

Division of Child and Family Services Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2023
(FY 2023)

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Please note: Data in this report is measured by state fiscal year (July 1 through June 30) unless otherwise indicated.

Executive summary

The Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) mission is to create safety for children by strengthening families. Achieving this mission is done through a skilled workforce in an integrated service community that includes community providers and legal partners.

Over the past few years, the DCFS workforce has experienced significant turnover, exceeding 40% for frontline caseworkers. Unprecedented turnover and vacancies resulted in incredible strain on the system, resulting in high caseloads and less time with families. Despite these challenges, DCFS has continued to provide quality services to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. DCFS leads the nation in prioritizing and achieving permanency for children as measured by how quickly children move out of the foster care system, resulting in successful reunification or placement in adoptive families. DCFS and legislature also recognized these positive results were unsustainable in a system experiencing such a high rate of caseworker vacancies.

DCFS extends our gratitude to Governor Cox and the legislature for acknowledging the impact this system instability could have on children and families and responding with their critical investment in compensation to stabilize the workforce. This investment is already resulting in a reduction in turnover, and several regions are experiencing the lowest vacancies they have seen in years. DCFS' staffing and retention improvement has boosted morale and provided hope to weary teams. DCFS also appreciates the additional investment made to support foster parents and the provider system recognizing the impact inflation has had on their ability to continue services, further supporting the goal of supporting success for the children and youth DCFS serves.

DCFS is an agency committed to continuous quality improvement. To further support keeping children safe at home and preventing the trauma of removal, DCFS is bolstering efforts to initiate safety planning at the onset of families becoming involved during the child protective services (CPS) assessment. Safety planning is done by including kinship and natural supports to create a robust safety plan. This process, referred to as the Family Action Meeting (FAM), is an expedited way of gathering the family's support system, sharing safety concerns, and promoting family leadership in creating a plan tailored to the specific safety needs of a child. FAM is built on the foundation that including families in decision making helps us create safety. Feedback from families has been overwhelmingly positive. During the upcoming year, DCFS will continue implementing the FAM process through a statewide phased rollout and looks forward to supporting the success of the children, youth, and families we serve.

Utah Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS)

Safe children

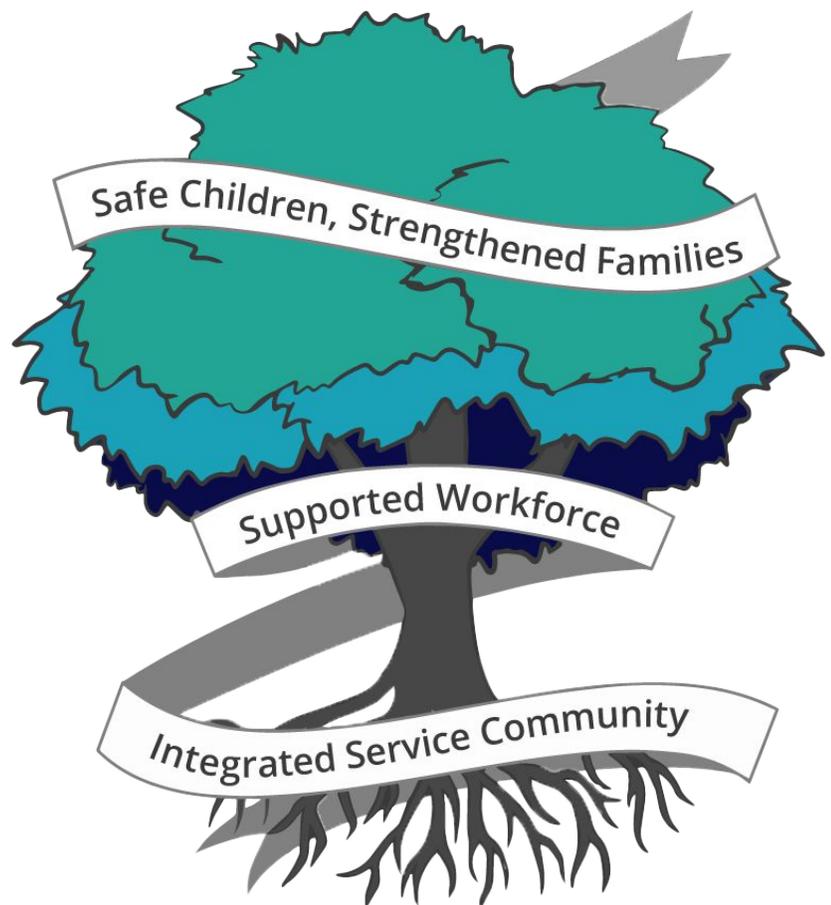
Safety is the reason we exist. The mission of DCFS is to keep children safe from abuse and neglect through the strengthening of families.

Strengthened families

A child's physical and emotional well-being largely exists within the context of the adults in their life. When a family is strengthened through individualized, trauma-informed, community-based services that are both safety driven and family driven, an environment that promotes child safety and well-being is created.

Supported workforce

Our most important resource in achieving success with children and families is our staff. They enter the lives of children and families at times of crisis and vulnerability. The professionalism and skill of our staff in engaging, teaming, assessing, planning, and intervening with children and families are essential to good outcomes. Due to the complex and critical nature of child welfare, our community expects and deserves a well trained, experienced, ethical, compassionate, and supported workforce.



Integrated service community

DCFS is not the child welfare system – we are the child welfare agency within a much larger social service continuum. Our ability to provide timely, effective, and extensive services to our most vulnerable populations is integrated within a robust network of legal partners and private and public community providers. We also provide domestic violence services.

