



**Child Protective Investigator and
Child Protective Investigator Supervisor
(Educational Qualifications, Turnover, Professional Advancement,
and Working Conditions)**

ANNUAL REPORT

Department of Children and Families

Office of Child Welfare

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Contents

Purpose	2
Special Note: Department of Children and Families and Sheriff Office Investigations	2
Educational Qualifications	3
Turnover.....	3
Professional Advancement	4
Working Conditions.....	5

Purpose

This report, pursuant to section 402.402(4), Florida Statutes, requires the Department of Children and Families (Department) to provide a status report to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives as to the educational qualifications, turnover, professional advancement, and working conditions of the Department's Child Protective Investigators (CPI), Senior Child Protective Investigators (Senior CPI), Child Protective Investigator Supervisors (CPIS), and other child protective investigative staff.

Special Note: Department of Children and Families and Sheriff Office Investigations

Prior to July 1, 2023, child protective investigations were conducted by the Department in 60 of Florida's 67 counties. Sheriff's Offices performed child protective investigations in the remaining seven counties (Broward, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Seminole, and Walton Counties) under grant agreements with the Department. As a result of the 2023 Legislative session, all child protective investigative functions transitioned fully back to the Department. The information within this report addresses positions for Department child protective investigative staff prior to the Sheriff's Office transitions. While retention data from the Sheriff's Offices was not a requirement of the grant, collaborative information sharing indicates that the Sheriff's Offices were similarly challenged by high turnover for their CPI positions. Hence, the challenging nature of the work responsibilities transcends the individual entities responsible for child protection across the state.

Educational Qualifications

Section 402.402(1), F.S., requires the Department to recruit and hire persons qualified by their education and experience to perform social work functions and provides guidance for preference to individuals having a social work degree with a second level preference given to individuals with a human service-related degree.

As of June 26, 2023, a People First data extract indicated that 1,362 staff were identified as having a bachelor’s degree; 153 were identified as having a master’s degree; four were identified as having a doctorate degree; 32 were identified as educational data unavailable; and 389 were identified as high school graduates, having an associate’s degree, or some years of college. This data is inclusive of CPI, Senior CPI, CPI Supervisors (CPIS), and Field Support Consultants (FSC). The total active child protective investigative staff currently holding a degree in social work is 6.79%.

Turnover

The CPI role is a demanding position that requires critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The high-stress nature of the job, particularly for younger employees, often contributes to higher turnover rates. Over the past two fiscal years, the average turnover rates for all CPI positions were 55.40% and 40.33%, while the rates for CPIS were 20.21% and 10.04%, and for FSCs were 12.42% and 15.05%. The turnover percentages for CPI, Senior CPI, and CPIS positions decreased during the last fiscal year, while the turnover percentage for Field Support Consultant increased.

		SFY 2021-2022			SFY 2022-2023		
Region	Class Title	Avg # Emp	Separated	Turnover Rate	Avg # Emp	Separated	Turnover Rate
Northwest	CPI	114.5	87	75.98%	130.5	90	68.97%
	Senior CPI	37	14	37.84%	40	2	5.00%
	FSC	4	0	0.00%	4	0	0.00%
	Supervisor	33.5	9	26.87%	35	5	14.29%
	Total	189	110	58.20%	209.5	97	46.30%
Northeast	CPI	176.5	154	87.25%	242	123	50.83%
	Senior CPI	40.5	27	66.67%	55	6	10.91%
	FSC	13.5	3	22.22%	16	2	12.50%
	Supervisor	54.5	13	23.85%	58	7	12.07%
	Total	285	197	69.12%	371	138	37.20%
Central	CPI	325	197	60.62%	327	218	66.67%
	Senior CPI	70	25	35.71%	79.5	12	15.09%
	FSC	44.5	2	4.49%	49	5	10.20%
	Supervisor	79	11	13.92%	83	5	6.02%
	Total	518.5	235	45.32%	538.5	240	44.57%
Suncoast	CPI	81.5	83	101.84%	120.5	55	45.64%
	Senior CPI	14	10	71.43%	20.5	2	9.76%
	FSC	5.5	1	18.18%	10	3	30.00%
	Supervisor	21	5	23.81%	26	3	11.54%
	Total	122	99	81.15%	177	63	35.59%
Southeast	CPI	102.5	54	52.68%	117	40	34.19%

