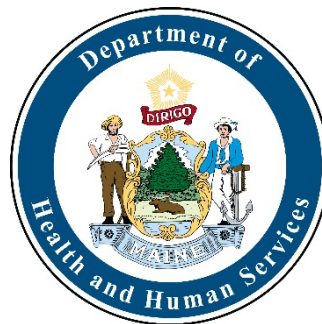


# Office of Child and Family Services

Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW

Director

June 26, 2025



# Office of Child and Family Services

**The Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) works in partnership with the community to ensure all Maine children and families are safe, stable happy, and healthy. The Office is made up of several different service areas:**

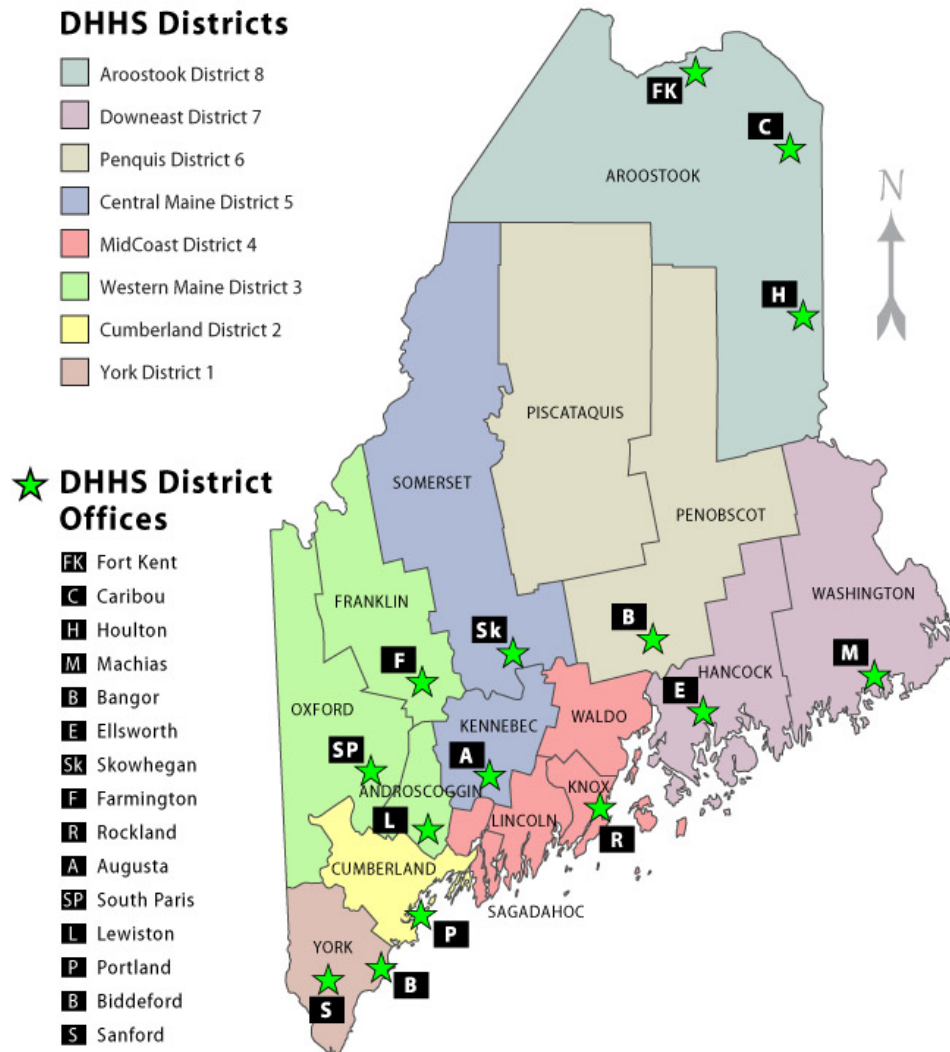
***Child Welfare*** – Staff in this division seek safety, well-being and permanent homes for children, working with professionalism and respecting the dignity of all families. Child abuse reports are investigated on behalf of Maine communities, working to keep children safe and to guide families in creating safe homes for children.

***Early Care and Education*** - The Early Care and Education team manages the Child Care Affordability Program (CCAP) that helps eligible families pay for child care so they can work, go to school, or participate in a job training program, as well as managing other services and supports related to early childhood including Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP), Help Me Grow (HMG), First4ME, and the Preschool Development Grant (PDG).

