

JB Pritzker, Governor

Heidi E. Mueller, Director

Budget Briefing

FY 2027



About Illinois DCFS

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is responsible for responding to reports of suspected abuse or neglect and, when needed, providing support to families and care for children to ensure their safety and well-being. Illinois DCFS serves children, youth, and families across the state, including urban neighborhoods, suburban communities, and rural areas. The Department partners with community-based organizations, schools, health systems, child and family advocacy centers, and advocacy organizations to meet the diverse needs of the youth and families we serve.

In FY 2025, Illinois DCFS answered **238,169** reports to the State Central Register (SCR), or hotline, resulting in **78,096** investigations. The Department assisted **6,248** Illinois children to achieve permanency through reunification, adoption, or guardianship, and supported an additional **4,371** families through services. These numbers reflect both the scale of the work and the shared responsibility to protect children and strengthen families across Illinois.

FAST FACTS



2.46 B

FY26 Budget

FY25 Facts



238,169

Hotline calls



122,133

Alleged child victims associated with investigations of abuse or neglect



78,096

DCFS investigations conducted



15,773

Number of youth in paid settings on 6/30/25



4,826

Number of children who entered foster care



6,248

Youth achieving permanency.
The reunification rate was **19.6%**; **15.5%** for adoption;
and **3.8%** for guardianship



4,371

Number of families being served in the preservation program keeping kids at home as of 6/30/25

