

Review of Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations

The Department of Public Health and Human Services

Findings and Recommendations

- The receipt, intake, and investigation of reports of alleged child abuse or neglect.
- Audit work reviewed 351 reports from FY14 and visited 10 field offices.
 - Resolving investigative inconsistencies
 - Complying with investigative timeframes
 - Actively using data to manage CPS activities
 - Clarifying supervisory responsibilities
 - Prioritizing documentation

Investigative Determinations

- Investigations of alleged child abuse or neglect are based on reasonable cause.
- The department assigns an allegation to a report of alleged child abuse or neglect based on the definitions outlined in state law.
- Current state law is incident-based in nature.

Investigative Determinations

- The department's investigative protocol adopted in 2012 is safety-based in nature.
- Final investigative determinations of alleged child abuse are inconsistent.
- A substantiation means that by a preponderance of the evidence that the reported act of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation occurred, and that the perpetrator of the abuse, neglect, or exploitation may pose a danger to children.

Investigative Determinations

- The department's safety-based investigative protocol deemphasizes the allegation which generated the investigation.
- The safety-based investigative protocol is time intensive and has impacted department investigations in several other ways, including meeting investigative timeframes.

Recommendation

- Resolve the inconsistency between state law and the department's safety-based investigative protocol.

Investigative Timeframes

- State law and department policy outline investigative timeframes for reports of child abuse or neglect.
- Based on the perceived risk to a child, the department assigns a priority timeframe for initial contact with the target child.
- State law requires a written report of an investigation documenting determinations within 60 days of commencing an investigation.

Investigative Timeframes

Priority Time Frames for Sampled Investigative Reports

Priority	Number of Reports	Number of Reports Not Meeting Time Frames	Percentage of Reports Not Meeting Time Frames	Median Days to First Contact
P1 (24 hours)	24	5	21%	0
P2 (72 hours)	144	31	22%	2
P3 (10 days)	82	14	17%	7

Investigative Timeframes

- Priority timeframes provide the department with a tool to consistently manage workload based on how quickly they need to respond.
- Not meeting investigative timeframes increases the risks to children.

Recommendation

- Comply with state law and department policies regarding investigative timeframes.

