



## **Child Protective Investigations Career Ladder Report**

Department of Children and Families  
Office of Child Welfare  
November 1, 2020

Chad Poppell  
Secretary

Ron DeSantis  
Governor

## PURPOSE

The information provided within this report is to meet the requirements contained within section 10 of Chapter 2020-152, Laws of Florida (Senate Bill 1326). SB 1326 requires the Florida Department of Children and Families (department), in collaboration with the Florida Institute for Child Welfare (Institute), to submit a proposal regarding an expanded career ladder for all Child Protective Investigators (CPI) and Child Protective Investigator Supervisors (CPI Supervisor) to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives no later than November 1, 2020. The plan outlined in this document will continue to evolve based on available funding and resources of the department. This proposal includes:

- Multiple levels of CPI classifications,
- Corresponding milestones for classes,
- Professional development opportunities for advancement with compensation ranges.

## BACKGROUND

Through Secretary Poppell's "Elevate DCF" initiative, the department has focused on transitioning from a crisis-focused agency to a prevention-minded agency by improving the safety and well-being of children and families statewide. The department is working to operationalize and hardwire prevention into the culture and practice of the department, modernize and create efficiencies in our systems to improve workforce stability and capacity, improve accountability and quality across all systems, and improve financial health by leveraging all revenue sources to improve the service array in our communities.

The Office of Child Welfare is operationalizing and hardwiring a prevention approach in all aspects of Florida's child welfare system to reduce the number of families in crisis. Given that families entering the child welfare system can present with multiple needs, there is the opportunity to not only maintain child safety but also provide services that may address additional needs for behavioral health and economic independence. This more comprehensive approach can reduce the number of families entering our system in the future and prevent further states of crisis. This report outlines a plan to elevate our child protective workforce by creating career ladders, specializations, and prevention-focused training to develop and professionalize Child Protective Investigators.

Staff turnover is costly; replacing an employee who resigns may cost, on average, 21% of the employee's annual pay<sup>1</sup>. Turnover can even be more costly in child welfare because a high turnover rate may result in potential risk to child safety due to lack of experience. Nationally, the annual turnover rate of child welfare professionals is estimated to be between 14% to 22%<sup>2</sup> per year

A stable child welfare workforce is a key factor in providing high quality services to children and families and turnover rates of less than 12% have shown a strong association with key outcomes in the public child welfare context<sup>3</sup>. Research suggests that career "ladders" may contribute to an improved retention rate and increased engagement within agencies<sup>4</sup>. Opportunities for training and professional development in addition to career advancement opportunities also increases retention of employees<sup>5</sup>. Research shows that providing learning and development opportunities to build proficiency and update job skills may both decrease the desire of an employee to resign<sup>6</sup> and improve the quality of service delivery.

The department’s child welfare professionals routinely operate within uncertain and difficult circumstances where they must ensure child safety and wellness. Forty-two percent of CPIs in the department have two or more years of experience<sup>7</sup>. Only half (51%) of CPI trainees are retained past the first year; by the third year, three-fourths of CPIs leave their jobs; and annual turnover rates have ranged between 45% and 49% each year since 2015<sup>8</sup>. Due to high turnover rates, institutional knowledge is not retained and matured, and the experience needed to deliver the best services is lacking. The department estimates that \$34,000 is lost for each CPI that leaves. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2018-19, the CPI turnover rate was 48.1% with an estimated cost of approximately \$19 million to the Department.

In response to high turnover rates, the department created a Child Protection Glide Path in 2017. The Glide Path was a competency-based promotion system and its purpose was to increase recruitment and retention of the department’s critical staff positions. However, the model did not provide additional career advancement and professional development opportunities. The Department ended the Glide Path in June 2019.

Senate Bill 1326 required that the department, in collaboration with the Institute, develop an expanded career ladder for CPIs and CPI Supervisors.

### CAREER LADDER

The department proposes a Career Ladder model to increase retention and improve engagement. This model considers different possible career desires of CPIs and offers different paths for professional improvement and career advancement.

**Current Structure** The department has four class titles within child protective investigations: CPI, Senior CPI, Field Support Analyst/Field Support Consultant, and CPI Supervisor.

