

**Children's
Administration**

Jennifer Strus, Assistant Secretary

2013-2015

Strategic Plan



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

We transform lives

VISION

An end to child abuse
and neglect

MISSION

To transform lives by
acting to protect children
and promote healthier
families through strong
partnerships with the
community and tribes

VALUES

Collaboration
Compassion
Respect

Introduction

The Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration (CA) is the public child welfare agency for the state of Washington. Our 2,400 staff in 46 field offices work with children and families to identify their needs and develop a plan for services which support families and assure the safety and well-being of children. These services are designed to reduce the risk of abuse, find safe alternatives to out-of-home placement and assure safety and permanency for children in out-of-home care.

CA's core services focus on the following:

- **Child Protective Services (CPS)** – Persons who suspect that a child is being abused or neglected contact CPS with their concerns. During Fiscal Year 2013, there were 39,928 referrals eligible to be investigated. In most of these cases, a social worker was required to conduct an initial face-to-face meeting with the child victim within 24 or 72 hours of receiving the referral. Most CPS investigations must be completed within 90 days (there are some exceptions permitted by policy).
- In January 2014, in three offices (Aberdeen, Lynwood, and two zip codes in Spokane), social workers will begin providing a differential response to low and moderate allegations of child abuse or neglect. This differential response, called Family Assessment Response (FAR), is a voluntary option for families who qualify. In FAR, there is no investigation and no finding of whether the alleged abuse or neglect occurred. Rather, social workers work with the family, building on their strengths to establish the community supports the family needs to be successful long-term.
- **Child and Family Welfare Services (CFWS)** – Whether a dependency petition has been filed or the family has agreed to services or placement of their child through Family Voluntary Services, our CFWS social workers work with the families and children to reunify them or find other permanent options for the children. On July 1, 2013 there were 8,260 children in out of home care. Of that group of children, 3,340 (40.4 percent) are in the care of relatives rather than, for example, foster homes.
- **Licensed Resources** – The staff in our Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) licenses foster homes and investigates alleged violations of licensing standards by licensed providers as well as allegations of abuse or neglect by licensed providers. There are currently 5,119 licensed homes. Licensors license an average of 501 state and private agency homes every three months. DLR staff also conduct adoption home studies which are used in the adoption of legally-free children into permanent homes.

CA emphasizes child safety at every stage of our involvement with children and their families. Safety is at the forefront of every aspect of our work as we endeavor to achieve the following:

- Maintain children in their own homes and prevent out-of-home placement;
- Serve and support children during the time they are in out-of-home care;
- Return children home safely as quickly as possible;
- Support children in homes of fit and willing relatives;
- Secure permanent families for children who cannot safely return home; and
- Decrease the over-representation of children of color in the child welfare system.

Through our partnerships with communities and community-based services, CA works with parents in safely parenting their children and achieving family self-sufficiency.

DSHS Goals

Goal 1

HEALTH – Each individual and each community will be healthy.

Goal 2

SAFETY – Each individual and each community will be safe.

Goal 3

PROTECTION – Each individual who is vulnerable will be protected.

Goal 4

QUALITY OF LIFE – Each individual in need will be supported to attain the highest possible quality of life.

Goal 5

PUBLIC TRUST – Strong management practices will ensure quality and efficiency.

Through the Fostering Well-Being Program, CA provides health coordination for children in out-of-home care. In addition, CA uses early and periodic screening, diagnosis and treatment for children involved in the public child welfare system and has implemented a process for ensuring that medically fragile children in our care are connected to ongoing and appropriate health care.

CA works diligently to provide exemplary services to vulnerable children and families, to constantly assess our performance outcomes and to practice good stewardship of state resources. While our first commitment is to the vulnerable children of Washington and the families from which they come, our guiding principles of quality, consistency, accountability and partnership increase public trust through the course of our day-to-day actions and interactions and ongoing rigorous self-appraisal.

Governor Jay Inslee's Results Washington Goals

CA is a partner in Governor Jay Inslee's **Results Washington**, a focused effort to create effective, efficient, accountable government.

