

Louisiana Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS)

Fiscal Year 2026 Business Plan

Forward, Together.



**Department of
Children & Family Services**
Building a Stronger Louisiana



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MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY AND THE FOSTER GENERAL



MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY



It is with great enthusiasm and a deep sense of responsibility that I present this business plan—our blueprint for transformation, accountability, and measurable progress. As Secretary, I am honored to lead the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services at a time when clarity of purpose, operational excellence, and trust with our stakeholders have never been more important.

This plan is more than a set of strategic commitments—it is a promise. A promise to the children and families we serve, to our dedicated staff, and to our community partners that we will do better, move faster, and work smarter. Each goal outlined here reflects our collective commitment to improving outcomes, increasing transparency, and building a system that is data-driven, responsive, and sustainable.

I am especially excited about the direction we are charting: completing strategic reorganization to better align our resources, modernize our technology, and harness data in meaningful ways that drive policy and practice. These aren't just operational improvements—they are foundational shifts that will define our department's future.

But none of this will be possible without disciplined execution and a shared sense of accountability. I want to be clear: I am personally committed to seeing this plan through. As Secretary, I will champion its progress, track its implementation, and ensure our team remains focused on results. Our stakeholders—children, families, team members, partners, and policymakers—deserve nothing less. Together, we can deliver on this vision.

Together, we will.

A handwritten signature in white ink, reading "Rebecca Harris".

Rebecca Harris, Secretary, Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services

MESSAGE FROM THE FOSTER GENERAL



As the new Foster General, I carry with me deep gratitude for the opportunity to have served as Secretary and immense pride in the progress we've made together. The work of DCFS is personal to me, and I remain fully committed to advancing our mission—especially in the areas of foster care and advocacy, which are close to my heart.

This business plan marks a transformative moment for our department. The upcoming reorganization is not just structural—it's strategic. It reflects a bold vision and a renewed commitment to how we serve Louisiana's children and families. I look forward to contributing to the meaningful change that lies ahead.

Thank you for your continued partnership and dedication. Together, we are building a stronger, more responsive DCFS that delivers on the promise of safety, stability, and opportunity for every child.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'David Matlock'.

David Matlock, Foster General, Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services

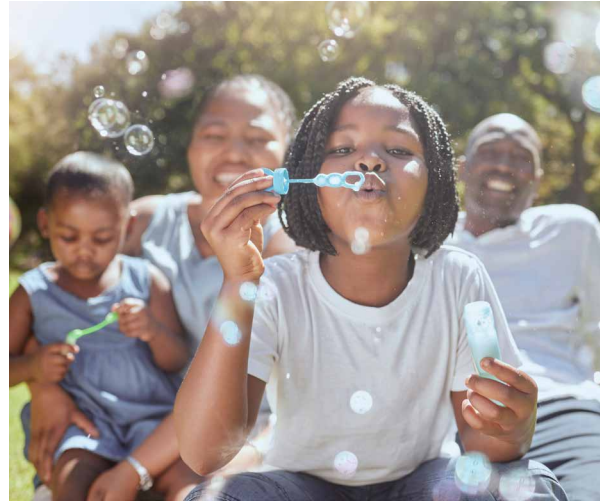
MISSION & VISION



MISSION & VISION

The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (“DCFS” or “department”) stands as a pillar of support for the state’s most vulnerable populations. With a deep-rooted commitment to child welfare, family empowerment, and community resilience, DCFS works to ensure that every Louisianian served by our agency is treated with dignity, compassion, and respect.

In the 2025 regular legislative session, DCFS declared that every child deserves to be safe, stability is the foundation for success, and strong families create strong communities. With this declaration, a new mission and vision were born:



MISSION

To protect children, empower families, and strengthen communities so every child grows up safe, stable, and strong.



VISION

A future where every child thrives in a safe, stable, and loving environment, supported by empowered families and resilient communities.

The Mission and Vision statements will inform every policy, program, and partnership, reflecting DCFS’s steadfast commitment to building a better future for Louisiana’s children and families.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This fiscal year marks a time of great change and opportunity for DCFS. During the 2025 regular legislative session, the One Door legislation was passed as Acts 477 and 478. Effective October 1, 2025, the Economic Stability program and Disability Determination Services will move to the Louisiana Department of Health. All employment and training programs will move to the Louisiana Workforce Commission. This will be an incredible shift in the way we deliver services, offering Louisianans a more effective social services delivery model that is financially sustainable and helps them move successfully from crisis to career.

