

Social Service Worker Caseload Averages Reporting Pursuant to KRS 199.461(4)

Pursuant to KRS 199.461(4), the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (cabinet), Department for Community Based Services (DCBS or department) is required to report to the Governor and the Legislative Research Commission if the monthly statewide, regional, and county caseload average for social service workers providing foster care, child protection, and adult protection exceeds 25 active cases for 90 consecutive days. The number of established social service worker positions and the number of vacant social service worker positions are also included in this report.

This caseload report captures all cases entered into The Worker Information SysTem (TWIST), the database used for child and adult protection and permanency programs. In addition, the caseload report totals the number of current and past due cases per worker; tallies the number of staff per team, county, region, and state; and takes into consideration the number of staff who are working at full capacity (carrying a full caseload). The following notes are of importance when reviewing these caseload averages:

- Each case consists of activities and tasks that protection and permanency staff must complete, such as investigations and ongoing case management of in-home and out of home care cases, and social service workers are also completing home evaluations, non-specified court orders, and the provision of safety net services. A case may consist of more than one child or family member and may continue to be open for a significant amount of time due to factors outside of the social service worker's control, such as placement options, cooperation of biological parents, availability of court dates, decision of judge, etc.
- The caseload averages contained in this report were calculated using only the number of front-line social service workers who are working at full capacity (carrying a full caseload). Social service workers who are not able to carry a full caseload or who need assistance with carrying a caseload for any number of reasons, such as the staff being newly hired, requiring extended and/or intermittent medical leave, or engaged in desk duty, are staff who are not at full capacity and are omitted from the calculation. If staff not working at full capacity were included in the calculation, the average caseload values would be lower, but only including staff who are working at full capacity gives a more realistic average of what social service workers are actually experiencing.

This report separates caseloads into child protective services (CPS) and adult protective services (APS) because each DCBS service region has dedicated staff for the program areas. The CPS and APS caseloads contained in this report are the average caseloads by program area based on the number of filled caseload carrying positions at full capacity.

This reporting period is for the months of April 2022 through June 2022. During that time period, the statewide caseload averages were 38, 37, and 36 for each respective month and did exceed 25 cases for 90 consecutive days. The specific areas of the state that exceeded an average of 25 CPS cases per social service worker for 90 consecutive days included 52 counties and six of the nine service regions. This is an increase of two counties from the previous quarter. The regions include Jefferson, Northern Bluegrass,

Salt River Trail, Southern Bluegrass, The Lakes, and Two Rivers, and are listed in the below chart. High caseloads (leading to past due work assignments) and staff not working at full capacity directly contribute to caseloads exceeding the 25-case threshold, and both are directly related to department turnover. This happens especially when there is not enough staff to manage the workload demands; however, another factor that contributes to past due cases is related to workers leaving the agency with incomplete work assignments that are then reassigned. Reassigned work is a significant cause of past due cases. The retention of front-line social service workers and their supervisors is critical in preventing incomplete work assignments and past due cases. Children and their families (biological, foster, or adoptive) deserve to have workers assisting them who complete their assignments and close cases as timely as possible. The below charts show the county averages and regional and state averages (in bold) for the months of April through June 2022 that exceeded an average of 25 cases for 90 consecutive days. These numbers should not be added together as they are averages for each of the three months considered in the quarter. As stated above, this average of caseloads includes all cases (current investigative cases, ongoing cases, and past due investigative cases) divided by the number of front-line caseload-carrying social service workers who are working at full capacity.

Child Protective Services

Region	County	April	May	June
Eastern Mountain	Perry	34	36	33
Jefferson	Jefferson	98	107	103
Jefferson Average		98	107	103
Northern Bluegrass	Boone	35	32	36
	Bourbon	51	160	135
	Campbell	33	27	41
	Gallatin	33	32	32
	Kenton	34	33	28
Northern Bluegrass Average		34	30	30
Salt River Trail	Breckinridge	37	37	38
	Bullitt	33	31	32
	Franklin	40	42	38
	Grayson	28	43	42
	Hardin	50	61	65
	Henry	56	60	127
	LaRue	55	47	31
	Nelson	48	49	48
	Shelby	51	41	47
	Spencer	50	58	61
	Washington	26	27	30
Salt River Trail Average		37	39	40
Southern Bluegrass	Boyle	60	55	44

