



Texas

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY
AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES



PROGRESS REPORT TO THE
SUNSET ADVISORY COMMISSION:

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES
TRANSFORMATION

APRIL 2016



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES

COMMISSIONER
John J. Specia, Jr.

May 4, 2016

Mr. Ken Levine, Director
Sunset Advisory Commission
1501 North Congress, 6th Floor
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mr. Levine:

Recommendation 2.2 of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Sunset Report requires the agency to report the following Child Protective Services (CPS) performance measures statewide, and for each region, to the Sunset Advisory Commission at six-month intervals through October 2016:

- Turnover rates for investigators, conservatorship and Family Based Safety Services caseworkers;
- Average number of days to close an investigation;
- Average number of placements per child;
- Average number of days to achieve permanency; and
- Recidivism rate of children into CPS system in all stages of service.

In addition to reporting on these measures, the report also includes an update on significant Transformation initiatives, including:

- Enhancements to performance evaluations;
- A shift toward Performance-based contracting;
- Using a Continuous Quality Improvement team to evaluate and sustain transformation efforts;
- An enhanced practice model that truly engages children and families;
- Expanded real-time case reads to ensure quality;
- Expansion of the Continuous Learning model for supervisors; and
- Additional changes to recruitment and hiring.

Transformation is increasing quality outcomes in key areas, but has yet to fully impact the regular course of business and bring desired outcomes. Momentum for this initiative remains high, and through critical assessment and thoughtful course-correction, CPS will continue to transform into a more efficient and effective agency, with a solid foundation anchored in child safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John J. Specia, Jr.', written in a cursive style.

John J. Specia, Jr.
Commissioner, DFPS

Introduction

Child Protective Services (CPS) Transformation began in August 2014 and has one overarching goal – enhanced child safety. CPS has identified three main priorities: ensure child safety, permanency, and well-being; develop a professional and stable workforce; and establish effective organization and operations. These priorities include initiatives to increase caseworker tenure and decrease workload, thereby ensuring quality outcomes for children and families served by CPS.

To date, the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) has published four reports to update the Legislature and stakeholders on implementation progress. The following gives a brief description of each report's content:

- The first Transformation Progress Report, published in February 2015, detailed ongoing work and accomplishments since October 2014. This first report marked a critical juncture for DFPS as Transformation moved from planning to implementation.
- The April 2015 progress report focused on Transformation metrics. This report provided a brief update on Transformation initiatives and the impact changes have had within the regions.
- In October 2015, DFPS produced a more comprehensive progress report on Transformation initiatives and again reported on Transformation metrics, this time measuring the impact on regional staff.

Like the other reports listed above, this report provides an update on Transformation initiatives and metrics. Overall, data indicates improvements in key areas, however CPS is not meeting all targets identified in the CPS Business Plan. For success and the ensured safety of all children, CPS must re-evaluate initiatives and mission-critical objectives – identifying what remains mission-critical, gaining a better understanding from field staff of Transformation's successes and where adjustments must be made, and building on that foundation to sustain real change. With new leadership, comes the opportunity to take a much-needed pause and reflection, and adjust course accordingly, while still keeping the main focus on enhancing child safety.

Transformation Overview

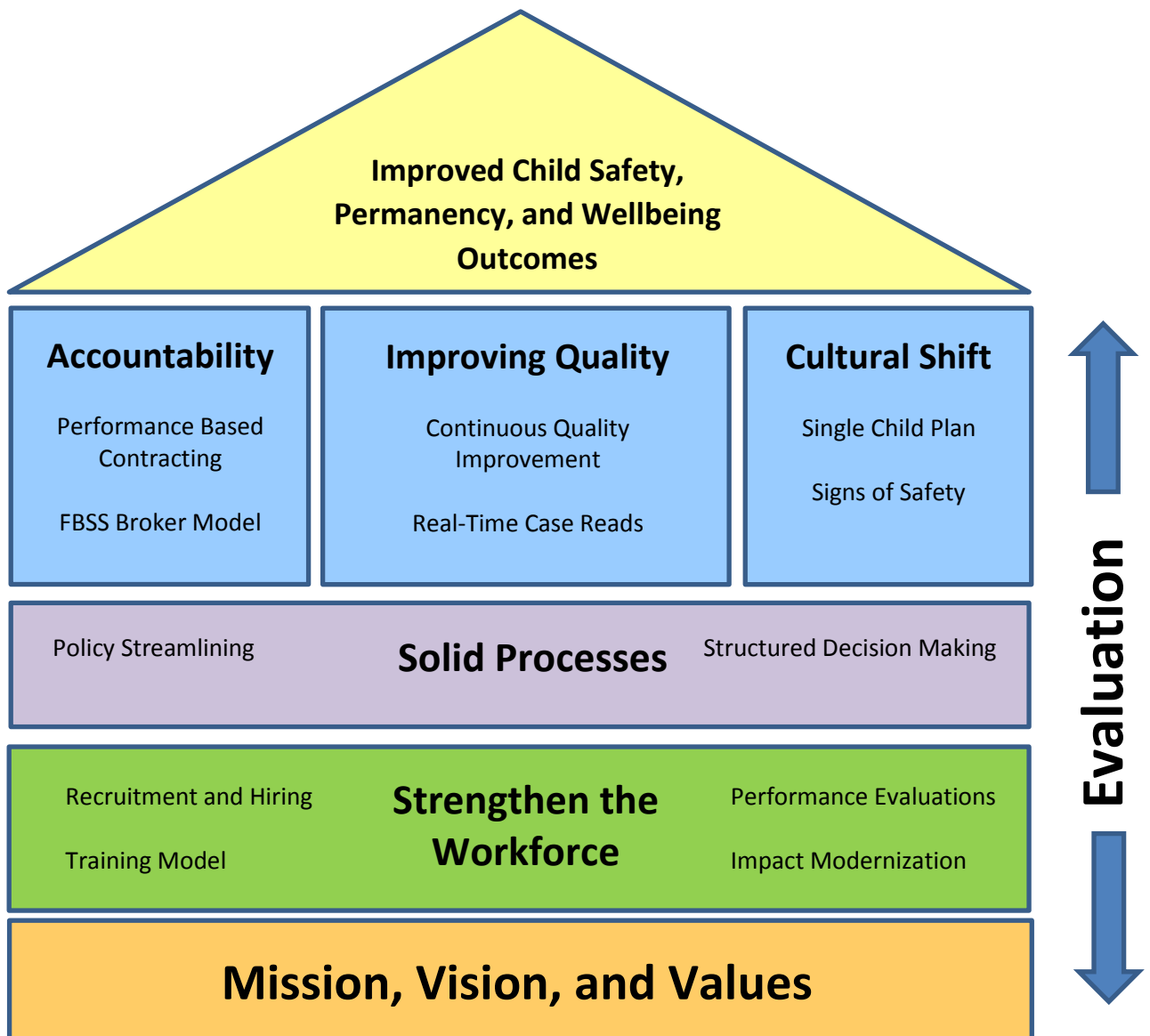
Transformation is a rigorous self-improvement process that began in 2014. Transformation is a bottom-up effort, built on the knowledge and insights of front-line staff and led primarily by regional staff. Transformation will improve child safety, build community collaboration, create a stable workforce, and ensure true leadership.

To ensure stability of CPS, a solid foundation must exist. CPS is built upon the groundwork of the CPS mission, vision, and values. Together, these offer the solid foundation and guiding principles. The second, layered foundation is a competent and stable workforce. CPS must work to ensure it recruits and hires individuals who demonstrate core competencies, providing them with the tools and training necessary to make good decisions, and must work to support its workforce.

Layered on these two key foundations, CPS must establish solid business processes that guide the workforce through day-to-day activities, streamlining work and enabling caseworkers to spend more

time with families, and providing the structure for solid decision making. The policies, procedures, and tools used to assess safety and risk and aid in decisions that impact safety, such as a decision to remove a child from their home, must be clear and easily used, while comprehensive and thorough. Ensuring accountability plays a critical role in sustaining true Transformation and achieving enhanced child safety. CPS must recognize that Transformation is an ever-evolving process, which requires continual evaluation and assessment of the organization’s health.

Foundation of Transformation



Mission, Vision, Values

CPS has a unique and critical charge that is paramount to the safety and wellbeing of children and youth in Texas. An agency's mission, vision, and values provide the solid foundation upon which all agency decisions and initiatives should be built. As CPS transforms, it is critical that CPS remains focused on the core mission to ensure changes build a stronger and better system for children and families.

CPS Mission

We partner with families and communities to address child abuse and neglect by practicing in a way that ensures safety, permanency, and wellbeing for the children and youth we serve.

CPS Vision

Children First: Protected and Connected

CPS Values

Our values represent the ideals we share and serve as broad guidelines for every situation. Our practice is built on our values.

RESPECT

We show respect to the children, youth, and families we serve by demonstrating our understanding that they are more than the reason that brought them to us, and by seeking ways for them to guide the help they receive.

COMMITMENT

We display our commitment through pursuit of the best outcome for each of the children, youth, and families we serve, knowing our interventions have important implications for them.

INTEGRITY

We demonstrate integrity by communicating to the children, youth, and families we serve about our purpose and how we make decisions in a way that is easily understood, and when we follow through on our words and obligations to them.

EQUITY

We achieve equity in outcomes by applying our methods fairly and consistently, and customizing our interventions to the unique cultural and community context of the children, youth, and families we serve.

URGENCY

We work with a sense of urgency to reach safety, permanency, and well-being concurrently for every child and youth we serve, and this is reflected in each of our interventions.

Strengthen the Workforce

The first step to ensuring a solid CPS is strengthening the workforce. CPS relies on a well-trained, stable workforce to properly ensure child safety. The following provides additional information regarding ongoing workforce-related activities.

Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention

Strengthening the agency's workforce begins with recruiting candidates who possess the knowledge, skills, and dedication to provide high-quality services to children and families while coping with the difficult, and often emotional, nature of providing protective services. In fiscal years 2014-2015, CPS redesigned the recruitment and hiring process to ensure recruiting efforts target qualified candidates and selected candidates become part of the team. While CPS believes that the recruitment and hiring process has improved, evaluation of this model reflects that more can be done to expand the qualified-candidate pool. Currently, CPS is exploring the possibility of expanding the candidate pool for hiring CPS Specialists by replacing the four-year degree requirement with equivalent work experience. Research indicates that organizations that employ this approach experience the following benefits:

- **Increased Knowledgeable Talent Pool.** Candidates with direct experience working with children, youth, young adults, or families is directly aligned with the agency's mission and considered valuable because of their ability to practically apply skills and knowledge.
- **Reduction in Turnover.** Employees who feel that their employer is invested in their success are more likely to remain long-term. Employment opportunities within the child welfare and protective services field are typically limited for persons without degrees. This option gives DFPS the opportunity to employ and draw upon other relevant professional and life experiences. Similar organizations have seen a 25 percent to 75 percent reduction in their turnover after implementing this practice.
- **Increased Diversity.** Hiring based on an individual's work experience versus their formal education increases the likelihood that the talent pool is diverse in experience and background.

Recruiting and hiring the best suited employees is the first step in strengthening the workforce. The following initiatives target these goals:

- Improved training model
- Enhanced performance evaluations
- Modernized technology
- Streamlined policies

To maintain a stable workforce, DFPS must develop initiatives to retain staff. Successful retention of staff requires a multi-faceted approach that includes changes in recruiting, training, and management practices as well as improvements in peripheral support for employees. Specific retention initiatives currently underway include:

- Operationalize the employee confidential complaint system

- Educate supervisors on the proper use of positive performance
- Define a standardized method for awarding merits
- Improve transparency by communicating results from staff surveys
- Develop succession planning
- Develop a new employee orientation and onboarding model
- Enhance performance plans for regional management, including Regional Directors and Program Administrators

In addition to the positive outcomes experienced by organizations that have already committed to this approach, DFPS will gain the added benefit of testing the quality of the new CPS Professional Development (CPD) curriculum to validate its effectiveness in preparing trainees regardless of degree or experience.

Redesigned Training Model

During fiscal years 2014-2015, DFPS redesigned CPS caseworker training and implemented a mentor program. Under the new model, caseworkers spend more time in the field, gaining a realistic preview of the job. They are also immediately matched with a tenured mentor. Through the new model, a newly hired caseworker can determine if CPS casework is the job that best fits them.

In fiscal year 2015, CPS designed and implemented a new competency-based training model for caseworkers statewide, known as CPS Professional Development (CPD). This program includes revised classroom training, hands-on and field-based specialty-track training, and mentor support. DFPS contracted with Dr. Cynthia Osborne and the Child and Family Research Partnership (CFRP) at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas-Austin to conduct a two-year evaluation of Transformation initiatives aimed at building a high-quality and stable workforce, including the new training program.

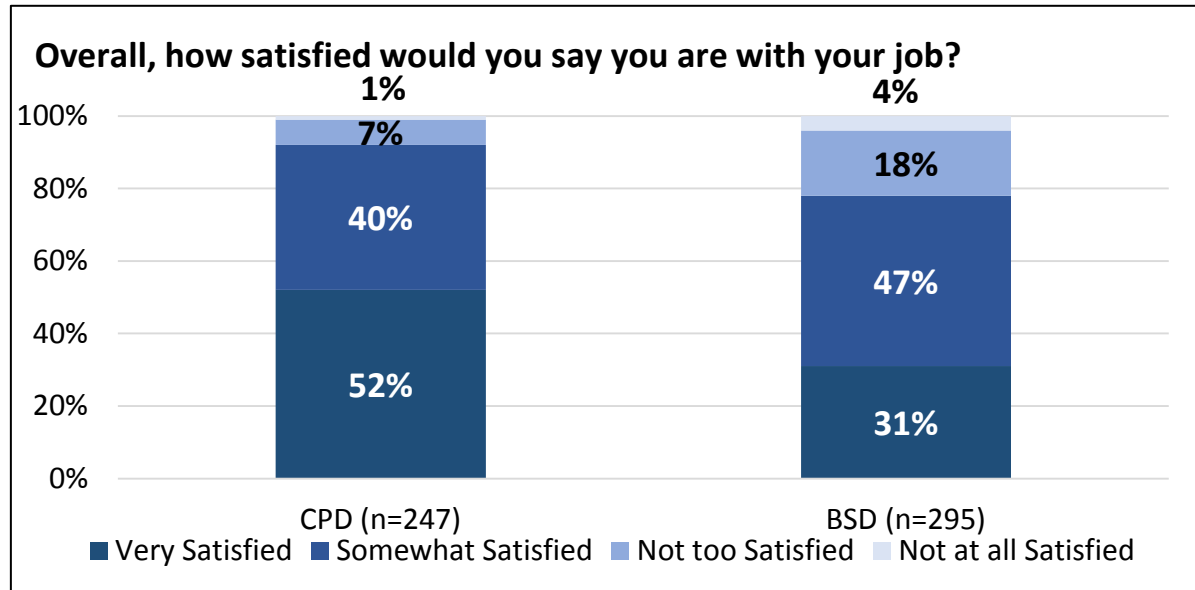
From June 2015 to February 2016, CFRP's primary activities have been data collection and analysis to inform ongoing efforts to assess and strengthen Transformation initiatives. During this time period, CFRP conducted two surveys, 24 focus groups covering all DFPS regions, and numerous meetings and informal interviews with key staff involved in implementation.

Preliminary analyses of job satisfaction, caseworker preparedness, and expected turnover measures collected through the statewide survey show positive trends among CPD-trained caseworkers compared to their counterparts with similar tenure trained under the Basic Skills Development (BSD) model. The results are preliminary and the evaluators have not yet conducted sophisticated analyses to determine the extent to which the CPD model is associated with favorable outcomes. Additional analyses are needed to determine the extent to which the differences between CPD-trained and BSD-trained caseworkers presented here are sustained over time and the extent to which the differences are independent of variation in job satisfaction, training, and turnover across the DFPS regions. The trends identified at this point in time, however, are promising.

In responses to the statewide survey, a larger proportion of CPD-trained caseworkers self-reported satisfaction with their job (very satisfied or somewhat satisfied) compared to their counterparts trained under BSD [shown in Figure 1]. Although the percent of CPD-trained caseworkers who are satisfied with

their jobs is somewhat lower among caseworkers who are case-assignable than those still in training, the proportion of CPD-trained caseworkers who report they are dissatisfied remains less than half the proportion of BSD-trained caseworkers. Because the sample of staff trained with the new model has an average of two and half months shorter tenure than the sample of staff trained with the old model, subsequent analysis will examine the extent to which these differences between the groups are associated with tenure and whether the level of job satisfaction among the CPD-trained caseworkers is sustained over time.

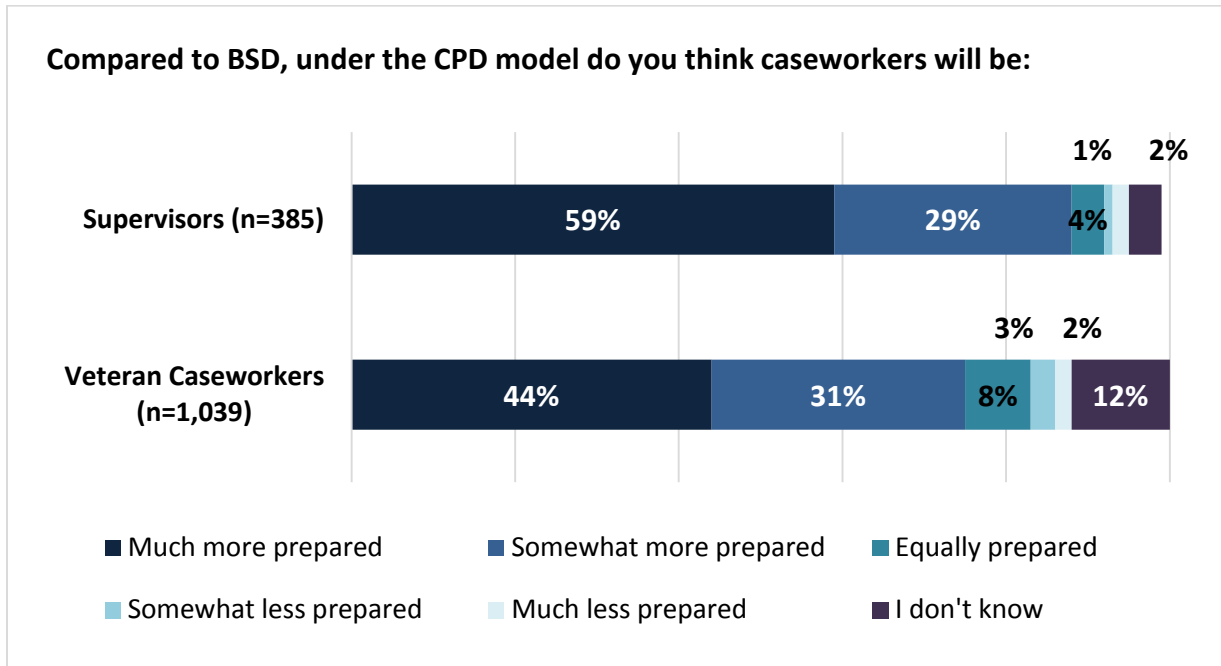
Figure 1: New Caseworkers’ Self-Reported Job Satisfaction, CPD vs. BSD



Source: Statewide Survey, November 2015. Notes: Limited to survey respondents who completed the Statewide Survey. Limited to caseworkers who were hired after January 1, 2015, and completed training before November 1, 2015.

