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# Abuse claims of Human Services residents up, reviews slower

**AP** By JOHN O'CONNOR

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. -- Allegations of abuse and neglect of developmentally disabled and mentally ill residents under the care of the Illinois Department of Human Services have increased by half since 2010 and the time it takes to investigate them has grown, too, an audit released Thursday found.

The report by Auditor General Frank Mautino discovered that abuse and neglect complaints jumped to 3,698 in the year that ended June 30, compared with 2,468 seven years earlier.

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The audit also found that the agency's Office of the Inspector General did not complete investigations into the complaints within the 60 working days agency rules require. Cases were closed in a timely manner 50 percent of the time in the year ending in June. In 2010, 85 percent of the cases were closed on time.

A heavier workload is falling on a lighter staff, the agency said.

"As noted in the audit report, the number of investigations opened continues to increase year after year which, with staff shortages, has impacted OIG's overall timeliness in completing investigations," the Human Services inspector general's office wrote in a response to the audit.

A Human Services spokeswoman was unable to provide further comment immediately Thursday.

The increase is sharper among community agencies. During the period, the state moved swiftly away from large institutions to community-living settings. Mautino's audit determined that abuse and neglect claims at community agencies overseen by Human Services jumped 81 percent during the seven-year period, to 2,714 last year.

Along with the increased number of complaints and short staffing, agency officials told the auditors the state's transition to community living arrangements also is a factor. The inspector's office has to monitor more sites that are more spread out.

The report indicates that nearly 13,000 residents lived in centralized developmental and mental health centers in 2010, compared with 7,000 this year. Human Services also has oversight over 421 community agencies operating 4,500 program sites, such as group homes or day programs. That's a 31 percent increase from 2010.

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