

# DCYF SOCIAL SERVICE SPECIALISTS COUNT

Report to the Legislature for SFY July 2022 - June 2023



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**



## CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction .....	1
Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Counts .....	1
Chart 1 - Number of Positions by Job Class SFY23.....	2
Expenditures .....	2
Chart 2 - Quarterly Expense by Job Class .....	2
Chart 3 - Quarterly Expense by Program Area .....	3
Chart 4 - Quarterly Expense by Region .....	3
Vacancy Rates .....	3
Chart 5 - Vacancy Rate by Region SFY23.....	4
Separations.....	4
Chart 6 - January to March 2023 Separations .....	5
Chart 7 - April to June 2023 Separations .....	5
Average Lengths of Employment .....	5
Chart 8 - SFY23 - Average Years of Service.....	6
Conclusion .....	6
Appendix .....	7

## Executive Summary

This report is prepared in compliance with ESSB 5187 Sec. (227) (5), which requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to provide a tracking report for social service specialists and corresponding social services support staff to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature. The report includes the following information identified separately for social service specialists doing case management work, supervisory work, and administrative support staff, and identified separately by job duty or program, including but not limited to intake, child protective services (CPS) investigations, CPS family assessment response and child and family welfare services:

- (i) Total full-time-equivalent employee authority, allotments and expenditures by region, office, classification and band, and job duty or program
- (ii) Vacancy rates by region, office, classification and band
- (iii) Average length of employment with the department and, when applicable, the date of exit for staff exiting employment with the department by region, office, classification and band and job duty or program