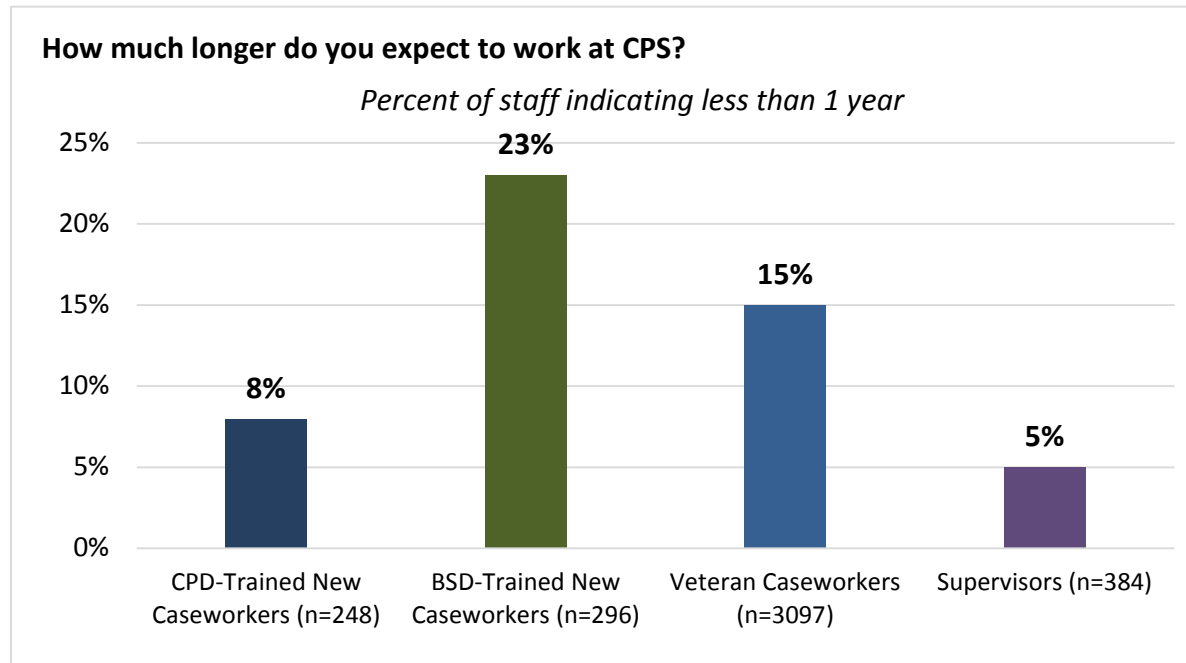
Although it is too early in the implementation of the new training model to examine differences in caseworker quality and productivity across the two models, supervisors and veteran caseworkers believe the CPD model is superior to BSD for preparing new caseworkers. As shown in Figure 2, the majority of supervisors and veteran caseworkers reported that new caseworkers will be more prepared as a result of training under the CPD model. Supervisors report the greatest strength of the CPD model is providing caseworkers with a realistic understanding of their job. The majority also reports the CPD model does a better job of building workers’ confidence to work independently by teaching new workers their supervisors’ expectations, and integrating new workers into their unit [not shown].

Figure 2: Comparison of CPD and BSD for Preparing New Caseworkers



Source: Statewide Survey, November 2015. Notes: Limited to survey respondents who completed the Statewide Survey. Veteran caseworker sample limited to mentors and veteran caseworkers who have had a new caseworker trained under the CPD model in their unit.

Finally, preliminary analysis of the statewide survey responses shows that CPD-trained caseworkers are far less likely than their BSD-trained counterparts to consider leaving the agency in the near future. As shown in Figure 3, nearly one-quarter of the BSD-trained caseworkers in this sample (case-assignable with three to 11 months tenure) report that they expect to work at CPS for less than one more year. In contrast, less than one-tenth of CPD-trained caseworkers indicate intentions to leave within the next year. As a point of reference, veteran caseworkers' (more than one year in their stage of service) reports of intentions to leave in the next year fall between the two new caseworker groups and supervisors tend to be more situated in their positions, with only 5 percent reporting plans to leave in the next year.

Figure 3: Caseworkers and Supervisors Reporting Plans to Leave CPS in the Next Year

Source: Statewide Survey, November 2015. Notes: Limited to survey respondents who completed the Statewide Survey. CPD and BSD sample limited to caseworkers who were hired after January 1, 2015, and completed training before November 1, 2015.

Although these are self-reports of intentions, and not actual attrition, the reports are likely to be indicative of staff who are pursuing other job opportunities. These results should be interpreted with some caution and it is too early to conclude that training under the CPD model is associated with reduced turnover. However, these early findings indicate trends in the right direction and subsequent analyses will examine the extent to which the differences between the groups, with regard to attrition intentions, are associated with caseworkers' tenure, the CPD model, or regional differences.

Additionally, it is important to note that the training model has been difficult to implement statewide, especially in areas of the state where there is a shortage of tenured workers to serve as mentors and in areas of the state, such as Dallas, where the agency is quickly hiring a large amount of staff. As such, the agency will continue to evaluate the training model and adjust to work towards a stable and well-trained workforce.

In fiscal year 2016, CPS is designing a training and development program for managers (supervisors, program directors, program administrators, and regional directors). This training will focus on their roles and need for improved decision-making and case outcomes; staff development; strategic and critical thinking; retention, modeling of desired behavior; and clinical child welfare practice. From January to March 2016, CPS has identified the primary gaps in the current training and development process based on feedback from supervisors and management through surveys and focus groups. CPS is now designing a solution to address these gaps and anticipates a statewide roll-out of a new program for supervisors and program directors by December 31, 2016. In addition, CPS plans to develop additional resources for supervisors throughout the year. For example, CPS will collaborate with the

DFPS Office of Child Safety to organize Safety Summits across the state to strengthen CPS supervisor's focus on safety, improve their practice, and help them foster relationships with their peers.

Performance Evaluations

Both the CPS Operational Review and the Sunset Advisory Commission review identified a need for CPS to revise plans to more fairly assess the performance of direct-delivery staff and regional management. CPS revised the caseworker and supervisor performance evaluations to better focus on how the caseworker engages, partners with, and assesses a family.

Currently, more than 100 categories of regional employees exist within CPS. Since January 2015, performance evaluations have been updated for 28 categories of those staff, which includes 8,219 out of 9,103 FTEs (approximately 90 percent of regional staff). On April 15, 2016, plans for regional directors, deputy regional directors, program administrators, administrative assistants and human service technicians were completed and available for use. There are still approximately 70 categories that must be completed (representing 884 FTEs).

New performance evaluations for regional directors, deputy regional directors and program administrators focus on five areas:

- Leadership
- Workforce Management
- Client Outcomes
- General Administration
- Community Engagement

Revamped performance evaluations for caseworkers rolled out February through March 2015. A group of supervisors piloted the caseworker performance evaluations before they rolled out with favorable feedback.

Performance evaluations for supervisors rolled out October 2015. When completing performance evaluations for supervisors, program directors were instructed to ensure feedback from a supervisor's co-workers, direct reports, stakeholders and any other parties that can provide important comments on the supervisor's performance, and use this information as part of the supervisor's annual performance evaluation.

CPS will continue to evaluate the timeliness of completion of performance evaluations and will work to ensure consistency in evaluating staff at all levels, with the goal to reach 100 percent compliance by December 31, 2016.

IMPACT Modernization

IMPACT is the primary tool that supports daily casework functions. IMPACT Modernization will update the system to achieve better reporting, decrease repetitive data entry, and reduce administrative casework tasks so that caseworkers can spend more time with the children and families they serve.

IMPACT Modernization has been divided into three primary phases:

- Phase 1 – Intake
- Reporting and Data Management (RDM)
- Phase 2 - remaining stages of service

Phase I

During Phase I, modernization efforts focused on:

- Updates to Statewide Intake processes, including electronic reporting through a website (eReports);
- Added features for external access for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and other partners; and
- Improvements to submission processes for required background checks for certain providers.

The external access component allows for CASA to upload documents, such as photographs and court documents into IMPACT. Phase I will allow DFPS to test the usability and support for external access so that it can be expanded to other critical child welfare partners, such as Law Enforcement and Child Advocacy Centers.

IMPACT Modernization Phase I is planned for completion in summer 2016.

Reporting and Data Management

The RDM project includes the implementation of new business intelligence and analytics software and a new data warehouse to provide better and timelier reporting capabilities and dashboards for caseworkers and supervisors. Although the project is behind schedule, there are two main dashboards under development:

- The Critical Task tool is designed to provide visualizations of existing data elements to allow staff the ability to identify case-related tasks that need their attention daily.
- The Case Complexity tool, using elements identified by field staff as making a case more complex to work, is designed to aid supervisors when assigning new cases. The Case Complexity tool provides supervisors with a metrics dashboard of each caseworker's current caseload and the complexity of those cases.

The RDM project is currently behind schedule. DFPS is working with contracted vendors to bring this project on track so that it may provide the intended efficiencies for staff.

Phase II

Phase II of IMPACT Modernization will continue building upon system improvements and usability for caseworkers within the remaining areas of IMPACT, such as Investigations, Conservatorship, and Family Based Safety Services. Phase 2 also includes updates for CPS Transformation and federal legislation on preventing sex trafficking. This project is in the procurement phase, with contract execution anticipated in May 2016. IMPACT Modernization Phase II is expected to be complete August of 2017.

