

January 26, 2024

Lilly T. Simmering, Deputy County Executive Officer  
County Executive Office  
County of Orange

RE: Performance audit of Child Support Services' administrative operations and functions

Dear Ms. Simmering:

Attached is our report for the performance audit of Orange County's Department of Child Support Services' administrative operations and functions.

The objectives of the performance audit were to:

- Review the current organizational structure and operations and make recommendations for increased efficiency with use of existing resources and right-sizing of resources.
- Review service areas and the level of working knowledge between administrative services and other areas to identify opportunities to streamline operations and improve quality of internal customer service delivery.
- Review policies, practices, and procedures and identify opportunities for streamlining and reducing costs, expanding efficiencies, and applying best practices. Include any estimated cost/savings for recommendations, if applicable.
- Review current use of technology and make recommendations for improvements and enhanced efficiency.
- Review departmental and industry standards and metrics.

We appreciate the assistance throughout the audit from staff of the Department of Child Support Services and the County Executive Office.

Sincerely,



Macias Gini & O'Connell LLP

CC: Liz Guillen-Merchant, Director, Performance Management and Policy, County Executive Office  
Maria Arzola, Director, Department of Child Support Services  
Veronica McNamara, Deputy Director, Administrative and Program Support, Department of Child Support Services

Attachment: Performance Audit Report

**COUNTY OF ORANGE**

Performance Audit of the Administrative  
Services Unit of Orange County's  
Child Support Services Department

January 26, 2024

# Performance Audit of the Administrative Services Unit of Orange County's Child Support Services Department

## Executive Summary

Macias Gini O'Connell LLP (MGO) was engaged by the County of Orange's (County) County Executive Office to conduct a performance audit of the Child Support Services Department's (CSS or Department) administrative operations performed by the Program Support Services division (such as budgeting, human resources, and information technology) and administrative functions performed by other Department divisions. The objectives of the audit were to review the Department's 1) current organizational structure and operations; 2) service areas and working knowledge between administrative services and other service areas; 3) policies, practices, and procedures; and 4) current use of technology; and provide recommendations for enhanced efficiency, opportunities for streamlining and reducing costs, and applying best practices. The methodology included interviews; reviewing Department policies and procedures, reports, data, statistics, etc.; and researching and reviewing best practices, industry standards and metrics, and performance metrics.

### Orange County Child Support Services Department (Department)

The Department is committed to providing professional, personalized child support services to facilitate financial support of children by engaging parents. Through collaboration with County agencies, community-based organizations, employers, and others, the Department offers solutions including paternity establishment, establishing court orders for financial and medical support, enforcing court orders for support, and collection and distribution of payments.

The Department consists of Legal Services, Customer Support, Case Management, and Program Support Services.

The following key **findings** were identified:

- The Department is experiencing a steady reduction in caseload demand, call center volume and court hearings, which has resulted in a decrease in overall workload and workforce.
- The Department has prioritized the implementation of retention and succession planning strategies in response to the evolving workforce and diminishing institutional knowledge.
- Information Technology (IT) and the Department have developed workarounds and supplemental tools to improve the efficiency in working with cumbersome and outdated IT applications.
- The Department offers expanded services beyond that of other counties, such as a full-time cashier, Saturday office hours, and forms workshops, which provide additional benefits to its customers.

The Department should consider the following **recommendations**:

- Continue to forecast and monitor caseload, call center volumes, court hearings, staffing levels, and state/federal funding.
- Continue to adjust the workforce to align with the expected workload.
- Continue to evaluate the reduction in caseload and call center volume, including the effectiveness of outreach and whether there is an underserved population.
- Confirm that all roles and responsibilities are documented and incorporated into the retention and succession planning strategies.
- Track and monitor the staff positions and rotations to ensure rotations are impartial and consider an employee's previous positions within the Department.