The One Door legislation presented DCFS with a valuable opportunity to restructure itself as a child-centered department, dedicated to child welfare and support. The business plan is strategically designed to leverage this opportunity and drive outcome-focused improvements.

Statutory requirements and federal laws define DCFS's responsibilities and scope of service. This includes the Child Protection Act, which authorizes the department to intervene in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect. It also includes the Louisiana Children's Code, which outlines legal standards for child welfare cases, emphasizing the importance of family-centered approaches and timely permanency planning. Additionally, DCFS administers federal grants including the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program, the Adoption Assistance Program, the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, Access and Visitation, and Child Support Enforcement. These legal and regulatory foundations ensure that DCFS can deliver a wide range of services while maintaining accountability and a focus on protecting the well-being of children and families.

The business plan for fiscal year 2026 (July 1, 2025–June 30, 2026) will lay the foundation for the work our department is doing to improve operational efficiency and ensure that Louisiana's most vulnerable children are protected. It is also our priority to promote staff well-being and resilience so we can build a culture rooted in connection, accountability, and action. DCFS will conduct an iterative review process to ensure continuous improvement and maximize transparency for all ongoing initiatives.

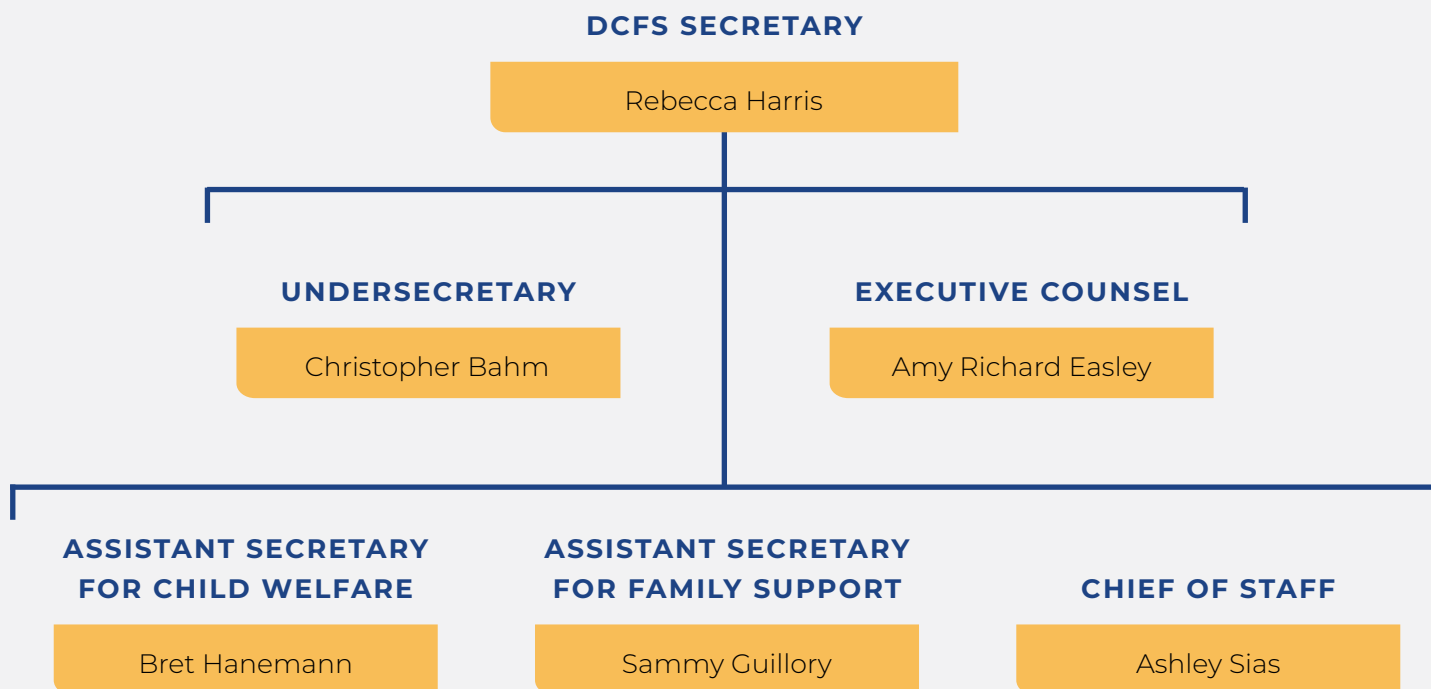
Throughout this plan, there are key initiatives as well as targeted strategies to achieve the initiatives' goals. This business plan—comprising of 12 initiatives and 32 goals—serves as a framework for tracking progress and enhancing accountability to the residents of Louisiana, our partners, and our dedicated team members at DCFS. We look forward to releasing our outcomes report in the first quarter of FY27, which will detail our successes and identify opportunities for further improvements as we move through this transformative time. We will carry out this challenging and important work at DCFS and, more importantly, we will move forward, together.



DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW



Organizational Chart



Organizational Snapshot

Structure

As DCFS continues to evolve to meet the growing and complex needs of children and families, it remains firmly grounded in a structure that values transparency, efficiency, and proactive regional support. This overview illustrates how DCFS is organized, funded, and staffed.

Staffing Levels

According [House Bill No 1](#), DCFS has 3,753 authorized positions, which include: 1,894 positions in the Division of Family Support, 1,540 positions in the Division of Child Welfare, and 319 positions in the Division of Management and Finance.

DCFS Divisions

DCFS is currently organized into three divisions, each aligned with the department's mission to protect children, support families, and promote self-sufficiency:

- » **Division of Child Welfare (CW):** This division is administered by Assistant Secretary Bret Hanemann and is responsible for safeguarding children through the investigation of abuse and neglect, managing foster care placements, and facilitating adoption services. Guided by executive leadership, it works closely with local partners and judicial systems to ensure child safety, permanency, and well-being.
- » **Division of Family Support (FS):** Operating under the oversight of Assistant Secretary Sammy Guillory, this division administers key public assistance programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Support Enforcement (CSE), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other services for individuals. Its core function is to help families achieve economic stability and access essential resources that support long-term self-sufficiency.
- » **Division of Management and Finance (OMF):** Led by Undersecretary Christopher Bahm, this division oversees financial and procurement operations, human resources, technology and systems management, policy and rulemaking, and strategic planning. It ensures that all programs are adequately resourced, compliant with state and federal regulations, and aligned with the department's broader goals. This division plays a critical role in sustaining operational integrity and driving continuous improvement across DCFS.

Each division functions within a clearly defined framework that supports collaboration, accountability, and responsiveness.

Regional Coverage

DIVISION/OFFICE	NUMBER OF OFFICES STATEWIDE
Child Welfare	49
Office of Management and Finance	1
Child Support Enforcement	15
Economic Stability	41
Disability Determination Services	3

(Numbers depicted in this table are not distinct)

Legend:

Region 1 – Orleans	Region 2 – Capital Area
Region 3 – South Central	Region 4 – Acadiana
Region 5 – Southwest	Region 6 – Central
Region 7 – Northwest	Region 8 – Northeast
	Region 9 – Northshore



DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Year in Review: Child Welfare Metrics from FY25 to Date

(July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025)



3,050

families served in their homes



7,361

children served in foster care



2,066

children reunified with their family



22,350

total cases created within Child Protective Services



21,190

cases closed with Child Protective Services



637

total adoptions



1,108

sex trafficking reports



1,136

referrals of human trafficking to Louisiana State Police



54,985

total calls received through the centralized intake hotline

Family Support Snapshot FY24-FY25

\$420,607,784

Child Support Collections

\$127,735,057

Total Arrears Collections

(This amount is included in Child Support Collections total)

