

# County of Santa Clara

Social Services Agency

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San Jose, California 95110-2335



**DATE:** May 1, 2024

**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
James R. Williams, J.D., County Executive

**FROM:** Damion Wright, DFCS Director

**SUBJECT:** Off-Agenda Report relating to the Child Abuse and Neglect Center

At the March 26, 2024 Board of Supervisors (Board) meeting, Supervisor Chavez requested Administration provide information relating to the Child Abuse and Neglect Center (CANC) call capture rate for taking live phone calls and how long it takes for a referral to be assigned for investigation. In August 2024, DFCS will provide an analysis of the data over the last three years to the Board of Supervisors as requested by Supervisor Chavez.

The CANC serves as the central call center that receives and responds to reports of abuse or neglect regarding children and youth in Santa Clara County. The CANC staff answer calls to the hotline twenty-four hours a day, connect with the reporting party to document their concern, and determine if the concern warrants an in-person investigation by a Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) Emergency Response social worker.

### *Calls Received by the CANC*

The CANC received 29,821 reports from January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023, an increase of 5.7 % over the previous calendar year (2022).

Figure A provides a breakdown of the number of calls received at the CANC and Figure B provides the definitions of response determinations.

Figure A: CANC Calls and Outcomes

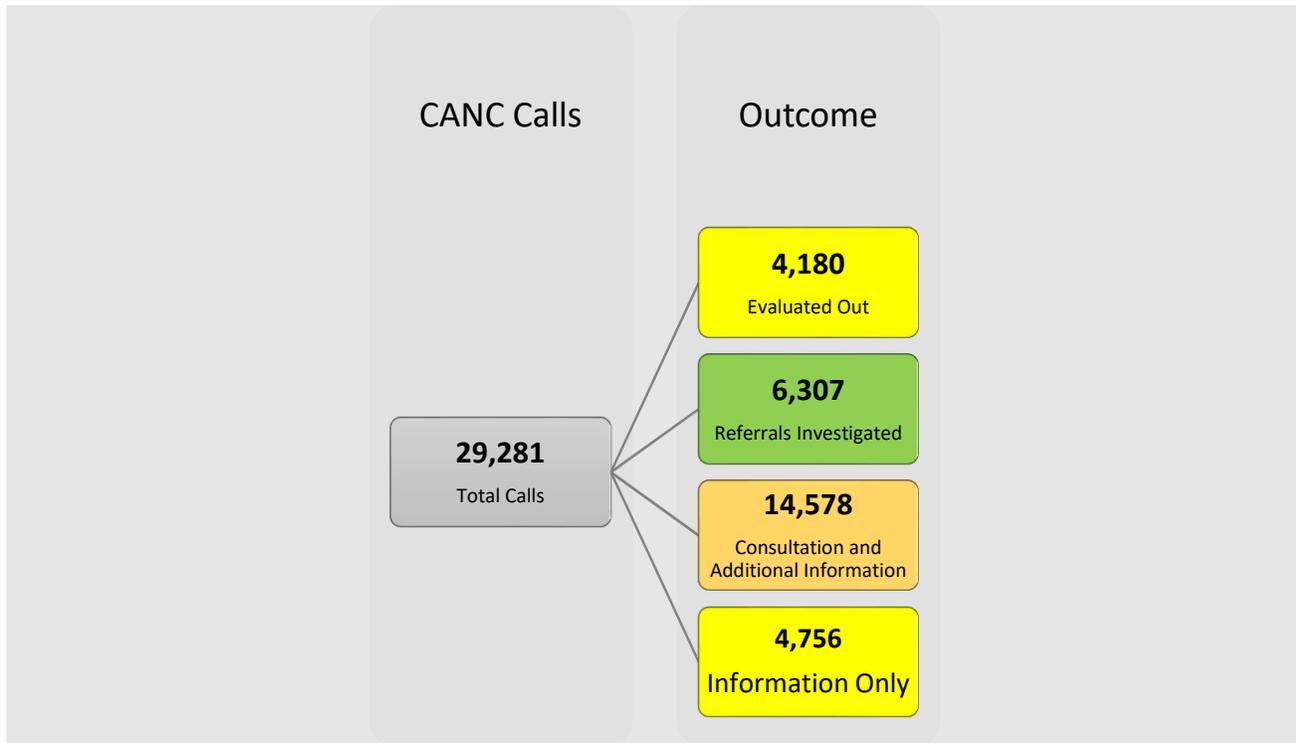
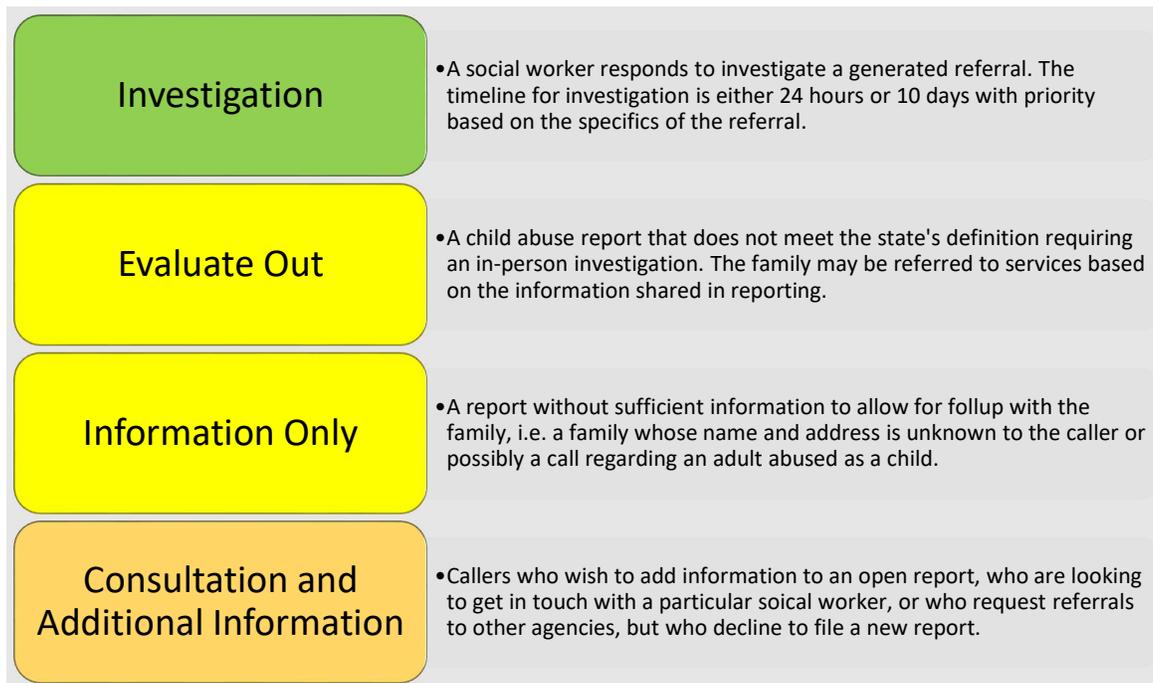


Figure B: Response Determinations



### *CANC Call Outcomes (CY 2023)*

While 97.1 % of the reports made in 2023 were made via phone call, other reports were also made through mail, email, fax, police report or in person.

Of the calls to the CANC, 91.1% were answered by a CANC representative, of which 58% of calls were directly answered by a CANC screening social worker. Thirty-three percent of CANC calls were directly answered by clerical staff. This sometimes occurred if all CANC screening social workers on shift were unable to answer the call due to being on another call or processing a child abuse and neglect referral. The clerical staff would determine if the caller needed to be immediately transferred to a social worker based on the urgency of the report. If the caller did not require immediate assessment by a CANC social worker, the clerical staff would take a message and a social worker would return the call within 24 hours. The clerical staff also have the ability to connect with the CANC supervisor or CANC manager immediately, if needed.