**Performance Audit of the Administrative Services Unit  
of Orange County's Child Support Services Department (continued)**

- Allow staff to identify “no transfer” preferences for rotational functions by providing a brief description of the reasoning. However, establish clear expectations with staff that these preferences are requests; and staff may still be required to perform functions in these areas to meet the business needs of the Department.
- Continue evaluating staffing levels to determine additional hiring needs and employee engagement.
- Determine if additional system application interfaces and workarounds are available to reduce the burden on staff.
- Develop a method(s) to transfer information into the system applications more efficiently and effectively.
- Determine if updates are available to State maintained software.
- Provide employees utilizing CAPS+ with ongoing training opportunities to achieve and maintain proficiency.
- Continue monitoring the utilization of additional services and the cost/benefit to providing these services.
- Evaluate whether funding could be used or obtained in partnership with other County departments, counties, or the State to provide additional services to customers.

The Department partially agreed with recommendations 6 and 13 and agreed with all the other recommendations. See their responses after the audit report.

### **Scope, Objectives, and Methodology**

The performance audit was an independent review of the Department's administrative operations performed by Program Support Services division, including accounting, budgeting, facilities management, human resources, information technology, and procurement; and administrative functions performed by other Department divisions. MGO reviewed the Department's information, documents, and reports from July 1, 2021 through May 31, 2023.

The objectives of the audit were to:

- Review the current organizational structure and operations and make recommendations for increased efficiency with use of existing resources and right-sizing of resources.
- Review service areas and the level of working knowledge between administrative services and other areas to identify opportunities to streamline operations and improve quality of internal customer service delivery.
- Review policies, practices, and procedures and identify opportunities for streamlining and reducing costs, expanding efficiencies, and applying best practices. Include any estimated cost/savings for recommendations, if applicable.
- Review current use of technology and make recommendations for improvements and enhanced efficiency.
- Review departmental and industry standards and metrics.

**Performance Audit of the Administrative Services Unit  
of Orange County's Child Support Services Department (continued)**

MGO performed the following procedures:

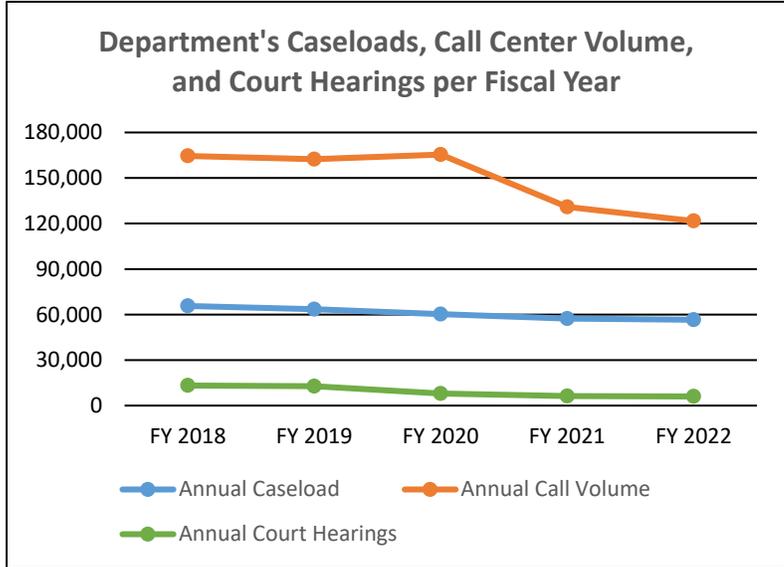
- Interviewed 33 employees across the Department.
- Reviewed the Department's current documented policies and procedures.
- Reviewed the Department's documentation related to budgeting, such as the budget process, guidelines, and enacted budget for 2022-2023.
- Reviewed the Department's website, newsletters, infographics, and reports, such as the 2023 Annual Report, Deputy Director Five-year Resource Plan (December 2021), and monthly state performance reports.
- Reviewed the Department's data and statistics related to revenue, staffing levels, case volume, call center volume, court hearings, and customer support, such as virtual appointments and Saturday hours.
- Reviewed the Department's documentation related to training, such as the training plan for 2021 – 2023 and sample training materials.
- Reviewed the Department's documentation related to staff retention, such as the growth and rotational opportunity program and a 2021 employee experience survey report.
- Researched best practices and federal and industry standards and metrics and evaluated the Department's performance to these standards and metrics.