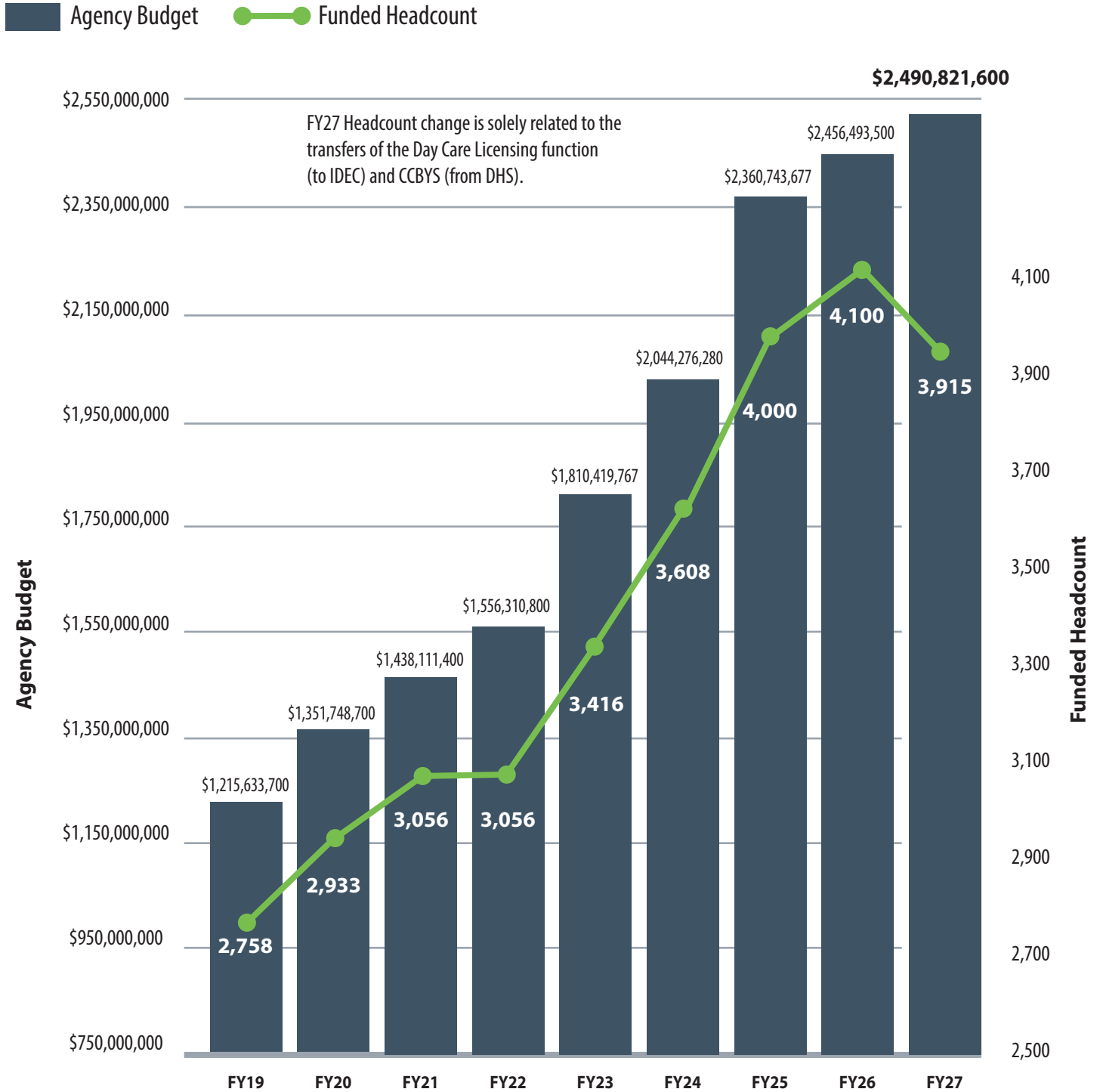


3,922

DCFS employees at the end of FY25

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services Budget Highlights

DCFS Budget and Headcount FY19-27 Proposed



Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

Budget Highlights

DCFS Youth Served¹ FY23-27 Projected

	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual	FY25 Actual	FY26 Estimated	FY27 Projected	FY26-27 Change	
						Number	Percent
Foster Homes & Specialized Foster Care							
Home of Relative	11,087	10,367	9,414	8,731	8,147	(584)	-6.7%
Regular (Traditional)	3,486	3,243	2,889	2,346	2,189	(157)	-6.7%
Specialized	2,499	2,431	2,300	1,955	1,824	(131)	-6.7%
Total Youth in Foster Homes	17,072	16,041	14,603	13,032	12,160	(872)	-6.7%
Institution & Group Home (I/GH) Care & Prevention							
Institution & Grp. Home ²	738	709	682	717	730	13	1.8%
Independent / Transitional	357	373	405	405	405	0	0.0%
Emergency Shelter	41	54	83	55	55	0	0.0%
Total I/GH, Transitional, Shelter	1,136	1,136	1,170	1,177	1,190	13	1.1%
Youth in Paid Settings Subtotal (Foster Homes + I/GH + ILO/TLP + Shelter)	18,208	17,177	15,773	14,209	13,350	(859)	-6.0%
Youth in Other Settings ³	2,710	2,755	3,136	2,558	2,403	(17)	-0.2%
Grand Total Youth Served⁴	20,918	19,932	18,909	16,767	15,753	(56)	-0.2%
Adoption & Guardianship							
Adoption	19,184	19,723	20,521	21,379	22,169	790	3.7%
Guardianship	2,618	2,776	2,979	3,212	3,512	300	9.3%
Total Adoption/Guardianship	21,802	22,499	23,500	24,591	25,681	1,090	4.4%

NOTES:

