

Arizona Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment

Annual Report



2022



The Governor's Office
of Youth, Faith
and Family



Council on Child
Safety and
Family Empowerment

goyff.AZ.gov/csfe



DOUGLAS A. DUCEY
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

MARIA CRISTINA FUENTES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

June 30, 2022

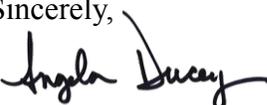
Governor Doug A. Ducey
State Capitol Executive Tower
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor,

It has been my pleasure to serve as chair of the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment. I would like to acknowledge the work of this Council, its members, task forces and workgroups over the past year. Their expertise and passion to continue serving and supporting vulnerable communities across Arizona has made this work possible.

Over the past year, the Council received presentations highlighting efforts taking place across the state to ensure we are continuing to improve how we support and serve Arizona's most vulnerable families. The Council continues to focus its efforts on amplifying available resources and raising awareness about organizations dedicated to supporting our most vulnerable children and families. The Council will continue to promote strategies that prevent and mitigate ACEs in our communities. Working together, we can ensure every child in Arizona is safe and thriving.

It is my hope that our continued efforts and collaborative partnerships concerning child well-being will improve and better serve our most vulnerable youth and families.

Sincerely,


Angela Ducey, Chair
Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment

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COUNCIL PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

Governor Doug Ducey established the Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment on July 13, 2015 (2015-08). On February 11, 2020, Governor Ducey signed Executive Order 2020-05, which supersedes 2015-08, and included the Children’s Justice (CJ) State Task Force, as part of the Council.

The Council, administered by the Governor’s Office of Youth, Faith and Family (GOYFF), was established on the premise that strong families and thriving children are vital to the health and success of our communities and our economy. To facilitate this vision, the Council works to align, leverage and coordinate faith-based and community resources to solve challenges faced by our state’s vulnerable children and families and improve child well-being.

Government plays an important role in providing supportive benefits, goods, and services, but that role is limited. This is why the Council works with private and public partners to support and implement improvements in how we serve our communities. Through its work, the Council has broadened the network of support and services for Arizona’s most vulnerable children and families.

In addition to holding five Council meetings a year, Council members have the opportunity to serve on two workgroups and the CJ Task Force. The groups meet regularly to address community needs and systemic challenges with the purpose of identifying best practices and providing evidence-based solutions.

CHILDREN’S JUSTICE TASK FORCE

The Children’s Justice State Task Force (CJ Task Force) is responsible for making training and policy recommendations in each of the three categories in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Section 107(e)(1). To this end, the CJ Task Force is responsible for developing a three-year plan that addresses training and policy recommendations for the state. The CJ Task Force is also required to have representation from a multitude of sectors, including law enforcement, the judicial system, child advocates, and child protection services.

PREVENTION WORKGROUP

The Prevention workgroup works to support, leverage and promote ongoing bodies of work throughout the state that improve child well-being; prevent child abuse and neglect; support and empower families; and ensure access to services and supports for those who need them.

OUTREACH WORKGROUP

The Outreach workgroup connects with Arizona’s community and faith-based partners to improve and promote services and expand access to services for children and families in need.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

In accordance with Executive Order 2020-05, the Council is composed of individuals appointed by the Governor who serve at his pleasure without compensation. The following members currently serve on CSFE:

Angela Ducey, Chair
First Lady of Arizona

Berisha Black
Arizona Foster Care Initiatives

Kathryn Blades Ptak
Foster/Adoptive Parent

Kate Brophy McGee
Community Leader

Terry M. Crist
City of Grace

Obed Escobar
Church Alliance

Michael Faust
Arizona Department of Child Safety

Maria Cristina Fuentes
Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family

