

TURNOVER

In a vicious cycle, high turnover rates drive up caseloads:

“Besides harming foster children in and of itself, DFPS admits, “High caseloads lead to high worker turnover, further exacerbating high caseloads.” ...[Commissioner] Specia admits that the “appropriate workload spread out among the workers . . . will help me keep workers.” It is no surprise then that “DFPS has an extraordinary amount of turnover.”

The Stephen Group reported that yearly CVS caseworker turnover is 26.7%, and “a major organizational burden.” To compare, turnover for workers comparable to Texas’s CVS caseworkers was 14% to 15% in Kentucky and 10% to 12% in Tennessee. The Stephen Group also noted that turnover is especially high for new CPS workers, with approximately 28% leaving within the first year, and approximately 43% within the first two years. Likewise, Black testified that turnover is approximately 38% for first-year caseworkers. The Sunset Commission reported, “One out of every six new caseworkers leaves CPS within six months.”

Unmanageable caseloads are the main reason that CVS caseworkers leave. In a survey, 70% of the caseworkers that left listed “Workload” as the first or second reason. (Page 176)

Lack of experienced workers for foster children

This high turnover rate means that one out of every 11 CVS caseworker positions is vacant. Even when those vacancies are filled, it takes “two years” for a caseworker “to fully be up to speed.” During their first three months, caseworkers are in training and do not have any cases. Consequently, while CPS has 1980 primary caseworkers, it needs to hire more than 500 primary caseworkers per year to retain an experienced workforce of only about 1000 who actually close most of the cases. **This puts a tremendous strain on the 1000 veteran CVS caseworkers, who are the front line workers for over 29,000 foster children, which is not captured in DFPS’s figures.** (Page 177)

Caseworker turnover has many negative impacts beyond higher caseloads. [Assistant Commissioner] Black admitted that turnover causes delayed investigations, a lack of continuity in providing services to families and children, a lack of consistent timely visits by caseworkers to children in State custody, and significant costs to the State in terms of recruiting, training, and lost productivity. Caseworker turnover also “delays or disrupts services and the case plan” of foster children, and hinders permanency planning. Moreover, as the Stephen Group explained, “workplace turnover is endemic and institutional knowledge is stripped from across the agency.” The high level of turnover at CPS “represents an extraordinary organizational challenge to replace these workers and maintain a consistent level of performance.” As one audit of DFPS explained, **“Numerous transitions in caseworker assignments disrupt momentum toward permanency by forcing children/youth and their families to ‘start over’ repeatedly with new caseworkers.”** Specia admitted that foster children are “absolutely” harmed when they do not achieve permanence. (Page 178)

Dr. Miller explained that foster children “have already been damaged” before entering the State’s care. According to Carter, subjecting these “already fragile” children to **a rotation of overburdened caseworkers only causes “despair,” “isolation,” and “helplessness”**. Instead of becoming a stable influence in a child’s life, foster children “don’t want to have a relationship with [caseworkers] . . . they lose confidence, they lose trust,” and see caseworkers as just a “number.” (Page 178)

Further, besides turnover harming the children who lose their caseworker, it also hurts children whose caseworkers remain and take over the departing workers’ cases. This situation all but assures that every PMC child is assigned an overburdened caseworker. Specia also acknowledged that the “longer children stay in the custody of the state the harder it is for them to achieve a permanent home.” **Thus, another consequence of rotating overburdened caseworkers, which disrupts permanency planning, is that 1300-1400 foster children age out of the system each year.** It is widely recognized that foster youths who age out generally experience poorer life outcomes. These youths leave the system with few life skills and little, if any, support (Page 184).

Projected Annual Turnover Rate based on 1st Quarter FY 2016

region:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	total
APS In-home	0.0%	0.0%	25.5%	0.0%	14.3%	14.8%	14.3%	12.3%	0.0%	0.0%	22.6%	na	13.6%
APS total	9.8%	16.7%	22.0%	0.0%	12.1%	16.4%	9.8%	10.3%	30.8%	0.0%	18.8%	na	15.0%
Conservatorship	21.4%	20.7%	21.3%	17.9%	13.8%	32.4%	25.1%	16.4%	36.9%	0.0%	7.8%	0.0%	21.5%
Family Based Services	28.1%	29.3%	24.4%	22.9%	26.7%	20.3%	27.6%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%	14.1%	0.0%	18.2%
Investigations	43.6%	28.6%	46.6%	37.9%	30.8%	31.1%	15.2%	30.3%	6.8%	6.5%	24.3%	41.4%	31.9%
Foster adoption development	22.2%	0.0%	13.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	13.8%	0.0%	0.0%	36.4%	0.0%	10.5%
Kinship	0.0%	0.0%	10.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%
TOTAL	27.8%	24.9%	32.6%	23.5%	19.6%	26.5%	19.3%	18.0%	17.2%	2.6%	15.9%	32.4%	23.6%

\$54,000:

The amount DFPS spends on Training a worker, according to Commissioner Specia’s testimony to the House Appropriations Committee S/C on Article II, 2/17/2015