

A Review of the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services for Fiscal Year 2019

CONCLUSION: During FY 2019, MDCPS received 90% of its revenues from state general funds and federal funds. Over half of the Department's expenditures were for caseworker and caseworker supervisor salaries and on reimbursements made to foster parents. While MDCPS never met court-order percentage-compliant caseload mandates in FY 2019, the daily mean weighted caseloads were not far from the standards. In FY 2019, the caseworker turnover rate was 26%, a 5% increase over FY 2018. Also, as of May 1, 2019, 25% of MDCPS's positions were vacant. While the settlement agreement requires MDCPS to develop a new case management system, CCWIS, by June 30, 2021, the Department's \$28.7 million RFP to develop and deploy the system contains limited documentation supporting needed system design features and associated costs.

Background:

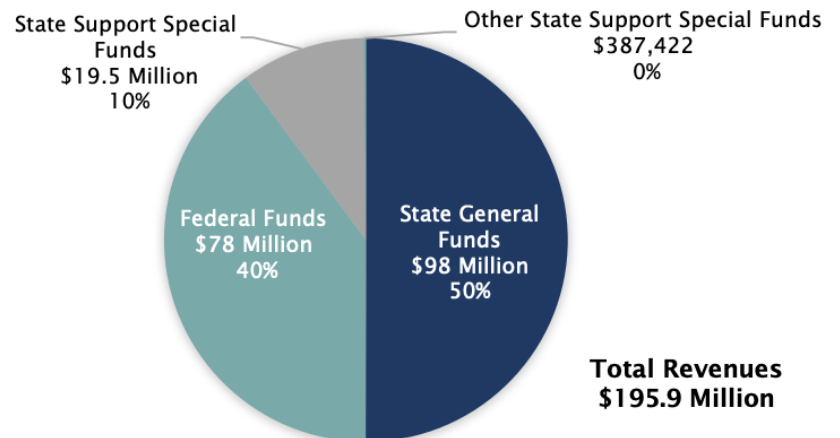
The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (MDCPS) is the entity responsible for the development, execution, and provision of Mississippi's child welfare services and for ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of the state's children and families.

MISS. CODE ANN. Section 43-26-1 (7) (1972) requires PEER to annually review MDCPS's sources and uses of funding, caseloads and annual turnover rates, program effectiveness based on outcome measures, and any other matters deemed pertinent by the PEER Committee. This is PEER's second review of MDCPS, focusing on data from state fiscal year 2019.

Sources and Uses of Funding

Revenues

In FY 2019, MDCPS received \$195.9 million in total revenues. As shown in the chart, 50% of its total revenues were state general funds and 40% were federal funds.



Source: PEER analysis of MDCPS revenues provided by the Legislative Budget Office.

MDCPS Staffing as of May 1, 2019

864 Caseworkers
214 Caseworker Supervisors
184 Other County Staff
205 State Office Staff
1,467 Full-time Employees
487 Vacancies
1,954 Total PINs

Expenditures

During FY 2019, MDCPS expenditures for salaries, wages, and fringe benefits totaled approximately \$80 million (41% of its total expenditures), including \$53 million for its caseworkers and caseworker supervisors. MDCPS expended \$55 million (28% of its total expenditures) on foster care maintenance payments and provided \$35 million (18% of its total expenditures) to child welfare agencies delivering services and programs to Mississippi children and their families.

Total MDCPS expenditures (\$195.9 Million) increased by 4% from FY 2018 to FY 2019.

Recommendations for Sources and Uses of Funding:

- MDCPS should estimate and identify expenditures and full-time equivalents by accountability program.
- MDCPS should identify child and family well-being intervention programs to serve Mississippi children and families and ensure that such programs are supported by high-quality research.

90% of MDCPS caseworkers should have caseloads that do not exceed the 1.0 weighted caseload standard

85% of MDCPS caseworker supervisors should supervise no more than 5 caseworkers

Caseload Analysis

During FY 2019, MDCPS never met the court-ordered percentage-compliant mandate for its frontline, adoption, and licensure caseworker caseloads, and only complied with the caseworker supervisor workload mandate for a few days during the fiscal year. However, despite low compliance with the percentage-compliant mandates for caseworkers, analysis indicated that the mean daily caseload for caseworkers and workload for caseworker supervisors was not far from the 1.0 weighted caseload standard for caseworkers and the standard number of caseworkers supervised (no more than 5) for caseworker supervisors. Inequality in the distribution of caseworker caseloads and caseworker supervisor workloads is the main reason for the Department's low performance on percentage-compliant mandates.

Recommendations for Caseload Analysis:

- MDCPS should implement its written procedures for code documentation, file retention, and data entry processes.
- MDCPS should conduct a new caseload study based on current caseworkers' time and responsibilities to determine the range of time necessary for a caseworker to perform a task in accordance with best practices. MDCPS should establish new standards based on the results of this study.
- Once a new caseload study is established, MDCPS should redistribute caseworker positions so that they more closely match expected caseloads. In addition, MDCPS should consider assigning more cases to caseworkers in bordering counties to better distribute caseloads.
- MDCPS staff should confer with the court monitor and attorneys representing the Plaintiffs in the *Olivia Y.* lawsuit to discuss replacing the percentage-compliant mandates.

Analysis of Annual MDCPS Turnover Rates

In FY 2019 the annual turnover rate for caseworkers was 26%, a 5% increase over the previous year, while the annual turnover rate for all other staff was 15%, a 2% increase. In addition, nine of MDCPS's fourteen regions and thirty-seven counties had an increase in caseworker turnover from FY 2018 to FY 2019.

As of May 1, 2019, 25% of MDCPS's positions were vacant. Of their 487 vacant positions, 58% were caseworker and caseworker supervisor positions.

Recommendation for the Analysis of Annual MDCPS Turnover Rates:

- MDCPS should maintain a current list of all licensed social workers in the Department.

Analysis of Selected MDCPS Outcome Measures

PEER was unable to assess MDCPS's performance measures for FY 2019 because the data were not yet available at the time of this review. PEER plans to include this analysis in its FY 2020 annual review of the Department.

Development of MDCPS's New Case Management System

MDCPS anticipates configuration of the new case management system to take 15 to 18 months.

MDCPS expended at least \$3.2 million on staff and technical consultants between 2017 and August 2019 to begin the process of developing a new custom-built case management system (CCWIS) to replace its current outdated system (MACWIS). However, MDCPS has now decided to procure an off-the-shelf system in order to meet its impending court-imposed deadline. MDCPS is on the verge of issuing an RFP to expend up to \$28.7 million to develop and deploy this system with limited documentation supporting needed system design features and associated costs.

Recommendations for the Development of MDCPS's New Case Management System:

- The State Auditor should conduct an audit of MDCPS's expenditure of \$3.2 million on contracts for the development of a custom-built case management system to ensure that all deliverables were produced according to the terms of the contracts.
- The MDCPS Commissioner should direct the Department's staff to develop a detailed business case for the CCWIS project prior to issuing a request for proposal (RFP) to procure the system, and should also direct Department staff to maintain complete and accurate documentation of the procurement process.



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A copy of the full report is available at: www.peer.ms.gov