



DSCYF

Department of Services for
Children, Youth & Their Families

Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

2023 Annual Report



Safe & healthy children,
resilient families,
strong communities.

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A Word from the Secretary



Dear Colleagues, Community Partners, Neighbors and Residents of Delaware,

On behalf of the dedicated employees of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, I am pleased to present our Department's Calendar Year 2023 Annual Report. This report provides us with an opportunity to highlight some of our accomplishments and share with you our goals for the future.

While this report includes only a sampling of the Department's achievements, I want to acknowledge that all the great work done on behalf of children and families is the result of our hard-working and selfless employees. Without them, we would not be able to accomplish our mission. We are equally thankful for our array of community providers and partner agencies. And as always, we are grateful to the Governor and the State Legislature for providing the direction and support necessary to keep our children safe.

DSCYF employees are dedicated and compassionate individuals who work tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of children and families in need. They provide essential services such as child protection, foster care, and mental health support, making a positive impact on the lives of those they serve.

As we enter the final year of Governor John Carney's administration, we will continue to work on the Department's five-year strategic plan. This plan was created with input from our front-line employees throughout the Department. Initiatives that have begun, or have been strengthened, by the strategic plan will continue. These include our commitments to providing trauma-informed care and embracing the values of diversity, equity and inclusion. If you have not had the chance to review the plan, you can find it here:

<https://kidsfiles.delaware.gov/pdfs/dscyf-strategic-plan-fy2022-fy2027.pdf>.

As we move into the next year, I hope to live up to the high standards of leadership our State deserves.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve E. Yeatman".

Steve Yeatman
Secretary

Background

The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF), established in 1983 by the General Assembly of the State of Delaware, provides critical child welfare, behavioral health and juvenile justice services for Delaware's children. DSCYF, commonly referred to as the Delaware Children's Department, employs approximately 1,400 staff at 31 locations and serves an estimated 8,000 children through four divisions, including:

- Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (DPBHS)
- Division of Family Services (DFS)
- Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services (DYRS)
- Division of Management Support Services (DMSS)

DSCYF uses trauma-informed practices that acknowledge how varied personal experiences shape individuals, and it is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of its operations, both within our workforce and in serving Delaware's children and families.



DSCYF Employees Participating in a Recruitment Event

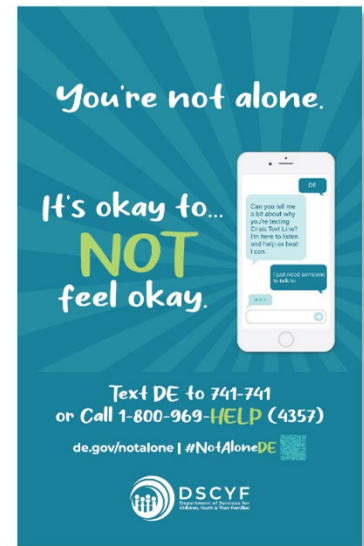


Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services

The Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (DPBHS) provides a family-driven, youth-guided, trauma-informed prevention and behavioral system of care.

In 2023, DPBHS showcased its expertise and dedication to a system of care focused on promoting family engagement and empowering youth by providing preventive measures, early intervention and behavioral health services.

- Suicide Prevention Campaign:** In collaboration with the Government Information Center (GIC), DPBHS developed creative content to support the launch of a youth suicide prevention campaign. The youth-focused messaging, “It’s okay to not feel okay” and parent/guardian-focused messaging, “It’s okay not to have all the answers” generated approximately 28,000 unique visits to the campaign webpage (de.gov/notalone) and resulted in 17.7 million digital impressions from January – August. In addition to social media, campaign tactics included print media, radio ads, billboards, bus wraps, and branded materials distributed to Delaware schools.
- Community-Based Provider Treatment Rate Study:** DPBHS implemented a new rate schedule for community-based behavioral health treatment services to address recruitment challenges and enhance service quality. The rate schedule resulted from a comprehensive study conducted in partnership with a Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance (DMMA) contractor in CY2022. Providers participating in the survey reported that increases were critical to recruiting and retaining staff and providing high-quality services to Delaware children and families.
- New Crisis Bed and Diagnostic Stabilization Program:** ARPA funding approval led to the development of a state-of-the-art crisis bed and adolescent diagnostic program to expand local



services for youth in crisis in a renovated DSCYF Main Administration Campus building. The diagnostic services offered by this program will be gradually introduced starting in spring 2024 and will be fully implemented once it can be