We conducted fieldwork from February 2023 through May 2023. We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

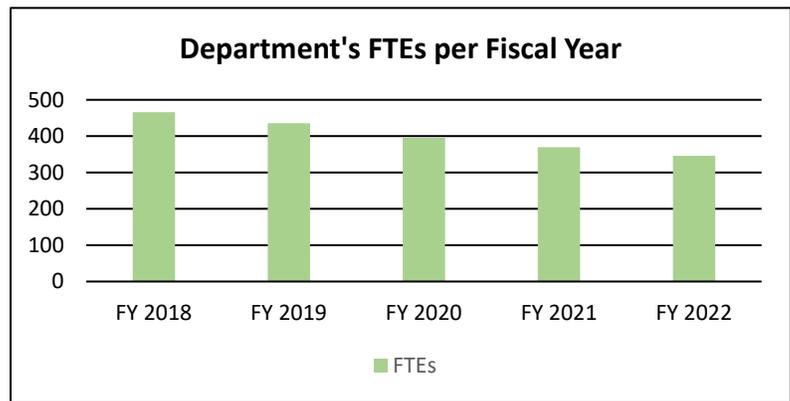
**Performance Audit of the Administrative Services Unit  
of Orange County’s Child Support Services Department (continued)**

**Finding 1: Department’s continued decline in workload impacts staffing levels**

The Department is experiencing a steady reduction in caseload demand, call center volume, and court hearings, which has resulted in a decrease in overall workload and workforce. From FY 2011 through January 2022, the Department experienced annual decreases in caseload with an overall decrease of about 28 percent (79,487 cases reduced to 56,566 cases). The reduction in new cases and increase in closing cases is an approximate decrease in caseload of 3.0 percent annually. In addition, the call center’s call volume continues to decline, decreasing from an average of 13,585 calls each month during FY 2020, to an average of 11,827 calls per month in FY 2021, and then to 10,349 calls per month in FY 2022. This equates to a 12.9 percent reduction in calls in FY 2021 and an additional decrease of 12.5 percent in calls in FY 2022. The number of court hearings also decreased each fiscal year, decreasing from 13,205 court hearings in FY 2018 to 5,994 court hearings in FY 2022; a total decrease of approximately 55 percent.



The reduction in caseload, call center volume, and court hearings has led to the Department adjusting its workforce from 465.7 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in FY 2018 to 346 FTEs in FY 2022, approximately a 29 percent decrease. The Department’s Deputy Director Five-year Resource Plan as of December 2021 (Resource Plan), forecasts a continued reduction in caseload, call volume and court hearings through FY 2027 and projects the Department would need to further reduce its workforce to less than 300 FTEs by FY 2025.

