

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF QUALITY AND PLANNING

Office of the Chief of Quality and Planning Overview

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Chief of Quality and Planning

The Department of Children and Families' Chief of Quality and Planning shall coordinate efforts to continuously monitor and improve DCF's outcomes and the overall quality of practice, care and services that are provided to Connecticut's children and families. The Chief of Quality and Planning shall ensure that DCF implements recurring, rigorous and comprehensive self-directed assessments of its functioning and progress. These efforts shall be guided by DCF's mission, practice model, cross-cutting themes and legislative mandates.

The Office of Quality and Planning shall ensure that DCF's quality assurance, continuous quality improvement, research, evaluations, practice and service oversight are implemented through a racial justice lens, and shall ensure that the collection, governance, use, sharing, interpretation and dissemination of DCF data occurs in a manner cognizant and mitigating of potential implicit bias, over- and underrepresentation and racial inequities.

Administrative Case Review

DCF shall conduct Administrative Case Reviews in accordance with state law and federal regulations.

Cross-reference: DCF Policy 5-2, "Administrative Case Review."

Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman shall address inquiries and complaints related to DCF services in order to resolve these issues and to help ensure that the rights of individuals involved with DCF are upheld and maintained.

The Ombudsman shall respond to inquiries received from, but not limited to, clients, foster and adoptive parents, the Governor's Office, legislators, providers and DCF staff to resolve disputes with DCF in a manner consistent with the best interests of children and shall act as an information and referral source for these individuals. The Ombudsman shall also respond to certain issues and correspondence on behalf of the Commissioner.

The Ombudsman shall utilize a neutral and collaborative process, by which to facilitate fair and equitable resolutions to concerns that are reported, and shall attempt to facilitate resolutions as amicably as possible.

As required, the Ombudsman, in collaboration with Regional, facility and other Central Office staff, shall consult and problem-solve case-related and systemic issues in order to assist and support DCF staff and management with service provision.

Inquiries received from any source, including but not limited to telephone calls, letters, faxes and emails, shall receive an initial response from the Ombudsman within two business days. Some inquiries may require an immediate response depending on the urgency of the concern or at the Commissioner's discretion.

No person shall be coerced, intimidated or retaliated against by DCF for requesting its Ombudsman services. Any person so aggrieved may seek a resolution through DCF's Human Resource Management.

The Office of the Ombudsman shall be subject to state and federal statutes, regulations, and DCF policies and procedures regarding confidentiality.

Legal references: Conn. Gen. Stat. §4-61dd; Gen. Stat. §17a-28; §17a-101 et seq.

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Multicultural Affairs and Immigration Practice

The Office of Multicultural Affairs and Immigration Practice (OMAIP) shall serve as a resource and support with respect to identifying and implementing sound immigration, multicultural and linguistically-competent practices, policies and strategies. OMIAP shall ensure that such practices, policies and strategies are racially just, trauma-informed, gender-responsive and child- and family-centered and that they promote and advance DCF's mission, goals and legislative mandates.

The OMIAP shall serve in a leadership capacity with respect to establishing, maintaining and convening a DCF Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup (SWRJWG). In this capacity, the OMIAP shall serve as one of up to three chairs for the SWRJWG, providing guidance and oversight of this body and any of its subcommittees.

The OMAIP shall partner with various DCF Offices and Divisions (*e.g.*, Office for Research and Evaluation and Community Consultation and Support Division) to create measures, metrics and reporting standards to ensure DCF's accountability with respect to eliminating disproportionality and disparity.

Consistent with DCF policies and practices, and the historical and persistent patterns of inequities, the OMAIP will focus on impacts on communities of color, low-income populations, immigrants and refugees, and limited English-speaking clients. In furtherance of supporting positive outcomes for children and families served by DCF regardless of race, gender and gender identity, class, geography, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age or other aspects of personhood, the OMAIP shall partner with the DCF Office of Diversity and Equity and seek guidance from the SWRJWG to develop, implement and sustain initiatives designed to support the diverse needs of the children and families served by DCF.

OMAIP Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Immigration Practice include, but are not limited to:

- advising the DCF Commissioner and the Senior Management Team regarding strategies to eliminate disproportionality and disparities in referral rates, substantiations, placements and retention among racial and ethnic groups known to experience higher rates of adverse child welfare, health and services outcomes because of religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, socioeconomic status, immigration status, language, ancestry, intellectual or physical disability, mental health status, prior criminal convictions, homelessness, gender identity or expression or geographic areas of residence;
- drafting an annual report detailing DCF's progress in eliminating disparities and disproportionality across DCF's mandates;
- reviewing, advising and making recommendations for expanding existing training programs for building staff capacity and development of skills for supporting racial justice practice;
- providing consultation with respect to establishing and maintaining a standardized data reporting system to support collection of data regarding the race and ethnicity of children and families referred to DCF at key decision points, including, but not limited to referral, substantiation, removal and placement,

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OMAIP Responsibilities (Continued)