Table 1. An overview of the base pay, general job description and minimum qualifications for the department’s Child Protective Investigations classes

Class Title	Base Pay	Job Description	Minimum Qualifications
Child Protective Investigator	\$39,600	This is professional work protecting children, working with families, and conducting investigations of alleged child maltreatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current valid driver’s license;</li> <li>• A bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university (preferred degree in social work, behavioral science, nursing or education field); and</li> <li>• Must obtain Florida Child Protective Investigator certification within 12 months of hire</li> </ul>
Senior Child Protective Investigator	\$41,500	Performs advanced (senior-level) child protective services work. Work involves investigating and analyzing child protective problems, taking corrective action for children, and overseeing and evaluating casework activities. May help plan, assign, and/or supervise the work of others. Works under minimal supervision, with extensive latitude for the use of initiative and independent judgment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current valid driver’s license;</li> <li>• A bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university (preferred degree in social work, behavioral science, nursing or education field);</li> <li>• Two years of child protection-related experience; and</li> <li>• Current Florida Child Protective Investigator certification</li> </ul>

Field Support Analysts/Field Support Consultant	\$44,200 /\$46,900	Provides real-time support/guidance to CPIs through documentation review and random and scheduled case file assessments . These activities occur during investigative activities with the goal to provide a comprehensive understanding of the collected information, documents, and assessments and to assist CPIs in determining and facilitating appropriate service referrals and supports during the investigative process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current valid driver’s license;</li> <li>• A bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university (preferred degree in social work, behavioral science, nursing or education field);</li> <li>• Two years of child protection-related experience; and</li> <li>• Current Florida Child Protective Investigator certification</li> </ul>
Child Protective Investigator Supervisor – SES	\$49,200	This is an advanced-level professional supervisor. The primary duty of the position is to communicate, motivate, train and evaluate employees, plan and direct work; and has the authority to hire, transfer, suspend, layoff, recall, promote, discharge, assign, reward, or discipline subordinate employees to effectively recommend such actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current valid driver’s license;</li> <li>• A bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university (preferred degree in social work, behavioral science, nursing or education field);</li> <li>• Three years of child protection-related experience;</li> <li>• One year of coordinating the work of CPIs or supervisory/managerial experience; and</li> <li>• Current Florida Child Protective Investigator certification</li> </ul>

**Proposed Structure** The proposed Career Ladder offers three different tracks: Performance-based, Specialty, and Supervisory. Each track offers different advancement opportunities for CPIs, and all CPIs and CPI Supervisors must meet specific experience, training, and performance requirements within each track to be eligible for the promotion. Diagram 1 on page 4 shows the proposed Career Ladder Model.

**Design Principles**

The Career Ladder initiative is employee-driven and supervisor-supported, and is designed with the following principles:

- **Voluntary:** The career ladder offers professional development opportunities for all CPIs and CPI Supervisors; however, participation is voluntary for Specialty and Supervisory tracks.
- **Climbing the Ladder:** CPIs can progress from CPI to CPI II, Specialist CPI, and Advanced CPI class titles, yet being promoted to the next level on the ladder is a selective process. The CPIs who wish to move up will be required to apply for those positions.
- **Advanced Levels:** All CPIs, if they desire, may enter the hiring process for Field Support Consultant and Supervisor positions.
- **Flexible:** CPIs can change tracks by completing the appropriate requirements.

## Process

Multi-layered learning and development opportunities are included in this initiative to propel and support employee advancement, engagement, and retention. The proposed process for the Career Ladder is:

1. **Application:** A CPI who elects to be part of the Career Ladder program must apply for advancement.
2. **Training:** Once an application is accepted, CPIs will collaborate with their supervisor to create an individual professional development plan that includes completion of online/classroom training.
3. **Transfer of Learning:** CPIs will need to successfully pass randomly selected Quality Assurance (QA) reviews.
4. **Performance Evaluation:** CPIs must earn at least an overall 3.5 or higher on their annual performance evaluation.
5. **Approval:** After completing all requirements, the CPI must receive approval from both supervisor and Program Administrator (PA).

