

**Progress of the
New Jersey Department
of Children and Families**

**Period I Monitoring Report for
Charlie and Nadine H. v. Corzine**

July 2006 through December 31, 2006

**Center for the Study of Social Policy
1575 Eye Street, NW, Suite 500
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I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Report

In July 2006, the State of New Jersey and Children's Rights, Inc. reached agreement on a Modified Settlement of the class-action litigation (Charlie and Nadine H. v. Corzine) aimed at improving longstanding problems in the State's child welfare system.¹ As part of the Modified Settlement Agreement, which was approved by the Honorable Stanley R. Chesler of the United States District Court on July 17, 2006, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) was appointed to independently monitor the State's compliance with the goals and principles of the Modified Settlement Agreement. As Monitor, CSSP is to independently assess the State's actions and to report periodically to the Parties and the public on the State's progress in implementing the terms of the Agreement and in achieving defined outcomes for systemic improvement and improved results for children and families. This is the first Monitoring report under this Agreement covering the period from July 2006 through December 31, 2006.

The Modified Settlement Agreement structured the State's commitments into two phases of work. Phase I (from July 1, 2006 to December 2008) is primarily focused on building a strong infrastructure and practice model within the newly-created Department of Children and Families (DCF) to ensure that children are protected and safe, helped to achieve permanency and stability in their lives, and that resources and service delivery systems exist to meet children's health, mental health, educational and developmental needs. Phase II, which runs from January 2009 until termination is focused on the State's ability to reach and sustain defined performance levels

¹ Charlie and Nadine H. et al. v. Corzine, Modified Settlement Agreement, United States District Court for the

for children's safety, permanency, stability and well-being. This first Monitoring report primarily addresses the State's commitments to build the infrastructure within DCF and to develop and begin to implement strategies to support high quality child welfare practice – ultimately leading to an improved future for New Jersey's most vulnerable children and families.

Methodology

The Monitor's responsibilities under the Modified Settlement Agreement (*Section IV*) are broadly defined: to verify the data reports and statistics produced by the Department; to independently gather information from case record and other qualitative reviews; and to review all plans and documents agreed to be developed and produced by the State. In preparing this report, the primary source of information has been the Department of Children and Families, which provided the Monitor with extensive aggregate and backup data and access to staff at all levels and across the State. Where possible, the Monitor verified the accuracy of the data and conclusions through a variety of means as specified in the body of this report.

Section II of the report provides overall conclusions and a summary of the State's progress in meeting the Modified Settlement Agreement commitments through December 31, 2006.

Other sections of the report provide specific information on the requirements of the Modified Settlement Agreement as follows:

- Section III: Departmental Leadership and Organization
- Section IV: The Case Practice Model for the Department of Children and Families
- Section V: Building a High Quality Workforce (Training, Staffing and Caseload)
- Section VI: Appropriate Placements for Children
- Section VII: Meeting Health and Mental Health Care Needs of Children
- Section VIII: Permanency Planning and Adoption
- Section IX: Accountability through the Production and Use of Accurate Data

II. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Summary of Accomplishments

The new Department of Children and Families (DCF) should be pleased with its accomplishments in its first six months of operation. As shown in summary fashion in Table 1 on pages 9-14 and discussed more in depth in the body of this report, DCF substantially fulfilled the expectations of the Modified Settlement Agreement in each area in which activity was to be completed during this monitoring period.

The Modified Settlement Agreement was constructed to permit DCF's leadership and its staff to focus first on fundamental building blocks without which the longer-term reform goals of the State could not be met. As such, the Modified Settlement Agreement's requirements for the period between July and December 2006 are heavily weighted toward building a solid infrastructure for the future.

Highlights of the Monitor's assessment of progress include:

The new Department of Children and Families assembled a strong leadership team both in the Central Office and in its Area Offices and committed itself with a clarity of purpose and a welcome sense of urgency to improving results for the children and families it serves. As DCF set about its work, it:

- Communicated a clear vision of change designed to improve results for children and families with Agency administrators and frontline staff and with key stakeholders including resource parents, providers, parents and community members;
- Successfully managed the transition of staff and functions from the Department of Human Services to a newly created cabinet level agency;
- Worked to clarify responsibilities for functions within Divisions and Offices of the Department; and

- Promoted more effective two-way communication between leadership in Trenton and the field so that there is regular and honest dialogue about the strengths and weaknesses of the system and opportunities for staff at all levels to work toward productive solutions for identified needs.

The State met its Phase 1 commitments for the reduction of caseloads as of December 31, 2006.

This means that average caseloads of DYFS workers have been reduced across the State. While there are still offices and workers with high caseloads, there has been positive movement across the State, a trend which is confirmed by the caseload data and experienced by workers in the field as a sign of progress.

The amount and quality of training made available to staff through the New Jersey Child Welfare Training Academy improved and continues to become more accessible, more responsive to the needs of the field, and more aligned with the outcomes that DCF must achieve. The newly established Training Partnership with a consortium of New Jersey universities is designed to greatly expand the scope and depth of in-service training for workers, and is expected to focus on the skills and capacities that are needed to implement the Department's Case Practice Model.

DCF took steps to develop and publish a Case Practice Model that identifies the kind of case practice DCF committed to provide to every child and family in its care. The Case Practice Model seeks to translate the basic principles that are embodied in the Modified Settlement Agreement into expectations for the ways in which DCF serves children and families. The next challenge for the Department is to ensure that 1) workers and supervisors are provided the skills and supports to deliver this practice, and 2) the array of services to support high quality work with children and families exists in New Jersey's communities.

Considerable thoughtful work is being directed to the diagnosis of longstanding key problems, including barriers to finalizing adoptions for legally free children; barriers to timely and respectful licensing of potential resource families (foster, kinship and adoptive); and barriers to recruitment of homes for children whose individual needs left them waiting for permanent homes for too long. In each of these areas, DCF leadership and designated Central Office and local staff looked closely at the number of children and families involved and their status, identified critical barriers, and have begun to initiate steps to resolve them. This evolving process has only just begun.

Analysis also began to identify the systemic and practice changes needed to better meet the health care and mental health needs of children served by the Department of Children and Families. In each of these areas, the Department began to assemble the relevant data, reached out to the broader community to learn about the strengths and problems with existing practices and desired solutions, and just recently began the work to develop, propose and implement reform proposals.

There are several areas where outcomes are improving and results to date are encouraging.

Most notable are:

- The Department exceeded its target for the number of children with finalized adoptions in Calendar Year (CY) 2006. One-thousand three-hundred eighty-seven (1387) children were adopted and are now living with permanent families.
- The Department began to experience a net increase in the number of resource families who are licensed each month, moving toward addressing the long-standing problem of an inadequate number of licensed families available for children who need placement.
- Most of the children newly placed in out-of-state treatment facilities from October through December of 2006 were placed in facilities within 50 miles of New Jersey's border, making it more possible that they can maintain connections with their families and communities.²
- In January 2007, no youth waited for an appropriate treatment placement in a juvenile detention center for more than 30 days post-disposition.

The State and the Monitor are cognizant of the fact that the hard and focused work during this Monitoring period and the encouraging trends are just beginning steps and there is much complex and challenging work ahead to achieve the ambitions of the reform and to meet the future commitments of the Modified Settlement Agreement. It would be unrealistic to expect significant impact at this point in the new Department's reform efforts on the ways in which

² Ultimately, the goal is for children to be placed close to their neighborhoods, communities and schools.

children, families and advocates routinely experience the child welfare system. It is important to acknowledge that the problems that led to the Modified Settlement Agreement are longstanding and wide-ranging and will not be completely fixed in six months, one year or even two years. The Modified Settlement Agreement prioritizes the expectations and requirements for improvements between 2006 and 2010. Better outcomes for children and families need to be demonstrated all along the way, and there is much work that remains to be done.

The Work Ahead

In this next monitoring period, the Department will be held to even higher standards regarding the building blocks (e.g., caseloads, supervision, training, resource family recruitment and licensing, management and data systems) for reform. In addition, the Department must begin the even more challenging work of translating their practice model into consistent planning and decision making on the frontline and, in doing so, they must provide workers with the skills and support to engage children and families, comprehensively assess their strengths and needs, and link them to services and supports that are essential to safety, stability and a brighter future. This effort requires not only providing the workforce with additional training and skill development but also requires a review of existing policies and practices to ensure they consistently support the Case Practice Model. Over the next several months, the Monitor will work with DCF to determine how best to fully implement and measure the quality of this Case Practice Model.

Importantly, Phase 2 of NJ SPIRIT, the State's new information technology system, will begin its deployment in the spring and complete its deployment in July 2007. Implementing a SACWIS system such as NJ SPIRIT is a challenging process even for the most prepared child welfare agency. This dramatic change is intended to facilitate the work of frontline workers as well as provide vital information to DCF management. However, it is to be expected that full deployment of NJ SPIRIT will result in some short-term stress to the workforce.

Finally, while much of Phase 1 focuses on building the infrastructure of DCF and solidifying a Case Practice Model, these efforts ultimately must improve outcomes for children and youth. There are many promising strategies that have been initiated or are in development by the

leadership at DCF. The Monitor will continue to track the progress of these efforts and examine their effects on the lives of children and families. Increasing the number of children finding safety and permanency through successful reunification with their families, decreasing the number of children legally free for adoption and the time they wait for finalization, ensuring regular medical assessment and follow-up care, reducing out-of-state placement, increasing the

Table 1:
Summary of Progress on Modified Settlement Agreement Requirements

Table 1: (Continued)
Summary of Progress on Modified Settlement Agreement Requirements
(July – December 2006)

Settlement Agreement Requirements	Due Date	Fulfilled (Yes/No)	Comments
II.B.3.b Begin giving specific training on intake and investigations process, policies and investigation techniques to all staff currently responsible for conducting intake or investigations who have not yet received such.	Beginning September 2006; Complete by June 2007	Yes	150 staff trained to date.
<u>Supervisory Training</u>	-		-
II.B.4.a Develop and begin to provide supervisory training program.	September 2006 and ongoing	Yes	Revised supervisory curriculum (40 hours of training).
II.B.4.b Begin training for all staff newly promoted to supervisory positions. Staff to complete training and passed competency exams within 3 months of promotion.	Beginning December 2006	Yes	Training has begun; majority of training to be completed by May 2007. Supervisory competency exam has been developed.*

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Table 1: (Continued)
Summary of Progress on Modified Settlement Agreement Requirements
(July – December 2006)

Settlement Agreement Requirements	Due Date	Fulfilled (Yes/No)	Comments
Caseloads			
II.E.1 Develop an interim caseload tracking system.	December 2006	Yes	Labor-intensive manual process.
II.E.2 Provide accurate caseload data to plaintiffs and public via DCF website on a quarterly basis.	December 2006	Yes	www.state.nuj.us/DCF .
II.E.3 Hire new Human Resources Director.	December 2006	Yes	Human Resources Director, Janet Zatz.
II.E.4 Make “Safe Measures” available to all staff.	December 2006	Yes	Training completed; additional training/technical assistance to local users continues.
II.E.5 Train all staff on “Safe Measures.”	December 2006	Yes	
II.E.6 60% of offices have permanency worker with average caseloads of 15 families or fewer and no more than 10 children in out-of-home care.	December 2006	Yes	60% of offices met the 15/10 standard.

