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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability  
**FROM:** Office of Child and Family Services  
**DATE:** April 13, 2022  
**SUBJECT:** Government Oversight Committee Follow Up Questions

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**Sen. Timberlake/ Rep. Blier - What prevents DHHS from hiring caseworkers to work nights and weekends using the current approved position count? Is Legislation needed to make this possible? (They asked this of COFS, then Timberlake asked OPEGA to follow-up – is this something you can track down? Off the top of my head I am wondering if department is limited by the is labor contract?)**

If OCFS were to remove 16 caseworker lines from ongoing work to create a new afterhours/weekend unit, it could have a detrimental impact on the remaining caseworkers' ability to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and families in investigations and cases. While critical, afterhours / weekend work has fewer cases and thus, by shifting resources as suggested, one issue may be partially solved but another issue would be created that is equally concerning. In addition, creating this unit through new positions allows OCFS to address issues regarding the potential shift differential for these positions and possible changes to the labor agreement currently in place.

As several members discussed during the public hearing and work session, we believe that due to the nature of these dedicated afterhours/weekend positions, there are some social workers who will be interested who may not have previously been interested in working for OCFS in a standard day-shift capacity. Similarly, there may be some workers who would newly apply for a standard day-shift with the understanding that they would generally not have to work afterhours and weekends.

**Sen. Libby – More information on the number of applicants per hire (4 applicants per hire in 2022 Quarter 1)**

From the data previously provided to the Government Oversight Committee, 102 applicants from January – March 2022 resulted in 24 new caseworker hires, roughly a 4:1 ratio. Below are some observations from the most recent hiring actions.

Reasons why a candidate may not be qualified:

- Does not have a degree or a qualifying degree.
- Has a degree from another country - not yet evaluated by World Transcript.

- May not be sure if degree will be considered qualifying by the Board of Social Work licensure - an email is sent to candidate asking that they send their transcripts to the Board for review. Some candidates follow up, while others do not.
  - When applicants do return their transcripts for review sometimes it is clear they have the 12 qualifying classes (12 classes, not credits) other times it isn't clear. Occasionally transcripts are sent to the Board of Social Work licensure for the Director to review and feedback.

#### Qualified Applicants:

- Applicants apply on Bureau of Human Resources website.
- Some applicants apply in multiple office locations (may appear to be multiple applicants but only one possible hire).
- Applicants are contacted to schedule screening interview.
  - If an applicant responds to the request, they are either set up with a screening interview with Recruitment and Retention Specialist or sent directly to the District for rapid recruitment in offices where there are immediate and critical vacancies (screening and 2nd interview rolled into one).
- Applicant may decide not to schedule a screening interview after hearing additional details about the job - pay, hours, and/or expectations.
- Applicant may not respond to Recruitment and Retention Specialist emails and/or telephone contacts.
- Applicant may schedule and later cancel the interview for variety of reasons.

#### Screened Applicants who pass the initial interview:

- If there are immediate vacancies in the District that the applicant is interested in, their name is sent immediately to the Program Administrator or Supervisor for an interview.
- In offices with critical vacancies qualified applicant's names are sent as soon as they are received via the application. These Districts have the capacity to conduct interviews quickly.

#### Declined Job Offers/Barriers to Hiring:

- Some recent job offers have been declined due to the after-hours / overtime expectations, hoteling, and Emergency Department coverage (7 declines the last three months).
- Challenges in finding appropriate, affordable housing in some locations (Lewiston, Skowhegan, Rockland are recent examples).
- Competing job opportunities within and outside state government.
- Recently have had candidates scheduled for second interviews and either no show or participated in the interview but never respond to the job offer.

#### Recruitments

- Previously, Child Protective Caseworker openings were not specific to a location. Starting in Fall 2021, announcements were assigned locations to address HR policies. This helps HR gauge which offices are receiving applicants, quantity of applications. Allows Recruitment and Retention Specialist to send the applicant's name to the office where they are most interested in working and will most likely accept a job offer.

- Historically the most difficult offices to recruit for are Lewiston, Ellsworth, and Rockland.

The data for a comparable period in 2021 is harder to count because the process for managing applications didn't shift to the OCFS Recruitment and Retention Specialist until May 2021. Based on reconstructing the information for January – March 2021, OCFS estimates the following caseworker application results.

- 106 total applications
- 96 qualified applications
  - 62 completed interview and passed
  - 6 interviewed but did not pass the screening
  - 10 cancelled the screening interview
  - 7 did not respond to a request to interview (email and phone contact)
  - 4 no showed a scheduled screening interview
  - 2 had history that would prevent them from qualifying
  - 3 declined the opportunity to schedule an interview
  - 2 determined they did not have enough classes to receive an LSW
- 31 hired applicants

Likewise, the data for all of CY2021 follows similar trends.