Solid Processes

Both the CPS Operational Review and the Sunset Advisory Commission review identified improvement in how CPS functions and creates and disseminates policy and procedure changes. Specifically, the reports identified a need for revamped CPS policies and procedures that were seen as overly cumbersome to field staff. Similarly, there were recommendations relating to CPS' practice model and decision-making support tools. Through Transformation, CPS made progress to correct these issues, and maintains a solid process for which CPS can implement policy and practice changes.

Policy Streamlining

In its operational review, the Stephen Group (TSG) found that the CPS policy handbook had become unwieldy and cumbersome over the years with outdated and conflicting provisions and an intermingling of policy, best practice and philosophy. As a result, field staff found it difficult to navigate through the handbook to find what they needed. To address this issue, CPS established a centralized process for policy review, development, and dissemination to ensure the policy handbook is up-to-date, clear, concise, and safety-focused.

Using this new process, CPS streamlined the Investigations and Family Based Safety Services (FBSS) policies in fiscal years 2014-2015. In fiscal year 2016, the work continued using the new process to implement policy changes from the 2015 legislative session. CPS is also continuing work to streamline policies for Conservatorship.

The CPS policy handbook is meant to clearly and succinctly identify the tasks that caseworkers must always do on each case to ensure safety, permanency and well-being. Caseworker feedback on the streamlined policy for investigations and FBSS has been generally positive. They feel it is much easier to navigate through the handbook when they have questions about what they have to do.

Simply knowing about and performing critical tasks are not enough. To ensure safety, permanency and well-being, caseworkers must know how to do a quality job performing the tasks and how to make good decisions based on the individual circumstances of each case. This is not something that can be spelled out in a manual or handbook but must be developed through effective training and supervision. To reinforce and support the training and supervision, CPS has developed practice guides that provide direction on best practices and how to think through common scenarios. Practice guides are not mandates, but are guides to assist the caseworker in determining the best decisions to make on a case based on the individual circumstances of each case.

When streamlining first rolled out, the policy and practice guides were published separately. Staff felt this was disjointed and made it difficult to understand the changes being made. CPS adjusted practice and now rolls out the policy change and any accompanying practice guide together. Each policy directive in the handbook has a link to any accompanying practice guide so staff and the public can easily access both from one source. It can be difficult to strike the right balance, providing enough detail and structure to ensure consistency in how work is done with enough flexibility to ensure staff uses their clinical judgment and critical thinking skills to make the best decision for each individual case. CPS has created an internal and external mailbox for policy questions to solicit feedback about the policy

handbook and practice guides. CPS adjusts policy and resource guides to strike the best balance based on this feedback.

Structured Decision Making

During fiscal years 2014-2015 of Transformation, CPS implemented the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Safety Assessment and Risk Assessment tools to guide and support caseworker decision-making during the investigation stage in a manner consistent with the agency's mission of protecting children. At the beginning of 2016, CPS implemented the Safety Assessment in FBSS and Conservatorship

Currently, additional SDM tools for FBSS and Conservatorship are being developed and implemented. The SDM tool for FBSS includes the risk re-assessment tool meant to assist FBSS staff in determining whether it is safe to close a case and end CPS intervention with that family by re-assessing the risk factors that have been identified during both the investigation and FBSS intervention.

The SDM tools for conservatorship include the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) and the Family Reunification Tool. These tools will assist conservatorship staff in determining the parent's needs and strengths to identify services to address the safety and risk factors in the home and whether it is safe for a child to return home, if reunification is the goal. Similar to the risk-reassessment tool in FBSS, it will help the caseworker determine if risk factors identified in previous stages of service, and throughout the conservatorship case, have been adequately addressed to ensure the safety of children reuniting with their families.

Also, currently in development for FBSS and Conservatorship stages is the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment tool. CPS staff will use this tool to assess the family and use it in conjunction with the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment scheduled for implementation on September 1, 2016. All children, ages 3 to 18, will receive a CANS assessment within the first 45 days of removal once the tool is implemented. Joint training for both tools will help staff understand how to use the assessments to drive the service planning process. Together, these tools will bring a structured system to support decision-making at critical points in the FBSS and Conservatorship stages, with the goal of reducing recidivism and ensuring child safety after CPS ends their intervention with the family. CPS also expects that the tools will lead to more consistent decision-making around safety across those stages of service.

Evaluation of the SDM tool will be conducted through case-reads and recidivism data.

Accountability

As CPS transforms, it needs to assure a more solid structure focusing on accountability. In October 2015, CPS published the Business Plan for fiscal year 2016. The Business Plan establishes clear goals and objectives. As CPS continues to transform, CPS will be transparent in its goals, objectives, and outcomes by using the Business Plan as a roadmap for the future and ensure CPS is accountable for outcomes.

Two major efforts in fiscal year 2016 will increase accountability for CPS service providers. First, CPS will continue to shift to performance-based contracting in residential and purchased client services to

improve the quality of the service provided and therefore positively affect outcomes for children and families served through CPS. Second, CPS will launch a pilot to test the use of a single entity to oversee subcontractors and service quality in Purchased Client Services (PCS).

Performance-Based Contracting

CPS developed the Residential Contracts Transformation Demonstration project to enhance the safety, permanency, normalcy, and well-being of all children in residential foster care through use of performance-based, outcome-focused contracting. DFPS and 24-hour residential contracted providers agreed to participate in the demonstration. In August 2014, the Residential Contract Division revamped the current provider risk assessment tool and oversight practices used to prioritize, scope and effectively monitor providers based on high safety risk indicators, as well as the provider's overall financial and operational viability. In October 2014, CPS Residential Contracts changed the contract monitoring tool from a compliance model to performing qualitative evaluations and analyzing fiscal and program data to determine the soundness of a provider's fiscal operations as well as the safety and well-being of children in care.

In December 2014, the Residential Contract Division received training relating to the scope, objectives, appropriate source of financial documentation, and relevant and applicable financial regulations as detailed in the revised monitoring tools. The training covered the revamped reporting method, which includes recommendations to findings and assistance to improve contractors' operations. In May 2015, Residential Contracts established a detailed work plan for the full implementation of a predictive performance-based contract monitoring system that will strengthen provider accountability and enhance contract-monitoring efforts. The work plan describes the detailed roll out of the new approach to monitoring provider quality and identifying risk indicators by incorporating the use of performance-based contracting, enhancing the contract monitoring process, and establishing a scorecard to report publicly providers' performance.

From June-November 2015, Residential Contracts facilitated monthly working sessions with provider partners to design and finalize enhanced performance measures and the Safety-Based Contract Monitoring Protocols. CPS Program Systems Improvement Team designed and implemented the predictive analytics tool used to detect high-risk children in care and as a more effective and real-time approach of employing Residential Contract's resources to ensure each child is in a safe environment.

In January 2016, Residential Contracts began the Performance Based Contract Monitoring Demonstration project. There are 36 provider partners who volunteered to participate in the demonstration, covering a total of 64 contracts. There are 30 child placing agencies, 14 general residential operations including basic child care facilities and general residential operations that offer treatment for emotional disorders, seven residential treatment centers, nine emergency shelters, and four intense psychiatric treatment program participating. Three sub-workgroups are established as a part of the demonstration requirements: Demonstration Evaluation, Contract Monitoring, and Performance Measures. As a part of the Demonstration contract amendment, the contractor is required to participate in at least one of the sub-workgroups throughout the duration of the demonstration. Each sub-workgroup meets monthly with the exception of the Demonstration Evaluation, which meets less often because its focus is evaluating the progress of the demonstration.

Enhanced monitoring activities began in February 2016 to include targeted-scope desk reviews and on-site reviews. In May 2016, the first set of performance measure outcomes will be reported for each provider participant; assessing baseline data for each performance measure and setting targets for the next reporting period. Initial discussion and design of a new performance measure relating to behavioral health will begin and reporting of the Demonstration Project evaluation will take place.

Family Based Safety Services Broker Model

FBSS is exploring an alternative way to contract for services – through a broker model. Currently, FBSS staff members work with families identified as high-risk. As families participate in FBSS services, they often have their children still in the home or in a Parental Child Safety Placement (PCSP), with the intent of returning the children to the home in a short timeframe. Additionally, the FBSS staff member must determine what services will benefit this family, locate the service, or retrofit services to meet the client’s needs. This task takes the FBSS caseworker away from other casework activities. The goal of the FBSS Broker Model is to expand access to services in areas that historically lack contracted services and increase the quality of the services while taking the burden of locating appropriate services away from the caseworker. A Request for Information was posted and CPS is working on drafting the Request for Proposal and locating pilot areas. CPS expects to launch the pilot in summer 2016.

Improving Quality

Continuous Quality Improvement

As noted in both the Sunset Report and CPS operational review, although CPS has vast quantities of data and reports, its process and support for turning that information into action has historically been limited. Each region has its own culture, strengths and areas needing improvement. To improve the system statewide, there has to be consistent statewide standards on policy and practice but regions also need flexibility to address their particular issues.

CPS has implemented a new Continuous Quality Improvement plan that will utilize Regional Systems Improvement (RSI) specialists. The RSI team started their work with the regions in January 2016.

The RSI team is managed through the state office CPS Systems Improvement Division while specialists are imbedded and housed in the regions. With this structure, the RSI team helps ensure consistency in implementing the statewide vision for improving safety, permanency and well-being. At the same time, they promote field-driven change by focusing on regionally specific issues. Regional management remains responsible and accountable for using data and reports to effectively manage their resources and ensure that staff are doing quality work, completing critical tasks and achieving safety, permanency and well-being for children and families. The RSIs support this work through reviewing, aggregating and analyzing data at a system level to help regional management identify areas of strength and those needing improvement and to implement plans to address root causes and eliminate identified barriers. The RSI team also tracks regional efforts so they can be incorporated into statewide plans and initiatives and successful practices can be shared across the state.