1,161,348

Total Calls through Call Center

63,503

Disability Determination Services Recipients

2,157

Strategies to Empower People (STEP) Average Total Families






834,178

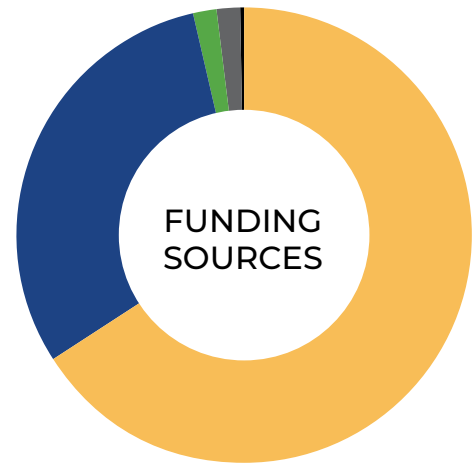
Average Monthly SNAP Recipients

FY26 Budget Overview ([State of Louisiana Executive Budget FY 2025-2026](#))

For FY26, DCFS has a budget of \$1.01 billion, funded through a mix of state general funds (\$317 million), federal dollars (\$664 million), and smaller sources like self-generated revenue and interagency transfers. The means of financing will change during the fiscal year as a result of the One Door legislation implementation.

Budget Overview

FUNDING SOURCE	BUDGET	% OF TOTAL BUDGET
 Federal Funds	\$664 million	66.1%
 State General Funds	\$317 million	30.5%
 Interagency Transfers	\$16 million	1.6%
 Fees & Self-Generated Revenue	\$16 million	1.7%
 Statutory Dedications	\$725 thousand	0.1%



Funding Impacts

Key investments in the Louisiana FY26 budget reflect a strategic effort to enhance care for children with complex needs. Notably, the state is funding the expansion of 40 therapeutic foster care beds, which are designed to serve children with significant emotional or behavioral challenges who require more intensive, trauma-informed support than traditional foster care settings can provide. Additionally, the budget includes a rate increase for congregate care settings, which offer structured environments and specialized treatment for youth who cannot be placed in family-based settings due to their clinical or behavioral needs.

Budget Allocation by Division

DIVISION	BUDGET	KEY FUNCTIONS
Child Welfare	\$394 million	Child protective services, family services, foster care, and adoption
Family Support	\$462 million	Child support enforcement, economic stability, disability determination services
Management and Finance	\$159 million	Administrative and financial operations and support services

Guiding Principles

DCFS is anchored by core principles that reflect a responsive, resilient, and grounded workforce. These principles are both aspirational and operational, shaping how we serve children, support families, collaborate with partners, and engage with one another. Every commitment, initiative, and milestone outlined in this business plan aligns to these core values and reinforces our shared mission to ensure that Louisiana children grow up in a safe, stable, and nurturing environment.



CHILD-CENTERED PRACTICE

We prioritize the safety, well-being, and long-term success of every child, ensuring their voices and needs are at the heart of all we do.



ACTION & RESULTS

We are driven by purpose and urgency, focusing on measurable outcomes that improve lives and strengthen families.



ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

We hold ourselves to the highest standards of integrity, openly sharing our progress, and taking responsibility for our actions.