Janet L. Garcia
Casey Family Programs

Dr. Lorrie Henderson
Jewish Family & Children's Service

Claire Louge
Prevent Child Abuse Arizona

Zora Manjencich
Attorney General's Office

Colleen McNally
Presiding Juvenile Court Judge, Retired

James Molina
Step Up Arizona

Kathryn A. Pidgeon, Co-Chair
Adoption Attorney

Paul S. Mulligan
Catholic Charities

Darlene Newsom
Community Volunteer

Katie O'Dell
Arizona 1.27

Leslie Y. Reprogle
Agape Adoption Agency

Brad Snyder
New Amsterdam Consulting

Warren H. Stewart
First Institutional Baptist Church

Jeff Taylor
Salvation Army Advisory Board

Torrie Taj
Child Crisis Arizona

Mark Upton
Christian Family Care

Ginger Ward
Southwest Human Development

Richard Yarbough
Pilgrim Rest Foundation

Ryan Young
Youth Member

COUNCIL GOALS, 2021/22

The Council is a public-private partnership created to support Arizona's children and families. The Council was created to align, leverage, and coordinate public/private partners, faith-based and community resources to address challenges faced by vulnerable children and families.

The Council continues to focus its efforts on reducing, preventing, and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), growing trauma-informed services and improving child well-being. Council meetings offer an opportunity to learn from issue-area experts on topics related to ACEs, trauma-informed care, and child well-being. This information has guided the Council's efforts to ensure that ACEs prevention and trauma-informed care become the standard for supporting children and families across Arizona - accomplishing the goal of becoming a trauma-informed state.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES, 2021/22

Be Connected Faith Based Network

June 2021

The Be Connected Faith Based Network was launched in June 2021 in support of Arizona's 500,000+ service members, veterans and their families. Offering a statewide, faith-based network for supporting Arizonans is a critical part of the ecosystem of support that Arizona continues to build. The Network, launched in partnership with the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, the Arizona Department of Veterans Services, and the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith & Family, fosters an environment where Arizona's faith communities rally in support of Arizona's military families.

Grand Canyon University Fostering Future Scholars Event

February 2022

In February 2022, the Governor's Office, the Arizona Department of Child Safety, and Grand Canyon University (GCU) announced the Fostering Futures Scholarship, a college pathway program that covers 100% of the costs for tuition, fees, and year-round room and board for qualified Arizona foster children by combining GCU's generous scholarships with state and federal funding resources.

Nationwide, fewer than 10% of youth in foster care graduate with a four-year degree. In addition to the cost of higher education, housing stability is among the biggest challenges for youth aging out of foster care. The Fostering Futures Scholarship Program provides recipients with a year-round home as well as the opportunity to begin their adult life without any student debt.

The program will also incorporate additional support elements such as free tutoring, access to work study jobs, mentoring, life skills programming designed to acclimate foster students into college life, and post-graduation planning assistance to help envision their path ahead. The first scholarships will be awarded for the 2022-23 academic year.

Grand Canyon University Foster Care Summit

May 2022

Grand Canyon University and the Arizona Department of Child Safety hosted a Foster Care Summit in May 2022 to discuss and identify opportunities to support Arizona youth, kinship and foster families. During the Summit, Arizona Qualified Foster Care Charitable Organizations,

non-profits, and faith-based organizations shared information and ideas in the areas of kinship care, community foster family recruitment and retention, and youth transitioning from foster care.

Discussion points included:

- Increasing the number of youth placed with kinship caregivers. As of May 2022, 57% of DCS youth are living with kin. The goal is to increase this number and place 65-70% of youth in kinship care.
- Recruiting additional foster parents. The goal is to have 25-30% of youth residing in community foster care systems. These foster care systems include traditional, therapeutic, and child development foster care.
- Supporting older youth, and children who are in that very delicate transition into adulthood. The goal is to have 80% of youth ages 18-20 years old in independent living or a family-like setting.

Conversations were focused on needs within the child welfare system, how partners can support families, identifying next steps, brainstorming, and challenging each other to solve problems in a meaningful way.

Maricopa County's Virtual Family Reunification Day Celebration

June 2022

Family Reunification Day honors birth parents who have reunited with their children. Maricopa County's 2022 Virtual Family Reunification Day Celebration created an opportunity for families to share their success stories, and inspire hope for other families who are actively involved in dependency matters with the juvenile court.

