Washington State Children's Administration Workload Study

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

November 2007

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E.1 INTRODUCTION

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration (CA) is in the process of evaluating and improving its systems. A new Program Redesign was just implemented, the full replacement of the Children Administration Management Information System (CAMIS) is underway, and new case work processes will be implemented in the Fall of 2007 as a result of the development of a new CA Practice Model. This workload study is one aspect of these improvement initiatives, and will complement and support the other program and organizational change efforts. In September 2006, CA contracted with Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc, in collaboration with American Humane Association, for a comprehensive workload study, designed to study all workers in the CA who provide services to a case. Both organizations are nationally known for child welfare workload analysis.

The goals of the Workload Study presented in this report were to:

1. Understand the required practice activities of child welfare workers, clerical staff and infrastructure support staff in fulfilling their duties;
2. Understand the time and staff needed to complete all practice activities;
3. Estimate the time required to engage in child welfare practice that can be considered basic practice; and
4. Equip CA with the tools, models and skills necessary to continuously reassess workload based on shifts in factors that influence the provision of child welfare services.

A significant proportion of resources went into the conceptualization, operationalization, and implementation of this study by Children's Administration staff at all levels, from state directors and policy-makers to office-level support staff. The results of their investment are:

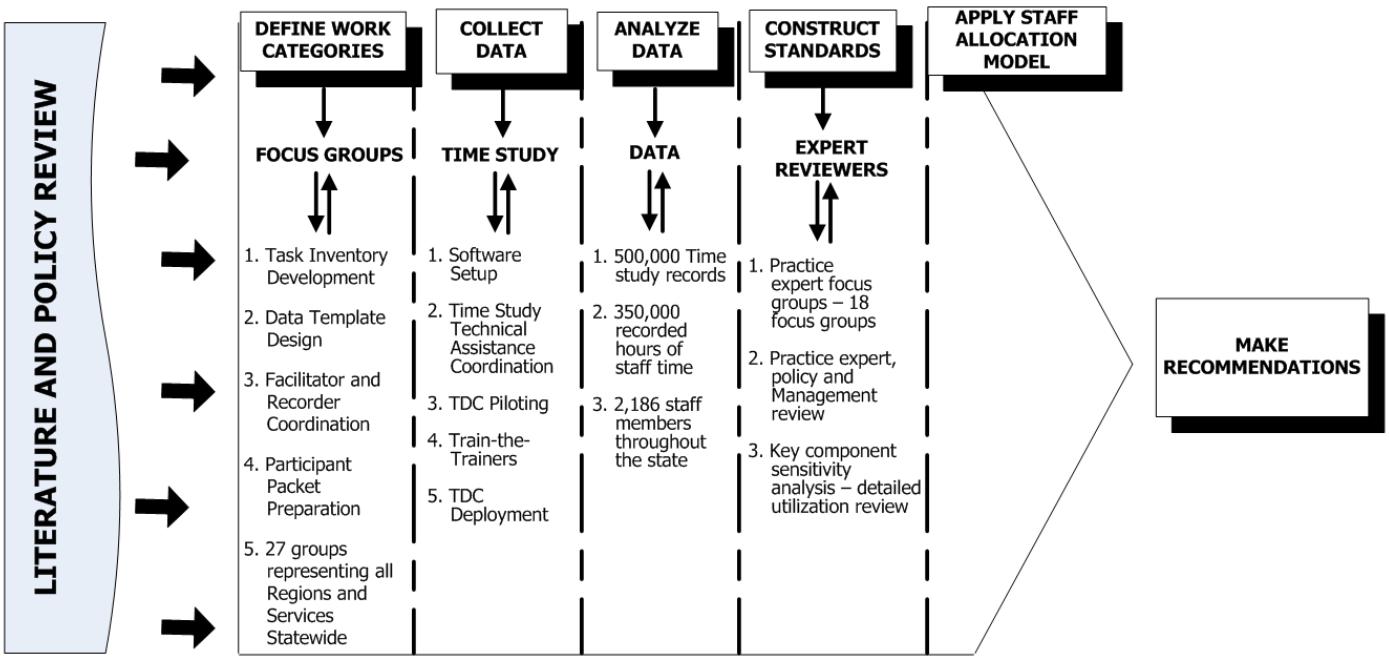
1. A detailed description of the *current State* of Children's Administration staffing, tasks, and time use;
2. An analytical exploration of what is needed and could be done to address *current gaps* in Child Welfare service delivery; and
3. A thorough description of the *methodological and analytical guidelines, processes, and tools* developed and utilized during the course of the study, so that all or part of it can be replicated or data further explored by CA at a later time.

