



# **Child Protective Investigator and Child Protective Investigator Supervisor**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

Florida Department of Children and Families

Office of Child & Family Well-Being

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## Purpose

This report, pursuant to section 402.402(4), Florida Statutes (F.S.), requires the Florida Department of Children and Families (Department) to provide a status report to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives as to the educational qualifications, turnover, professional advancement, and working conditions of the Department's Child Protective Investigators (CPI), Senior Child Protective Investigators (Senior CPI), Child Protective Investigator Supervisors (CPI Supervisor), and other child protective investigative staff.

## Educational Qualifications

Section 402.402(1), F.S., requires the Department to recruit and hire persons qualified by their education and experience to perform social work functions and provides guidance for preference to individuals having a social work degree. A second level preference is given to individuals with a human service-related degree including: psychology, sociology, counseling, special education, education, human development, child development, family development, marriage and family therapy, and nursing.

Additionally, a third level preference is to hire persons with baccalaureate degrees who have a combination of direct relevant work or volunteer experience, preferably in a public service field related to children's services, demonstrating critical thinking skills, formal assessment processes, communication skills, problem solving, and empathy with a commitment to helping children and families.

As of July 7, 2025, a People First data extract indicated a total of 2,200 employees were serving in either CPI, Senior CPI, CPI Supervisor, or Field Support Consultant (FSC) roles. Of that number, 1,429 staff were identified as having a bachelor's degree; 186 were identified as having a master's degree; three were identified as having a doctorate degree; 62 were identified as educational data unavailable; and 520 were identified as high school graduates, having an associate degree, or some years of college with associated work experience.

The total active child protective investigative staff currently holding a degree in Social Work is 118 (5.36 percent).

Table 1 - Educational Qualifications for Department Child Protective Investigation Positions							
Fiscal Year	Position	Some College and/or Work Experience	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctorate Degree	Unavailable	Social Work Degree
2024-25	CPI, Senior CPI, FSC, CPI Supervisor	520	1,429	186	3	62	118
Fiscal Year	Position	Some College and/or Work Experience	Bachelor's Degree	Master's degree	Doctorate Degree	Unavailable	Social Work Degree
2023-24	CPI, Senior CPI, FSC, CPI Supervisor	301	1,322	180	2	47	99

## Turnover

The CPI role is a demanding position that requires critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The high-stress nature of the job often contributes to higher turnover rates and leads to burnout for many professionals. The demanding work, coupled with unpredictable work hours, tight timeframes, fluctuating high caseloads and exposure to trauma, contributes to significant emotional and psychological strain. High turnover rates among CPI staff leads to increased caseloads for remaining investigators, impacting the Department's ability to develop a skilled and specialized workforce.

The Department's Turnover rate decreased 11.67 percent from the previous fiscal year.

Table 2 - Turnover Rate of Department Child Protective Investigation Positions						
	FY 2024-2025			FY 2023-2024		
Position (FTE)	FTE	# separated	% Turnover	FTE	# separated	% Turnover
CPI	1,313	628	47.83%	1,085.5	698	64.30%
Senior CPI	301	38	12.62%	229	37	16.16%
FSC	145	7	4.83%	96	12	12.50%
CPI Supervisor	332	39	11.75%	262	22	8.40%
Total	2,091	712	34.05%	1,672.5	769	45.98%

## Vacancy Rates

Table 3 - Vacancy Rate of Department Child Protective Investigation Positions			
Position (FTE)	FY 2024-25	FY 2023-24	Difference/Increase
CPI	12.72%	11.31%	+ 1.41%
Senior CPI	11.30%	16.33%	- 5.03%
FSC	28.97%	14.63%	+ 14.34%
CPI Supervisor	10.54%	14.71%	- 4.17%

The increase in vacancy rates, particularly for the FSC position, is directly contributed to the creation of new positions to help train and support CPI staff. The positions were recently created, and recruitment efforts are currently underway. The positions are designed to help train and provide field-based coaching for CPI staff.

## Recruitment Efforts

The Department continues to deploy several strategies to address recruitment challenges for CPI and CPI Supervisor positions, which have effectively resulted in a reduction in the vacancy rate. Additionally, there are several support positions in place to assist investigators and supervisors, ensuring a holistic approach to serving our families is in place. These include FSCs, Analysts, Family Navigators, and staff from HOPE Florida. Subject Matter Experts specializing in substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence also provide guidance during investigations. This collaborative approach helps ensure families receive the best possible support while strengthening the work of investigators. Enhanced, modernized technology is currently being implemented to improve efficiency. In addition, streamlined processes have been established for managing lower-priority cases.

