

# DCYF Takes Action in Response to Child Advocate’s Report

*DCYF Director Piccola announces preliminary action plan to address concerns raised by the report*

DCYF is committed to protecting our state’s most vulnerable children. Injuries to a child or the loss of a child are tragedies that our staff work to avoid day in and day out. Upon taking office, Governor Gina M. Raimondo took swift action to tackle the inherent challenges at DCYF. There has been a great deal of progress at the agency, from reductions in the use of congregate care, including group homes, and the purchase of new home-based and community services to assist children and families, to the implementation of stronger financial controls. However, there are still critical challenges that need to be addressed immediately. The Governor selected Dr. Trista Piccola as the permanent Director for the Department because she brings over 23 years of child welfare experience and strong leadership to Rhode Island. Director Piccola has created a preliminary action plan – outlined below – to address concerns raised by the Child Advocate’s report.

## 1. FILLING FRONTLINE VACANCIES – ONGOING

### *Key Supporting Actions*

- 18 newly hired frontline staff, including Child Protective Investigators and Child Support Technicians, started at DCYF on Monday, April 3, 2017. This hiring dropped the Department’s frontline vacancy rate from 20% to 16%.
- **By May 31, DCYF plans to hire an additional 47 frontline staff. This hiring will reduce the frontline vacancy rate to 6%, not including any subsequent attrition that occurs.**

## 2. EVALUATING LEADERSHIP IN CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS) UNIT – ONGOING

### *Key Supporting Actions*

- The Director’s initial assessment of DCYF’s leadership structure resulted in a call for a permanent Assistant Director of CPS. This permanent position is posted and the Director will evaluate qualified applicants for this position. In the interim, the Department’s Deputy Director has been assigned to oversee the CPS unit.
- The Deputy Director is ensuring that the CPS unit has the appropriate management oversight and has daily briefings with the Director to discuss issues as they arise. The Deputy Director has also instituted a daily review of all information/referrals with the CPS senior team.

## 3. STRENGTHENING CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES UNIT – IN DEVELOPMENT

### *Key Supporting Actions*

- **On or before May 31, Director Piccola will have:**
  - Mapped the Department’s entire “front door” process, to see how families interact with DCYF from the first phone call to the hotline
  - Built a structured response for information/referrals
  - Addressed how the Department can better assess and respond to the limited protective capacity for children ages 6 and under

## 4. ASSESSING CHILD SAFETY AND RISK – IN DEVELOPMENT

### *Key Supporting Actions*

- The Department will strengthen the practice around assessing child safety and risk factors. The DCYF team has worked on an approach to safety and risk assessment from a national model called Structured Decision Making. The goal of Structured Decision Making is to provide staff with a set of tools and assessments so the Department has a standardized practice for assessing safety and risk and improves consistency in response.