

Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment

Annual Report

2023



The Governor's Office
of Youth, Faith
and Family



Council on Child
Safety and
Family Empowerment

goyff.AZ.gov/csfe



KATIE HOBBS
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

TONYA HAMILTON
DIRECTOR

July 31, 2023

Governor Katie Hobbs
State Capitol Executive Tower
1700 West Washington Street.
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor,

It has been our pleasure to serve as the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment Co-Chairs. We would like to acknowledge the work of this Council, its members, workgroups, and task force over the past year. Their expertise and passion to continue serving and supporting vulnerable communities across Arizona have made this work possible.

Over the past year, the Council heard from issue-area experts highlighting efforts across the state that promote preventing, reducing, and mitigating the number of Arizonans who experience Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to ensure we support and serve our most vulnerable children and families. These presentations helped inform the Council about where targeted support is needed to implement trauma-informed care strategies to strengthen families. The council continues to amplify available resources and raise awareness about organizations dedicated to supporting our most vulnerable children and families.

We hope our continued efforts and collaborative partnerships concerning child well-being will improve and better serve Arizona families.

Sincerely,

Maria Cristina Fuentes
Co-Chair

Colleen McNally
Co-Chair

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COUNCIL PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE	1
COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP	2
COUNCIL GOALS, 2022/23	3
COUNCIL ACTIVITIES, 2022/23	3
COUNCIL MEETING PRESENTATIONS	5
COUNCIL SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS	8
COUNCIL WORKGROUP REPORTS	8

COUNCIL PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

The Governor’s Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment (the Council) is administered by the [Governor’s Office of Youth, Faith and Family \(GOYFF\)](#) and authorized under [Executive Order 2020-05](#). Established under the premise that strong families and thriving children are vital to the health and success of our community and economy, the Council works to align, leverage, and coordinate Arizona's governmental and non-governmental organizations to broaden the network of support and services for Arizona’s most vulnerable children and families.

In addition to holding five Council meetings annually, Council members serve on workgroups and the Children’s Justice State Task Force (CJ Task Force) to further facilitate discussions around community needs, address systemic challenges to identify best practices, and provide evidence-based solutions.

Children’s Justice State Task Force

The CJ Task Force is responsible for making training and policy recommendations in each of the three categories in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), Section 107(e)(1). With representation from law enforcement, the judicial system, child advocates, and child protection services, the CJ Task Force develops a three-year plan to address training and policy recommendations for the state.

Prevention Workgroup

The Prevention Workgroup supports, leverages, and promotes ongoing bodies of work throughout the state that improve child well-being; prevent child abuse and neglect; support and empower families; and ensure access to services and supports for those who need them.

Outreach Workgroup

The Outreach Workgroup connects with Arizona’s community and faith-based partners to improve and promote services that expand access to services for children and families in need.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Under Executive Order 2020-05, the Council is composed of individuals appointed by the Governor who serve at her pleasure, without compensation. The following members currently serve on the Governor's Council on Child Safety and Family Empowerment:

Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair
Copa Health

Colleen McNally, Co-Chair
Presiding Juvenile Court Judge, Retired

Berisha Black
Trinity Opportunity Alliance

Leslie Y. Reprogle
Agape Adoption Agency of Arizona

Brad Snyder
New Amsterdam Consulting, Inc

Mark Upton
Christian Family Care

Claire Louge
Prevent Child Abuse Arizona

Obed Escobar
The Titus Foundation

Darlene Newsom
Community Volunteer

Paul Mulligan
Catholic Charities

Dr. Lorrie Henderson
Jewish Family & Children's Service

Rachel Mitchell
Maricopa County Attorney's Office

Ginger Ward
Southwest Human Development

Richard Yarbough
Pilgrim Rest Foundation

James Molina
Step Up Arizona

Ryan Young
Youth Member

Jeff Taylor
Lead By Experience

Terry Crist
City of Grace

Kate Brophy McGee
Community Leader

Torrie Taj
Child Crisis Arizona

Kathryn Blades Ptak
Foster/Adoptive Parent

Warren Stewart, Sr.
First Institutional Baptist Church

Katie O'Dell
AZ 1.27

COUNCIL GOALS, 2022/23

The Council continues to focus on reducing, preventing, and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), growing trauma-informed services, and improving child well-being. Council meetings offer an opportunity to learn from issue-area experts on information related to the aforementioned topics, guiding the Council's efforts to ensure that ACEs prevention and trauma-informed care become the standard for supporting children and families across Arizona.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES, 2022/23

Maricopa County National Adoption Day

November 2022

Kathryn Pidgeon, former Council Co-Chair, serves as co-chair of the [Maricopa County National Adoption Day Foundation](#). Established in 2012, the 501(c)(3) fundraises, organizes, and facilitates Maricopa County's National Adoption Day event each November.