GOYFF Executive Director Maria Cristina Fuentes served as the event emcee and was joined by First Lady Angela Ducey and key partners to honor parents who have overcome significant challenges to successfully reunify with their children. This year, 51 local families were recognized. Families were nominated for recognition by either child welfare staff, attorneys, counselors, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), or parent allies. Thanks to perseverance and partnership, these families were successful in resolving their issues and regained custody of their children.

COUNCIL MEETING PRESENTATIONS

During the past year, the Council heard presentations from issue-area experts on topics related to child well-being, with an emphasis on service providers, advocates and others who share the Council goals. The Council continued to learn and implement strategies that support safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. All presentation materials can be found [here](#). The following are summaries of presentations heard throughout the year.

Be Connected

Thomas Winkel, Director of the Arizona Coalition for Military Families

September 9, 2021

The [Arizona Coalition for Military Families \(ACMF\)](#) was established in 2009 as a public/private partnership and collective impact initiative that engages helpers, organizations and communities in the creation of a coordinated ecosystem of support for military families. Through ACMF, the Be Connected Program was launched in 2017. The program serves as a statewide upstream

prevention program to support Arizona's 500,000+ service members, veterans, and their families across all social determinants of health. Be Connected's public health approach is predicated on the understanding that the same approach does not work for every service member, veteran, and family member. The program is designed to reduce deaths by suicide in Arizona's population of service members and veterans, build on existing capacity and strengths within service systems, and develop a sustainability plan that builds program components into systems and funding.

Black Mothers Forum: MicroSchools

Janelle Wood, President and Founder of Black Mothers Forum

September 9, 2021

[Black Mothers Forum](#) was founded in August 2016 with a mission to promote healthy mindsets and relationships to end the school-to-prison pipeline. Microschools came as a result of three main challenges: disproportionate disciplinary practices; the discounting of Black parents' and children's concerns regarding over and excessive discipline for misbehavior/minor infractions; and the inability of districts/schools to create safe and supportive learning environments for Black children. The Forum launched its first microschool in January 2021, serving 42 students. The curriculum guides were based on those used by national microschools and public charter schools in their local network. These microschools utilize Phoenix-area churches, nonprofits and shared school buildings as spaces to teach. Students are grouped in mixed-grade classes, learning at their own pace with a 10:2 student to teacher ratio. Currently, Black Mothers Forum operates 11 microschools in 4 different locations, with children enrolled in grades kindergarten through eighth grade.

Legislative Update

Christina Corieri, Senior Policy Advisor to Governor Ducey

September 9, 2021

During the 2021 legislative session Governor Ducey signed into law three bills that directly impact child safety.

- [Senate Bill 1660](#), also known as the Crimes Against Children Omnibus bill, takes additional steps to protect children in Arizona. The bill expands the definition of a position of trust to include all employees of the school, the minor's employer, and anyone who is related by blood or marriage to the child by the third degree. S.B. 1660 requires that children over the age of eight in the custody of the Arizona Department of Child Safety receive age-appropriate information on abuse and exploitation, and how to report it. Additionally, S.B. 1660 directs the Arizona State Board of Education to establish best practices for social media and cell phone usage between students and school employees.
- [House Bill 2410](#) impacts the Baby Safe Haven program, which allows a parent to deliver a newborn infant into the program if they feel that they cannot properly care for or do not want to care for the newborn infant. H.B. 2140 increases the age for safe-haven placement of unharmed newborn infants from 72 hours old or younger to 30 days old or younger.
- [Senate Bill 1391](#) protects a child's right to be represented by legal counsel in all dependency cases.
- Additional funding has been provided to the states through different federal relief bills, including the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). In the fall of 2021, unlicensed kinship care families received a one-time \$1,800 stipend per child. Over 5,000 children and more than 3,000 families were supported through this one-time relief stipend, totaling over \$9 million.