Table 1: (Continued)
Summary of Progress on Modified Settlement Agreement Requirements
(July – December 2006)

Settlement Agreement Requirements	Due Date	Fulfilled (Yes/No)	Comments
II.F.4 Gather data to establish baseline for provision of medical and dental services for 2007 and thereafter.	December 2006	Yes	ber 2006 Yes Baseline information collected; analysis in process.
Permanency Planning and Adoption			

II.G.2 Develop and begin implementing improved permanency practices, including 5 month permanency reviews, 10 month placement reviews.	December 2006	Yes	Revised process developed; to be implemented in 10 demonstration
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Table 1: (Continued)
Summary of Progress on Modified Settlement Agreement Requirements
(July – December 2006)

Settlement Agreement Requirements	Due Date	Fulfilled (Yes/No)	Comments
II.G.9 Identify and train adoption workers in each office. In 88% of offices, all children with goal of adoption should be on the designated adoption worker’s caseload, unless child has established relationship with permanency worker.	December 2006	Yes (Training is ongoing.)	All offices have separate adoption workers; 81% of children with adoption goal statewide are assigned to adoption workers. According to the State, all adoption workers have been trained.

Table 1: (Continued)
Summary of Progress on Modified Settlement Agreement Requirements
(July – December 2006)

Settlement Agreement Requirements	Due Date	Fulfilled (Yes/No)	Comments
II.H.7 Establish target number of new resource families for each office.	December 2006	Yes	Currently serving as tool to manage monthly progress on recruitment and licensing of resource homes.
II.H.8 Establish accurate baseline of available resource families, broken down into kinship and non-kinship families.	December 2006	Yes	Produced by hand count of computer runs of active resource family homes as of 12/31/06.
Institutional Abuse Investigations Unit (IAIU)			
II.I.1 Locate IAIU within DCF.	July 2006	Yes	Complete with creation of DCF in July 2006.
Data			
II.J.1 Identify initial set of key indicators, ensure accuracy and publish.	August 2006	Yes	Data posted on DCF website; progressive addition of new indicators.
II.J.2 Initiate management reporting based on Safe Measures.	September 2006	Yes	
II.J.3 Identify, ensure accuracy of, and publish additional key management indicators.	November 2006	Yes	
II.J.4 Implement New Jersey SPIRIT Release 2, Phase 1.	July 2006	Yes	Release 2/Phase I complete by July 2006. Work in progress toward Release 2/Phase II (case management implementation), expected to begin deployment in April 2007 and be completed in July 2007.*

*

III. DEPARTMENTAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

A New Cabinet-level Department of Children and Families (DCF) was Created in July 2006.

On July 11, 2006, Governor Jon Corzine signed legislation that created the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) as a cabinet-level department with responsibilities for child welfare, children's behavioral health and the development of preventive services and community supports for children and their families⁴ By creating this new department, the responsibility of child protection was removed from the Department of Human Services (DHS) and placed in DCF. The Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), Division of Child Behavioral Health Services (DCBHS), and Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships all were transferred from DHS to the new DCF with the goal of creating unified responsibility and improved coordination of services for New Jersey's most vulnerable children and their families. The DHS Unit responsible for investigating institutional abuse (IAIU) was also relocated to the new Department. Appendix A provides the organizational chart for DCF. The estimated Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 budget for DCF is \$1.4 billion.⁵

The Governor appointed Kevin Ryan as the first Commissioner of DCF. Commissioner Ryan has extensive experience working on behalf of children and families as New Jersey Commissioner of the Department of Human Services and as New Jersey's first Child Advocate. Since the creation of DCF, Commissioner Ryan assembled a strong senior leadership team

created supports for their workers including establishing an Office of Equal Employment and an employee counseling program.

DCF also focused on communicating with the public about child welfare issues with an explicit goal of providing the public with greater access to information. A website for the new department was fully operational in July 2006, and it provides easy access to child and family outcome data, departmental news and accomplishments, and announcements of requests for proposals. Information about the creation of DCF and the Modified Settlement Agreement are available in English and Spanish as are most publications and outreach materials.

Finally, extensive work went into setting up an appropriate financial system for DCF, particularly separating funds from DHS and assigning them to DCF, establishing procurement processes and establishing procedures to appropriately manage expenditures against budget.

In creating the new organizational structure for DCF, attention was given to clarifying lines of responsibility and accountability and improving communication throughout the Department and between the Central Office and the field. Key leaders at the Central Office level meet regularly to improve coordination among the Divisions and to track progress against defined work plans related to the Modified Settlement Agreement as well as other Departmental priorities. Central Office staff, particularly through the Directors of DYFS, Policy and Planning, and Training are in much closer communication with Area Directors and Local Office managers, in an effort to correct longstanding and debilitating communications problems. Area Directors are more consistently engaged as part of the Department's leadership structure. Anecdotal reports from the field confirm a greater sense of shared understanding of the vision, goals and direction of the agency and perception of improved responsiveness to the needs of workers in the field offices. External partners report greater access to information and enhanced communication with departmental leadership. Efforts continue to improve communication and clarity about responsibility and accountability within DCF Central offices and with Area and Local offices.

IV. THE CASE PRACTICE MODEL FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN

of alleged abuse or neglect and are served by DYFS, but the model will be expanded to include the operations of the Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships and the Division of Child Behavioral Health Services in 2007. The work to implement the model is only beginning.

Highlights of New Jersey's new Case Practice Model are:

- A mission statement for DCF: to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of children and to support families.
- A definition of who DYFS serves: all children who have been abused or neglected, children who are alleged to have been abused or neglected, children placed into the agency's custody, and families in which child abuse or neglect has occurred; children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral health care challenges, and children and families at risk of abuse or neglect.
- A definition of the agency's core values and principles that articulates the belief that children do best when they have strong families, preferably their own, and when that is not possible, a stable relative, foster or adoptive family.
- The importance of engaging with youth and families, often by developing and working through family teams.
- Quality assessments and investigations, using a strengths-based approach.
- Individualized case planning and service delivery that strives to place children in family settings while concurrently planning for alternative permanency arrangements. Here, in addition to the new Case Practice Model, DCF strengthened and enhanced its protocol for concurrent planning.
- Continuous review and adaptation of case progress through the use of family team meetings and other processes to review the child and family's status, service progress, the appropriateness of decision making and goals, and to make adaptations as case goals are

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workforce. In the Monitor's assessment, the New Jersey Child Welfare Training Academy (NJCWTA) made important strides in the past six months in its ability to provide new and existing staff with quality training.

a. *DYFS revised and clarified its processes for the initial entry and training of new workers.*

Effective August 2005, the requirements for training a new case-carrying DYFS employee were revised as follows:

- As soon as a trainee is hired s/he is assigned to a Field Training Unit Supervisor (FTS) who serves as a training "guide" throughout the trainee period.
- Every trainee must be enrolled in pre-service training within two weeks of his/her employment start date. NJCWTA staff review Human Resources reports every pay period for up-to-date data on new hires to ensure that trainees are properly enrolled in training.
- Pre-service training now consists of 12 modules of classroom training. After each module of pre-service training, the trainee takes a competency test. The results of the competency exams are shared with the trainee and his/her FTS.
- NJCWTA trainers also prepare an interim and final progress report for each trainee that is provided to both the trainee and the FTS.
- A trainee is not eligible to be assigned cases until after completion of Module 7 of the pre-service training. Cases are assigned to trainees at the discretion of the FTS and the Local Office manager. After a period of six months, the trainee transitions from the FTS and is supervised by a supervisor.
- Once the trainee has completed the pre-service training modules, s/he is eligible to enroll in required core competency courses which must be successfully completed between the 3rd and 11th month of service and are a prerequisite for moving from the Civil Service Trainee position to a permanent position.
- At the conclusion of six months of service, a trainee may be assigned a full caseload, at the discretion of the FTS and the supervisor.

b. DCF revised the pre-service training curricula for all newly hired staff.

The NJCWTA began using a revised pre-service curriculum in September 2006. The pre-service training incorporates a newly revised curriculum that includes 176 hours of training, 32 classroom days and 20 days of field instruction. Figure 1 below shows the 12 modules in the pre-service training during the monitoring period.

Figure 1: Modules in NJCWTA Pre-Service Training Curriculum

Module 1	Orientation
Module 2	Understanding Child Welfare in New Jersey
Module 3	Computer Applications
Module 4	Self-Aware Practitioner
Module 5	Life of A DYFS Case
Module 6	Taking Care of Yourself
Module 7	Functional Assessments for Child Well-Being, Safety and Risk
Module 8	Engagement and Interpersonal Skills
Module 9	Casework Applications
Module 10	Teaming with Families for Positive Change
Module 11	<i>First Responders</i> in Child Welfare
Module 12	Program Wrap Up

Given that the curriculum needs some revision to reflect the newly developed Case Practice Model, the Monitor is waiting to review the training content in-depth until a later monitoring period. Now that the Department's Case Practice Model is developed, the NJCWTA, in collaboration with DCF's leadership, is beginning to assess the curriculum and is expected to make modifications as needed to ensure that it provides new workers with the appropriate skills and training to carry out the Department's practice expectations.

- c. All newly hired staff are enrolled in pre-service training within two weeks of their start date.

The NJTWA enrolls newly hired workers in training within two weeks of their employment start. To determine if a trainee is enrolled in pre-service training within two weeks of his/her start date, the NJCWTA staff cross-references reports from Human Resources each pay period with signed rosters from participants in pre-service training sessions. The Monitor independently used this methodology to review trainees hired in October and November 2006 and found consistent enrollment in pre-service training within two weeks of the trainee's start date.

- d. The Department and the NJCWTA are taking beginning steps to assess the competency and skills of workers during and after pre-service training, although the Monitor recommends that a standardized process be developed to certify that a trainee who has taken competency exams has acquired sufficient skills to assume a full caseload.