	Senior CPI	27	8	29.63%	30	3	10.00%
	FSC	3.5	1	28.57%	4	1	25.00%
	Supervisor	30.5	4	13.11%	31	5	16.13%
	Total	163.5	67	40.98%	182	49	26.92%
Southern	CPI	78	50	64.10%	84	59	70.24%
	Senior CPI	18.5	12	64.86%	21	3	14.29%
	FSC	9.5	3	31.58%	10	3	30.00%
	Supervisor	24	7	29.17%	26	1	3.85%
	Total	130	72	55.38%	141	66	46.81%
Statewide	CPI	878	625	71.18%	1,021	585	57.30%
	Senior CPI	207	96	46.38%	246	28	11.38%
	FSC	80.5	10	12.42%	93	14	15.05%
	Supervisor	242.5	49	20.21%	259	26	10.04%
	Total	1,408	780	55.40%	1,619	653	40.33%

High turnover rates among CPI staff can lead to increased caseloads for remaining investigators, impacting the Department's ability to develop a skilled and specialized workforce. To improve workforce stability, the Department is focused on reducing turnover rates, with a positive working relationship between CPIs and their supervisors being a key factor in retention. According to feedback from CPI staff, some of the top reasons for turnover include high caseloads, stress and emotional exhaustion, administrative tasks, and lack of a support network.

The Department demonstrated a reduction in turnover over the past two fiscal years, resulting from the following actions:

- Significant Pay Raises
 - \$4,000 base rate increase for CPI
 - \$6,000 base rate increase for Senior CPI
- Workforce Wellness Initiatives
- Local Leadership Retention Efforts
- Career Ladder Implementation

Professional Advancement

Providing opportunities for growth and career advancement is crucial for retaining qualified child welfare professionals. In SFY 2022-2023, there were 178 promotional advancements. Of these advancements, 23% were CPIs promoting to other positions, including Senior CPI, CPIS and Child Protective Field Support Analyst/Consultant. CPIS promotions accounted for 37 moves, with promotions to Program Administrator, Family Services Specialist, and other various positions. The remaining promotions were Sr. Senior, Field Support Analysts or Consultants, and Program Administrators promoting to other positions.

The Department's Career Ladder initiative provided employees with access to optional promotional opportunities, professional development, and advancement across multiple career pathways: Performance, Specialty, and Supervisory. Advancement requirements included achievement of tenure, satisfactory performance evaluation, additional training, a personal Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Training (SWOT) analysis, and a satisfactory quality review of case work at a threshold of at least 80% passing rate. Specialty training provided expertise in specific areas of child welfare, while

supervisory training included mentoring and coaching. All steps required Mental Health First Aid training.

During the first year of the program (January 2022 – January 2023), there were 479 total applicants who expressed interest in completing steps within the Career Ladder. Of those, 231 (48.2%) completed all the requirements necessary to achieve one or more steps within the Career Ladder and received compensation for completion of those higher learning requirements. Table 2 below offers a breakdown of step completion:

Step	# of Employees Who Completed Step	% Increase Received
CPI II	16	2.50%
CPI Specialist	5	5.00%
Advanced CPI	8	5.00%
Senior CPI	3	5.00%
Senior CPI Specialist	14	5.00%
Senior Advanced CPI	18	5.00%
CPIS Level 1	114	5.00%
CPIS Level II	79	7.00%
Field Support Consultant	11	5.00%
Field Support Analyst	26	5.00%

After evaluating feedback from the initial launch of the Career Ladder, on August 18, 2023, the Department implemented enhancements to the program, including increased focus on supporting Child Welfare participants, providing opportunities for continued professional development, and offering greater return on investment.

Working Conditions

The Department is focused on supporting the growth and stability of its workforce, which is fundamental to the success of the state’s child protection efforts. To this end, several initiatives have been implemented, including the establishment of the Workforce Wellness Unit, the creation of a Career Ladder model, and the development of new recruitment strategies.

The Workforce Wellness Unit was created to address the overall well-being of Department staff and to prevent secondary traumatic stress and burnout among CPI staff. The office has launched several initiatives, including the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team, Mental Health First Aid Training, Wellness Advocates in the Regions, and the Lead Well program.

CISM team members respond to critical incidents using a peer-driven intervention system to increase resilience. Mental Health First Aid Training is an evidence-based program that teaches participants how to identify immediate mental health needs and reduce stigma. The goal is to offer this training to all new hires within the Department, with a focus on front-line workers.

Wellness Advocates are staff members who promote wellness offerings, support CISM logistics, and assist colleagues in accessing local wellness resources. The Lead Well Initiative is a leadership program for frontline

supervisors that focuses on creating a culture that supports the care, competency, resiliency, and retention of the workforce.

The Department's recruitment teams have also implemented several initiatives to attract qualified candidates for CPI positions. These include enhanced hiring qualifications that allow for a combination of education and experience, enhanced recruitment efforts through social media and other marketing strategies, and partnerships with internal and external organizations.

The Department remains committed to developing new initiatives to support CPI staff in their work. CPI staff play a critical role in keeping vulnerable children safe and achieving the best possible outcomes for Florida's families.