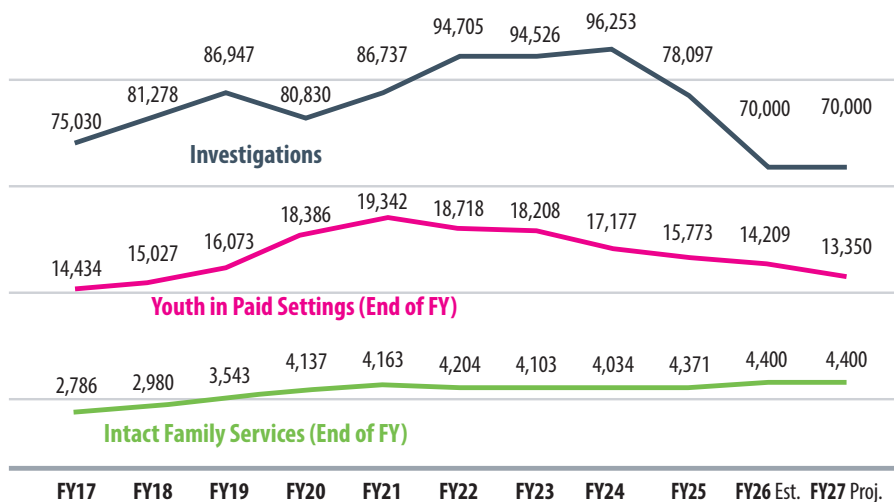
¹ End-of-Fiscal Year Cases

² IGH Counts = on-site only, excluding children absent from placement

³ Includes youth in Home of Parent, College/Scholarship, Detention/Corrections, Absent from Placement, Other Independent, Hospital Stays (Mental and Physical), Other Institutions/Facilities, Community Integrated Living Arrangements (CILAs), Job Training, Armed Services, and other settings.

⁴ Includes all open child cases, regardless of legal guardianship status.

DCFS Caseload Trends FY17-27 Projected



Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

Budget Highlights

Fund Summary (\$ in thousands)	FY25 Expenditures	FY26 Approp.	FY27 Request	FY26-27	
				\$ Change	% Change
All Funds - Total	1,921,956.6	2,456,493.5	2,490,821.6	34,328.1	1.4%
State Funds Subtotal	1,912,140.3	2,440,676.9	2,475,005.0	34,328.1	1.4%
General Revenue (GRF)	1,411,137.9	1,594,108.0	1,668,497.4	74,389.4	4.7%
DCFS Children's Services (CSF)	491,146.8	713,774.4	693,713.1	(20,061.3)	-2.8%
DCFS Special Purpose Trust (SPT)	9,855.6	32,794.5	32,794.5	–	0.0%
Build Illinois Bond Fund (BIB)	–	100,000.0	80,000.0	(20,000.0)	-20.0%
Federal Funds Subtotal	9,816.2	15,816.6	15,816.6	–	0.0%
DCFS Federal Projects (FPF)	9,816.2	15,816.6	15,816.6	–	0.0%

Program Group Funding (\$ in thousands)	FY25 Expenditures	FY26 Approp.	FY27 Request	FY26-27	
				\$ Change	% Change
DCFS Program Group	1,921,956.6	2,456,493.5	2,490,821.6	34,328.1	1.4%
Protective Services	254,200.2	308,844.0	316,339.0	7,495.0	2.4%
Adoption & Guardianship	237,342.9	261,832.3	287,306.2	25,473.9	9.7%
Family Maintenance	128,471.0	152,431.0	190,251.6	37,820.7	24.8%
Family Reunification	1,221,262.5	1,633,857.0	1,618,780.0	-15,077.0	-0.9%
Accountability	80,680.0	99,529.2	78,144.7	-21,384.5	-21.5%