- Total applications = 478
- Total Qualified Applicants = 414
  - 260 completed interviews and passed
  - 17 interviewed but did not pass the screening
  - 49 cancelled the screening interview
  - 32 did not respond to a request to interview (email and phone contact)
  - 12 no showed a scheduled screening interview
  - 7 had history that would prevent them from qualifying
  - 23 declined the opportunity to schedule an interview
  - 14 determined they did not have enough classes to receive an LSW

115 caseworkers hired from these groups

During the first quarter of CY21, the ratio of applications to hires was 3:1 and slightly higher for the entire CY21. The Recruitment and Retention Specialist reported seeing a higher percentage of people who completed an initial screening interview between January - March 2021 as compared to the same time period in 2022 (65% versus 45%). It was also noted that first quarter CY 21 appeared to have a more qualified candidate pool than the same period in 2022 despite having fewer vacancies to hire.

**Sen. Libby – What is the rate of attrition for caseworkers?**

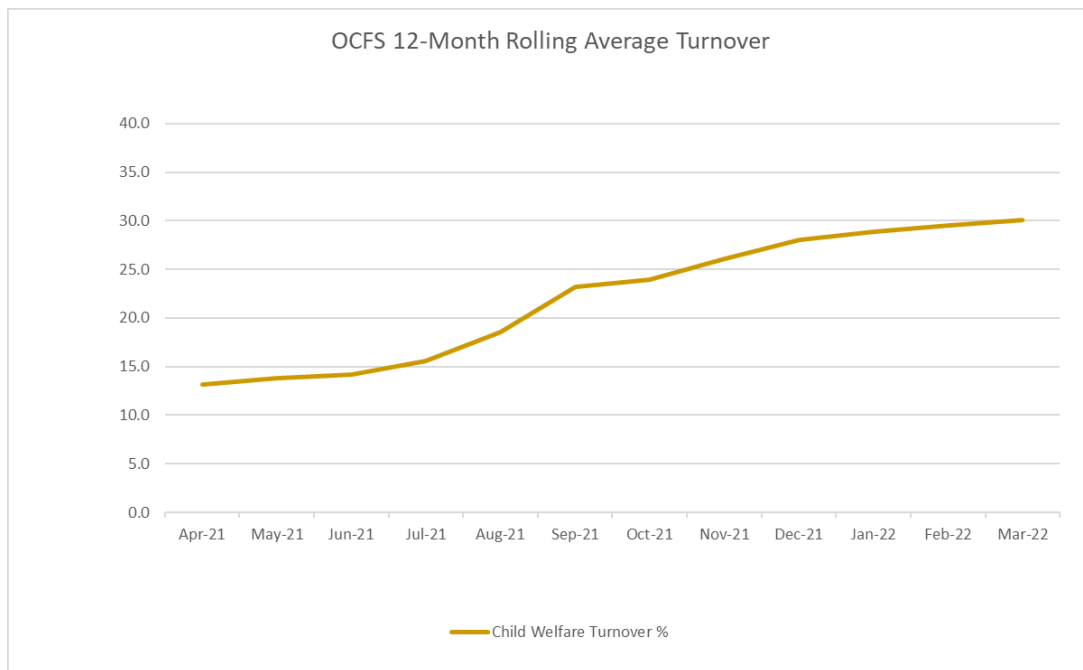
We are interpreting the term “attrition” to mean leaving state service. The following data of vacancies from January – March 2022 includes resignations from state employment. There was a total of 41 resignations for the first quarter of CY22. In addition, there were 10 additional

vacancies created due to lateral transfers to other parts of state government (6), promotions (3), and a demotion (1).

The table below shows a point in time comparison of vacancies for the midpoint of the first quarter of each calendar year reported.

Caseworker Vacancies 2018 - 2022					
Month/Year	Feb-18	Feb-19	Feb-20	Feb-21	Feb-22
# Vacancies	26	13	18	11	48
% Vacancies	7.4	3.6	4.6	2.7	11.3

OCFS also tracks turnover using a 12-month rolling average to help project trends. Although recent monthly data shows higher than normal turnover, the 12-month rolling average curve is beginning to flatten and with the prospects of college graduation in the spring, the expectation is that the curve should begin a downward slope in the upcoming months.



**Information on the various Recruitment strategies efforts for CPS caseworkers**

Job Fairs

- St. Joseph’s College - Virtual-2/8 (no attendees).
- University of Maine -Virtual 2/16 - invited 16 candidates with qualifying degrees; spoke to 10 attendees, have hired 1 so far.
- Howard University – Virtual 2/24 (no attendees).