For 4.99% of calls, the caller opted to leave a voicemail rather than wait to speak with a CANC staff member. Only the caller can select voicemail, otherwise they will remain on hold until a CANC representative answers the call.

All voicemails with a phone number are promptly returned within an average of two hours; however, staff have up to 24 hours to return the call, if a non-emergency. DFCS staff are only required to follow up with the caller once from the initial call; however, if there is a return number then per policy, staff must call the caller back.

Of the remaining calls to the CANC, 4.75% were abandoned before they could be answered and without the caller leaving a voicemail. In 2023, the average wait time for a call to be answered was 76 seconds, with nine minutes as the average time a screener spoke with a caller. The average wait time before call abandonment was 5.6 minutes. The English language queue was chosen by 89.6% of the callers. Of the 6,307 reports that met the qualifying criteria for an in-person response, 90.7% were made by mandated reporters (e.g., law enforcement, medical personnel, school personnel).

### *CANC Referral Assignment*

After a call is made to the CANC and a social worker determines an in-person response is needed, the response time is determined utilizing the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Hotline tool. Once the response time is determined, the CANC has internal processes to assign the referral to the appropriate staff. Assignment depends on whether the referral is an immediate response (contact within 24 hours) for the day shift, after hours or weekend shift, or a 10-day response (contact within 10 days). All responses are calculated from date and time the child abuse referral was taken.

If the referral is an immediate response during the day shift of the regular work week, an electronic board is utilized to assign staff based on guidelines and staff's placement on the board (for equity), language, or regional assignment. If the referral is an immediate response during after-hours or a weekend shift, the referral is assigned to the after-hours or weekend social work teams, directly. If the referral is a 10-day response, it is assigned regionally by random assignment.

### *Time to Referral Assignment*

In review of the call times and assignment times within the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS), which is the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) for California, the following are the average times to referral assignment between January 2022 and February 2024:

Table 1: Average and Approximate to Time to Assignment

Response Time	10-Day	Immediate Response	Joint Response (Immediate Response)
<b>Average Time to Assignment</b>	1 – 2 days	3 hours	2 hours

Additionally, from March 2022 to February 2024, 88.6% of referrals were assigned no later than the second day from the call to the CANC.

### *Continuous Quality Improvement*

DFCS is reviewing opportunities to streamline the efficiency of referral assignment and ensuring that referrals are assigned as early as possible, including putting ticklers in place to alert supervisors when referrals have not been assigned past a certain assignment benchmark.

DFCS has also engaged the San Jose Police Department (SJPD) to pilot a law enforcement process that will allow for law enforcement agencies to utilize a specific pin to prioritize their call and route them directly to a staff who can process their referral urgently. DFCS hopes to have this in place by May 2024 to pilot with SJPD, and subsequently phase in all law enforcement agencies.

DFCS leadership has also looked at several staff proposals to potentially support increased efficiency at the CANC. These include community-based social workers operating in a vertical case management model and/or adding specific unit assignments including a unit focused on written child abuse and neglect reports received by the CANC, which are currently handled rotationally. DFCS recently halted its After Hours and Weekend CANC team from doing Emergency Response, allowing the teams to focus on CANC operations and to consider other opportunities to support the CANC operations.

Lastly, DFCS is looking to add additional staff to the CANC program. The CANC calls and reports have progressively increased and there is a need to add additional staffing in the peak hours of operations, which is approximately 3 pm to 9 pm. DFCS is looking to add one additional unit by Summer 2024 through the administrative transfer process.

### *Types of Allegations*

Figure C lists the percentage of different allegations including:

- General Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse

- Sexual Abuse
- At Risk; Sibling Abused

General neglect remains the highest percentage of referrals and includes many different factors such as substance abuse, mental health and other complicating factors impacting parenting ability. Emotional abuse also accounts for a high percentage of referrals, which is reflective of the increase in domestic violence/intimate partner violence in the community.