Positive Parenting Program in Prison

**Karen Hellman, Assistant Director of the Arizona Department of Correction,
Rehabilitation & Reentry**

September 9, 2021

In the United States, there are over 5.7 million children that have had a parent incarcerated at some point during their childhood. Those children have three times more ACEs than children whose parents were never incarcerated. Nearly 2.7 million children currently have a parent in jail or in prison. Through collaboration with the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family, grant funding was made available to provide [Positive Parenting Program](#) (Triple P) training to 12 inmates within the [Arizona Department of Correction, Rehabilitation and Reentry](#) and three staff members. These individuals offer training to other inmates as inmates that are Triple P Facilitator trained can also market those skills when they leave prison and re-enter society.

Triple P is a parenting and family support system designed to prevent, as well as treat, behavioral and emotional problems in children and teenagers to prevent problems in the family, school and community before they arise and to create family environments that encourage children to realize their potential. Triple P draws on social learning, cognitive-behavioral and developmental theory, as well as research into risk factors associated with the development of social and behavioral problems in children, to equip parents with the skills and confidence they need to be self-sufficient and to be able to manage family issues without ongoing support. As of September 2021, seven cohorts with 63 participants have enrolled to be trained in Triple P, with priority placement given to pregnant inmates.

Cybersecurity

Tim Roemer, Director of the Arizona Department of Homeland Security

January 13, 2022

The [Arizona Department of Homeland Security](#)'s Cyber Command Center, housed within the [Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center \(ACTIC\)](#), provides a facility to fight back against modern threats to the state with a digital component, serving as a lasting legacy to support the State of Arizona.

From a cyber security perspective, it has become easier for criminals to go online to find the information they seek and illegally access online accounts. Often, criminals use social engineering which entails researching targets online and using that research to hack accounts, using common phrases that are shared through social networking. Some of the best ways to prevent online crime include: exercising caution when engaging with individuals online; changing passwords regularly; using different passwords for different accounts; exercising caution when posting online; and providing law enforcement with the tools they need to pursue these criminals.

R.E.A.L. Friends Don't Campaign

Claire Sechler Merkel, Senior Director of Arizona Programs for the McCain Institute for International Leadership at Arizona State University

January 13, 2022

Over the course of the COVID-19 Pandemic, there was a 63% increase in the use of digital tools, such as Chromebooks and tablets, but no increase in digital training to keep youth safe online. In response to the need for digital training, the [R.E.A.L. Friends Don't Campaign](#) was established by the [McCain Institute for International Leadership](#) at Arizona State University. The campaign increases awareness while educating parents and caregivers about online safety. The program has evolved to empower parents to protect their children from harmful content, grooming or online

exploitation and inform kids about what to do if they find themselves needing help. Since its launch in December 2020, the campaign has reached over two million internet users around the world since, and it continues to provide caregivers and kids with comprehensive resources and actionable support.

Updates: 2022 State of the State Address

Christina Corieri, Senior Policy Advisor to Governor Ducey

January 13, 2022

During his 2022 State of the State address, Governor Doug Ducey issued a call to increase funding for grandparents and other close relatives who raise kids in foster care, helping families stay together and ensuring all caregivers have the support they need. Arizona has made notable strides in this area thanks to the dedicated support of the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) along with investments from the state.

Kinship families are extended family members, such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, who become caregivers for a child when a child enters into DCS care due to abuse or neglect. These kinship homes are often familiar and a loving place for children and can be less traumatic for a child than being placed in an unfamiliar location.

In 2020, kinship represented 45 percent of placements for children in the Arizona Department of Child Safety system. Kinship families tend to be led by a grandparent who may no longer be able to work and is on a fixed income. The lack of financial support can be a barrier to more kin agreeing to take in children. This can result in a child going into foster care, large sibling groups being broken up and more placements in congregate care.

However, kinship and foster care are not compensated equally. Foster parents receive an average monthly stipend of approximately \$700 to support bringing in a child to their families, while kinship families receive \$75 a month. Many of these kinship families are headed by grandparents on a fixed income and taking on these children can cause great financial strain.

To close this gap and help these family members who have stepped up to the plate, Governor Ducey has prioritized raising compensation for kinship families who have devoted their time to help these vulnerable children. Under this plan, kinship families will be able to receive the same level of financial support as Arizona foster care families receive.

