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# Arizona Department of Child Safety Strategic Plan

State Fiscal Year 2016

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# Foreword

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Arizona's present and future health is dependent upon the safety, strength, and resiliency of children and families. At times, those very people become dependent upon our shared systems and need expedient and appropriate intervention to reestablish growth and renewal. We must act to ensure all systems that touch Arizona's child welfare system have the proper culture, processes and people to effectuate this vital mission. The Department of Child Safety is proud to present a Strategic Plan to guide us on the correct path and launch a true Theory of Change that is desperately needed. The Department of Child Safety desires a spirit of shared accountability, recognizing multiple systems interact with children and families and more importantly, we can't do it alone.

Within this plan, five strategic goals are described. These five goals are linked throughout our Department's business process and each directly impacts the other. While concentrating on one of these areas we must realize the potential risks and rewards experienced by others. Without preparation, results achieved in one area could degrade the other. By thoughtfully approaching these goals as a continuum, we understand the underlying causes and true remedies to impact these challenges across the board. Achieving positive outcomes within these five strategic goals will pave the way for substantial, sustainable reform for Arizona's child welfare system.

Gregory McKay  
Director

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# Overview

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The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS or the Department) is committed to becoming a national leader for child safety through a well-run, efficient, and effective organization based on best practices. DCS believes that thoughtful planning that responds to multiple timelines, addresses all levels and functions of the organization, and leverages our greatest strength – our workforce – are essential components of this commitment.

The Department's strategic plan outlines a comprehensive and clear approach to accomplishing the critical yet highly complex work of achieving safety, permanency, and well-being for Arizona's children. DCS recognizes that the best plan for the Department must lay out strategies to both immediately address some of the urgent issues facing the Department as well as build a strong organization for the future. It must also take into account advice, evaluation, and consultation provided by leading experts in our field. Therefore, the strategic plan includes several levels of activity that will move the Department forward over the short term and will set the Department up for long term success.

The strategic plan outlined in the following pages is ambitious yet necessary to ensure we accomplish our vision and mission. We will take a partnership approach to this strategic plan, and we as a Department look forward to working with our community partners, providers, foster families, legislators, oversight bodies, stakeholders, and the citizens of Arizona at large to ensure Arizona's children are safe and families are strong.

