

**County of Santa Clara**  
**Social Services Agency**



**DATE:** February 6, 2024

**TO:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Damion Wright, Director, Department of Family and Children's Services

DS  
DW

**SUBJECT:** E.1 - Data Requested by the Board regarding Child Abuse and Neglect Center (CANC) and CANC Annual Report

At the December 19, 2023 Special Meeting of the Board of Supervisors, the Board requested inclusion of a report at the February 6, 2024 Board meeting with information relating to CANC call center data, including call pick-up rates and specific staffing positions that can take calls, after consultation with line staff regarding how the process works; and to broadly interpret the direction to include the function of staff and any concerns they have regarding the function. This memorandum provides the requested information.

Because the Board's requests for information at the December 19, 2023 Special Hearing overlapped significantly with the data provided by DFCS in its CANC annual report, the report below provides the data requested by the Board as well as the data regularly presented to the Board as part of the CANC annual report.

### **CANC Annual Report**

Since December 8, 2016, the County of Santa Clara's (County) Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) has provided the Finance and Government Operations Committee and Children, Seniors, and Families Committee with periodic reports on the Child Abuse and Neglect Center (CANC).

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 has social worker staff answering calls to the hotline twenty-four hours a day, connecting with the reporting party to document their concern, and determining if the concern warrants an in-person investigation by a DFCS Emergency Response social worker.

### **CANC Calls update**

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 the definitions of response determinations.

As reflected in Figure B, the number of calls annually has remained fairly consistent over the past several years with one notable dip in 2020, during the novel coronavirus pandemic, and has gradually increased in total reports since then.

Figure A: CANC Calls and Reports for 2023

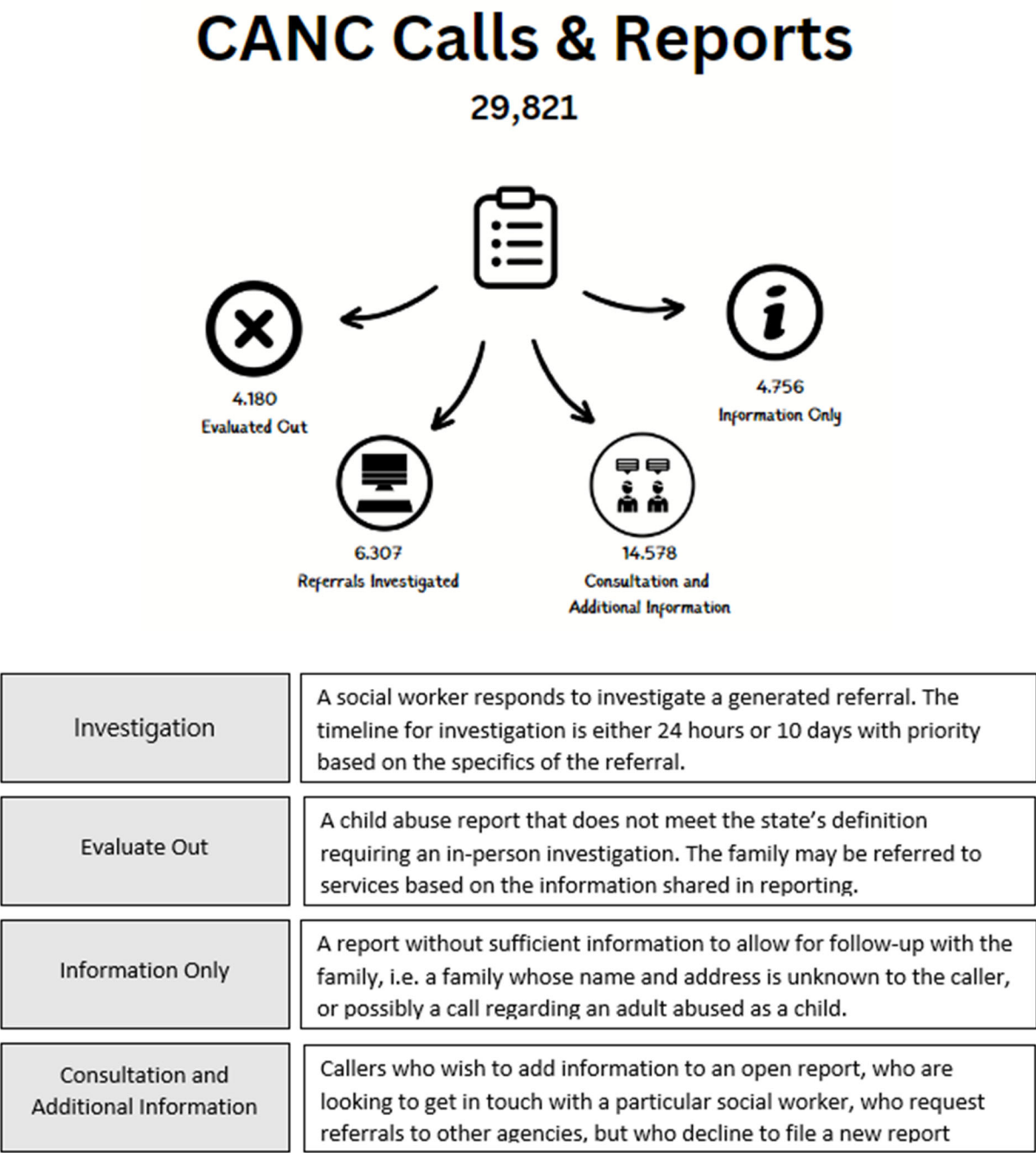
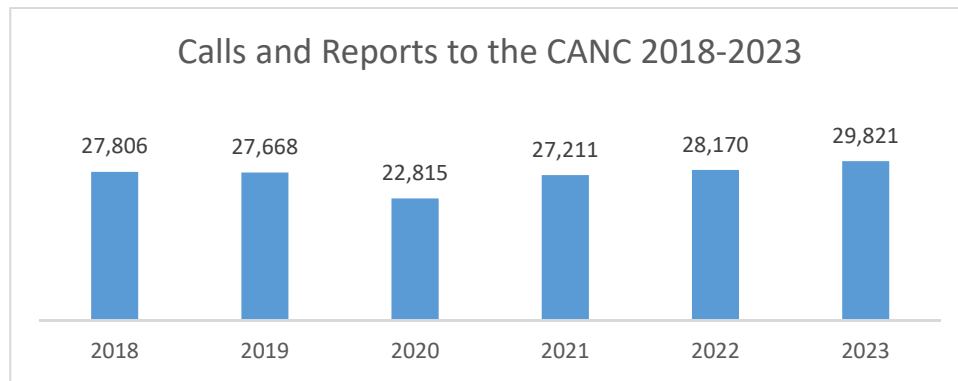