The primary findings of this study present the difference between "what is" and what a significant number of experienced CA staff believe "is needed" to fulfill current policies, regulations, and basic practice standards. These findings are measured in terms of the staff hours, case hours and the number of FTEs needed in both the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and the Division of Licensing Resources (DLR). These findings are meant to be descriptive and not definitive recommendations.

E.2 METHODOLOGY

The first phase of the Workload Study included defining work categories carried out by CA staff, through the development of a Task Inventory. Task Inventory categories were then used as the framework to document the time that staff was currently investing in each activity. The results of the time study data collection provided a basis upon which experienced CA staff were asked to construct standards for the time they estimated it should take to provide consistent services to children and families. The constructed standards were then utilized in a staff allocation model process that resulted in the number of FTEs required. The final phase of the project involved the analysis and development of recommendations for further study and consideration by the CA. ***Figure E.1, Washington Workload Study Process*** portrays the flow of project phases over time.

Figure E.1: Washington Workload Study Process



- *Define Work Categories.* The development of the service categories and tasks was the first phase of this project. Focus groups from all regions and the central office participated in describing services and defining descriptive terms for services and tasks. Regions were asked to provide names of staff in order to develop well rounded focus groups and structured estimation groups. Group participants either volunteered or were asked to participate. Regional Administrators and Workload Study project staff reviewed the lists to ensure that all service areas were covered with staff experts, that staff were able to attend the meetings, and that they were willing to share their expertise with others. The first phase was completed with the development of a Task Inventory (see **Volume II, Methodology page 23**).

- *Collect Data*. For the second phase of the study, a computerized time recording method referred to as the Time Data Collector (TDC) was developed for staff to use in logging how they used their time. All CA staff participating in the study received training on the Task Inventory definitions and the computerized TDC software. These procedures and tools are included in **Volume II, Methodology page 141**.

  CA staff from all regions and offices, as well as central office staff providing services to children and families, participated in the time study from February 5 to March 6, 2007. Hours were documented at various levels of the organization, across geographic areas, across service areas as defined in the recently implemented Program Redesign, and by different employee types such as case-carrying social workers and support staff. Technical support and ongoing quality assurance feedback were provided to inform participants of response rates and early results.

- *Analyze Data*. Data obtained from the TDC were checked for completeness and consistency. Once data were cleaned and finalized, syntax was prepared in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to produce the findings contained in this report. Time study results describing existing casework practice for services are presented in the accompanying *Workload Profile*. These results are referred to as the" measured time" for providing services during the month.

  Time Study data were then summarized, to describe the number and proportion of hours spent by each DCFS and DLR staff position on case-related versus case-support tasks. Case-related tasks included activities such as face-to-face contact with the child and meetings with collateral service providers. Examples of case-support tasks included general meetings and attending trainings, professional development workshops, policy review, development of regulatory procedures and leave and break time.

- *Construct Standards.* After data collection was complete, the results were reviewed by another round of 18 CA focus groups that were selected in the same manner as the task inventory focus groups. These groups constructed "workload standards" used to produce the analysis and recommendations in this study. A workload standard is the expected amount of time necessary to perform a service for a case in a month, if all federal and state law, policy and good practice are met.

  A series of focus group sessions brought together small groups from all staff levels across the state. These groups applied their knowledge of Child Welfare in providing estimates of time needed to perform case work for all of the Task Inventory categories of the case work. The following three-phase approach was used:

  1. Present data from the time study for each service by task, as a baseline for measurement under existing conditions. Focus groups were provided a policy review of task requirements for services. Groups made adjustments to measured time in order to meet federal and state law, policy and good practice;
  2. Conduct a review of selected task requirements constructed by the focus groups with the CA policy and practice staff experts, to verify legal and policy requirements;

3. Perform final review and adjustment of case requirements using administrative data and sensitivity analysis of task times.

This process provided a frequency of occurrence and a time allocation for each task in the Task Inventory. Using that information as the base, the focus groups made estimations of how long it would take to do the job as it should be done. These times became the constructed standards for each Service Category.

- *Apply Staff Allocation Model.* In analyzing the gap between the Measured Time for services and Constructed Standards, the Workload Study Team developed a Workload Allocation Model. This model established a formula, which was used to determine the number of staff required to fulfill the activities of the Constructed Standards. Calculations, which assessed the number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)[1] staff needed to perform the tasks assigned in each Service Category, were developed for each DCFS and DLR staff position.

- *Make Recommendations.* Based on the findings of the analysis and comparisons of Measured and Constructed Time, the Workload Study Team, in partnership with CA staff, developed a set of potential changes that could be made to address some of the identified gaps.