Figure C: Allegation Type by Percent of Referrals

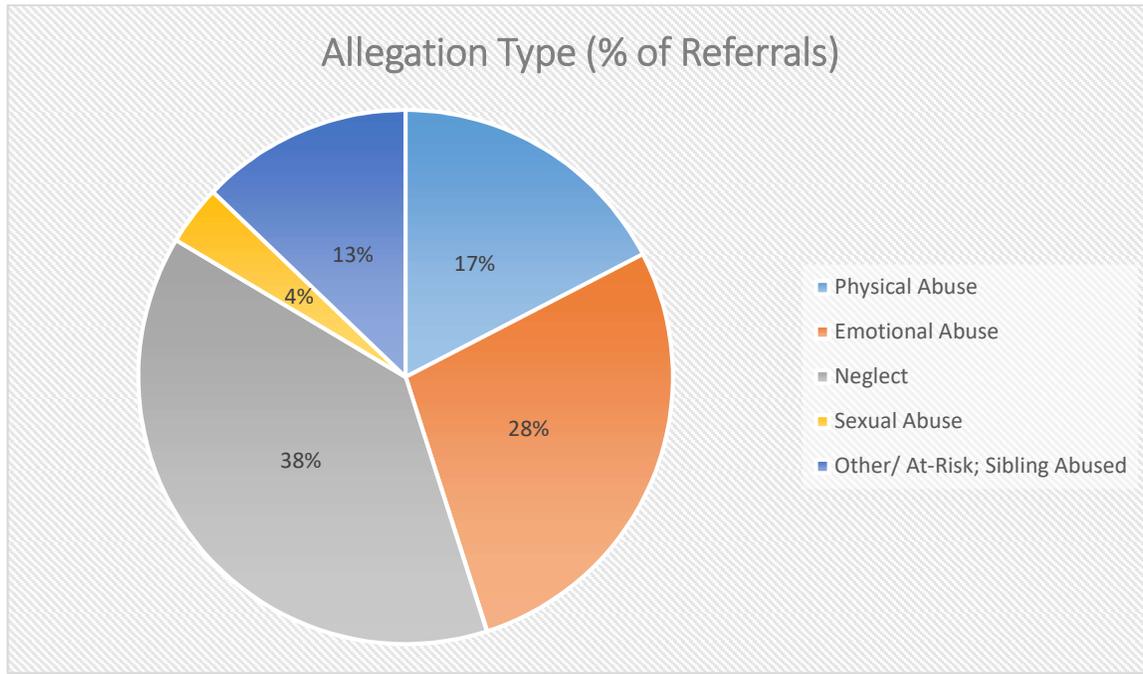


Table 2 shows the percentage of referrals and the specific response time or if the referral was evaluated out as it did not meet the requirement for an in-person response as per the SDM Hotline Assessment tool.<sup>1</sup> It also shows the state percentage for comparison, showing that DFCS is investigating allegations of abuse or neglect at a much higher rate than the rest of California. Simply put, DFCS puts eyes on and arms around a larger percentage of referrals.

Table 2: Referral Response and Associated Percentage and Number in Comparison to State (CY 2023)