## ***Hiring Fairs***

By leveraging technology platforms such as Indeed and LinkedIn, the Department has been expanding our reach for educating the public about available job opportunities and attracting qualified candidates. These platforms allow the Department to access extensive talent databases and strategically target hiring event advertisements to relevant audiences.

The Department continues to implement its targeted recruitment strategy by hosting hiring fairs. In FY 2024–25, 16 virtual events were conducted using Indeed’s global search engine and hiring platform.

## ***Continue the Mission***

First Lady Casey DeSantis spearheaded the Department’s “Continue the Mission” initiative beginning in 2022. This is a collaborative effort involving the Department and Florida’s Department of Veteran’s Affairs to recruit veterans, military spouses, and former law enforcement officers to serve CPI positions. This initiative was designed to leverage the skills and experiences of these individuals to protect Florida’s most vulnerable children and support strong, resilient families. The program has seen significant success, resulting in numerous targeted hiring fairs and 380 candidates being hired to work in these critical roles, beginning from inception of Continue the Mission in July 2022 through June 2025.

## **Retention Efforts**

Efforts to reduce turnover and improve workforce stability in CPI positions include a variety of strategies:

### ***Regional Retention Efforts***

Supervisory support plays a vital role in ensuring frontline worker stability and long-term retention. To enable supervisors and management to concentrate on direct casework and providing guidance to CPI staff, the Department established Retention Specialist positions. These regionally based specialists carry out a range of initiatives designed to strengthen and stabilize the workforce, including:

- Enhanced onboarding with wraparound support for new employees.
- Graduation ceremonies celebrating staff milestones, with family members invited to share in the achievement.
- Monthly engagement workshops to foster teamwork and professional growth.
- Recognition events such as service awards, certificates of appreciation, and other acknowledgements of staff contributions.
- Regular communications, including newsletters and weekly broadcasts, highlighting individual achievements and operational successes.
- Team building and morale-boosting activities such as luncheons, holiday celebrations, potlucks, and friendly competitions.
- Stay and exit interviews to gather meaningful feedback and identify trends.
- Data collection and analysis on retention and turnover to inform ongoing strategies.
- Lunch-and-learn sessions for continued learning and professional development.
- Employee feedback channels, such as suggestion boxes and recommendation reviews.

Through these efforts, Retention Specialists provide consistent, localized support that not only enhances employee satisfaction but also contributes to a stronger, more resilient workforce.

Additional regional efforts include:

- The use of round tables between frontline staff and varying levels of leadership to solicit feedback,

- collect enhancement and improvement needs, and identify suggestions for resolution.
- The creation of “weekend units” and evening/night units that aim to reduce the burden of weekend and night on-call shifts which allows for a better work/life balance.
- The development and introduction of mobile technology where CPIs can accomplish more in the field and allow for supervisors to review investigations and performance in real time. This reduces the time CPI staff must spend on administrative requirements, enhancing their time spent with families and in the field.

The Department has allocated fleet vehicles to CPIs, with over 750 vehicles – granting approximately 50 percent of CPIs access – thereby reducing the need for CPIs to use personal vehicles while in the field. This has provided an increase in staff morale and supported competitive recruitment efforts. This fleet expansion has only recently been fully implemented, and ongoing assessments will be conducted to determine the long-term impact to staff retention.

### ***Professional Development***

- The Department’s **Career Ladder** initiative provides employees with access to targeted training, professional development opportunities, and advancement across multiple career pathways, as well as monetary incentives for moving throughout the pathways. Some of the Career Ladder requirements include achievement of tenure, satisfactory performance evaluations, completion of additional trainings, a personal Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Training (SWOT) analysis, and a satisfactory quality review of case work at a threshold of at least 80 percent passage rate. Additionally, completion of some of the Career Ladder provides expertise in specific areas of child welfare, while supervisory training includes mentoring and coaching. During FY 2024-25, participation and completion rates declined from previous years. To enhance outreach and engagement in the upcoming year, regional communication efforts will be expanded to include informational flyers, FAQs, and scheduled email announcements aligned with application release dates. Furthermore, additional feedback is being gathered to enhance the Career Ladder and provide the most value to the staff and return on investment to the agency.
- The Department’s **Supervisor Leadership Academy**, initiated in January 2024, is offered to current Department staff in any program who are high-potential leaders within the organization. The program is designed to support leaders in strengthening and expanding their leadership abilities. It focuses on refining coaching, team-building, and problem-solving skills, all of which contribute to increased team productivity and operational efficiency. Applicants must demonstrate a strong commitment to self-improvement and a genuine interest in supporting the growth and development of their direct reports. As of July 2025, 53 Department staff have completed the Supervisor Leadership Academy and 10 of these staff were from the CPI program. There are 40 Department staff enrolled in the current cohort, with 17 of these staff members being from the CPI program. Based on survey feedback from participants, the Supervisor Leadership Academy has received a high level of satisfaction across all survey measured areas, with 100% of responses being positive.
- The Department’s **Emerging Leaders Academy**, initiated in October 2024, adopts the framework of the “Hero’s Journey” to guide leaders in discovering their authentic voice and leading with purpose. This academy spans over four months and helps staff explore and understand their own personal journey, challenges, triumphs, and self-discovery. It also helps the employee shape their ability to relate to others, communicate effectively, and lead with empathy and resilience. As of July 2025, 38 Department staff have completed the Emerging Leaders Academy with 9 of these staff from the CPI program. There are an additional 53 Department staff enrolled in the current cohort, with 15 of these being from the CPI program. Based on survey feedback, the Emerging Leaders Academy has received