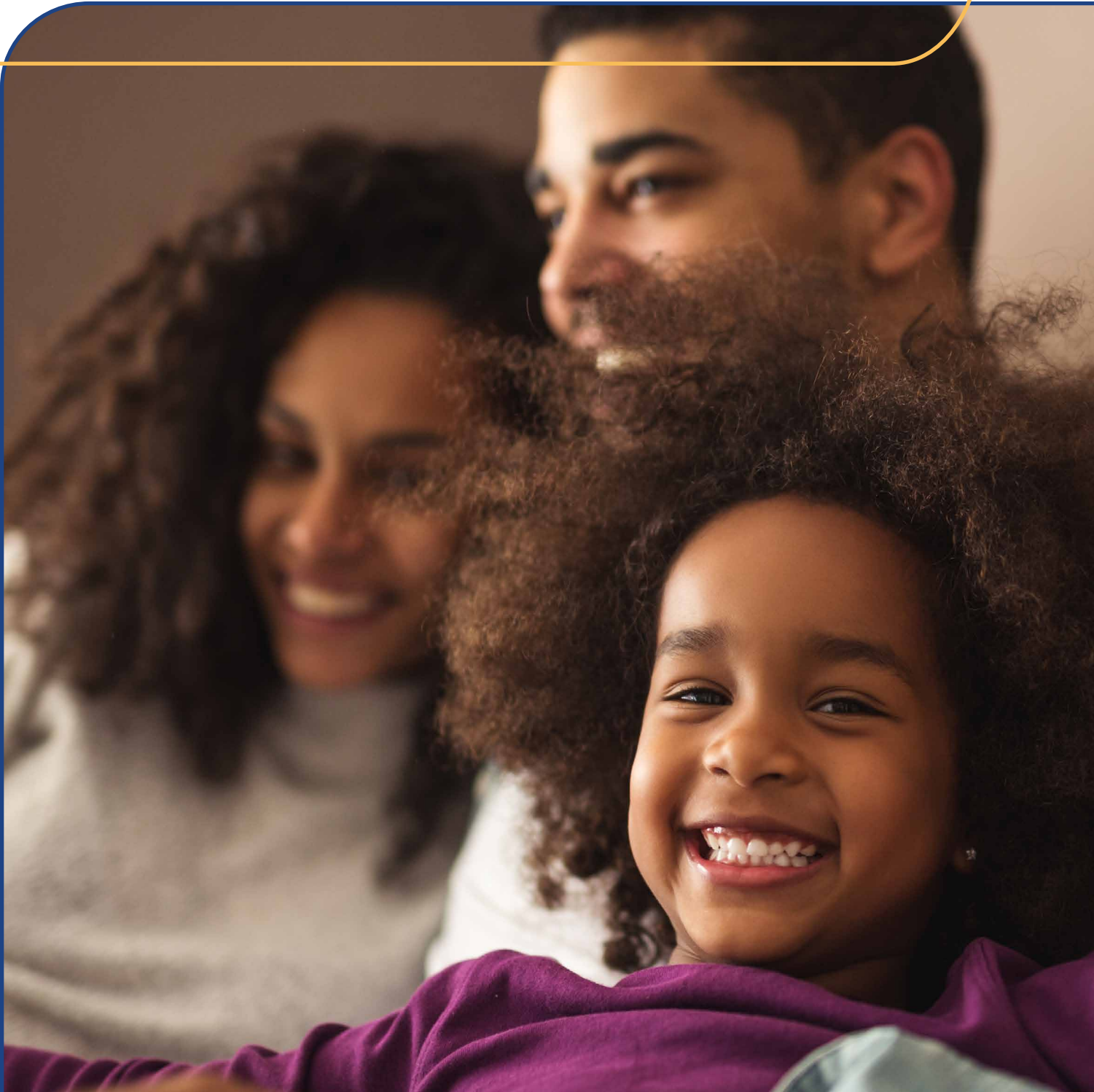


COLLABORATION & INNOVATION

We foster strong partnerships and embrace new ideas to solve complex challenges and deliver better services.

Together, these guiding principles form the foundation of our mission and vision. They serve as a compass for our daily work and long-term goals, ensuring that every action we take moves us closer to a Louisiana where all children and families have the opportunity to thrive. By staying true to these values, DCFS reaffirms its commitment to meaningful, lasting change.

COMMITMENTS, GOALS & KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



At the heart of our mission lies an unwavering dedication to children's well-being, driven by our guiding principles of child-centered practice, action and results, accountability and transparency, and a spirit of collaboration and innovation. These principles inform every aspect of our work and are reflected in our commitments. By establishing focused goals and key performance indicators (KPIs), we ensure that our actions yield tangible improvements and hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards. The following section outlines these commitments, along with the specific goals and KPIs.



Commitment 1: Ensure Appropriate Staffing Levels

DCFS is committed to maintaining sufficient staffing to ensure timely responses to reports of child maltreatment. This includes expanding coverage during evenings, weekends, and holidays through the creation of a dedicated second-shift team. This approach will reduce response times, alleviate staff burnout, and ensure children are protected at all times.

Initiative 1.1: Timely respond to reports of child maltreatment by a caretaker

GOAL #1: 99% OF EVENING, WEEKEND, AND HOLIDAY CASES ARE ASSIGNED TO AND HANDLED BY SECOND SHIFT

Baseline: Dependent on Initiative 5.1, Goal 4.

GOAL #2: 80% OF CASES ARE INVESTIGATED TIMELY ACCORDING TO PRIORITY

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

Initiative 1.2: Recruit and retain a qualified workforce

GOAL #1: 10% INCREASE IN CASE-CARRYING EMPLOYEES RETAINED WITH MORE THAN THREE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Baseline: 44% of employees retained.