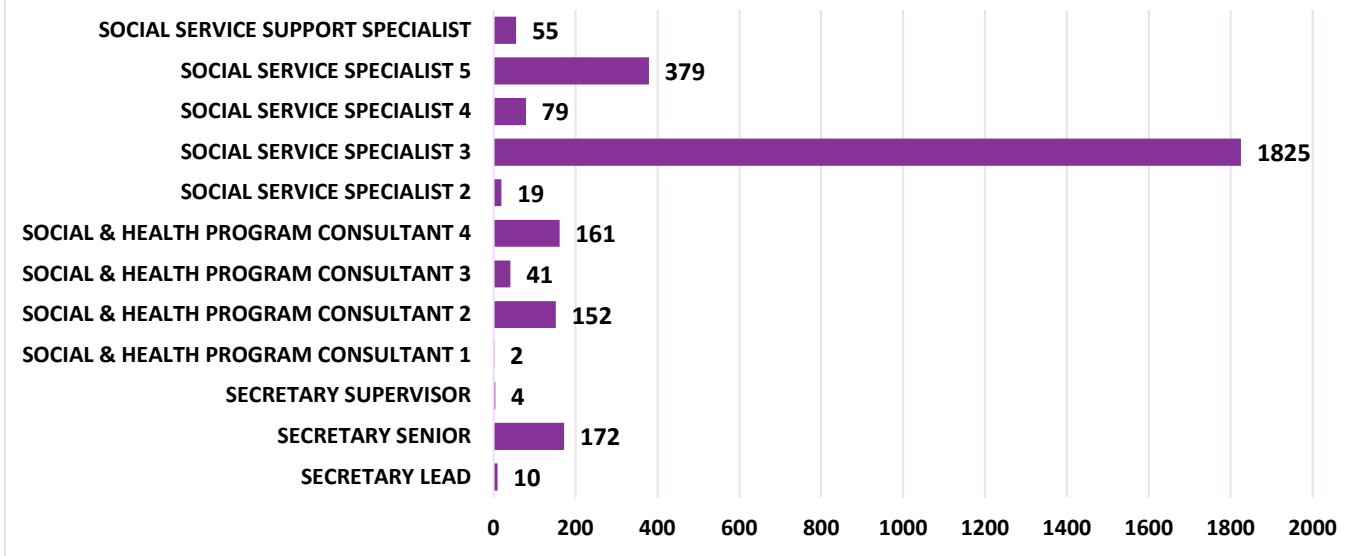
## Introduction

Data covers the period from July 2022 through June 2023. Job classifications included are Social Service Specialist (SSS) 2, 3, 4 and 5; Social Service Support Specialist, Secretary Senior, Lead and Supervisor, Social and Health Program Consultant 1, 2, 3, and 4. DCYF does not have any permanent Social Service Specialist 1 positions; however, this classification is used as a training level within higher-level SSS positions. SSS2s and SSS3s are typically considered - case-carrying. SSS4s are leads with expectation for very limited case carrying capacity, and SSS5s are supervisors. DCYF established the SSS4 positions in 2021 and has filled several of these positions since that time. Social Service Support Specialist (SSSS) positions were also established in 2021 and several of the positions have been filled. Further descriptions of these job classifications are located in the Appendix.

## Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Counts

Full-time staff within the Child Welfare Field Operations in SFY 2023 was 2,899. Of these, 1.9% consists of SSSS; 63.6% consists of SSS2-3; 2.7% consists of SSS4; 13.1% consists of SSS5; 6.4% consists of clerical staff; and 12.3% consists of program managers that provide policy, practice, and field-based supports to staff. 45 offices in six geographic regions are managed by regional management teams that are comprised of regional administrators, deputy regional administrators, and area administrators. Chart 1 provides a numerical breakdown of field staff by classification.

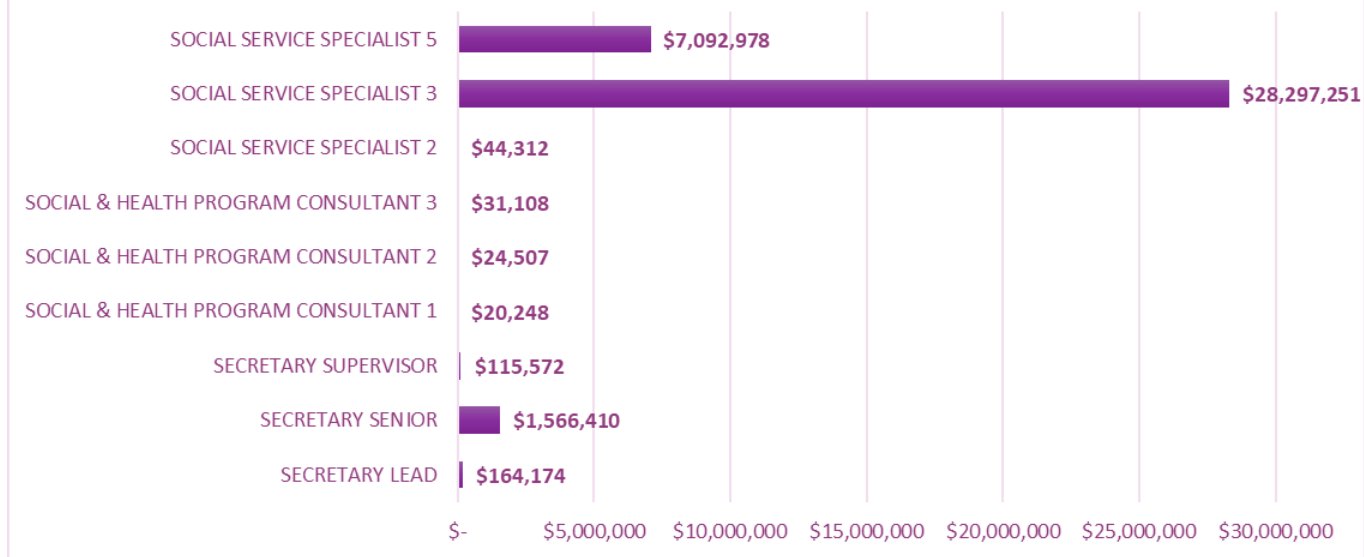
**Chart 1: Number of Positions by Job Class SFY23**