At the Division of Child and Family Services, our work in child welfare brings us into the lives and communities of diverse families with diverse needs.

DCFS is committed to creating fair and equitable opportunities for children, youth, and families to live safe and healthy lives. We are supported in this effort by ongoing partnerships with community partners, national organizations, and researchers that support administration of the system and measure effectiveness and outcomes.

The division will continue its work to review policy and practice to address disproportionate outcomes at specific decision points in the child welfare process.

89.5%

Children confirmed victims of abuse or neglect did not experience repeat maltreatment within 12 months.

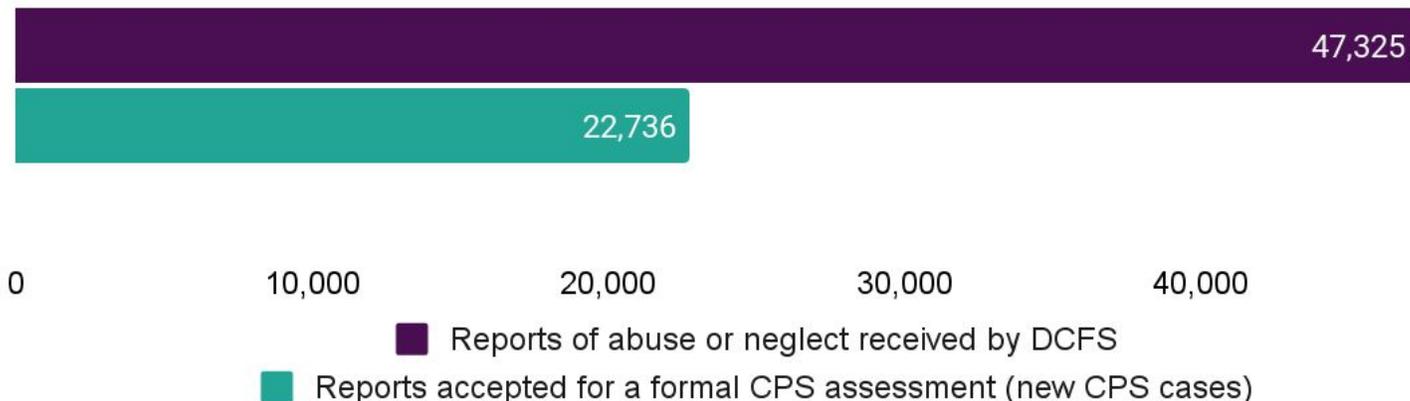
9,278

Children confirmed as victims of abuse or neglect.

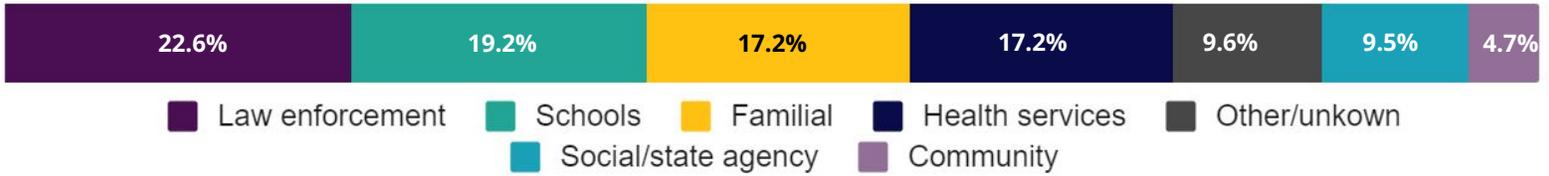
The moment CPS becomes involved with a family, our goal is to assess for safety concerns, work with the family to create a safety plan, and provide effective interventions that promote child safety and strengthen parents.