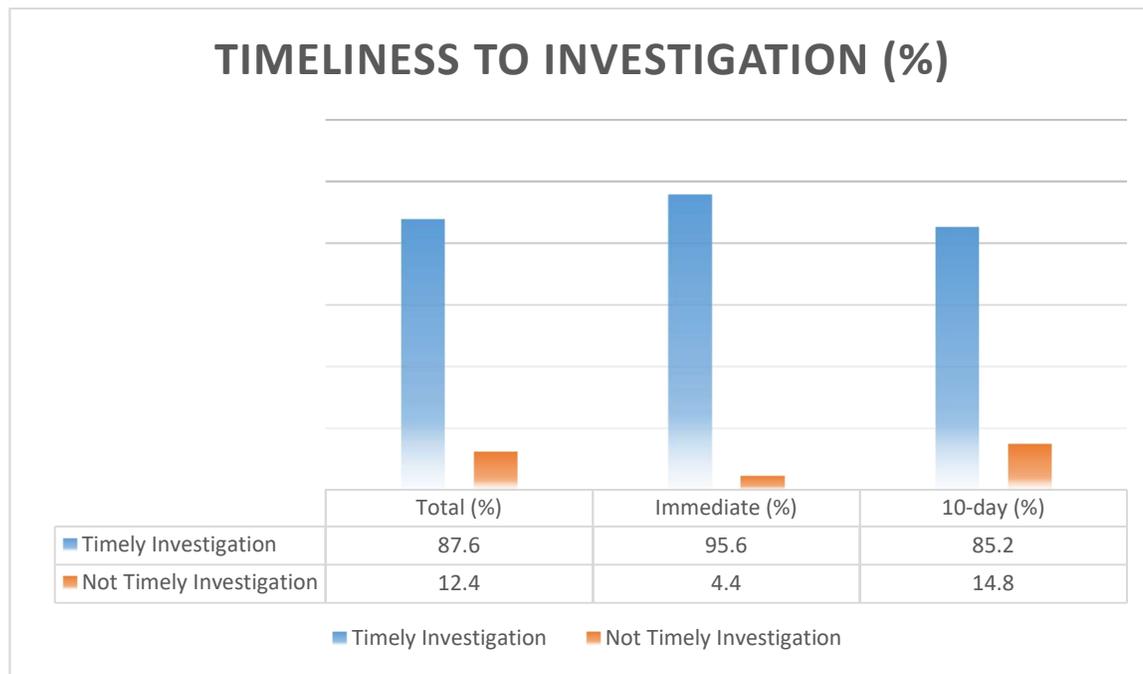
Response Time	10-Day	Immediate Response	Evaluate Out
<b>Percentage</b>	46.4%	13.7%	39.9%
<b>(# of Referrals)</b>	(4,865)	(1,438)	(4,189)
<b>CA State Percentage (avg. all Counties)</b>	27.8%	10.6%	50.5%

For an investigation to be considered timely the social worker must make contact with all of the children associated with the referral, either within 10-days for a 10-day referral or 24

<sup>1</sup> Structured Decision Making – Hotline Assessment Tool available at <https://ca.sdmdata.org/Definitions/HT/PP> (last visited Apr. 29, 2024).

hours for an immediate response referral. Figure D shows the timeliness of investigations for CY 2023 for immediate response and 10-day referrals.

Figure D: Timeliness to Investigation Percentage: Overall, Immediate and 10-day



### *Differential Response*

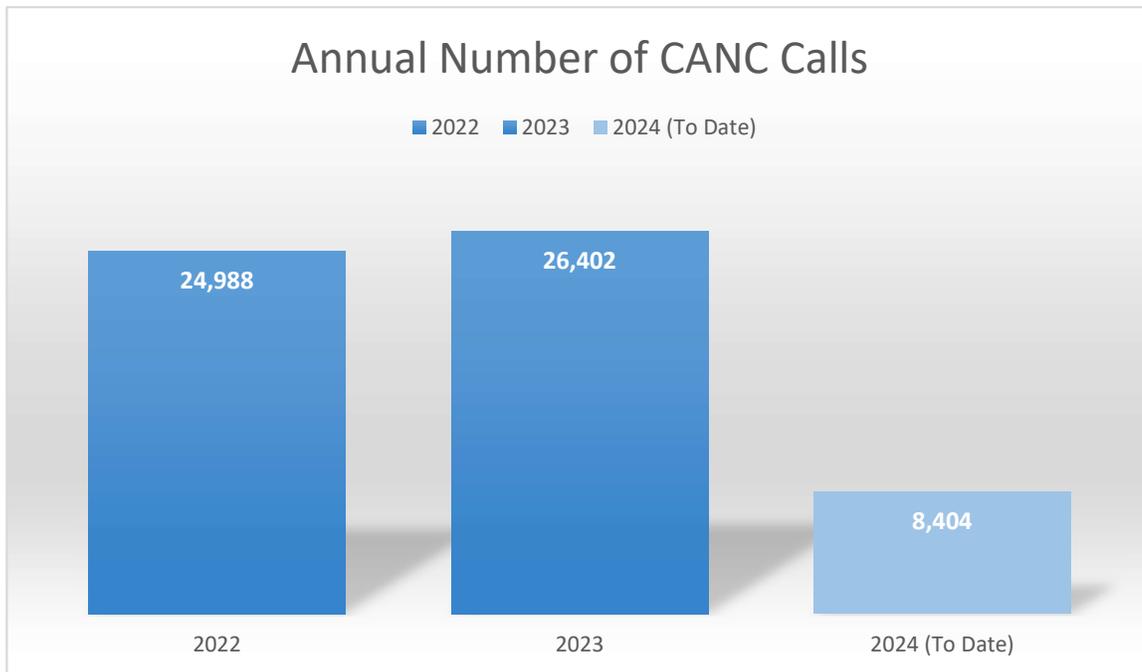
Differential Response (DR) is a strategy that allows DFCS to respond in a flexible manner to reports of child abuse or neglect. DR affords a customized approach based on an assessment of safety, risk, and protective capacity that recognizes each family’s unique strengths and needs, and addresses these in an individualized manner. Differential Response can only work with families who have been assessed to be safe. DFCS has contracted, community-based providers that support differential response referrals. A DR referral is generated for all families with referrals that are evaluated out.

