

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION
Braam Compliance



2015-17 BIENNIAL BUDGET

Request	FY16	FY17	15-17
FTE	63.0	63.0	63.0
GF-State	\$3,895,000	\$3,895,000	\$7,790,000
Total	\$5,052,000	\$5,052,000	\$10,104,000

DECISION PACKAGE SUMMARY

The Children's Administration (CA) requests 63.0 FTEs and \$7,790,000 GF-State and \$10,104,000 Total Funds in the 2015-17 Biennium in order to become compliant with measures required under the Braam settlement. By funding this request, CA is expected to achieve compliance for required Braam outcomes including, but not limited to, locating children on the run, conducting monthly health and safety checks for children in out of home care, and ensuring foster parents have adequate information, training and support.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 2004, the department settled a lawsuit brought by a number of former foster children in what is known as the Braam case. The 2011 revised settlement agreement mandated the department to become compliant with 21 outcomes related to the welfare and well-being of the children in out of home care and their caregivers.

In July of 2014, CA went back to the court to demonstrate that it had substantially complied with the majority of remaining measures. The court did not find that CA was in full compliance, despite substantial improvement in most measures. CA now has 14 months to achieve compliance with the measures. By operation of the agreement, if CA achieves 18 consecutive months of full compliance related to supporting sibling visits, conducting monthly health and safety visits each and every month with children in out of home care, giving caregivers necessary information when a child is placed with them, and reducing the number of youth who run from out of home care and the days they are on the run, the remainder of the measures is not enforceable.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Since 2008, CA has not received additional funding to become compliant with the Braam settlement. Over the past year, CA exhausted all strategies currently possible with existing staff to become compliant. This effort resulted in four additional measures being removed from the list for compliance. However, achievement of the remaining measures requires additional staffing.

CA proposes hiring 45 social workers, spread throughout offices, in order to assist in maintaining or achieving compliance with several measures, including conducting and documenting twice monthly sibling visits or contacts, when appropriate. These staff will phase in beginning January 2015. The current sibling visit measure is challenging because two documented visits or contacts must occur between siblings every month. Also, CA cannot miss a monthly health



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and safety visit during each performance year; if any monthly visit is missed, that case is out of compliance for the remainder of the year. In addition, these positions will ensure that caregivers receive the caregiver information packet within the very narrow timeframes outlined in the agreement. Lastly, the staff will also contact caregivers upon initial placement of a foster child to ensure they have adequate support and resources from the department. These activities will help free up time for case carrying social workers so they may conduct their monthly health and safety visits.

In addition, CA proposes hiring additional 18 social workers beginning January 2015 to assist with placement stability, especially for youth at a high risk for running away from care. CA will work with the Research and Data Administration within DSHS to determine which youth are most at risk of running and focus attention on them and their caregivers. In a recent focus group conducted with repeat runaways, the main factor reported that either prevented or increased running away was the quality of the placement and whether the youth feel supported by the department and caregiver.

If CA must become compliant on all measures, the most costly would be achieving the caseload requirement dictated in the settlement - which requires that at least 90 percent of social workers assigned at least one child in out of home care have caseloads at or below 18.0. This measure would require an average caseload of 1:15. To become compliant with this measure, CA would need to add 90 additional social workers plus supervisors and clerical support for those positions. By operation of the agreement, this higher cost need can be avoided by filling the above 63 new positions, which represents a lower cost option to achieving compliance, while ensuring that foster children are safe and their basic needs are met.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The budget request supports DSHS Goal 3: Protection - Each individual who is vulnerable will be protected. The decision package is essential to implementing the CA's Strategic Objectives- 3.2: Percentage of children in placement who received a visit to evaluate their health and safety during a calendar month they were in care will increase; and 3.9: Percentage of children in foster care longer than five years will decrease.

This decision package supports the Results Washington goals to help keep people safe in their homes, on their jobs, and in their communities and decrease the percent of children in out-of-home placement five years or more.

With these additional staff, CA will be able to become compliant with the following Braam measures:

- 90 percent of the children in out of home care would receive a monthly health and safety visit each and every month of the year.
- 90 percent of all children in out of home care would visit or contact their siblings at least twice a month.
- 90 percent of all caregivers will be given critical information about the children placed with them within 72 hours of initial placement, at or before a planned change in placement, or within 24 hours of an urgent placement change.
- 2.35 percent of youth in out of home care for at least 30 days who run away from out of home care placement during the fiscal year.



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- Median number of days that youth are on runaway status is 25 days or less.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACT

The Braam measures are important to CA's stakeholders, including foster parents and other caregivers and youth advocates.



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