E.2.1 Study Constraints

Gap analysis vs. baseline. It is important to understand the difference between constructed standard FTEs and measured time study FTEs is the *gap.* This gap is artificial, in that it is not based on the CAs allotted FTEs. Since current staffing levels were not obtained from the state's Human Resource Management System (HRMS) or the Agency's accounting system (Fastrack), the actual allotted number of FTEs by service area at the time of the study was not used. The number of FTEs reporting in the time study was used. This means that when calculating the number of FTEs required to complete the tasks for a specific service, the CA will need to use their FTE allotment to figure an accurate number.

As with any workload study, this report should be seen as one of a series of studies building a cumulative understanding of workload over time. This report, in particular, serves as a baseline for future analysis, particularly since it was conducted during a period of significant organizational change within CA. A new Program Redesign was just implemented, the full replacement of the Children Administration Management Information System (CAMIS) is underway, and new case work processes will be implemented Fall 2007 as a result of the development of a new CA Practice Model. This workload study will complement and support these efforts, as well as providing a complete electronic database of study data and a complete methodology to facilitate the ongoing use of the study results.

[1] The concept of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) refers to a measurement of the state workforce. The position of an employee who works full time is counted as 1.0 FTE, an employee who works half time is counted as 0.5 FTE, etc.

E.3 RESULTS

The following study findings are grouped by Division, to allow the reader to follow the progression of the analysis for each Division from start to finish. These include examine Staff Hours, Case Hours, and FTEs by Service Category and Position, for DCFS and DLR respectively. Due to rounding, the figures may present very minor variance from actual data.

E.3.1 Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

E.3.1.1 Staff Hours

One significant finding from the analysis was that more than two-thirds (69%) of the DCFS case-carrying social worker's time and over half the time of noncase-carrying staff (57%) was spent on case-related tasks. (See Volume I, Table 1.02).

Within specific Service Categories, the largest proportion of case-related time for all staff positions (37%) was found to be in "Family Dependency." Together with "CPS/Investigation and Assessment" service time, the two categories represented 55% of all DCFS staff time and almost 80% of all case-related time. The following table, ***Table E.1, Distribution of Hours by DCFS Service Category,*** breaks out the total hours spent by DCFS staff during the study period, across all Service Categories.

Table E.1: Distribution of Hours by DCFS Service Category

Service	Total Hours Overall	Percent of Total
Intake	19,502	6%
CPS/Investigation and Assessment	61,416	18%
Family Voluntary	17,049	5%
Family Voluntary (FRS)	8,229	2%
Family Dependency	129,266	37%
Adoption Support	3,796	1%
Case Support Time	107,729	31%
Total	346,988	100%

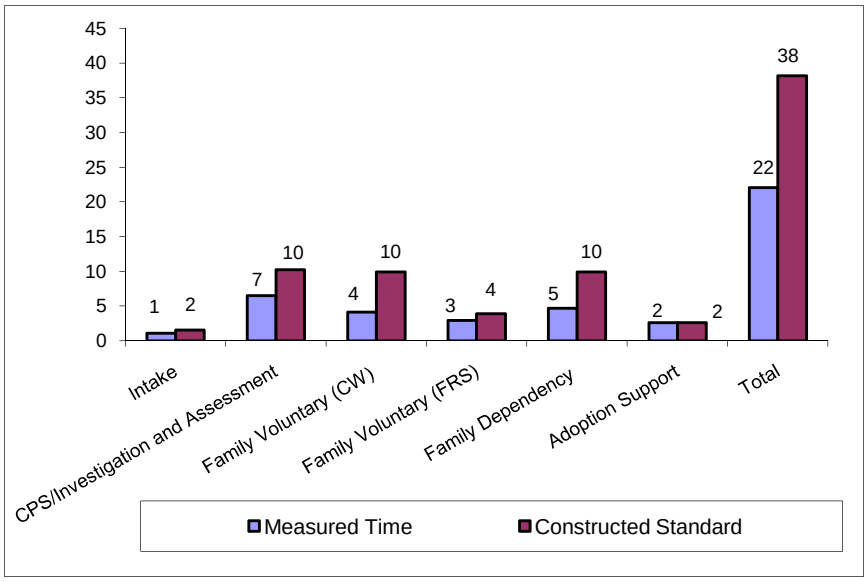
E.3.1.2 Case Hours by Service Category

Measured Time data were analyzed to obtain the average hours per case for each Service Category. Results served as the basis for constructing standards with focus groups in the expert review process. The figures used included: (1) Average times for tasks to be completed; (2) proportions of cases within a Service Category receiving a task; and (3) the average number of times a task occurred per month. The sum of these calculations resulted in an average time per task for each service.

The current Washington State workload study measured 69% of caseworker time spent on specific case tasks. This number compares favorably to other states. Montana child welfare workload study measured 64.5% of caseworker time as being spent on specific case tasks, New York 68.9% (extrapolated to 40 hour week), Idaho 71.1% and Alaska 65%.