Results Washington Goal Area number 4 is Healthy and Safe Communities. Under this goal area, CA has lead responsibility for three success metrics under the *Safe People: Protection and Prevention* success indicator. CA's three **Results Washington** success metrics are:

- Decrease the percentage of children with a founded allegation of abuse or neglect who have a new founded allegation within six months.
- Decrease the length of stay in out-of-home placement for children in state foster care.
- Increase the percentage of child victims seen by a social worker within 24 hours of the intake in emergent cases.

Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Goals

As a member of the DSHS team, CA also has lead responsibility for performance metrics that fit within DSHS' departmental goals. DSHS has the following five broad goals:

- **Health** – Each individual and each community will be healthy.
- **Safety** – Each individual and each community will be safe.
- **Protection** – Each individual who is vulnerable will be protected.
- **Quality of Life** – Each individual in need will be supported to obtain the highest possible quality of life.
- **Public Trust** – Strong management practices will be used to ensure quality and efficiency.

All of CA's success metrics are in support of the DSHS Protection goal. The CA success metrics are:

- The average active caseload for Child Welfare social workers will meet the national average.
- Percentage of child victims seen by a social worker within 24 hours of the intake in emergent case will increase.

- Percentage of children in placement who received a visit to evaluate their health and safety during a calendar month they were in care will increase.
- Percentage of children with a founded allegation who have a new founded allegation within six months will decrease.
- Percentage of children not re-entering placement within 12 months of reunification will increase.
- Percentage of all children currently in care for at least one year who have not moved within 12 months of their previous move or their entry into placement will increase.
- Disparity ratio of minority-to-white children who remain in out-of-home care for more than two years will decrease.
- Number of full-time Child Protective Services workers with more than 25 cases will decrease.
- Number of Child Protective Services investigations open more than 90 days will decrease.
- Percentage of children in foster care longer than five years will decrease.
- Number of outstanding Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) completed between tribes and regional child welfare offices will increase.

Strategic Plan

Below are the details of our Strategic Plan to meet our Strategic Objectives. Each Strategic Objective is discussed under its larger DSHS goal area. Each Strategic Objective includes a statement of its importance, a qualification of a success measure and a timeline for achieving it and, most importantly, an Action Plan. CA Strategic Objectives are monitored and updated quarterly at <http://ppa.dshs.wa.lcl/CoreMetrics/Pages/ExcelNEW.aspx>. Each CA Action Plan is also updated quarterly.

Strategic Objectives, Importance, Success Measures and Action Plans

DSHS Goal 3: Protection - Each individual who is vulnerable will be protected

Strategic Objective 1: Percentage of child victims seen by a social worker within 24 hours of the intake in emergent cases will increase.

Importance: To assure the safety of child victims in emergent cases, they must be seen quickly after a referral is received.

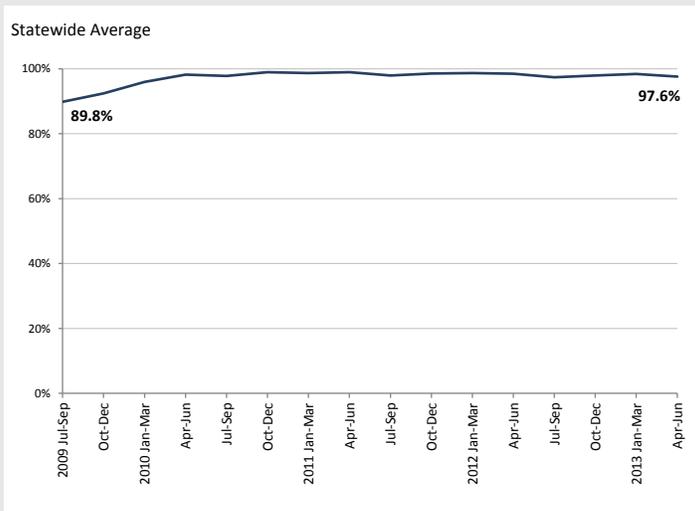
Success Measure: Increase the percentage of child victims in emergent Child Protective Services intakes who were seen by a social worker within 24 hours of the intake from 97.6 percent to 98.5 percent by 2014.

Action Plan: The Children's Administration is enhancing practice and business processes to increase child safety from the point of first contact through the life of the case.

The development and implementation of a new child safety framework including tools for safety assessment and planning, in consultation with the National Resource Center for Child Protection, is helping social workers better identify and manage threats to child safety.