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services FY26 Progress

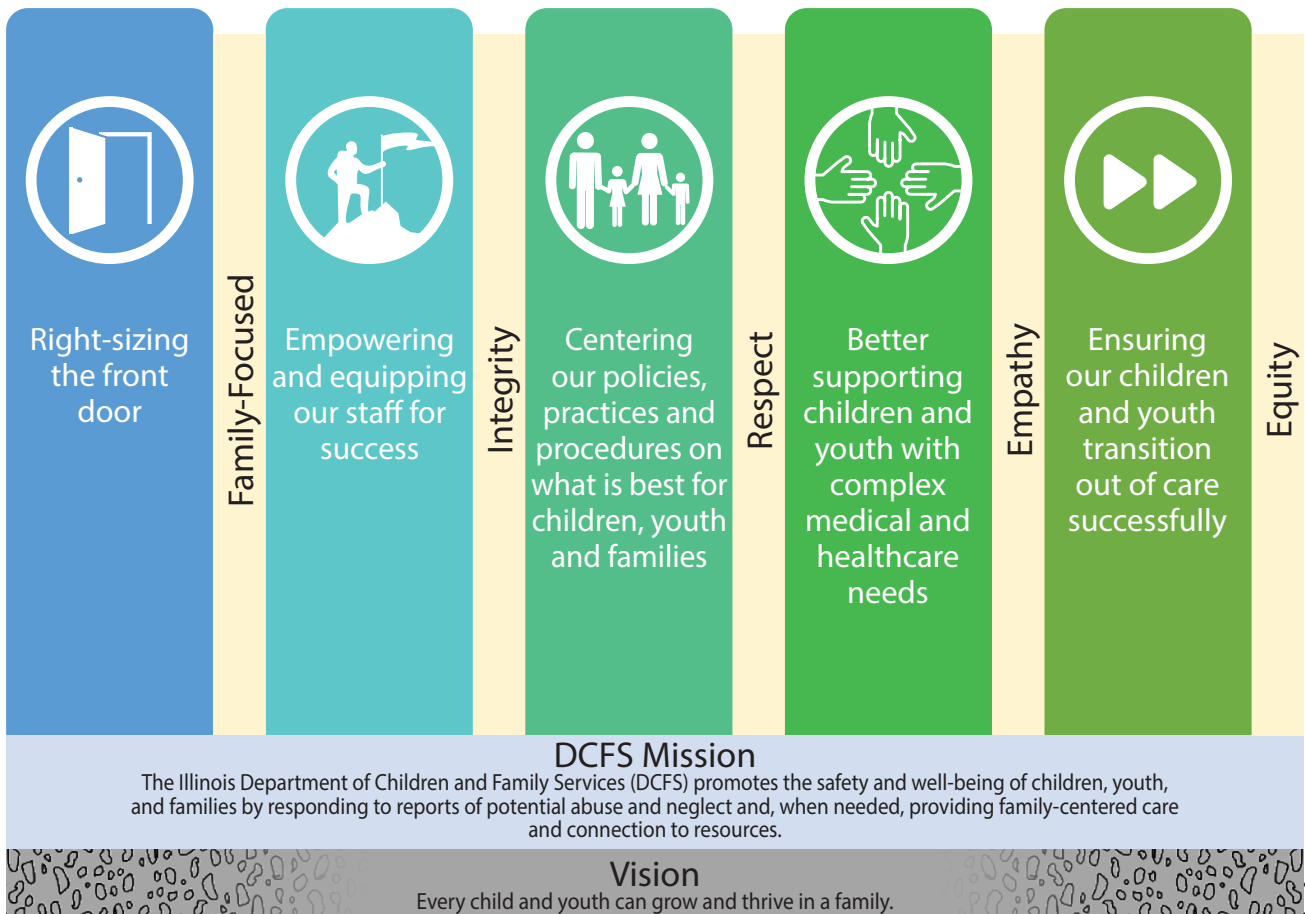
Illinois DCFS Mission, Vision, Values and Goals

Over the past 18 months, DCFS leadership has partnered with staff, communities, youth and families to develop and put forward a shared vision, mission, values and strategic goals to guide us in our work and help ensure that we keep the children and families we serve at the center of everything we do. Our vision is for every young person in Illinois to grow and thrive in a family. This vision served as the Department's bedrock throughout the year and remains the lens through which we operate.

Our mission is to promote the safety and well-being of children, youth, and families by responding to reports of potential abuse and neglect and, when needed, connecting families to resources.

Our values – identified and defined with staff and child welfare community partners- are what guide us in our work every day:

- **Family-Focused**
- **Integrity**
- **Respect**
- **Empathy**
- **Equity**



Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

FY26 Progress (cont'd)

Guided by our vision, mission and values, DCFS has identified five strategic pillars to focus our efforts and drive transformative change:

- **Right-sizing the front door**
- **Empowering and equipping our staff for success**
- **Centering our policies, practices, and procedures on what is best for children, youth, and families**
- **Better supporting children and youth with complex medical and behavioral healthcare needs**
- **Ensuring our young people transition out of care successfully**

Fully Staffed Teams and Manageable Caseloads

Illinois DCFS increased staffing levels to their highest in more than two decades during 2025. As of December 31, 2025, 3,871 dedicated employees stand behind children, youth, and families across the state. Targeted recruitment strategies in 2025 resulted in 398 new employees and an all-time-low vacancy rate of 2.6%. This milestone showcases the agency's steadfast dedication to recruiting, retaining, and uplifting its staff.

Successful recruitment, hiring, retention and the introduction of the SAFE Model contributed to a 24.7% reduction in worker caseloads in 2025 (compared to CY24) and helped DCFS finally achieve compliance with a decades-old provision of the B.H. v Mueller consent decree—one it had been struggling to achieve since 1994.