Further removing barriers and getting government out of the way, DCS would expedite licensing for kinship families to become a licensed foster family. With this streamlined approach, kinship families would be eligible for the full amount paid to foster parents. The expedited licensing process would waive certain foster family requirements not related to safety, such as allowing a den to be used as a bedroom or allowing an additional child to share a room.

Under House Bill 2274, kinship families will be eligible to receive the same level of financial support as Arizona foster care families. Additionally, House Bill 2084 will create a swifter pathway to licensing, waiving the requirement of a Level 1 Fingerprint Clearance card for homes that are solely licensed to serve kinship family members. This will enable kinship care providers the ability to access the same support as any other foster family much more swiftly. If H.B. 2274 passes, the \$300 increase to kinship licensing will go into effect on July 1, 2022, with the Governor's Budget reflecting this commitment as a \$25 million ongoing investment.

The Youth Experiences Survey

Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Associate Professor, Arizona State University

January 13, 2022

The [Youth Experiences Survey \(YES\)](#) is a study of the experiences of homeless young adults in Arizona that has been conducted by the ASU Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research for the past eight years. The YES survey focuses on how the life experiences of Arizona's homeless young adults (ages 18-25) increases their risk of experiencing human trafficking and helps determine gaps in service needs for this particularly vulnerable population and explores the prevalence of sex and labor exploitation as a result of these vulnerabilities. The findings from the YES study have consistently provided insight into the challenges and needs of Arizona's homeless young adults to better target needed services as well as the first of its kind knowledge of the scope of the sex and labor exploitation of this population in Arizona.

The findings from the 2021 YES study shed light on the ongoing needs for homeless young adults in the state of Arizona, including substance abuse programming and mental health support, particularly to address maladaptive coping and the significant effects of trauma. With regard to sex trafficking and labor exploitation, social serving agencies must be equipped to screen for the presence of these forms of exploitation and must strengthen their organizational programming to address this occurrence within this population. Efforts such as street outreach, mobile resource units, and drop-in centers can serve as touchpoints for prevention and intervention. Additional funding opportunities from local and state governments should be made available to specifically target service provision for this population. Perhaps even more importantly, these findings demonstrate the need for prevention and early intervention efforts for school-age children at risk for homelessness. The findings indicate that homeless young adults were experiencing not only homelessness prior to adulthood, but also a significant number of other negative life experiences and traumas that may have contributed to their homelessness.

Find the full report [here](#).

Youth Probation Screening Tool

Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Associate Professor, Arizona State University

January 13, 2022

The Maricopa County Juvenile Court System began using a screening tool to identify trafficked youth in 2017. Through the screening tool, the courts were able to confirm 83 sex trafficking cases and match them with STRENGTH Court data. It has been determined that six specific questions have the highest likelihood of identifying a sex trafficking victim. Based on this data, a new screening tool that reduced the number of questions from 17 to nine, was developed by the [Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research at Arizona State University](#). This Youth Probation Screening Tool is now being used by 12 of 15 Arizona counties in an effort to identify sex trafficking victims and provide appropriate supports.

ACEs Consortium and Resiliency Council

Angie Burleson, Executive Director of the ACEs Consortium and Resiliency Council

March 10, 2022

Founded in 2007, the [Arizona ACEs Consortium](#) brings together a diverse group of professionals and agencies to create a strong and productive Arizona by increasing awareness about the causes, effects, and opportunities to decrease adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The Consortium promotes ideas, policies, and practices that reduce and prevent childhood adversity and build resilience in individuals, families, and communities. The Consortium's work is done through

committees and workgroups, focusing on the needs of the community and the best ways to support efforts to mitigate the impact of ACEs through statewide events.

Current Consortium endeavors include:

- Partnering with Arizona Health Improvement Plan, Pandemic Recovery and Resilience to build the statewide ACEs awareness plan;
- Bringing together stakeholders from across the state to identify gaps and how to best provide support;
- The Resilience Coordinating Council, which was launched in response to Vitalyst's Trauma-Sensitive Schools Report in 2020. The report provided information on trauma-informed practices taking place in schools, the incoming knowledge level of staff, and identification of gaps in knowledge; and
- Conducting a Maricopa Countywide ACEs Training program focusing on schools, community organizations and youth through a grant from the Maricopa County Health Department.

Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation

Kris Jacober, Executive Director of Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation

March 10, 2022

Since 1984, the [Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation \(AFFCF\)](#) has worked to improve the lives of children in foster care across Arizona and enhance their self-esteem by funding social, athletic and educational activities and items that provide them with quality experiences. In 2021, AFFCF granted more than \$1,600,000 in awards for kids in foster care to participate in every day, fun activities that give them the childhood they deserve. AFFCF has provided support for a variety of activities, including: summer camps, supplemental clothing outside of the DCS clothing stipend and funding a drivers education classes for foster kids.

In 2014, AFFCF's Keys To Success program was launched to support youth aging out of foster care. AFFCF believes that youth should continue to receive support for education efforts through post-secondary scholarships. Currently, 70 AFFCF scholars attend community colleges and universities. It is estimated that in 2022, AFFCF will enroll 300 youth in Maricopa County with career development, education support, and assistance in finding a job. In total, 92% of youth in the Keys to Success program are employed and 96% of those old enough to attend college are enrolled in college, vocational schools or post-secondary education. AFFCF's Penson Fund was introduced in 2018 to provide funding for youth pursuing their post-secondary education who experience an emergency situation such as emergency rental assistance, car repairs or technology needs.

ASU Preparatory Academy at Pilgrims Rest

Heidi Alexander, principal of ASU Preparatory Academy Pilgrim Rest

March 10, 2022

[ASU Preparatory Academy at Pilgrim Rest](#) is a Pre-K-5 college preparatory school focusing on science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. The campus is scheduled to open in the fall of 2022 at Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church in the heart of Phoenix. Students will be encouraged to embrace a growth learning mindset and sense of responsibility to others through peer leadership and academic mentoring opportunities.

Traditionally, individualized learning plans are reserved for students with exceptional abilities and for students in special education. The ASU Preparatory Academy model provides every child with the same level of intentional individual learning plans. Families, teachers and the

children are included in the creation of these plans and the children monitor their plan goals. A peer leadership and mentoring program has been added to the school, encouraging older students to mentor younger students and provide academic support. A large focus in student learning plans includes both musical and visual arts, with every child taking part in a musical component, receiving their own instrument and learning art history, art techniques and highlighting artists of color. Other key elements of the program include wrap-around student services, culturally responsive instruction, Head Start programming, and community-centered after-school partnerships.

Hushabye Nursery

Tara Sundem, Executive Director of Hushabye Nursery

March 10, 2022

[Hushabye Nursery](#) provides a therapeutic and inviting environment where short-term medical care is provided to infants suffering from Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) and their families. Hushabye Nursery offers non-judgmental support, education and counseling to families in a cost-effective manner. Through a deeper understanding of ACEs, Hushabye's care model transitioned from 'save the babies' to 'save the families.' Hushabye serves parents that are struggling with substances and dealing with an unplanned pregnancy prenatally, striving to de-stigmatize substance use, meet families where they are, and provide resources with the help of community partners. This care model treats babies in quiet, dark, calm environments with private nurseries where parents can stay with their babies alongside staff who understand opioid use disorder and can provide medicated assisted treatment.

Case managers, as well as peer support specialists, are also located on-site and trained to support families working with DCS. The average length of stay for NAS infants at Hushabye is seven days while the average stay in the NICU is 22 days. AHCCCS is the insurance provider for 95% of Hushabye families. Hushabye's cost is \$1,000 a night compared to \$7,000 at a NICU, with an average stay at a NICU costing between \$40,000 to \$60,000.

The [Hushabye Opioid Pregnancy Preparation and Empowerment Program \(HOPPE\)](#) engages pregnant women struggling with Opiate Use Disorder and their families. HOPPE partners with parents prenatally, and connects them with services and support. Participants receive education in infant safe sleep, car seat safety, Triple P, birthing classes and musicology. While completing this program, parents document their successes by adding verification of completion to a binder that they can then share with careworkers, court officials as well as keep for themselves as a source of pride for all they have accomplished.