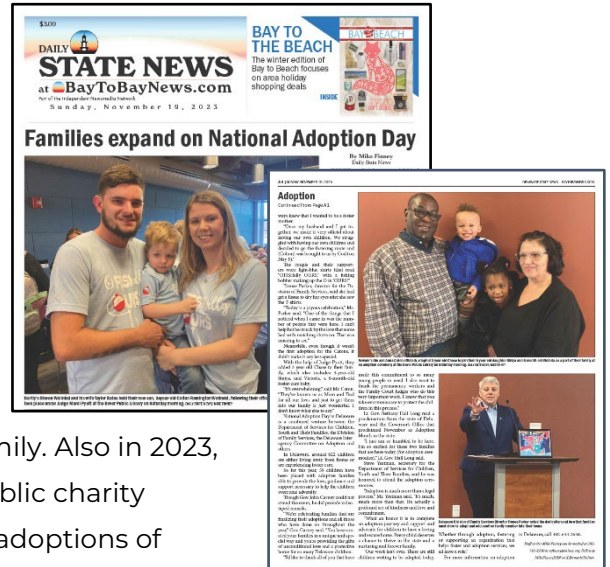
transitioned into the new facility. This new facility is expected to open in early 2025.

Division of Family Services

The Division of Family Services (DFS) prevents, protects, and finds permanent placement to keep children safe.

Over the past year, DFS continued its unparalleled commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of Delaware's children through strategic initiatives focused on transforming the lives of vulnerable children and families.

- Adoption Awareness:** DFS launched a social media campaign and collaborated with design partners to create a Heart Gallery at the Christiana Mall, featuring children awaiting a match with a forever family. Also in 2023, the Dave Thomas Foundation, a national nonprofit public charity committed to dramatically increasing the number of adoptions of children waiting in North America's foster care systems, awarded a \$500,000 grant to DFS for additional pre- and post-adoption support efforts.



Daily State News, November 18, 2023



DSCYF Heart Gallery at Christiana Mall

- Child Abuse and Neglect Report Line:** DFS, the central reporting agency for child abuse reports, operates the 24-hour Child Abuse and Neglect Report Line. In FY23, the report line received 24,420 and screened-in 7,649 cases for investigation. The number of reports continues to increase annually, partly due to extra-familial reports, which are reviewed and routed to the appropriate law enforcement agencies. In addition, DFS is managing caseloads and workloads for frontline staff. DFS continues to experience high vacancy rates, contributing to the higher-than-standard caseloads. Multiple strategies have been implemented to resolve this issue, including updating internal policies/strategies to manage current caseloads, increasing recruitment efforts, and improving retention.

- Federal Child and Family Services Review:** In collaboration with federal partners and stakeholders, DFS completed the in-person portion of Round 4 of the Federal Child and Family Services Review. Delaware was among the first states to participate in this required review round; the results report is expected in early 2024. The months-long review process included a comprehensive Statewide Self-Assessment of Delaware's Child Welfare system, including DSCYF's larger child and family serving system partners. The second phase of the review entailed individual case reviews using the federally approved case review tool and system. The Division continues to plan and prepare for system enhancements focused on further improving our performance on the national performance standards.



- Foster Care Resources:** To address the growing need for additional foster care resources and strengthen our continuum of providers, DFS initiated an RFP process to expand opportunities in all foster

care service areas including family foster care, shelter care, group care and specialized foster care. DFS also renewed efforts for formal foster care recruitment, including implementing a social media campaign to grow awareness and expand our resource pool.