Response time for seeing child victims is monitored and reported regularly to support ongoing improvement.

Percent of child victims in emergent Child Protective Service intakes who were seen by a social worker within 24 hours of the intake



Strategic Objective 2: Percentage of children in placement who received a visit to evaluate their health and safety during a calendar month they were in care will increase.

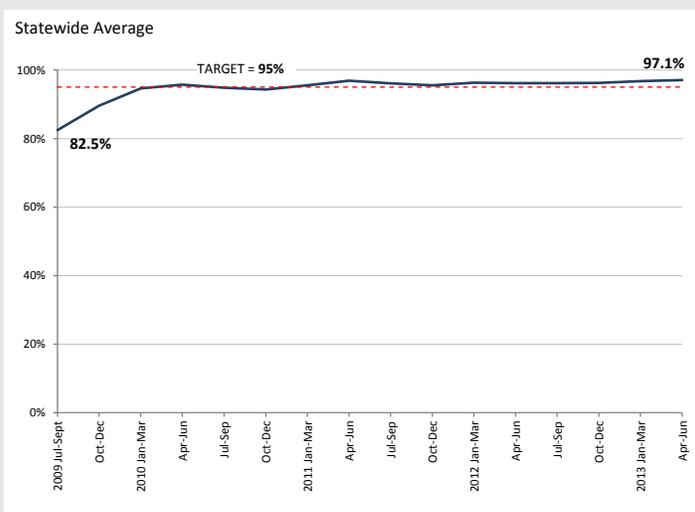
Importance: To assure the continued safety and well-being of children in care, the social worker must conduct regular monthly visits.

Success Measure: The percentage of children receiving safety and health visits increases from 97.1 percent to 98 percent by July 2015.

Action Plan: Solution-Based Casework and Child Safety Framework principles are used by social workers to identify safety threats to children and build on family strengths to alleviate those threats. During visits, social workers apply engagement skills, interviewing techniques, family life cycle development frameworks, and relapse prevention techniques.

Completion of health and safety visits is monitored and reported regularly to support ongoing improvement.

Percent of children in placement who received a visit to evaluate their health and safety during a calendar month they were in care



Strategic Objective 3: Percentage of children with a founded allegation who have a new founded allegation within six months will decrease.

Importance: The impact of child abuse or neglect on child victims can be devastating; stopping the cycle is critical for the continued well-being of the children involved.

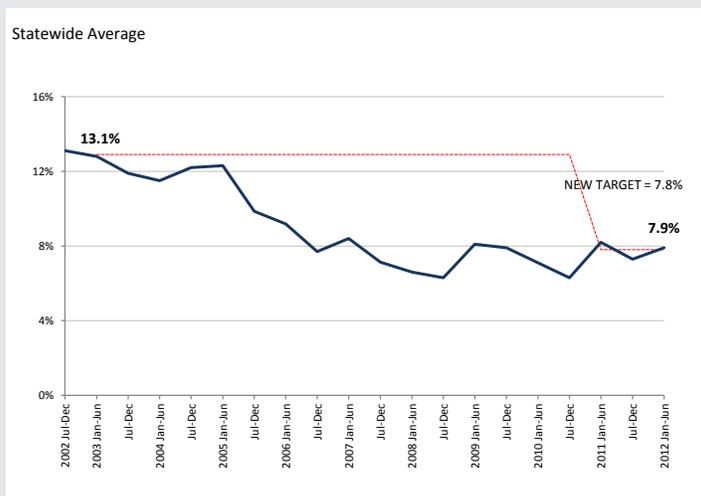
Success Measure: Decrease the percentage of children with a founded allegation of abuse or neglect who have a new founded allegation within 6 months from 7.9 percent to 7.0 percent by July 30, 2014.

Action Plan: The practice tools used by social workers are being enhanced in 2013 and will improve the assessment of family needs and issues that impact child safety.

The use of evidence-based services will be expanded statewide to ensure that families are receiving services that effectively address their needs.

Contracts for services are being transitioned to performance-based contracts so providers' performance can be measured.

Percent of children with a founded allegation who have a new founded allegation within six months



Strategic Objective 4: Percentage of children not re-entering placement within 12 months of reunification will increase.

