

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



448

FROM: DEPT. OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

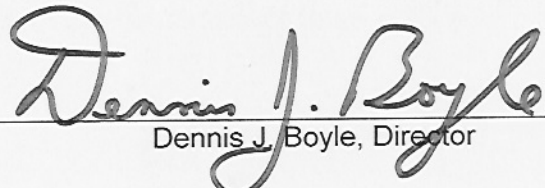
SUBMITTAL DATE: January 28, 2003

SUBJECT: Child Welfare Services Action Plan, Quarterly Progress Report

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Review and File the attached report.

BACKGROUND: On July 16, 2001 Your Honorable Board heard a report by John George from the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) regarding the status of Child Protective Services in Riverside County. The CWLA report listed ten Priority Strategies for improving the safety, permanence, and well being of children in our county. On September 11, 2001 the Board accepted the Action Plan for the implementation of the Priority Strategies submitted by the Department of Public Social Services and requested quarterly Progress Reports. Quarterly Progress Reports were submitted in January, May and August 2002.

Attached please find the fourth quarterly progress report (completed December 2002) entitled: Child Welfare Services Action Plan Quarterly Progress Report.


Dennis J. Boyle, Director

FINANCIAL DATA: N/A

CURRENT YEAR COST: \$ 0

NET COUNTY COST: \$ 0

ANNUAL COST: FY 00/01 \$ 0

IN CURRENT BUDGET: N/A

BUDGET ADJUSTMENT: N/A

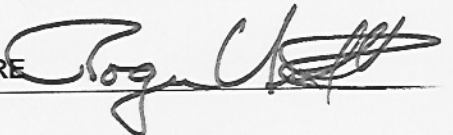
FOR FY: 2002/03

SOURCE OF FUNDS:

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATIONS:

APPROVE

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICER SIGNATURE



Department Recommendation: 9 Policy
Per Executive Office: 9 Consent

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AGENDA NO.

2.6

**CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
ACTION PLAN
QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT
December 2002**

(In Response to the Child Welfare League of America)

INTRODUCTION

On September 11, 2001, the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) presented to the Board a preliminary action plan implementing the 10 Strategies recommended by the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) in its presentation to the Board on July 16, 2001. This plan was accepted and the Board requested quarterly progress reports. DPSS presented its initial action plan in September 2001. Quarterly reports have been submitted in January, May, and September 2002. This document is the fourth report of our current progress toward meeting the goals identified by the CWLA.

The goals to be accomplished in Riverside County by implementing the ten Priority Strategies recommended by the CWLA are:

- Enhanced Child Safety
- Increase in Placement Permanency
- Enhanced Child and Family Well Being

CURRENT STATUS

DPSS continues to improve Riverside County's Child Welfare Services system. We have implemented many of the specific recommendations made by the

CWLA and developed modifications of others. Since the time of the last progress report we have accomplished the following tasks in our action plans:

1. Developing and implementing an organizational and professional accountability system
 - ◆ Program Mandate Checklists have been developed and will soon be used by supervisors to ensure that Social Workers comply with state, federal, and local regulations and mandated requirements. Use of the Checklists will improve the consistency and quality of service provision to families and children.
 - ◆ Supervisors and Managers are expected on a weekly basis to review compliance data provided by SafeMeasures, the computer software program that tracks compliance with state and federal requirements. Divisional use of this accountability tool was implemented in July 2002. By September 2002 full weekly analysis by Child Welfare Services managers and supervisors was implemented. Supervisor access to this data has resulted in more timely services. Because the data is accessed weekly, supervisors are now able to ensure that contacts with families and children occur within mandated time limits.
 - ◆ The Division has fully implemented the new Complaint Protocol, which has resulted in increased responsiveness to client and community complaints regarding Child Protective Services issues.
 - ◆ The Department has initiated a random audit of CWS cases to independently verify whether Social Workers are conducting visits with the children assigned to them as required by regulation. This audit will include a review of case documentation and management reports, but will also include personal contact with caregivers to verify contacts documented in case files. Because the audit is being conducted by staff external to the Children's Service Division, we are using this opportunity to survey caregivers regarding the services that they and the children receive from CPS staff. This information will be used to improve relationships with caregivers.
 - ◆ Riverside DPSS contributed 27 cases to the 600 cases involved in a recent State Review of requirements for assessing the suitability of relative caregivers. In all 27 randomly selected cases, relative approvals had been completed according to the State Review standards. Each file selected for review contained standardized, thorough documentation regarding the suitability of the proposed caregiver and the adequacy of the home. The State Review has offered the Department an opportunity to improve its approval process by ensuring timely and thorough

criminal records clearances of prospective relative caregivers. Clearances are now required from several different law enforcement information systems. Checklists are being developed to assist social workers in requesting all necessary clearances from these multiple systems.

- ◆ Supervisory staff attended a presentation in November regarding Child Welfare Services funding sources and the direct link between proper documentation on the State computer system (CWS/CMS) and other required reports and funding for services and staff.
- ◆ Regional Manager accountability has been improved by better data reports leading to proactive, rather than reactive, systems improvements, including timely case closures and improved documentation of services.
- ◆ A newly implemented, computerized, fiscal tracking system (GEMS) monitors expenditures for contracted services. Eventually, each operational region will control service expenditures based on an annual budget.