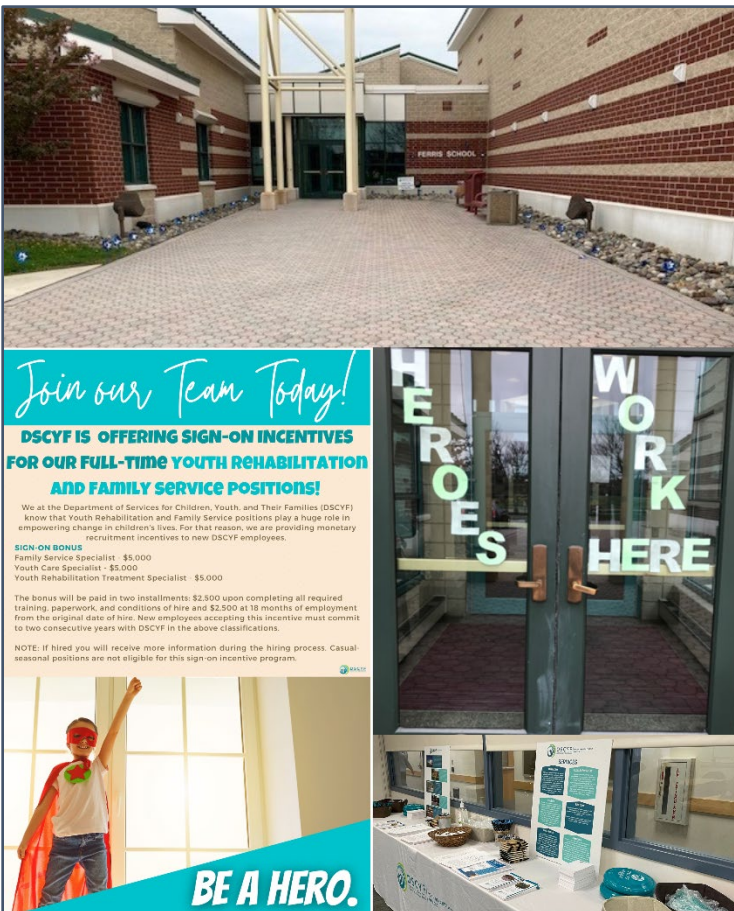


Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services

The Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services (DYRS) reduces recidivism, enhances public safety and promotes positive youth outcomes.

DYRS has made significant strides in transforming the lives of young individuals and fostering positive change through innovative programs and initiatives to create a supportive environment for youth and families through guidance, education and empowerment.

- Civil Citation Program:** DYRS revamped the civil citation program to reduce reliance on contractors to provide services to youth in the Juvenile Civil Citation (JCC) program. A process analysis of the program determined the previously contracted services could be streamlined and absorbed by current DSCYF staff. The change enables staff to continue providing best practice and case management responsibilities in a fiscally responsible way.



- Secured Mail Process for Level 4 and 5 Facilities:** DYRS continues to enhance operational and security processes in juvenile justice. The division implemented a secured mail process to eliminate contraband risk in the facilities. Nonlegal mail for residential facilities is now processed through a secure PO Box system in partnership with a private vendor. The mail undergoes a thorough screening for contraband before being digitized, printed, and then sent to DYRS facilities, effectively eliminating the risk of contraband infiltration through the mail. This successful initiative was piloted by James T. Vaughn Correctional Center in 2022, prompting consideration for expansion to all Delaware

Department of Correction facilities. This strategic change ensures youth and staff's ongoing safety and security while mitigating the potential threat of contraband within the facilities.

Division of Management Support Services

The Division of Management Support Services (DMSS) provides critical support functions to ensure services to employees and clients are delivered efficiently and effectively.

Throughout 2023, DMSS played a vital role in enhancing DSCYF's organizational efficiency by providing crucial support functions and seamlessly delivering services that support the critical work of the Department.



DSCYF Administration Campus

▪ **Training and Professional Development:** DMSS supports DSCYF's goals by assisting DYRS, DFS, and DPBH with training and professional development initiatives, technology updates, and policy updates such as DSCYF's policies on standards of practice, dress codes, background checks, and subsequent arrests. The Center for Professional Development

(CPD) arranged for various trainings, including first aid,

CPR, the use of AEDs, and ComPsych courses involving trauma-informed care and diversity, equity, and inclusion, in addition to increasing opportunities for supervisor core training. Many policies and training courses are now available via the Delaware Learning Center (DLC).

- **Technology Updates:** DMSS implemented several technology resources to support the Department this year, including a Community Directory online dashboard (kids.delaware.gov/first-community-directory) developed by the Office of Case Management's (OCM) Family Informed Resource Support Team (FIRST). FIRST, a voluntary program that builds on family strengths through a team meeting approach, connects families with community services to address each family's unique needs. This new, easy-to-navigate dashboard allows users to filter and search for community resources such as financial guidance, food support, parenting education, after-school activities, transportation, and recreation. With this tool in place, New Castle County program referrals increased by 58% with a 92% successful enrollment rate, Kent County referrals decreased by 5% although experienced a 93% successful enrollment rate, and Sussex County referrals increased by 29% and experienced a 98% successful enrollment rate.
- **Maintenance Unit Support:** The Maintenance Unit supports DSCYF's operations by ensuring the facilities and equipment are well-maintained to minimize disruptions and provide a safe, efficient working environment for staff. While managing three capital projects, the team completed several facility improvements across our residential and office sites including new lactation rooms, installing AEDs, upgrading bathroom facilities, and ensuring ADA compliance by installing a ramp and new automatic doors.