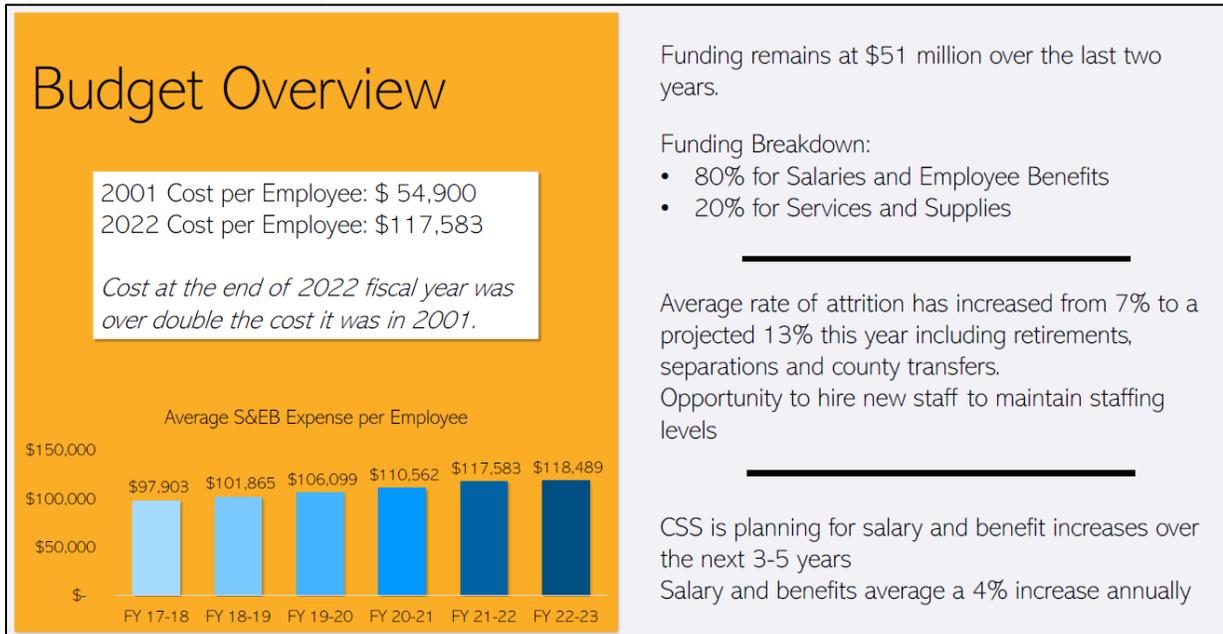


While the Department’s funding is not directly impacted by the reduction in overall caseload, customer calls, and court hearings, those metrics do factor into the funding calculation. The Department uses workload forecasts to estimate workforce needs and available funding. According to the Department, program funding, which is approximately 34 percent State and 66 percent Federal pass-through from the State, has been stable for over twenty (20) years through FY 2020 at \$55 million. However, funding was reduced by eight (8) percent in FY 2021 due to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) and has since remained at \$51 million.

**Performance Audit of the Administrative Services Unit  
of Orange County’s Child Support Services Department (continued)**

Another contributing factor to the reduction in workforce is the Department’s cost per employee, which as shown in Figure 1 on the following page, has more than doubled between 2001 and 2022, from \$54,900 to \$117,583. Approximately 80% of the Department’s FY 2022 budget was for salaries and employee benefits. Each year the County provides Department employees with raises or cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) of approximately four percent (4%). The State and Federal funding are not adjusted for COLA increases or to cover benefit costs for employees.

**Figure 1: Department Budget Overview**



Source: State of the Department 2023, Orange County Child Support Services

While reducing the workforce to align with a decreasing workload and budget are appropriate strategies, reducing the workforce may negatively affect the Department’s customer service response time and the availability of services. Per the Resource Plan as of December 2021, the Department is predicting the following:

- Call center wait times to increase from 25 seconds to greater than one minute starting in FY 2023-2024;
- Case management times for credit reviews to increase from less than 10 days to less than 20 days starting in FY 2026-2027;
- Case management times for review of financial audits to increase from less than 3 days to less than 7 days starting in FY 2025-2026;
- Case openings to increase from less than 2 days to less than 5 days starting in FY 2024-2025; and
- Preparing legal documents to increase from less than 4 days in FY 2024-2025 and to less than 6 days in FY 2026-2027.

It should be noted that the Department’s increased customer service response times would still be within the allowable performance metrics for the program.

**Performance Audit of the Administrative Services Unit  
of Orange County's Child Support Services Department (continued)**

The Department has identified a number of reasons for the continuous reduction in caseload, including an overall decline in birth rate within the county and state; parents working out their own agreements and using Venmo, Zelle, or other money apps to transfer support obligation payments; the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased financial support from other government funding sources; and individuals not wanting to put increased pressure on the other parent as a result of unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While some of the reasons for the reduction in caseload are reasonable in the current economic and social environment, the Department is concerned there is an underserved population of people needing assistance.

The Department's Research and Development team monitors activities and identifies explanations for the reductions in caseload in order to determine how best to support its customers and communicate services offered. For example, the Department and State of California (State) introduced the Simplified Enrollment Process (SEP) in July 2022. SEP offers applicants an easier and faster way to apply for services from the Department as it reduces the number of screens that must be completed and allows the applicant to submit applications on their mobile device. The Department has seen initial positive results from the implementation of SEP including a slight increase in the number of case openings period over period when comparing July 2021 through October 2021 to July 2022 through October 2022.