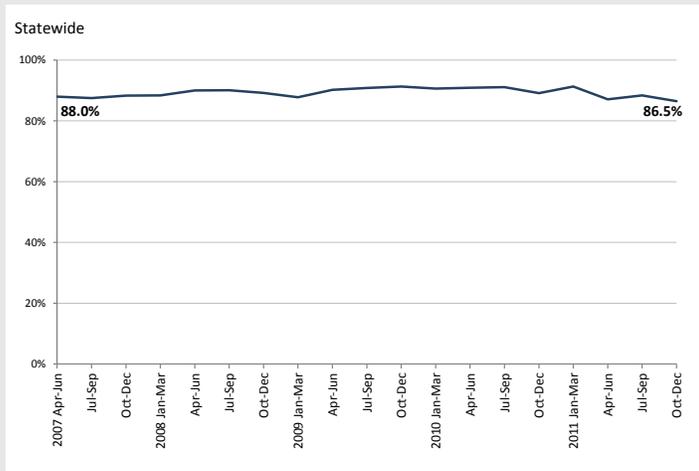
Importance: It is harmful for children to experience multiple placements.

Success Measure: The percentage of children not re-entering placement within 12 months of reunification increases from 86.5 percent to 87 percent by July 2015.

Action Plan: Monthly health and safety visits assure families are safe, supported, and stable during the six month transition home period before dependencies are dismissed. Enhancements to the practice tools made in 2013 will improve the assessment of the family needs and issues that impact a safe return of the child.

The use of evidence-based services will be expanded statewide to ensure that families are receiving services that are addressing their needs and supporting child safety and stability.

Percent of children not re-entering placement within 12 months of reunification



Strategic Objective 5: Percentage of all children currently in care for at least one year who have not moved within 12 months of their previous move or their entry into placement will increase.

Importance: It is harmful for children to experience multiple placements.

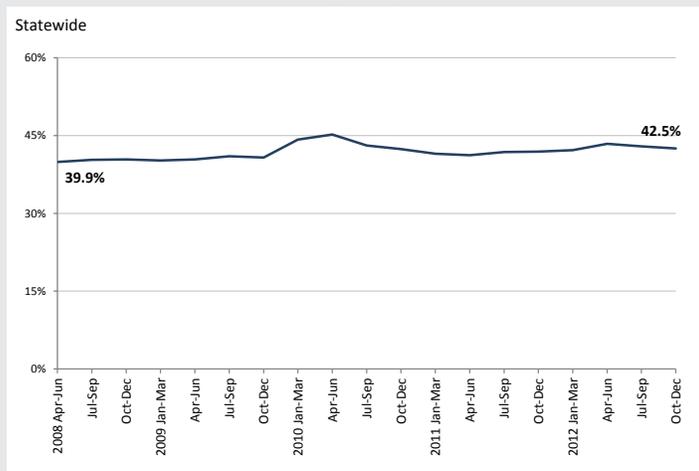
Success Measure: The percentage of all children currently in care for at least one year who have not moved within 12 months of their previous move or their entry into placement increases from 42.5 percent to 43.8 percent by July 2015.

Action Plan: Increase supports for licensed caregivers and relatives caring for children in the child welfare system, including creating regional teams to address licensing barriers and providing staff and caregiver training to meet the unique needs of relatives caring for children.

Revise minimum licensing standards to simplify language so that rules are easily understood and provide flexibility in meeting standards while assuring child safety.

Monthly health and safety visits assure families are safe, supported and stable and that resource needs are identified in a timely manner.

Percent of all children currently in care for at least 1 year who have not moved within 12 months of their previous move or their entry into placement



Strategic Objective 6: Disparity ratio of minority-to-white children who remain in out-of-home care for more than two years will decrease.

Importance: Children of color should not be over-represented in out-of-home care.

Success Measure: The disparity ratio of minority-to-white children who remain in out-of-home care for more than two years decreases by July 2015.