Upon receiving a referral, the DR contractor must proactively engage the family within three days. They are required to make at least four contact attempts using various methods within 48 hours, ensuring different times and days are covered. If unable to make contact after the second attempt, the contractor must reach out to the referent for support or additional information. An unannounced home visit is conducted if necessary. Feedback loops are incorporated into the referral process, with updates provided to the referring social worker or referent within 11 days. Collaboration with the social worker or referent is essential for warm handoffs to engage the family in services.

### CANC Call Analysis (2022 – 2024, to date)

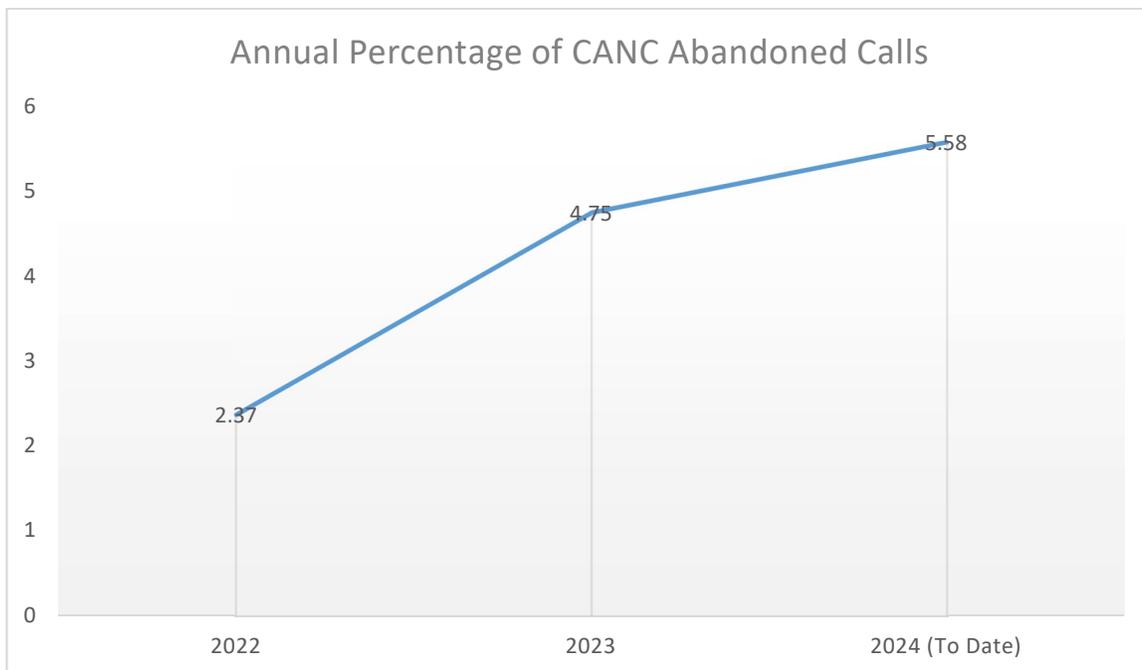
Through analysis of CANC calls from CY 2022 – CY 2024 (to date), there were several trends identified including higher call volumes, more calls being abandoned, and fewer callers selecting voicemail. See Figure E for the total annual number of calls to the CANC.