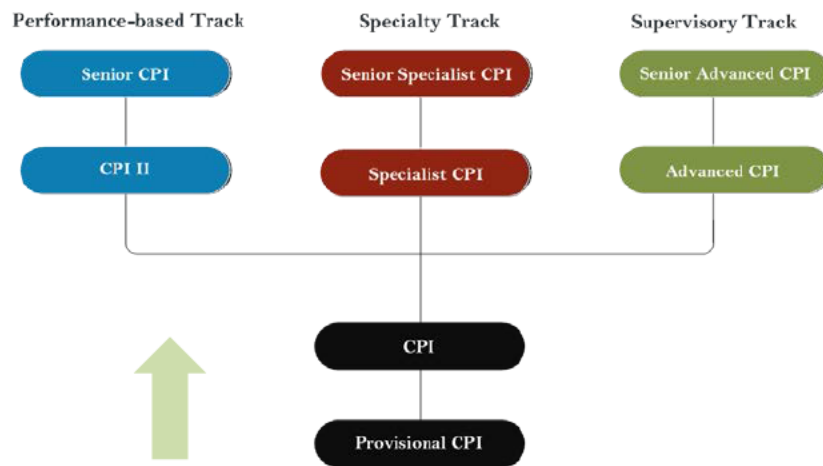


Diagram 1. Proposed Career Ladder Model

## Career Ladder Tracks

### Performance-based Track

This track is the default option for all CPIs, and is based on proficiency and tenure in the position. This track has two ladders and introduces two new class titles: CPI II and Senior CPI. Table 2 shows official titles, the number of minimum years service, minimum qualifications, criteria to achieve the position, and % salary increase.

TITLE	# MIN YEARS SERVICE	MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS	CRITERIA TO ACHIEVE POSITION	INCREASE %
CPI Provisional	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's Degree</li> <li>Valid Driver's License</li> </ul>	Entry level	\$39,600
	12-18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> </ul>	Gained proficiency level	\$41,580

CPI		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successfully Obtain Permanent Status</li> </ul>		(5% of CPI Provisional Salary)
CPI II	Min 24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> <li>Employed for at least 24 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receive at least 3.5 on annual evaluation</li> <li>Pass QA reviews</li> </ul>	\$42,890 (2.5 % of CPI Salary)
Senior CPI	Min 48 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> <li>Employed for at least 48 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receive at least 3.5 on annual evaluation</li> <li>Pass QA reviews</li> </ul>	\$43,962 (2.5 % of CPI II Salary)

Table 2. Performance-based track summary

### Specialty Track

This track offers opportunities for CPIs who desire to advance in child welfare as a specialist to handle complicated cases. This track is based on the number of specializations, proficiency on the job, and tenure in the position. This track has two ladders: Specialist CPI and Senior Specialist CPI.

TITLE	# MIN YEARS SERVICE	MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS	CRITERIA TO ACHIEVE POSITION	INCREASE %
CPI Provisional	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's Degree</li> <li>Valid Driver's License</li> </ul>	Entry level	\$39,600
CPI	12-18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> <li>Successfully obtain Permanent Status</li> </ul>	Gained proficiency level	\$41,580 (5% of CPI Provisional Salary)
Specialist CPI	24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> <li>Employed for at least 24 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receive at least 3.5 on annual evaluation</li> <li>Completed 3 specialization trainings in at least 3 specialty areas</li> <li>Supervisor and PA approval</li> <li>Pass QA reviews</li> </ul>	\$43,660 (5% of CPI Salary)
Senior Specialist CPI	36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> <li>Employed for at least 36 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receive at least 3.5 on annual evaluation</li> <li>Pass QA reviews</li> <li>Completed 3 specialization trainings in at least 3 specialty areas</li> <li>Supervisor and PA approval</li> <li>Qualify for Field Support Analyst</li> </ul>	\$45,850 (5% of Specialist CPI Salary)
Field Support Consultant	48 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> <li>Passed Safety Management Field Support Consultant Proficiency Test within one year in this position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gained proficiency level in the practice model</li> </ul>	\$50,434 (10% of Senior CPI Specialist Salary)

Table 3. Speciality track summary



## Supervisory Track

This track offers opportunities for CPIs who have leadership ambitions, is based on the number of areas of specialization achieved, mentoring, and proficiency and tenure in the position, has two ladders and introduces two new class titles: Advanced CPI and Senior Advanced CPI.