***Recommendations:***

The Department should consider the following recommendations:

- Continue to forecast and monitor caseload, call center volume, court hearings, staffing levels, and state/federal funding.
- Continue to adjust the workforce to align with the expected workload.
- Continue to evaluate the reduction in caseload, call center volume, and court hearings, including the effectiveness of outreach and whether there is an underserved population.

**Performance Audit of the Administrative Services Unit  
of Orange County’s Child Support Services Department (continued)**

**Finding 2: Implementing retention and succession planning strategies**

The Department has focused on implementing retention and succession planning strategies to adjust for the changing workforce and decrease in institutional knowledge. As discussed in Finding 1, the Department’s FTEs decreased from 465.7 FTEs in FY 2018 to 346 FTEs in FY 2022, approximately 29 percent. In addition to the reduction in budgeted positions, the Department had an increase in attrition during FY 2020 through FY 2022, mainly due to retirements and transfers to other County departments. While the Department continues to fill the vacant positions (it hired over 50 new employees or 15% of its workforce during FY 2022), the incoming staff have less knowledge and experience than those who left.

While the average workforce tenure with the Department was 19 years as of June 30, 2022, historically, employees joined the Department and stayed for 20-25 years or until retirement. However, employees are no longer staying in their positions through retirement. To help address the potential loss of institutional knowledge due to attrition, the



*Source: 2023 Annual Report, Orange County Child Support Services*

Department has focused on implementing retention and succession planning strategies, such as employing a holistic approach to case management and enhancing staff development.

One key retention and succession planning strategy is the Growth and Rotational Opportunities (GRO) Program, which was developed by the Department after evaluating the results of employee experience surveys, focus groups, and senior leadership feedback. GRO is a program to rotate staff through all areas of the Department, within their classification, to grow staff’s knowledge of the services the Department provides. GRO allows employees to identify up to three areas they would be interested in rotating to. However, employees are not guaranteed a transfer to an area they have selected, as rotations are based on the needs of the Department and employees being in good standing.

GRO has received mixed reviews from employees, based on interviews. Interviewees stated that some employees welcomed the opportunity to expand their knowledge or get experience in other areas; while other employees were not happy with the requirement to rotate functions. Specifically, employees that had been in their assigned units for 20 years or more did not want to rotate to another area.

**GRO Program Objectives**

- Build knowledge and expertise about all child support services functions throughout the Department
- Ensure Child Support Services (CSS) prepares knowledge transfer well in advance of retirements and separations
- Create avenues of growth and learning for all staff
- Develop well-rounded caseworkers through up-skilling rotations with broader perspectives, greater understanding of internal units/counterparts, and the ability to serve customers holistically
- Allow staff to have a voice in their career path at CSS
- Include mandatory rotations based on key factors such as maximum time on one team
- Commit to a scheduled cycle for rotations to ensure rotations occur in an intentional and consistent manner

*Source: Department’s GRO Program policy*

## **Performance Audit of the Administrative Services Unit of Orange County's Child Support Services Department (continued)**

Another strategy of the Department is its holistic approach to case management, which involves a shift in team operations and interactions. This approach emphasizes a broader understanding of the Department's services rather than individual areas of specialization. Based on our interviews with Department staff, this approach directs employees to assume full responsibility for the lifecycle of cases, instead of disaggregating phases to various individuals, as was previously done. This change resulted in employees feeling more engaged with the cases, thus enhancing their comprehension and rapport with the customers and improving the overall quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the services offered. Customers also provided positive feedback, via customer surveys, that issues were addressed by one person instead of requiring interactions with multiple people or additional calls.

Furthermore, the Department has been enhancing staff development by providing employees with additional formal trainings, cross-trainings, collaborations, and peer learning opportunities. The Department internally developed the case-path model training, which is a six-to-seven-month development plan that supports the understanding of the case lifecycle for newly hired employees. Additional training tracks include professional and personal development content, curated internally by the Department's Training Unit and offered within the County's online training system. Our review of the Department's documented policies and procedures indicated there was sufficient detail to provide staff with the knowledge of how to conduct the procedures.

