



OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

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Performance Audit

Follow-Up Report

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Management Audit of the Department of Children and Family Services' Search for Missing Children Audit Follow-Up

The Illinois Office of the Auditor General conducted a management audit of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (Department or DCFS) search for missing children pursuant to House Resolution Number 120. The audit was released in December 2014 and contained nine recommendations to the Department. As part of the compliance examination for the two years ended June 30, 2016, auditors followed up on the status of the recommendations. Recommendation 1 of 9 was determined to be fully implemented during the two years ended June 30, 2016. The remaining 8 recommendations were followed up on as part of the compliance examination for the two years ended June 30, 2018, June 30, 2020, and June 30, 2022, and remained partially implemented. As part of the compliance examination for the two years ended June 30, 2024, we followed up on the status of the remaining recommendations. The current status of the recommendations is shown in the table below. The eight remaining recommendations remain partially implemented.

STATUS OF PERFORMANCE AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

As of June 30, 2024

Rec. No.	Recommendation Description	Agency	Current Status		
			Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented
1	Total Number of Missing Wards	DCFS	X		
2	CFS 906 Form	DCFS		X	
3	Data Accuracy	DCFS		X	
4	CIRU Notification	DCFS		X	
5	Caseworker Notification	DCFS		X	
6	Report Missing Wards	DCFS		X	
7	Complete All Agency Forms	DCFS		X	
8	Supervisory Review	DCFS		X	
9	Training and Monitoring	DCFS		X	

Source: Summary of OAG follow-up.

Recommendation 2: CFS 906 Form

DCFS should prevent overpayments by ensuring that CFS 906 forms are completed, submitted, and entered in a timely manner.

Current Status: Partially Implemented

The auditors noted in 41 of 60 (68.3%) instances where a child went missing that were selected for testing, the CFS 906 form had not been filed within 24 hours of when the child had been reported missing. For testing purposes, the auditors considered the file to be in compliance with the 24-hour rule if the date of the CFS 906 form was the day following the date the child went missing.

Recommendation 3: Data Accuracy

DCFS should emphasize to all involved in the reporting and locating of missing children of the need to accurately enter information into case files and to correct discrepancies when identified.

Current Status: Partially Implemented

During the current examination, the auditors noted in 43 of 60 (71.7%) instances where a child went missing, the initial CFS 1014 form could not be provided by the Department, so the auditors could not compare the initial CFS 1014 forms to the notes in SACWIS to ensure their accuracy.

In addition, during fieldwork, the auditors also tested whether Department supervisors were conducting reviews of the initial CFS 1014 form. Department Procedure 329, Locating and Returning Missing, Runaway, and Abducted Children, provides the documentation of supervisor reviews through the submission of the CFS 1014 form. As a result of the Department being unable to provide the 43 initial CFS 1014 forms noted above, the auditors also could not test documentation of supervisor reviews.

Recommendation 4: CIRU Notification

DCFS should improve controls to ensure that the CIRU is immediately informed when a DCFS caseworker is notified that a ward has gone missing, as per Procedure 329.

Current Status: Partially Implemented

Department Procedure 329 requires caseworkers to notify the CIRU within one hour of when they receive notification that a child is missing. The date when the CIRU is notified is documented in the initial CFS 1014 form; however, this form does not have a field to indicate the time.

During the current examination, the auditors noted in 8 of 60 (13.3%) instances where a child went missing, the CIRU had not been notified within an hour of the child being reported missing. For testing purposes, if the auditors were unable to determine the time the CIRU was notified from the notes in SACWIS, they considered the file to be compliant if CIRU was notified the same day as the child was reported missing.

Further, the auditors noted in 39 of 60 (65.0%) instances where a child went missing, the initial CFS 1014 form or other documentation that notes the notification date to CIRU could not be provided by the Department, thus the auditors could not confirm CIRU was notified timely, or at all.

Recommendation 5: Caseworker Notification

DCFS should establish (1) a field in SACWIS to require caseworkers to enter the date and time when they first learned about a missing ward; (2) procedures for the caseworker to acknowledge notification of the missing ward; and (3) a process to ensure that searches are conducted for missing wards in a timely manner, including after business hours or on weekends.

Current Status: Partially Implemented

During the current examination, the auditors noted the Department did include a field in SACWIS for the date and time caseworkers received notification of a missing child. However, the auditors noted in 6 of 60 (10.0%) instances where a child went missing, the initial CFS 1014 form or other documentation that notes the notification date to the caseworker could not be provided by the Department, thus the auditors could not confirm the recording of the date and time the caseworkers received notification of a missing child.

Further, Department Procedure 329 requires caseworkers to notify law enforcement within three hours of learning that a child is missing and provide them with a photograph of the child. The auditors noted in 4 of 60 (6.7%) instances where a child went missing, law enforcement was not notified within three hours of when the child had been reported missing, and thus a photograph of the child was not submitted to law enforcement within three hours of when the child had been reported missing. For testing purposes, the auditors considered the file to be compliant if the CFS 1014 form's date was the same day when the child was reported missing, unless otherwise documented in the notes.