## Strategic Planning Process

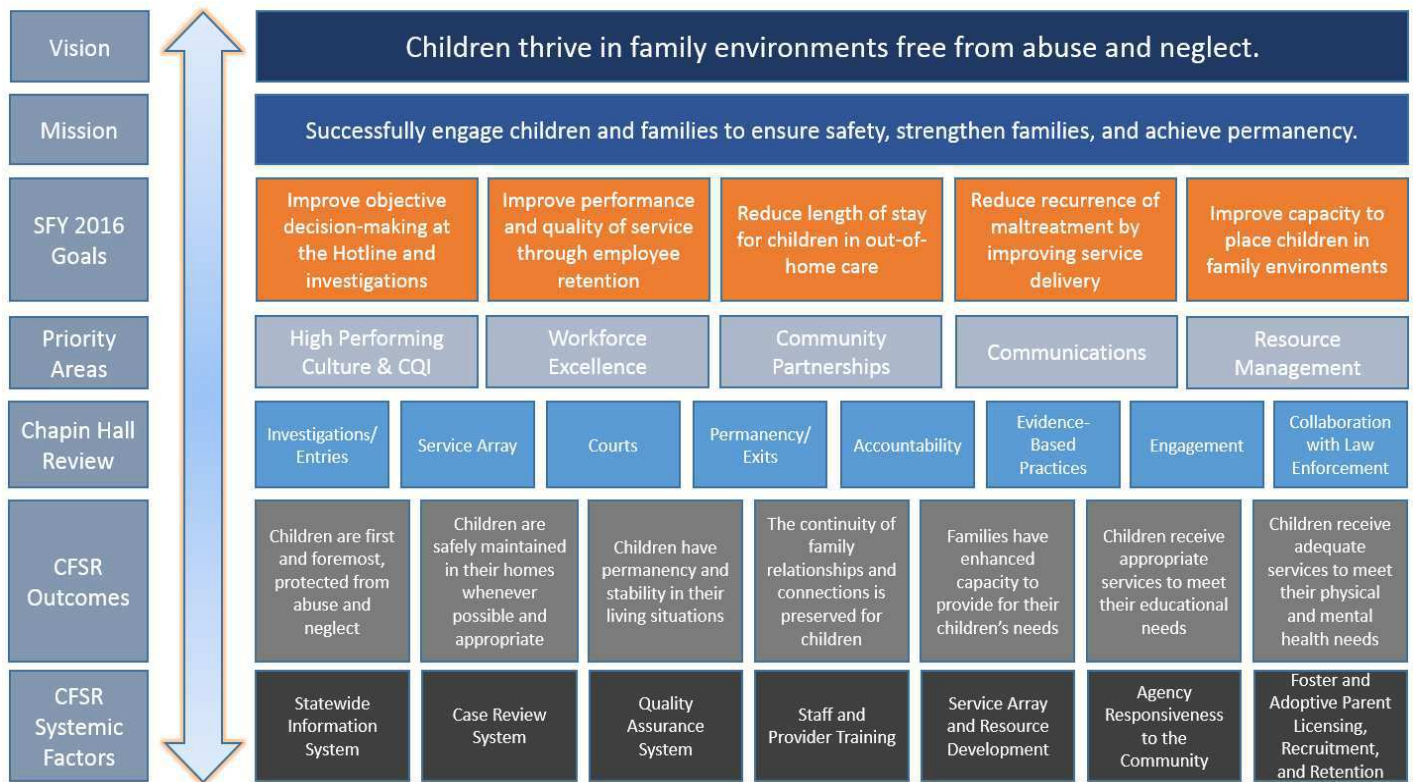
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The Department, with the support of Casey Family Programs, engaged Clarus Consulting Group (Clarus) to assist in the development of an agency wide strategic plan. Clarus worked closely with representatives from DCS and Casey Family Programs to design a phased approach built around data gathered from key internal and external stakeholders in the form of interviews, focus groups, and online surveys. Additionally, DCS thoughtfully reviewed and incorporated a number of recommendations from national and local child welfare organizations. Through this process, DCS has established a solid foundation for organizational planning that can be continued and shaped into initiatives that respond to ongoing priorities and new ideas for carrying the Department into the future.

### **External Consultation and Federal Oversight**

DCS has relied on the advice, evaluation, and consultation of leading national child welfare organizations, including Casey Family Programs, Chapin Hall, and the Federal Children's Bureau. These organizations have committed both financial and technical resources in evaluating DCS and making recommendations, and we are pleased that they will continue to provide support for our progress as a Department. Chart 1 outlines some of these stakeholder resources and recommendations the Department considered.

Chart 1: Planning Continuum



The recommendations from the Chapin Hall Independent Review were taken into consideration when developing the strategic goals, objectives, and deliverables. The report confirmed many of the same areas of need that DCS leadership had identified. Specifically, the report outlined the following systemic risks: investigations and entries, service array, capacity at the courts, permanency and exits, evidence-based practices, accountability, engagement, and collaboration with law enforcement. The Department had several efforts already underway to address the recommendations and those efforts were included in the response to the Chapin Hall report and in the Department’s strategic plan.

During the development of the strategic plan, the Department also referenced the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) that is conducted by the federal Children’s Bureau. As the cognizant state agency for Title IV-B and Title IV-E funding, DCS must participate in the CFSR as a method of ensuring conformity and compliance with federal regulations. This review closely examines child and family outcomes, and systemic factors through a variety of methods including case reviews, and interviews with stakeholders and families. The results of the review are shared with DCS and any areas needing improvement require a Program Improvement Plan (PIP). The significant alignment between the strategic plan and the CFSR requirements will allow the Department to be more transparent and accountable to both the state and federal requirements and will begin a consistent dialogue about the well-being of families and children in Arizona.