positive feedback from participants, with 100% of respondents indicating satisfaction with the overall experience. Additional feedback indicated some emerging themes around participants highlighting transformational growth, a boost in confidence, and a deep appreciation for the program's structure and facilitators.

### ***Enhanced Pre-Service Training***

Following the April 2024 launch of the new pre-service program, the Florida Academy for Child Protection and Family Resiliency (the Florida Academy) resulted in successful pilots in Jacksonville and Miami. The Department continued this implementation throughout the state during FY 2024–2025.

### ***Child Protective Investigations Specialty Track Schedule***

Since its pilot launch in the Northeast Region in January 2024, the CPI specialty track has been strategically rolled out across Florida – expanding to the Southern Region in April, the Northwest and Southeast Regions in July, the Central Region in October, the Suncoast Region in January 2025, and culminating in full statewide implementation as of March 2025. In parallel, the Case Management specialty track began with a pilot at Family Partnerships of Central Florida in April 2025, reinforcing our broader commitment to elevated professional development. Throughout this phased rollout, the Department has sustained a comprehensive approach to in-service training: rigorously assessing training needs – utilizing surveys, performance metrics and evaluations, interviews, and direct feedback – and design instruction tailored to address those gaps. Every training module is therefore linked directly back to evidence-based needs assessments, ensuring relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with the evolving needs of CPI staff.

The redesigned program features updated curriculum, virtual reality, simulation, applied critical thinking skills, and competency assessments. These changes were developed in collaboration with multiple stakeholders and have created additional opportunities for new staff to practice core skills and receive feedback from supervisors before achieving provisional certification. The new model aims to bring statewide consistency while preserving flexibility to support local processes and each community's unique system of care.

The Florida Academy pre-service program was launched in a structured, staggered rollout to ensure trainer and regional support and maintain program fidelity. Real-time problem-solving addressed barriers for learners, with escalations to leadership as needed. At the 2024 annual Children and Families summit, attendees sampled the virtual reality program and provided positive survey feedback. The Florida Academy is being evaluated in partnership with the Florida Institute for Child Welfare and Florida Atlantic University, and preliminary evaluations show promising outcomes.

### ***Additional Training Programs for Child Welfare Staff***

Ongoing in-service training is essential for maintaining a skilled, adaptable, and engaged workforce. In today's rapidly evolving work environment, continuous learning ensures that employees remain proficient in their roles and are prepared to meet emerging challenges. Consistent training not only enhances individual performance but also contributes to overall organizational success by aligning employee capabilities with strategic objectives. Moreover, investing in employee development fosters a culture of growth and can lead to increased job satisfaction and retention.

To effectively address the dynamic needs of our workforce, the Department employs a systematic approach to identifying individual staff training needs through an assessment process. This involves identifying gaps in knowledge, skills, and abilities that may hinder performance or impede the achievement of organizational

goals. By conducting thorough assessments, the Department can prioritize training initiatives that offer the most significant impact. Methods for gathering this information include surveys, interviews, review of performance measures, and feedback mechanisms to ensure a comprehensive understanding of training requirements.

Once training needs are identified, targeted programs are designed and implemented to directly address these gaps. By aligning training content with specific performance objectives, the Department ensures that employees acquire relevant skills that enhance their effectiveness in their roles. This strategic alignment not only optimizes resource utilization but also maximizes the return on investment in training initiatives. Furthermore, the effectiveness of training programs is continuously monitored and evaluated, allowing for adjustments and improvements that keep pace with evolving organizational needs.

