| DCF PARENT AIDE PROGRAM |
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- Parent Aide workers make in-home visits to improve parenting skills for families with an open DCF abuse / neglect case who are at low to medium risk of child out-of-home placement
- Services, given by 24 contracted providers, include parent education and skill-building, assistance with basic needs, and links to community services
- Program is being re-tooled into a new program – Family Enrichment Services – that aims to provide better-focused services; most recent projection for start of implementation is January 2010

**Contribution:** *Connecticut children grow up safe, healthy, and ready to lead successful lives.*

Parent Aide helps children safely remain in their homes, which is key to leading successful lives.

| Key Program Performance Measures | | | | |
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| | *Progress* | *FY 09 Data (Estimates)* | *Data Available and Regularly Analyzed* | *PRI Staff Analyzed* |
| **I. How *Much* Did We Do?** | | | | |
| 1. Clients Served (reported) | | 1,306 reported (37% decrease from FY 05) – far short of contracted capacity | Yes | ✔ |
| 2. Resources (expenditures) | | $4.25 million (1.9% decrease from FY 08) | (not applicable) | ✔ |
| **II. How *Well* Did We Do It?** | | | | |
| 3. Meeting Client Demand | **?** | Generally demand appears met | Not collected | ✔ |
| 4. Completing the Program | **+** | 56% (five percentage point increase from FY 08) | Data not analyzed | ✔ |
| 5. Meeting Program Standards | | | | |
|   a. Receiving 2 hrs. of services weekly | **?** | --- | Data collected but not retained or analyzed | |
|   b. Maximum service duration of 4 months | **?** | --- | Data collected but not retained or analyzed | |
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| 6. Satisfying Clients | **?** | --- | Providers collect but do not report | |
| 7. Managing Cost Per-Client | **- ?** | Median funding/client served cost of $3,340 (real increase of 65% since FY 05); much variation, with median provider per-client capacity cost of $1,649 | Data not analyzed | ✔ |
| 8. Managing Provider Performance Using Data | **⇔?** | A few providers appear to have higher or lower completion rates, but currently is no way to control for family factors | Data not analyzed | ✔ |
| **III. Is Anyone *Better Off*?** | | | | |
| 9. Children Are Free From Repeat Maltreatment | **⇔?** | 5.3% repeat maltreatment during program participation, about same as previous 2 FYs | Data not analyzed | ✔ |

| 10. Children Remain In Home | **+ ?** | 2.5% out-of-home placement during program participation, lower than in FYs 05-07 | Data not analyzed | ✓ |
| 11. Family Functioning Has Improved | **?** | --- | Client-reported data collected but not retained | |
| 12. The Service is Cost-Effective | **?** | Cannot determine – lack necessary information | Some critical data not collected | |

| **Story Behind Program Performance** |
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- Client-level Parent Aide program data have been collected (not analyzed) for several years, but only a limited amount is kept and it is unclear whether the data are accurate.
- A program lead (i.e., manager) has been assigned to develop and oversee implementation of the replacement to Parent Aide, but for the past several years, there was no one charged with overseeing the program- and provider-level data analysis that would have helped the department evaluate and improve Parent Aide.
- The service expectations – which providers reported used to be longer and more intensive – vary among providers and area offices.
- Administration of the program is decentralized and it appears not all area offices are sufficiently overseeing their Parent Aide providers.
- Overall, area offices are satisfied with the providers but see several provider staffing challenges: lack of bilingual ability, inability or unwillingness to provide services regularly in the evenings or on weekends, and in a few cases, staff turnover and engagement of clients. In addition, a few area offices noted they would like to see staff focus more on improving parenting skills, which should be the focus of the program services.
- Clients generally can get into the program quickly – only one office usually has a waitlist – so demand appears met, but real demand may be higher because a few area offices reported they sometimes refer clients to Intensive Family Preservation, instead of Parent Aide.
- Comparison of the Parent Aide client information to the contract scopes of service shows all but two of the 24 contracted providers reported substantially fewer clients than they were contracted to maintain capacity to serve, with ten reporting less than half their contract amount. The gap could be attributed to many factors, including longer program duration expectations than allowed for by contracts, provider staffing shortages that prevented full client capacity from being reached, funding more slots than are needed, or funding that is inadequate for contracted capacity.
- The cost-effectiveness of Parent Aide cannot be determined because two things are unclear or unknown: per-client cost, and reliable "better off" performance measures over the long-term, since child removal is not imminent for these families when they start the program.

| **Actions to Turn the Curve: DCF Efforts Underway and PRI Recommendations** |
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**Currently Being Undertaken by DCF:**
- Standardizing program expectations and steps (including uniform assessment, intake, and exit forms) during the merging of Parent Aide, and Parent Education and Assessment Service, into Family Enrichment Services
- Planning to collect client data through PSDCRS, the new web-based client database, starting July 2010
- Beginning to offer periodic training to provider staff

**PRI Recommendations: DCF should –**

1. **Immediately replace the current data collection form with a simple monthly report from each provider** until FES data can be submitted using PSDCRS

2. **Dedicate a program manager (i.e., lead)** to: 1) at least every six months, analyze the data from the FES client database; and 2) on an ongoing basis, work with providers and area offices to improve model fidelity and practice, drawing upon the FES client database information and particularly focusing on how to improve parenting skills

3. **Use provider-corrected data to examine variations in per-client costs**, to determine whether there are legitimate reasons for substantial variations from the median cost, and if there are none, financially penalize those providers who are consistently experiencing higher costs

4. **Use provider-corrected data to examine the numbers of clients served and area office waitlists, and compare to contracted slots, adjusting contracts and funding amounts as necessary, including shifting capacity so demand is better met** in the area office that reports consistent waits for services

5. **Expect provider staff to be available on weekends or evenings for regular family appointments** regularly (e.g., weekly), enforcing contract language where it already exists, and adding such language where it does not

6. **Encourage providers to actively recruit from communities and work with Connecticut colleges and universities to improve the supply of bilingual provider staff**

| **Parent Aide*: Data Development and Research Agenda** |
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| (*Being replaced by Family Enrichment Services during 2010) |

1. Add several items to the FES PSDCRS client database to improve ability to assess and meet client demand, understand who is being served, and analyze program outcomes: time spent on waitlist; SDM risk rating; caregiver demographic characteristics; previous family involvement with DCF; and previous family involvement in Parent Aide .

2. Allow providers to view and correct client data to improve accuracy.

3. Replace the current data collection form immediately, with a simple tool that allows providers to correct data, until FES data can be submitted using PSDCRS.

4. Adjust FES program forms: a) Program exit form so progress may be analyzed for each service area indicated necessary on the service plan and the family's DCF social worker can also evaluate progress; and b) Service plan so each goal is directly connected to a service area, and all service areas are addressed by a goal.