

### Why We Conducted This Review

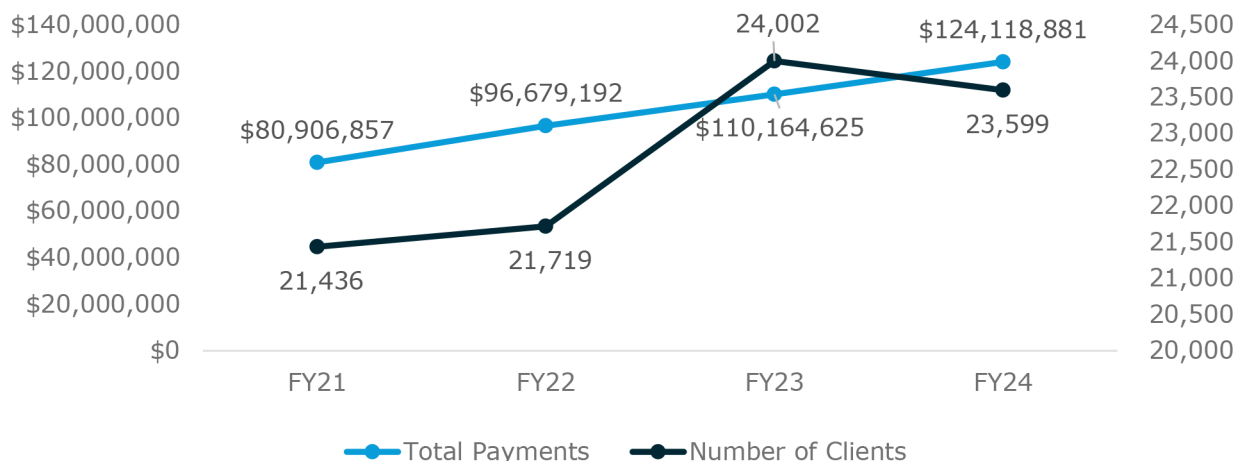
This report provides information on the Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) controls over payments it made for child welfare services. DCFS's Division of Child Welfare (Child Welfare) works to protect children against abuse and/or neglect, find permanent homes for Louisiana's foster children, and to educate the public on Safe Sleep and Louisiana's Safe Haven Law. Payments for child welfare services are primarily for adoption and foster clients. We performed this review to provide information about how DCFS could strengthen its controls over child welfare payments.

### What We Found

Overall, we found opportunities where DCFS could strengthen controls over child welfare TIPS payments. Controls are important mechanisms to ensure that payments are made in accordance with established policies and that payment amounts have been approved and are appropriate for the services rendered. DCFS currently has controls over payments, including payment approval processes and automatic controls in TIPS such as standard rates. However, we found some areas that could benefit from additional controls. The exhibit below shows the total TIPS payments and number of clients served during fiscal years 2021 through 2024.

The **Tracking, Information, and Payment System (TIPS)** has been DCFS's payment system for child welfare payments since 1988.

**Total TIPS Child Welfare Payments and Number of Clients Served  
Fiscal Years 2021 through 2024**



**Source:** Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using TIPS data.

# Child Welfare Payments

## Department of Children and Family Services

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### What We Found (Cont.)

Specifically, we found:

- **DCFS could strengthen controls over processing manual payments by requiring approval from staff at a level higher than the supervisor.** Additional approval could prevent overpaying for services or approving services that do not meet policy requirements.
- **DCFS could strengthen its retention of payment approval documentation to support child welfare payments.** DCFS could not always provide supporting documentation for payments requested by auditors, or approvals were not conducted in accordance with policy.
- **While standard rates may not be applicable to all types of services, DCFS could strengthen controls over child welfare payments by ensuring most services have standard rates, that the established rates are reasonable, and that services provided are paid in accordance with the established rates.** We found that hospital and in-home sitter services and transportation services may have a risk of unnecessarily high payments.
- **DCFS could create additional automatic controls in the TIPS system to help prevent incorrect payments, such as capturing the number of service hours and requiring more rates to be coded into TIPS.** Automated control activities can be incorporated directly into computer applications to achieve validity, completeness, and accuracy of transactions during processing.

We made seven recommendations, and DCFS agreed with all of them. See Appendix A in the report for DCFS's full response.