A process does exist for trainers from the NJCWTA to assess a trainee's acquisition of knowledge and skills during pre-service training and to communicate that information to the trainee and to the Field Training Supervisor. Trainees are assessed after each module of the training to determine if they mastered the content, and an interim and final progress report is provided to the Field Training Supervisor. This is a considerable improvement over past practice by creating a connection between what goes on in classroom training and subsequent field training and skill development in the Local Office. The decisions about when a trainee is sufficiently skilled to assume a full caseload are made by the

Field Training Supervisor after a review of the trainee's performance on competency

the Monitor's expectation that the in-service training will focus heavily on the skills needed by workers to implement the newly developed Case Practice Model.

NJCWP is expected to provide 452 training days during CY 2007 and more than 900 training days during CY 2008. Courses will take place at locations in the northern, central, and southern regions of the State, and incorporate an extensive quality assurance program. The full implementation of this training partnership has the potential to greatly enhance the State's ability to develop and maintain a skilled and effective child welfare workforce.

- b. *The State implemented concurrent planning training for staff; almost 2,500 staff have received concurrent planning, training and the remaining 400 staff are expected to be trained by March 2007.*

DCF delivered training about concurrent planning to approximately 2,408 caseload-carrying staff and supervisors in CY 2006. Other staff, including new workers, litigation specialists and case practice specialists also participated, for a total of 2,499 staff who completed the concurrent planning training. Concurrent planning training is conducted by Rutgers University School of Social Work based on a nationally recognized curriculum developed by Hunter College School of Social Work's National Resource Center for Permanency Planning. Four-hundred eight (408) caseload-carrying staff still need to be trained in the concurrent planning curriculum. The Monitor reviewed a schedule for concurrent planning training through March 2007, which suggests that there is sufficient capacity to train the remaining staff. Actual scheduling of the remaining 408 staff should occur in the first quarter of 2007.

- c. The State developed a new and improved curriculum for those staff responsible for intake and investigations. Procedures are in place to ensure that all new staff conducting intake and investigations are trained. Existing staff who currently conduct intake and investigations have begun training. All existing staff members are scheduled to complete training and take competency exams by June 2007.

In preparing for revisions to the existing curriculum on intake and investigations, DCF conducted focus groups with staff to determine what information they felt was most needed. A new curriculum entitled *First Responders*, was pilot-tested by the NJCWTA in two sites. The Monitor reviewed the curriculum, attended the *First Responders* pilot training, and subsequently provided DCF with suggestions for improvement. As a result of feedback from the Monitor and others, including DYFS field staff, DCF revised the curriculum to include new information on safety assessments and safety planning. The Department began providing the *First Responders* training at the end of September 2006. The pilot-test groups included 44 supervisors and casework supervisors. One-hundred six (106) trainees also took the *First Responders* training, for a total of 150 staff trained to date. The training consists of 33 hours in five modules, including: Family Engagement; Communication/Interviewing; Assessment; Documentation; and Quality Investigations.

DCF expanded its pre-service training to include *First Responders in Child Welfare* training in August 2006. The Modified Settlement Agreement requires that all workers performing intake and investigations pass a competency examination following training (*Section II.B.3.a.*). A competency examination was developed, pilot-tested and subsequently refined. The Monitor has not independently reviewed data on the results of competency testing on the *First Responders* training but intends to do so in the next monitoring period.

3. *Supervisory Training.*

- a. *The State developed a new curriculum for newly promoted supervisors that consists of at least 40 training hours.*

The Modified Settlement Agreement requires that by September 2006, DCF develop a quality supervisory training program of at least 40 classroom hours that is consistent with the principles in the Agreement and sufficient to meet the need for a highly effective supervisory workforce (*Section II.B.4.a*). In the summer of 2006, the new Department formally promoted a large number of staff to supervisory positions; it is this group for whom the new training was initially designed. All supervisors promoted to their positions before December 2006 are expected to receive this training over the next six months and to pass supervisory competency exams by no later than June 2007. All supervisors hired after December 2006 are expected to receive this training within three months of assuming their supervisory positions.

As a prelude to revising the supervisory training curriculum, the NJCWTA conducted focus groups with managers and field training unit supervisors and pilot-tested the training in two areas of the State. The Monitor also reviewed the supervisory training curriculum and provided comments on the content and the methods. The Monitor found the revised supervisory training to be comprehensive, well-organized and strong in many ways, particularly in its emphasis on tools for workers to engage the families they serve.

4. *Caseloads*

No child welfare system can be expected to be successful unless and until it has a sufficient and

current and accurate on employees and their caseloads has become a shared Departmental priority and responsibility.

Considerable time and effort goes into obtaining and maintaining accurate information on worker status and caseloads at this time because the process depends on unlinked systems that require separate and continuous manual updating to keep information in sync. Nevertheless, the focus and effort on obtaining and maintaining accurate information about employees and their caseloads is critical, not only to the Modified Settlement Agreement but to the credibility of DCF with its workers and with its partners.

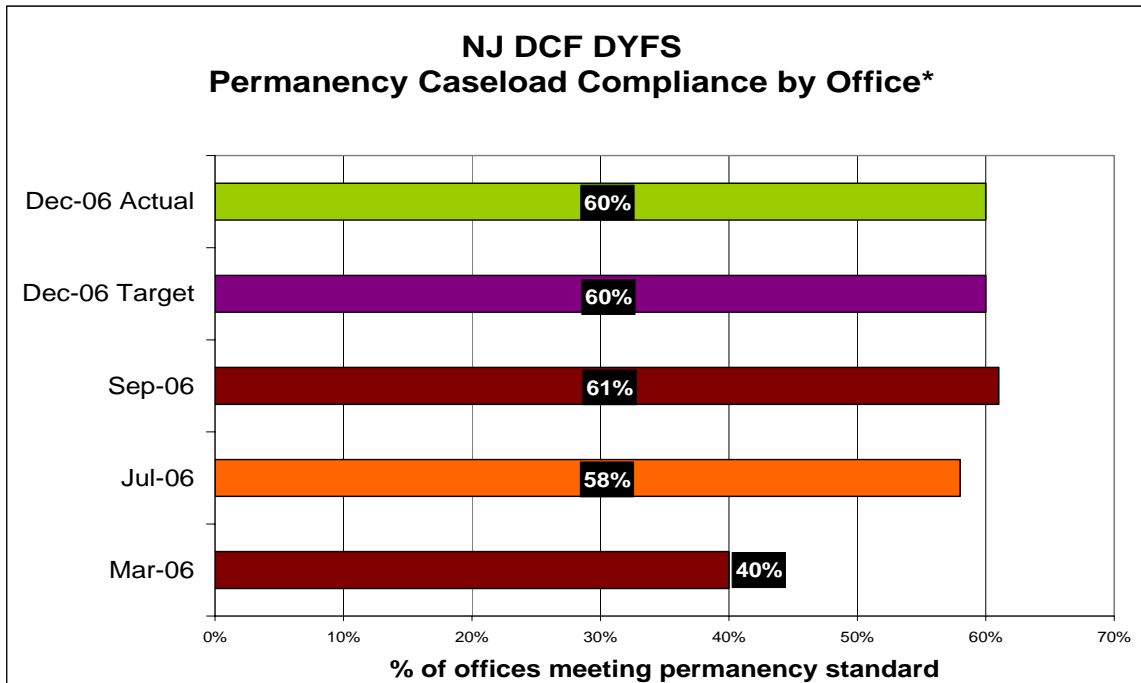
Prior to December 31, 2006, the Department posted caseload data quarterly on its website and continually refined what could be accurately shared with the public. The most recent refinement is to disaggregate adoption caseloads from the other permanency caseloads. Starting with the December 31, 2006 posting, the website reflects separate caseloads for intake, adoption and permanency staff and trainees will be reflected separately. (*Section II.E.2*)

b. DCF achieved the December 2006 caseload target set for average caseloads for

Until December 2008 (Phase 1), caseload compliance is measured by *average* caseloads in an office. Ultimately, the Phase I goal is for 95 percent of all offices to have average caseloads for the permanency workers that meet the two-pronged standard. This goal is to be achieved over a period of time with targets starting in 2006, and with the final target of 95 percent to be achieved by December 2007. Starting in December 2006, average caseloads in 60 percent of all 43 Local Offices were to meet the caseload standard. (Section II.E.6)

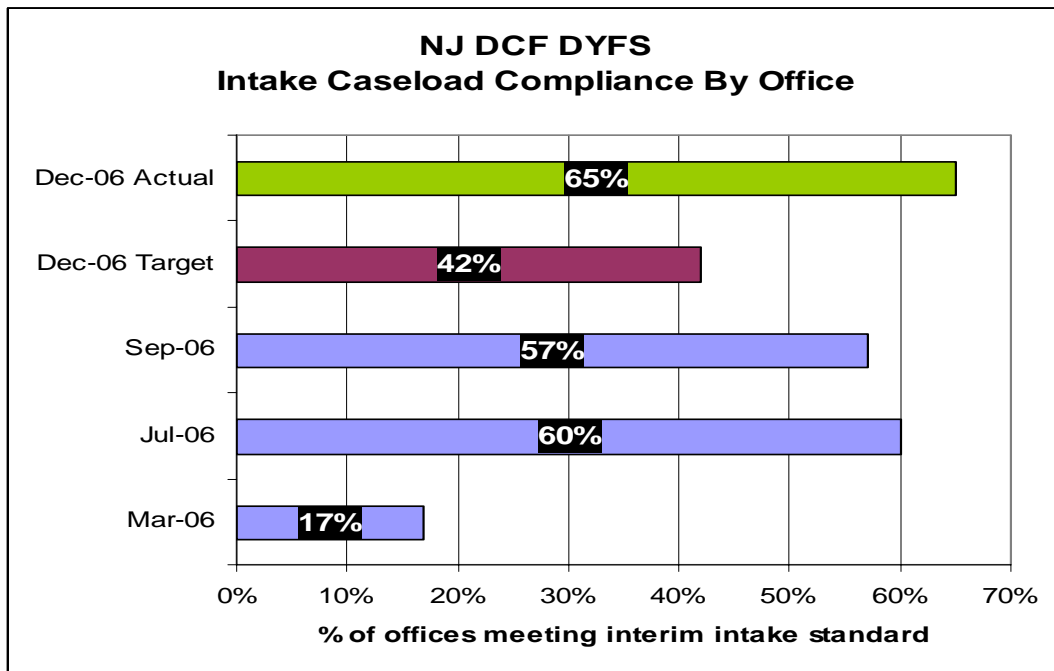
As displayed in Figure 2, the State achieved this first target with available permanency workers in 60 percent of the offices averaging 15 families or fewer and 10 or fewer children in placement. This chart is posted on the Department’s website and also indicates the progress the Department made since March 2006. Appendix B contains a table with supporting details for each office.