Even more importantly, growing the Illinois DCFS team means safer families and stronger support. With more hands-on decks, caseloads become more manageable, and supervision sharpens, allowing staff to devote more time to those who need them most. Families receive help sooner, oversight improves, and care becomes more reliable.



Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

FY26 Progress (cont'd)

Looking Ahead to 2026

As we enter 2026, the Illinois DCFS will continue to place child safety and well-being at the center of every decision. We will prioritize timely family reunification whenever it is safe to do so and will identify, engage, and support relatives and kin who can serve as caregivers. We will also strengthen partnerships across every region of Illinois so families can access help earlier and closer to home.

Our 2026 strategy will focus on right-sizing the front door through prevention and early support. We will equip and empower staff through training, tools, and consistent supervision. We will align policies, practices, and procedures around what is best for children, youth, and families. This includes continued implementation of the KIND Act to prioritize relative and kin placements. We will also expand customized support for children and youth with complex medical and behavioral health needs. We will strengthen pathways that help young people successfully transition out of care.

IllinoisConnect will continue to phase in, improving efficiency through integrated systems and better coordination. The SAFE Model will continue to roll out across divisions, providing a consistent, trauma-informed framework for case workers, supervisors, and court partners to assess safety, support families, and guide decision-making.

Illinois DCFS enters 2026 with clear priorities: protect children, strengthen families, support our workforce, modernize our systems, and partner with communities and the people that live in them to work together for the betterment of all children, youth, and families. We are grateful to our staff, caregivers, providers, and partners, including Governor Pritzker and the Illinois General Assembly, for their support of our work and mission. Together, we will keep raising the standard for child welfare in Illinois, so every child can grow in a safe, supported, and connected environment.



Illinois Department of Children & Family Services FY26 Progress (cont'd)

DCFS Hiring

FY	Total New Hires	Investigator Adds*	Total Separations	Total Agency Headcount**
2019	447	190	-372	2,748
2020	354	148	-384	2,752
2021	496	159	-370	2,861
2022	560	188	-398	2,979
2023	568	194	-385	3,140
2024	993	318	-457	3,644
2025	650	145	-363	3,921
2026	146	20	-193	3,872

*Investigator Adds – These numbers are included in the total adds and does not reflect internal moves to DCP worker; Add-Sep numbers for FY26 thru December

**Total Agency HC – Reflects end of year numbers, FY26 data from Feb 2025



Illinois Department of Children & Family Services FY27 Budget Walk

Line Item	Amount	Pct.	Note
DCFS FY26 Enacted Appropriations	\$2,456,493,500		
Adoption & Guardianship Services	\$25,029,700	73%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for record growth in adoption and guardianship homes
Institution & Group Home Care & Prevention	\$19,671,300	57%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding salaries tied to benchmark Increased beds for high end youth
Staffing	\$19,096,900	56%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains authorized headcount Annualization of FY26 Headcount Union Contract Funding
Scholarships	\$4,683,700	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annualization of existing scholarships Maintain 350 new scholarship awards for FY27
Auxiliary Grant & Lump Sum Lines	\$3,474,500	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salary increases for budget-based contracts
Level of Care (Reappropriation Adjustment)	\$(20,000,000)	-58%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reappropriation spend down based on FY26 est. spending
Foster Care	\$(20,294,300)	-59%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding provider salaries tied to benchmark Adjusted appropriation for declining foster care population
Governmental Realignment			
Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services (CCBYS)	\$35,410,300	103%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer of CCBYS program from DHS (includes 3 HC)
Electronic Data Processing; Information Technology	\$(13,195,900)	-38%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct appropriation to DoIT for agency-specific payroll costs Decrease in FY27 interagency billings
Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) Transfer	\$(19,548,100)	-57%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer of funding for Day Care Licensing unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal Services & Related (-188 HC) Travel Commodities Electronic Data Processing Telecommunications
TOTAL CHANGES	\$ 34,328,100	100%	
DCFS FY27 Request	\$ 2,490,821,600		



[DCFS.Illinois.gov](https://dcfs.illinois.gov)