

Department of Health and Human Services and Nebraska State Patrol: Analysis of Processing Background Checks for Child Care Providers

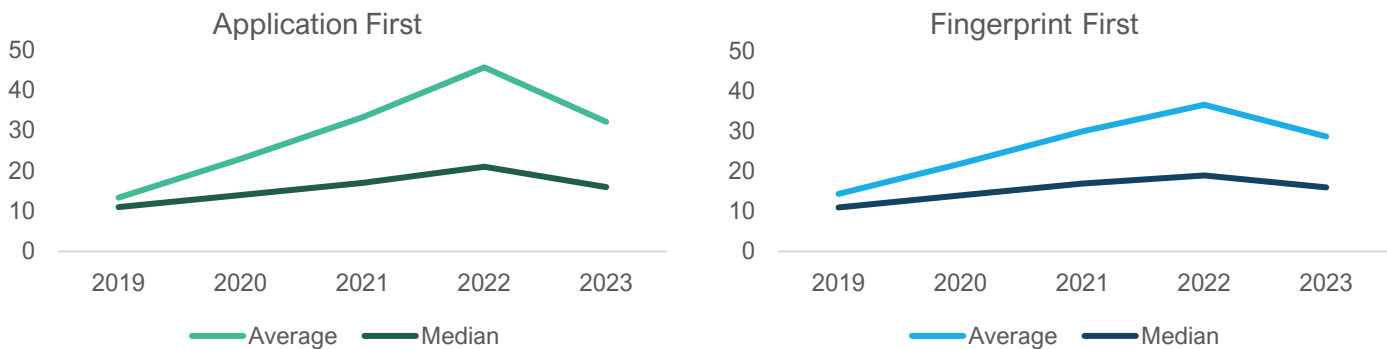


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Fingerprint-based criminal history checks were added as a requirement for child care licensing in 2019, to ensure compliance with federal regulations. The program requires coordination of processes between the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Nebraska State Patrol (NSP).

The average total processing time for child care applications grew steadily from 2019 to 2022, before decreasing in 2023. When applicants submitted their application to DHHS first, the highest average yearly processing time was 46 business days in 2022. When applicants submitted their fingerprints to NSP first, the highest yearly average processing time was 37 business days, also in 2022.

The average number of business days for application processing grew steadily until from 2019 to 2022, then fell in 2023.

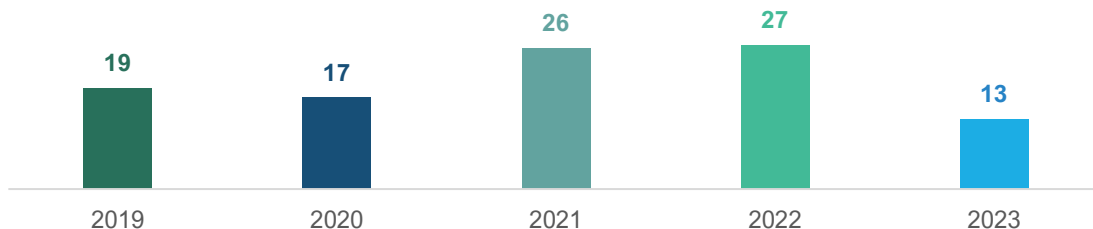


Source: Audit Office analysis of DHHS and NSP data.

Federal regulations require background checks to be completed within 45 calendar days. The audit found that between 6% and 30% of applications were not completed within this time frame, depending on the year.

The average number of business days for NSP to process fingerprints from creation to completion was highest at 27 days in 2022 and lowest at 13 days in 2023.