Figure 2:



The Monitor took several steps to independently verify caseload information. First, in conjunction with Department staff, the Monitor reviewed monthly reports and the Department's methodology for computing caseloads as well as the process used to verify and refine the caseload reporting. This included looking at examples of communication

Figure 3:



Source: New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Policy and Planning, February 2007.

d. DCF achieved the December 2006 caseload target set for average caseload for adoption staff.

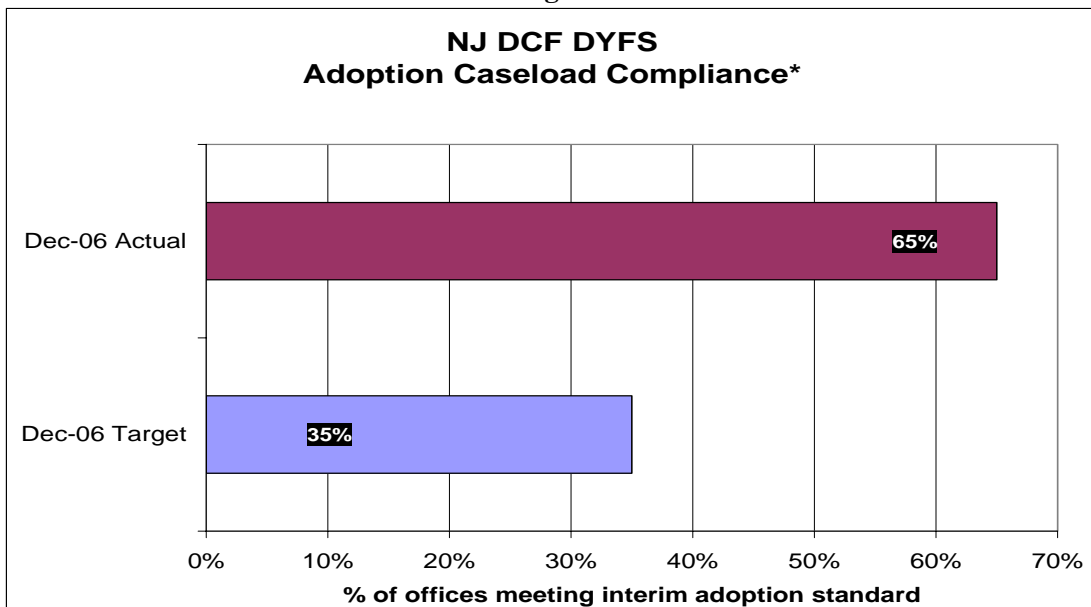
Adoption staff are responsible for moving children to permanency by developing adoptive resources and performing the work needed to finalize adoptions. The Modified Settlement Agreement requires the State to move away from generic permanency caseloads and to ensure that children with a goal of adoption are assigned to designated adoption workers with the exception of children who have an already established relationship with a permanency worker who is also responsible for adoption work. As of December 31, 2006, 81 percent of children in DYFS custody with a permanency goal of adoption had been assigned to an adoption worker. Adoption workers are placed in every Local Office with the exception of the three Newark Local Offices; in Newark, there is a separate Local Office handling adoption work for the entire city. (Section II.G.9)

As with the permanency and intake caseloads, by December 2008, the goal is for adoption staff in 95 percent of offices to have average caseloads of 18 or fewer children

with a subset of 60 percent of the offices achieving average caseloads of 15 or fewer families (*Section II.G.18*). Starting in December 2006, adoption staff in 35 percent of all Local Offices are to have average caseloads of 18 or fewer children. (*Section II.G.10*)

As displayed in Figure 4 below, the State far exceeded this first target with adoption staff in 65 percent of the offices having average caseloads for adoption staff at or below the standard. This information was verified by the Monitor using the previously described approach. This chart is posted on the Department's website. Appendix B contains a table with supporting detail for each office.

Figure 4:



Source: New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Policy and Planning, February 2007.

*Prior to December 2006, adoption staff were included in permanency staff numbers.

- e. DCF appears to have met the benchmark for ratio of supervisors to workers through the utilization of frontline casework supervisors (SFSS2) and the assignment of unit supervisors (SFSS1).

Supervision is a critical role in child welfare, and the span of supervisory responsibility should be limited to allow more effective individual supervision. Therefore, the Modified Settlement Agreement also establishes standards for supervisory ratios. By December 2008, 95 percent of all offices should be able to maintain a 5 worker to 1

supervisor ratio (*Section II.E.8*). Like the caseload standards, this standard was to be phased in starting in December 2006, with a target of 80 percent of

5. *Creating an Effective Human Resource Function within DCF.*

a. *DCF hired a new Human Resource Director.*

DCF developed and filled the position of Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations (*Section II.E.3*). The new Director has extensive public service human resource and labor relations experience in New Jersey including twenty years in senior executive positions in the New Jersey Department of Personnel. As part of the leadership team in DCF, the new Director has helped to implement an overall hiring plan that is based on individual office need-based projections for staff. The hiring plan calls for filling 203 casework positions and 42 supervisor positions between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2007.

The positions authorized for each office are based on actual workload and the caseload standards to be achieved and sustained. The projections for July 2006 through March 2007 were reassessed in January 2007 based on the actual experience of July through December 2006, and some reallocation of new hires projected among offices took place. The DCF Human Resource Director joins the DYFS Director in weekly teleconferences with Area Office managers to review and track hiring and position vacancies against the plan and other personnel issues raised by the managers.

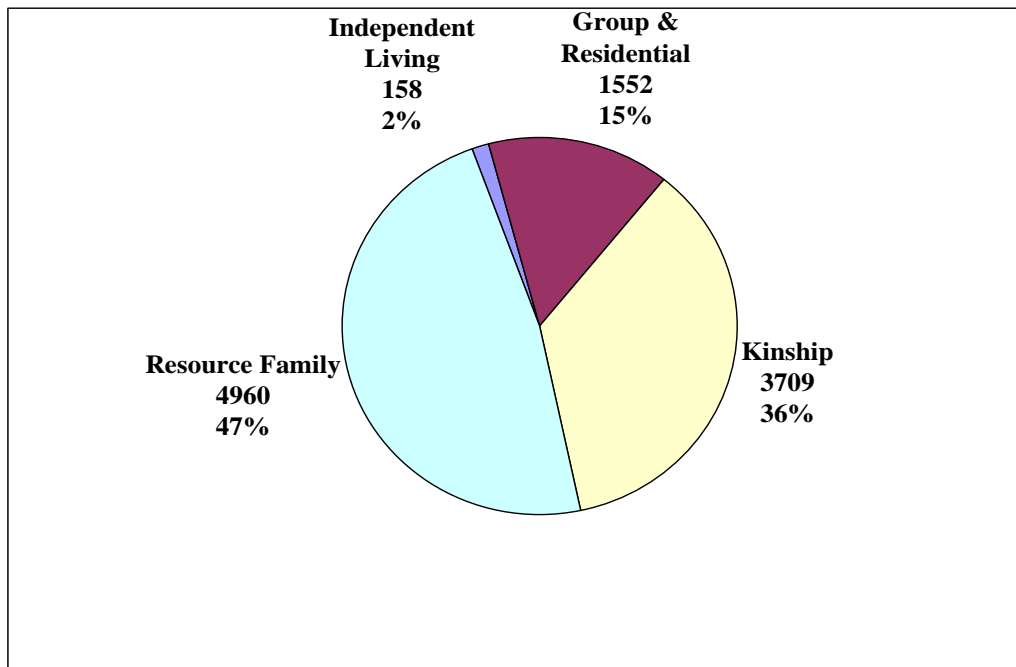
Typically, the bi-weekly conversations, referred to as “position control calls,” allow Area Office managers to 1) cover the steps they are taking to fill positions, including the source of candidates, interviews planned, offers to be made and likely timeframes for filling positions; 2) confirm filled positions and start dates within the previous week and ensure that Human Resources has the appropriate completed paperwork to ensure a smooth process for new hires; and 3) raise questions and problems. The Human Resources Director and staff troubleshoot and help problem solve around positions – what can and cannot be done within the New Jersey Civil Service requirements.

Retention of workers also appears to be improving. Overall, DCF reports that the attrition rate is down from 14 percent in 2004/2005 to 11 percent in the period between November 2005 and October 2006. To improve workforce stability further, DCF Human Resources is renewing efforts to complete exit interviews for all staff that leave employment. They hope these interviews will provide information on how to improve the work place and job satisfaction.

VI. APPROPRIATE PLACEMENTS AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

As of January 6, 2007, there were 10,379 New Jersey children in placement under the supervision of the DCF’s Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). Figure 6 below shows the types of settings where children are placed.

**Figure 6:
NJ DCF DYFS
Children in Placement by Placement Type
(Total = 10,379, January 6, 2007, point-in-time)**



Source: DCF, Office of Policy and Planning, February 2007.

1. Resource Family Recruitment, Licensing and Retention

When children cannot be maintained safely at home because they have been abused or neglected or are at risk of abuse or neglect, it is the responsibility of DYFS to remove them from their families and place them in a safe and stable alternative – if at all possible – in a family with an appropriate relative or with an approved resource family. The Modified Settlement Agreement (*Section I.A*) and the DCF practice model further state that when children need to be placed, efforts must be made to place them with siblings, close to their neighborhoods and schools, and with families that can, if necessary, become a permanent placement. Recruitment and retention of the appropriate array of resource families has long been a serious problem for the State. DCF spent its first six months intensively investigating and assessing the problems and barriers to resource family recruitment, licensing and retention. As a result of its findings, DCF made some key changes and is beginning to build a new infrastructure to support this work.

a. The State established a baseline of available resource family homes that separately identifies kinship and non-kinship resource homes.

To produce an accurate baseline of available resource family homes, DCF went through the arduous process of hand-counting computer-generated data on active resource family homes, distinguishing kinship from non-kinship homes. The result is shown in Table 3 below. This is a baseline only; the next monitoring period requires DCF maintain an accurate list of current kinship and non-kinship resource family homes and to create systems to set and track targets.

Table 3: Baseline of DCF Licensed Family Resource Homes as of December 31, 2006

Non kinship resource family homes (DCF licensed)	2,260
Resource family homes (licensed and supervised by Babyland)	114
Resource family homes (licensed and supervised by Tri-City)	74
Treatment Homes (DCF licensed)	504
Total non-kinship resource family homes	2,952
Kinship resource family homes	+ 2,584
Total kinship and non-kinship resource family homes	5,536

Source: New Jersey DCF, 2006.