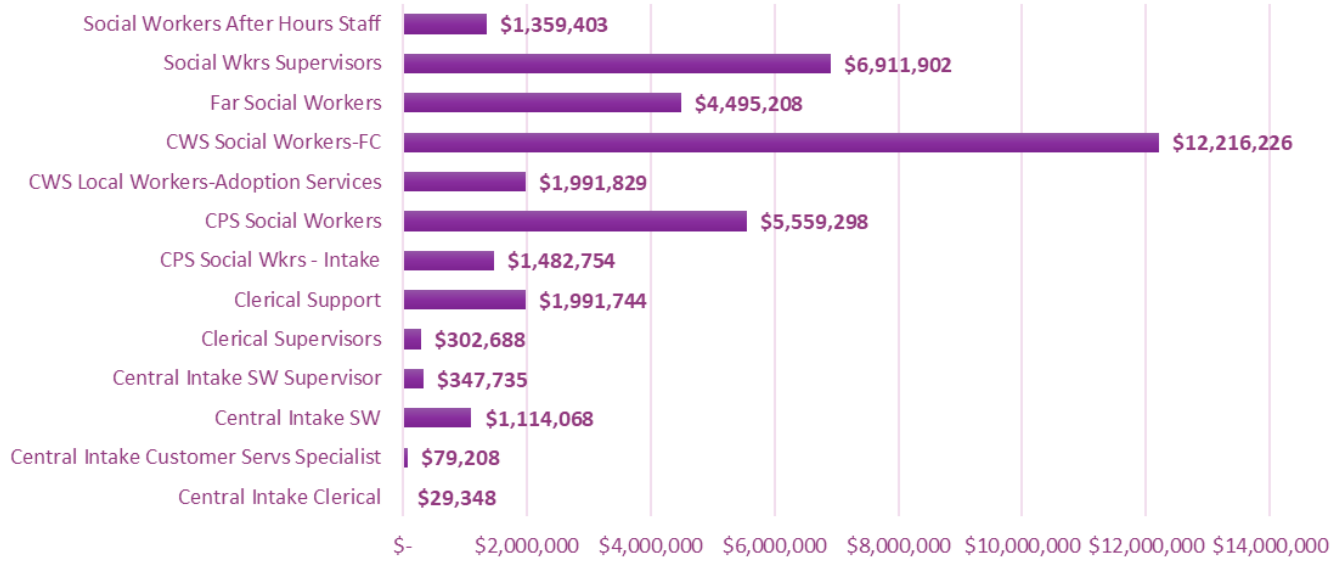
**Expenditures**

The charts below display allotments and expenditures by region, office, classification, band, and job duty or program. The quarterly expenses by job class chart depicts employer expenses for SFY 2023. Other budgetary expenses such as office supplies or equipment are not included. Charts 2, 3 and 4 show the expenditures by job class, program area, and regions.

