

FY 2017-19 Budget Workshop Board Inquiry Form

Board Member	
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Inquiry Number: 18

Department: SOCIAL SERVICES
 Date: 4/14/2017
 Page(s) of Book or Powerpoint: PP 23-25

Request/Question:

How will the proposed reduction in Social Services staff impact the caseload sizes for the respective programs: Child Welfare, Adult Protective Services and Foster Care?
 Are there "industry standards" that recommend best practices in re: caseload sizes?

Response:

Child Welfare

The proposed reduction for Child Welfare is to support staff so will not increase caseloads directly. However, the reduction in available support staff will directly impact social workers as they are still responsible for completing all mandatory caseload activities and the decreased in support for administrative tasks will mean a corresponding decrease in the amount of time they have for their primary case management responsibilities including investigations and face to face contacts. As Daniel stated during the presentation the Department is not requesting restoration for the CWS support staff however, restoration is requested for 6 unfunded CWS Social Workers positions.

CWS Assessment and Investigation units averaged over 16 referrals per worker per month in 2016 which exceeds the SB 2030 recommended standard of 13. The restoration of 3 positions in the CWS Assessment and Investigations units will result in increased safety and support for children and families. Although CWS prioritizes child safety with timely investigation response being the highest priority, inadequate staffing compromises social workers ability to complete the balanced and rigorous assessments that are necessary to ensure child safety with the appropriate level of intervention. The restoration of these 3 positions will allow further improvement in investigation response times, the ability to complete comprehensive assessments across all domains including more timely and accurate safety and risk assessments, thorough documentation, and timely referral closures, all of which are critical factors in determining child safety.

CWS Ongoing Services caseloads averaged over 23 cases per worker in 2016 which exceeds the SB 2030 recommended standard of 15. The restoration of 3 positions in the CWS Ongoing Services units will result in improved outcomes for children and families through increased family engagement in the planning and delivery of supports and services that are needed to enable a child to live in the least restrictive family setting, promote normal childhood experiences, and ultimately achieve permanency.

Adult Protective Services

The proposed reduction in Adult Protective Services (APS) staff will result in a 21% caseload increase, increasing the average number of monthly referrals from 19 to 23 per social worker. Although there are no established caseload standards for APS the 21% increase will have a negative impact on APS Social Workers who already struggle with the increasing complexity of referrals and growing community demands for intensive intervention. Adult Protective Services (APS) has experienced an increase in the number of referrals each month in part due to the amount of people turning 65 every day, but also due to the social factors surrounding the population we serve. Many of our clients (aged & disabled) receive SSI benefits as their only source of income, which is minimal, and are unable to sustain housing, utilities, food and medication. An increase in visits to the Emergency Room by individuals who are not able to receive the level of care they require at home has also impacted the number of referrals made by hospital/medical personnel to APS seeking assistance with resources for discharge planning from local hospitals back into a suitable placement. With the aging population growing and available resources continuing to shrink it is anticipated that APS will continue to see an increase in referrals. As stated on slide 24 the amount of GFC to restore these positions (2.33 line workers & .8 support staff) is \$190,764 which will leverage \$173,289 in State and/or Federal funding for a total cost of \$364,053.

Response:

Foster Care Administration

The proposed reduction in Foster Care Administration staff will result in a 37.5% caseload increase, including an increase in the average number of monthly intakes/redeterminations from 11 to 15 per eligibility worker. Although there are no established caseload standards for Foster Care the 37.5% increase will have a negative impact on Eligibility Workers ability to meet mandated timeframes for foster care eligibility determination which allows the Department to draw down federal foster care funding. Additionally this delay will negatively impact the resource families, including relatives, who rely on foster care funding to meet the basic needs for food clothing and shelter for the children placed in their care. This lack of timely and consistent financial support through foster care funding further affects the Departments ability to recruit and retain quality caregivers which allows children in foster care to remain in their Community. Further, these caseload increases will make it unlikely that the Department will continue to meet mandates for timely, accurate intake and reassessments, which puts the Department at risk for audit findings that could potentially lead to fiscal sanctions. As stated on slide 23 the amount of GFC to restore these positions (3.75 line workers) is \$180,147 which will leverage \$164,303 in State and/or Federal funding for a total cost of \$344,450.