TITLE	# MIN YEARS SERVICE	MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS	CRITERIA TO ACHIEVE POSITION	INCREASE %
CPI Provisional	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's Degree</li> <li>Valid Driver's License</li> </ul>	Entry level	\$39,600
CPI	12-18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> <li>Successfully obtain Permanent Status</li> </ul>	Gained proficiency level	\$41,580 (5% of CPI Provisional Salary)
Advanced CPI	24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> <li>Employed for at least 24 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receive at least 3.5 on annual evaluation</li> <li>Completed 3 specialization trainings in at least 3 specialty areas</li> <li>Pass QA reviews</li> <li>Supervisor and PA approval</li> <li>Complete <b>Mentoring</b> training</li> </ul>	\$43,660 (5% of CPI Salary)
Senior Advanced CPI	36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> <li>Employed for at least 36 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receive at least 3.5 on annual evaluation</li> <li>Pass QA reviews</li> <li>Completed specialization trainings in at least 3 specialty areas</li> <li>Supervisor and PA approval</li> <li>Mentor new CPIs</li> </ul>	\$45,850 (5% of Specialist CPI Salary)
CPIS Level I	48 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> <li>Passed Supervisory Proficiency Test within one year in this position</li> <li>Completed certified supervisory training</li> </ul>	Entry level supervisor or gained proficiency level	(15% of Senior Advanced CPI Salary)
CPIS Level II	72 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified CW Professional</li> <li>Passed Supervisory Proficiency Test</li> </ul>	Expert level	(7% of CPI Supervisor Level I)

Table 4. Supervisory track summary

## Career Ladder Professional Development Opportunities

The CPI Career Ladder Professional Development training strategy is based on a continuous learning model and provides program-specific competency and professional development opportunities. The

training strategy also incorporates CPI accountability to measure the transfer of learning throughout the program regarding classroom, online, and hybrid training delivery. Also, CPIs will have opportunities to practice skills and apply knowledge to authentic work situations. The department proposes five major learning and development opportunities categories:

1. **Speciality Training:** This category provides learning opportunities for CPIs in technical knowledge and competence areas to support Florida’s practice model and to enhance performance, such as Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking, Substance Abuse & Mental Health, Child Fatality/Critical Injury Investigations, Substance Exposed Newborn, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Opioid Response, Institutional Abuse or Neglect, and Medical Neglect. The department and the Institute will collaborate to create specialized certification programs for CPIs.
2. **Teamwork and Leadership:** The department will offer courses to CPIs on teamwork and leadership that include Coaching, Certified Public Manager Program, Frontline Leadership Development Program, and Mid-level Leadership Development Program.
3. **Mentoring:** The department will establish a formal mentoring program for CPIs. Provisional CPIs, CPIs, CPI IIs, Specialist CPIs, and Advanced CPIs will be paired with Senior Advanced CPIs utilizing a formal process. This process will provide new CPIs professional and personal development opportunities by Senior Advanced CPIs. The mentoring program will provide organized training, development activities, and evaluation of the pairs for one year.
4. **Professional Development:** This category of training will offer different courses to help CPIs and CPI Supervisors develop new skills, stay up-to-date on current trends, and advance their career. Professional Development courses include Conferences, Business Writing, Advanced Computer, and Personal Skills Training.
5. **Supervisory Training:** The department, in collaboration with Strong Foundations, is creating a certified supervisory training program for all CPI Supervisors. The purpose is to create a specialized supervisor certification program to increase the understanding of core supervisory competencies and to enhance the ability to coach and supervise.

The department will continue to expand learning and development opportunities for both CPIs and CPI Supervisors. In addition, the training will utilize continuous quality improvement to revise and enhance the career ladder’s learning and development opportunities that utilizes an individual professional development plan. Table 5 provides an example of an individual professional development plan.



Category	Training/Course	Delivery Method	Self-Reflection	Transfer of Learning
Agency Required: Compliance Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security Awareness</li> <li>• Employee Refresher</li> <li>• Civil rights</li> <li>• HIPAA</li> <li>• FLSA</li> </ul>	Online – DCF LMS	N/A	N/A
Technical Knowledge and Expertise Building Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic Violence</li> <li>• Human Trafficking</li> </ul>	Online – External LMS	Required	3 QA Reviews on Domestic Violence
Professional Development Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time Management</li> </ul>	Classroom	Required	Supervisor Feedback
Teamwork and Leadership:	TBD	TBD	Required	Supervisor and Colleguage Feedback

Table 5. CPI to CPI II Specialization Career Ladder Individual Professional Development Plan Template

### Career Ladder Process Implementation

Prior to implementation, the department will perform an organizational readiness assessment in the following four areas:

1. The state of the following key processes, which must be in-place prior to implementation:
  - a. Application process for CPIs to apply for the program in each participating region.
  - b. The components needed to support and enact individual professional development plans to develop unique competencies necessary for promotion.
  - c. A Management Review Process to review a CPI’s individual development plan quarterly.
  - d. A Promotional Approval Process for supervisors and PAs to sign off on the CPI’s promotion.
2. All supervisors must be trained on the career ladder program, processes, and coaching.
3. A change management plan must be created in reponse to the feasibility assessment and implemented. The goal of change management is to communicate the program to all stakeholders and participants, identify and overcome the resistance to change, and help to ensure beneficial implementation while mitigating disruption.
4. All specialized training should be completed and approved and a mentoring program in place. Training must be designed, purchased, or outsourced.