Some of the RSIs initial work includes the following:

- **Harris County Routing Analysis.** Harris County modified the way it routed cases to investigators to reduce the amount of travel time for workers and improve outcomes for families. The RSI analyzed the new routing system and found several large systemic problems, which were contributing to worker dissatisfaction and negative outcomes for families. The RSI worked with regional leadership to make operational modifications to the routing system to address the identified issues.
- **Region 8 Investigations.** The RSI worked with Region 8 leadership on a root cause analysis to determine why investigations were not being closed timely. Several systemic issues were identified that created concerns. CPS developed an action plan in conjunction with regional leadership to address those issues.
- **Travis County FBSS Assessment.** The RSIs conducted basic analysis of the functioning of the FBSS systems statewide. Several areas were identified as concerning, including Travis County. The Region 7 RSI completed a root cause analysis and isolated the FBSS concerns to several units. Regional leadership, in collaboration with the RSI, used the information to develop a plan addressing the FBSS concerns.

Case Reads

Case reads are critical to evaluating the quality of work being done and the safety of children. There are generally two types of case reads.

A traditional quality assurance case read usually focuses on a random sample of cases that have been open a longer period of time or have been closed and reviewed retrospectively primarily for compliance with policy.

A real-time case read focuses on cases shortly after they are open, targeting high-risk cases using factors identified through predictive analytics. These reads are proactive, focusing primarily on actions to ensure child safety with a structured follow-up process to ensure critical actions are completed.

Both types of case reads generally use a structured case review tool so information from the reviews can be aggregated and analyzed to identify patterns and trends that inform needed improvements in policy, practice or training.

CPS uses a mix of both types of case reads and has some form of case review for each stage of service. As part of Transformation, however, CPS has been expanding the use of real-time case reads as that type of review has been found to improve child safety and help staff take needed actions to prevent negative outcomes.

As part of Transformation, CPS implemented a real-time case review in Family Based Safety Services that began statewide in July 2015. In the review, specialized staff review cases identified through the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Risk Assessment as high/very high risk of recurrence within the first 30-40 days after the case is opened for ongoing services. The review focuses on ensuring that tasks critical to safety are completed. If critical actions or tasks have not been completed, the reviewer follows up to ensure that they get done, including notifying regional management. The pilot of this

process in Region 8 found a 30% reduction in serious recurrence (confirmed physical abuse, sexual abuse, fatality or a removal) during an FBSS stage. In January 2016, CPS also implemented a real-time read as part of its Residential Contract Monitoring pilot. CPS used predictive analytics to identify children at a higher risk of abuse or neglect in foster care. In the pilot, for each identified child, specialized staff use a structured case review tool to examine the files from the Child Placing Agency (CPA) responsible for overseeing the home or facility where the child is placed. As with the FBSS real-time case read, if critical tasks have not been completed, staff follow-up to ensure they get done.

CPS is also examining the Child Safety Specialist (CSS) case review process. Currently, the CSS reviews cases at the beginning of an investigation when there are young children involved in the case and someone in the family has been involved in multiple reports to CPS in the past 12 months. The CSS reviews the entire file and provides feedback and guidance to the caseworker on issues they need to focus on during the investigation. The CSS also reviews investigations on the back end as a secondary approver (reviewing the case after the supervisor has already approved) on cases where there are young children, a disposition other than ruled out and the recommendation is to close without ongoing services. If the CSS rejects the case, the program director reviews the case and gives final approval.

This process was set up almost a decade ago when CPS first created the CSS position. CPS recognizes that the process needs to be adjusted to conform to current best practices. In January 2016, CPS implemented a structured case review tool for CSS to use in their reviews to capture information that can be aggregated and analyzed. CPS is also examining the types of cases CSS review, when they do the review and the follow-up process for identified concerns or issues and will be making adjustments to most effectively target the CSS resources.

Cultural Shift

As CPS works through Transformation initiatives and enhances the practice model, children, youth, families, external stakeholders, staff, and leadership will begin to see a cultural shift toward increased involvement with a child's family to achieve outcomes that focus on the safety, permanency, and wellbeing of the children involved in the CPS system. Engaging families is paramount to the mission of CPS and it is crucial toward better outcomes for children and families.. CPS is piloting and/or implementing critical initiatives over the next year to truly focus on more family inclusion to achieve better outcomes.

Single Child Plan

This initiative seeks to increase collaboration between CPS, parents, caregivers, and contracted placements on the development of the child's plan of service. After working closely with providers, Texas CASA, Residential Child Care Licensing, Residential Contracts, and parent advocates, CPS will implement changes to support better collaboration to develop the child's service plan. The new model will include a joint meeting between parents, CPS, caregivers, residential providers, attorneys for the parents and the child, guardians ad litem, CASA, and family support systems within 45 days of a child entering conservatorship. The meeting will focus on the parents' and child's strengths and needs with the goal of co-developing the child's plan of service. A standard form for child care providers will also be implemented to ensure consistency across the state. Following the initial planning meeting, all

service planning meetings will take place at the provider's facility and will be attended by the same individuals invited to the initial meeting. CPS policy and residential providers' time frames for initial and plan reviews will be aligned through Minimum Standards, Residential Contract, and CPS Policy. Additionally, CPS will update IMPACT to allow for providers to enter service plan information directly into the IMPACT system, thus reducing duplication. IMPACT changes are expected in fall 2017. CPS will begin using the new single service plan model in December 2016.

Signs of Safety

CPS has also implemented a new practice model to engage the family and their support network so child safety remains the primary focus even after CPS is no longer working with the family. The Signs of Safety approach provides strategies for creating effective working relationships among all stakeholders (child, youth, family, worker, supervisor, extended community, etc.) and establishes a shared focus that guides casework. Strategies include bringing the voice of the youth and family front and center through specialized tools, identification and development of family safety networks, facilitated safety network meetings, case mapping, group supervision and family finding.

Signs of Safety seeks to:

- Create effective working relationships and a shared focus to guide stakeholders (including the child, family, worker, supervisor, extended family, providers, and the community). Strategies include facilitated family meetings, developing family safety networks, family finding, and group supervision. This promotes shared decision making and avoids casework being done in isolation, both of which are critical to ensuring child safety.
- Enhance critical inquiry and minimize the potential for bias by workers through a rigorous "mapping" of the safety, danger, and risk, which is a process undertaken collaboratively by all stakeholders and helps sort complicated information into meaningful child protection categories.
- Develop a joint understanding by workers, families, and extended community as to what the dangers, risks, protective actions, and family strengths are, and what clear, meaningful, behavioral changes, goals, and actions will create sustainable safety.

Two regions were chosen as initial implementation sites for Signs of Safety – regions 8 and 11. Signs of Safety is currently being practiced in early adopter units of Family Based Safety Services and Investigation in these regions. Post implementation activities are being conducted in these regions, including holding regular debriefing calls with staff to ensure fidelity to the model and providing formal coaching sessions to caseworkers and supervisors. Regional staff members who are working the Signs of Safety model report feeling more successful with their cases and increased job satisfaction. Initial Signs of Safety training is scheduled to roll out statewide to all stages of service by December 31, 2017.

Transformation Performance Metrics as of April 2016

The Sunset Advisory Commission directed the Department of Family and Protective Services to report the following Child Protective Services performance measures statewide, and for each region, to the Sunset Commission at six-month intervals through October 2016:

- Turnover rates for investigators, conservatorship and Family Based Safety Services caseworkers.
- Average number of days to close an investigation.
- Average number of placements per child.
- Average number of days to achieve permanency.
- Recidivism rate of children into CPS system in all stages of service.

Unless otherwise noted, all of the data discussed below represents the period from September to March. As with prior reports, fiscal year 2014 is used as a baseline to measure progress since Sunset and Transformation initiatives began in fiscal year 2015.

Statewide Metrics

Investigations

Although turnover in investigations has not improved, the metrics reflect that caseloads, time to case closure and recidivism rates are showing improvement.

Investigations	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16
Turnover	31%	32%	31%
Average daily caseload	19.5	17.0	16.8
Time to Close Stage (days)	53.3	49.9	44.2
Recidivism	7.5%	7.6%	7.3%

Family Based Safety Services

The data reflects that Family Based Safety Services has lower turnover, lower caseloads, and reduced recidivism. The data also indicates that cases in the FBSS stage are staying open longer.

FBSS	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16
Turnover	24%	26%	22%
Average daily caseload	15.6	15.0	14.5
Time to Close Stage	7.2	6.9	7.4
Recidivism	7.9%	7.7%	7.3%

Conservatorship

In Conservatorship, recidivism rates after reunification have declined, but other Conservatorship metrics have not significantly changed.

Conservatorship	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16
Turnover	20%	22%	20%
Average daily caseload	31.1	28.4	29.4
Average number of placements	3.2	3.2	3.1
Exits to permanency	91.6%	92.8%	92.0%
Average time to permanency (in months)	18.7	18.6	18.5
Recidivism after reunification	12.4%	12.3%	10.3%

Metrics Vary Across the Regions

As in prior reports, results across the regions vary. As detailed in Appendix A, every region showed improvement on some metrics but there is room for improvement across the state. Under the new leadership, CPS will re-evaluate the Transformation initiatives to determine what critical changes it needs to make for improved outcomes.

Conclusion

So far, Transformation efforts are making an impact; however not all areas of the effort are notable, positive, or as expected. Recidivism data has declined statewide across all stages of service. However, CPS has not yet achieved the targeted goal of 6.8 percent for Investigations and FBSS. The recidivism rate for Conservatorship at this point in time exceeds the goal of 10.5 percent.