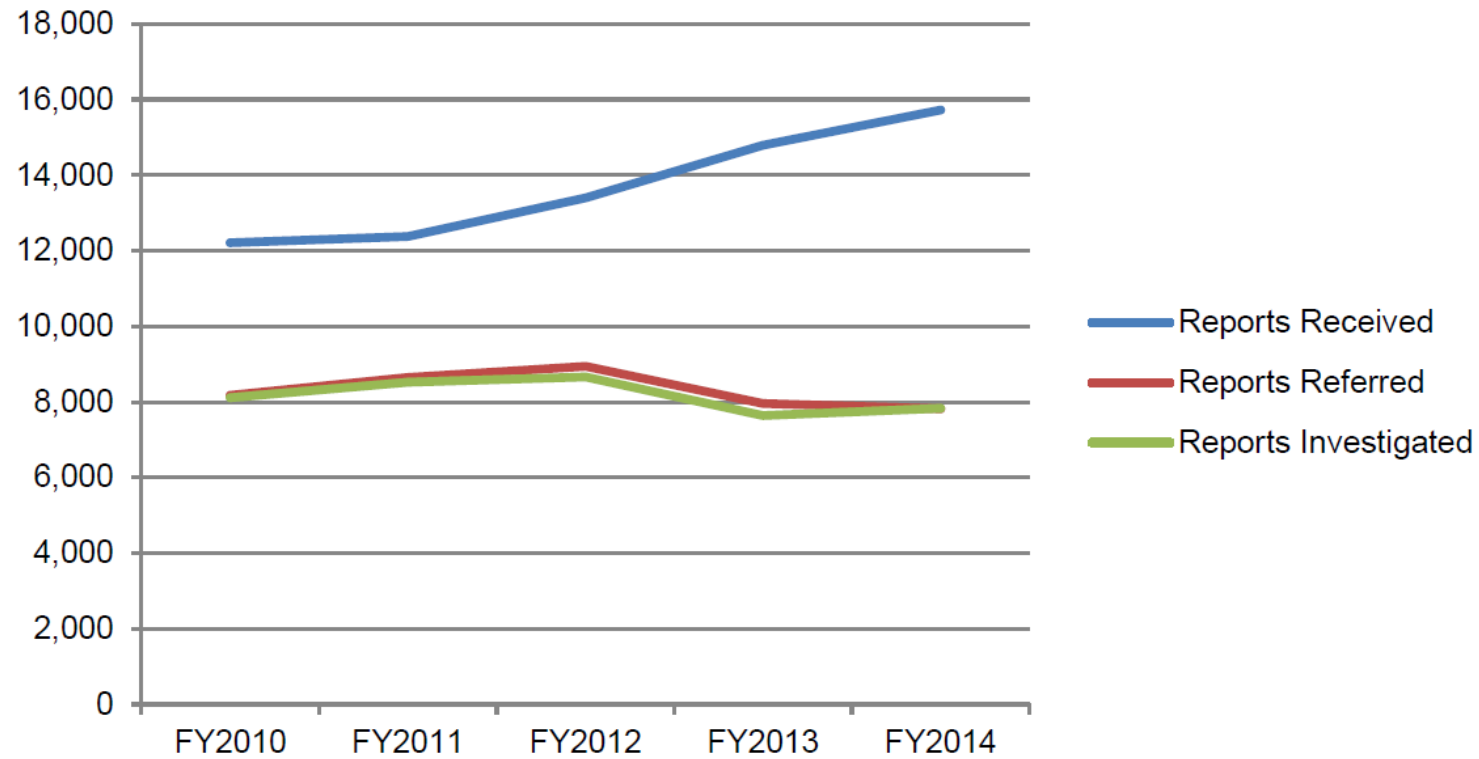
Management Information

- The department has access to limited data to manage CPS activities, impacting the department's ability to effectively manage intake and investigative activities.
 - How many reports of abuse or neglect does the department investigate on an annual basis?
 - What impact does the number of children in care have on the department's ability to complete work within required timeframes?