***Children's Licensing and Investigation Services*** - This specialized team licenses, monitors and investigates child care programs, children's residential facilities, child placing agencies, emergency shelters, and homeless shelters for youth. This program conducts child abuse and neglect investigations in a wide array of out of home settings that are licensed, subject to licensure, and funded by the Department. The program also conducts investigations in collaboration with or on behalf of other State Departments.

***Violence Intervention and Response Program (VIRP)***- This team is responsible for administering federal grants and overseeing statewide contracts for violence prevention services (including domestic violence and sexual assault services) as well as managing the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) program. The VIRP plans, monitors and evaluates the delivery of violence prevention services statewide including programs, policies, and resource allocations.

# Maine DHHS Office Structure



# Strategic Plan

The plan was developed over the last year.

- The Child Welfare Team reviewed over 200 recommendations received from various sources
- Other division and program goals, as well as federal and state measures across OCFS were included.
- OCFS was supported by the members of the Commissioner's Office, Casey Family Programs, Public Consulting Group, and Dr. Sheena Bunnell in this work

Implementation and data tracking will begin in July

- Currently working to establish baseline measures across all programs

Program specific plans will be linked to the Strategic Plan and desired outcomes, for example District Program Improvement Plans

High quality documentation will be a key to demonstrating our success.

**The strategies and desired outcomes are specifically designed to elevate and improve OCFS practice in a manner that is best for children and families. We are committed to supporting OCFS' Districts and Programs to ensure full implementation and success.**

# MAINE Pillars of Child Welfare Practice



# OCFS Updates

- In July, OCFS will welcome our new Deputy Director, Jenny Hinson
  - The Deputy will be responsible for directly overseeing Children's Licensing and the Violence Intervention and Response Program
  - The Deputy will also work across OCFS on the implementation and monitoring of the OCFS Strategic Plan
- Mandated Reporting
  - Established a Steering Committee and Workgroup together with community partners
  - Conducted a survey (946 respondents) and focus groups
  - Spearheaded a statutory change (clarifying that poverty in and of itself is not neglect) that was recently signed into law by the Governor (LD 1406)
  - Working to update and strengthen the mandated reporter training and knowledge of other pathways of support for families and mandated reporters
- Psychotropic Medication
  - Implementing required changes based on the recent settlement of the Bryan C. case
  - Conducting training for staff on new processes for overseeing prescriptions of psychotropic medications for youth in care and the new informed consent process
  - Updating Katahdin to incorporate processes into the system
  - Utilizing OCFS' medical team (Medical Director, Psychiatric Consultant, and nurses)

# OCFS Updates

- Child welfare continues its focus on developing strategies to alleviate the pressure on staff when children in custody are being cared for in hotel and emergency department settings
  - OCFS successfully stood up its first intensive short-term home and is working on other solutions together with providers, community partners, and resource families
  - Conducting regular meetings to review complex cases and brainstorm additional options for placement
  - Meeting with both New England and national partners to address this shared challenge
- OCFS' Information Services team continues to conduct regular outreach to Katahdin users to gather feedback and look for opportunities to improve the system, this includes meetings both with staff and external partners like attorneys and GALs
- Over the last six months, OCFS has rolled out a new Child Welfare Decision-Making Framework that serves as a tool to help increase consistency and transparency in decision making and to empower staff to make decisions at the appropriate level of the organization

# OCFS Updates - Legislative

- LD 84, *An Act to Improve the Coordination of Health Care for Minors in State Custody*
  - OCFS bill – gives OCFS medical team access to HealthInfoNet so child welfare has immediate information when children first enter care (OCFS will still request medical records from providers)
  - Will be used to ensure OCFS is meeting the needs of children when they first enter care by providing knowledge of allergies, medications, upcoming appointments, important medical history, etc.
- LD 122, *An Act to Update Certain Laws Regarding Extended Care and Adoption*
  - OCFS bill – Enacts several changes to statute:
    - Clarifies that training programs also qualify for the Alumni Transition Grant Program (ATGP)
    - Removes the requirement of an annual judicial review for older youth in care (ages 21 and 22) as these aren't required by federal law
    - Requires that youth age 14 and older receive notice of judicial reviews that includes language regarding their right to attend and be heard if the wish