- working collaboratively with the Division of Diversity and Equity to develop and support Diversity Action and Racial Justice Teams across the state;
- monitoring statewide immigrant and refugee data and trends to support recommendations for resource allocation, training, practice and policy changes;
- consulting with DCF leadership and staff and public and private service providers and stakeholders to determine organizational and client linguistic and diversity needs, including deaf and hard of hearing populations;
- providing consultation and support for:
 - o U Nonimmigrant Status I-918 B petitions;
 - o matters related to obtaining out-of-country travel documents for children in care;
 - o interactions with state and federal immigration enforcement regarding refugee resettlement; and
 - o matters pertaining to the Unaccompanied Minor Program;
- facilitating requests of birth certificates for children born in Puerto Rico;
- providing human diversity and culturally complex case consultation, immigration practice guidance, CLAS Standards Language access resources, education and training;
- leading, guiding and supporting the charge of the Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup across the agency (SWRJWG).

Statewide Racial Justice Work Group

The OMIAP shall organize and chair a Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup (SWRJWG). This body shall provide advice and offer recommendations to DCF regarding decreasing disproportionality and disparities and improving equitable outcomes across DCF's mandates.

The SWRJWG shall, as warranted, convene subcommittees to focus on core areas, including but not necessarily limited to:

- policy and practice;
- workforce development;
- contracts and procurement; and
- community engagement and partnerships.

Cross references: DCF Policy 7-1, "Office of Diversity and Equity; 21-13, "Immigration;" and 21-3, "Delivery of Services Using a Client's Preferred Communication."

Performance Management

The Office of Performance Management shall serve as the hub for synthesizing and disseminating actionable information about DCF's outcomes. This shall occur in congruence with and in furtherance of DCF's current Performance Expectations. Further, the Office of Performance Management shall support implementation of the DCF's Result's Based Accountability (RBA) efforts.

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Performance Management (Continued)

The duties of this Office shall include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- collecting and cataloging DCF RBA report cards;
- conducting analyses and authoring reports to support DCF Performance Expectation functions;
- engaging in select focus reviews; and
- maintaining the DCF Data Connect website.

In addition, the Office of Performance Management shall be responsible for maintaining the Continuity of Operation Plans and working with senior management to coordinate emergency responses.

Business Continuity Plans

All DCF work locations shall have a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) designed to respond to emergency situations including, but not limited to, medical emergencies, fire, the release of hazardous materials, bomb threats and weather-related events. COOP Plans shall be readily available through the Office of Performance Management and posted on the DCF intranet Health and Safety web page.

The most senior administrator for each work location shall:

- communicate the COOP Plan to all staff on a quarterly basis;
- maintain a hard copy of the COOP Plan in a location that is readily accessible to staff;
- revise and update the COOP Plan on a quarterly basis; and
- submit revisions to the Office of Performance Management.

The COOP Plan shall include designated key staff to:

- manage the overall response to an emergency; and
- represent the work location at COOP Plan-related meetings called by DCF Central Office.

The COOP Plan shall include criteria for notification of appropriate DCF officials and outside emergency services to obtain their expertise and participation in decision-making.

Special Qualitative Review and Safety Science

The Office of Special Qualitative Review and Safety Science shall, as directed by the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee, implement a process for reviewing child fatalities and other significant events. This shall include convening a meeting or conference call between the impacted DCF Region and Area Office or facility, the Commissioner's Office and other necessary Central Office staff to obtain an overview of and briefing about the triggering event.

These Special Qualitative Reviews (SQRs) shall consist of extensive and comprehensive examinations of relevant electronic and paper case records, staff and collateral interviews and, as necessary, consultation with multidisciplinary experts.

The SQR shall be built on the principles of safety science and DCF's cross-cutting theme to be an accountable and learning organization.

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**Special
Qualitative
Review and
Safety
Science**
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The SQR is, at a minimum, focused on three core areas:

- internal and external practice;
- internal and external policies and procedures; and
- internal and external systems.

The SQR process shall provide DCF with information about challenges and strengths with respect to the aforementioned core areas.

Due to the nature of the types of events that lead to an SQR, individual findings from a SQR shall be documented in a confidential and privileged report, noted to be drafted in preparation for possible litigation. Therefore, the SQR report shall have limited internal distribution and shall only be shared with persons outside of DCF as authorized by the Commissioner or the Commissioner’s designee.

Aggregated information from multiple SQRs shall, however, be shared with DCF staff or other stakeholders through Learning and Leadership Forums and other training mechanisms to guide and support professional development and skill-building across DCF and other systems, identify best practices, and direct any needed improvements in the delivery of care and services by DCF and other systems that may touch the lives of Connecticut’s children and families.

**Office for
Research
and
Evaluation**

The Office for Research and Evaluation (ORE) shall be an essential component of DCF’s overall quality assurance and continuous quality improvement structure. ORE’s core functions are shaping, supporting and conducting research, evaluation and analytic inquiry within DCF. It shall transform DCF data into actionable, useful and relevant information through the application of continuous quality improvement (CQI) and research methodologies to support its vision of guiding sound decisions to strengthen practice and maximize positive outcomes for children, families, groups and communities.

