

# C.A.R.E Project – Recommendations Summary

## Recommendations Prioritization

Using recommendations from phase one of the business process redesign project — **focused on Intake and Assessment** — with Public Consulting Group (PCG), as well as suggestions from reports by OPEGA, Ombudsman, Child Death and Serious Injury, and DHHS Internal Review, OCFS developed a comprehensive list of eighty-four (84) recommendations.

To narrow down the list to a manageable number of the highest priority and impact items, OCFS staff were asked to rate each recommendation on a scale of (1) “Not a Priority” to (4) “Must Do”. **Approximately 350 OCFS staff completed the survey, a nearly 54% response rate.** Below are more details about who completed the survey.

## Survey Response Demographics

Response Rate	
Number of Respondents who started the survey	421
Number of Respondents who completed the survey	~350

Intake	57%
Assessment	56%
Permanency	57%
Licensing	64%
Adoption	69%
Support Staff	46%
PA/ APA	72%
Other	88%

District	% of District Who Responded
1 – York	48%
2 – Cumberland, Lincoln, Sagadahoc	52%
3 – Western Maine	32%
4 – Midcoast	51%
5 – Central Maine	69%
6 – Penquis	69%
7 – Downeast	75%
8 – Aroostook	50%
9 – Centralized Intake	63%
Maine Office – Administration	48%

In addition to staff prioritization, OCFS management was asked to rank all 84 in terms of effort required and impact for the organization. The final list from OCFS management included 30 recommendations.

When cross-walking the recommendations staff rated 3 or above with the OCFS priorities, both have similarly aligned ideas about prioritization, as shown on the following page in the 20 shared recommendations with which OCFS will move forward over the coming years. Shown alongside each recommendation is the aggregate staff rating on the scale of 1-4.

These recommendations were chosen by both staff and management, as well as priorities shared by stakeholders, as ones that can most effectively improve outcomes, ensure child safety, and increase permanence for children and families, by:

- Meeting statutory timeframes
- Improving the quality of assessments
- Better engaging families
- Increasing accountability and responsiveness to the community
- Increasing compliance with federal outcome measures
- Improving internal efficiencies
- Reducing costs associated with turnover and training of new staff
- Updating policies
- Improving practices and consistency of application
- Strengthening caseworker supports
- Improving transparency
- Updating technology

The next step for OCFS leadership is to develop a detailed timeline to ensure that as many of these can be undertaken as simultaneously and quickly as possible while not stretching agency resources too thin. *It is worth noting that some of these recommendations are required by law or statute, so they were not ranked by staff.*

### Final List of Recommendations

Recommendation	OCFS Staff Rating (1-4)
<b>Update caseload size, standards, and ratios. Maine should continue to aim to be at or below the caseload best practice of 1:10.</b>	3.73
<b>Improve efficiencies in practice by reducing duplication of preparing documents on paper and in MACWIS, and more fully utilizing support staff to assist caseworkers with administrative tasks, to allow more time to engage with clients.</b>	3.37
<b>Clarify positioning around child rights vs. parent rights.</b> The agency, through its caseworkers and leadership, must make the decision that its primary responsibility and obligation is to the best interest of the child/children and align policy and practice to reflect this.	3.21
<b>Update the workload analytic tool so workload can be measured on an ongoing basis and used to determine how many supervisors, specialists and support staff are needed.</b> OCFS should also update the time caseworkers time have available for casework.	3.17
<b>Improve processes and ensure adequate staffing to handle intake calls and volume.</b> Moving forward, OCFS should fill vacant positions with experienced, well-trained staff, develop a back-up plan to ensure calls are answered live, consider additional changes to staffing to stagger schedules, and improve training for intake staff.	3.13
<b>Tighten assessment practices to further assure child well-being.</b> OCFS should implement practice and culture changes that encourage caseworkers/supervisors to prioritize the child’s best interest and make recommendations to the supervisor and the AAG when circumstances require a different course of action.	3.09
<b>Provide training opportunities to judges, attorneys, guardian ad litem and other court staff to ensure thorough understanding of child welfare.</b> This includes offering domestic violence training and other child welfare related training, and hiring retired judges with extensive child welfare knowledge and experience to mentor Maine judges.	3.09
<b>Improve supervisory support for assessment staff.</b> OCFS should expedite supervisor reviews of new reports, form an on-call team to act on off-hour reports, and ensure there is a robust alert system that prioritizes and tracks the clock from initial report to keep supervisors informed and alerted to initiate the assessment timely.	3.04
<b>Re-assess the ARP program to align to best practice and define the referral process.</b> It is of the utmost importance that policy is clear and concise, the referral criteria is explicit, and the practice is consistent and implemented with fidelity across provider agencies.	3.03

Recommendation	OCFS Staff Rating (1-4)
<b>Develop a consistent, structured and transparent way to share updates and changes with staff in a variety of formats, such as emails, unit meetings, supervision, or newsletter.</b>	3.00
<b>Further build infrastructure to have staff-led input on practice and policy changes and implementation efforts.</b>	3.00
<b>Clarify processes so that decisions have at least two-tier review with clear roles and responsibilities at each level.</b>	3.00
<b>Formalize an ongoing training management plan for future implementation(s).</b>	2.97
<b>Improve consistency with case closing summary.</b> OCFS should convene a group of intake, assessment and permanency workers to discuss key information that be required in the closing summary and design a clear model for writing the closing summaries that all workers are then subsequently trained to follow when closing a case.	2.74
<b>Create an internal dashboard, with potential for external release in the future.</b> OCFS should create a centralized, regularly updated internal dashboard featuring the key metrics that leadership and staff can use to determine performance trends.	2.25
<b>Align report reclassification with Structured Decision-Making model.</b>	Not Ranked Must Do
<b>Ensure that supervisors review reports within 24 hours.</b>	Not Ranked Must Do
<b>Increase compliance with agency policy timeframes (24hr/ 72hr/ 35day rules).</b>	Not Ranked Must Do
<b>Use quality assurance process to support agency policy and practice model and training needs.</b>	Not Ranked Must Do
<b>Undertake key steps to successfully procure and implement a MACWIS replacement.</b>	Not Ranked Must Do