National Adoption Day is a national effort to raise awareness of children in foster care waiting to find a safe, permanent, and loving family. Since 2000, Maricopa County has celebrated National Adoption Day and annually hosts one of the nation's largest celebrations. In 2022, 104 children were adopted into safe, permanent, and loving homes.

Arizona Department of Child Safety Welcome Center Soft-Launch Opening

December 2022

The new Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) Welcome Center opened in December 2022 to support children entering foster care. The trauma-informed transition center is designed with various spaces to accommodate the different needs of children of all ages before being placed with a family. Members from the previous Governor's administration, the LoveUp Foundation, and community stakeholders were present to tour the new facility and see the different spaces available to the children coming into the Center.



Arizona Governor's Office Executive Team Amberly's Place Tour

May 2023

In May 2023, Governor Katie Hobbs' Director of Community and Constituent Engagement, Tracy Lopes, and GOYFF Director Tonya Hamilton traveled to Yuma, Arizona to tour [Amberly's Place](#). They saw firsthand how the Family Advocacy Center provides innovative, multi-disciplinary approaches to investigations, prosecutions, and interventions of cases involving child sexual and/or physical abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking.



Maricopa County Family Reunification Day Event

June 2023

The 'Rally to Reunify - 2023 Maricopa County Family Reunification Day Celebration' provided families the opportunity to share their success stories and inspire hope for others actively involved in dependency matters with the juvenile court. Council Co-Chair Colleen McNally served as the event's emcee and was joined by Council Member Pastor Terry Crist, GOYFF Director Tonya Hamilton, City of Mesa Mayor John Giles, Governor Katie Hobbs' Director of Community and Constituent Engagement, Tracy Lopes, and Governor Katie Hobbs, who additionally proclaimed June 2023 as [Arizona Family Reunification Month](#).

Over 200 individuals (approximately 75 families) were present at the 2023 event, and attendees included local families, child welfare staff, attorneys, counselors, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), and parent allies.



COUNCIL MEETING PRESENTATIONS

During the past year, the Council heard presentations from issue-area experts on topics related to child well-being with an emphasis on service providers. The Council continued to learn and implement strategies that support safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. Find presentation materials on the [Council's website](#). Presentations included the following:

Thrive AZ

Steve Vogel, President | Thrive AZ

September 8, 2022

Since opening its doors in August 2016, it has been the mission of [Thrive AZ](#) to better the lives of Arizona families. By connecting individuals with critical resources, the organization has played an integral role in foster care prevention, biological family reunification, and services for youth who have aged out of foster care. Recently, Thrive AZ expanded to a 25-acre property to meet the growing needs of aged-out youth. The campus has 15 male dorms and a commercial-size kitchen that can feed up to 300 people. In June 2022, Thrive AZ opened their “Hope House,” a 12-room maternity ward for young women who have aged out and are pregnant. Since 2016, Thrive AZ’s impact on Arizona has resulted in 5,700 beds given to at-risk youth, 5,697 children served, 556 youth who have aged out of foster care, 1,732 foster care preventions/interventions, and 530 reunifications.