The following graph, ***Figure E.2, DCFS Time in Hours per Case by Service Category***,(see Volume I, Tables 1.04-1.09) shows the relationships between the average number of Measured Time hours currently spent on each case and Constructed Standard hours, for the primary worker. Results indicate that more time was needed to meet the needs of individual cases in all but one Service Category. These differences vary from no difference for Adoption Support, to more than double for Family Voluntary (4.1 versus 9.9 hours) and Family Dependency (4.7 versus 9.9 hours). Intake, CPS/Investigation and Assessment, and Family Voluntary (FRS) showed smaller gaps between the current Measured Time and the projected Constructed Standard.

Figure E.2: DCFS Time in Hours per Case for Primary Worker by Service Category



E.3.1.3 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Positions by Service Category

Table E.2 represents the time per case of the primary staff role delivering the service (often the case carrying social worker). Other staff roles also contribute required services to a case. The noncase-carrying social workers and program managers included in the workload study perform specialized functions that normally would be performed by case carrying social workers. Some of these functions require a level of proficiency best suited for a designated worker. At times, it is more efficient for a function to be performed by a designated worker.

Noncase-carrying social workers have been used for many years to support case carrying social workers, which enables them to spend more time with children and families. This work includes:

- Intake and Referral staff
- Child Health & Education Track (CHET) Screeners

- Relative Search Specialists
- Placement Specialists
- Court Specialists
- Native American Status Identification, Tribal Notification, and Family Search Specialists
- Due Diligence (Due diligence is the search for a missing or unknown person, such as a non-custodial parent.)
- Child Protective Team, and other Staffing facilitators

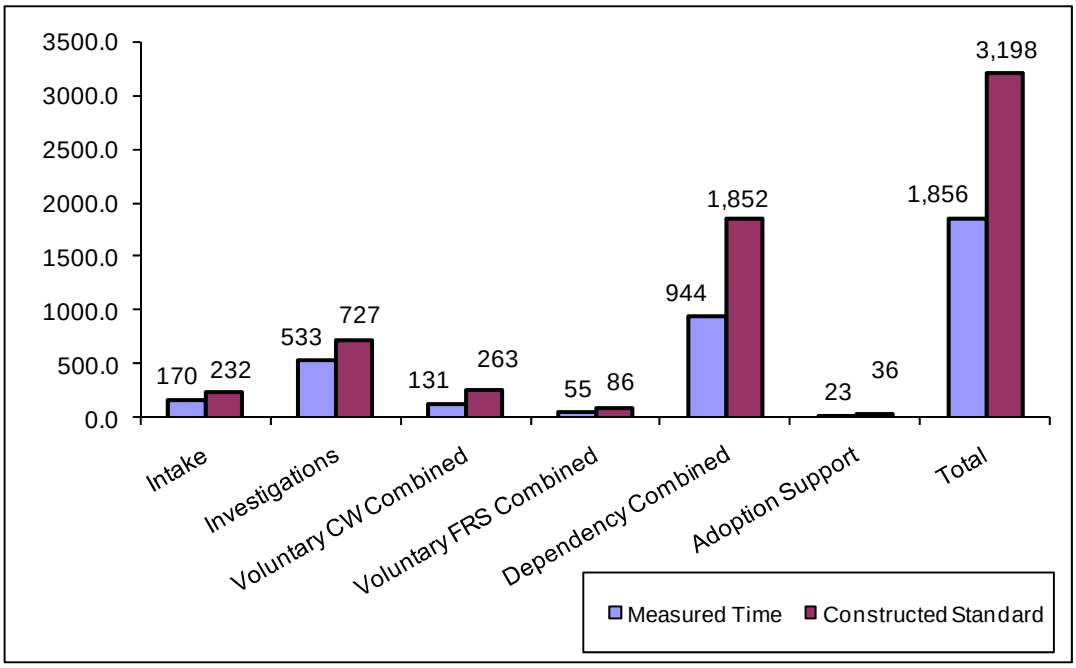
Other specialized support staff generally Social and Health Program Consultants, do not carry cases but perform direct service work with children, families, service providers and foster parents. This direct service work is essential for the achievement of child safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and families on the case carrying social workers' caseloads. This work includes:

- Family Team Decision Meeting(FTDM) facilitators
- Foster care recruitment and retention worker
- Adoption support worker
- Adolescence and ICW program manager.
- CWS and CPS support staff
- Data integrity staff
- Fiduciary specialists

The following graphs illustrate the number of FTEs in the Measured Time and the number of FTEs calculated for the Constructed Standard. ***Figure E.3, DCFS FTE Summary by Service Category*** presents the results for DCFS, with FTE figures based upon all staff positions. The gaps may be addressed by increased staffing, as well as by taking other approaches to maximize staff efficiency, which will be discussed in the Recommendations section.

