

Minutes
Senate Interim Committee on Children and Youth
House Interim Committee on
Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs
Meeting Jointly
Monday, July 16, 2018

The Senate Interim Committee on Children and Youth and the House Interim Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs met jointly on Monday, July 16, 2018, at 1:30 p.m., at the State Capitol, Room 130, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Committee members present: **Senators** Stephanie Flowers, Chair; David Wallace, Vice-Chair; Alan Clark, Breanne Davis and Missy Irvin. **Representatives** Charlene Fite, Chair; David Meeks, Vice-Chair; Charles Blake, Monte Hodges, Steve Hollowell, Rebecca Petty, Clark Tucker and Carlton Wing.

Non-committee members present: **Senators:** Lance Eads, Bryan King and Gary Stubblefield. **Representatives:** David Fielding, Justin Gonzales, Kim Hammer, Grant Hodges, Fredrick J. Love, Reginald Murdock, Mathew W. Pitsch, Johnny Rye, Matthew J. Shepherd, James Sorvillo and Dwight Tosh.

Representative Fite called the meeting to order and recognized new legislator; Senator Breanne Davis, District 16.

Approval of Minutes: June 5, 2018 [Exhibit C]

Representative Hollowell made a motion for approval of the meeting minutes of June 5, 2018, and Senator Wallace seconded the motion. Without objection the motion was approved.

Caseload Report for County Legal Operations: Child Welfare Cases, Arkansas Department of Human Services, Office of Chief Counsel (DHS-OCC) [Exhibit D]

Representative Fite recognized Mr. Jerald Sharum, Deputy Counsel, DHS, OCC. Mr. Sharum presented the 3rd Quarter Report, SFY 2017-2018. The report included the following information:

- CLO Attorneys and Staff Breakdown
- Number of Pending Child Welfare Cases - During the 3rd quarter of SFY 2017-2018 (SFY18), the number of child welfare cases decreased from 3,356 to 3,229. This represents a net loss of 127 cases, or 3.78%. The loss corresponds to 472 cases opened; 601 cases closed, and a correction of 38 cases that were confirmed as closed, but not reflected in previous closed-case reports.
- Number of Opened and Closed Child Welfare Cases per Month – At the end of the 3rd quarter of SFY18, the number of cases opened per month averaged 157.33 and the number of cases closed per month averaged 200.33 *Please see Exhibit D for the full report.*

Discussion of ISP 2017-014: To amend the law concerning child support and ISP 2017-015: To amend the law concerning child support ordered pursuant to a divorce decree and concerning the establishment of paternity before and after the entry of a divorce decree. [Exhibits E1 and E2]

Representative David Fielding discussed ISP 2017-014 and ISP 2017-015. He stated that the workgroup looking at these ISPs has met twice and further research is being done by the BLR Legal Section. Any suggestions are welcome, still a work in progress. *Please see the Exhibits E1 and E2*

Department of Human Service, Division of Aging and Adult Services and Behavioral Health Services (DHS-DAAS-BHS): Update on Adult Protective Services Program (APS) [Exhibits F1, F2, and F3]

Representative Fite recognized Mr. Mark White, Deputy Director, DHS-DAAS-BHS and Ms. Shannon Halijan, APS, Director, DHS-DAAS-BHS. Mr. White provided a PowerPoint presentation: Arkansas Adult Protective Services – “An Overview of the Unit’s Closure Backlog and Plan to Stay Current”, defining APS backlog and efforts APS is making to reduce the backlog of cases. *Please see Exhibit F1 for the full presentation.*

Defining the Problem:

- APS has a statutory deadline of 60 days in which to close investigations
- Of the 5,442 investigations opened in calendar year 2017, only 459 investigations (8.4%) were closed timely
- The inability to stay current was both a cause and consequence of the closure backlog
- Inadequate reporting capabilities – Managers and investigators had no efficient way of knowing week-to-week what investigations were due to reach the 60-day limit, or whether investigators were meeting deadlines; and
- Software limitations – The current custom system used to track and document investigations is outdated and unreliable, and was built around an inflexible, inefficient investigative process

Refocusing APS Efforts:

- In March 2018, APS began a four-week effort focused on timely closing of current investigations, to show whether or not APS could stay current and meet the 60-day deadline for closing investigations with existing staff and resources
- In the first week of this effort, only 49% of investigations coming due that week were closed within 60-days
- In the following weeks, APS increased the number of cases closed on time, demonstrating that APS did have adequate staff and resources to stay current on new cases with proper complaint screening
- By week 7, APS closed 97% of investigations timely

Initial Client Visits:

- 100% of all Priority 1 visits made or attempted within 1 day;
- 95% of all Priority 2 visits made or attempted within 5 days

- Priority 1 cases are those in which the victim is in imminent danger and immediate need of assistance
- All initial visits are unannounced and in-person

Investigation Closure:

- 95% of all cases closed, or reasonable efforts documented and approved, within 60 days
- 100% of all cases closed, or reasonable efforts documented and approved, within 75 days

How will APS resolve the closure backlog?

- The closure backlog reached its high point of 8,893 cases in December, 2017, and dropped to 6,109 by July 6th
- While staying current, APS investigators will work to close all overdue investigations that were opened in 2018
- The remaining pre-2018 cases still open will be addressed and closed through a dedicated effort
- Deloitte is working with APS to close blocks of cases that can be immediately identified for screen-out and closure through data queries
- All remaining backlogged investigations will be screened and triaged by registered nurses on loan from other DHS units
- Most investigations opened before July 2017 were not originally screened to determine whether or not the allegations met the minimum statutory requirements for an investigation
- Some investigations opened after July 2017 were inadequately screened
- The nurses will triage the remaining investigations to prioritize them and to identify investigations that may be closed without additional review

Mr. White mentioned the follow-up and accountability of APS leadership, stating that they will continue to meet weekly with DHS leadership to report progress. Quarterly reports will be provided to the legislative committees and data dashboards will provide continuous monitoring of investigations timing and closure to prevent future backlogs and to determine long-term staffing needs and case allocation. *Please see Exhibit F1.*

Mr. White provided a brief overview of the Adult Protective Services Organizational Chart. *Please see Exhibit F2.*

Representative Meeks asked APS to provide an update to the committee on its progress at the next committee meeting. Representative Fite asked that an electronic copy of the PowerPoint Presentation be forwarded to the committee.

Ms. Halijan reviewed the State of Arkansas Technical and General Service Contract that is contracted by Southwest Call Center Inc., in Lake Charles, Louisiana. *Please see Exhibit F3.*

Without any further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.