Hope Women’s Center

Tammy Abernathy, CEO | Hope Women’s Center

September 8, 2022

[Hope Women’s Center](#) is a faith-based organization that serves all women who need help through a holistic approach to their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs in a trauma-informed care setting, giving women a safe place to process wounds of the past or present while establishing goals for a new future. As of 2021, Hope Women’s Center invested 3,736 hours of emotional and mental help, provided over 2,600 educational opportunities related to parenting and abuse prevention, and served 1,100 women, providing nearly 54,000 client services across their six locations around the state: Phoenix, Apache Junction, Coolidge, West Valley, Maricopa, and a maternity home in Camp Verde.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Dr. Angela Salomon, Director of Programs | StreetLightUSA

March 9, 2023

Since 2009, [StreetLightUSA](#) has provided adolescent residential services to at-risk, highly suspected, or confirmed victims of child sexual exploitation or child sex trafficking. As of March 2023, the most frequent age of an individual in the program is 16, with an average ACE score of 6-7. The primary method of exploitation is the boyfriend/romeo followed by the online sexual luring/exploitation method. To date, StreetLightUSA has served approximately 1,300 girls; 98%

of the girls reported being from Arizona, and 100% are confirmed or suspected victims of sex trafficking.

Unhoused Youth: LGBTQIA+

Sarah Chung, Senior Facilitator | U.S. Department of Labor and the National Veterans' Technical Assistance Center

March 9, 2023

Across the nation, on any night and in any year, approximately 41,000 unaccompanied youth, ages 13-25, experience homelessness. LGBTQIA+ youth and Black/African American youth disproportionately represent this number. There is a need to continue analyzing the causes, risks, and protective factors to develop appropriate support strategies at entry points. Examples of entry points are shelters, transitional housing, temporary housing assistance, and permanent supportive housing.

Unhoused Youth in Arizona

Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Clinical Director | Arizona State University Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research (ASU STIR)

March 9, 2023

The Youth Experiences Survey (Y.E.S.) is an annual study of the experiences of homeless young adults in Arizona, conducted since 2014 by the [Arizona State University Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research \(ASU STIR\)](#) in partnership with four agencies from Phoenix and Tucson that provide direct services to homeless persons: [Our Family Services of Tucson](#), [Native American Connections](#), [UMOM](#), and [one.n.ten of Phoenix](#). The Y.E.S. focuses on how the life experiences of Arizona's homeless young adults (ages 18-25) increase their risk of experiencing human trafficking. The findings from the Y.E.S. have consistently provided insight into the challenges and needs of Arizona's homeless youth to target services and the scope of youth who have experienced sex and labor exploitation.

The findings from the 2022 study identified that there is still a large ongoing need to aid homeless young adults in the state of Arizona with services that include but are not limited to educational support, services specifically for individuals at higher risk for homelessness, and mental health support to address maladaptive coping behaviors (i.e. substance use) and the significant effects of trauma. Prevention and early intervention is key for school-age children at risk for homelessness.

Arizona Department of Child Safety Welcome Center Human Trafficking Training

Joanna Jauregui, Senior Program Coordinator | McCain Institute

March 9, 2023

Due to the unique position DCS has in connection with vulnerable children, the McCain Institute and ASU STIR designed training programs for DCS staff. The training curriculum included legal definitions, the dynamics of child sex trafficking (recruitment locations/tactics, grooming & trauma bonding, means of control, and experiences in the life), the different styles of traffickers,

the impacts of abuse, the warning signs, how to support victims, how to report, and available Arizona-based resources. The McCain Institute also offers an accredited online safety [certificate program](#) that follows this curriculum.

Foster Cooperative

Kim Vehon, Founder and CEO | Foster Arizona

May 11, 2023

[Foster Arizona](#) and the [Foster Arizona Housing Project](#) work to educate, empower, and engage youth, families, and the community to offer hope through connections. Powered by Foster Arizona and launched in March 2023, the [Foster Cooperative](#) is an open-source online community with tools for individuals helping youth facing adversity that provides connections, quality resources, peer support, local events, and training to all those who are a part of the site. Since launching, 150 users have benefited from the site's resources.

Arizona Child Abuse Prevention Conference

Molly Peterson, Director of Strategic Partnerships | Prevent Child Abuse Arizona

May 11, 2023

[Prevent Child Abuse Arizona](#) is one of 50 Prevent Child Abuse America chapters dedicated to strengthening families and protecting children through collaboration, education, and advocacy. The [29th Arizona Child Abuse Prevention Conference](#) occurred July 18-19, 2023, and approximately 700-800 child welfare professionals, advocates, healthcare workers, early education providers, community leaders, volunteers, law enforcement professionals, and policymakers were in attendance. The annual statewide conference connects leaders, organizations, and individuals utilizing evidence- and strength-based solutions to increase resiliency in the populations they serve. Based on the reach of attendees, approximately 40,000 Arizona families are positively affected by the knowledge, networking, and tools received each year.