Commitment 2: Complete Strategic Business Reorganization

A comprehensive reorganization of the department's structure will optimize the use of resources, streamline workflows, and improve service delivery. This effort will align roles and responsibilities with the department's strategic goals, eliminate redundancies, and enhance coordination across divisions.

Initiative 2.1: Create a stronger DCFS

GOAL #1: 80% OF OFFICES HAVE ON-SITE SUPPORT FROM THE DIVISION OF MANAGEMENT & FINANCE

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

GOAL #2: 50% OF OFFICES FOLLOW AN ESTABLISHED MODEL

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

GOAL #3: 75% OF SUPERVISORY STAFF MEET AN ESTABLISHED REPORTING RATIO

Baseline: This is a new initiative.



Commitment 3: Conduct Comprehensive Market Study for Competitive Compensation

To recruit and retain a skilled and dedicated workforce, DCFS will conduct a statewide market study to assess current compensation levels. The findings will inform strategies to offer competitive salaries, ensuring the department remains an employer of choice in the public sector.

Initiative 3.1: Reduce disparity in salary for DCFS

GOAL #1: 55% OF POSITIONS PAID WITHIN 94% OF THE STATE AVERAGE SALARY

Baseline: 43% of DCFS positions are compensated within 94% of the state's average salary.

GOAL #2: 10% INCREASE IN THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS PER POSITION

Baseline: In FY25, DCFS had an average of 36 applications per position posted.



Commitment 4: Leverage Modern Technology

DCFS will invest in compliant, modern, user-friendly technology platforms that improve case management, data sharing, and communication. These tools will reduce administrative burdens, increase efficiency, and empower staff to focus more on direct service to children and families.

Initiative 4.1: Enhance DCFS digital footprint

GOAL #1: 100% UPDATE TO DCFS INTERNET WEBSITE

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

GOAL #2: 100% UPDATE TO DCFS INTRANET SITE

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

GOAL #3: 20% IMPROVEMENT IN ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Baseline: In FY25, DCFS average online engagement rate was 2.66% across Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn.

GOAL #4: 10% INCREASE IN SOCIAL MEDIA REACH

Baseline: In FY25, DCFS page and profile reach was 2,192,785 unique views across Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Initiative 4.2: Enhance technology to recruit, onboard, train, and retain out-of-home placements including foster parents, fictive kin, and relative kin

GOAL #1: DECREASE THE TIME BETWEEN INQUIRY TO CERTIFICATION BY 32 DAYS

Baseline: The average time to onboard a new foster parent in FY24 was 151.8 days.

GOAL #2: 5% INCREASE IN NEW FOSTER PARENT INQUIRIES

Baseline: In FY25, DCFS received 3,497 inquiries.

GOAL #3: 10% DECREASE IN FOSTER PARENT ATTRITION

Baseline: In FY25, DCFS lost 479 foster parents.

GOAL #4: DECREASE TIME TO TRAIN A NEW FOSTER PARENT BY 10 DAYS

Baseline: Dependent on Initiative 5.1, Goal 4.



Commitment 5: Maintain Data Accuracy, Transparency, and Outcome Reporting

Reliable data is essential for accountability and informed decision-making. DCFS will implement rigorous data quality controls and develop transparent reporting systems that track progress towards established measurable outcomes.

Initiative 5.1: Enhance data collection and monitoring and use it to ensure children quickly and safely transition from crisis to permanency

GOAL #1: NO MORE THAN 25% OF CHILDREN IN CARE EXPERIENCE A PLACEMENT DISRUPTION IN A 365-DAY PERIOD

Baseline: Dependent on Initiative 5.1, Goal 4.

GOAL #2: COMPLETE RELATIVE/FICTIVE KIN CERTIFICATIONS FOR SUBSIDY WITHIN 90 CALENDAR DAYS

Baseline: Dependent on Initiative 5.1, Goal 4.

GOAL #3: COMPLETE AND DOCUMENT FAMILY FINDING ACTIVITY WITHIN 30 CALENDAR DAYS OF DCFS CUSTODY

Baseline: Dependent on Initiative 5.1, Goal 4.