Adoption Support shows a gap not reflected in the previous graph, due to a need for more case support staff. Figure E.2 was based only on the primary case carrying staff person. Figure E.3 presents all FTEs needed to work on a case. These positions, such as program managers and clerical workers, perform essential functions serving children in need of adoption.

Figure E.3: DCFS FTE Summary by Service Category

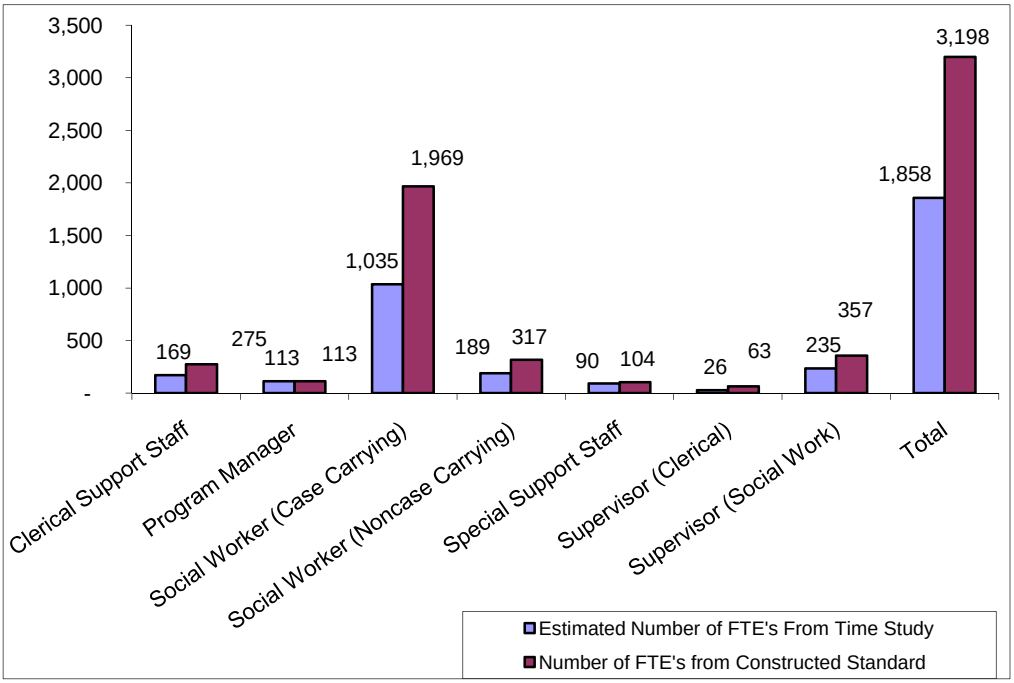


E.3.1.4 Full-Time Staff by Position Type

The following graph depicts the gap between measured staff and the FTEs projected by the Constructed Standards, by Staff Position.

The primary finding for DCFS, as shown in ***Figure E.4, DCFS FTE Summary by Position***, was that most of the gap was in Case-Carrying Social Workers. It was found that the estimated number of case-carrying social worker should be almost doubled – 934 FTE social workers are needed to reach the number of FTE's recommended in the Constructed Standard process, based on the gap analysis. (See page ix for explanation of gap analysis).

Figure E.4: DCFS FTE Summary by Position



*See description of noncase-carrying social worker and program manager on page xii.

E.3.2 Division of Licensing Resources (DLR)

E.3.2.1 Staff Hours

For DLR services, the word "case" was used most often to refer to a foster home, group home, or other facility being licensed, rather than to a child or family. The Time Study found that, among DLR staff, the time spent on "case-related" tasks was 72% of staff time during the time study. The following table, ***Table E.2, Distribution of Hours by DLR Service Category***, shows the statewide total number of hours, and associated proportions of time, spent by DLR staff on the various services provided by the Division.

Table E.2: Distribution of Hours by DLR Service Category

Service	Total Hours Overall	Percent of Total
DLR Investigations	6,073	24%
Facility Licensing	2,793	11%
Foster Home Licensing	9,293	37%
Case Support Time	7,029	28%
Total	25,187	100%