### Stakeholder Engagement

In addition to consultation with various child welfare organizations, Clarus guided DCS through a planning process centered on broad stakeholder engagement. The data collection process leveraged the insights and

knowledge of a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders by engaging more than 300 stakeholders through interviews, focus groups, and online surveys. A consistent set of high-level themes was present in the stakeholder feedback. These themes are presented briefly below:

- Child Safety and Permanency – The number one priority for the agency is achieving child safety and permanency. This drives the work of leadership, staff, partners, and providers every day.
- Prevention – Legislation creating the new agency was specific in naming prevention as an important part of DCS. Stakeholders agree establishing a functioning prevention system in the state is critical.
- DCS Workforce – Ensuring the workforce has appropriate and ongoing training and support, and recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce, are paramount.
- Communication – Strong internal and external communication will promote transparency, accountability, and trust throughout the agency and between the agency and its partners.
- Partnership – Strengthening partnership at all levels of the organization and with external partners and providers is critical to DCS success.
- Policy, Procedures, and Practices – Stakeholders identify a need for comprehensive evaluation, standardization, and communication of agency policies, procedures, and practices.
- Organizational Culture – The creation of a new agency is an opportunity to create an organizational culture marked by transparency and accountability.
- Technology – Improvements in technology and data management systems will provide much-needed support to staff, facilitate administrative processes, and generate good data to share with partners and guide DCS policy and work.

The strategic plan is representative of a true collaboration informed by the input of hundreds of internal and external stakeholders, best practices across child welfare jurisdictions, and clear vision and direction provided by DCS senior leadership. It aligns and prioritizes recommendations from national experts in a way that allows our stakeholders to be clear about our focus and progress over time and provides clear guidance to our workforce.

## Vision, Mission, and Values

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Establishment of the new Department presented both the opportunity and challenge of building a new agency from its very foundation while continuing to carry out the daily work of keeping Arizona's children safe. For DCS, this included developing vision and mission statements and a set of core values to communicate the agency's fundamental purpose and focus. The vision, mission, and values set the tone and direction for the strategic plan.

### ***Vision***

The comprehensive strategic plan works toward a single vision for the agency:

**Children thrive in family environments free from abuse and neglect.**

This vision clarifies what DCS should look like in the future and where the organization would like to be in the future. It communicates the core principles that guide the work of child welfare in Arizona:

- Safety: All Arizona’s children are safe and protected from harm
- Permanency: All Arizona’s children live in safe, loving forever families
- Well-Being: All Arizona’s children are given the opportunity to thrive through support of strong families and their communities

### ***Mission***

The plan outlines strategies for building the workforce, systems, and culture necessary to support the agency in achieving its mission:

**Successfully engage children and families to ensure safety, strengthen families, and achieve permanency.**

This mission clarifies DCS’s purpose and why it should be doing what it does. The focus on successful engagement of children and families communicates how and why DCS reaches and partners with Arizona’s children and families.

### ***Values***

The plan acknowledges and supports a set of core values that serve as guiding principles for DCS. The following values were identified through the development of the Department’s Practice Model and confirmed through the strategic planning process:

- Child-Centered: Children belong with families – their own when it is safe to do so and when it’s not, with a safe, permanent family who can meet their unique needs and will maintain their supporting, meaningful connections to continue positive values, beliefs and their cultural legacies.
- Family-Focused: Families have the primary responsibility for raising their children and keeping them safe. Families are the experts regarding their own strengths and needs and will have a voice and decision-making role regarding decisions that affect them and their children.
- Successful Engagement: Children, youth, and families are best served when child welfare staff respect the family, actively listen to them, and invite participation in decision-making to achieve positive outcomes.
- Partnerships and Community: The entire community shares the responsibility of keeping children safe and protected from abuse and neglect.
- Professional Environment and Workforce Excellence: Our professional competence will be demonstrated by an organization and workforce that proactively responds to the changing needs of communities and provides respectful treatment to families.
- Cultural Responsiveness: All children and families have the right to be understood within the context of their own family rules, traditions, history, beliefs, and culture.
- Accountability and Transparency: The child welfare system holds itself accountable to the highest standards of practice at all levels within the organization. We are transparent and responsive to our children, youth, and families as well as our staff, partners, and communities within the limits of confidentiality.