Employees generally had positive feedback regarding the retention and succession planning strategies the Department had implemented. Staff interviewed noted that the strategies help people think differently and focus more on internal interactions and communications, specifically those from executive management. However, through inquiries with staff, we identified that not every role or position was included in the retention and succession planning strategies (specifically, the Staff Specialist for Administrative State Complaint Resolution and State Hearing Representative, the Civil Rights Officer, and the Public Service Information Officer). To be successful, succession planning should include all roles and responsibilities as to not leave any potential for gaps in responsibilities or tasks performed.

### **Recommendations:**

The Department should consider the following recommendations:

- Confirm that all roles and responsibilities are documented and incorporated into the retention and succession planning strategies.
- Track and monitor the staff positions and rotations to ensure rotations are impartial and consider an employee's previous positions within the Department.
- Allow staff to identify "no transfer" preferences for rotational functions by providing a brief description of the reasoning. However, establish clear expectations with staff that these preferences are requests; and staff may still be required to perform functions in these areas to meet the business needs of the Department.
- Continue evaluating staffing levels to determine additional hiring needs and employee engagement.

**Performance Audit of the Administrative Services Unit  
of Orange County's Child Support Services Department (continued)**

**Finding 3: Information Technology requires workarounds and supplemental tools**

Information Technology (IT) and the Department have developed workarounds and supplemental tools in order to improve the efficiency in working with required cumbersome and outdated IT applications. The Case Management Enforcement (CSE) System utilized by the Department for case management is a State-managed system; and, therefore, the Department cannot make changes to it. Interviewees noted that CSE was developed over 15 years ago; and while CSE is adequate, it can be cumbersome by requiring tasks to be completed that do not add value or change the information within the system. For example, in order to clear some of the tasks, a case manager is required to go through the entire case record, reviewing all details without any change to the overall case file.

**IT applications used by the Department**

- Case Management Enforcement (CSE) System
- Simplified Enrollment Process (SEP)
- Call Centers use CISCO CUIC for recording calls
- California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Information Center (CalWIN) *(in the process of being replaced by California Statewide Automated Welfare System [CalSAWS])*
- Simplified Enrollment Process (SEP)
- CAPS+

*Source: Department*

Another challenge is the State's SEP, which was previously discussed in Finding 1. The SEP was introduced by the State in July 2022 to offer a streamlined application process on mobile devices. While the SEP is easier for customers to use, it creates additional work for the Department as SEP does not interface with CSE. Staff must manually enter the information from SEP into CSE. Due to these challenges with CSE, employees stated they frequently develop workarounds and tools to supplement CSE's functionality. Some of these tools were obtained from other counties, and others have been developed by the Department. Interviewees noted that improved interfaces and interactions with other state or county applications/systems would help to create efficiencies and limit staff from having to enter the same information in multiple applications/systems, which creates opportunities for data entry errors, information not being updated in all necessary applications/systems, and inconsistencies in information across the applications/systems utilized by the Department.

We reviewed the Accounting and Budget service unit's training policies and guidelines, utilized by the Financial Services Unit, and determined the accounting process is documented, including the process on how to enter and utilize the countywide enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, CAPS+. The budget and accounting procedures are documented and followed for the preparation of the Department's budget; however, some employees within the Accounting Program unit noted that CAPS+ can be difficult to use and understand. Even with additional training and development, some employees still had difficulty understanding how to use CAPS+ efficiently or correctly.

**Recommendations:**

The Department and County should consider the following recommendations:

- Determine if additional system application interfaces and workarounds are available to reduce the burden on staff.
- Develop a method(s) to transfer information into the system applications more efficiently and effectively.
- Determine if updates are available to State-maintained applications/systems.
- Provide employees utilizing CAPS+ with ongoing training opportunities to achieve and maintain proficiency.

**Performance Audit of the Administrative Services Unit  
of Orange County’s Child Support Services Department (continued)**

**Finding 4: Additional services offered by the Department**

The Department offers expanded services beyond those of other counties, such as full-time cashiering, Saturday office hours, and forms workshops, which provide additional benefits to the Department’s customers. The Department is one of the few counties in the state that still employs a full-time cashier as other counties only have kiosks or part-time cashiers for collecting customer payments. As a result, sometimes customers from neighboring counties utilize the Department’s cashier service, for which the Department does not charge a fee.