Referrals to CPS hotline during FY 2023

48% of CPS referrals resulted in a new CPS case



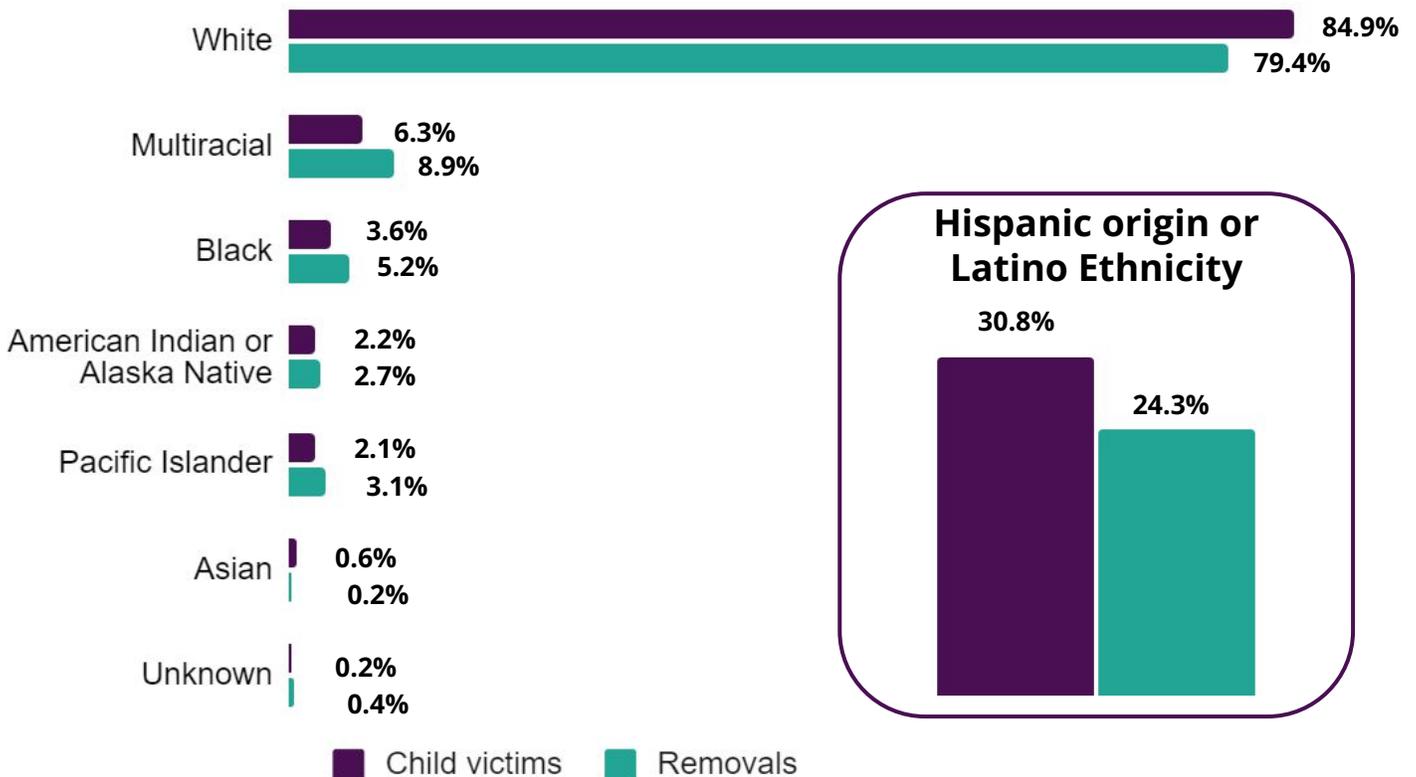
Sources of CPS reports of abuse and neglect accepted for assessment during FY 2023



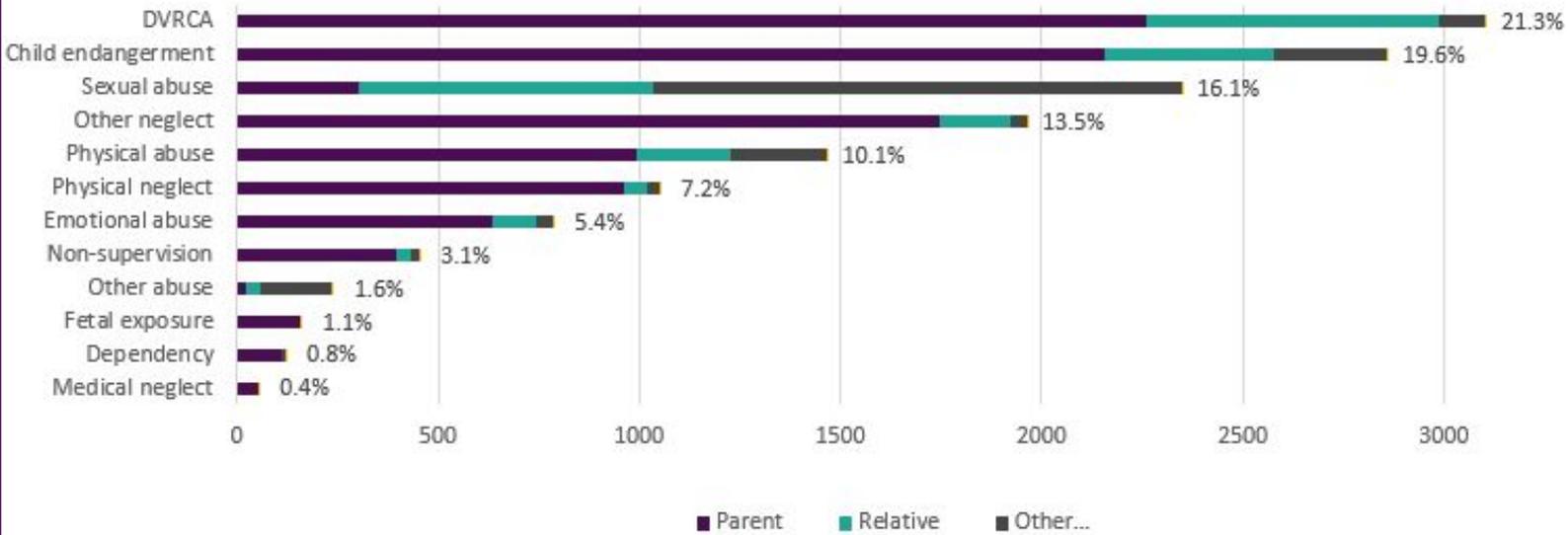
Percent of children confirmed as victims by age group, FY 2023