STATE AGENCY UPDATES

Department of Economic Security Child Care Access to Quality Childcare

Lela Wendell, Program Administrator from the Arizona Department of Economic Security

January 13, 2022

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the [Department of Economic Security \(DES\)](#) received approximately \$200 million through the [Child Care and Development Fund Grant](#) to support access to quality childcare. In March 2020, an additional \$88 million was allocated to Arizona through the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) to help maintain and support Arizona's childcare network. At that time, DES worked closely with the Governor's Office to implement the Arizona Enrichment Centers Program. In December 2020,

Arizona received an additional \$248 million in CARES Act funding. The state received an additional \$968.6 million through the [American Rescue Plan Act](#) (ARPA) in March 2021.

Following the COVID-19 Pandemic, DES has continued to support Arizona’s early childhood education and childcare network, implementing 20 initiatives across four priority areas. These priority areas include:

- Expanding access to care by continuing the suspension of the childcare subsidy waitlist and increasing the childcare provider reimbursement rate;
- Investing in quality systems that would, over the course of the next three years, add 800 childcare providers to the Quality First system as part of a partnership with First Things First, funding early childhood mental health consultations and support;
- Stabilizing Arizona’s child care network by operating the Child Care Stabilization Grant Program; and
- Accelerating educational support and early childhood literacy by partnering with the Arizona Department of Education and Read On Arizona to accelerate early childhood literacy.

Arizona Department of Child Safety

Director Michael Faust

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) works to engage Arizona children and families to ensure safety, strengthen families, and achieve permanency by creating family environments free from abuse and neglect for children to thrive. Director Michael Faust continues to provide ongoing updates on the activities of DCS at each Council meeting. These updates include an overview of current DCS data, staffing levels and agency priorities.

DCS continues to work to find permanency for children and families and identify community-based support services to walk alongside youth that are aging out of foster care. For more information on the DCS agency updates, please see the meeting minutes [here](#).

Governor’s Office of Youth, Faith and Family

Director Maria Cristina Fuentes

The Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family (GOYFF) is a cabinet level agency that administers state and federal grant programs and engages stakeholders across all sectors throughout the state to improve services and service delivery to citizens. GOYFF continues to focus on prevention and trauma-informed care across its focus areas, which include: child well-being, human trafficking, juvenile justice delinquency prevention, domestic and sexual violence, aging, and substance abuse prevention.

For more information on all GOYFF grant programs [click here](#).

COUNCIL SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

Throughout the year, the Council recognizes extraordinary contributions made by individuals, families, organizations and congregations that work to provide safety and well-being for Arizona’s most vulnerable populations. This report highlights the nominees who were selected and celebrated during 2021/2022. The Council would also like to acknowledge and extend its gratitude for every person, family, and organization that fights for the future of Arizona’s children and families.



Rachel Mitchell

Rachel Mitchell has supported the prosecution of sex crimes and crimes against children for the majority of her 28-year career as a prosecutor, including cases involving child molestation, sexual assault, computer-related crimes against children, child physical abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse. She also instructs prosecutors and other professionals nationally and across Arizona in these areas. Ms. Mitchell works on legislation for her office and serves on various committees and task forces, including serving as Chair for the Arizona Children's Justice Task Force. In 2019, she was appointed to serve as Co-Chair of the Justice for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse Task Force, where she played an integral role in examining a broad range of concerns and opportunities to enhance the protection of victims of child sexual abuse and sex

trafficking.

Ms. Mitchell now serves as the Interim Maricopa County Attorney.

Hope Kopp

Hope Kopp has been a single foster parent for 14 years. In that time, she has fostered approximately 27 children, some for a day and others for years. She has also adopted four children from foster care, bringing them home from the hospital at birth. With each child that comes into her home, she focuses on giving the children in her care the most love and support that she can for the amount of time that she has them with her. In addition to Ms. Kopp's personal commitment to children in need, her daughter has also become a foster parent and recently received her third placement. Ms. Kopp's passion for ensuring the children entrusted to her care are raised in safe, stable and nurturing homes continues to serve as an incredible example of the legacy and impact one person can have in the lives of our most vulnerable.





