



Child Protective Investigator and Child Protective Investigator Supervisor ANNUAL REPORT

Department of Children and Families

Office of Child & Family Well-Being

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Purpose

This report, pursuant to section 402.402(4), Florida Statutes, requires the Department of Children and Families (Department) to provide a status report to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives as to the educational qualifications, turnover, professional advancement, and working conditions of the Department's Child Protective Investigators (CPI), Senior Child Protective Investigators (Senior CPI), Child Protective Investigator Supervisors (CPIS), and other child protective investigative staff.

Special Note: Department of Children and Families and Sheriff Office Investigations

Prior to July 1, 2023, child protective investigations were conducted by the Department in 60 of Florida's 67 counties. Sheriff's Offices performed child protective investigations in the remaining seven counties (Broward, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Seminole, and Walton Counties) under grant agreements with the Department. As a result of the 2023 Legislative session, all child protective investigative functions transitioned fully back to the Department. The information within this report addresses child protective investigative positions for the Department post transition.

Educational Qualifications

Section 402.402(1), F.S., requires the Department to recruit and hire persons qualified by their education and experience to perform social work functions and provides guidance for preference to individuals having a social work degree with a second level preference given to individuals with a human service-related degree.

As of June 21, 2024, a People First data extract indicated a total of 1,852 employees were serving in either CPI, Senior CPI, CPI Supervisors (CPIS), or Field Support Consultant (FSC) roles. Of that number, 1,322 staff were identified as having a bachelor's degree; 180 were identified as having a master's degree; two were identified as having a doctorate degree; 47 were identified as educational data unavailable; and 301 were identified as high school graduates, having an associate degree, or some years of college. The total active child protective investigative staff currently holding a degree in social work is 99.

Recruitment Efforts

The Department has deployed several strategies to address recruitment challenges for CPI and CPI supervisor positions, which have effectively resulted in a reduction in the vacancy rate from 14.05% to 10.24% over the last three years.

Hiring Fairs

The Department continues its strategy of targeted recruitment efforts through utilization of hiring fairs. Streamlined processes used over the last year include expanding the number of hiring fairs conducted, the use of "on the spot" fairs whereby potential candidates can complete applications and required employment screenings onsite, subsequently enabling them to be interviewed and offered employment in a quicker, more streamlined manner.

Further, use of the Indeed virtual platform has allowed the Department to attract talent by reaching

candidates located within this database and targeting the advertisement of our hiring events to the appropriate populations. Since October 2023, the Department has hosted 19 virtual hiring events across the state with 45% of registered candidates attending. As of February 21, 2024, 35% of these attendees were recommended for interviews.

Continue the Mission

First Lady Casey DeSantis spearheaded the Department’s “Continue the Mission” initiative beginning in 2022. This is a collaborative effort involving the Department and Florida’s Department of Veteran’s Affairs to recruit veterans, military spouses, and former law enforcement officers to serve as child protective investigators. This initiative is designed to leverage the skills and experiences of these individuals to protect Florida’s most vulnerable children and support strong, resilient families. The program has seen significant success, resulting in numerous targeted hiring fairs with and 263 applicants being hired to work in these critical roles.

Increased Base Rate of Pay

Over the last several years, the Child Protective Investigations (CPI) Program has experienced many accomplishments in recruitment strategies, including addressing competitive workforce pay. In July 2022, the Department increased the base rate of pay for CPIs from \$39,600.08 (annually) to \$43,000.10 (annually), with a subsequent increase to \$50,000.08 (annually) in October 2023. Concurrently, the base rate of pay for Senior CPIs was also increased from \$41,500.16 (annually) to \$54,500.16 (annually). The CPI Supervisor base rate increased from \$49,200.06 to \$57,200.00. These increases to the base rate of pay were necessary to remain competitive in the workforce and have positively impacted recruitment efforts.

Position Title	Base Rate Prior to July 2022	Current Base Rate of Pay	% Increase
Child Protective Investigator (CPI)	\$39,600.08	\$50,000.08	26.26%
Senior CPI	\$41,500.16	\$54,500.16	31.33%
CPI Supervisor	\$49,200.06	\$57,200.00	16.26%

Turnover

The CPI role is a demanding position that requires critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The high-stress nature of the job often contributes to higher turnover rates.