	Clark	37	41	32
	Fayette	43	52	45
	Garrard	36	39	70
	Jessamine	45	54	40
	Lincoln	28	29	29
	Madison	39	50	34
	Powell	31	29	27
Southern Bluegrass		39	45	38
The Cumberland	Adair	46	50	42
	Clay	29	31	28
	Clinton	27	66	44
	Green	43	44	37
	Pulaski	40	37	28
	Wayne	45	49	28
The Lakes	Caldwell	35	38	29
	Calloway	54	48	46
	Carlisle	37	40	44
	Christian	75	79	83
	Graves	53	47	43
	Hickman	117	114	106
	Hopkins	39	33	40
	Marshall	68	71	68
	McCracken	33	33	33
	Todd	41	48	30
	Trigg	28	26	29
The Lakes Average		45	44	45
Two Rivers	Allen	52	52	37
	Barren	30	28	37
	Butler	33	27	34
	Daviess	42	31	32
	Hart	40	27	26
	Metcalfe	31	35	38
	Monroe	72	65	62
	Simpson	49	35	36
	Warren	50	45	45
Two Rivers Average		37	33	34
Statewide Average		38	37	36

Adult Protective Services

DCBS has established dedicated adult protective services (APS) teams in each of the nine service regions across the state. These teams are managed regionally, and county data related to APS caseloads is not available. The caseload averages did exceed an average of 25 over a 90-day period in three (a decrease of one region from the prior reporting period) – Jefferson, Northern Bluegrass, and Southern Bluegrass – as well as statewide during the reporting period.

Region	April	May	June
Jefferson	271	336	315
Northern Bluegrass	323	148	96
Southern Bluegrass	48	50	47
Statewide Average	47	47	43

Established/Vacant Social Service Worker Positions

DCBS is required to report the number of established social service worker positions and the number of vacant social service worker positions for the counties that exceeded an average of 25 cases for 90 consecutive days. Each region is assigned a regional personnel cap, and regional leadership monitors each county’s caseload to make decisions as to where to assign positions. Therefore, the assignment of positions can change frequently due to turnover and changes in caseloads. For that reason, DCBS cannot report on county level vacancies as it changes based on the region/county needs. Below is the number of statewide and regional CPS and APS established/filled and vacant positions in the regions where caseloads exceeded an average of 25 cases for 90 consecutive days, as of July 15, 2022. Please note that DCBS allows counties with higher turnover rates to maintain additional positions to ensure they keep their hiring practices moving forward, which can result in variations between statewide and regional totals. The department has a personnel cap of 4,600 paid full-time (PFT) positions and 4,096 of those were filled as of June 30, 2022. Also, as of July 15, 2022, DCBS had 20 interim employees who are part of the new interim hiring process. These employees will become PFT employees as they move through the formal hiring process. Each division/area of the department is given a personnel cap to manage their staffing, and caps are adjusted as needs change.

Region	Established/Filled Caseload Carrying SSW Positions	Vacant SSW Positions
Jefferson	80	98
Northern Bluegrass	133	45
Salt River Trail	120	71
Southern Bluegrass	127	51
The Lakes	89	19
Two Rivers	151	25
Division of Service Regions	1,027	211

The Executive Branch budget bill, HB 1 G8(14), required the department to report on the number of filled specific social worker positions. Please see the following total number of filled positions as of June 30, 2022.

	FY 2022 12/31/21	FY 2022 03/31/22	FY 2022 06/30/22
Social Worker & Clinician Filled Positions			
Social Service Worker I	400	413	438
Social Service Worker II	249	250	233
Social Service Clinician I	374	355	348
Social Service Clinician II	200	214	239
TOTAL Social Worker & Clinician Filled Positions	1,223	1,232	1,258
Other Social Work Filled Positions			
Social Service Specialist	99	98	96
Family Services Office Supervisors	275	271	274
TOTAL Other Social Work Filled Positions	374	369	370
TOTAL Filled Positions	1,597	1,601	1,628

	FY 2022 12/31/21	FY 2022 03/31/22	FY 2022 06/30/22
CPS Caseload Carrying Filled	923	927	951
APS Caseload Carrying Filled	87	86	86
TOTAL CASELOAD CARRYING FILLED POSITIONS	1,010	1,013	1,037
Interim SSW Hires included in the Caseload Carrying Positions	N/A	N/A	10
Non-Caseload Carrying SSW I, SSW II, SSC I, SSC II Positions	217	219	221
SSW I, SSW II, SSCL I, SSCL II Vacancies	272	263	237