Management Information

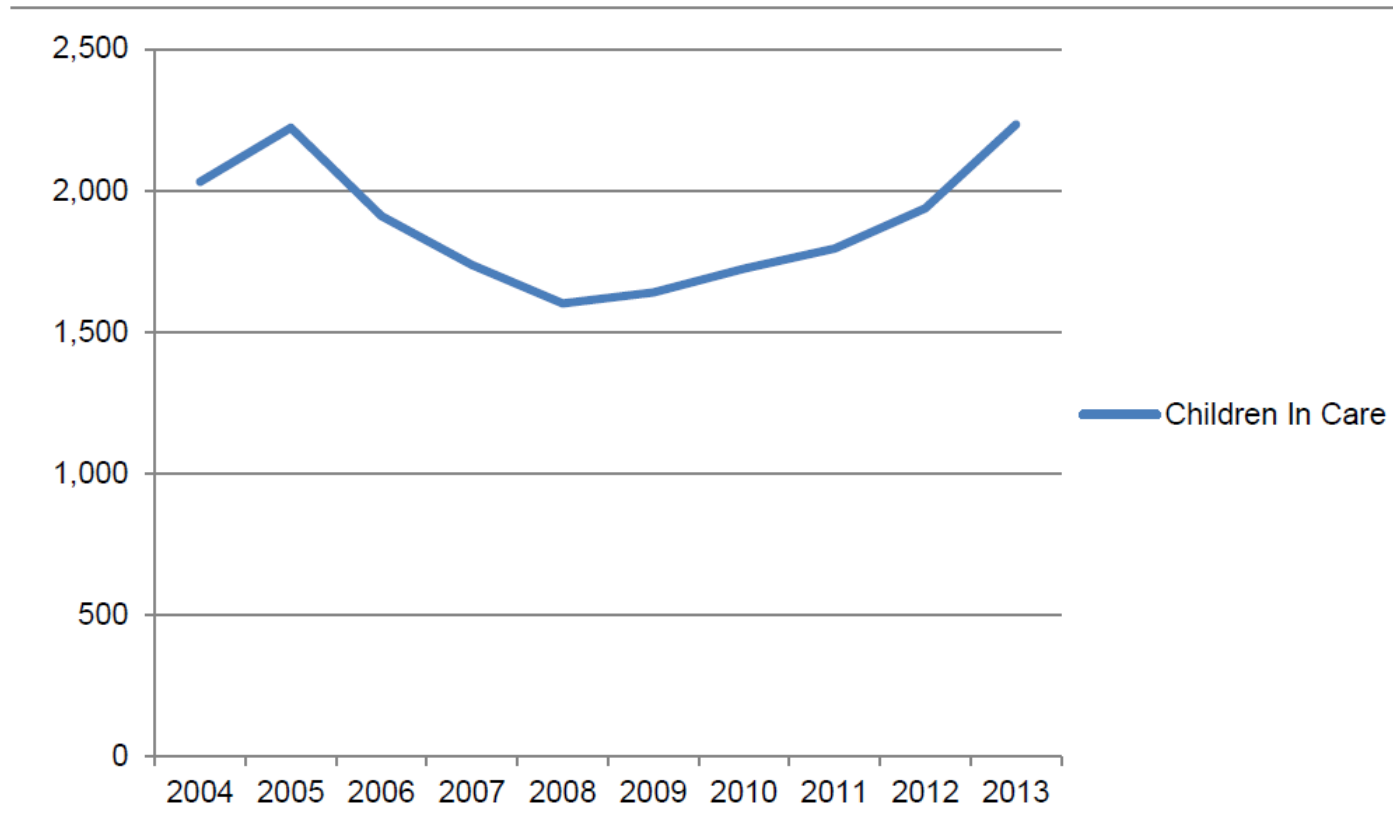
Annual Reports Received, Referred, And Investigated

Fiscal Years 2010-2014



Management Information

Children in Care
Fiscal Years 2004 through 2013



Management Information

- The department needs to more actively manage investigative and ongoing caseloads.
- The department has not developed a plan to use data to manage CPS activities.
- The Legislature has prioritized funding for a new CPS data system.

Recommendation

- Develop a plan to use data to manage CPS activities, including prioritizing legislative funding for a case management system.

Supervisory Oversight

- Intake and investigative activities receive limited supervisory oversight.
- Intake and investigative activities are not uniformly performed, with key decisions not reviewed and approved through supervisory oversight.
- Examples of limited supervisory oversight included investigations which were delayed or dropped due to staff leave or attrition.

Supervisory Oversight

- Department policy lacks specificity regarding supervisory responsibilities.
- Best practices stress the roles of CPS supervisors.

Recommendation

- Clarify and implement policies and standards regarding supervisory oversight and review, including requirements for reassigning investigations.

Limited Documentation

Documentation Weaknesses for CPS Intake and Investigations

Centralized Intake



66% of intake assessments incomplete



17% of intake assessments missing



54% of report category changes undocumented



64% of report priority changes undocumented



36% of report referrals to outside entities such as law enforcement missing

Field Investigations



9% of present danger assessments missing



19% of family functioning assessments incomplete



7% of family functioning assessments missing



54% of child removals with parental notification of removal missing



78% of investigated reports with determination notification missing

Limited Documentation

- Department management stress that child safety is their priority.
- Documentation represents a basic management practice; limited documentation exposed the department to legal risk.

Recommendation

- Prioritize and require documentation of CPS intake and investigative activities.

Questions?