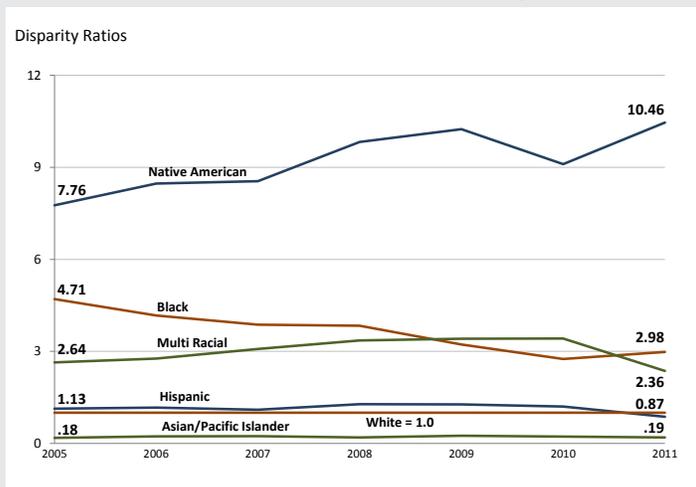
Action Plan: The department engages in disproportionality awareness and bias reduction training as a vital step in efforts to eliminate disproportionality in the child welfare system.

CA continues its Permanency Roundtables to decrease length of stay in out-of-home care.

Regional disproportionality leads monitor length of stay by race/ethnicity and develop recommendations that drive outcomes for children of color.

CA will expand statewide contracts to increase the pool of potential caregivers and placement options across the state, particularly for Native American, African American and multiracial children.

Disparity ratio of minority to white children who remain in out-of-home care for more than two years



Strategic Objective 7: Number of full-time Child Protective Services workers with more than 25 cases will decrease.

Importance: Social workers are better able to provide case management and service to children and families when their caseload sizes are manageable.

Success Measure: The CPS average caseload ratios up to 1:20.3 decreases to 1:15 by July 2015.

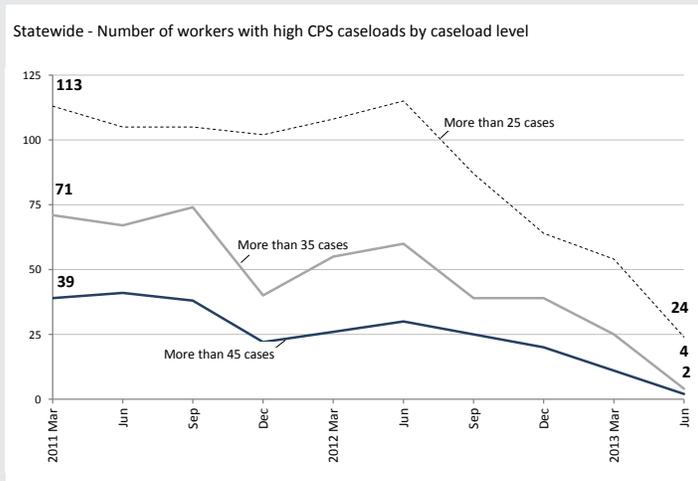
Action Plan: An additional 22 FTEs were added since the beginning on 2013 to reduce the CPS Caseload.

CA will work with the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence to develop a pool of qualified CPS workers to reduce the time it takes to fill vacant social worker staff positions.

CA will support CPS supervisors to ensure that CPS staff has caseloads trending to 15.

Caseloads sizes will continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis for early identification of increasing caseloads and identification of strategies to maintain lower caseload sizes.

Number of full time Child Protective Services workers with more than 25 cases



Strategic Objective 8: Number of Child Protective Services investigations open more than 90 days will decrease.

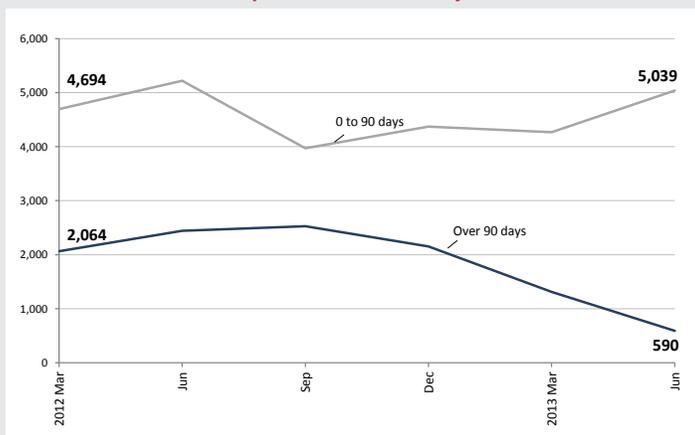
Importance: To provide the greatest protection to children and families, social workers' must consistently close cases within 90 days.