Each of the values listed above guides the agency in achieving its mission and outcomes. They are also the foundation to building the organizational culture. Together, the vision, mission, and values shape the

thinking and behavior of all levels of professionals within our organization and how we engage with each other, children and families, and the community.

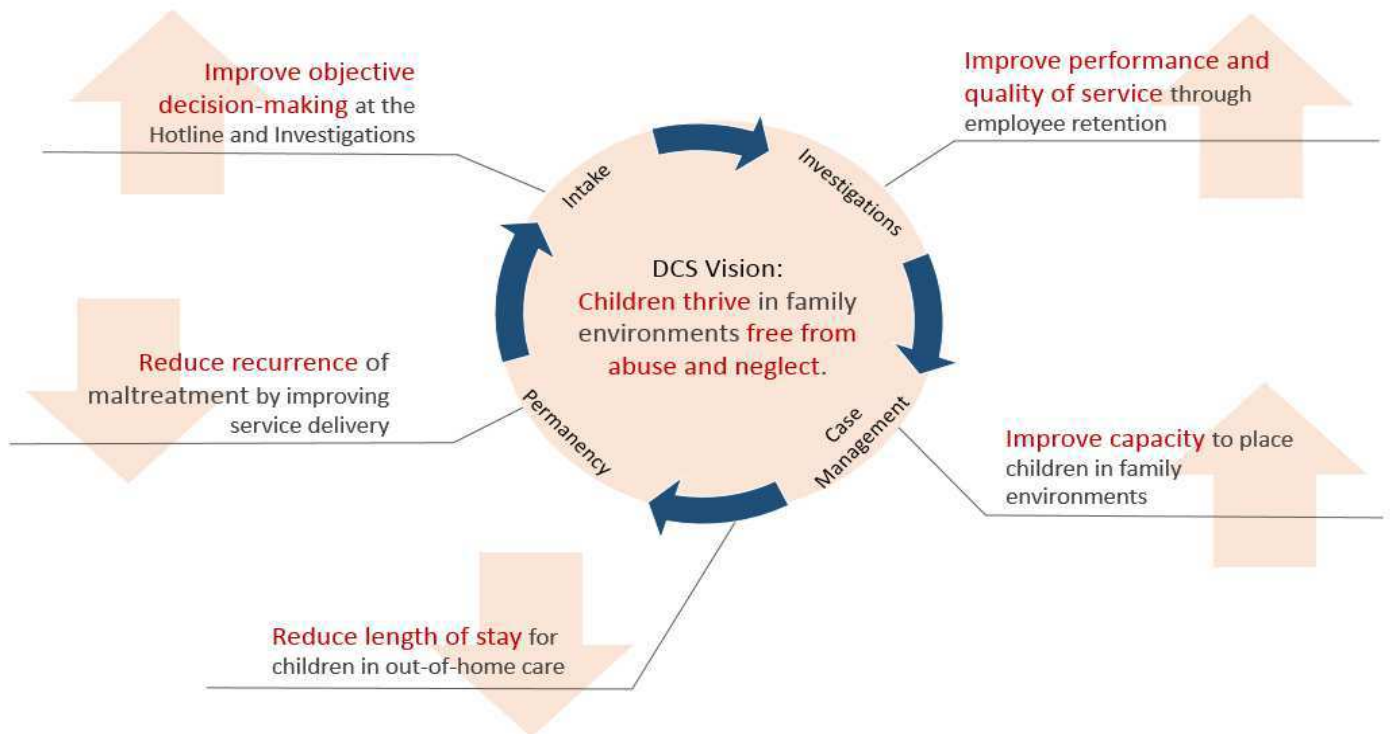
## Strategic Goals

The creation of the Department of Child Safety in May of 2014 was a watershed moment for the State of Arizona. It presented an unprecedented opportunity to refocus attention and resources on the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in Arizona. Recognizing an opportunity to take proactive steps to build on the new agency's creation, DCS leadership focused on the development of five strategic goals that address several of the most pressing challenges facing the Department:

1. Improve objective decision-making at the Hotline and investigations
2. Improve performance and quality of service through employee retention
3. Reduce length of stay for children in out-of-home care
4. Reduce recurrence of maltreatment by improving service delivery
5. Improve capacity to place children in family environments

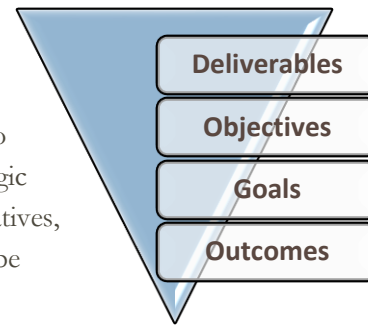
The purpose of the strategic plan is to build the systems and structure that will support outcomes for the future while at the same time identifying challenges that have evolved over time that need to be addressed in the immediate term. With these strategic goals, the agency balances the priorities of being responsive to immediate need while building systems to ensure sustainability and success over the long term.

Chart 2: Making Sustainable Change





Accompanying each of the five strategic goals are objectives, and deliverables with metrics and timelines. Each deliverable has an assigned lead and reporting on the status of the deliverables will occur routinely to monitor progress and address any identified barriers. As part of the strategic planning process, it was critical to consider the ongoing Department initiatives, therefore many of these deliverables are in process and are estimated to be completed at various times over the next 12 months.



### Goal One: Improve Objective Decision-Making at the Hotline and Investigations

In a statewide agency with a large workforce and complex mission, clearly defined practice standards are critical to success. When calls come into the Hotline, it is important that each call is handled with accuracy and consistency in order to assure that DCS can respond timely and when appropriate. Similarly, clear safety assessment protocols are necessary when investigating allegations of abuse and neglect. As outlined in the deliverables below, DCS will establish data-informed standards, practices, and tools to improve decision-making, and implement team reviews of critical cases to establish a continuous quality review of practice.

#### Objectives:

- 1.1. Increase the accuracy of referral categorization at the Hotline
- 1.2. Increase the accuracy of safety and risk assessments in investigations
- 1.3. Increase utilization of the dashboard to better define workloads, develop action plans, and accommodate volumes

Goal One Deliverables	SFQ Est. Complete
<b>Objective 1.1: Increase the accuracy of referral categorization at the Hotline</b>	
Notify callers to the Hotline of false reporting penalties	Q1
Hire dedicated audit staff to institute quality assurance reviews at the Hotline and continuously assess and improve inter-rater reliability among Hotline Specialists	Q1
Analyze investigation outcome data with support from Casey Family Programs and Eckerd	Q1
Complete policy analysis on the investigation/assessment of very low risk families	Q1
Change Hotline screening tool in order to clarify the definitions, practice standards, and requirements to be a report for investigation, particularly <i>unreasonable risk of harm</i>	Q2
Compile a report with recommended changes to statute and/or policy	Q2
Institute Hotline screening tool and/or coaching to improve inter-rater reliability	Q3
<b>Objective 1.2: Increase the accuracy of safety and risk assessments in investigations</b>	
Create and implement administrative and clinical supervision guides for investigation cases	Q1
Create and implement a considered removals guide aligned with the safety assessment model	Q1
Implement Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) reviews of fatality/near fatality cases	Q1

Expand the use of pre-removal Team Decision Making meetings	Q2
Implement a revised safety and risk assessment documentation tool in the automated system	Q3
<b>Objective 1.3: Increase utilization of the dashboard to better define workloads, develop action plans and accommodate volumes</b>	
Create a dashboard to track overall case management	Q1
Develop a utilization tracking of the dashboard and incorporate it as a MAP measure	Q3

## Goal Two: Improve performance and quality of service through employee retention

One of the greatest challenges to the Department's success is the high rate of attrition among staff. This rate of turnover creates significant challenges for both business operations and field operations sides of DCS, and can translate to significant delays and costs. DCS will pursue a variety of strategies to significantly improve staff retention, including addressing the backlog, developing a method to compensate employees for a job well done, and offering more advanced training opportunities.

