

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

109



FROM: Dept. of Public Social Services **SUBMITTAL DATE:** May 20, 2003

SUBJECT: Child Welfare Services Action Plan, Quarterly Progress Report

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Receive 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 and January 2003.

Attached please find the fifth quarterly progress report (completed April 2003) entitled: Child Welfare Services Action Plan Quarterly Progress Report.

Dennis J. Boyle
Dennis J. Boyle, Director

Policy Policy

Consent Consent

Department Recommendation:
Per Executive Officer:

FINANCIAL DATA:

CURRENT YEAR COST	\$N/A	ANNUAL COST:	\$ N/A
NET COUNTY COST	\$N/A	IN CURRENT YEAR BUDGET:	N/A
		BUDGET ADJUSTMENT	N/A
		FY:	

SOURCE OF FUNDS: N/A

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE

County Executive Officer Signature

Roger Chitt

Prev. Agn. ref.

Dist.
All

AGENDA NO.

2 18

**CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
ACTION PLAN
QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT
April 2003**

(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, and in February 2003. This document is the fifth 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 concentrated on accountability and practice issues ensuring timely and stable permanency situations for our children who cannot be safely reunited with their original families. In keeping with the CWLA's priority strategies we have accomplished the following tasks during the time since our February report:

1. Developing and implementing an organizational and professional accountability system
 - ◆ Program Mandate Checklists have been distributed to supervisors for their review. The checklists will help supervisors 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.
 - ◆ An additional protocol/checklist to guide the screening of children new to the system for probability of reunification or need for alternative permanent placement is currently being piloted by operational and adoptions staff. Early screening is a key factor to permanency decisions that ensure the best outcomes for children who cannot return homes. Adoptions and operational staff are emphasizing screening for each child within 90 days of the original Court decision adjudicating the child as a victim of abuse or neglect and removing the child from the home.
 - ◆ DPSS is now in compliance with State requirements for Transitional Independent Living Plans for each child 16 years of age or older who is in out-of-home placement. By ensuring that each child in out-of-home care has a current, individualized plan, we are better able to ensure that the young adult will be self-sufficient when he emancipates from our system.
 - ◆ DPSS management staff met with staff from each County Supervisor's office on April 15, 2003 to discuss the process for responding to constituent complaints regarding Child Welfare Services issues. Coordinated complaint procedures result in better and more timely services to our clients.
 - ◆ Children's Services supervisors, who have been closely tracking compliance and service provision issues, will be presenting program issues at the monthly Supervisor's Forums. This new approach to developing strong, competent supervisors is a tool for empowering first line supervisors to identify problems and work in program teams to develop recommended solutions.

2. Improving the Emergency Response System

- ◆ **Social Work staff is working with representatives of law enforcement to update the joint protocol for investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect. In addition, DPSS has a task force considering how best to ensure that each social worker involved in initial investigations complies with the procedures outlined in the protocol.**
- ◆ **DPSS staff are working with the Riverside Police Department and community service partners in metropolitan Riverside to form a collaboration for intervention in families afflicted with domestic violence. Child Welfare Services representatives currently participate in a similar program, SAVE, in the Hemet/San Jacinto area. A coordinated approach to this serious community issue will result in timely, appropriate services to all members of the families and eliminate duplication of effort. The project in metropolitan Riverside is in the initial discussion phase. The project in the Hemet/San Jacinto area is operational.**
- ◆ **Emergency Response staff has implemented a procedure for investigating allegations against families who have had multiple referrals. All cases in which multiple referrals have been received are staffed with supervisory and management staff in each region and an investigative plan is developed before the assigned investigator contacts the family. This procedure helps ensure that safety issues based on repetitive occurrences of incidents previously judged unfounded or inconclusive are not overlooked.**
- ◆ **Child Welfare Services representatives have completed 34 training sessions for mandated reporters. 27 of the presentations were to school personnel. The remainder included foster parents, clergy, and other community service providers.**

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

- ◆ **The Inland Empire Health Plan was originally scheduled to begin the provision of health care services to foster children placed in Riverside and San Bernardino counties in January 2003. The IEHP will allow most children to continue treatment with their current MediCal providers and will offer an enhanced range of preventative services. Due to delays in finalizing procedures transitioning foster children from the current Medi-Cal system, the Inland Empire Health Plan has not yet begun providing medical services to foster children. Some delay has been due to a miscalculation of the amount of time needed for the transition. In addition, the completion of a mutually acceptable Memorandum of**

Understanding has taken more time than expected. Full implementation is scheduled to occur by July 1.

- ◆ Cameron Hill Associates has successfully competed for a contract to offer services to former foster youth (ages 18-21), who have emancipated from the system and are now transitioning to independent adulthood in our communities. Cameron Hill services are funded through the State Independent Living Skills Program allocation and will consist of financial assistance for housing, education, and vocational training while young adults complete their case plan to achieve self-sufficiency. Cameron Hill will also provide assessment and case-planning services, as well as limited case management and support services to a maximum of 400 young adults in Riverside County.
 - ◆ Improvements in providing services to children placed in Riverside County by other states or counties in California are resulting in a quicker, more thorough response to other jurisdictions needing status reports on these children.
4. Implementing a Family Centered approach based on utilizing the strengths and participation of the families served
- ◆ The implementation of Structured Decision Making, the risk and safety assessment system recommended by the CWLA, remains delayed due to technical difficulties in connecting State computer system with the local area network (LAN) for the County. All supervisors and managers have completed training in the Structured Decision Making approach to case management. Training for Child Welfare Services staff has been delayed pending completion of the computer system design and availability.
 - ◆ Four separate brochures are now completed, and will be available by June 1, to help relatives acting as kinship providers with information regarding financial options for the care of the children, permanency options and the permanency decision making process, our complaint and grievance process and a description of Family Group Decision Making. All four brochures are in the process of being printed.
 - ◆ Reorganization of the Parent Locator function is making it possible to locate missing parents and ascertain their interest and commitment to the children in our care. The unit responsible for this task has implemented a better tracking method for assignments that ensures the timely completion of searches. Current law requires that a diligent effort be made to locate and provide services to parents separated from their children because of abuse or neglect. An efficient Parent Locator

effort results in either children being reunified with non-offending parents or in a quicker permanent alternative placement.

- ◆ The opening of the new Southwest Justice Center has improved services to families of children appearing before the Juvenile Court. Families no longer have to travel as far from home for Court Hearing. Approximately 1/3 of Child Welfare Services cases now supervised by the Juvenile Court are assigned for hearings in the Southwest Justice Center.
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. DPSS now has a partner, Catholic Charities, to coordinate alternative response services between the Department and the Community based services.
 - ◆ 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. Because Structured Decision Making (SDM) assessments play such a large role in implementing an Alternative Response System, a PowerPoint presentation introducing the concepts and uses of the Structured Decision Making system was piloted in draft form to this group on April 15.
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. By lowering caseloads in the investigative units, DPSS is coming closer to the investigative caseload standards required by the Council on Accreditation.

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 April 2 meeting with the State's Community Care Licensing focused on the Riverside County Foster Family Agency (Teens in Preparation for Success). The Community Care Licensing Division, as are many other State functions, is waiting for specific information regarding the State budget before considering major program changes.

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 remains committed to improving services for children by improving accountability, following consistent practice methods, and solidifying our partnerships with service agencies within the communities we all serve.