

Orange County Child Support Services

Management Responses to Performance Audit

A. Workload and Staffing		
Recommendation		Management Response/Implementation Plan
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. Retention & Succession Planning		
Recommendation		Management Response/Implementation Plan
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. Retention & Succession Planning	
Recommendation	Management Response/Implementation Plan
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>

C. Information Technology – Workarounds and Supplemental Tools		
Recommendation		Management Response/Implementation Plan
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.

D. Additional Services		
Recommendation		Management Response/Implementation Plan
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.