### *Objectives:*

- 2.1. Create manageable workloads by addressing factors that contribute to the inactive backlog
- 2.2. Reduce the number of inactive cases, which includes investigations that have been open for 60 days or more with no new report in the most recent 90 days
- 2.3. Improve job fit using behavioral characteristic analysis of applicants
- 2.4. Develop a compensation plan to recognize performance of all Department employees
- 2.5. Increase advanced training opportunities for Child Safety Specialists and managers

<b>Goal Two Deliverables</b>	<b>SFQ Est. Complete</b>
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<b>Objective 2.1: Create manageable workloads by addressing factors that contribute to the inactive backlog</b>	
Reduce clerical workload per case manager by increasing the Case Aide to Specialist ratio	Q2
Establish a continuous recruitment cycle specifically for retaining case aide positions	Q2
Pilot the use of a field guide that facilitates the collection and entry of assessment information	Q2
Recommend revisions to investigation procedures that aligns the use of agency resources with family risk level	Q2
<b>Objective 2.2: Reduce the number of inactive cases, which includes investigations that have been open for 60 days or more with no new report in the most recent 90 days</b>	
Create a data dashboard on overdue reports to be used for ongoing monitoring of overdue report volume and project management	Q1
Analyze the capacity and extent allowed under statute and rules for community partners and contractors to assist with the backlog	Q1
Categorize investigations open more than 60 days, according to well-defined procedures	Q1

Create dedicated teams to assess and close investigations open more than 60 days, according to well-defined procedures	Q1
<b>Objective 2.3: Improve job fit using behavioral characteristic analysis of applicants</b>	
Develop behavioral characteristic profiles and apply profiles to screen potential job applicants	Q1
Refine and centralize DCS exit interview survey data	Q3
<b>Objective 2.4: Develop a compensation plan to recognize performance of all Department employees</b>	
Evaluate and identify compensation strategies to implement Department wide	Q1
Implement compensation plan payment	Q3
<b>Objective 2.5: Increase advanced training opportunities for Child Safety Specialists and managers</b>	
Host a supervisor summit that focuses on developing family engagement practice model skills	Q1
Expand the eligibility criteria for the Certified Public Manager course	Q1
Coordinate with ADOA to expand the leadership courses for supervisors with 2+ years' experience	Q2
Develop advanced training curriculum for Specialists and Supervisors	Q4

### Goal Three: Reduce length of stay for children in out-of-home care

It is the Department's responsibility to provide permanency as timely as possible for children placed in out-of-home care. Permanency planning begins the instant a child is placed in care and continues as an ongoing assessment of strengths and needs of the child and family. Improving timely permanency requires a multi-pronged approach of facilitating successful engagement with families, targeted staffings that allow sufficient time to discuss each case, clearly defined roles between the internal case transitions, and collaboration with the local courts and other partners.

#### Objectives:

- 3.1. Improve timeliness of reunification, guardianship, and adoption
- 3.2. Improve casework transitions and division of labor to increase efficiencies
- 3.3. Increase frequency of clinical supervision

<b>Goal Three Deliverables</b>	<b>SFQ Est. Complete</b>
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<b>Objective 3.1: Improve timeliness of reunification, guardianship, and adoption</b>	
Use performance-based contracting for targeted child specific recruitment (CSR)	Q1
Conduct targeted permanency staffings on cases with a goal of reunification, where the child has been in out-of-home care for 6 to 9 months, in Pima and Maricopa Counties	Q2
Increase the availability and utilization of Permanency Team Decision Making meetings	Q2
Implement evidence-based interventions: motivational interviewing, peer parent support program, trauma specific/trauma informed therapy	Q3
Develop strategies to strengthen collaboration with the courts to address timely permanency	Q4

<b>Objective 3.2: Improve casework transitions and division of labor to increase efficiencies</b>	
Conduct a process improvement pilot on shared case management between ongoing and adoption	Q2
Conduct a pilot in Pima Region to test early transfer of investigation cases to ongoing staff	Q2
<b>Objective 3.3: Increase frequency of clinical supervision</b>	
Implement administrative and clinical supervision guides for ongoing cases	Q1

### Goal Four: Reduce recurrence of maltreatment by improving service delivery

Families that come into contact with DCS have varying levels of risk that result in the need of Department intervention. The timeliness of services and supports when DCS intervention is necessary is critical in successfully engaging families and expediting the time to recovery. Furthermore, providing services and supports both on the front-end and after DCS involvement would reduce the need for DCS intervention significantly, and in some cases entirely.

