

Video transcript: Quality of Child Protection Data

Audit objective

In this audit, we assessed if the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (or the department) has adequate controls to make sure that child protection data in its Client Relationship Information System (or CRIS) is reliable.

What we examined

We examined if the department manages child protection data in line with the government's data quality standards.

We also examined if its controls make sure that child protection data is complete, accurate and recorded in a timely way.

What we concluded

We found that the department doesn't have effective controls to make sure its child protection data is high quality.

We found examples of incomplete, inaccurate and inconsistent data in CRIS. This is because:

- the department doesn't comply with the government's data quality standards
- CRIS isn't fit for purpose and its controls don't always work, and
- staff who use CRIS have heavy workloads, which reduces the time they have to correctly record information.

This means the department may not have easy access to high-quality data to:

- make decisions about vulnerable children, and
- monitor children's progress in care.

The department told us it's aware of these issues and is working on a plan to fix them.

Why this audit is important

The department is responsible for child protection in Victoria. CRIS is the main system it uses to store information about children in its care.

For example, CRIS stores children's personal details, including their address and their progress in school.

It also records decisions about their support and wellbeing, including checks to make sure they're being cared for in a safe home.

The department needs to make sure that CRIS data is high quality so it can fulfil its obligations to vulnerable children and support its policies and decisions.

Issue 1: CRIS isn't fit for purpose

We found that CRIS isn't fit for purpose and some of its data quality controls aren't effective.

For example, CRIS has controls to make sure users fill mandatory data fields. But we found they're not always filled. This leaves gaps in the data.

Some of the data in CRIS we looked at was incomplete, inaccurate and inconsistent.

For example, we found:

- 462 children didn't have their address recorded
- 19 per cent of children didn't have their disability status recorded
- of the children that did have a disability recorded, 32 per cent of files didn't say the type of disability, and
- there were 437 more children recorded in the department's carer payment system than in CRIS.

These gaps mean that the department can't make informed decisions that are in the best interests of vulnerable children.

Issue 2: Reasons for poor-quality data

There are many reasons why the department's child protection data is poor quality.

Including:

- CRIS is a legacy system that hasn't kept up with technology and sector changes
- the department doesn't comply with the government's data quality standards, and
- staff don't have time to enter information in CRIS due to their heavy workloads.

What we recommended

We made 3 recommendations to the department about strengthening its controls to improve the quality of child protection data.

More information

To find out more, or to read our full report, go to audit.vic.gov.au

To access the complete video, please go to <https://youtu.be/uKokaMIVfS4>