

Complaint Process Summary Report for the 67th L.J. Compliance Report

During the reporting period of July 1st, 2021 to December 31st, 2021, the Child Welfare Team received a total of 66 L.J. class member complaints (including C&G). The pool of complaints similar to the prior reporting period includes cases where Custody and Guardianship had been previously granted, eliminating the class member status of these youth, but we felt that it was important to include these in the summary as contained below.

During this reporting period we didn't make any changes to the complaint process. There will be noticeable changes coming in the 69th reporting period resulting from feedback provided by the Internal Verification Agent. This feedback occurred during the 68th reporting period. The most noticeable change will be the provision of access to the complaint tracker for class members which will begin July 1st, 2022. Currently, all complaints, including those which arise in situations involving a LJ Class member or prior class member, are being tracked by the Executive Assistant of an Assistant Deputy Director of Child Welfare.

For this reporting period there was not one major theme to the complaints that stood out, but rather a few different themes that I want to highlight. The complaint areas included payment issues, permanency, and becoming a foster parent.

Out of the sixty-six inquiries, fifteen were related to payment issues. These are divided into two groups: services and stipends. There were eight inquiries in the area of services, and seven involving stipends. In the area of services there was a reported delay in various services including daycare payments, payments for extracurricular activities (martial arts) and flex funds. In seven of these instances documentation had initially been submitted, but payments were delayed due to CJAMS issues. The documentation was re-submitted and checks for all of these services were distributed. The other inquiry around payment and services was resolved with proof that the check was actually received and deposited. The remaining seven inquiries were in regard to the failure to receive stipends. In each of these cases the problem involved the lack of new household addresses. In each case, the Custody and Guardianship team explained the process and the documentation that was needed to solve the delayed stipend payments. Once the caretakers provided the team with the needed information, work with the Comptroller's office was completed to update the necessary information to resolve the inquiries. Resolving this issue in regard to these subsidy payments prevented further delays.

The second area to highlight are inquiries around delays in achieving permanency. Out of the sixty-six inquiries five were around delays in achieving permanency. In these cases, delays were collectively caused by a missing document that was holding up a custody and guardianship or an adoption study from being completed, reimbursement for fingerprinting, proposed relatives not having an up to date medical or prior criminal or CPS history that needed to be reviewed more closely. Upon receiving these inquiries, the Program Manager for the Adoption and Custody Unit immediately met with the team to triage the issue. In all of these cases, with some better communication and added support in understanding the process around the issues that needed resolution, each complaint was satisfactorily resolved.

The final area I want to highlight is the area of Kin Providers becoming restrictive foster parents. This issue resulted in six inquiries. The inquiries started as conversations around services and options for monetary assistance or further questions around how to become a foster parent. As the Agency does with all inquiries, the permanency case worker and in some instances the supervisor reached out to the Kin Providers and offered immediate support pending the possibility of becoming a restrictive foster parent in the form of food cards and flex funds for clothing, but also a bigger discussion regarding the steps necessary to become a restrictive foster parent occurred. In instances where the Kin Provider was ready to become a restrictive foster parent, the team ensured that they were immediately engaged with the Resource Home Unit. Finally, there was one inquiry in this category regarding meeting the requirements for becoming a restricted foster parent and necessary training in which the Resource Home team quickly worked with the provider to obtain the outstanding training that was needed.

This was the first reporting period where we had several biological mothers utilize the complaint line. We received five inquiries all from different biological mothers involving requesting financial assistance with housing repairs, rental assistance, case worker information, and placement concerns. In all of these instances, the permanency teams held internal staffings to address and support these inquiries and where appropriate FTDMs also occurred.

The remainder of the complaints could go under the umbrella of lack of communication. Examples of these include not notifying the family when a worker team has changed or a change in the visitation schedule had occurred. In addition, we received a few complaints from Child's Attorneys about not receiving timely change of placement or hospitalization notices. BCDSS leadership continues to focus on the importance of communication throughout the chain of command and with our partners. The Agency has seen an increase in positive collaboration with our providers and partners. The Agency will continue to stress the importance of communication with the workforce.

BCDSS will continue to track complaints and implement ways to improve services to the children, youth and families we serve. We will continue to share common themes and trends and ways we have and will in the future improve all facets of our service provision as a result of our complaint process.