- b. The resource family licensing function was incorporated into DCF with the creation of the new Department in July 2006.

In order to provide clearer lines of authority and accountability for the recruitment and licensure of resource homes, the Modified Settlement Agreement requires that the function of resource family licensing be incorporated into DCF (*Section II.H.1*). A new Resource Family Director with more than 30 years experience in child welfare was appointed in September 2006. In October 2006, she assumed responsibility for the resource family licensing, a unit that formerly reported to the Office of Licensing (OOL) as well as for resource family recruitment and support. This important shift helped unify two divisions: Resource Family Support and Resource Family Licensing, and served as the structural change necessary to help overcome significant communication and coordination challenges previously experienced.

- c. The State designated a point person for each area office to focus on resource family recruitment.

By the end of December 2006, DCF finalized the appointment of a full-time resource development person in each Area Office to serve as the point person to coordinate the recruitment and licensing support work for that area. A job descri

expectations in order for these new staff members to be effective in their jobs and to create a statewide learning network.

- d. *The period for processing resource family applications is expected to take no more than 150 days.*

The Modified Settlement Agreement requires the State to process prospective resource families through to licensure within 150 days of application (*Section II.H.4*). DCF has developed an implementation plan and process (see Table 4) that establishes responsibilities with timeframes for actions so that an application can be expected to move from receipt through to licensing within 150 days. This plan became operational at the end of December 2006 and may be modified as the geographic impact teams operating in the Passaic and Atlantic Area Offices implement it and develop more information. The plan is a significant improvement over past practice in that it mandates continuous communication between the Office of Licensing and the resource family staff within DCF so that an application is not permitted to sit with unresolved issues in either the resource family support unit or licensing un

**Table 4:
DCF Task Plan for
150-Day Resource Home Licensing Process**

Time Frame	Tasks	Responsibilities
Day 1 – 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed application sent to OOL • Family contacted to schedule appointment and review home study process • Resource Family Support worker and supervisor conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Family Supervisor (RFS) • Resource Family Support Worker (RFSW)
Day 7 – 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First home visit (orientation, home inspection) • References for family solicited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFSW • RFSW
Day 30 – 60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second home visit (interview using SAFE home study model) • Materials for CHRI/CARI waivers prepared and submitted, if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFSW • RFSW
Day 60 – 90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third home visit; all interviews complete and obstacles identified/addressed • SAFE home study report completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFSW • RFSW
Day 90 – 95	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAFE home study packet approved by supervisor and sent to OOL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Family Supervisor (RFS)

- e. *The State created “Impact Teams” to address the backlog of homes waiting to be licensed and to better assess the obstacles to prompt and effective licensing and support.*

In September 2006, under the direction of the new Resource Family Director, DCF began to develop four Impact Teams: a licensing impact team (implemented October 2006), and teams in Middlesex (implemented November 2006), Passaic (implemented December 2006), and Atlantic (implemented January 2007.) The Impact Teams are charged with:

- Completing a sample of the applications pending for more than 150 days from processing through licensing;
- Identifying potential structural challenges to completing licensing within 150 days; and
- Providing assistance to support the State’s ability to meet the targets for new resource families.

DCF plans to keep the Impact Teams in place until the majority of resource family home applications can be resolved in 150 days.

The licensing team – the first team to begin work in October 2006 – is staffed with experienced resource family central operations staff and senior licensing staff who now work in the same geographic location. The team focused on a backlog of 189 home study applications that were languishing in the Office of Licensing. Their work helped inform the development of the newly-implemented process discussed above. In addition, 75 percent (142) of the applications reviewed by the licensing Impact Team have been resolved: 94 families were licensed; 44 families have withdrawn from the process; and 4 families were denied licenses. DCF reports that the remaining 47 families have been assigned to an inspector for joint follow up by the Office of Licensing and Local Office Resource Family staff.

From their review of the 189 pending resource family applications, the licensing Impact Team found critical gaps in communication be

Table 5: Number of New

**Table 6: Resource Family Monthly Licensure Targets
(January – June 2007)**

Local Office	Monthly Target
Atlantic I	3
Atlantic II	3
Bergen Central	4
Bergen South	4
Burlington East	2
Burlington West	2
Camden Central	3
Camden East	3
Camden North	2
Camden South	2
Cape May	2
Cumberland East	2
Cumberland West	2
Newark Center City	2
Newark No East	2
Newark South	2
Newark West	2
W. Essex Central	2
W. Essex North	2
W. Essex South	3

2. Increasing the Resource Family Board Rate.

The Modified Settlement Agreement requires the State to close the gap between current resource family support rates (foster care, kinship care, and adoption subsidy) and the United States Department of Agriculture’s estimated costs of raising a child. By January 2007, the State was expected to raise rates sufficient to close the gap by 25 percent (*Section II.H.15*). Table 7 below provides the new rates, effective January 1, 2007.

**Table 7:
DYFS Approved Resource Family Rates,
Effective January 1, 2007**

Age of Child	DYFS Rate 12/31/06 (STEP 0)	Revised USDA Rate CY 2005 (published April 2006)	Difference between USDA 2005 Rate and DYFS Rate 12/31/06	Percentage of increase required to close gap 25% by 1/1/07	Approved Increase to Monthly Rate	Approved DYFS Rate 1/1/07
0-5	\$497	\$667	\$170	33%	\$56	\$553
6-9	\$534	\$718	\$184	33%	\$61	\$595
10-12	\$557	\$741	\$184	33%	\$61	\$618
13-17	\$609	\$786	\$177	33%	\$58	\$667

Source: DCF, DYFS.

According to DCBHS, the Bed-Tracking 2 system provides:

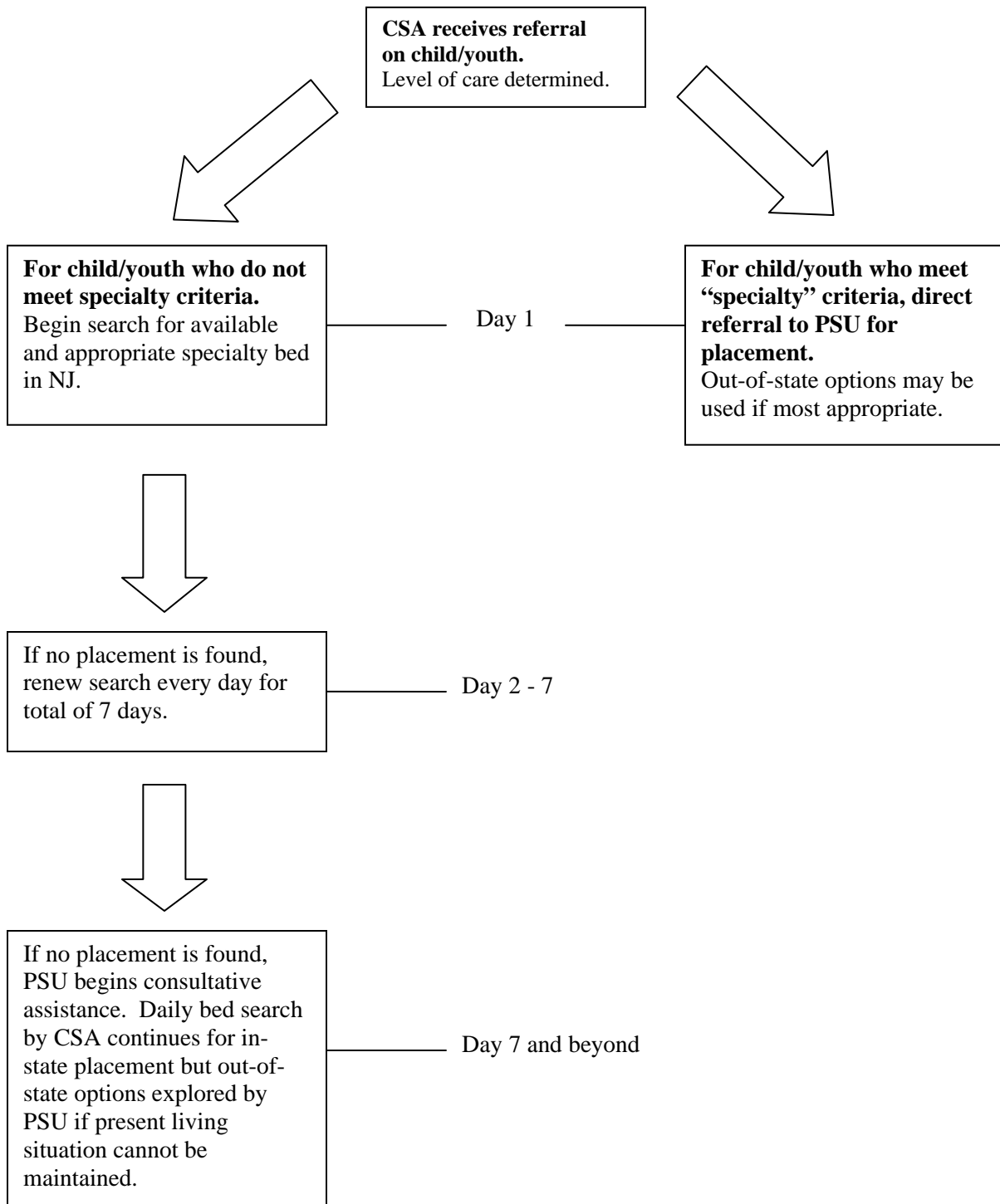
- Real time bed availability
- Information about the number of children and youth waiting for out-of-home treatment for specific levels of care
- Length of time a child/youth waits for placement—tracking time from referral to out-of-home placement
- Ability to track providers' acceptance and non-acceptance rates
- Ability to track reasons children/youth are not accepted into programs
- Ability for case managers to view all referrals and admission status

Through this bed-tracking system, each program receives one referral at a time and must make a decision on that referral before another child is referred to their program. The child is also referred to one program at a time; in this way fewer referral packets are created and potentially there are fewer program interviews and rejections for the child/youth.