Race among confirmed child victims vs. child removals into foster care FY 2023



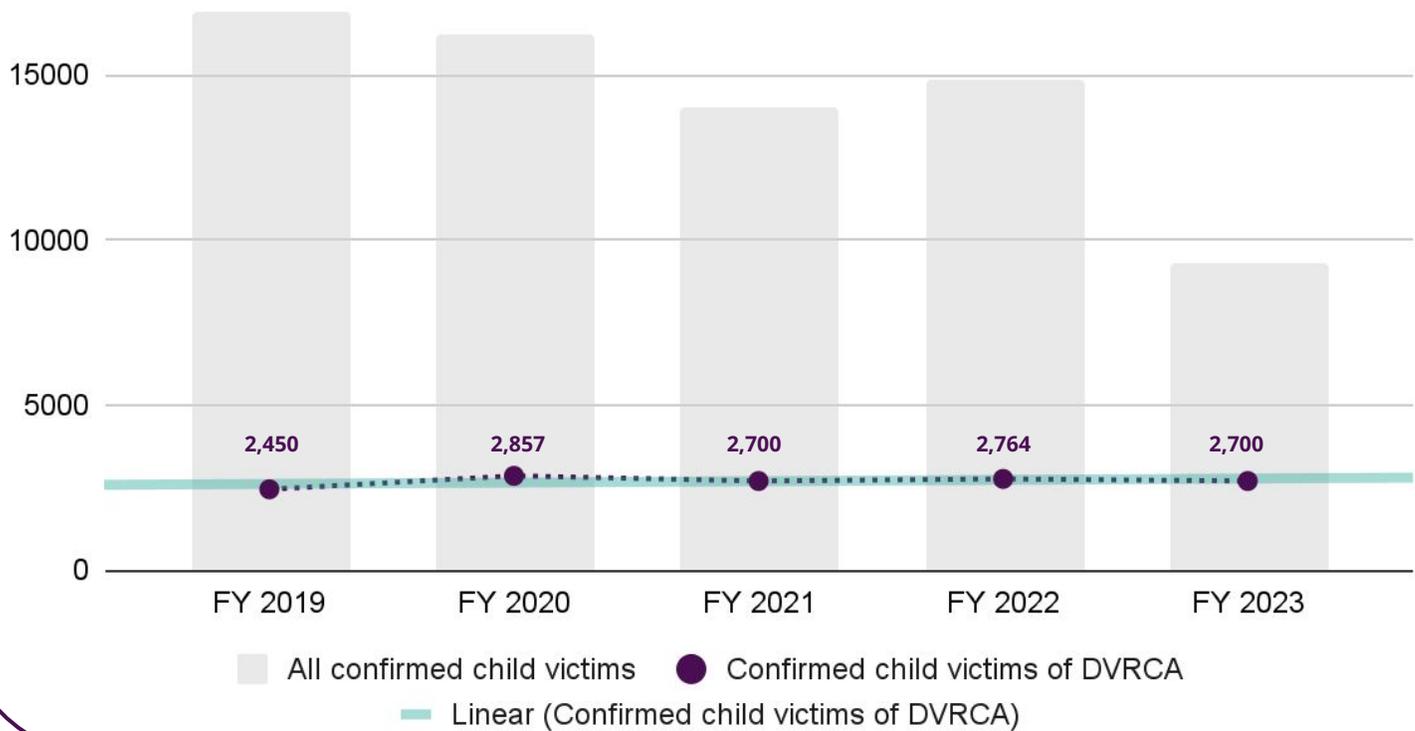
Confirmed allegations by type and relationship of individual responsible for abuse or neglect to child victim, FY 2023



* **Other neglect** includes: Abandonment, educational neglect, failure to protect, failure to thrive, sibling/child at risk, **Other abuse** includes: dealing in material harmful to a child, human trafficking (sexual), lewdness, sexual exploitation.



All confirmed child victims and domestic violence related child abuse (DVRCA) victims



29% of all confirmed victims were a victim of domestic violence related child abuse (DVRCA) in FY 2023.



We recognize substance use disorders (SUDs) as a health crisis that affects countless Utah families. The majority of cases requiring a child welfare intervention involve substance use.

Our goal is always for the child to remain in the home whenever safely possible while we work to connect the parent or caregiver to services to help build their long-term capacity to safely care for their children.

Utah has several residential substance use disorder treatment programs that allow young children, including children in foster care, to reside with their parents while completing treatment.

Of the **1,418** children who were placed in foster care in FY 2023, **70.5%** involved substance use as a safety concern.

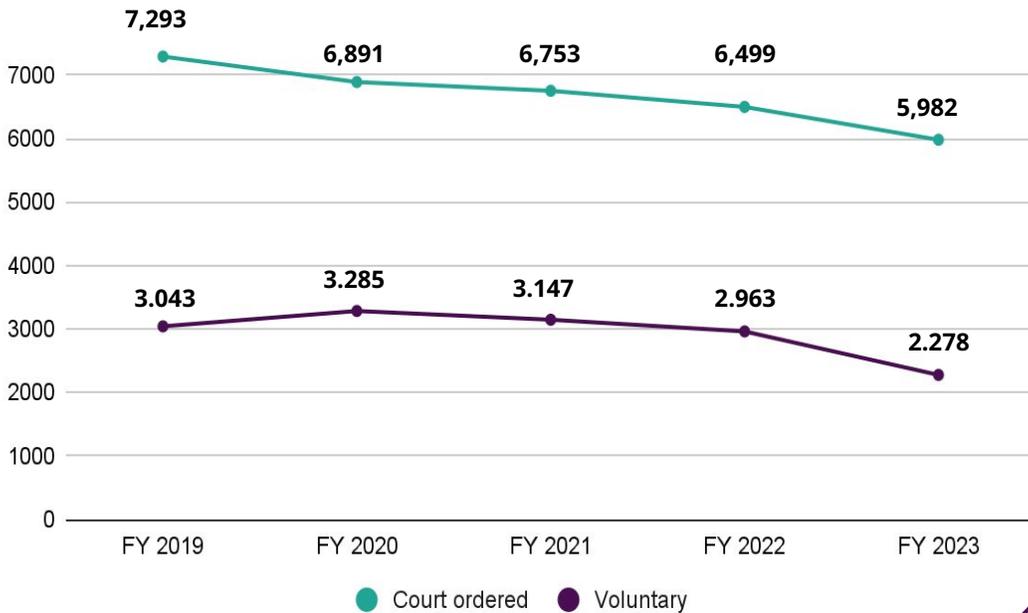


The goal of in-home services is to keep children safely at home while addressing abuse or neglect through family-driven, solution-focused interventions.