CarePortal

[CarePortal](#) is designed to connect families in crisis with local churches willing to lend a hand. The program equips caseworkers at the Arizona Department of Child Safety(DCS) with an online communications network through which to notify nearby churches of a specific child or family in need of help, allowing churches to then fill that need based on the resources they have available. In 2022, CarePortal achieved a milestone - over 10,000 Arizona children have been impacted by CarePortal’s services.

Kris Jacober

Kris Jacober has served as the Executive Director of the [Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation](#) for over eleven years. Prior to that, Ms. Jacober served as the President of the Arizona Association for Foster and Adoptive Parents for eighteen years. Her steadfast dedication to partnering with Arizona stakeholders to support, empower and educate the state’s foster and adoptive parents is unmatched. During her tenure with Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation, with the support of the Board of Directors, the Foundation launched the Keys to Success program, supporting post-secondary education for young adults who have aged out of foster care, and still need support as they bridge the gap between aging out of foster care and join the workforce.



COUNCIL WORKGROUP REPORTS

Three workgroups regularly convene to support the goals of the Council. Included below are summaries of their activities and accomplishments.

Children’s Justice State Task Force

Rachel Mitchell, Chair

The CJ Task Force is responsible for reviewing investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, and making training and policy recommendations in each of the three categories in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Section 107(e)(1). The CJ Task Force offered recommendations through a three-year assessment, which was completed in the spring of 2021. This assessment was distributed to a variety of stakeholders throughout Arizona involved in providing services to victims of child abuse and neglect including employees of the Department of Child Safety, law enforcement,

family advocacy centers, child welfare organizations, medical and behavioral health providers, and juvenile probation staff. The assessment was completed based on 461 responses. The survey asked providers for feedback on the following areas: additional supports needed to work more effectively with all children; common challenges experienced with the child/children the providers are working with; improvement needed in reporting and investigations in cases of abuse and neglect; the judicial process in juvenile courts in cases of abuse and neglect; the judicial process in criminal court in cases of abuse and neglect; problems that continue to hamper the systems' responses to maltreated children; and changes needed to improve the state's response to maltreated children.

Recommendations following the 3-year assessment include:

Recommendation 1: Build a statewide, multidisciplinary, annual symposium to promote the exchange of ideas, build a professional network, and coordinate training opportunities.

Recommendation 2: Develop guidelines for county joint-investigation protocols and communicate them to relevant parties in each county, encouraging revisions and determining technical assistance where needed.

Recommendation 3: Support enhanced, standardized, and statewide Mandatory Reporter Training (MRT) to ensure that all appropriate personnel receive adequate and consistent training needed for reporting allegations of child abuse or neglect.

Recommendation 4: Continue to sustain and strengthen existing resources for Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) and MRTs throughout the state, including child or family advocacy centers, children's justice coordinators, the Arizona Child and Family Advocacy Network, and the Arizona Department of Child Safety, to increase efficiency of investigations and improve services to victims.

Prevention Workgroup

Claire Louge, Chair

This year, the Prevention Workgroup focused on expanding the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) to individuals re-entering society after being in prison. The group toured New Freedom, a recently established residential facility providing reentering citizens 90 days of services including counseling, group support, job placement, and life skills training. The relationship the Workgroup established with the organization has resulted in two New Freedom employees getting certified to facilitate Triple P Level 4 Group enabling Triple P to be integrated into New Freedom's curriculum for their clients who are parents, supporting them to build strong and positive relationships with their children. The Workgroup also provided input on the design and marketing of the new statewide [Triple P referral website](#), which launched in January 2022 and was funded by AHCCCS.

Outreach Workgroup

Katie O'Dell, Chair

The Outreach Workgroup focuses on the recruitment of foster and kinship families while partnering with faith leaders to identify effective strategies to recruit additional communities of faith to support Arizona foster care families.