Position	SFY 2022-2023			SFY 2023-2024		
	CPI	914	585	64.00%	1085.5	698
Senior CPI	193.5	28	14.47%	229	37	16.16%
FSC	85.5	14	16.37%	96	12	12.50%
Supervisor	231.5	26	11.23%	262	22	8.40%
Total	1424.5	653	45.84%	1672.5	769	45.98%

Vacancy Rates

Position Vacancy Rate	SFY 2022-2023	SFY 2023-2024	Difference
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CPI	13.66%	11.31%	- 2.35%
Senior CPI	42.11%	16.33%	- 25.78%
FSC	30.7%	14.63%	- 16.07
Supervisor	18.3%	14.71%	- 3.59%

Retention Efforts

Efforts to reduce turnover and improve workforce stability in CPI positions include a variety of strategies:

Regional Retention Efforts

Supervisory support is a critical component of frontline worker stability and retention. To allow supervisors and management staff to focus on direct work and case support with the CPI staff, the Department created and implemented Retention Specialist positions. Regionally based, retention specialists undertake a variety of activities to stabilize the workforce, including:

- The use of round tables between frontline staff and varying levels of leadership to solicit feedback, collect enhancement and improvement needs and identify suggestions for resolution.
- The implementation of “Lunch & Learns” to address educational topics relevant to staff whether related to specific job procedures/processes or staff well-being.
- The creation of “weekend units” that aim to reduce the burden of weekend on call shifts and allow for a better work/life balance.
- Incorporating the Ideal Team Player concept (Humble, Hungry, Smart) into the hiring and onboarding processes to allow for better candidate screening and to create an environment that celebrates these traits.
- Work on standardization of both the exit and stay interview processes to understand why staff remain in their roles and areas of opportunity that they may identify.

Career Ladder

The Department’s Career Ladder initiative provides employees with access to targeted training, professional development opportunities, and advancement across multiple career pathways, as well as monetary incentives for moving throughout the pathways. Some of the Career Ladder requirements include achievement of tenure, satisfactory performance evaluations, completion of additional trainings, a personal Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Training (SWOT) analysis, and a satisfactory quality review of case work at a threshold of at least 80% passage rate. Additionally, completion of some of the Ladder provides expertise in specific areas of child welfare, while supervisory training includes mentoring and coaching.

Enhanced Pre-Service Training

In April 2024, the Department launched its new pre-service program, the Academy for Child Protection and Family Resilience (the Academy) in Miami, Florida after a successful pilot in January 2024 in Jacksonville, Florida. The new program includes updated curriculum, virtual reality, simulation, applied critical reasoning skills, and assessment. The changes were made with feedback and partnership from multiple stakeholders and have added additional opportunities to practice competencies and receive feedback from supervisors

prior to attaining provisional certification. The program will continue to expand in FY 2024-2025.

Working Conditions

The Department is focused on supporting the growth and stability of its workforce, which is fundamental to the success of the state's child protection efforts. To this end, DCF established the Workforce Wellness Unit (WWU) as an initiative dedicated to enhancing the overall well-being of Department staff, with a specific focus on preventing secondary traumatic stress and burnout among CPI staff. The initiatives implemented by the Department are comprehensive and proactive, aiming not only to address the immediate needs of staff in crisis situations but also to promote ongoing wellness and resilience across the organization. By integrating peer support, structured wellness programs, and local advocacy, the WWU seeks to create a supportive environment that enhances the overall well-being and retention of Department staff. A breakdown of the key initiatives and ongoing offerings is below:

1. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team:
 - The CISM team is designed to respond to critical incidents that may affect staff members, utilizing a peer-driven crisis intervention system, with a goal of increasing resilience among staff following traumatic events.
2. Comprehensive Menu of Offerings:
 - The WWU provides a wide range of wellness initiatives that address various dimensions of wellness, including team dynamics, family well-being, and personal health.
 - These offerings encompass programs, resources, and support mechanisms aimed at promoting holistic wellness among staff members.
3. Facilitated Training on Trauma and Resilience:
 - Specialized programs are available throughout the state that specifically address trauma and resilience.
 - These programs are structured to provide education, support, and tools for coping with and recovering from traumatic experiences.