Permanency for children in conservatorship, however, has remained relatively unchanged. CPS has not yet reached the targeted goal of 14 months for time to permanency statewide. However, the data reflects that it is trending in a positive direction.

Investigations seems to be managing its work more efficiently, as caseloads and the average time to case closure have decreased, as has the average daily caseload for investigators. However, areas of the state have struggled to achieve targeted goals.

In contrast, FBSS has reduced turnover and caseload, but time to case closure has increased. Again, there is more improvement CPS must make to achieve targeted goals.

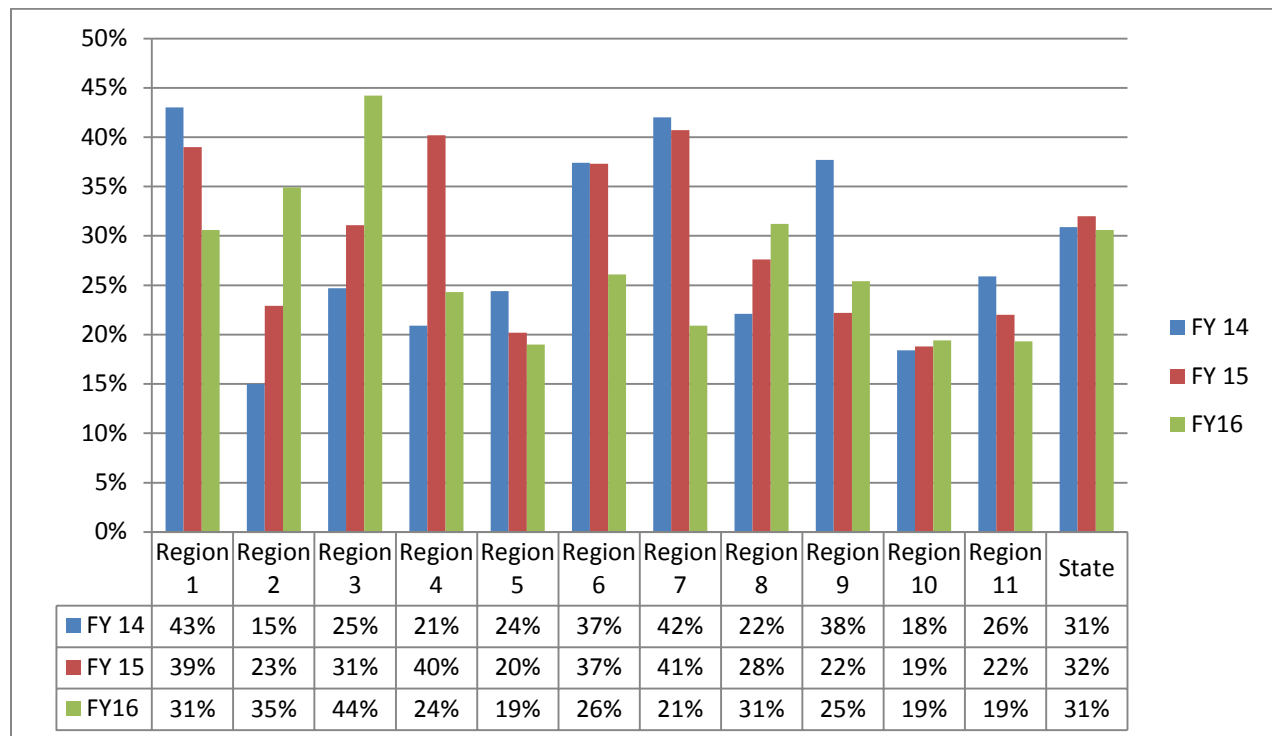
And finally, in conservatorship, caseloads have declined slightly and turnover has remained relatively unchanged.

APPENDIX A - REGIONAL DATA

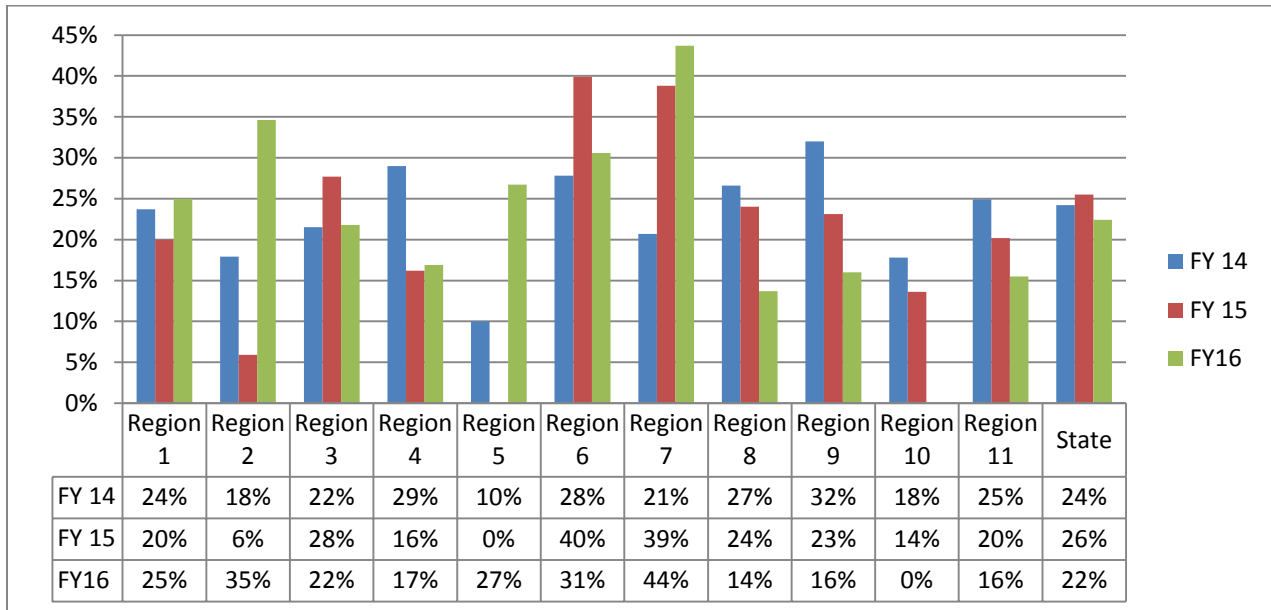
Unless otherwise noted, all data discussed below represents the period from September to March. As with prior reports, fiscal year 2014 is used as a baseline to measure progress since Sunset and Transformation initiatives began in fiscal year 2015.

There are no specific regional trends or patterns as to overall performance. All regions improved in some areas and declined or remained stable in others.

