



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY
Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona

News Release

Clarence H. Carter, Director

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DES Calls for Cooperative Effort from Community, Child Welfare Advocates to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect

PHOENIX – The Department of Economic Security (DES) announced today during its [Semi-Annual Child Welfare report briefing](#) with child welfare advocates the necessity of community involvement to help improve safety, permanency and well-being for Arizona children and families.

“With tremendous leadership from Governor Brewer, legislators provided significant funding for the child welfare system in this year’s budget that will be an enormous help to our workforce,” said Director Clarence Carter. “The public child welfare agency is but one component of Arizona’s child welfare system. Safety, permanency, well-being and prevention must be community-based and community-driven. We cannot do this alone.”

With the leadership of Governor Brewer, DES has been on a mission to engage the child welfare community and continue a discussion about how conditions can be improved for the children of Arizona. Through these conversations, the Department has been able to successfully build support for the work it is doing to reform and refine the child welfare system.

The number of children entering the foster care system continues to rise. Although there are numerous potential reasons for the continued increase, no definitive causation has been established. As of March 2013, there are 14,314 children in foster care. Tremendous improvements have been made through the Department’s process improvements, but the trend in children needing care is not sustainable. With ongoing process improvements and continuous innovations, the goal is to create more long-term sustainable changes that will transform the child welfare system to improve outcomes for children and families.

“Supporting Arizona’s children, especially those who are living in out-of-home-care, starts with and ends with the community. The Department cannot be in all places at all times. It takes individuals in the community willing to take notice and report child abuse and neglect. As evidenced by the increase in calls to the child abuse hotline, I am proud to see the community stand up and take that obligation seriously,” added Carter.

During the meeting, Director Carter and leaders from the Division of Children, Youth and Families discussed past and current child welfare trends. These trends include:

An increase in the number of children reunified with their families: In the last reporting period 2,534 children were reunified with their families, an increase of 482 over the prior reporting period. Overall, the number of children leaving CPS custody due to adoption or reunification increased by approximately 20 percent over the prior reporting period.

Better recruitment and retention of caseworkers: The number of case carrying CPS workers increased by 73 between October 2012 and March 2013. This is attributed to a more efficient recruiting process that has resulted in the hiring of more caseworkers and fewer vacancies.

An increase in the number of children receiving visitation: The number of children receiving visitation increased to 85 percent in the most recent reporting period from 74 percent in the prior reporting period. The number of foster homes receiving visitation is at a record high with 93 percent receiving visitations compared to 83 percent in the prior reporting period.

The increase in number of children in out-of-home care is slowing: The total number of children in out-of-home-care grew to 14,314 on March 31, 2013 from 14,111 on September 30, 2012, a two percent increase in the number of children in out-of-home care.

The DES [Semi-Annual Child Welfare Report](#) is now available online.

The Department appreciates the public's vigilance in reporting child abuse or neglect. When anyone has concerns regarding a child's safety, please contact Arizona's Statewide Toll-Free Child Abuse Hotline at 1.888.767.2445 (1-888-SOS-CHILD). An investigation and assessment of child abuse or neglect cannot be undertaken until a report is made.

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