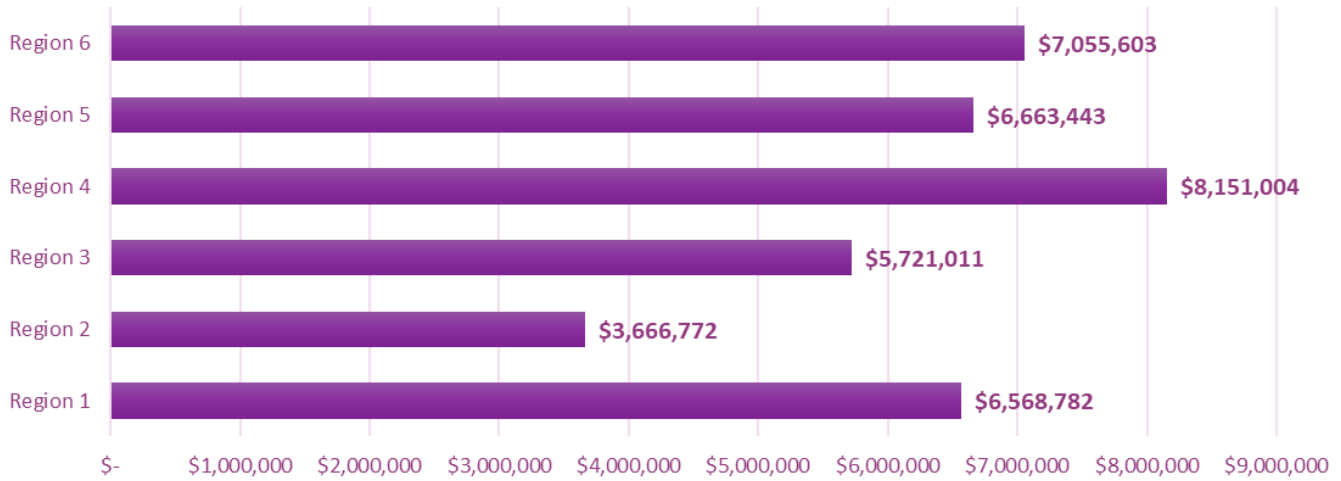
**Quarterly Expense by Job Class**



### Quarterly Expense by Program Area



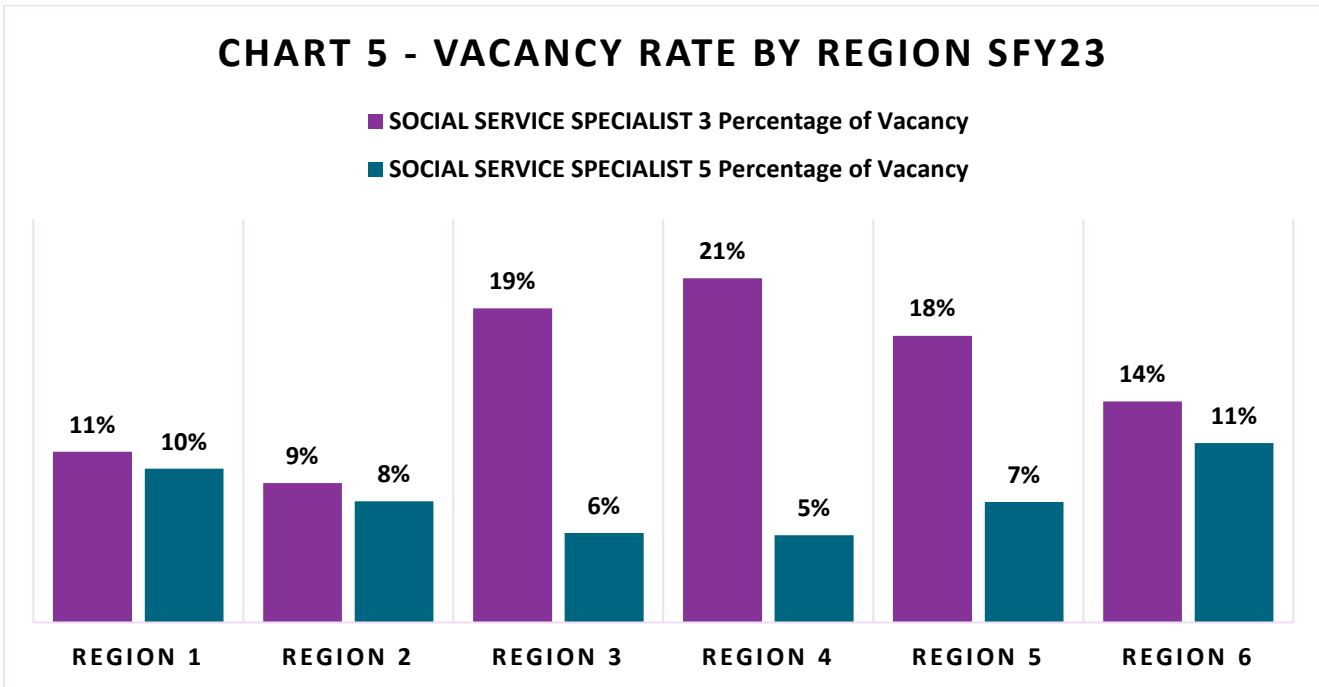
### Quarterly Expense by Region



### Vacancy Rates

Vacancy rates are generally high, especially for the SSS3 job class compared to SSS5. DCYF does not have any permanent positions in the SSS1 classification. Due to high vacancies, regions are hiring more SSS1 entry level positions. During Regional Core Training (RCT) SSS1's are secondarily assigned on cases as a practical way of learning the job. These positions are designed to be in training for a year and are usually not considered case-carrying during this time as they require a high degree of training, coaching, mentoring, and supervision. After the first year, an SSS1 will progress to SSS2 for another year; then finally to SSS3 — the goal class. Recent collaboration between HR and child welfare is targeting sourcing and recruitment resources to parts of the state where recruitment has been extremely challenging. Chart 5 shows the vacancy rates by region for SFY 2023.

**CHART 5 - VACANCY RATE BY REGION SFY23**



## Separations

As reflected in Chart 6 and Chart 8, a total of 163 employees left DCYF between January and June 2023. In the first quarter of 2023 (January-March), 70 staff exited the agency. Another 93 staff exited at the close of the second quarter of 2023 (April-June). Of the 163 exits, 17 were transfers to other government agencies and 103 were resignations. SSS3s accounted for 100% of all the transfers during this period.

Resignations continue to be the dominant reason code for staff exits. SSS3s accounted for 95.2% of the resignations during the first quarter, and 88.5% of resignations during the second quarter. In sum, the SSS3 class accounted for 91.3% of all the resignations during this period.