2. Improving the Emergency Response System

- ◆ DPSS, in collaboration with the lead Child Abuse Prevention Council (PCA-RC), developed and implemented a new presentation for training Mandated Reporters (school personnel, child care providers, health care professionals, mental health care providers, and law enforcement staff) in referring suspected incidents of abuse and neglect. The presentations have resulted in improved professional relationships with school personnel in the many school districts within the County.
- ◆ All staff working in the Central Intake Center will be trained in the use of Structured Decision Making risk assessment tools beginning in January 2003. The implementation of a more thorough and structured risk assessment tool during the intake process will result in more accurate assessments and valid decisions regarding new referrals of neglect and abuse.
- ◆ The Central Intake Center is improving the referral data given to Emergency Response Investigators by increasing its use of Thomas Guide maps and Global Positioning data. Better maps and information regarding the location of referred families results in more timely response, more efficient use of service resources, and improves the safety of children.

- ◆ A laminated list of contracted services delivered by community based organizations has been prepared and distributed to each social workers, court personnel, and public agency partners, enhancing the knowledge of all staff regarding DPSS funded services available within the County to families and children.
- ◆ After Hours (Second Shift) Emergency Response services have been improved by the addition of a Regional Manager, working with the five Operational Regions, to coordinate an additional two ER Units (one each in the eastern and western areas of the county) on the second shift as well as Standby/Callback staff for late nights, weekends and holidays. This manager will also coordinate specialized investigation units for forensic interviews and severe abuse, as well as manage the Temporary Pre-Placement Holding Area, located within our Central Intake Center.

3. Improving and Enhancing the Out-of-Home Care System

- ◆ In January 2003, Inland Empire Health Plan will replace the current Medical system for providing medical services to foster children. This plan will provide improved medical care and services to Riverside County dependents of the Juvenile Court residing in Riverside and San Bernardino County. DPSS plans to seek final approval from the Board of Supervisors in January 2003 and begin program implementation after receiving approval.
- ◆ Our ongoing efforts to improve relationships with licensed and relative caregivers were reflected in October at a recognition dinner attended by 296 caregivers and DPSS Child Welfare Services staff.
- ◆ An additional Group Home Unit, serving children requiring residential treatment, has resulted in fewer children assigned to each Social Worker in this program. Social Workers are now able to spend more time with each child and to work intensely with staff at the child's placement; ensuring improved care to the Department's most emotionally disturbed children.
- ◆ The Children's Services Division helped deliver holiday gifts to foster children. Prevent Child Abuse-Riverside County (PCA-RC) successfully organized its first annual gift drive for children in out-of-home care. Over 4000 gifts were collected from public and non-profit agencies, local businesses and private donors. Although timing issues regarding the availability of the gifts resulted in some delivery delays, this initial collaborative effort was an extraordinary success.

4. Implementing a Family Centered approach based on utilizing the strengths and participation of the families served
 - ◆ Structured Decision Making, the risk and safety assessment system recommended by the CWLA, also emphasizes family centered practice. Although there are still some remaining technical issues (pertaining to the interface between the State computer system and the local LAN) until full implementation of the computerized documentation is achieved, all supervisors will have completed training in the Structured Decision Making approach to case management by the end of March. Training for Child Welfare Services staff will begin in February 2003.
 - ◆ Social Work staff are currently using new relative approval forms and instructions, bringing the Division into conformity with the latest state regulations. Riverside DPSS has been proactive in the process of ensuring that relative and licensed caregivers all meet the same high level of suitability required by the federal government. Workers and supervisors emphasize the importance to children of being placed with relatives. The relative approval process ensures safe, stable and permanent homes for children within their extended families whenever possible.

5. Initiating the framework of an Alternative Response System to maintain children safely in their homes and in their communities
 - ◆ An Alternative Response System (also called Differential Response) is a community partnership ensuring that families and children receive services through public and private agencies within their communities before unresolved family issues result in the abuse or neglect of the children. Because SDM will require a diminished focus on low risk cases and a greater focus on high risk cases, the Department is exploring ways to partner with Community Based Organizations to implement a Differential Response System.
 - ◆ DPSS has organized quarterly meetings of all providers funded through state and federal Child Abuse Prevention and Family Support funding programs. The organizations involved in these programs will provide the foundation for the Differential Response System described above.

6. Pursuing accreditation through the Council on Accreditation to ensure the maintenance of high quality service provision
 - ◆ The accomplishment of the goals and activities listed in the six other action plans brings DPSS closer to meeting the standards required for

accreditation. DPSS management keeps accreditation standards in mind as we move closer to attaining our goals by implementing the Priority Strategies. A specialized unit devoted to the supervision of MSW interns, completing their degrees at local graduate schools, results in social work employees meeting the high educational standards required by the Council on Accreditation. Many of the interns "graduate" from the unit into full time employment with the Division as soon as their degree is granted.

7. Pursuing the acquisition of the Foster Family Home Licensing function to improve and increase homes available for children in need of Out-of-Home care by the end of 2003
 - ◆ An October meeting with the State's Community Care Licensing focused on the needs of prospective foster parents currently in the licensing process. New legislation requiring that relative caregivers meet the same standards as licensed foster parents is requiring even greater coordination between the two approval systems. Another meeting will be held by March 2003 to further explore the combining of both functions under DPSS.

The Child Welfare Services Division continues to pursue an active strategic process consisting of four working committees engaged in detailed action plans for accomplishing the goals articulated by the CWLA. The Division's supervisors are now fully participating in each workgroup and have been instrumental in developing detailed action plans for existing tasks, as well as assisting in developing new action plans as the need for new services and improved systems becomes evident.