The Department expanded its office hours to include Saturdays in order to provide access for customers that might not be able to access Department services during the regular business hours on Monday through Friday. According to the Department, the customer feedback regarding these initiatives has been favorable, resulting in a notable rise in the number of customers assisted on Saturdays since the inception of the expanded service hours. As indicated in the Department's 2023 Annual Report, during the period spanning from January to September 2022, more than 200 customers were accommodated on Saturdays.

In addition, the Department expanded the daily hours of its Forms Workshops to assist customers that may have difficulty in understanding or completing the various forms that are required to submit an application. Per the Department, the majority of the forms it helped customers complete were income and expense declarations, and information regarding health insurance and childcare. The following graphic from the Department shows some of the highlights of the workshops’ expansion of hours 30 days after implementation.

*Notable Highlights from Expanded Forms Workshop Hours, Source: Department*



The Department has evaluated offering additional services and partnering with other County offices; however, the departmental funding can only be used to fund services related to those outlined in the Federal program guidelines and performance metrics, which limits the services the Department is able to offer.

**Recommendation**

The Department should consider the following recommendations:

- Continue monitoring the utilization of additional services and the cost and benefit to providing these services.
- Evaluate whether funding could be used or obtained in partnership with other County departments, counties, or the State to provide additional services to customers.

# Orange County Child Support Services

## Management Responses to Performance Audit

<b>A. Workload and Staffing</b>		
<b>Recommendation</b>		<b>Management Response/Implementation Plan</b>
1	Continue to forecast and monitor caseload, call center volumes, court hearings, staffing levels and State/Federal funding.	OC CSS agrees with the recommendation. The department has a strong data analytics and business intelligence unit in place that consistently monitors workload volumes, caseload size, court hearings and key performance metrics/indicators. The department monitors state/federal funding and the funding methodology and actively participates in efforts to secure funding.
2	Continue to adjust the workforce to align with the expected workload.	OC CSS agrees with the recommendation. The department has a proactive and consistent monitoring system of budgeted and filled positions and a multi-year hiring and attrition forecast, which is monitored in conjunction with service level metrics. In addition, OC CSS has a resource plan to support resource management with workload alignment.
3	Continue to evaluate the reduction in caseload and call center volume, and court hearings including the effectiveness of outreach and whether there is an underserved population.	OC CSS agrees with the recommendation. OC CSS has a robust plan that includes media campaigns and outreach to reach underserved populations and to better inform the public of the services and benefits offered by the child support program. OC CSS leverages data analytics for research and evaluation of case opening trends, court hearings, case closures and child support program policy changes. It is a nationwide trend in declining caseloads. OC CSS partners with other jurisdictions on effective strategies applied to increase case openings and collaborates with IV-A counterparts.

<b>B. Retention &amp; Succession Planning</b>		
<b>Recommendation</b>		<b>Management Response/Implementation Plan</b>
1	Confirm that all roles and responsibilities are documented and incorporated into the retention and succession planning strategies.	OC CSS agrees with the recommendation. The department has instituted and applied a strong framework for succession planning, including rotation of leaders and casework staff, knowledge transfer, expansion of training programs, a formalized coaching and mentoring program, cross-training opportunities, and a series of career development workshops. Opportunities for advancement exist in Operations, Legal, Administrative and Program Support. OC CSS will confirm that all critical positions in the department are clearly documented and incorporated into the retention and succession plan.