The real time bed-tracking system also helps DCBHS monitor treatment programs' compliance with their contract obligations. For example, if DCBHS contracts with a program to provide services to boys ages 12-17 who have a history of assaultive behavior and setting fires, but a program denies placement of a 16-year-old boy with this type of history, DCBHS can review the contract obligation with the Director of the program. Initial implementation of the system created some problems as providers needed to be

facilities (*Section II.D.2*) and to bring children who are placed out-of-state back to New Jersey as soon as they are ready to be “stepped down” (*Section II.D.6*)

**Figure 8:
DCBHS Placement Process
For Children and Youth Requiring Treatment Providers**

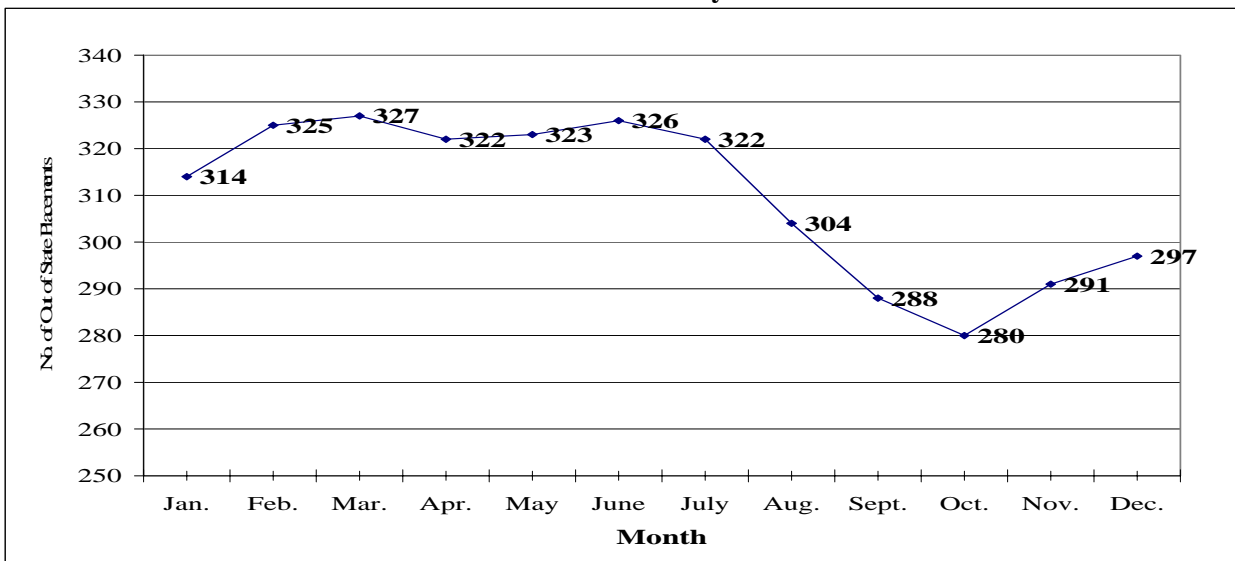


policy so that children/youth who meet a specific program's criteria for treatment will be accepted in the program, and the program will not terminate the child/youth from the program before his/her treatment is complete.

For the most part, the Monitor found that PSU workers provided documentation with the approval form of the in-state programs that denied placement to the child/youth. Although not required by the Modified Settlement Agreement, there was no documentation that the child's/youth's family was aware of the placement plans other than through self-reporting by the PSU worker. Additionally, some of the approval forms failed to identify which agency or worker is ultimately responsible for the tasks in the plan to return the child/youth to the State of New Jersey.

Figure 9 shows the number of DCBHS authorized out-of-state placements for 2006 for all youth served by DCBHS. It is important to note that the Modified Settlement Agreement focuses on developing adequate in-state services and placements only for children or youth in DYFS custody (*Section II.D.3*), although obtaining adequate in-state services is a DCF priority for all children served by DCBHS.

**Figure 9: Out-of-State Placements
2006 for All Youth Served by DCBHS**



Source: New Jersey DCBHS, February 2007.

Table 8 below provides data regarding the number of *new* out-of-state placements since October 1, 2006 for all New Jersey children served by DCBHS and separately identifies those children in DYFS custody. In October 2006, DCF began to collect data to separately look at children/youth placed within 50 miles of New Jersey and children/youth involved with DYFS. Beginning in January 2007, the monthly data will be further refined to reflect the children/youth who returned to New Jersey (exited the out-of-state placement). Eighty-nine percent (89%) of youth placed out-of-state since October 2006 were treated within a 50 mile radius of New Jersey.

**Table 8:
New Placements Out-of-State
(October – December 2006)**

Month	Number of Out-of-State Placements	Number Within 50 miles of NJ	Number in DYFS Custody
October 2006	13	11	5
November 2006	28	26	9
December 2006	21	18	7
Total	62	55	21

Source: New Jersey DCBHS

- b. *The state developed a methodology for identifying children in custody in out-of-state congregate care who are potentially ready to return to New Jersey and step down to a lower level of care.*

In accordance with the Modified Settlement Agreement (*Section II.D.6*), the State developed an administrative process for identifying children/youth who are placed out-of-state and who may be ready to return to New Jersey and “step down” to a lower level of care.

Every month, DCBHS generates a list of children/youth placed out-of-state and highlights those who may be appropriate for step down. Youth are identified for step down by consensus of the case manager, provider, and CSA, or if the child's length of stay exceeds one standard deviation of the mean length of stay. Every 90 days, each of the three staff members involved is expected to indicate on the electronic treatment plan whether the child/youth is ready to be discharged from the current program and stepped down. When any one of the three parties directly involved in the child/youth's care – the case manager, the provider or the CSA – feel that the child/youth is step-down ready, s/he is placed on a “three button” report generated by DCBHS. DCBHS team leaders consult directly with the case management entity to explore if the child/youth is step-down ready and, if so, to identify barriers, action steps and strategies for transitioning youth.

5. *Youth in Juvenile Detention Post-Disposition.*

a. The State developed an automated system for tracking youth in juvenile detention facilities post-disposition and awaiting placement.

A longstanding problem is the continued placement of children/youth in juvenile detention facilities post-disposition – youth who remain in these detention facilities solely because they are awaiting an appropriate placement. One of the barriers to moving children/youth out of detention quickly was the lack of a systematic process to identify and track youth and to use information about their needs to identify appropriate resources. Through the Modified Settlement Agreement (*Section II.D.3*), the State committed to implement an automated system by December 2006 to identify youth in DYFS custody being held in juvenile detention facilities post-disposition and to ensure that each youth is appropriately placed within 30 days of disposition.

The automated system was pilot-tested in the spring 2006 and was fully operational by the early fall 2006. DYFS court liaisons and key staff from the Case Management Organizations (CMOs) and Youth Case Management Organizations (YCMs) received

training by the Central Office staff on how to use an electronic tracking form. Tracking and processes put in place to find appropriate placements produced the desired outcome.

VI. MEETING THE HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Modified Settlement Agreement emphasizes the important and urgent need for DCF to do a better job meeting the health and mental health needs of children and youth in their care and requires the State by June 2007, to have developed a statewide coordinated system of health care for children and youth in out-of-home care. The Commissioner and his staff committed to developing and implementing a new comprehensive medical health care model for children and youth in care that will provide for a pre-placement assessment, comprehensive medical examinations within 60 days of a child entering care (similar to the current CHEC model, which provides for a 4-6 hour physical, developmental, and mental health assessment), a case management component that ensures children/youth who require follow up care receive these

1. Assessment of DCBHS System of Care.

Under the Modified Settlement Agreement, the State committed to complete an assessment, by December 2006, of the continuum of services needed to best meet the needs of children and families served by DCBHS (*Section II. C.1*). This assessment is intended to inform the development of mental health and behavioral health care services over the next few years.

Two reports recently completed have provided DCBHS with insight into their current array of services for children and families. The reports include an assessment of the New Jersey Children's Behavioral Health Care System, dated October 2006. This report was commissioned in response to a recommendation of a Task Force on Mental Health Services, established by Governor Codey in 2004 and was conducted by the University of South Florida.¹⁰ The report provides a broad evaluation of how the current child behavioral health system functions and offers recommendations for continued improvement. Service need was one area that this report explored. The researchers recommended the development of specialty services for children with dual diagnoses (mental health and developmental delays) and children with a history of setting fires or sexual aggression. As mentioned previously, DCF recently issued an RFP for specialty services to meet the needs of these children. The report also includes recommendations about specific ways to improve assessments, governance structures of the system of care, and involvement of families in all levels of decision making.

DCF commissioned another study¹¹ to create empirically grounded estimates of the continuum of services needed to meet the treatment needs of children and adolescents accessing treatment in New Jersey's System of Care. Dr. John Lyons of Northwestern University's Mental Health Services and Policy Program conducted this study. Dr. Lyons analyzed data on service needs and experiences of children and youth currently in the system to estimate what quantity of

¹⁰ *Final Report: Independent Assessment of New Jersey's Children's Behavioral Health Care System, October 5, 2006*, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida, October 5, 2006.

¹¹ *Empirically Estimating the Level and Type of Behavioral Health Services Required to Meet the Needs of Children and Families in New Jersey's System of Care, New Jersey Department of Children and Families Division of Child Behavioral Health Services, December 2006.*

services are needed at the various levels of care. His overall conclusion, which mirrored an earlier DCBHS needs assessment using a completely different methodology, was that “youth may be well-served at more community integrated levels of care than the System of Care currently provides.”¹² The implication of this assessment is that additional treatment home capacity is needed and that the Department needs to develop a clear model and delivery system for treatment foster care.

In addition to the formal reports, the DCBHS Director sponsored a series of public meetings around the State to gain input on the DCBHS System of Care and future strategic directions. DCF leadership and the DCBHS Director are now using the findings of these reports and their assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system to decide next steps. Options under consideration include administrative changes, changes to the System of Care case management functions and providers and the development of new service models, including a clinical model for treatment foster care.

2. *DCF Hired a Chief Medical Officer.*

The Modified Settlement Agreement requires the new Department of Children and Families to hire a new Chief Medical Officer by August 2006 (*Section II.F.1*). A Chief Medical Officer, a pediatrician with expertise in epidemiology was hired June 1, 2006. The Chief Medical Officer is responsible for providing individual case consultation, approving the administration of psychotropic drugs, and emergency consultation. Other duties include conferring with DCF senior staff on health and health care issues, reviewing and creating policies and procedures related to health care issues and services, supervising the nursing unit, and participating in the Child Fatality and Near Fatality Board reviews.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

3. *Pre-Placement Medical Assessment.*

DCF data support that all children entering out-of-home care are routinely receiving pre-placement assessment, but there is wide variability in the extent to which they are performed in non-emergency settings, in what the examination entails, and in who sees the child (Nurses or Doctors). The goal of the pre-placement assessment is to perform a quick check-up of the child, assess for any communicable diseases, and determine any medication that may need to be continued or administered.

Under the Modified Settlement Agreement, all children entering placement are expected to have a pre-placement medical assessment in a setting other than an emergency room (*Section II.F.2*).

will be evaluated for its effectiveness in reducing the use of emergency rooms setting for these assessments.