GOAL #4: CREATE CLEAR DATA SOURCES AND QUERIES TO MEASURE AND MONITOR OUTCOMES

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

GOAL #5: 50% REDUCTION IN SIBLING SEPARATIONS IN FOSTER CARE

Baseline: Dependent on Initiative 5.1, Goal 4.

GOAL #6: INCREASE REUNIFICATION RATE TO 40%

Baseline: In FY25, the reunification rate was 28%.

Initiative 5.2: Meaningful outcome reporting to stakeholders

GOAL #1: 100% OF LOUISIANA PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM (LAPAS) KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS ON DASHBOARD

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

GOAL #2: 40% TRANSITION OF CHILD WELFARE DOCUMENTATION FROM PAPER TO A DIGITAL SOLUTION

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

GOAL #3: 80% TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS CASES ARE FILED WITHIN 90 CALENDAR DAYS FROM A COURT-ORDERED GOAL OF ADOPTION

Baseline: Dependent on Initiative 5.1, Goal 4.



Commitment 6: Use Historical Data to Inform Evidence-Based Policy

By analyzing historical trends and outcomes, DCFS will develop policies grounded in evidence and best practices. This data-driven approach will help the department anticipate challenges, allocate resources effectively, and implement interventions that have proven impact.

Initiative 6.1: Establish methodology to create and maintain sound rates for all care settings

GOAL #1: DEVELOP AND DOCUMENT A STANDARDIZED RATE-SETTING FRAMEWORK

Baseline: No unified methodology currently exists.

GOAL #2: IMPLEMENT NEW RATES FOR ALL CARE SETTINGS

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

Initiative 6.2: Increase adherence to practice and policy

GOAL #1: 15% REDUCTION IN RECIDIVISM RATE FOR REPEAT ALLEGATIONS OF MALTREATMENT

Baseline: Dependent on initiative 5.1, Goal 4.

GOAL #2: 80% IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCESS TO REFER CASES FROM CENTRALIZED INTAKE TO FAMILY SERVICES WHEN NOT ACCEPTED FOR INVESTIGATION

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

GOAL #3: 80% IMPLEMENTATION OF PROCESS FOR CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TEAM TO COMPLETE 20 CASE REVIEWS PER MONTH

Baseline: This is a new initiative.



Commitment 7: Enforce Timeliness Requirements and Strengthen Process Controls

DCFS will prioritize enforcing current policy requirements around timeliness and implement robust process controls to prevent future delays. This will standardize procedures, improve case tracking systems, and ensure timely follow-up on all reports and services.

Initiative 7.1: Ensure timeliness requirements are met by increasing controls and streamlining business operations

GOAL #1: 5% INCREASE CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT COLLECTIONS, IN ARREARS

Baseline: In FY25, Child Support Enforcement collected \$127,735,057 in child support arrears.

GOAL #2: REDUCE THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILD WELFARE INVESTIGATIONS THAT EXCEED THE REQUIRED TIMELINESS THRESHOLD TO 10%

Baseline: 52% of cases did not meet timeliness requirements.

GOAL #3: 80% RESOLUTION OF OPEN CHILD WELFARE INVESTIGATIONS THAT EXCEED TIMELINESS REQUIREMENTS AS OF JULY 1, 2025

Baseline: As of July 1, 2025, a total of 2,042 child welfare investigation cases were still open past the required timeframe.



Commitment 8: Enhance Accountability Through Audit Implementation

DCFS will rigorously implement recommendations from internal and external audits to strengthen oversight and accountability. This will establish clear expectations and timelines, assign responsibility, and implement corrective actions to maintain compliance and improve transparency.

Initiative 8.1: Implement audit recommendations

GOAL #1: IDENTIFY AND EXECUTE 10 AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITS ISSUED 2022–2025

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

GOAL #2: 80% COMPLIANCE WITH AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS ISSUED IN FY26

Baseline: This is a new initiative.

GOAL #3: 50% REDUCTION IN RECIDIVIST AUDIT FINDINGS

Baseline: Dependent on Initiative 5.1, Goal 4.



For more information, visit our website dcfs.louisiana.gov or contact us at LAHelpU.DCFS@la.gov.