<b>B. Retention &amp; Succession Planning</b>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Management Response/Implementation Plan</b>
2	<p>Track and monitor the staff positions and rotations to ensure rotations are impartial and consider an employee's previous positions within the Department.</p> <p>OC CSS agrees with the recommendation. The department currently tracks and monitors staff rotations to ensure they are impartial, considerate of an employee's prior positions within the department and balances the employee and department needs, when feasible.</p>
3	<p>Allow staff to identify "no transfer" preferences for rotational functions by providing a brief description of the reasoning. However, establish clear expectations with staff that these preferences are requests and staff may still be required to perform functions in these areas to meet the business needs of the Department.</p> <p>OC CSS partially agrees with the recommendation. The department currently tracks and monitors staff rotations to ensure they are impartial, considerate of an employee's prior positions within the department and balances the employee and department needs, when feasible. The department does have an option for staff to express their desire to remain in their current assignment and team as part of rotations. However, staff's preference will always be considered and may or may not be accommodated by the department due to specific customer or department needs.</p>
4	<p>Continue evaluating staffing levels to determine additional hiring needs, and employee engagement.</p> <p>OC CSS agrees with the recommendation. The increase in employee separations in recent years through retirement, county transfers and variables outside of the department's control resulted in a shift in the composition of the department's workforce and diminishing institutional knowledge. The department implemented a proactive and consistent monitoring of budgeted and filled positions and developed a multi-year hiring and attrition forecast, which is monitored to match workloads and customer demand.</p> <p>For employee engagement, the department has a formalized Employee Engagement Initiative that continuously focuses on improving the work environment, employee engagement and incorporates feedback from staff surveys and focus groups. The department also has a formalized Employee Suggestion Program that permits employees to submit suggestions, which are evaluated by a committee.</p> <p>The department has enhanced staff development by providing additional formal trainings, cross-trainings, collaborations, and peer learning opportunities. The department developed a new more robust onboarding program for all new case managers to build program knowledge from the onset. More effective onboarding programs facilitate increased employee engagement, program knowledge, experiential learning and focus on a sense of purpose and community within the department serving a dual purpose of increased retention and reinforced program knowledge.</p>

<b>C. Information Technology – Workarounds and Supplemental Tools</b>		
<b>Recommendation</b>		<b>Management Response/Implementation Plan</b>
1	Determine if additional system application interfaces and workarounds are available to reduce the burden on staff.	OC CSS agrees with the recommendation. OC CSS implemented several applications to assist staff with efficiencies, streamline case and workload management, and eliminate manual data entry into the case management system.
2	Develop a method(s) to transfer information into the system applications more efficiently and effectively.	OC CSS agrees with the recommendation. In August 2023, the department implemented the State-developed Simplified Enrollment Process (SEP) macro to eliminate manual data entry of online application information into the case management system to improve efficiency and automation.
3	Determine if updates are available to State maintained software.	OC CSS agrees with the recommendation. While the local child support agencies do not control design, improvement or changes to the statewide system, OC CSS participates on several statewide workgroups and committees that contribute to the prioritization of changes to the statewide system. In addition, OC CSS provided feedback through statewide surveys on system impact to local child support staff, including quantifying inefficiencies and potential resource savings for system improvements. OC CSS continues to advocate for system changes and efficiency. California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) 2023 Strategic Plan includes several improvements and system changes to the statewide system which will support modernizing processes and increasing efficiencies.
4	Provide employees utilizing CAPS+ with ongoing training opportunities to achieve and maintain proficiency.	OC CSS agrees with the recommendation. It is the expectation of the department that procurement and budget staff are mandated to attend all county provided trainings in their respective areas of expertise as well as in all tools and systems required to conduct their duties. Strong quality assurance practices are in place to identify additional training opportunities on a continuous basis.

<b>D. Additional Services</b>		
<b>Recommendation</b>		<b>Management Response/Implementation Plan</b>
1	Continue monitoring the utilization of additional services and the cost/benefit to providing these services.	OC CSS agrees with the recommendation. The department monitors all customer services for usage, value, and return on investment. OC CSS has a strong commitment to serving the community in the ways they want to be served. Services such as Saturday hours and Forms Workshops are examples that provide customers with greater access to services and help customers with barriers to navigate the child support process. The department's data shows the demand for these additional services is growing as awareness of the services increases.
2	Evaluate whether funding could be used or obtained in partnership with other County departments, counties, or the State to provide additional services to customers.	OC CSS partially agrees with the recommendation. Regarding the expansion of partnerships, the department has formalized a Community Partnerships Strategic Plan and a Community Ambassador Program that includes expanding partnerships with other county departments, non-government organizations and other community service providers that serve mutual customers. Outreach activities are fully funded by program funds and are in support of our objectives to increase program awareness to underserved communities and to increase our caseload. The department will continue to evaluate opportunities for non-funded program activities as grants and alternative funding may become available.