal year 2021.

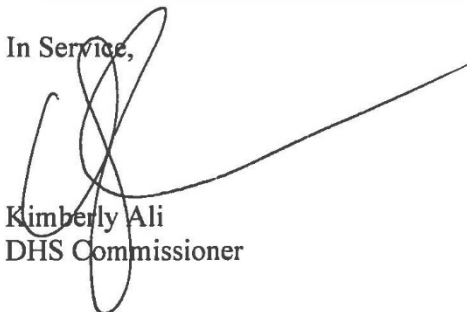
Figure 2. CUAs Overall Bell Level in Fiscal Years 2017 and 2021



As we have done in the past, DHS would welcome opportunities to meet with Council to provide updates on Improving Outcomes for Children and the progress of the CUAs.

If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me.

In Service,



Kimberly Ali  
DHS Commissioner