





The lawsuit names Arizona Department of Child Safety Director Charles Flanagan, shown above last May, as one of the defendants. *PHOTO: ARIZONA REPUBLIC/ASSOCIATED PRESS*

The lawsuit alleges there is a severe shortage of health-care services for foster-care children and a dearth of foster-care homes.

The suit also claims state officials didn't adequately preserve foster children's ties to their biological families and haven't investigated reports of child abuse in a timely manner.

The suit named Charles Flanagan, director of the state's Department of Child Safety, and William Humble, director of the state's Department of Health Services, as the defendants. Both agencies didn't comment on the allegations, referring inquiries to the governor's office.

Arizona has previously come under intense scrutiny over its ability to care for children potentially facing abuse.

In 2013, the head of the state agency that oversaw child-protective services disclosed publicly that the agency had failed to investigate thousands of reports of abuse and neglect beginning in 2009.

Last year, then-Gov. [Jan Brewer](#), a Republican, called a special legislative session that ultimately approved a major overhaul of the child-welfare system, creating the stand-alone Department of Child Safety.

But Tuesday's lawsuit alleged the changes enacted last year haven't addressed the failings in the state's foster-care system. The suit was filed by three law firms on behalf of 10 children currently in the foster-care system. It seeks class-action status.

"Arizona's reforms to date will not keep children safe," said Anne C. Ronan, an attorney with the Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest who is part of the lawsuit. "The state's recent efforts to reduce its huge backlog of reports that children have been maltreated in their homes do not even address, much less remedy, the core deficiencies that are harming children already in state custody."

The 51-page complaint outlined the stories of 10 children in state care ranging in age from 3 to 14. These children haven't received essential services because of a lack of resources, the suit alleged.

Some of the children were diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome and others threatened suicide, according to the complaint.

The lawsuit charged that the state has a shortage of family foster homes.

There were 9,418 children who needed a licensed foster-care home as of September, but there were only 4,397 foster homes with 5,669 available spaces, according to the suit. That left 3,749 children without foster homes, resulting in some children sleeping in offices, the lawsuit charged.