In-home services include:

- Child and Family Team Meetings that bring the family, members of their support system, and service providers together to help set solution-focused goals to address safety concerns.
- Developing child safety plans with the family to address and manage safety concerns.
- Linking the family to evidence-based community resources including mental health treatment, parenting skills, and substance use disorder treatment.

Adult and child clients receiving in-home services



In some situations safety is achieved when a family works collaboratively and voluntarily with DCFS to address risk factors. At other times these services are court ordered to ensure the best outcomes for children and their families.

89.0%

in-home child clients did not have confirmed abuse or neglect findings within 12 months of case closure (based on all in-home case closures in FY 2022).

96.5%

in-home child clients did not enter foster care within 12 months of case closure (based on all in-home case closures in FY 2022).

2,098

total number of in-home services cases for FY 2023.

Placement with family best reduces trauma and preserves a child’s connection to their culture, biology, ancestry, and community.

When children are unable to safely remain in their own homes, foster care acts as a temporary intervention until children are able to be safely reunited with their family. Whenever **safely** possible, a kinship care placement is priority.

Kinship care allows a child in foster care to stay in the care of a family member or friend who is willing to meet the child’s needs, including working with the child’s parent(s) toward reunification, or providing a permanent home. Early involvement of kinship in a CPS case may also support more robust safety planning, allowing children to remain safely at home, and decreasing the likelihood of removal in some cases.

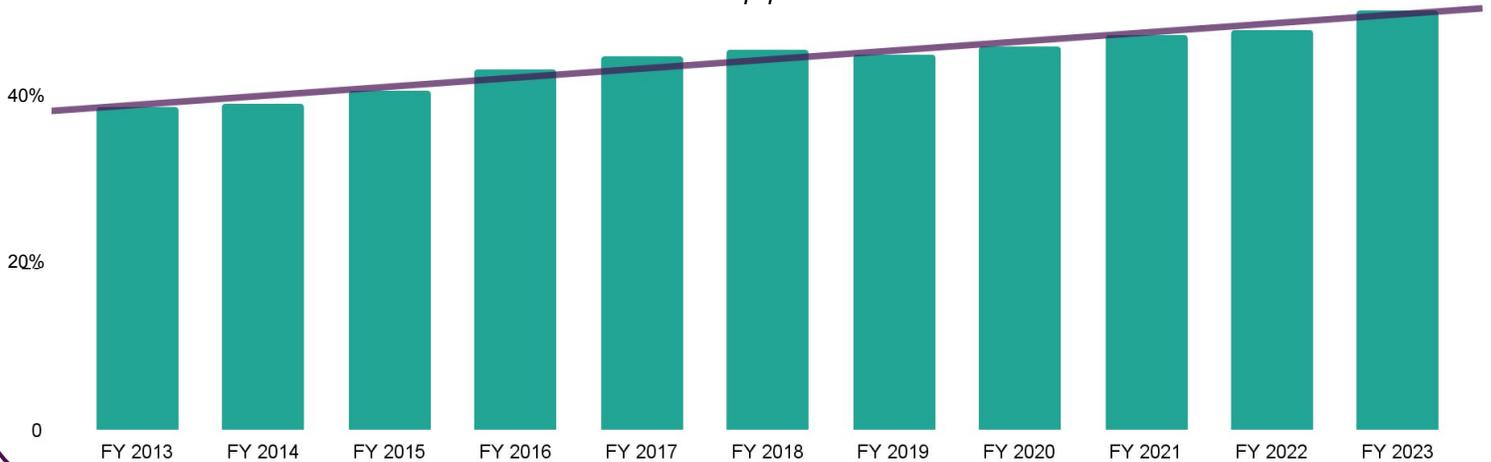
Among all children served in foster care **1,691** were served in kinship placements

Relationship of kinship caregiver to children placed in kinship care during FY 2023:

39.2%	31.5%	29.3%
Grandparent	Aunt/uncle	Other

Kinship placements continue to increase

Children served in a kinship placement FY 2013 - FY 2023



93.2%

Children who exited foster care to a relative in FY 2022 and did not re-enter foster care within 12 months.

96.4%

Children who exited foster care to a relative in FY 2022 and did not have a supported CPS case within 12 months.

Approximately 2 of every 1,000 children* will enter foster care in Utah, while the national rate is 5 of every 1,000 children.

Foster families are an important part of providing temporary safety and support for children and youth in care who are unable to remain safely at home. Supporting a robust continuum of providers ensures children and youth are placed in the most appropriate and least-restrictive settings for their individual needs.