Success Measure: The number of Child Protective Services investigations open more than 90 days decreases from 11 percent to 6 percent by July 2015.

Action Plan: CA will continue to focus on recruitment of qualified CPS staff to lower caseloads.

Supervisors will continue to track CPS cases open longer than 90 days to identify programmatic, practice, and systemic barriers to case closure and assure that cases are closed when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Number of Child Protective Services investigations open more than 90 days



Strategic Objective 9: Percentage of children in foster care longer than five years will decrease.

Importance: All children who cannot safely reside with their parents deserve a safe, permanent home.

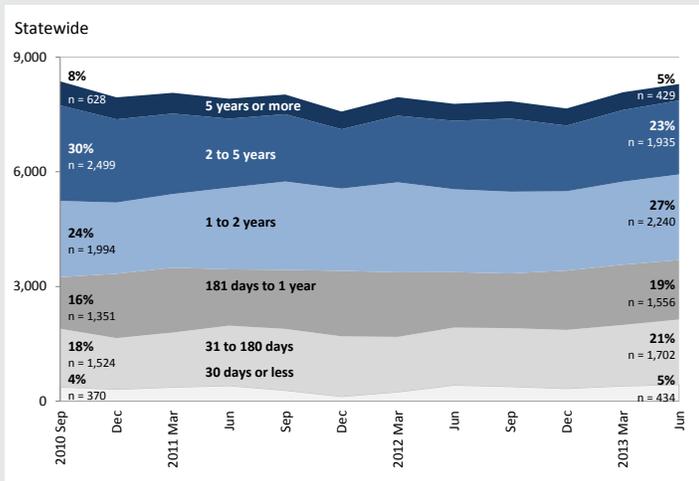
Success Measure: Decrease the percentage of children in Division of Children and Family Services out-of-home placement five years or more from 5.7 percent to 5.5 percent by September 30, 2014.

Action Plan: CA will continue to work with the Administrator of the Courts (AOC) and the Office of the Attorney General (AG) to analyze and improve the process that develops and finalizes permanent plans for dependent children.

The capacity to provide Permanency Roundtables will be increased. Permanency Roundtables were conducted for 174 children in 2012 and there will be 120 consultations in 2013 with expanded criteria to include more categories of children in the population. CA is collecting and analyzing the outcomes for the children that have received consultations to better understand the effects of the Permanency Roundtables.

The Division of Licensed Resources and the Division of Children and Family Services will continue to refine the Unified Home Study project providing a single approval for foster care and adoption home study applicants to improve outcomes for children in out-of-home care by ensuring that all caregivers meet safety standards and reduce placement disruptions when children become legally free (all caregivers will meet adoption criteria after they complete the home study).

Number of DSHS Children by length of stay in out-of-home placement



Strategic Objective 10: Number of outstanding Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) completed between tribes and regional child welfare offices will increase.

Importance: It is important to know how different tribes interact with the state in child welfare cases to better serve native children and respect for sovereignty of the tribes.

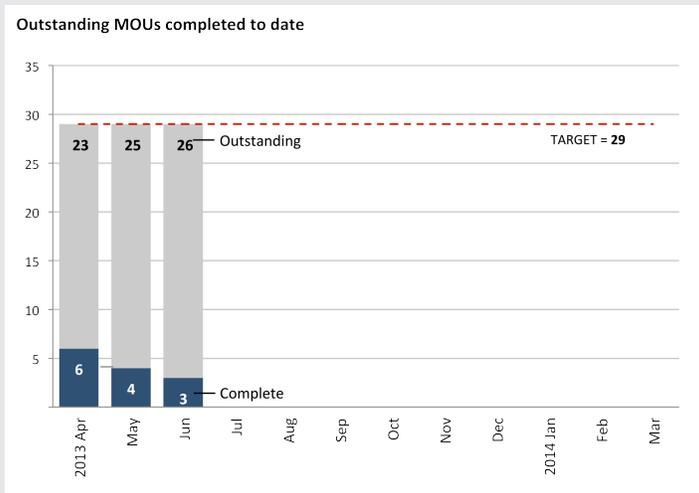
Success Measure: The number of outstanding Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) completed between tribes and regional child welfare offices will increase from 3 to 29 by July 2015.