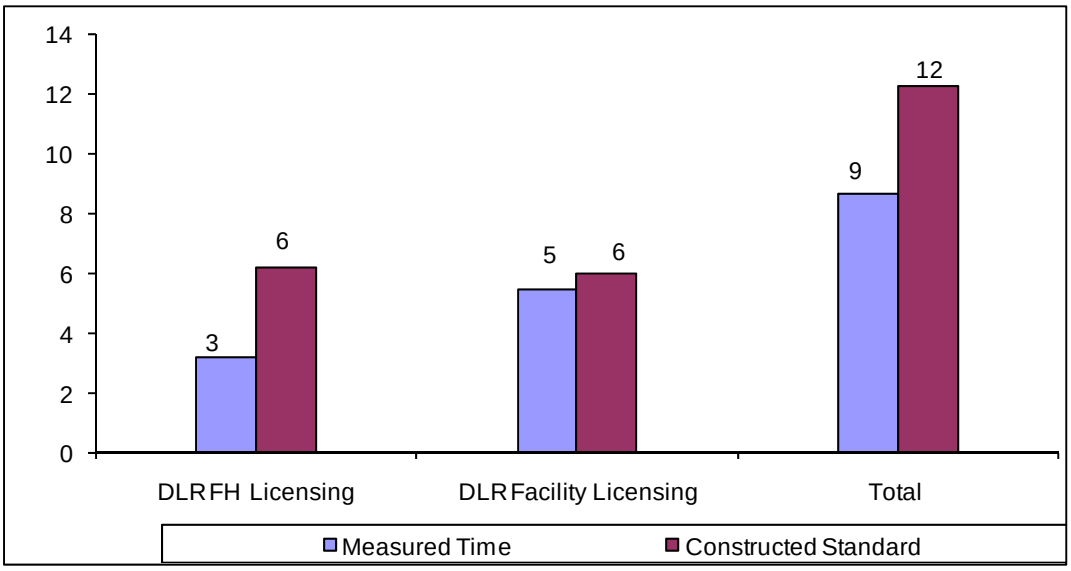
"Foster Home Licensing" service (37%) accounted for over a third of the DLR staff resources. "DLR Investigations" (24%) was the next highest Service Category.

The following bar graphs depict the relationship between Measured Time findings and Constructed Standards, by DLR Case, for Service Categories and Positions.

E.3.2.2 Case Hours by Service Category

Figure E.5, DLR Time in Hours per Case by Primary Worker by Service Category (see Volume I, Tables 1.13-1.14), indicates that a higher number of hours was identified by the Constructed Standard process for each Service Category than was recorded during the Time Study. These times are for the primary case carrying position in each service. The primary position for the Foster Home Licensing was the case carrying social worker and for the Facility Licensing, the program manager. These average hours were based upon 143 staff coded to DLR and completing the time study.

Figure E.5: Average DLR Time in Hours per Case by Service Category for Primary Position (excludes investigation services)



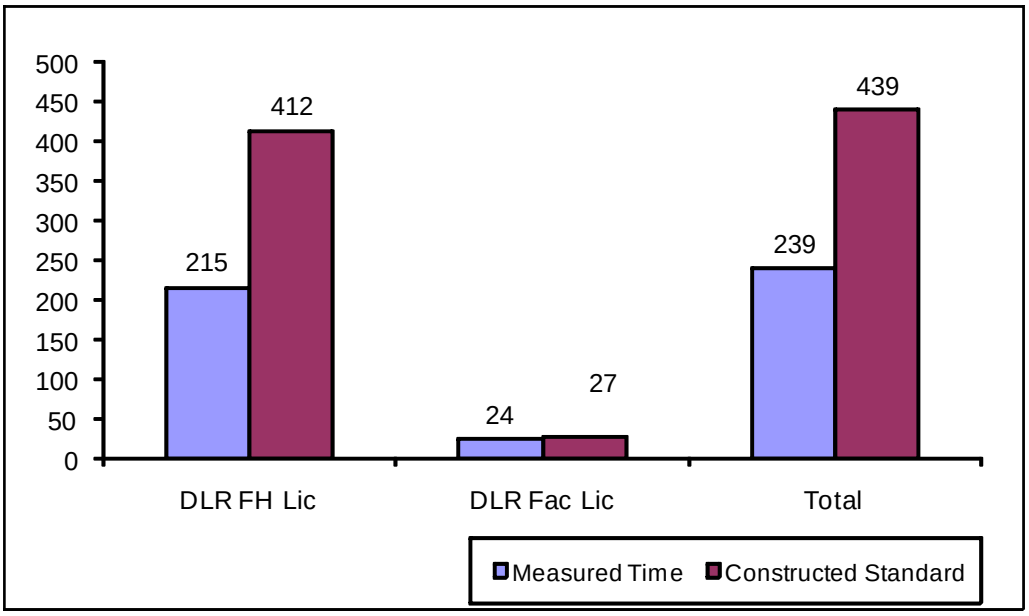
A limitation of the study was that it was not possible to obtain average measured time per case for DLR CPS Investigation and DLR Facility Investigations. Since there were no measured times for these services, constructed standard times count not be developed. There were two reasons

for this; 1.) during the data collection period DLR investigations received lower than normal number of referrals; this allowed staff time to address information and documentation backlogs and to close case files, but caused an underestimation of time per case, and 2.) there was some confusion as to whether time recorded as investigations of CPS allegations in facilities were to be coded related to licensing work or to investigations. The study team strongly recommends that DLR investigations be restudied as soon as feasible to address this gap.