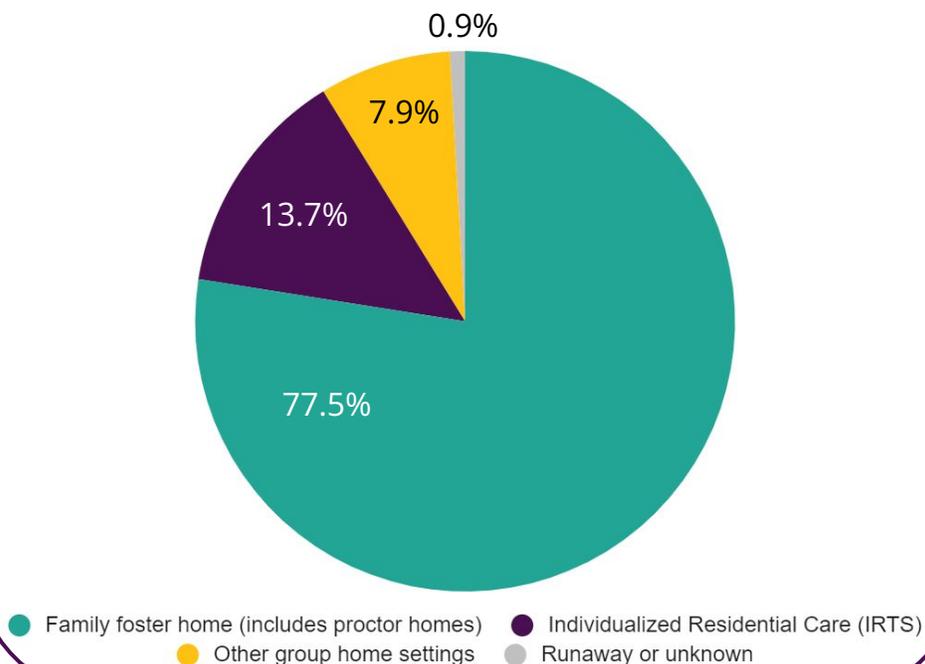
3,376

Total children served in foster care at some point during the fiscal year.

78.1%

Children served in foster care less than 12 months with two or fewer placements.

Placement level of children/youth in care, June 30, 2023



Children in foster care by age June 30, 2023



*Based on [2021 National Kids Count](https://datacenter.kidscount.org/) data, datacenter.kidscount.org.

Every child deserves safety, stability and permanency.

For children who cannot reunify safely with their family, DCFS seeks to find a safe, nurturing and permanent family through adoption or guardianship.

Youth who exit foster care without a permanent home need added supports.

No service replaces the stability and connection of a family. We provide assistance to youth ages 14 to 21 and continue to work with community partners toward reunification, kinship care, or adoption until youth leave our care.

The Transition to Adulthood Living (TAL) program utilizes a network of organizations to offer services including academic mentoring, financial planning, career preparation, and limited financial assistance until youth reach age 23.

13.8 months

Median time in care for children who exited foster care in FY 2023.

10 months

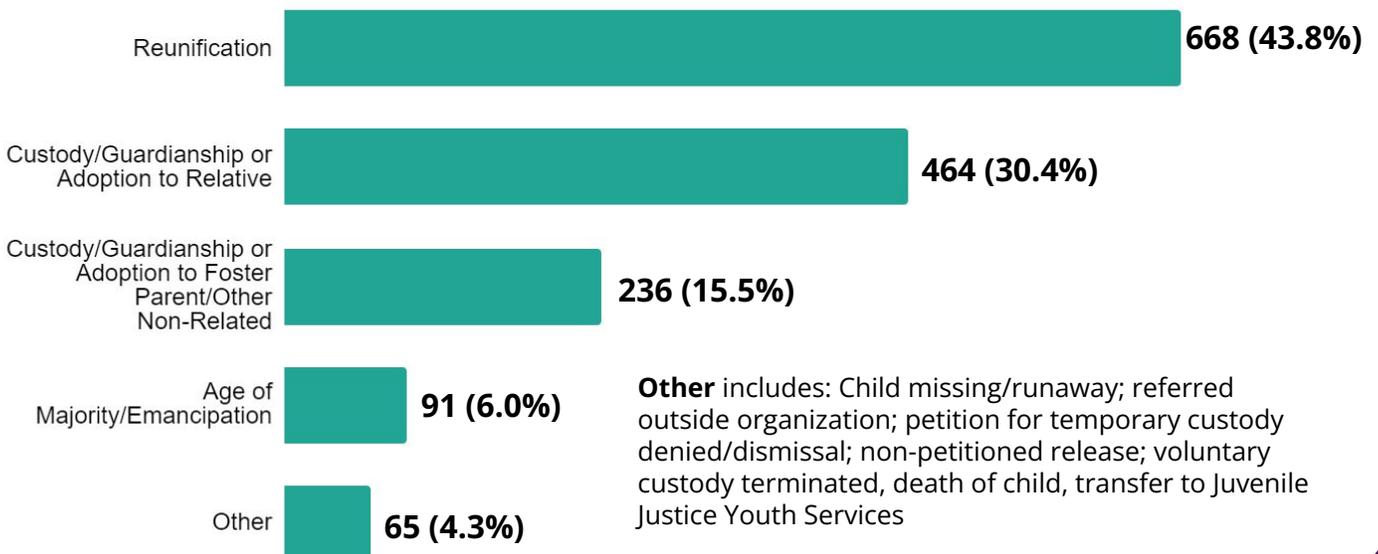
Median time in care for children who exited foster care to reunification.

20 months

Median time in care for children who exited foster care to adoption.