4. *Data on Health Care Services.*

New Jersey law and policy requires the State provide children entering out-of-home care with pre-placement assessments, full medical exams within 60 days of entering out-of-home care, annual medical exams in accordance with EPSDT guidelines, semi-annual dental exams for children age 3 years and older, mental health assessments, and all identified follow-up care. Recognizing that DCF had much work to create the service and data tracking systems to ensure appropriate delivery of health care services, the Modified Settlement Agreement requires that in 2006, the State shall provide such care to the best of its ability and document provisions of such care (*Section II.F.2*). Using data collected in 2006, by April 2007, the State and the Monitor will develop both the baseline and future performance targets for improved health care delivery.

DCF gathered data from a variety of sources to inform the upcoming work to establish a baseline for provision of medical and dent

handles the finalization of adoptions for children from three local Newark offices. At the end of December 2006, 81 percent of children statewide with a goal of adoption, were transferred and being served by adoption workers. Non-adoption permanency workers still carry some cases of children moving toward adoption but DCF staff report that based on their interactions with Local Offices, in most instances these specific situations are exceptions allowed by the Modified Settlement Agreement, due to previously-established relationships with the permanency workers. Thus, in the Monitor's view, the Department is meeting the Modified Settlement Agreement requirement (*Section II.G.9*) that children with a permanency goal of adoption be assigned to qualified adoption workers.

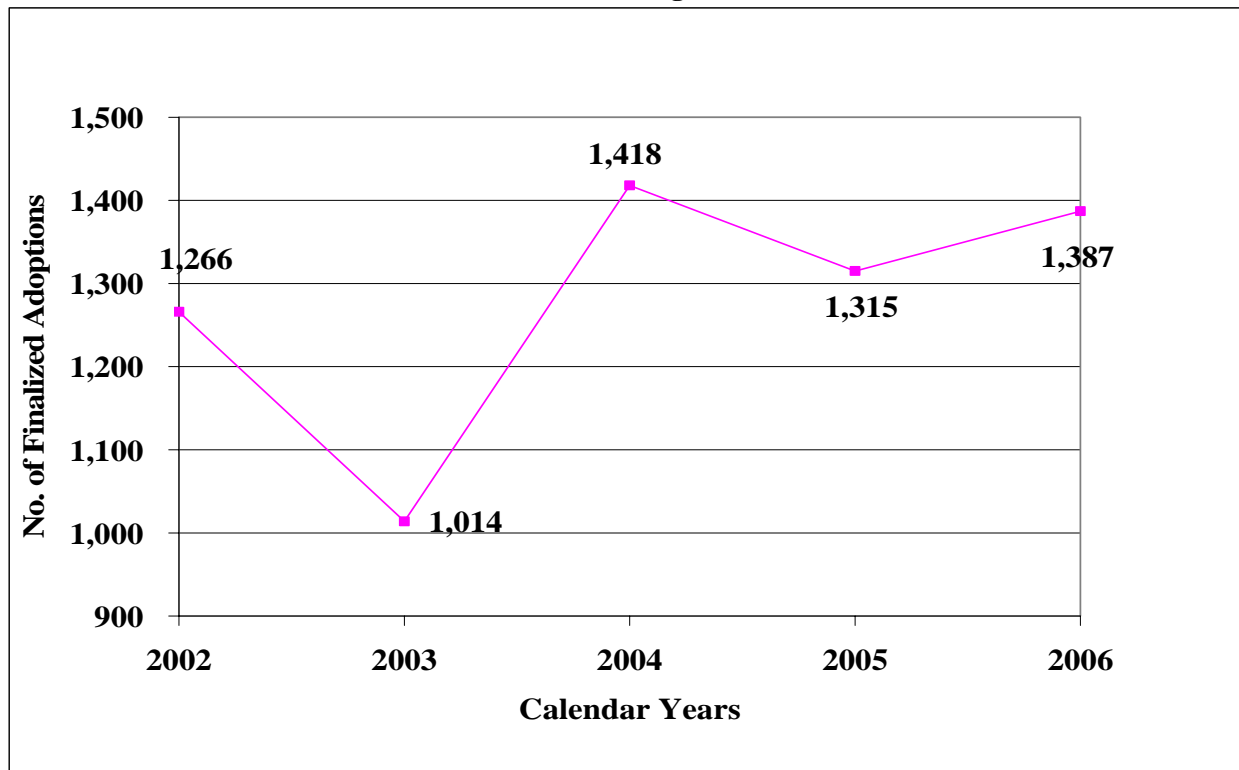
Designated adoption workers exist for each Local Office, and cases are to be transferred to them within five days of a child's permanency hearing. Concurrent planning specialists have been hired to support adoption practice in all Area Offices. These specialists provide expertise in concurrent planning practice, assist with decisions made on cases, track progress towards adoption, and monitor compliance with 5-month and 10-month review hearing protocols. Currently, as required by the Modified Settlement Agreement (*Section II.G.9*), a three-day training session is provided to all new adoption workers (the New Adoptive Worker Training). The Office of Adoption Operations is responsible for conducting this training. DCF trained 91 new and existing adoption workers by December 2006 in training held in Monmouth, Camden and Middlesex counties; 51 additional workers were trained in January 2007 in training held in Essex and Ocean counties. According to the State, all adoption workers have received the New Adoptive Worker Training (a curriculum modified from the original ARC training) at some point over the last several years. The Office of Adoption Operations sends rosters of trained adoption workers to NJWTA, which maintains the information in a statewide database. The Monitor has not independently verified these data and will do so in the next monitoring period.

2. The State Finalized the Adoption of 1,387 Children in Calendar Year 2006, Exceeding the Modified Settlement Agreement Target of 1,100 Adoptions.

This is an extremely positive and noteworthy accomplishment, which reflects the hard and focused efforts of individuals at all levels of DCF, working in cooperation with resource families and Judges across the State.

Figure 10 below provides historical data on the number of adoptions finalized in Calendar Years 2002 through 2006.

**Figure 10: Number of Adoptions Finalized in
CY 2002 through 2006**



Source: New Jersey DCF, February 2007.

In order to better understand the delays in adoption, each Local Office was asked to assess barriers for backlogged cases in which a child was legally free *for more than 90 days*, and not in a finalized adoption.

The assessment of the “Adoption Backlog” was completed in September 2006, at which time Local Offices reported that there were 1,113 legally free children and youth waiting more than 90 days for a finalized adoptive home. Three hundred ten (35%) of the children were in Essex County and an additional 119 (11%) children in Union County. The Local Offices identified timely completion of consent materials as the principal barrier to adoption for almost 40 percent of these cases. Table 10 below shows the number of cases identified by their principal barrier.

**Table 10: Principal Barrier to Adoption for Legally Free Children
Waiting More than 90 Days*
(September 2006)**

Primary Barrier	No. of Cases
Timely Completion of Consent Materials	442
Completion of Home Study	280
Completion of ICPC (out-of-state) Study	37
Criminal History/Child Abuse Clearance (CHRI/CARI issue)	61
Require Facilitation of Decision Making on Adoption Plan	96
Require Recruitment of an Adoptive Home	197
TOTAL:	1113**

Source: DYFS Local Office Assessments

*Staff were to identify primary barrier per case although a case could have more than one barrier.

**As of September 2006, the total number of legally free children was 2,154 although by December 2006, it dropped to 1,919 (see Figure 12) and by January 2007, is reported to be at 1,861 children. According to Office of Adoptions Operations, the difference between 2,154 children legally free for adoption in September 2006 and the 1,113 children assessed for barriers is accounted for as follows: 550 children were placed in adoptive homes and 491 children were legally free less than 90 days or were in the final stages of the adoptions process.

Based on these assessments, the Office of Adoption Operations is working with the Local Offices to create strategies to alleviate the primary barriers identified. Specifically, four counties (Essex, Union, Ocean and Burlington) required additional resources to assist in preparing the adoption consent materials. DYFS has since designated one-half of its federal Adoption Incentive Award (\$243,000) to support “adoption expeditors” who will write child summaries, assemble necessary packets, write court reports, and perform other administrative tasks. These expeditors, under contract with the Children’s Home Society, are scheduled to operate from January 22, 2007 through September 30, 2007. The number of expeditors assigned per county is: Essex (4), Union (2), Ocean (1), and Burlington (1). The primary barrier identified in Middlesex County was the completion of the home study and, thus, the plan for those Local Offices is to have the completion of these studies become part of the resource family Impact Team process.

5. *Increasing Staff Supports to Facilitate Adoption Activities.*

The Modified Settlement Agreement requires the State, by December 2006, to increase staff support in two specific ways to promote successful adoption outcomes. The first is to designate a resource family recruiter in each Local Office to conduct child-specific recruitment for children with a goal of adoption awaiting families (*Section II.G.8*). The second is to provide paralegal support and child summary writer support for adoption staff in Local Offices (*Section II.G.5*). DCF fulfilled these requirements to support staff in finding homes for children awaiting adoption and in addressing the paperwork necessary to complete the adoption process.

As of December 2006, the State designated a resource family recruiter for each Area Office to conduct child-specific recruitment for children with a goal of adoption who are waiting for families. To support their work, the State developed a “Child-Specific Recruitment Plan” form. This form is designed to guide the recruitment team (permanency/adoption worker, supervisor, and recruiter) in their work with children who are not yet legally free and with children who are legally free.

The State also hired paralegals and child case summary writers to support the Local Office

7. *By December 2006, the State of New Jersey Designed a Concurrent Planning Model to be Demonstrated in Ten Sites That Includes 5- and 10-Month Permanency Reviews.*

The Modified Settlement Agreement requires the Department to improve concurrent permanency planning and adoption practice (*Section II.G.1 and 2*). Particularly, DYFS must begin the process earlier of identifying and supporting permanent living arrangements for children and youth who are unable to reunify with their parents. In response to this goal, DYFS created a new Concurrent Planning “Enhanced Review” Model for implementation in 10 demonstration sites beginning January 2007. This Model outlines the

family or resource family; review the appropriateness and stability of the child's placement and verify that the home is licensed. This review is also meant to facilitate the identification of cases for early reunification, early adoption or Kinship Legal Guardianship.”¹⁴

For children remaining in care at 10 months, there is a required placement review to be held in preparation for the permanency hearing in court. After this review, a decision is made to either provide more time for reunification to the parent(s) because of improved circumstances and likelihood of reunification (an exception to ASFA) or to recommend the Termination of Parental Rights (TPR). This review has two parts—a family discussion (involving the family, caseworker, supervisor, casework supervisor, caretaker, and other interested parties) and a litigation conference involving casework and legal staff as preparation for moving forward with Kinship Legal Guardianship or Termination of Parental Rights. If a decision is made to change the child's goal to adoption, an adoption worker is assigned to the case, but does not formally take on the case until after the permanency hearing. The permanency worker is responsible for introducing the adoption worker to the child and caregiver. Any remaining tasks required to be completed by the permanency worker before the permanency hearing are identified at this time. After the post-permanency hearing, the case is required to be transferred to the adoption worker within five days and a child-specific recruitment plan must be completed within 30 days. A guardianship petition (the Termination of Parental Rights petition) must be filed within 45 days of the permanency hearing. Missing from this Model is the requirement to assign a recruiter for children moving toward adoption who lack an identified adoptive home (*Section II.G.2.b.iv*).