Chart 6: January-March 2023 Separations

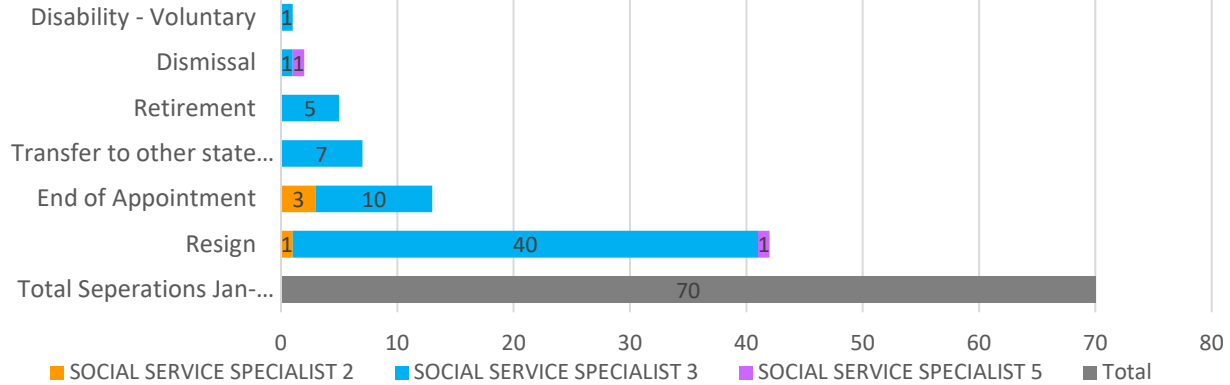
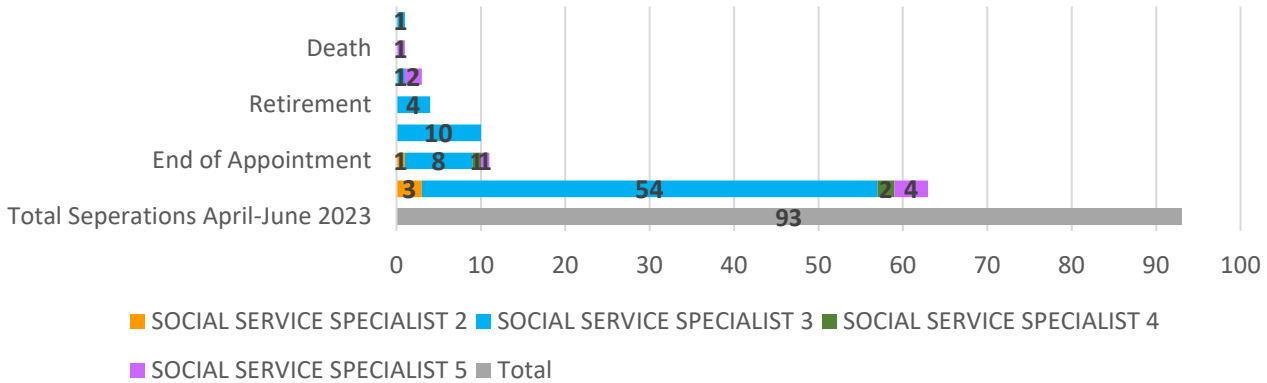
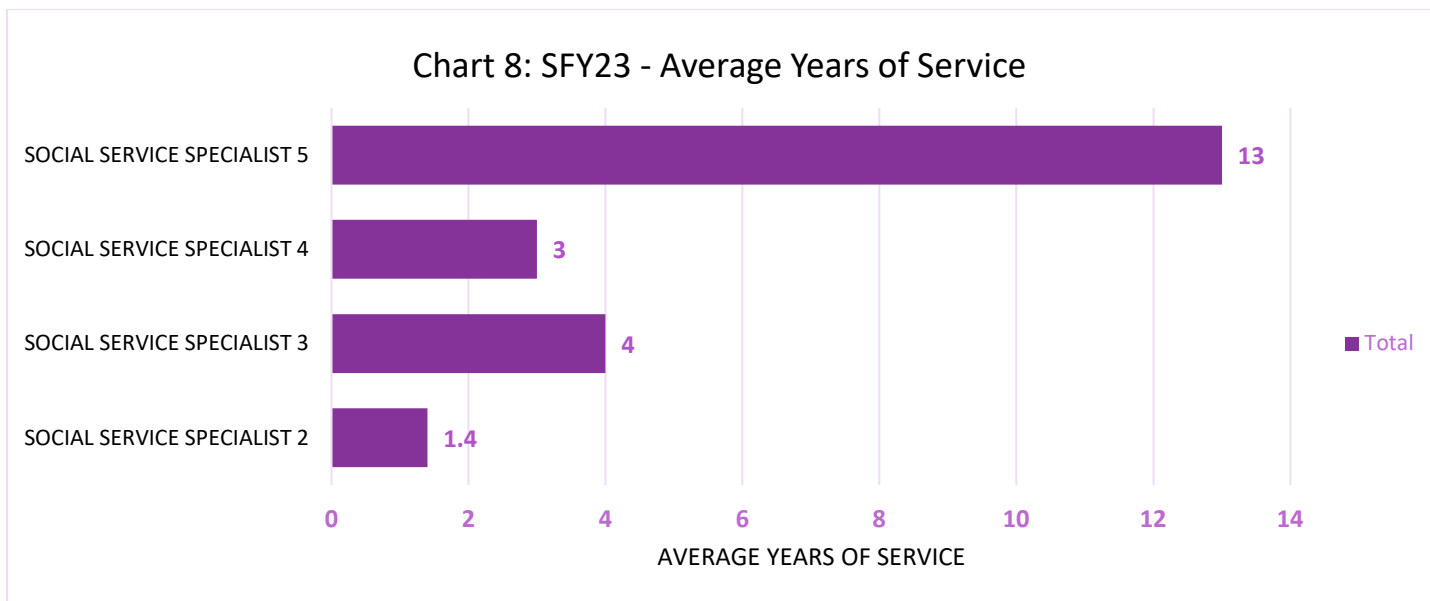


Chart 7: April-June 2023 Separations



## Average Lengths of Employment

Average lengths of employment for the SSS class for fiscal year 2023 are represented in Chart 8. SSS 5 had an average length of 13 years of employment; SSS3 class had an average length of 4 years of employment; SSS4 had an average employment length of 3 years; and SSS2 had an average length of 1.4 years. The SSS2 class has the shortest length of employment because it is a transition class and workers usually spend about a year in the SSS2 class.



