




*Arizona Department of Child Safety*

MEMORANDUM

To: Mrs. Cindy McCain  
Co-Chair, Arizona Human Trafficking Council

Mr. Gil Orrantia  
Co-Chair, Arizona Human Trafficking Council

From: Greg McKay   
Director, Arizona Department of Child Safety

Date: May 28, 2019

Subject: Inaccurate data represented at May 28, 2019 Human Trafficking Council Meeting

I am writing to correct false statements and inaccurate data that were represented today during the public comment portion of the Arizona Human Trafficking Council meeting. Moreover, I want to apologize for the disruption, but mention that open meetings, especially those well attended, often bring critics of the Department of Child Safety (DCS) and myself.

The group signed in today calls themselves, "DCS Oversight Group," and are made up of some people whom have had unfortunate, life changing outcomes as a result of DCS intervention. The first allegation they leveled was that DCS has no oversight, therefore the "DCS Oversight Group" is required to seek accountability. The truth is, DCS has 27 different layers of oversight (local, state, and federal) and deeply appreciates accountability and an interested community.

The next allegation was that DCS is removing more children under my tenure, and it is done without due process. In 2015, Arizona was ranked the worst of fifty states in America for foster care growth. We had an all-time high of 19,044 kids in foster care (data as of March, 2016). Last year, Arizona was celebrated as the best state in America for safe foster care reduction of 25%. As of April, 2019, there were 13,380 children in foster care. More importantly, Arizona has not seen adverse outcomes from such a steep decline in the number of children in foster care. In short, the data doesn't suggest that we left children in harm's way in order to reduce the number of children in foster care. In the end, if children are endangered we take custody; regardless of numbers, costs, or theories on best interest. Moreover, last year we enacted legislation to require court authorization prior to removing children from their parent or guardian. Once children are removed, DCS must meet a multitude of conditions and prove those to judges repeatedly. There is due process.

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The next allegation was that DCS takes people's children and makes a profit from federal funding streams. This is obvious nonsense, however, people come to this conclusion because the federal government does match funding for foster care and adoption related expenses. They also provide funding to share the cost with DCS to rehabilitate parents through services. DCS spends over \$970 million per year to support children and families in Arizona. That certainly is not a profit.

Finally, it was alleged that DCS has unlawfully taken people's children and then "lost" them. They had data, purportedly from a DCS website, that shows over 700 children are missing. This is categorically false. What is true, however, is that 213 children are listed as runaways, and 32 are listed as missing as of April, 2019. What constitutes these numbers are kids who run from their foster or kinship placement, delinquents placed with DCS who run and violate probation, and children whose parents absconded while an investigation was ongoing. Diligence goes into each of these categories. We have analysts searching and trying to track them down, each child has been reported to police and is listed in National Crimes Information Systems and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. We track social media, education systems, food stamps and other subsidy programs to find them. Oftentimes, we recover them, and they run away immediately thereafter. This is why our partnership with police has limited the AWOLs from group homes leading to human trafficking.

In closing, I know you and my colleagues on the council did not require an explanation. I am providing this because information is always helpful, and every child unaccounted for in the foster care system personally pains me. The dedicated staff at DCS do amazing work, and they do it under some of the most dreadful and thankless conditions imaginable. Talk is cheap from those who misshape the narrative. What's valuable, however, is the combined effort from all of us to share the responsibility for our children, fight for their justice and bring them peace and healing when the dust settles.