E.3.2.3 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Positions by Service Category

The following graph, ***Figure E.6, DLR FTE Summary by Service Category***, also indicates a need for increased staff, with Foster Home Licensing requiring almost 200 more staff (197 FTEs) statewide. (See page ix for explanation of gap analysis.)

Figure E.6: DLR FTE Summary by Service Category (excludes investigation services)

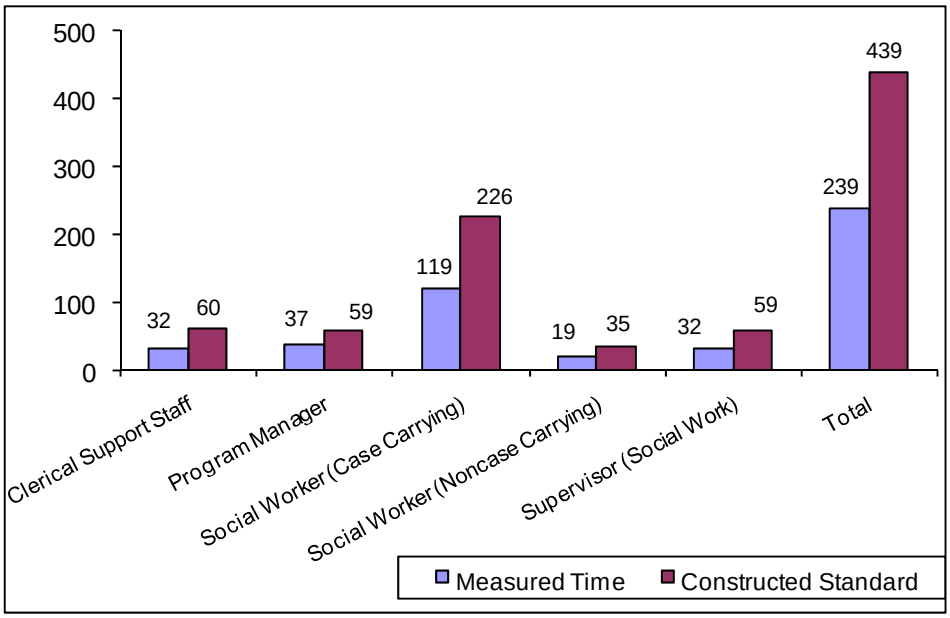


Based upon the average time per case from the time study and the number of DLR cases from the DLR administrative data, the number of FTE from measured time is determined to be 239.

E.3.2.4 Full-Time Staff by Position Type

For DLR, the Case-Carrying Social Worker position shows the most striking difference between the Measured Time and Constructed Standard number of FTEs (119 versus 226). In ***Figure E.7, DLR FTE Summary by Position,*** all positions show a gap between Measured Time and Constructed Standards.

Figure E.7: DLR FTE Summary by Position (excludes investigation services)



*See description of noncase-carrying social worker and program manager on page xii.

Table E.2 shows Foster Home and Facility Licensing services represented 48% of DLR workload. The FTE profile presented above in Figure E.7, includes only these services. The Investigation services of DLR comprise a large proportion of DLR time. Tasks related to Investigation on the Task Inventory were not complete enough to make calculations regarding Measured Time and Constructed Standard Time for DLR Investigations, and further study is recommended. This issue was addressed above in relation to Figure E.5 in an earlier part of this chapter.

E.3.3 Specialized Caseload Calculations

The measured and constructed standard case times for both DCFS and DLR shown in ***Table E.3, Final Measured Time per Case and Constructed Standards*** were used in allocation models to determine the numbers of staff needed to provide services and to determine the associated caseload size.

Table E.3: Final Measured Time per Case and Constructed Standards[2] for Primary Worker (excludes investigation services)

	Measured Time		Constructed Standard	
	Hours/Case or Referral # Hours	Specialized Caseload # Cases or Referrals	Hours/Case or Referral # Hours	Specialized Caseload # Cases or Referrals
Intake	1.12	88	1.55	61
CPS/Investigation and Assessment	6.54	18	10.24	12
Family Voluntary	4.13	29	9.93	12
Family Voluntary (FRS)	2.95	40	3.91	30
Family Dependency	4.69	25	9.91	12
Adoption Support	2.63	22	2.63	22
DLR FH Licensing	3.24	33	6.22	17
DLR Facility Licensing	5.42	16.8	6.02	15

E.3.4 SACWIS baseline information

Data specifically related to tasks associated with information processing were also examined, which considered staff position and Service Category for both DCFS and DLR. The analysis found that, of the total of 372,175 hours recorded for DCFS and DLR, 42% were associated with processing information. Of the information processing hours in the time study, 39% were performed manually and 61% using computers. The findings for this analysis will provide a useful baseline for comparison when assessing the efficiency of the information system now being developed to replace the CAMIS system.