Figure B



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 answered were screened by a social worker. For 4.5% of calls, the caller opted to leave a voicemail rather than wait to speak with a CANC screener. Of the calls to the CANC, 4.3% were abandoned before they could be answered and without the caller leaving a voicemail. All voicemails with a phone number are promptly returned. Thus, 95.6 % of all calls to the CANC were responded to.

The average wait time for a call to be answered was 76 seconds, with 9 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% were made by mandated reporters (i.e. law enforcement, medical personnel, schools, etc.).

### *Staffing of CANC Calls*

When all CANC social work staff are occupied on existing calls, new CANC calls are answered by CANC data office specialists (DOS). In order to ensure the caller/reporter is able to speak to a live person, CANC DOS take the information of the call, and send correspondence on to social workers on a rotational basis, if it is a non-emergent call. The CANC social worker must return that non-emergent call within 24 hours. If the call is an emergency, the caller remains on the line and the call is given directly to the next CANC social worker in rotation.

Historically, a significant portion of CANC calls have been answered by DOS staff assigned to the CANC to control overflow. DFCS has progressively added staffing units to the CANC to support the reduction of this overflow; however, there has been an increase in calls in 2023.

In 2023, the CANC added the After Hours CANC Units. Additionally in the latter part of CY 2023 the priority for staffing was filling Emergency Response social worker positions. As of December 19, 2023, the CANC had three social worker vacancies. DFCS is looking to add a swing shift unit as this is the high call volume period, and additional staff will cut down on CANC DOS staff needing to answer calls.

### **Law Enforcement**

Law enforcement and DFCS regularly partner to improve child safety and minimize emotional trauma to children who have been reported as possible victims of abuse or neglect. Law enforcement primarily contacts the CANC for one of three reasons, which is to: 1) determine if a family has any child welfare history, 2) file a report of child abuse or neglect, or 3) request a Joint Response from a social worker in the field.

DFCS has continued to partner with law enforcement in multiple ways to support communication including but not limited to continued utilization of the Joint Response protocol, engagement of specific law enforcement personnel around daily operations through the DFCS Law Enforcement liaison, and a tiered engagement with local law enforcement agencies at multiple levels.

## **Medical Community**

DFCS is always looking for ways to improve the CANC as well as enhance engagement with the medical community. To achieve this goal, the CANC participates in regular meetings with staff from Valley Medical Center, Children's Advocacy Center, and Kaiser Permanente to discuss improved reporting practices for medical providers reporting suspected child abuse and neglect to the CANC, important information needed by DFCS to properly calibrate its response, and ongoing support for medical providers in need of additional information and support for joint efforts to protect children and serve families. These meetings also focus on areas of better partnership including plans of safe care for safe discharges of children with mothers suffering from substance addiction, coordination of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) meetings ran by different hospital or hospital networks to share necessary information about medical assessment and need for children in ongoing child abuse investigations, and supporting conversations around mandated reporting.

## **Continuous Quality Improvement**

DFCS has implemented several trainings designed to improve the quality of work performed by staff at the CANC. There have been mandatory trainings for updates to the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Tool as well as the Safety Organized Practice model. The SDM tool is a state-mandated assessment for use by child welfare departments and includes hotline-specific tool.

The internal mandated reporting training has been implemented and presented to six different groups of DFCS employees. The presentation is designed to provide a refresher training to DFCS staff and provide updated information of current California laws and practices for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. The CANC Dashboard, which is a comprehensive information management tool to support informed decision-making, provides real time reporting of key information daily, weekly and monthly to CANC supervisors in order to review and analyze team data regarding workflow, with the aim of increasing efficacy in all areas. Additionally, the dashboard was made available to the public on October 13, 2023. This dashboard is available at [DFCS CANC Dashboard](#)

## **Technology**

As the CANC accepts reports of child abuse and neglect, mandated reporters must first give a verbal report, and then must also submit a completed suspected child abuse form, BICA

8572, Suspected Child Abuse Reporting (SCAR) form. This form must be completed within 36 hours of getting the information and is sent by eFax, Fax, or U.S. Mail. DFCS in partnership with Social Services Agency's Technical Support Solutions (TSS) are assessing solutions that meet the needs of an online mandated reporting tool for mandated reporters to submit non-emergent child maltreatment reports and to alleviate the long call wait times. The solution should reduce demands on the hotline and enable receiving emergent reports more quickly. This solution will allow mandated reporters and authorized staff to easily view submitted referrals.

At this time, there has been an established project management team inclusive of a DFCS Executive Sponsor, management, supervisors and staff, and TSS. This team has met regularly to determine a project timeline, project objectives and success criteria. This team has also engaged another southern CA county that has a functional, online mandated reporting system. There have been multiple meetings to help address scope, cost, build out and implementation of the determined solution.