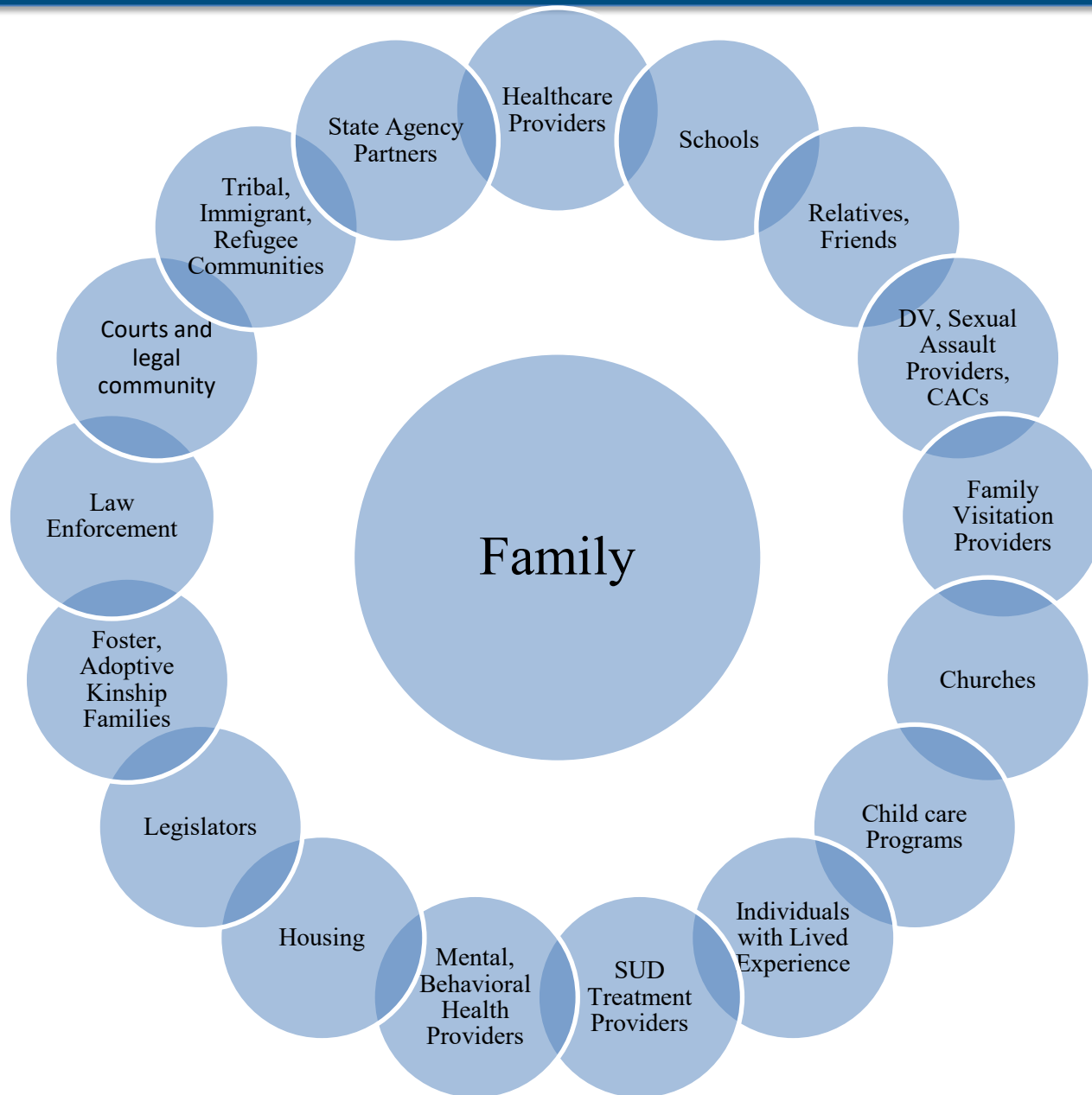
# OCFS Updates - Legislative

- LD 156, *An Act to Improve Notifications Related to Substance-exposed Infants*
  - OCFS bill – revised with the assistance of providers and parents with lived experience
  - Clarifies the statutory language related to notifications to the Department of substance-exposed infants to align with federal law
  - Authorizes the Department to make rules to further clarify the process and ensure consistency among providers
- LD 1406, *An Act to Amend Certain Definitions in the Child and Family Services and Child Protection Act*
  - OCFS worked on this bill with providers, advocates, and those with lived experience in the child welfare system
  - Clarifies that poverty in and of itself is not neglect by updating definitions in the Child and Family Services and Child Protection Act

# Celebrating Success

- Safe reduction of the number of children in care who achieved permanency through reunification, adoption, permanency guardianship, aging out (12% reduction since September 1, 2024)
- Kinship care placement rates continually exceed the national rate
- Nationally, Maine has the lowest number of children placed in congregate care settings – and has sustained this for the past 15+ years.
  - The Department continue right-size our need for these types of services and to invest in community-based programming

# Maine's Child Welfare System



# Thank you

Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW  
Director  
Office of Child and Family Services, DHHS