Results for America, an

organization helping governments accelerate using evidence and data to deliver better results, [recognized the State of Delaware](#) in its *2023 Invest in What Works State Standard of Excellence* report. This recognition included a DSCYF quality improvement project highlighted in the Government Efficiency and Accountability Review (GEAR) Board's 2022 [annual report: Implement Continuous Quality Improvement through Administrative Case Review](#) - The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families is implementing an administrative case review process to support its continuous quality improvement efforts and data-driven decision-making. The scope of work has included the development of a comprehensive review tool to assess case management practices when children and families are involved with more than one division in its system of care. The use of the newly developed tool is in the pilot stage, and the results of the pilot review will inform changes to the review process and provide valuable information about strengths, needs, and gaps that will inform system improvement efforts.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DSCYF made significant strides in fostering a more inclusive and diverse workplace this year by implementing engagement, empowerment, and education initiatives to strengthen DSCYF's workplace culture and enhance staff's cultural competency and skills. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee initiatives include events such as a Juneteenth celebration focusing on African American culture and a Winter Fusion Jubilee celebrating cultural traditions, launching an intranet site, newsletter, and a DEI-focused book club. An anonymous mailbox was also created to handle employee questions and suggestions. As a result of these efforts, the average monthly attendance at DEI meetings attendance increased throughout the year.



DSCYF Winter Fusion Jubilee

In the fall, a DEI comprehensive survey of DYRS staff working in secure locked facilities achieved over a 50% participation rate. The survey focused on underrepresented staff segments to help amplify these voices and assess workplace experiences, contributing to a more inclusive environment.

In partnership with the DSCYF Trauma-Informed Care Committee, the DEI Committee secured a Governors Grant to expand trauma-informed and DEI training beginning in February 2024 for upper to middle management. DEI is also finalizing a DEI training module for new employee orientation.

Trauma-Informed Care

DSCYF is committed to providing an empathetic and supportive response to trauma. Throughout FY23, staff offered comprehensive training to youth-serving community partners through co-facilitating trauma-informed care train-the-trainer programs and providing ongoing technical



assistance and support. [Take Care Delaware](#), DSCYF's trauma-informed program that promotes school and community partnerships, successfully expanded its reach to involve 18 school districts, multiple charter schools, and 24 law enforcement agencies, aiming to mitigate negative effects experienced by children's exposure to trauma and to increase the likelihood of children remaining in their classrooms, better able to function and learn.

The DSCYF Trauma-Informed Care Committee (TICC) continues implementing trauma-informed practices, workplace wellness initiatives, and workforce development. The committee, representing employees from all four divisions, developed a strategic framework that guides key actions aligned



DSCYF Trauma-Informed Care Hydration Challenge Participants

with the Department's vision and core values. Understanding that promoting employee health and well-being is directly connected to work satisfaction, productivity and quality, the TICC added workforce wellness to its core focus area in the latter half of FY23 – additionally, the committee prioritized workforce development through training courses in trauma-informed practices. Leveraging the state's

Employee Assistance Program (EAP), the TICC collaborated with the Center for Professional Development to offer monthly EAP webinars.

EMPLOYEE Spotlight

Social Media Video Series: Three DSCYF employees were the first to be highlighted in the Department of Human Resources #DEFutureChanger series. This social media video series, launched in June 2023, showcases the inspirational work of State of Delaware employees.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLllyBzZz3w>



<https://youtu.be/q-t4eZ7zze8>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRhimOfjEc>

Challenges/Improvement Areas

DSCYF acknowledges challenges, including staffing shortages, retirement eligibility, and the need for continuous innovative recruitment and retention efforts.

- **Recruitment/Retention:** Addressing staffing shortages remains a priority, with a focus on recruitment and retention efforts. DSCYF remains committed to investing in our existing employees and continuously seek innovative opportunities to recruit new employees, including offering recruitment and retention bonuses, incentive pay such as weekend shift incentives and attendance incentives for eligible frontline workers, and collaborating with the Department of Human Resources in a comprehensive recruitment, marketing, and social media campaign. DSCYF hosts hiring events on our campuses, attends numerous job fairs throughout the state, visits colleges and pursues new internship opportunities.
- **Hard-to-Fill Positions:** DSCYF continues its efforts to manage and mitigate vacancy rates across service divisions. For calendar year 2023, the following classifications were especially impacted by vacancies and are designated as hard-to-fill.