The Concurrent Planning Model as described

The DCF website (www.state.nj.us/DCF) now publishes data, at least quarterly on the following indicators:

- Demographic Data
 - Licensed Foster and Adoptive Families
 - Child Caseload
 - Placement Caseload
 - Children in Out-of-State Placement
 - Families under DYFS Supervision
 - Comparison of Children Entering and Exiting Out-of-Home Care
 - Age of Children in DYFS Out-of-Home Placement
 - Hotline Referrals
 - Child Protective Referrals by Source
 - Family Service Requests by Source

- Child Behavioral Health Data
 - DCBHS Authorized Out-of-State Placements

- Workforce and Caseload Data
 - Staff Trained
 - Separation Rate for Caseload Carrying Staff
 - Intake Caseloads
 - Permanency Caseloads
 -

- State Central Register (SCR) Referral Data
 - Type and disposition of referrals
 - Outcomes of investigations/assessments
 - Timeliness of investigations/assessments

- IAIU Investigations Data
 - New investigations
 - Pending investigations
 - Backlog

Ultimately, the Department’s goal is to publish accurate and timely data not only on process indicators but on outcomes for the children and families it serves.

2. *“Safe Measures” is Accessible to All Staff and All Staff Are Trained to Use the System*

By September 2006, the Department was to initiate management reporting based on the “Safe Measures” system (*Section II.J.2 and II.E.4*). “Safe Measures” is an automated case tracking and workflow tool that is now accessible to all staff and can be used by both staff and managers to monitor their workload and track case status and progress. Each DYFS staff member can generate reports from “Safe Measures” from their own desk-top computers. The DCF “Safe Measures’ Team trained all the existing staff in how to use the system. It can be used to look at caseload assignments and completion of key case-processing activities, such as case plan development, monthly visits with families etc. Actual use varies both by worker and by office managers. Some use it frequently and effectively; those who do use it find it to be a very user-friendly and useful tool. Workers are identifying and correcting data input errors in the SIS system as a result of using “Safe Measures.”

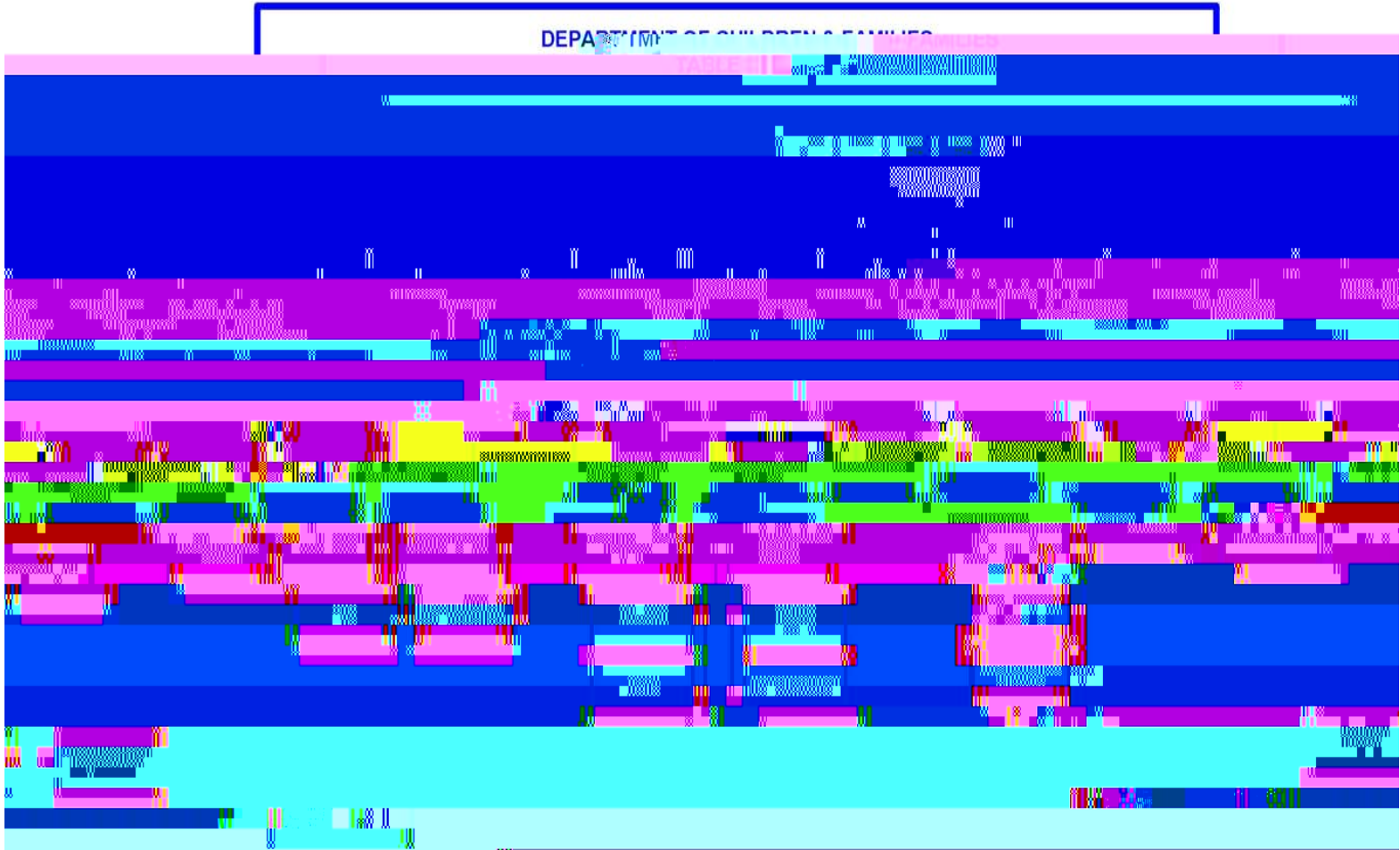
3. *The State Is Making Progress and Is on Track for Implementation of New Jersey SPIRIT.*

Over the past several years, New Jersey moved toward the development and implementation of an automated child welfare information system that meets federal SACWIS requirements and provides a case management tool for workers with greatly increased functionality for management and reporting including resource and financial management. DCF was expected to

modifications that can be more easily made before full deployment to the remainder of the State in July 2006.

While the work goes on to develop and test the system, the Department is also taking steps to get workers ready to accept the new technology. This is being done in part through worker training and access now to “Safe Measures” which is teaching them how to manage their caseload activities through a computerized system. It is also being supported through the NJ SPIRIT knowledge web, which is already operational, keeps staff informed about progress, and is working to improve staff readiness to use NJ SPIRIT.

**APPENDIX A:
New Jersey Department of Children and Families***



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APPENDIX B

Caseload and Supervisory Ratio Detail for Local Offices

Appendix B contains four tables with local office detail for caseloads of permanency, intake and adoption workers and the number of Local Office supervisors.

Table B-1: Number of Families,* Children Placed and Assignments Permanency Workers December 2006						
Local Office	Office Summary					
	Number of Available Permanency Workers	Families	Average Number of Families	Children Placed	Average Number of Children Placed	Office Meets Criteria
Atlantic	34	493	15	186	5	Yes
Bergen Central	18	231	13	82	5	Yes
Bergen South	30	437	15	186	6	Yes
Burlington East	30	449	15	172	6	Yes
Burlington West	24	380	16	92	4	No
Camden Central	37	330	9	134	4	Yes
Camden East	33	568	17	172	5	No
Camden North	42	455	11	161	4	Yes
Camden South	27	411	15	132	5	Yes
Cape May	23	307	13	109	5	Yes
Cumberland West	35	589	17	263	8	No
Essex Central	47	595	13	307	7	Yes
Essex North	21	469	22	125	6	No
Essex South	29	432	15	105	4	Yes
Newark Center City	28	641	23	294	11	No
Newark Northeast	50	536	11	316	6	Yes
Newark South	44	978	22	410	9	No
Gloucester East	20	226	11	85	4	Yes
Gloucester West	20	247	12	82	4	Yes
Hudson Central	21	435	21	140	7	No
Hudson North	17	292	17	86	5	No
Hudson South	21	361	17	140	7	No

Table B-1: (Continued)

**Number of Families,* Children Placed and Assignments
Permanency Workers
December 2006**

Local Office	Office Summary					
	Number of Available Permanency Workers	Families	Average Number of Families	Children Placed	Average Number of Children Placed	Office Meets Criteria
Hudson West Hunterdon	15	168	11	73	5	Yes

<p style="text-align: center;">Table B-2: Number of Families,* Children Placed and Assignments Intake Workers December 2006</p>						
Local Office	Office Summary					
	Number of Available Workers	Assignments	Average Number of Assignments	Families	Average Number of Families	Office Meets Criteria
Atlantic	21	140	7	185	9	Yes

Table B-2: (continued)

**Number of Families,* Children Placed and Assignments
Intake Workers
December 2006**

Local Office	Office Summary					
	Number of Available Workers	Assignments	Average Number of Assignments	Families	Average Number of Families	Office Meets Criteria
Morris	21	144	7	458	22	No
Ocean North	21	130	6	320	15	Yes
Ocean South	17	69	4	322	19	No
Passaic Central	20	100	5	277	14	Yes
Passaic North	20	118	6	277	14	Yes
Salem	11	39	4	158	14	Yes
Somerset	12	75	6	360	30	No
Sussex	9	74	8	129	14	Yes
Union Central	10	39	4	170	17	No
Union East	13	80	6	156	12	Yes
Union West	14	67	5	149	11	Yes
Warren	12	95	8	294	25	No
Statewide Total	624	3,306	5	8,890	14	Yes
Percentage of Offices that meet the caseload average of 10 or fewer new assignments and 15 and fewer family criteria.						65%

Source: New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Policy & Planning February 6, 2007.
Family counts include both Primary and Secondary families. Trainees are excluded.

Table B-4: Number of Supervisors, By Local Office, December 2006

Supervisory Staff

Supervising Family