#### Objectives:

- 4.1. Expand the availability of in-home services to prevent repeat reports for investigations and foster care re-entry
- 4.2. Reduce waitlists for in-home and parent aid services
- 4.3. Implement targeted prevention strategies to reduce the need for Department intervention

<b>Goal Four Deliverables</b>	<b>SFQ Est. Complete</b>
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<b>Objective 4.1: Expand the availability of in-home services to prevent repeat reports for investigations and foster care re-entry</b>	
Contract for in-home prevention services in Maricopa County for low risk families who have been the subject of a DCS investigation	Q1
Expand Substance Exposed Newborn Safe Environment (SENSE) units in the rural counties	Q2
<b>Objective 4.2: Reduce waitlists for in-home and parent aid services</b>	
Establish on-going monthly meetings with service providers and DCS regional management	Q1
Conduct a process improvement project in collaboration with service providers and GTO to address factors contributing to the waitlist	Q1
<b>Objective 4.3: Implement targeted prevention strategies to reduce the need for Department intervention</b>	
Develop operating procedures to engage with faith-based resource website, The Care Portal Network	Q1
Develop recommendations for community-based interventions in areas of high report volume	Q4
Add more co-location relationships in high volume report areas	Q4

## Goal Five: Improve capacity to place children in family environments

Positive outcomes for children in out-of-home care are more likely when placed in safe, family environments that meet their developmental needs and preserve their connection to values, beliefs and cultural legacies. In many cases, this sense of stability can be achieved by placing children with kin or in foster or adoptive placements. The Department is committed to engaging kin sooner, increasing the capacity of the foster home network, and evaluating ways to improve stability and retention of existing foster placements.

### Objectives:

- 5.1. Increase the number of foster homes and the availability of foster home placements
- 5.2. Increase the time that children are placed with a kinship caregiver
- 5.3. Improve retention of existing licensed foster homes

Goal Five Deliverables	SFQ Est. Complete
<b>Objective 5.1: Increase the number of foster homes and the availability of foster home placements</b>	
Conduct a process improvement project to reduce the time from application to licensure	Q1
Conduct performance based contracting for foster home recruitment	Q1
Review policy and rules related to expediting foster home licensing amendments	Q3
Explore IT solutions for identifying available foster family placements upon removal of a child	Q4
<b>Objective 5.2: Increase the time that children are placed with a kinship caregiver</b>	
Increase use of Placement Coordinators to identify available kinship placements upon removal	Q1
Expand the use of software tools, e.g. Lexis Nexis, to find potential kinship placements	Q1
<b>Objective 5.3: Improve retention of existing licensed foster homes</b>	
Establish Fostering Inclusion Respect Support Trust Advisory (FIRST) Commission	Q1
Reinstitute Ice Breaker meetings with biological and foster parents	Q3

## Working Initiatives

In addition to the deliverables outlined as part of one of the five goals above, the Department identified key initiatives that will impact several or all of the strategic goals. These working initiatives are either essential to the operations and infrastructure of the new agency or are key projects that are in process and will need continuous monitoring and support.

Working Initiatives	SFQ Est. Complete
Scope the requirements for CHILDS replacement	Q2
Class Action Lawsuit needs	Q4
Build CQI capacity within the Office of Quality Improvement	Q4
Build audit capacity within the Governance, Risk and Compliance Office	Q4
Build internal data analytics infrastructure	Q4

Family Assessment Protocol planning	Q4
Ongoing monitoring and fiscal analysis of the Title IV-E Waiver	Q4

## Metrics

A key component of the strategic plan is the development of a reporting structure that provides accountability and transparency. DCS assessed the types of data and information that is currently collected and selected metrics that will inform the progress of the objectives and deliverables. This reporting structure is a reflection of the Department's commitment to building a data-driven organization that monitors and addresses challenges proactively.

