

2016 APSR- Monthly Caseworker Visit Formula Grants Report

The report below from CAPSS, the State's Automated Child Welfare Information System, indicates that the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) achieved a total of 93.7% of the total visits that would be made if each child were visited once per month. This is a decrease of 1.8% from the total reported for FFY 2014 of 95.5%.

Also in the report below from CAPSS, SCDSS achieved a total of 68.8% of the total number of monthly visits made by caseworkers to children in foster care occurred in the child's residence, thus exceeding the required compliance of at least 50%.

South Carolina Department of Social Services

Face-to-face Visits with Children in Foster Care (eff. 20151201 / ADR)

Period: October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015

The total number of visits made by caseworkers on a monthly basis to children in foster care during a fiscal year must not be less than 95 percent of the total number of such visits that would occur if each child were visited once every month while in care.

# children	Monthly Caseworker Visits	# Complete Calendar Months	# Visits Months in the Residence	% of Visits on a Monthly Basis	% of Visits in the Residence
5,657	37,937	40,474	26,108	93.7%	68.8%

Causal Factors For Face-To-Face Visits Below Compliance

The primary factors related to the reduction below the 95% of the required total for face-to-face visits with children in foster care are:

- 1) The total foster care services (cases) increased from 5,214 for FFY 2014 to 5,658 for FFY 2015. This is an 8.5% increase in the number of foster care services for FFY 2015 over FFY 2014. In FFY 2015, the number of Child Protective Services Assessment/Investigation services and Family Preservation services increased dramatically over the number in FFY 2014. This is significant because many caseworkers have carried and are carrying multiple types of cases including foster care caseworkers.
- 2) The increase of 8.5% of the number of Foster Care services, combined with the increase in Child Protective Services Assessment/Investigation services and Family Preservation services also handled in some counties by Foster Care caseworkers, when further combined with a high staff turnover and resultant reduction in caseworker capacity at the SCDSS (2016 APSR Page 56), resulted in a reduction of 1.8% of the total visits that would be made if each child in foster care were visited once per month. For many caseworkers, the number of children in their caseload continues to be above the SCDSS Caseload/Workload Standards Maximum Number of forty-eight (48) for Child Protective Services Assessment/Investigation cases, of forty-eight (48) for Ongoing Cases (In-Home/Family Preservation), and of forty (40) for Foster Family Care cases.

As mentioned in the 2016 APSR on Page 28, the "Strength" rating of 68.7% for Item 19 of the CFSR 2 Onsite Instrument used in Quality Assurance Reviews in FFY 2015, "caseworker visits with the children", while a decrease of 3.4% from 2014, yet it is a significantly higher Strength score than for "visiting with parent" in Item 20 of 11.5%. This indicates that the high caseload/workload of the SCDSS staff resulted in choices being made by caseworkers

when necessary, and visiting face-to-face with children, assessing for services, and case planning with children took visitation precedence for caseworkers.

Use of Monthly Caseworker Visit Grant

For the time period of 10/1/2014 – 9/30/2015, the Monthly Caseworker Visit Grant expended \$132,808.56 in travel, \$25,627.40 in telecommunications, and \$120.92 for leased cars. The travel included expenses such as in-state meals, in-state mileage, and in-state lodging. The telecommunications expenses included cell phone, air cards and video conferencing payments. The amount spent on leased cars is the monthly caseworkers' visits portion for the upkeep and use of state vehicles.

Steps In FFY 2016 To Ensure Compliance

The SCDSS recognizes the significant impact that staff turnover has had on the efficiency and effectiveness of services rendered by the Department, including the reduction in face-to-face monthly visits with children in foster care.

As indicated in the 2016 APSR on Page 56, the SCDSS has been analyzing staff turnover data for the Department and obtaining feedback from county offices. Causes of this turnover for South Carolina and for Child Welfare caseworkers across the nation include low wages, high workload and insufficient supervision. To address these issues, the SCDSS has developed multiple strategies to increase staff capacity.

- 1) The South Carolina Legislature authorized an additional 177 Full-time Employee positions for the FY 2014-2015 for caseworkers and caseworker supervisors, hiring is being implemented.
- 2) Increase in salary for frontline caseworkers to remain competitive with other states.
- 3) Development of a career ladder to provide opportunity for advancement.
- 4) Second and third shift pilots to distribute workload and strategies to address caseloads.
- 5) Guided Supervision for all cases will be provided once every six months or more after June 30, 2015. The Guided Supervision tool will be integrated into CAPSS, and staff fully trained to complete the tool within the CAPSS.
- 6) The training and implementation of Catalyst Coaches continues for statewide implementation. Casework Assistance Caseworkers are beginning and placed in CPS.
- 7) An assessment of Child Protective Services (CPS) Assessment/Investigation and Family Preservation Services was completed, recommendations were made and adopted for a revised CPS assessment and Family Preservation process and tool. The objective of the revised process and tool is to enable improved assessment of when to open cases, and improved ability to close cases safely and sooner than the previous average length of time cases were open.