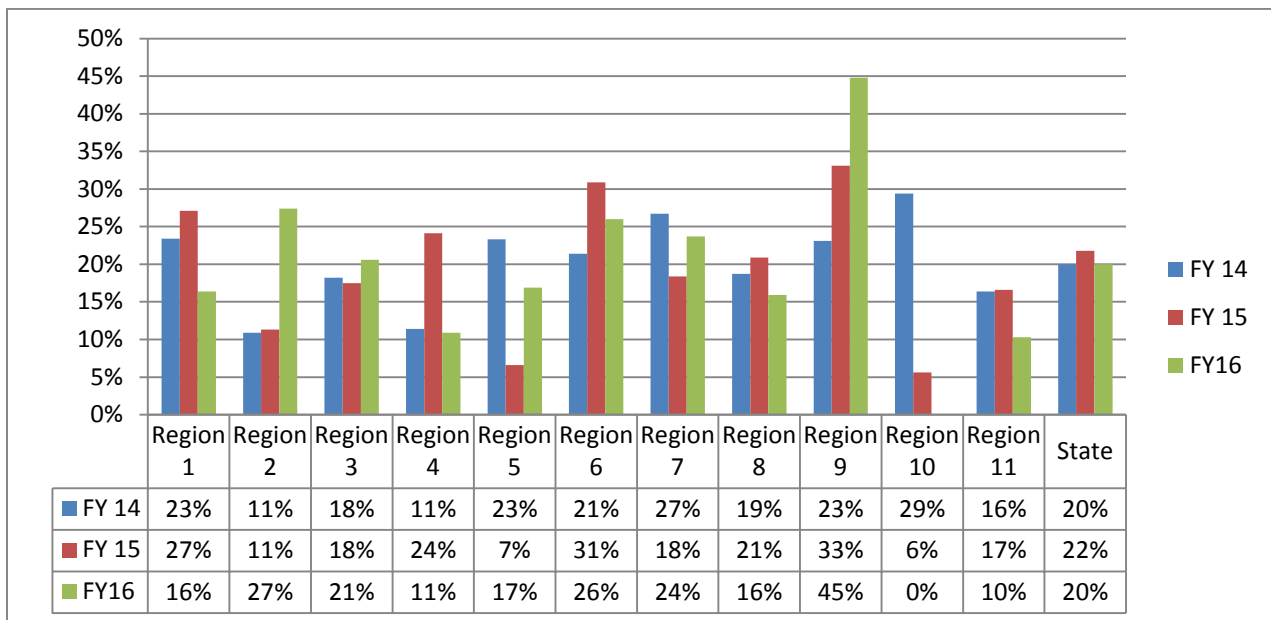
Turnover Rates for Investigators



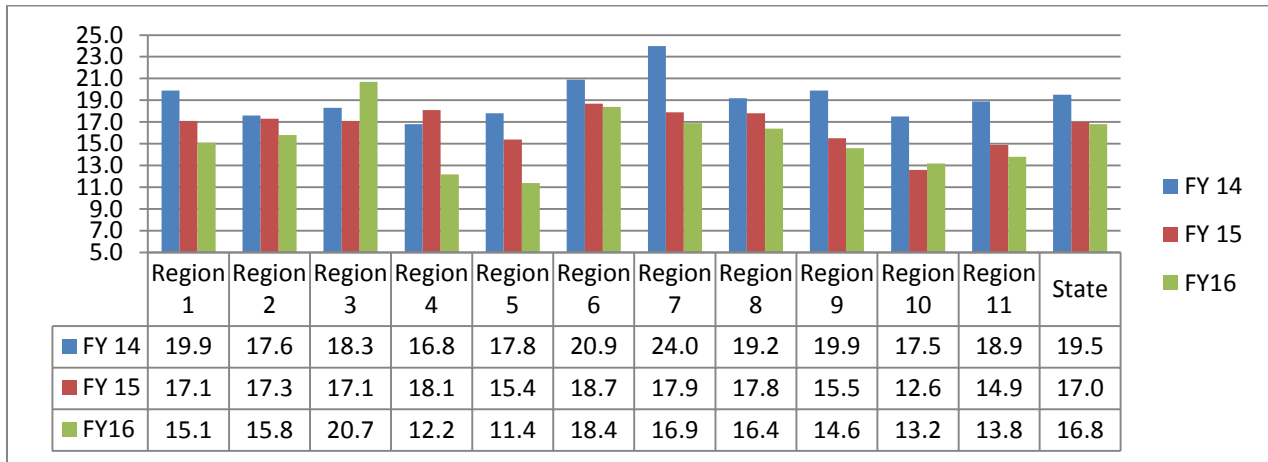
Turnover Rates for FBSS



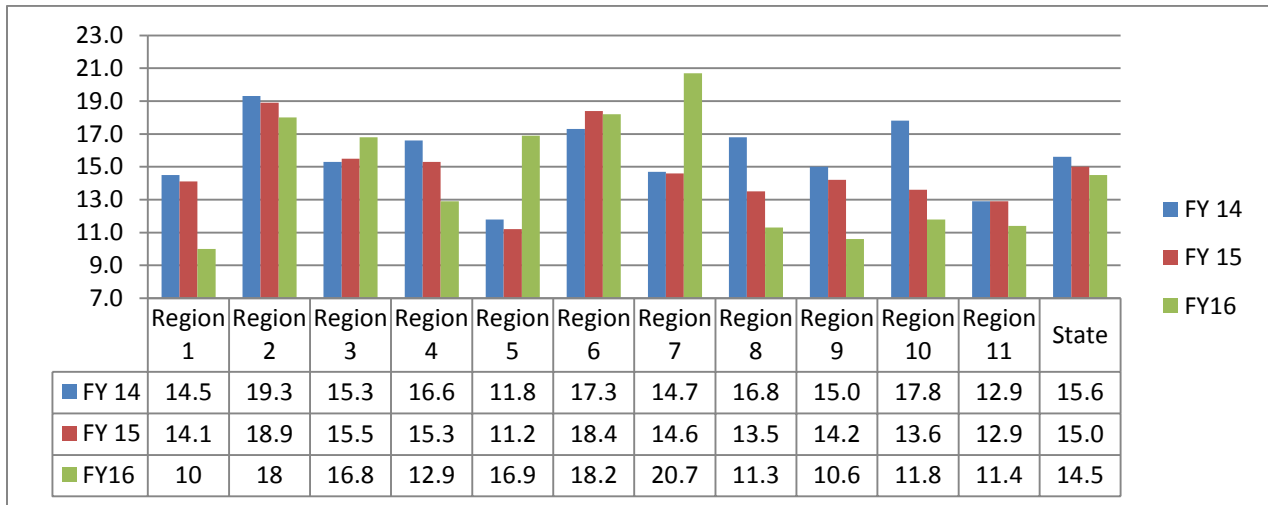
Turnover Rates for Conservatorship



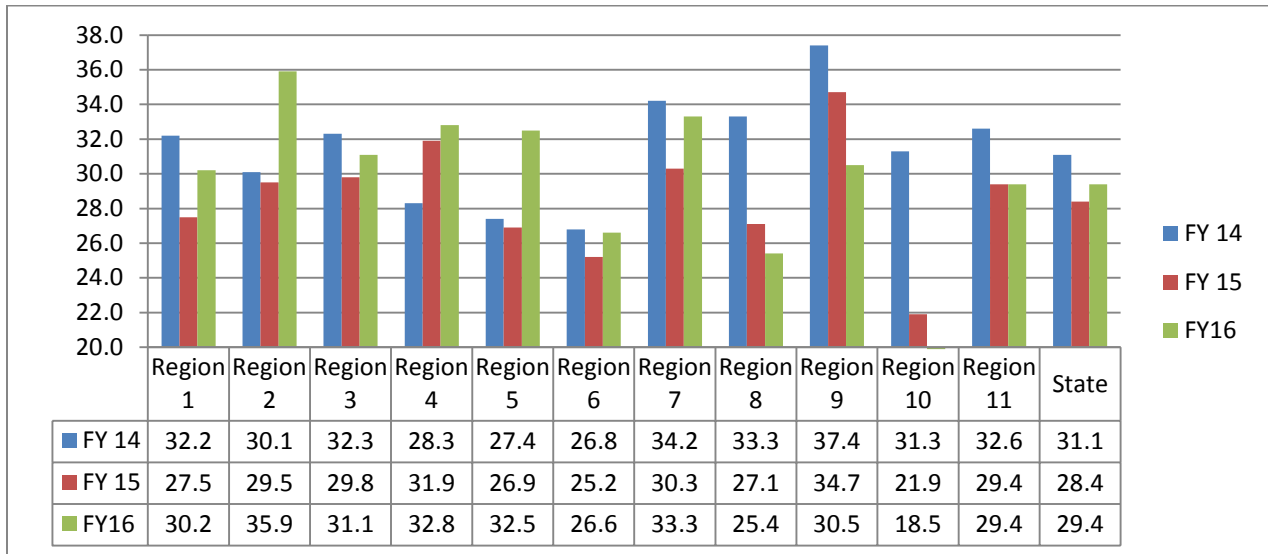
Caseload Numbers for Investigators



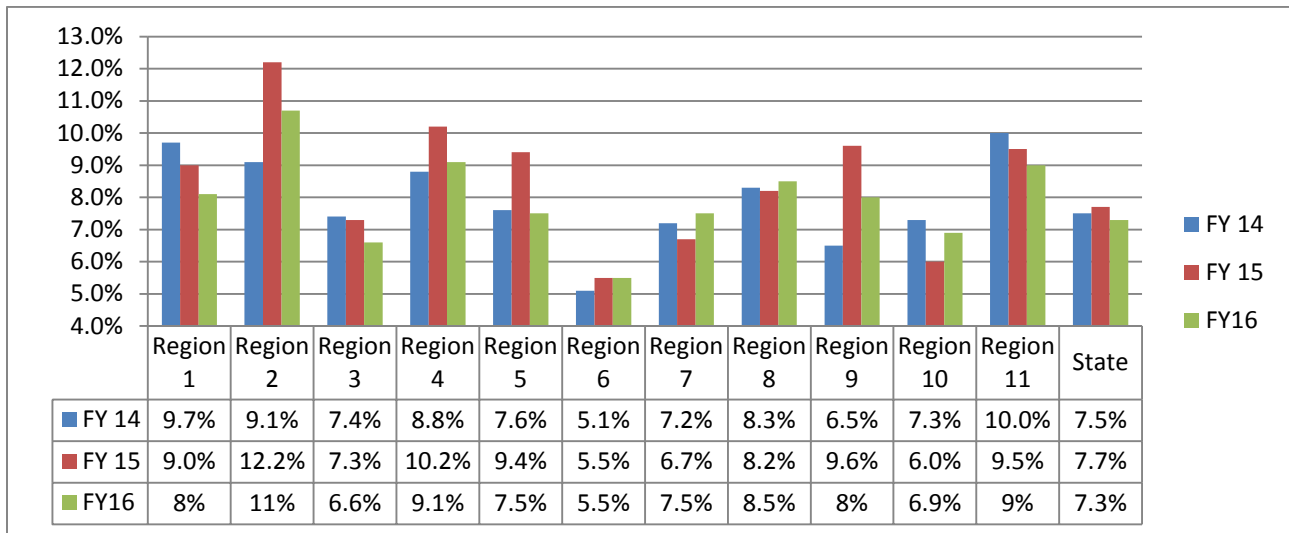
Caseload Numbers for FBSS



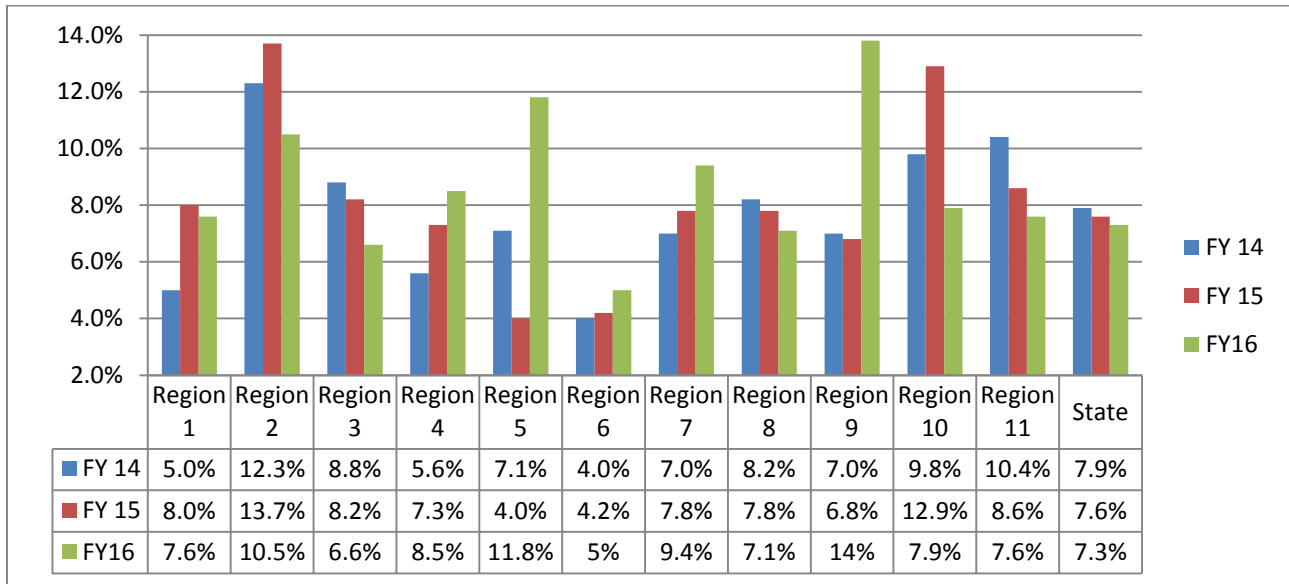