Through this ongoing cycle of assessment, training, and evaluation, the Department remains committed to fostering a competent and resilient workforce capable of driving sustained success.

### ***Unified Home Study Training***

Launched in March 2025, this mandatory in-person training focuses on improving the quality and documentation of home study assessments, while reinforcing the critical role of supervision in ensuring high standards. It is required for 100 percent of CPIs, Case Managers, Family Finders, and their supervisors.

### ***Project NorthStar***

The Workforce Learning and Development team is currently developing Project NorthStar, a new training initiative for CPI Supervisors, Program Administrators, and Operations Managers. The program is designed to strengthen frontline leadership's understanding and application of Florida's practice model to enhance guidance and support to the CPIs. Project NorthStar is set to launch in late 2025.

### ***Back to Basics Learning Series***

Set to launch in Fall 2025, this series will reinforce foundational investigative processes from intake through closure. It will focus on core competencies such as information collection, investigative techniques, and the use and evaluation of evidence in decision-making. This is a level set for all CPI operations team members and a strong precursor to Project NorthStar implementation.

## **Working Conditions**

The Department is focused on supporting the growth and stability of its workforce, which is fundamental to the success of the state's child protection efforts. To this end, the Department established the Workforce Wellness Unit (WWU) dedicated to enhancing the overall well-being of Department staff, with a specific focus on preventing secondary traumatic stress and burnout among CPI staff.

The initiatives implemented by the Department are comprehensive and proactive aimed at not only addressing the immediate needs of staff in crisis situations but also promoting ongoing wellness and resilience across the organization. By integrating peer support, structured wellness programs, and local advocacy, the WWU seeks to create a supportive environment that enhances the overall well-being and retention of Investigation staff.

### ***360 YOU Training***

A total of 1,826 Department staff members participated in the 360 YOU workshop, a foundational training



designed to build self-awareness and resilience.

The training focuses on the eight dimensions of wellness, guiding participants through self-assessments to identify strengths and areas for growth. Each participant creates a personalized wellness plan aimed at enhancing well-being in identified areas of challenge.

### ***Teambuilding and Engagement Initiatives***

WWU facilitates events focused on strengthening workplace relationships, improving communication, and fostering psychological safety. These activities integrate principles of emotional intelligence and holistic wellness, helping team members recharge and reconnect meaningfully. These teambuilding events are offered enterprise wide, with a specific focus on the office of Child and Family Well-Being, considering the nature of the work that this team encounters. To date, the WWU has facilitated a total of 3,367 events from July 2024, with 458 events in fiscal year 2025-2026. These events range from activities such as team building exercises, 360 series, Balance Blend Boundaries, debriefings, Launch Restored, Psychological First Aid, and Retention Intelligence.

### ***Welcome Wednesday:***

This monthly virtual event welcomed 887 new Department employees during Fiscal Year 2024-2025 and provides early career engagement. Through direct interaction with senior leadership and storytelling centered on impact and purpose, participants gain a deeper understanding of the Department's mission and how their roles contribute to it. It also provides an overview of opportunities within the agency in support of professional development and interest pairing.

### ***Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)***

- The Department has expanded its internal CISM Team to include more than 80 trained staff across the state.
- CISM is a confidential, international peer-led crisis intervention model designed to support staff following high-impact or traumatic events, more often experienced within the Office of Child and Family Well-Being.
- The Department's CISM model is accredited through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation which requires a master's level clinician to serve as the Clinical Director for the Department's CISM model. The Clinical Director acts as an expert in the subject of mental health and is a resource to the Department's CISM Team both during and after critical incidents.
- Over the past year, the team has responded to more than 100 incidents, offering immediate emotional support and mitigating potential long-term psychological effects. Examples of incident response circumstances include:
  - Fatalities: Support for staff impacted by the sudden death of individuals connected to their work, including clients, coworkers, and family members.
  - Burnout and Compassion Fatigue: Assistance provided to individuals and teams experiencing signs of burnout or secondary traumatic stress due to sustained exposure to traumatic case content or high-intensity workloads.
  - Disaster Response: Emotional support following critical disaster incidents.
  - Vicarious Trauma: Addressing the effects of vicarious trauma resulting from prolonged exposure to emotionally intense or distressing casework, including peer-related impacts.

The Department continues to invest in leadership development through coaching and mentoring provided by experienced staff, the Office of Quality and Innovation, and designated trainers. In addition, the Department funds staff from the University of South Florida School of Social Work to visit sites across the state, where they engage directly with frontline teams to support and strengthen organizational culture.