Reasons children exited foster care during FY 2023

74.2% of children in foster care were reunified with family or adopted through kinship



Supporting family well-being

Prevention of child abuse and neglect is a focus of DCFS through local community-based services that include:

- Parenting classes
- 6 evidence-based home visitation programs
- Statewide community and school-based education presentations
- Support to grandparents raising grandchildren
- 17 crisis nurseries in local Family Support Centers across the state

In FY 2023 we served approximately 5,000 families including 8,500 children and 7,000 adults.

In an effort to highlight services available to help families thrive across Utah, DCFS collaborated with United Way programs, Utah 211 and Help Me Grow Utah, to create the 211 Strengthening Families webpage (uw.org/211/family-strengthening).



Domestic violence services

Connecting adults affected by domestic violence to trauma-informed services also enhances stability, safety and permanency for children. Domestic violence services provided by local shelter and treatment programs with federal and state funding through DCFS include:

- 16 domestic violence shelters
- Trauma-informed therapy, financial planning and safety planning
- Assistance with protective orders
- LINKline domestic violence crisis hotline
- Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) program utilized by law enforcement and victims advocates to assist and educate victims
- Trauma-focused treatment for both survivors and offenders

More than \$12.1 million was provided through DCFS to support the domestic violence services program in FY 2023.

44,118

Number of crisis calls made to the Linkline and domestic violence shelters.

2,782

Number of adult and child clients served in domestic violence shelters.

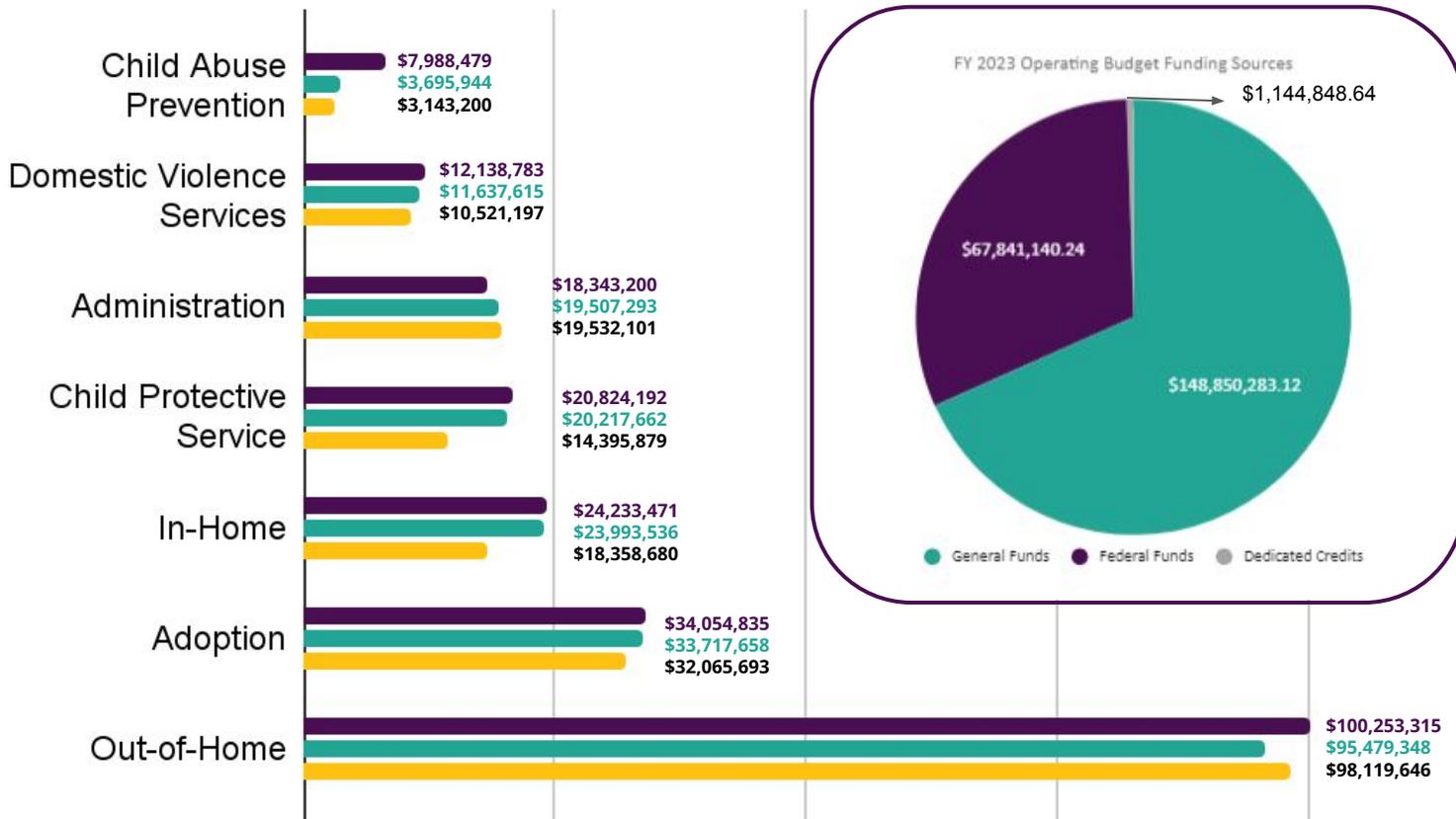
The budget for the division is primarily made up of a mix of state general fund, federal funds and dedicated credits. The following four general fund restricted accounts are appropriated by the Legislature and distributed through DCFS for services that focus on child abuse prevention and treatment programs, adoption, health and education programs for adults and children, and domestic violence services:

- Children’s Account
- Choose Life Adoption Support Restricted Account
- National Professional Men’s Basketball Team Support Women and Children Issues Restricted Account
- Victims of Domestic Violence Services Account

DCFS expenditures by program

State and federal funds included

FY 2023 FY 2022 FY 2021



Please note expenditure totals are subject to change as financial closeouts occur

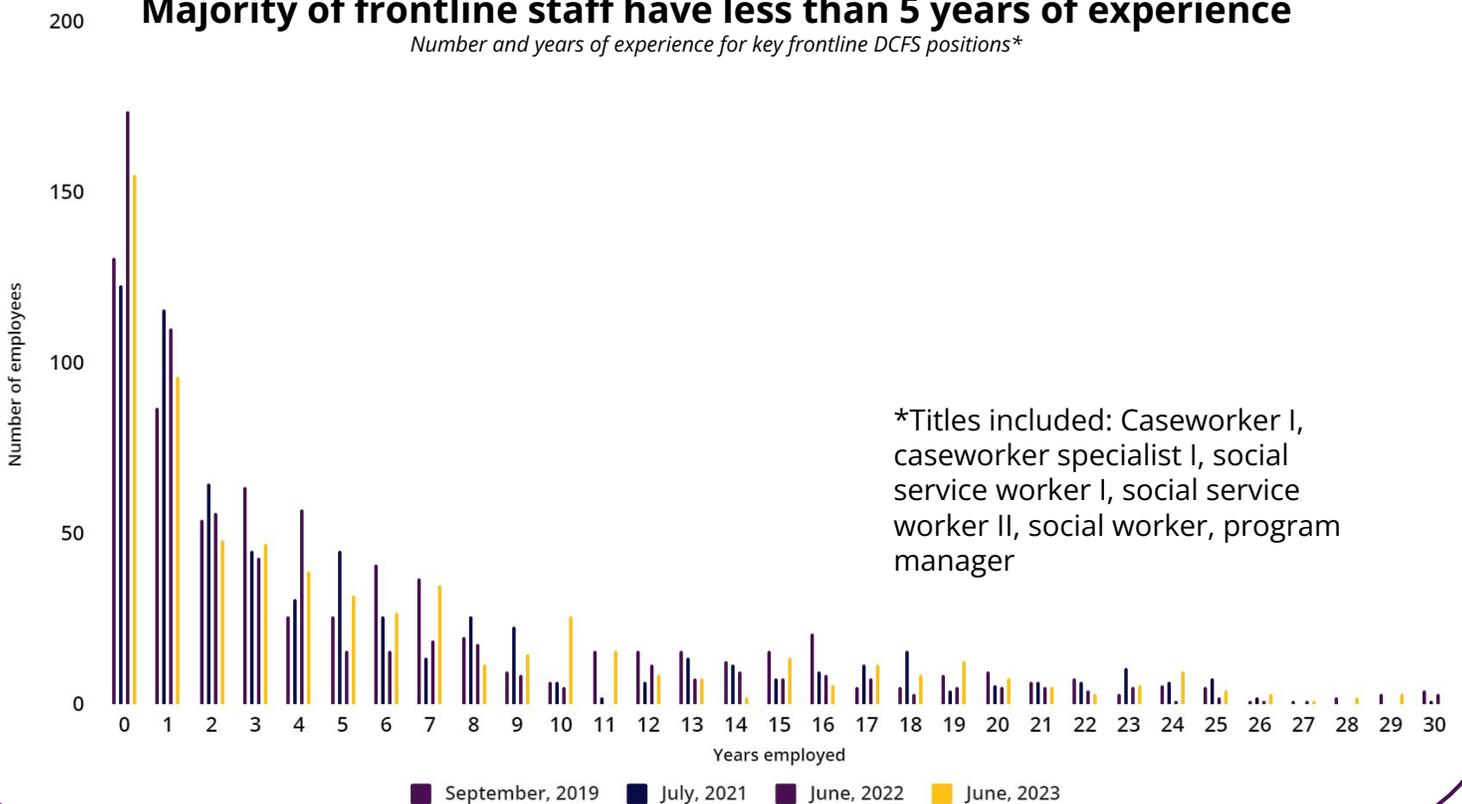
During FY 2023, 213 new case worker/social service workers completed the required hours of training and 63.5% of employees that have 1+ years with the agency completed 20 or more hours of training.

Required training includes:

- All DCFS direct service staff are required to complete 120 hours of in-class Practice Model Training and 40 hours of supervised field experience prior to working independently with families.
- Within 90 days of hire, direct services staff are required to complete a web-based 4th and 14th Amendments training.
- Within one year of hire, direct service staff are required to complete an Indian Child Welfare Act course, and a one-day Trauma Informed Care training.
- After the first year, direct services staff are required to complete a minimum of 20 hours of additional annual training.

Majority of frontline staff have less than 5 years of experience

Number and years of experience for key frontline DCFS positions*



1,022

Total number of DCFS staff at end of FY 2023.

665

DCFS staff in key frontline positions at end of FY 2023.

52%

DCFS staff in key frontline positions at end of FY 2023 with >3 years of experience.

37%

Turnover for key frontline DCFS positions during FY 2023.



Utah Department of

Health & Human Services

Child & Family Services

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For questions about this report please contact the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Public Affairs and Education at dhhs@utah.gov.