### Proposed Career Ladder Measures of Success

The following measures will be used to measure the success of the Career Ladder model:

- Measure 1 - % improvement in career advancement engagement scores in FY 2020-21 and 2021-22 compared to FY 2019-20: The purpose of Measure 1 is to measure the level of engagement of CPIs and CPI Supervisors through the department’s stay interviews<sup>10</sup>.

- Measure 2 - % improvement in comparative turnover and 3-year retention scores: The purpose of Measure 2 is to understand whether the Career Ladder program helps the department to decrease annual turnover and improve retention scores.
- Measure 3 - Compare % of participants in the FY 2021-22 vs. FY 2022-23 career ladder participation: The purpose of Measure 3 is to assess the employees' participation rate in the Career Ladder program to determine ongoing interest.

## **Financial Implications**

### **Salary Impact**

The department will distribute the number of allocated positions based on available funding and specific regional needs.

### **Proposed Funding Positions:**

The model is to retain the current four class code structure, but provide different working titles. The proposed model positions are:

- Child Protective Investigator
- Child Protective Investigator II
- Advanced Child Protective Investigator
- Specialist Child Protective Investigator
- Senior Advanced Child Protective Investigator
- Senior Specialist Child Protective Investigator
- Senior Child Protective Investigator
- Field Support Consultant
- Child Protective Investigator Supervisor
- Child Protective Investigator Supervisor II

### **Training Budgetary Impact**

The department is assessing the current and newly requested training to determine the budgetary impact. Once specific training needs are determined, the department will produce a final budget and execution plan.

## **Financial Effect of the Career Ladder Program**

Savings of approximately \$1 million dollars could be achieved in Year 1 due to expected 5% reduction in the current turnover rate (46%). The savings are projected to reduce CPI hiring expenses (i.e., background screening, pre-service training, recruiting, etc.) as a result of lower turnover. These savings will be invested in professional development opportunities for CPIs and CPI Supervisors.

## Footnotes

1. Chamberlain, A. (2017). Why do employees stay? A clear career path and good pay, for starters. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved June 7, 2020 from <https://hbr.org/2017/03/why-do-employees-stay-a-clear-career-path-and-good-pay-for-starters>
2. Edwards, F., & Wildeman, C. (2018). Characteristics of the front-line child welfare workforce. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 89, 13-26.
3. The Annie Casey Foundation. (2015). 10 Practices: A Child Welfare Leaders Desk Guide to Building a High Performing Agency Part One, 15,33. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-10Practicespart1-2015.pdf>
4. Roberts, M. (2019). The benefits of career ladders. Retrieved June 7, 2020 from <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-career-ladders-benefit-organizations-1669368>
5. Griffeth, R. W., Hom, P. W., & Gaertner, S. (2000). A meta-analysis of antecedents and correlates of employee turnover: Update, moderator tests, and research implications for the next millennium. *Journal of Management*, 26(3), 463–488. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630002600305>
6. Ramsay, C. S. (2006). Engagement at Intuit: It's the people. Society of Organizational and Industrial Psychology 21st Annual Conference, Dallas, TX: Intuit Inc. Retrieved from: <http://www.slideshare.net/CraigRamsay3/employee-engagement-practices-at-intuit>
7. DCF Human Resources Data Chart (FY 18/19 – FY 19/20)
8. Wilke, Dina J. & Radey, Melissa & Langenderfer-Magruder, Lisa, (2017). "Recruitment and retention of child welfare workers in longitudinal research: Successful strategies from the Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families," *Children and Youth Services Review*, 78(C), 122-128. Retrieved from <https://ideas.repec.org/a/eee/cysrev/v78y2017icp122-128.html>
9. Stay interviews are conducted by Human Resources on an as needed basis to measure employee engagement.