Objectives, and Metrics					
Objective		Metric	FY 15 Actual	FY 16 Est.	FY 17 Est.
1.1	Increase the accuracy of referral categorization at the Hotline	Intake Specialists accurately categorize referrals as reports or non-reports, as measured through quality assurance reviews of randomly selected referral calls	n/a	85%	95%
1.2	Increase accuracy of safety and risk assessments in investigations	In fatality/near fatality cases with prior Department involvement, a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) review will be conducted	n/a	100%	100%
1.3	Increase utilization of the dashboard to better define workloads, develop action plans, and accommodate volumes	Increase the percentage of field supervisory staff that utilize the DCS dashboard as a workload management and tracking tool	10%	50%	90%
2.1	Create manageable workloads by addressing factors that contribute to the inactive case backlog	The Department closes more reports than it receives statewide, expressed as the percentage difference	n/a	5%	10%
2.2	Reduce the number of inactive cases, which includes investigations that have been open for 60 days or more with no new report in the most recent 90 days	Reduce the inactive cases by 25% (net)	15,810	11,858	7,905
2.3	Improve job fit using behavioral characteristic analysis of applicants	Reduce the number of Child Safety Specialists that leave within one year	148	133	118
2.4	Develop a compensation plan to recognize performance of all Department employees	Implement a compensation plan by April 2016			
2.5	Increase advanced training opportunities for Child Safety Specialists and Managers	Increase the number of available advanced training courses	3	9	12

3.1	Improve timeliness of reunification, guardianship, and adoption	Of all children who entered care in a given period, increase the percentage who discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering care (excludes children in care less than 8 days)	31.3%	36.0%	38.0%
3.2	Improve casework transitions and division of labor to increase efficiencies	Decrease the average number of days from the termination of parental rights to finalized adoption	BASE-LINE	-10%	-20%
3.3	Increase frequency of clinical supervision	Conduct clinical supervision per policy for ongoing cases, as measured through quality assurance reviews of randomly selected cases	n/a	80%	85%
4.1	Expand the availability of in-home services to prevent repeat reports for investigations and foster care re-entry	Of children who are the subject of a report to DCS (alleged or confirmed victim), decrease the percentage who are the subject of another report to DCS within 12 months	27.6%	25.0%	24.0%
4.2	Reduce waitlists for in-home and parent aid services	Reduce the number of referrals for service that are currently on the waitlist	668	334	167
4.3	Implement targeted prevention strategies to reduce the need for DCS intervention	Increase the number of co-located prevention or investigation specialists in high volume report areas	8	12	18
5.1	Increase the number of foster homes and the availability of foster home placements	Of total in care days, reduce the percentage of days spent in shelter or non-therapeutic group home	11.0%	10.0%	9.5%
5.2	Increase the time that children are placed with a kinship caregiver	Of the percentage of total days children spend in out of home care, increase the total days spent with a kinship caregiver	45%	47%	48%
5.3	Improve retention of existing licensed foster homes	Of total foster homes licensed during the year, reduce the percentage of homes that close their licenses for reasons other than adoption	59.8%	55.0%	50.0%

## Implementation

Every deliverable outlined in the strategic plan has been assigned a functional area, a project champion, a timeline for completion, and a metric to measure achievement. Additionally, deliverables will be tracked as green (on track), yellow (behind), or red (off track) and routine reporting to the DCS leadership team has been established to address any unforeseen barriers and ensure continued alignment with the strategic goals. The Department recognizes that by adopting a strategic approach, we commit to accountability and continuous improvement and therefore be in a position to make thoughtful decisions about sequencing our efforts toward addressing current issues while also building for the future. The implementation of the strategic plan provides a platform to support this approach.