

2018 Supplemental Budget Decision Package

Agency: 307 Department of Children, Youth, and Families

Decision Package Code/Title: PL – A5 / Improve CI Response Times

Budget Period: 2017-19

Budget Level: Policy Level

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) requests \$2,049,000 (\$2,008,000 GF-State) and 19 FTE to provide timely responses to the increased number of alleged child abuse or neglect referrals it receives from mandatory reporters and the general public. These additional staff will reduce dropped calls and the extraordinary wait times callers sometimes experience.

Fiscal Summary:

Operating Expenditures	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
001-1 General Fund-State	\$0	\$2,008,000	\$1,896,000	\$1,896,000
001-2 General Fund-Federal	\$0	\$41,000	\$39,000	\$39,000
Total Cost	\$0	\$2,049,000	\$1,935,000	\$1,935,000
Staffing	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
FTEs	0	19.0	19.0	19.0
Revenue	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
001-2 General Fund-Federal	\$0	\$41,000	\$39,000	\$39,000
Object of Expenditure	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Object A - Salaries	\$0	\$1,285,000	\$1,285,000	\$1,285,000
Object B - Benefits	\$0	\$501,000	\$501,000	\$501,000
Object E – Goods and Services	\$0	\$263,000	\$149,000	\$149,000

Package Description:

The DCYF Central Intake Unit (CI) is the statewide call center that receives and processes reports of alleged child abuse or neglect 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from mandated reporters or concerned citizens. Staff assess each report for the level of risk and determine an appropriate response. CI also receives a variety of other requests including parent/teen conflict and a large number of family-centered service requests. Additionally, CI staff direct callers to appropriate emergency or support services and provide required responses for several programs such as youth missing from care, foster parent hotline, Safe Haven babies, and Commercially Sexually Exploited Children.

Intake call volume since 2012 has increased by approximately 4,000 calls per year. Of the 170 average calls per month by a Central Intake employee, roughly 62 percent or 105 of those calls result in intakes.

Because of the increased call volume:

- Call wait times can be more than an hour during high-volume periods.
- 20 percent of referrers hang up the phone before providing a report due to long call wait times. The average abandoned caller hangs up the phone after waiting five to seven minutes. Using the same 62 percent figure from above, the abandoned calls represent as many as 1,700 missed intake reports each month.
- Work product quality decreases due to the imperative of workers and supervisors performing complex tasks, research, and risk assessment within increasingly short timeframes.

Base Budget:

In fiscal year 2017, CI had 58 FTE, Social Service Specialist 3 (SSS-3). Each SSS-3 answered an average of 170 phone calls per month, and completed an average of 105 intakes.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions, calculations and details:

In 2007, CI contracted with Sterling Associates to conduct a comprehensive review, including a workload study, of the program. They recommended that CI staff to the peak call volume, requiring “staffing to the highest call volume at any given time.” In March 2017, CI answered 9,109 calls and had 2,744 abandoned calls for a total of 11,853 calls. Assuming a 62 percent intake rate, the 2,744 abandoned calls would have resulted in 1,701 additional intakes if there were enough staff available to answer the calls.

In order to answer these calls, DCYF needs:

- 16 SSS-3 FTE. (2,744 abandoned calls per month/170 calls per FTE per month = 16.1).
- 3 SSS-4 FTE for supervision. Current SSS4 FTE supervise up to six staff each. CI supervisors are required to conduct a full review of all intakes that the SSS3 process.

Decision Package Justification and Impacts

What specific performance outcomes does the agency expect?

90 percent of calls answered in 180 seconds.

Reduce call abandonment rate to 5 percent.

Performance Measure detail:

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents and specific populations served.

The additional FTE will allow DCYF to process 2,744 additional calls per month from Washington citizens concerned about a child’s safety and wellbeing. In March 2017, CI answered 9,109 calls and had 2,744 abandoned calls for a total of 11,853 calls. Assuming a 62 percent intake rate, the 2,744 abandoned calls would have resulted in 1,701 additional intakes if there were enough staff available to answer the calls.

What are other important connections or impacts related to this proposal?

Impact(s) To:		Identify / Explanation
Regional/County impacts?	No	Identify:
Other local gov't impacts?	No	Identify:
Tribal gov't impacts?	No	Identify:
Other state agency impacts?	No	Identify:
Responds to specific task force, report, mandate or exec order?	No	Identify:
Does request contain a compensation change?	No	Identify:
Does request require a change to a collective bargaining agreement?	No	Identify:
Facility/workplace needs or impacts?	Yes	Identify: The additional staff can likely be accommodated in existing leased space if a more modern work environment can be used.
Capital Budget Impacts?	No	Identify:
Is change required to existing statutes, rules or contracts?	No	Identify:
Is the request related to or a result of litigation?	No	Identify lawsuit (please consult with Attorney General's Office):
Is the request related to Puget Sound recovery?	No	If yes, see budget instructions Section 14.4 for additional instructions
Identify other important connections		

Please provide a detailed discussion of connections/impacts identified above.

What alternatives were explored by the agency and why was this option chosen?

The Sterling Associates workload study recommended a ratio of 61 intakes per worker per month. The recommendation would require CI to employ more staff in order to meet the standard. Currently, CI has 58 FTE doing this work and for CI to meet this requirement, it would need additional 62 SSS-3 and 11 SSS-4. ($11,853 \times .62 = 7,349$. $7,349/61 = 120$)

DCYF is also exploring the use of other resources to staff peak call times which could make a small reduction in the total number of staff needed. DCYF is also pursuing a more advanced telephone system that would allow for the better collection and tracking of data and possibly allow for electronic submission of reports by some populations such as mandatory reporters and law enforcement.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

CI does not have enough staff to meet call volume, despite staff increasing their productivity and management implementing efficiencies and call volume reduction initiatives. Due to high and increasing call volume:

- Intake workers lack sufficient time to properly conduct research, review, risk assessment, and quality control
- Callers must wait for lengthy periods, sometimes over an hour, to have their concerns and allegations heard and processed.
- An average of 20 percent of callers hang up before providing a report, resulting in thousands of missed child abuse reports.
- Constituents, stakeholders, and community partners express anger and frustration at long wait times.

How has or can the agency address the issue or need in its current appropriation level?

CI has instituted multiple measures to better meet call volume and increase productivity, quality, and efficiency, including:

- Diverting all Adult Protective Services calls to local APS intakes.
- Requiring staff to maintain minimum productivity standards.
- Training staff to shorten call time by referring out to community resources and reducing counseling.
- Having more staff on duty during peak periods.
- Replacing aging equipment:
 - Currently purchasing new phones and headsets, with delivery and installation in October 2017
 - Conducting a needs assessment for a modern, integrated call management system that will give real-time feedback, situational awareness, user-friendly reports, and an ability to advise regarding staffing to call volume

CI also hired five temporary staff to cover the phone calls. However, this diverted resources from other areas of Children's Administration and does not allow CA to respond to other pressures from caseloads and the placement crisis.

Other supporting materials:

Information technology:

No

Yes