Maricopa County Family Reunification Day Event

Victoria Strayer, Co-Founder, and Co-Executive Director | Voices for CASA Children

May 11, 2023

The [Maricopa County Family Reunification Day Event](#) celebrates the accomplishments of biological parents who have overcome an array of challenges to reunify with their children successfully. This event supports positive, long-lasting permanency outcomes by harnessing the power of parent participation for a better Child Welfare experience that prevents re-entry. By teaming with reunified families to co-create a psychologically safe forum for parents to share concerns and express their needs, Arizonans can actively cultivate their local community to reflect on the more diverse demographics across the state while remaining culturally sensitive.

Partners for the 2023 Maricopa County Family Reunification Day Event included the [Arizona Department of Child Safety](#), [Casey Family Programs](#), [CASA of Maricopa County Family](#)

[Involvement Center](#), [City of Grace](#), [Open Hearts Family Wellness](#), [Maricopa County Juvenile Court](#), [Prevent Child Abuse Arizona](#), and [Voices for CASA Children Inc.](#)

Arizona Department of Child Safety Welcome Center Update

Gillian Vanasse, Interim Deputy Director of Field Operations | Arizona Department of Child Safety

May 11, 2023

Since opening in December 2022, the [DCS Welcome Center](#), on average, 212 children enter each month with the average duration of each child’s stay being 48 hours. Approximately 27% of children entering care will stay at the Welcome Center at least once; 20% will have the Welcome Center as their first caregiver. Children aged 12 months and younger are the highest age group staying at the Welcome Center. The second is 16-year-olds, followed by 14-year-olds.

COUNCIL SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

In November 2022, at former First Lady Angela Ducey’s last meeting as Council Chair, she and Katherine Pidgeon, former Council Co-Chair, took the opportunity to present commendations to all Council members to acknowledge their hard work serving children and families for the State of Arizona.

Former First Lady Angela Ducey presented special recognition awards to Maria Cristina Fuentes and Mike Faust for their dedicated efforts during their tenures as directors at respective agencies.



COUNCIL WORKGROUP REPORTS

Three workgroups regularly convene to support the goals of the Council.

Children’s Justice State Task Force

Rachel Mitchell, Chair

The Children’s Justice State Task Force (CJ Task Force) meets quarterly and continues to further the work of the Children’s Justice Act's three-year assessment. Recommendations from the 2021 three-year assessment resulted in GOYFF releasing the [2022 Children’s Justice Act Grant](#)

[Program Request for Grant Application \(RFGA\)](#). GOYFF awarded approximately \$200,000 in grant funding to improve multidisciplinary coordination, provide training for professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of cases, and support the development of child and family advocacy centers to five Arizona organizations:

1. Amberly's Place, Inc.
2. Childhelp, Inc.
3. Flagstaff Medical Center - Safe Child Center
4. Prevent Child Abuse Arizona - Yavapai Family Advocacy Center
5. Southern Arizona Children's Advocacy Center

The next three-year assessment will be in Spring 2024.

Prevention Workgroup

Claire Louge, Chair

The Prevention Workgroup focused its strategies on improving the navigation of existing resources to better connect families to critical services that mitigate stress and ultimately prevent abuse and neglect. Initiatives from these strategies included:

- Foster Cooperative: An online platform where families and providers can connect and share resources.
- Family Resource Centers: Community-based resource hubs focused on helping families access formal and informal support to promote overall health and well-being.
- Considering Yourself a Mandated Supporter Training: Designed for individuals who work with children and families to help them identify ways to connect families to resources, provide support to reduce family overload, and prevent child maltreatment.

Prevention Workgroup members continue to connect these initiatives to their networks and other prevention-related coalitions and workgroups, including Thriving Families Safer Children, the Maricopa County Family Reunification Day Planning Committee, and Together for Arizona.

Outreach Workgroup

Katie O'Dell, Chair

The Outreach Workgroup continues to focus on the recruitment of foster and kinship families while partnering with faith leaders to identify effective strategies to recruit additional communities of faith to support Arizona foster care families.