Figure E: 2022 – 2024 CANC Calls



The number of callers who choose to abandon their call and not speak to a social work screener or leave a voicemail increased from 2.37% in CY 2022 to 4.75% in CY 2023 to 5.58% thus far in CY 2024 (Figure F).

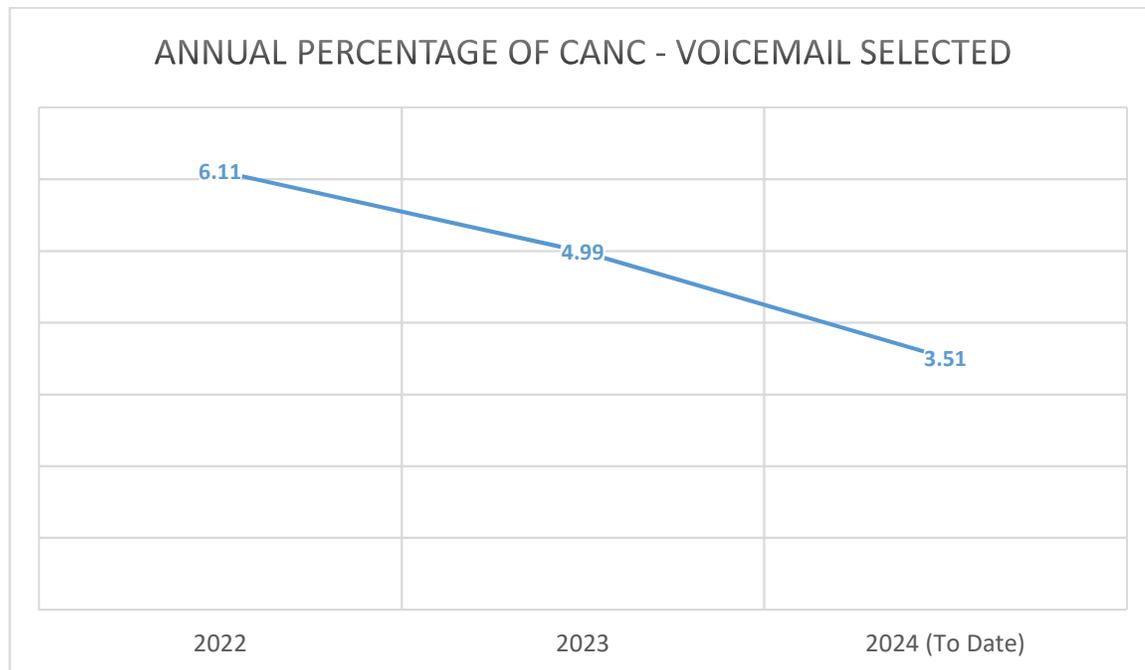
Figure F: CY 2022 – 2024 (To Date) Annual Percentage and Number of CANC Calls – Abandoned



Annual Number of CANC Abandoned Calls		
2022	2023	2024 (To Date)
591	1255	469

Conversely, the percentage of callers who selected to leave a voicemail decreased from 6.11% in CY 2022 to 4.99% in CY 2023 (Figure G).

Figure G: 2022 – 2024 Annual Percentage of CANC – Voicemail Selected



Annual Number of CANC Calls – Caller Selected Voicemail		
2022	2023	2024 (To Date)
1,529	1,320	295