Caseload Numbers for Conservatorship



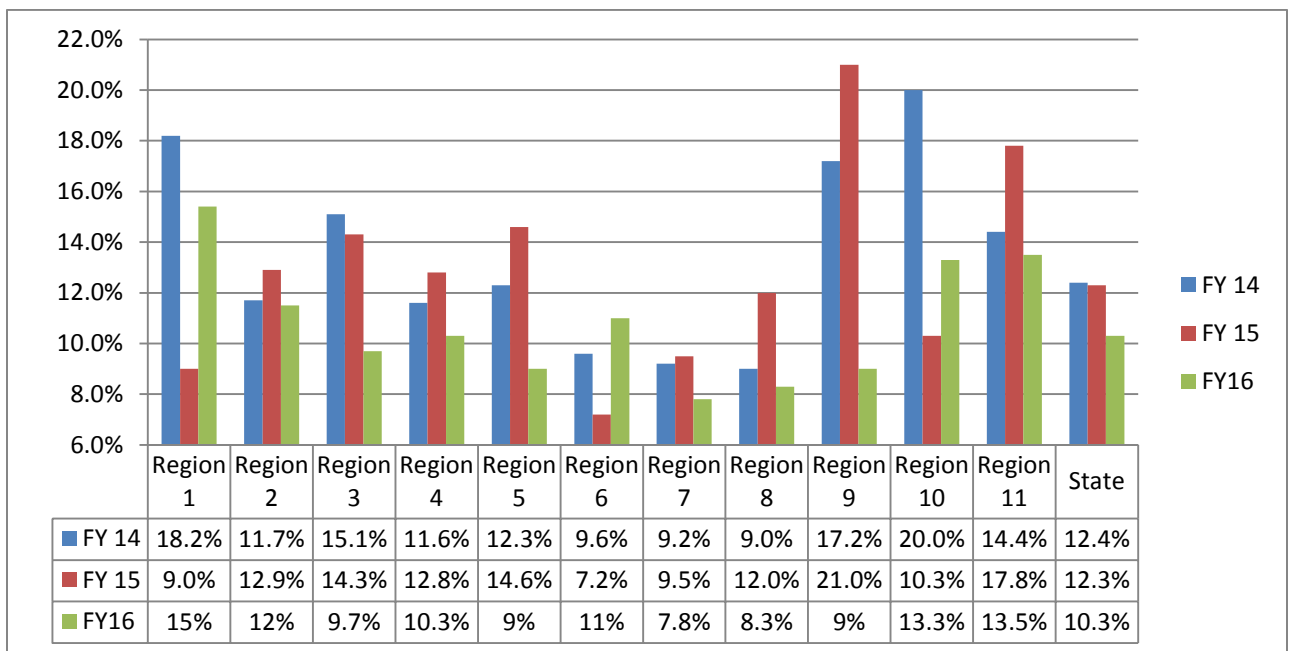
Recidivism Rates for Investigations



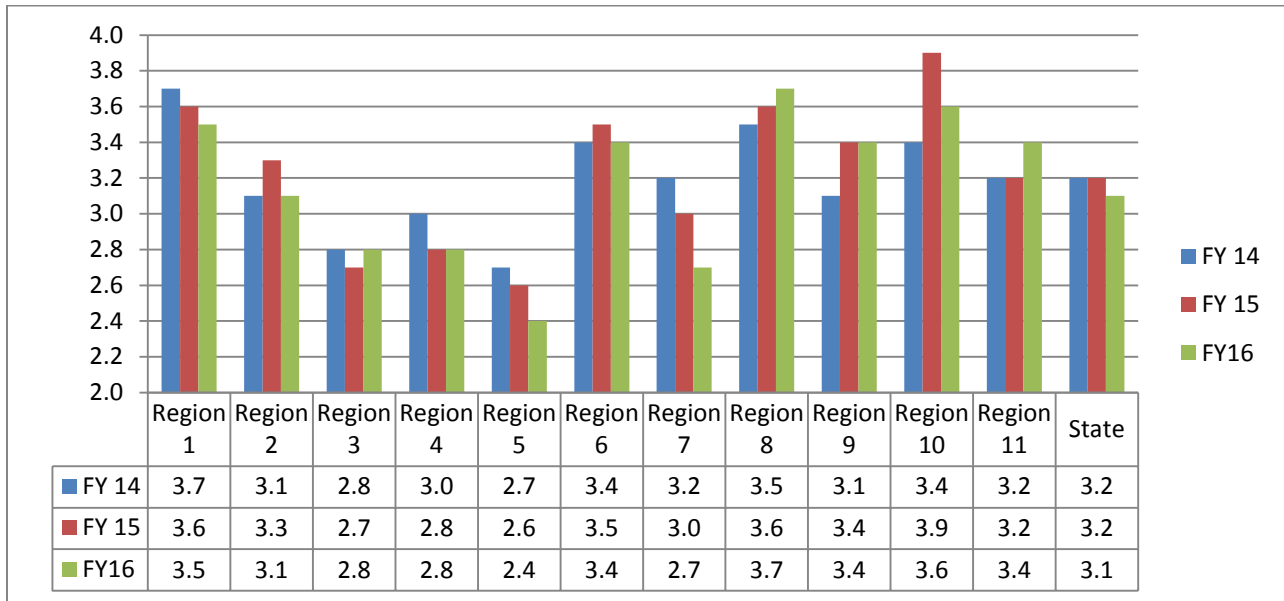
Recidivism Rates for FBSS



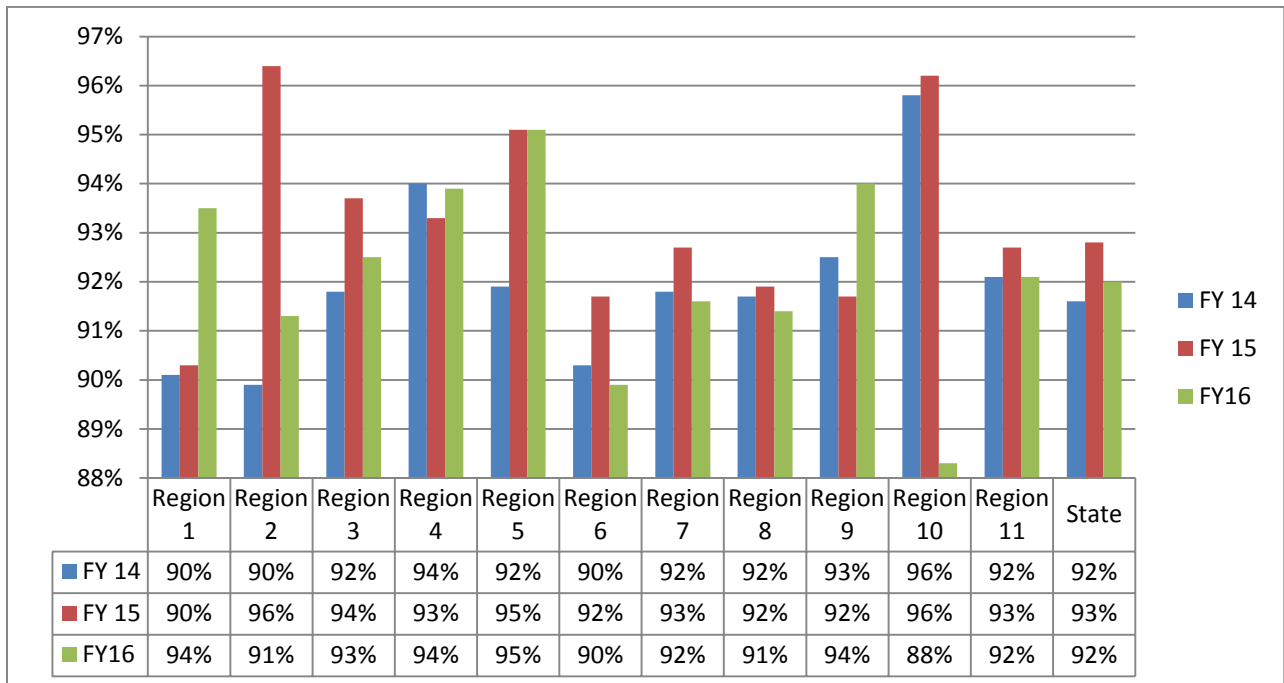
Recidivism Rates for Conservatorship



Permanency: Average Number of Placements



Exits to Permanency



Average Time to Exit to Permanency (in months)