### Conclusion

The 2022 Child Welfare Retention Report showed that staff left for a variety of reasons; such as high caseloads; inadequate compensation for child welfare workers; concern for physical and psychological safety; high degree of job stress; an increase in acuity levels of clients; impact of critical incidents and traumatic events on staff mental health; inadequate training; technology; workplace climate; inadequate client services in remote parts of the state; placement crisis; and inadequate supports to name a few.

Within the past four years, the Department lost several providers, worsening the placement crisis. As the data shows, the agency continued to lose qualified staff to other state agencies with similar Social Service Specialist or equivalent positions that have considerably lower stress levels but pay the same salary. Many child welfare workers have been lost to hospitals, private and federal agencies that pay higher salaries, offer recruitment and retention bonuses, and provide support for licensure. Turnover among child welfare staff is highest within the first three years of employment due to difficulties coping with the demands of the job. New legislation and court requirements are increasing the expectations for child welfare workers, making it even more challenging for retention.

Child welfare workers are considered an essential workforce because of the nature of their jobs. During severe inclement weather, emergencies, or natural disasters, they are expected to respond to reports of child abuse and neglect; coordinate their work with law enforcement and other partners; conduct face-to-face meetings with child victims; and monthly visits with children, parents, and caregivers.

Child welfare has adapted to the hybrid work environment, but recruitment and retention challenges remain. The result of the 2019 research on telework showed no impact on retention of child welfare staff. The Child Welfare Retention Report contains a range of recommendations for improving



recruitment and staff retention. Some of the recommendations have been implemented; some are in the process of being implemented; and others will take time to implement. The 2023 legislatively provisioned workload study concluded in July with recommendations for additional staffing resources.

## Appendix

### Social Service Specialists (SSS) Job Classification Definitions per Office of Financial Management (OFM) State HR

**SSS1** – This is the entry-level, in-training classification for the professional social services series. Performs intakes, assessments, and/or investigations of abandonment, abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, personal exploitation or self-neglect of vulnerable adults or abuse and neglect of children. Clients served are children and/or families in which risk of child abuse or neglect is minimal, or adults with disabilities resulting from varying degrees of incapacity, or vocational, social, cultural or health impairments that hinder economic or residential independence.

**SSS2** – This is the journey level of the series. Positions provide professional-level social services to children and/or families in which risk of child abuse or neglect are minimal or investigations of abandonment, abuse, neglect, financial/personal exploitation, and self-neglect for vulnerable adults resulting from varying degrees of incapacity, or vocational, social, cultural or health impairments that hinder economic or residential independence.

**SSS3** – Functions as a lead worker or sole case manager in a remote location. Positions that serve as a lead worker or sole case manager in a remote location are responsible for the full scope of social services provided in that location.

**SSS4** – Positions at this level serve as a lead worker and perform advanced-level specialized case management conducting investigations of abandonment, abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, personal exploitation or self-neglect of vulnerable adults and children. (Established July 1, 2019)

**SSS5** – Functions as the first-line supervisor of a unit of Social Service Specialists (implemented July 1, 2019).

#### Social Services Support and Administrative Staff job classification definitions:

**Social Service Support Specialist (SSSS)** – Assists Social Service Specialists in providing services to children and/or families where there is risk of child abuse or neglect, such as: conducting health and safety home visits, transporting children to scheduled visitations, and/or supervising children/parent visitations.

**Social and Health Program Consultant (SHPC) 1** – Assist a higher-level Program Manager by developing a portion of and/or monitoring, evaluating, or coordinating social, financial or health services programs, projects or the program policies and procedures. May develop and/or conduct training in program policies and procedures to staff or service vendors.