Factors Contributing to High Caseload Averages

During this reporting period, the department has continued to support staff during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure their health and safety while still providing essential services to the vulnerable populations served. Approximately 80% of DCBS staff continue to telework, while in-person services continue to be provided. Some turnover is expected given the stress and secondary trauma that may be experienced in these positions, and turnover is something that department and regional leadership are always working to prevent and address; however, since June 2021, there has been a significant increase in the number of staff leaving the department. The department continues to struggle to recover from that turnover and to recruit new staff. The pandemic has changed the workforce, and the department is trying to adapt and understand how to recruit and retain staff. DCBS staff are making decisions to seek less stressful jobs, and it is unknown how much salary contributes to that decision. Turnover and the resulting incomplete work and past due cases will impact the vulnerable adults, children, and families served by the department. Staff turnover needs to be addressed now, more than ever, in order for DCBS to have a resilient, skilled, and qualified workforce to serve the most vulnerable citizens of the commonwealth. We remain hopeful that recent salary increases as well as the below efforts will help with the recruitment and retention of employees.

DCBS' Response and Recommendations

The below initiatives are underway in DCBS to address social worker caseloads and to improve the culture in which our social service workers operate:

- Organizational vision and strategies: DCBS continues to evaluate existing programs and services to assess outcomes, barriers, and access. DCBS is establishing an eighteen-month strategic plan focusing on innovation and creating a 21st century DCBS.
- DCBS implemented an approved telecommuting plan that includes a hybrid schedule for work. Staff working a hybrid schedule allows for continued support of clients needing to be served in the office while offering additional flexibilities to staff. This approach has been well received by both clients and staff. Telecommuting continues to be helpful in modernizing the department's workforce and create needed flexibilities for staff. This is attractive to employees and is a similar provision that private agencies across the state offer to prospective and current employees. The continuation of allowing telecommuting will help the department attract and retain employees.
- DCBS continues to work proactively on recruitment of new staff, with ongoing job postings that are being shared on social media platforms, LinkedIn, universities, etc. for full time, interim, and part-time positions. The department is in the process of creating a new marketing campaign for recruitment.
- DCBS is in the process of exploring with the use of paid CO-OP/interns in partnership with local universities. These CO-OPs will help the department not only recruit future employees, but will also provide needed case specific support to the department's overburdened workforce.
- The new interim hiring process implemented by the department in December of 2021 continues to offer the department the opportunity to expedite the hiring process for prospective employees. We continue to evaluate the results of this hiring process but have seen positive results of the onboarding of new staff through this process.
- DCBS continues to offer a shift differential that allows the department to pay staff an additional hourly rate for the hours worked after-hours, responding to on-call reports of abuse and neglect and placement disruptions. The new shift differential went into effect in November of 2021.
- The department worked with Eastern Kentucky University to improve training for new staff, including skill-based training and moving away from an academia approach. The pilot of the new training track launched February 2022 and is now available for all new staff.
- DCBS has begun piloting a field training specialist (FTS) program in three of nine service regions. This program pairs new staff with a tenured worker who is trained in the field training specialist model to provide practical, skill-based competencies, which will better prepare new workers for field work. The FTS program will expand into other regions in 2022.
- The department continues to establish opportunities, both internally and externally, to be a more trauma and resilient aware agency allowing DCBS to better address the secondary trauma experienced by the workforce. This includes the use of professional development and self-care plans with staff.
- The department continues work on the expansion of prevention services. During this reporting period, community response pilots launched in Montgomery and Clark counties with planning to launch two additional counties (Perry and Barren).

- The department continues to work with Office of Application Technology Services (OATS) and Commonwealth Office of Technology (COT) partners to enhance technology and data.
- The department is securing a new safety model that will assist front-line staff with decision making at critical points of casework. The first phase of this new model launched in April 2022.
- DCBS continues to collaborate with KVC to assist the Jefferson Service Region in addressing their backlog of past due cases. The department has expanded upon that contract to continue to support Jefferson Service Region while working towards improving recruitment and retention of staff.
- DCBS was approved by the Personnel Cabinet to offer a locality premium for staff in the Jefferson Service Region of \$4 per hour. This became effective in May 2022. The department is currently evaluating whether this has helped with the recruitment and retention of staff in this area.
- To address the imminent need for staff in Jefferson, the department implemented a “Weekend Blitz”. Staff from other regions have agreed to work weekend shifts in Jefferson to assist with past due work assignments. This enables staffing to remain consistent in their home region while also offering support to the Jefferson Service Region.
- The department supports the continued use of virtual platforms where appropriate to aide staff in fulfilling job duties and establishing better connections with community partners and families.

DCBS acknowledges that its capacities and circumstances continue to be a challenge and is committed to identifying and implementing sustainable improvement. The vulnerable adults, children, and families served by the department deserve our best. DCBS will provide ongoing reporting as required by KRS 199.461(4).