Based on the above findings, the following Recommendations were developed to support the CA in addressing the identified gaps in staffing services.

E.3.5 Recommended Areas for Improved Efficiency

A workload study is not a budget study, a strategic plan, an efficiency report, a work process study, nor a quality assurance report. But, it can serve to support each of these types of studies. It should be seen as a tool to understand staff time utilization, ranging from Division-wide requirements down to task-level detailed efforts by selected staff types. Future work will be needed to fully address the gap between “what is” and “what should be.”

This study took place during a period of organizational change for the Children’s Administration. The CA Program Redesign was implemented only one month before the time study was conducted, and new procedures were still being learned by staff. Efforts to implement a new Practice Model, which will begin in October 2007, were considered in constructing the standards, but its impact can only be effectively assessed after conducting another workload study when it is fully operational.

[2] Measured hours per case and constructed hours per case for DLR Investigation are not available. See discussion of study limitations, above.

In light of these factors, it would be useful to consider whether there are some practical actions that might begin to narrow the gap identified in the results of this study. Two directions that seem important to consider are 1) work process efficiencies and 2) redefining the work requirements. These possibilities are discussed in the next section.

The following suggestions provide examples of how study results may be utilized to support the continuing efforts of CA management to improve service delivery. By creating greater efficiencies, they may make some contribution toward closing the gaps between current and desired staffing levels, in addition to what can be accomplished by increasing the number of FTEs. These potential next steps include:

- **Regular Workload Studies** – Considering the current changes in the CA approach to services, it may be helpful to conduct comprehensive workload studies every three to five years, with more focused studies between the more comprehensive ones. This would develop a series of time study data sets over time, which could build upon each other.

- **Court Waiting** – CA staff spent about 6,387 hours during the month long time study across the state, waiting for or participating in court. Waiting accounts for 42% of this time (2,685 hrs/mo) or about 20 FTE positions. Working with court staff to streamline scheduling may address this inefficient use of social worker time.

- **Data Processing** – Time study results documented over 158,000 hours of CA staff time spent on information processing tasks, either electronically or manually. Investigation of improved and/or new technology, such as remote access, may help support less time-consuming data processing.

- **Face-to-Face Contacts in Dependency Services** – Due to federal and state requirements, gaps related to this activity are crucial for the CA to address. This is an area in which it might be worthwhile to consider strategies for prioritizing visits and minimizing travel time.

- **Supervised Visits** – Supervised visits accounted for 1,374 hours during the time study, or 11.5 FTEs of case-carrying social worker time. Other approaches to achieving child safety while freeing up social workers for other tasks, may be considered.

- **Client Transportation –** During the month-long time study, client transportation required 1,841 case carrying social worker hours, or 15.5 case-carrying social worker FTEs. This is another area that could be examined for increased efficiency in the use of social worker time.

- **New Model for Covering "Uncovered" Caseloads** – Supervisors spent 46% of their time statewide in direct case-related activities, during the time study. Much of this case activity was for cases previously assigned to others. CA may consider other models for overseeing uncovered caseloads, as a way of prioritizing the Supervisor time use.

- **Review Meeting Commitments** – While meetings are a necessary part of the job, the nature and frequency of these activities could be reviewed as a possible source of time that could be redirected toward case-related tasks. Not including case staffing or staff training, CA staff spent 11,447 hours in meetings during the study month statewide. The 4,323 of these hours spent by case carrying caseworkers in meetings amounts to the equivalent of 36 FTEs.

As can be seen from the above items, case carrying social workers spent almost half (46%) of their case-related time on tasks not involving contact with families and collaterals. Some tasks have become the responsibility of case carrying social workers due to cuts in support staff. Many of the above suggestions indicate the need for a comprehensive review of case-carrying social worker time use, and consideration of what tasks they currently perform that may not require the expertise or training of a professional social worker.

As mentioned above, this report should be seen as one of a series of studies which can build a cumulative understanding of CA staff workload over time. The data collected for this report can serve as a baseline for future analysis.

The resources invested in The Washington State Children's Administration (CA) Workload Study now and in the future are reflective of the agency's commitment to better serve Washington State's children and families. The time, energy, creativity and funds dedicated to more efficient and effective service provision will, over time, produce improved outcomes for these vulnerable populations.

For more information about this study, you may contact Ginny Heim from Children's Administration at HEVI300@dshs.wa.gov or Donald Graham from Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc. at dgraham@wrma.com.