Action Plan: CA field and headquarters staff are actively engaging tribes, providing support and problem solving barriers to completion of MOUs.

The current status of the MOUs will be updated on a monthly basis and provided to the Assistant Secretary and Secretary.

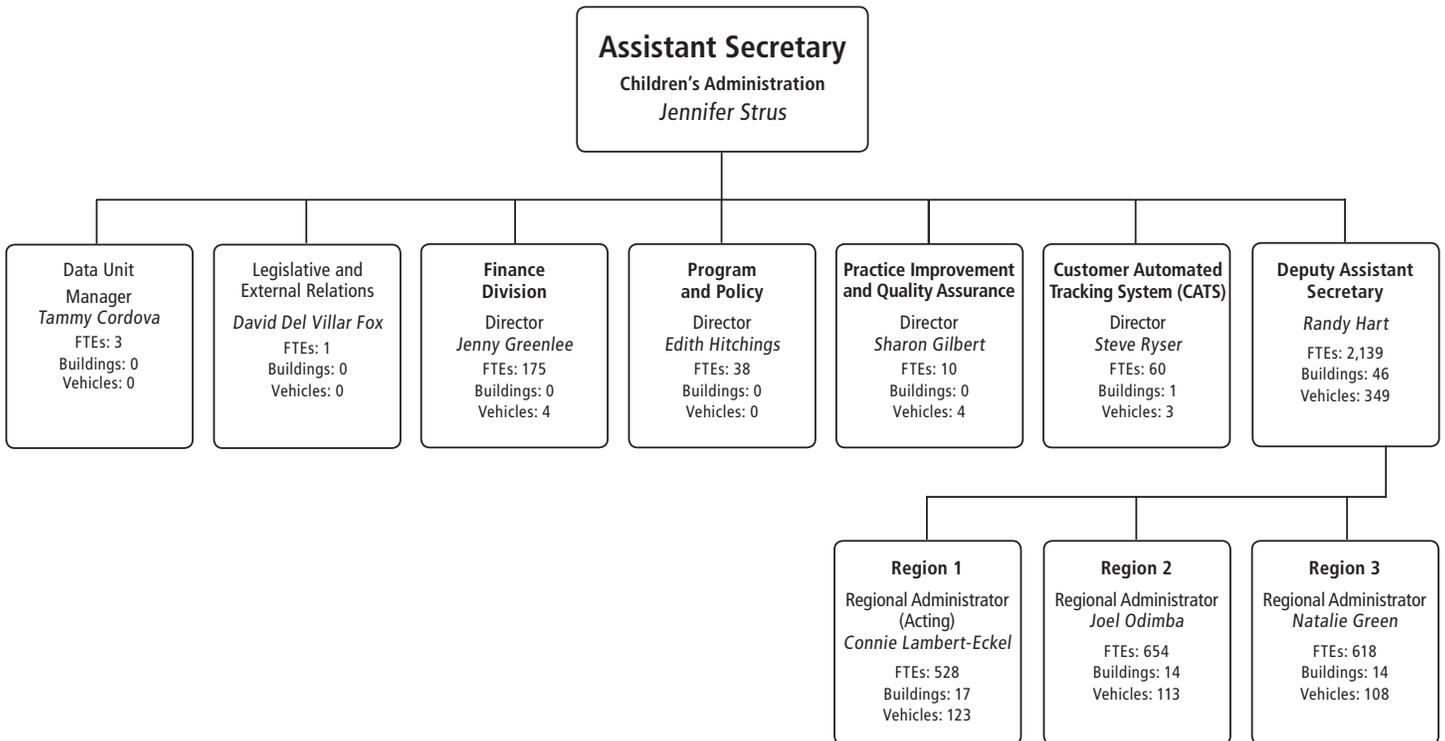
Previously there were six MOUs completed but it has been requested that all MOUs be updated if they are over 2 years old and are in the FAR office locations. This has required all but three of the MOUs to be updated.

Number of outstanding Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) completed between Tribes and regional child welfare offices



Department of Social and Health Services

Children's Administration



Sept. 6, 2013