

Comprehensive Review of Arkansas DHS

The following is a **comprehensive review plan** for the **Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS)**, broken down by division. This plan outlines the structure, key objectives, methodologies, timelines, and responsible parties for evaluating each major division, including Shared Services. Pursuant to Section 13 of Act 1004 of the 2025 legislative session, this review process outline includes Shared Services, Division of Children and Family Services, and Division of County Operations.

Executive Summary

Purpose & Objectives

The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) is tasked with delivering a wide range of essential services across various programs, including child welfare, aging services, developmental disabilities support, and Medicaid. Given the evolving needs of Arkansas residents and increasing demands on public services, it is essential to conduct a thorough review of DHS operations to identify areas for improvement and ensure alignment with state and federal guidelines.

The **primary objectives** of this comprehensive review are to:

- **Evaluate service delivery** across all divisions to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.
- **Assess compliance** with state and federal regulations.
- **Identify areas for innovation** and improvement, particularly in areas of technology, staff retention, and cross-divisional coordination.
- **Propose actionable recommendations** for enhancing service quality and operational performance.

Scope of Review

The review initially will be conducted across the following **three divisions** of DHS:

1. **Shared Services:** Secretary's Office, Office of Chief Counsel & Office of Appeals and Hearings, Office of Communications and Community Engagement, Office of Finance, Office of Human Resources, Office of Information Technology, Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of Policy & Rules, Office of Procurement, Office of Payment Integrity and Office of Security & Compliance.
 2. **Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS):** Foster care, adoption, child welfare, and family preservation.
 3. **Division of County Operations (DCO):** Eligibility determination for SNAP, Medicaid, and TANF.
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Review Methodology

The review will follow a **data-driven** and **stakeholder-inclusive** approach. The methodology includes:

- **Internal reviews** to assess efficiency and compliance within each division.
- **Interviews and focus groups** with frontline staff, service recipients, providers, and other external stakeholders.
- **Quantitative analysis** of service outcomes, such as wait times, application processing times, and customer satisfaction metrics.
- **Benchmarking against best practices** from other states and federal standards.

Key Focus Areas

- **Administrative Policies and Functions**
- **Personnel and Staffing Evaluations**
- **Revenues and Expenditures of the:**

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- Department,
 - Divisions, and
 - Providers.

Expected Deliverables

Upon completion of the review, DHS will receive:

1. **Subcommittee Report:** An overarching assessment of DHS's operational strengths, weaknesses, and key opportunities for improvement.
 - a. Recommendations
 - b. Desired metrics
 - c. Timelines of completion
 2. **Final Report:** Assess outcomes in accordance with the preliminary recommendations, including recommending legislation to address findings at the final Arkansas Legislative Council meeting of the 95th General Assembly.
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Timeline

The review will be conducted in **five phases** over a **twelve-month period**:

- **Phase 1 (Month 1):** Planning and scoping of the review.
- **Phase 2 (Months 2-5):** Assessment and data collection.
- **Phase 3 (Month 6):** Synthesis of findings and recommendations.

- **Phase 4 (Month 11):** Reporting and stakeholder briefings.
- **Phase 5 (Month 12):** Action plan development and implementation strategies.

Comprehensive Review Plan: Arkansas DHS

Overall Goal:

To assess the performance, efficiency, effectiveness, and service delivery outcomes across all DHS divisions, identifying areas for improvement and aligning programs with state and federal mandates.

I. Project Governance and Oversight

Role	Responsibility
Executive Sponsor	Arkansas DHS Secretary, Kristi Putnam
Project Lead	Deputy Secretary for Operations & Budget, Misty Eubanks
Advisory Committee	DHS Executive Team subject matter experts (Division Directors & Chiefs), external stakeholders, Hospital, Medicaid, & Disabilities Subcommittee, ALC
Review Team	Interdisciplinary team comprised of Governor’s office liaisons, DHS Executive Team and subject matter experts, and legislative partners (legislators, BLR)

II. Review Phases

Phase	Description	Timeline
1. Planning	Define scope, metrics, data needs	Month 1
2. Assessment	Conduct reviews by division	Months 2–5
3. Initial report	Summarize initial findings, draft recommendations	Month 6
4. Reporting	Final report, stakeholder briefing	Month 11
5. Action Plan	Develop implementation strategies	Month 12 and beyond

III. Division-Specific Review Plans

1. Shared Services

Focus Areas:

- Secretary's Office
- Office of Chief Counsel & Office of Appeals and Hearings
- Office of Communications & Community Engagement
- Office of Finance
- Office of Human Resources
- Office of Information Technology
- Office of Legislative & Intergovernmental Affairs
- Office of Policy & Rules
- Office of Procurement
- Office of Payment Integrity
- Office of Security & Compliance

Objectives:

- Evaluate resource efficiency and shared service support to program divisions.
- Assess IT system reliability and cost-efficiency.
- Review major upcoming procurements to identify strategies for workload management and opportunities for consolidated approach with SAS/OSP.

Methods:

- Gather internal metrics
- Conduct stakeholder interviews
- Review existing audits
- Review contracts

2. Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

Focus Areas:

- Foster care, adoption, family preservation
- Case management workloads
- Permanency outcomes
- Stakeholder/partner communications and relations

Objectives:

- Assess child safety metrics
- Evaluate timeliness to permanency
- Analyze staff turnover and burnout
- Identify opportunities for improving communications and strengthening relationships

Methods:

- Conduct case file reviews
 - Review existing audits/program recommendations
 - Outcome metric analysis
 - Focus groups with frontline workers
 - Field visits:
 - DCFS county offices
 - MDT meeting
 - CACD hotline recordings
 - Foster/adoptive event
 - Child Advocacy Centers of Arkansas
 - Residential facility visit
 - Private Licensed Placement
 - Supervised Independent Living
 - Restore Hope – 100 Families
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3. Division of County Operations (DCO)

Focus Areas:

- SNAP, Medicaid eligibility, TANF
- Field office operations

Objectives:

- Assess application processing times and error rates
- Customer satisfaction
- Field office staffing models & location analysis
- Opportunities for automation

Methods:

- Analyze workflows
 - Review client experience
 - County office comparisons
 - County office visits
 - Independence County Processing Center tour / Diamond State Interview Center (central office), and Jefferson County Scanning Center
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IV. Cross-Division Themes

- **Access to Appropriate Services/Care**
 - **Workforce Stability**
 - **Customer Service**
 - **Digital Modernization/ Technological Advancements**
 - **Outcome-Based Contracting**
 - **Cross-Divisional Coordination**
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V. Deliverables

1. **Executive Summary:** DHS-wide strengths, risks, and improvement areas
2. **Division-Level Reports:** Findings and recommendations per division/section
3. **Updated Dashboard:** Suggested performance metrics for ongoing tracking
4. **Action Plans:** Division-specific and enterprise-wide strategies for change or improvement

VI. Optional Enhancements

- **External Peer Review:** Invite experts from other state human services agencies
- **Public Dashboard:** Transparency for citizens and stakeholders
- **Legislative Briefings:** Engagement with other General Assembly committees

Conclusion

This review represents a critical opportunity to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accessibility of all Arkansas DHS programs for both internal and external customers. By evaluating performance across key divisions, identifying service gaps, and collaborating with Governor's office, legislative, community partners, and external stakeholders for solutions, Arkansas can ensure that its Department of Human Services is best equipped to serve its most vulnerable populations while adhering to best practices and compliance standards.