ORE shall have the following responsibilities:

- support the consistency, utility, appropriateness and accuracy of DCF’s self-monitoring activities;
- promote coordination of quality assurance and continuous quality improvement activities through collaboration with quality improvement staff from the Regions and DCF facilities;
- provide technical assistance and training to DCF’s programs, divisions, Regions and facilities in order to provide support for research, evaluation, quality assurance and quality improvement activities;
- ensure consistency across DCF programs, divisions, Regions and facilities, including:
 - assisting in developing sound methodologies that enable DCF to answer with confidence any research and evaluation questions posed;
 - assisting in developing outcome measurement metrics and monitoring mechanisms;
 - assisting in establishing quality review criteria;

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**Office for
Research
and
Evaluation**
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- identifying already-existing data to support research, evaluation, continuous quality improvement and self-monitoring activities; and
- developing continuous quality improvement training for staff in conjunction with the Academy for Workforce Development;
 - partner with DCF Information Systems in developing, enhancing and sustaining data collection instruments, data files, portals and reports;
 - collaborate with external and internal partners in the maintenance, enhancement, and development of data collection and reporting systems [e.g., Results Oriented Management (ROM), Provider Information Exchange (PIE) and Case Review System (CRS)]; and
 - participate in key DCF strategic planning, program development, implementation and evaluation activities.

ORE shall partner with the Regions, facilities and other divisions to validate DCF's quality improvement activities to ensure the continuous measuring and monitoring of DCF performance and outcomes. It shall provide technical assistance with respect to the development of instruments necessary to conduct requisite reviews and evaluations.

Further, ORE shall provide consultation and technical assistance to DCF staff regarding the development of automated reporting systems. Such assistance shall be limited to the provision of business analysis, report specification and testing of reports otherwise constructed per specification by Information Systems staff or contracted vendors.

The Office for Research and Evaluation shall also:

- support the development and updating of DCF data development and research agendas;
- assess that all proposed research and research-related activities align with DCF priorities and impact on DCF staff and other resources prior to review by the DCF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and provide administrative oversight of and technical assistance to the DCF IRB;
- assess proposed non-research activities that impact on human subjects protection and provide guidance when appropriate;
- ensure that all research and non-research projects and activities are designed and conducted in a manner that support racial justice and equity, are guided by ethical standards that include ethical responsibilities to our served populations and utilize resources for positive impact;
- conduct comprehensive evaluations, select focused reviews, engage in research and research-related activities and collaborate with other external partners in research and evaluation that support the interest of DCF;
- utilize the most appropriate research and study methodology in order to conduct focused and other reviews, evaluations, research and research-related activities;
- prepare and disseminate evaluation and select focused review reports and research manuscripts; and
- track and catalog all DCF data and evaluation and research reports.

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Office for Research and Evaluation
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The Office for Research and Evaluation shall evaluate the quality of care and services, casework practices, research and non-research projects and activities and, where appropriate, make recommendations and implement models and approaches designed to support the achievement of safety, permanency and well-being outcomes. ORE shall accomplish these responsibilities through continuous quality improvement and qualitative reviews and activities that include but are not limited to:

- Risk Management, collecting, documenting, monitoring and tracking significant events and other incidents such as emergency safety interventions (ESI), serious occurrences and adverse events that occur during research and non-research projects, and distributing information regarding select significant events and other incidents;
- producing aggregate, periodic and special reports on events and other incidences to support policy development and the review of service providers' quality;
- implementing the use of a model or other approach that combines the use of predictive analytic, prospective qualitative review and coaching as a means to proactively identify and intervene in cases at an elevated risk for severe child maltreatment or child fatality;
- conducting reviews of out-of-state congregate care facilities, in partnership and consultation with the DCF Office of Children and Youth in Placement (OChYP), for new use and periodic reviews to ensure quality of care and services, racial justice and equity, and suitability of use for initial and ongoing placements; and
- conducting data analyses of casework practices within DCF and across its continuum of services.

Note: OChYP shall have the final approval of use of out-of-state facilities prior to placing any DCF child in such program.

The Office for Research and Evaluation shall support and conduct reviews, continuous quality improvement and evaluation activities, data analysis and reporting required under state and federal statutes and regulations. These include, but are not limited to:

- review and provision of training and technical assistance to providers that support claiming of federal reimbursement for Private Non-Medical Institution (PNMI) services and oversight of the associated Random Moment Time Study;
- Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) and the related Program Improvement Plan (PIP) activities;
- National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) Commentary, agency file submission and other continuous quality improvement activities;
- activities related to the Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS) in collaboration with Information Systems;
- provision of data and information to support the development of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and its Annual Progress Services Report (APSR); and
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) data requests in collaboration with the DCF Office of Legal Affairs.

Within available resources, ORE shall fulfill ad hoc data requests. ORE shall establish and implement a process for receiving, cataloging, vetting, responding to and tracking requests for ad hoc and other data.

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Requesting Data from ORE

Employees and other persons and entities may request data from ORE using the DCF-5101, "ORE Request," and, at the request of ORE, the DCF-5102, "Project Scope."