**SHPC 2** – Independently develop, administer and/or monitor social, financial or health services programs; or the program policies and procedures for use by staff or service vendors; or develop plans for monitoring service delivery; or develop, implement, monitor, and provide statewide program consultation and/or technical assistance to staff, community or providers to enhance the delivery of services; or serves as a licenser of daycare centers.

**SHPC 3** – Within the social service system, this position serves as a designated lead worker, directing and monitoring the activities of a team comprised of professional level social service staff, other professional staff, families and the community in providing guidance to families that are at risk of dependency and/or serving clients with severe and intense social service needs. These positions also develop, administer and/or monitor social, financial or health services programs; or the program policies and procedures used by staff or vendors.

**SHPC 4** - (1) Serves as a designated specialist for client eligibility for social services, the training of staff who conduct client eligibility assessments and the monitoring of staff and staff processes in meeting state and federal policies and regulations. Conducts quality assurance audits and reviews responses to quality assurance audits, as necessitated by legal, statutory or legislative requirements. Reviews and approves corrective action plans.

OR

(2) Oversees the intake and coordination of client cases to include acting as the liaison with internal DCYF entities and external entities such as law enforcement, courts, attorneys, and community-based social service organizations; and monitors these cases through the abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation hearings process to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of vulnerable children and adults.

**Secretary** – In support of a supervisor and/or staff members, provides secretarial services and assistance for the purpose of facilitating the supervisor's and/or staff members' own work and relieving the supervisor and/or staff members of day-to-day clerical detail. Applies knowledge of supervisor's and/or staff members' work commitments including status of projects and nature of contacts. Secretarial duties include making travel arrangements, scheduling meetings, taking notes, and transcribing minutes, screening calls and visitors, keeping supervisors and/or staff member's calendar(s) and committing supervisor's and/or staff members' time.

**Secretary Lead** – As the designated lead worker, assigns, instructs and checks the work of lower-level staff and performs the duties of Secretary Senior including complex secretarial duties such as independently planning, organizing and prioritizing work, monitoring and evaluating budget(s) status and initiating corrections, developing travel itineraries, compiling reports, studies, applications and developing, modifying and/or maintaining database management, office record-keeping, or filing system(s). Positions establish office procedures, standards, priorities and deadlines, coordinate office operations, initiate action to ensure work unit and/or office goals are met and have frequent contacts with clients, the public, staff members from other departments, students, and faculty.

**Secretary Senior** – Performs complex secretarial duties such as independently planning, organizing, and prioritizing work, monitoring and evaluating budget(s) status and initiating corrections, developing travel itineraries, compiling reports, studies or applications, developing, modifying and/or maintaining database management, office record-keeping; or filing system(s), establishing office procedures, standards, priorities, and deadlines, and coordinating office operations. Positions initiate action to ensure work unit and office goals are met and have frequent contacts with clients, the public, staff members from other departments, students, and faculty.

**Secretary Supervisor** – Supervise office support staff, interview and recommends the selection of applicants, conduct training, assign, and schedule work, act on leave requests, conduct annual performance evaluations and recommend corrective or disciplinary actions. Positions establish office procedures, standards, priorities and deadlines and have frequent contact with clients, the public, students, faculty, staff members from other departments and management staff. Positions perform complex secretarial duties such as independently planning, organizing and prioritizing work to meet internal and external deadlines, monitoring and evaluating budget(s) status and initiating corrections, developing travel itineraries, compiling reports, studies and applications, developing, modifying and/or maintaining database management, office record-keeping, or filing system(s), coordinating office operations and initiating action to ensure work unit and office goals are met. Positions may perform administrative duties as delegated by the supervisor and/or provide and coordinate administrative support functions for a large unit. Exercise independent judgment to accomplish assignments or solve problems and to develop new work methods, procedures, strategies or modify existing work methods, procedures; and strategies to solve new or unusual problems. Work is subject to review at the completion stage to determine effectiveness in producing expected results.