Classification	Average Vacancy Rate CY23
Family Service Specialist Series (DFS)	36%
Youth Care Specialist Series (DYRS)	17%
Youth Care Specialist Series (DPBHS)	10%
Youth Rehabilitation Treatment Specialist Series (DYRS)	48%
Youth Rehabilitation Treatment Specialist Series (DPBHS)	68%
Teacher (DMSS)	35%

- **Retirement Eligibility:** Within five years of December 31, 2023, 301 DSCYF employees (29%) are projected to be eligible for retirement. This number includes employees eligible to retire with full and reduced pensions based on creditable service and age criteria. Of these, 84 DSCYF employees (8%) are eligible to retire immediately. DSCYF's strategic plan includes continuous improvement practices and dedicated resources to support ongoing improvement, cross-training, and succession management activities to guide the Department's succession planning.

Moving Forward

DSCYF is entering year three of its five-year Strategic Plan (<https://kidsfiles.delaware.gov/pdfs/dscyf-strategic-plan-fy2022-fy2027.pdf>), focusing on organizational transformation and family and community-centered mission delivery. In January 2022, DSCYF entered the implementation phase of the Strategic Plan process. The implementation plan provides clear and measurable performance indicators to manage progress to help DSCYF remain focused on meeting the needs of the communities and individuals it serves. DSCYF enters year three with significant milestones already achieved for each of the strategic plan's four goals.

- The **utilization of a best practice framework emphasizing child and family engagement and empowerment** has been supported through staff training in Motivational Interviewing and the expansion of Trauma Informed Care through various training program.
- The **integration of practice and infrastructure across divisions has been improved** by actively involving Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Trauma Informed Care (TIC) representatives on the policy committee and implementing a policy establishing Standards of Practice (<https://kidsfiles.delaware.gov/policies/dscyf/dsc218-standards-of-practice.pdf>), utilizing teaming and collaboration strategies to ensure a coordinated approach across divisions.
- Efforts have also been made to **expand and institutionalize data-driven decision-making** through the establishment of a culture of continuous quality improvement and the development of tools and protocols for administrative case review.
- Lastly, the goal of **ensuring a qualified, competent, and supported workforce** has been addressed through the incorporation of data quality and fidelity into employee training, the development of FOCUS training for new employees, and increased recruitment and retention opportunities.



The strategic plan change management team will continuously monitor key performance indicators moving forward. The plan's implementation strategies are agile and adaptable, allowing DSCYF to adjust to new circumstances and opportunities.

Summary

The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families provides child welfare, behavioral health, and juvenile justice services. With approximately 1,400 staff and 31 locations, DSCYF serves an estimated 8,000 children through four divisions, including Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (DPBHS), Family Services (DFS), Youth Rehabilitative Services (DYRS), and Management Support Services (DMSS).

This report highlights some of the initiatives and programs each division accomplished during the 2023 calendar year. DPBHS focused on suicide prevention, community-based provider treatment rate study, and the establishment of a new crisis bed and diagnostic stabilization program. DFS implemented adoption awareness initiatives, expanded foster care service areas to support permanent placements for children, and completed the in-person portion of the Federal Child and Family Services Review while managing an increase in calls to the child abuse and neglect line. YRS revamped the civil citation program and implemented a secured mail process for facilities to eliminate contraband risk. DMSS provided critical support functions, including training and professional development, resource enhancements, and maintenance support.



Significant progress has been made to foster a more inclusive and diverse workplace through engagement, empowerment, and education initiatives. The DEI team worked to expand training for new employees, implemented digital and literary initiatives, and hosted seasonal cultural events and celebrations to promote cultural awareness.

DSCYF demonstrated its commitment to providing an empathetic and supportive response to trauma by offering training to youth-serving community partners and expanding the Take Care Delaware program reach. DSCYF's Trauma-Informed Care Committee focused on implementing trauma-informed practices, workplace wellness, and workforce development.

Although 2023 includes many achievements for DSCYF, the Department acknowledges its challenges and areas for improvement, including staffing shortages, retirement eligibility, and the need for innovative recruitment and retention efforts. DSCYF addresses these challenges through recruitment and retention bonuses, incentive pay, and collaborative inter-agency recruitment campaigns.



DSCYF is entering year three of its five-year Strategic Plan, which focuses on organizational transformation. The strategic planning team continuously monitors key performance indicators and adapts its strategies to meet the needs of the communities and individuals they serve.

DSCYF carries out its mission with the support of its dedicated and compassionate employees, who work tirelessly to provide essential services that ensure the safety and well-being of children and families in need.

We sincerely thank our dedicated staff, partners, and stakeholders who contribute to DSCYF's success. We look forward to continued collaboration as we strive for excellence in serving Delaware's children and families.

Thank You

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