- University of Maine Farmington - In Person 3/7 - 5 attendees; have interviewed one candidate who does not graduate until the end of June.
- University of Connecticut – Virtual 3/30 - 4 attendees.

### Speaking Engagements

- University of Maine at Farmington - 2/10 - Rehabilitation class (qualifying degrees).
- University of Maine at Machias - 4/13 - one hour Zoom presentation provided to interested Psychology and Community Studies students.
- University of Southern Maine-Social Work students - scheduled to speak on 4/20.
- UMaine/Social Work - 3 classes on 10/13/21 (2) and 11/10/21 (1) and University of Maine at Augusta on 12/9/21 (2 different classes) 11/9/21 - Human Development Class
- Emails sent to professors and career counselors at Maine universities and colleges (April 2022) asking them to remind their students of job opportunities through the Office of Child and Family Services

### Paid Indeed Ads

- Ongoing, for each individual office - most at this point are paid.

### National Organizations

- National Association of Social Workers (NASW) ads for 12 weeks October 28, 2021 through January 6, 2022

### Expanded Media Outreach

- Upcoming digital media outreach and radio advertisement buys through Pulse Marketing during the period May through June 2022. Based on the success of the campaign, OCFS will have the option for a follow-on effort. Information attached.
- Media Strategy includes:
  - Digital radio ads will run on digital radio platforms, including iHeartRadio and Spotify. Pulse will implement the ad buys to ensure that the ad reaches a targeted and qualified audience of listeners throughout New England.
  - Videos will be produced as a testimonial recruiting new candidates to the Office of Child & Family Services' Child Welfare Services Unit. The video will showcase the day-to-day aspects of working as a Child Protective Caseworker, including both the challenging and rewarding elements of the career.
  - Media ad buys to ensure that the message reaches a targeted and qualified audience of current or new social workers in New England (Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire).
  - Messages and Tactics developed across social media platforms to recruit new candidates for the open Caseworker positions.
  - Google Ads run when users search for relevant keywords, such as social work jobs, social work careers, human services careers, etc. The ads will promote the open job positions at DHHS, their duties, and the company benefits, including employee assistance, paid holidays and vacation time, and public service student loan forgiveness.
  - Location Lookback will be used to target users in or recently in a certain physical location, such as a college graduation, college building, or office.

- Job Title Targeting will reach current social work professionals, or professionals eligible for a Maine social work license who use related keyword searches.

**Sen. Bailey – request for the Foundations curriculum / summary information**

See the attached document ME Child Welfare Caseworker Foundations Training Summary April 2022.

**Sen. Libby – information on scale up of caseload for new workers (Director Landry indicated goal of 50% initially, but not always possible); please quantify what that means in practice – how often is it possible to give the 50% and how does it vary by district**

Data was captured for caseworkers who completed Foundations Training between 6/18/21 – 2/18/22, representing 5 training cohorts. The median number of assignments to an investigation caseworker in the first complete month following training was 3 investigations (50% caseload) and increased to a full caseload between months 2-3. Assignments for permanency caseworkers, which are captured differently, averaged 1-2 new case assignments per month beginning with the first full month following the completion of training. There were some district differences noted. Districts 2 and 3 assigned at a higher rate than Districts 5, 7 and 8. There may be some correlation between districts with a higher number of vacancies assigning at a higher rate during that time.

**Rep. Arata – Is there data DHHS/OCFS could compile on child deaths**

OCFS currently provides data on child fatalities on our website and that data is updated quarterly. Currently available data indicates that in 2021 there were 25 fatalities of children that fall into the categories which OCFS reports. These are fatalities due to homicide, fatalities where there was a finding of abuse or neglect, and any fatality where the child's family had history with the Department (regardless of how far in the past that history occurred, whether the deceased child was involved in the history, or the level of involvement). For example, the 2021 data reflects several cases where the Department's last involvement with the family was over a decade before the child's death and in other cases the Department's only involvement was a report made to the Department regarding the family that did not contain allegations appropriate for investigation. At the advice of the Office of the Attorney General, this data does not include any fatality for which there is an active criminal investigation or prosecution.

Of the 25, 10 were accidental deaths with most of those accidents being related to house fires and motor vehicle incidents. 3 were ruled to be natural deaths by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, indicating the child had a medical condition that resulted in their death. 7 were categorized as "other", with the majority of those being the result of suicide. There were 3 fatalities related to unsafe sleep conditions and 2 fatalities that the Medical Examiner ruled as "sudden unexplained infant death."

OCFS will continue to update this data quarterly and welcomes additional clarification related to the data the Committee and individual legislators are interested in seeing.