Finally, the auditors noted in 34 of 60 (56.7%) instances where a child went missing, the initial CFS 1014 form or other documentation that notes the notification date to law enforcement could not be provided by the Department, thus the auditors could not confirm if law enforcement was notified timely, or at all.

Recommendation 6: Report Missing Wards

DCFS should report the missing wards to required parties within the time established in its procedures, including to NCMEC, juvenile courts, and parents/guardians and require supervisors to sign-off on the CFS 1014 to document their review.

Current Status: Partially Implemented

Department Procedure 329 requires the notification of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) within three hours of when the child was reported missing.

During the current examination, the auditors noted in 9 of 60 (15.0%) instances where a child went missing, the NCMEC was not notified within 3 hours of when the child was reported missing.

Procedure 329 also states that the parents, guardian or legal custodian, juvenile court of jurisdiction, and/or guardian ad litem should be notified within three hours of when the child was reported missing. The auditors noted in 9 of 60 (15%) instances where a child went missing, the parents, guardian or legal custodian, juvenile court, and/or guardian ad litem were not notified within three hours of when the child was reported missing. For testing purposes, the auditors considered the file to be compliant if the date notified was the same day as the child was reported missing.

Further, the auditors noted in 30 of 60 (50.0%) instances where a child went missing, the initial CFS 1014 form or other documentation that notes the notification date to NCMEC could not be provided by the Department, thus the auditors could not confirm whether NCMEC was notified timely, or at all.

Finally, the auditors noted in 40 of 60 (66.7%) instances where a child went missing, the initial CFS 1014 form or other documentation that notes the notifications could not be provided by the Department, thus the auditors could not confirm whether the parents, guardian or legal custodian, juvenile court, and/or guardian ad litem were notified timely, or at all.

Recommendation 7: Complete All Agency Forms

DCFS should ensure that all its internal forms are completed in a timely manner as specified in DCFS procedures, including the CFS 1014 Missing Children Recovery Report. In addition, DCFS should debrief missing wards when they are found, and document the interview.

Current Status: Partially Implemented

Department Procedure 329 requires the caseworker or supervisor to complete a Missing Child De-Briefing form (CFS 680-A form) and a CFS 1014 - Child Recovery form, within two business days from the date the child returned.

During the current examination, the auditors noted in 10 of 60 (16.7%) cases tested, the CFS 680-A form had not been completed in a timely manner. Specifically, the auditors noted the form was completed by the caseworker or supervisor 1 to 222 days after the two-business-day requirement.

In addition, the auditors noted in 42 of 60 (70%) instances where a child went missing, the CFS 680-A form could not be provided by the Department, thus, the auditors could not confirm whether the form was completed timely, or at all.

Further, the auditors noted in 9 of 60 (15%) cases tested, the CFS 1014 - Child Recovery form had not been completed in a timely manner. Specifically, the auditors noted the form was completed by the caseworker or supervisor 1 to 222 days after the two-business-day requirement.

Lastly, the auditors noted in 40 of 60 (66.7%) instances where a child went missing, the CFS 1014 - Child Recovery form could not be provided by the Department, thus the auditors could not confirm whether the caseworker or supervisor had completed the CFS 1014 - Child Recovery form timely, or at all.

Recommendation 8: Supervisory Review

DCFS should comply with its written procedures which require that supervisory meetings with caseworkers be documented when searching for missing wards. Supervisors should review the documents completed by caseworkers and sign off to demonstrate their review.

Current Status: Partially Implemented

Department Procedure 329 requires the supervisor to document their review via the submission of the initial CFS 1014 form and via a note in their supervisor file on a weekly or daily basis.

During the current examination, the auditors noted in 5 of 60 (8.3%) instances where a child went missing, the supervisor did not perform a review on a weekly or daily basis, as required. In addition, the auditors noted in 43 of 60 (71.7%) instances where a child went missing, the Department could not provide evidence of the supervisor's note in their file.

Recommendation 9: Training and Monitoring

Given the lack of documentation and noncompliance found in this audit, DCFS should:

- *Provide training to its caseworkers and supervisors on missing children;*
- *Review its search procedures for missing children for possible modifications; and*
- *Give the CIRU (or another unit within DCFS) the responsibility to monitor actions taken by caseworkers and supervisors to report and locate missing children, and to report to management the degree to which the Department's policies and procedures are being followed.*

Current Status: Partially Implemented

Department Procedure 329 was last revised in FY18 in response to the original recommendation and training has since been conducted to make caseworkers and supervisors aware of the revised requirements. As stated in the revised procedure, it is the CIRU responsibility for monitoring caseworkers' and supervisors' compliance with Procedure 329.

During the current examination, the auditors noted the Department could not provide documentation of any reports from caseworkers or supervisors to Department management, or any other monitoring mechanisms, ensuring the CIRU staff were in compliance with Procedure 329.

Follow-up was conducted as part of the Fiscal Year 2023 and 2024 State compliance examination by our special assistant auditors, Roth & Co. This was the fifth time follow-up has been done on the recommendations from the December 2014 performance audit.