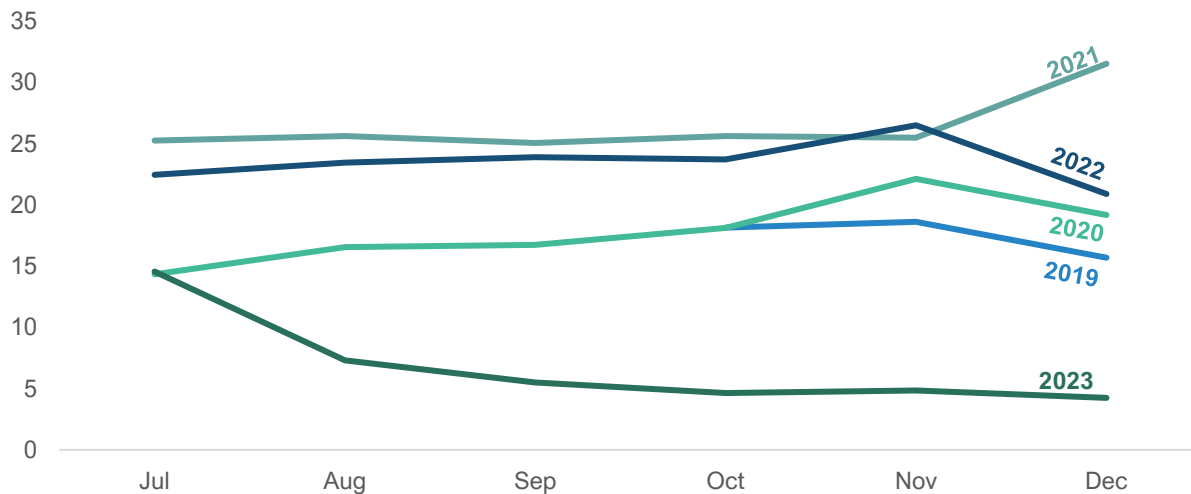
The average number of business days fingerprints took to be processed at NSP peaked in 2022, with a sharp decrease in 2023.



Source: Audit Office analysis of NSP and DHHS data.

The monthly averages for the NSP portion of the process peaked in December 2021 at 34 business days and reached its low in December 2023 at 4 business days. NSP processing times were noticeably impacted by the move from individual authorization of child care applicant fingerprints to blanket authorization of all fingerprints in the later part of 2023.

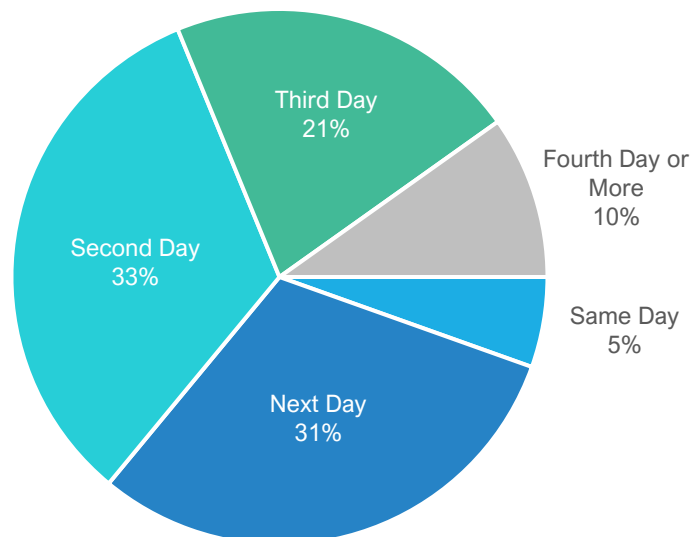
The implementation of blanket authorization in August 2023 corresponded with a decreased average number of days for processing at NSP.



Source: Audit Office analysis of NSP data.

The audit identified interagency mail as an inefficiency; transit time between agencies generally added up to three business days to the process.

DHHS received 69% of CHRI within two business days of NSP completion, and 90% within three business days.



Source: Audit Office analysis of DHHS and NSP data.

The audit found that the Department of Health and Human Services uses antiquated software which requires staff to rely on paper documents. The paper system is highly inefficient and introduces opportunities for data entry errors and the misplacement of files. Further, DHHS lacks internal controls and computer systems controls that could mitigate the risk of human error.