

## DHS/DSS STAFFING NEEDS as REPORTED to LEGISLATURE

Caseloads are the primary driver of the need for staffing throughout DHS is the caseload. The caseload for public assistance programs is driven largely by economic factors. The child welfare caseload may vary for other reasons including changes in policy or program emphasis. The three largest assistance programs in the Family Investment Administration have all experienced significant decreases in caseloads. Due to the significant decreases in children in foster care placements, the total number of children in out-of-home care has decreased by 8.5% during this period. These decreases have an impact on the staffing needs of the agency.

The fiscal 2019 allowance abolishes 100.0 vacant positions throughout the department. No significant impact from the position abolitions is expected because all were vacant. Some of these positions are caseworker positions. However, the impact is still expected to be limited. In SSA, 23.5 positions were abolished in the Local Child Welfare Services programs, only 9.0 of these positions were caseworker positions. Most jurisdictions still meet the caseworker standards, and there are still sufficient vacant caseworker positions throughout the State to ensure all jurisdictions could meet the standard. In addition, FIA caseloads for public benefits have significantly declined, as has the overall workload, due to the transition of income-based Medicaid eligibility determination to the Health Benefit Exchange. As such, fewer positions are needed to complete the work of the administration. The abolitions include: • 41.0 positions in FIA; • 34.5 positions in SSA; • 19.5 positions in DHS Administration; and • 5 positions in CSA

Social Services Administration Child welfare caseload ratios have been of concern to GAM for many years. In 1998, GAM passed the Child Welfare Workforce Initiative requiring that DHS and DBM ensure Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) recommended caseload to staffing levels are met. The Child Welfare Accountability Act of 2006 reiterated this requirement. For the past decade, the budget committees have either withheld funds until a certain number of caseworker positions were filled or asked DHS to report on caseload ratios for supervisor and caseworker positions. The request for information continued as part of the 2016 JCR.

The existing CWLA recommended caseload ratios are a series of caseload ratios separated by the type of case or work being undertaken. For example, intake, preservation services, out-of-home placement foster care, and out-of-home placement kinship care each have individual ratios. The amount of workers needed are then combined and compared to the number of filled positions. A separate ratio determines the amount of supervisors needed. Statewide, there is a surplus of both filled caseworker positions (109.7) and filled supervisor positions (10.5); however, individual jurisdictions have shortages.

Three jurisdictions have shortfalls in the number of filled caseworker positions (Baltimore County, Charles, and St. Mary's counties) with a cumulative shortfall of 14.1 positions. Two of the three jurisdictions could meet the number of caseworkers needed if the jurisdiction filled more of the vacant positions. Charles County could not meet the caseworker need with its vacant position, but DHS could move surplus vacant positions to Charles County to resolve the remaining shortfall. A more significant issue occurs among supervisor positions. While there is a net surplus in filled supervisor positions, nine jurisdictions have a cumulative shortfall of 17.1 supervisor positions. Only one of these jurisdictions has enough vacant positions to cover the shortfall.

However, DHS has enough surplus vacant supervisor positions statewide to cover the shortfall if positions were moved between jurisdictions. In addition, one of the shortfalls is of a nominal amount (0.1 position). DHS indicates that CWLA is beginning the process of reviewing and updating the CWLA standards.

The Child Support Enforcement Administration (CSEA) has indicated that compensation for child support specialists at DHS is not competitive with neighboring states. Noncompetitive compensation is likely to contribute to high vacancy rates in other parts of DHS, as well.

Maryland Total Human Services Information Network Major IT Project DHS is leading an effort to overhaul legacy IT systems throughout the State into one modular system. The new IT system, called the Maryland Total Human Services Information Network (MD THINK), will support a more integrated, client-centric approach to health and human services delivery and management, which is designed to improve efficiency at DHS and partner agencies.

**MD THINK has the potential to alleviate the effect of staffing shortfalls by improving efficiency.**