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



FROM: Department of Public Social Services

SUBMITTAL DATE:
May 25, 2004

SUBJECT: Child Welfare Services Action Plan, Quarterly Progress Report

RECOMMENDED MOTION: Review and File the attached report.

BACKGROUND:

Departmental Concurrence

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.

Attached please find the eighth quarterly progress report (completed May 2004) entitled: Child Welfare Services Action Plan Quarterly Progress Report.

Dennis J. Boyle, Director
Department of Public Social Services

FINANCIAL DATA	Current F.Y. Total Cost:	\$ N/A	In Current Year Budget:	N/A
	Current F.Y. Net County Cost:	\$ N/A	Budget Adjustment:	N/A
	Annual Net County Cost:	\$ N/A	For Fiscal Year:	N/A
SOURCE OF FUNDS: N/A				Positions To Be Deleted Per A-30 <input type="checkbox"/>
				Requires 4/5 Vote <input type="checkbox"/>

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE

County Executive Office Signature

- Policy
- Policy
- Consent
- Consent

Dep't Recomm.:
Per Exec. Ofc.:

Prev. Agn. Ref.: 2/24/04, 3.27

District: ALL

Agenda Number:

2.9

**CHILD WELFARE SERVICES ACTION PLAN
QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT
May 2004**

(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. This document is the eighth report of our current progress toward meeting the goals identified by the CWLA.

The goals to be accomplished in Riverside County by implementing the 10 Priority Strategies recommended by CWLA are:

- Enhanced child safety
- Increase in placement permanency
- Enhanced child and family well being

CURRENT STATUS

Over the past two and a half years, the Riverside County Children's Services Division has continued to make consistent improvements to its child welfare services system in order to meet the changing needs of the children and families in our community. 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 continued to concentrate on accountability and practice issues ensuring safety, timely and stable permanency situations for our children who cannot be safely reunited with their original families, and work toward improved services to support child and family well being.

In keeping with the CWLA's priority strategies we have accomplished the following tasks since our January 2004 report:

1. **Developing and implementing an organizational and professional accountability system**
 - Children's Services Division has responded to this strategy through continual improvement measures over the past two (2) years and has implemented improved accountability through the following actions:
 - Implementation of the California Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System, mandated by AB 636, which was signed into law in 2001. This is being accomplished through the County Self-Assessment process which is focused on Riverside County's performance based outcomes relative to the federal Child and Family Services Review indicators. This review must include population-based consideration of how Riverside County resources contribute to the prevention of child maltreatment. Since early February 2004:
 - All levels of staff have participated in the review and analysis of Riverside County's outcomes data provided by the University of California, Berkeley, and the California Department of Social Services.

- A series of community forums were hosted by DPSS where a variety of local child advocates, DPSS partners and community stakeholders participated in a review of data and were asked to provide input based on their expertise to add further insight and interpretation to the analysis of this data which focuses on service array, collaboration and case review (court) system.
- A series of interviews, focus groups and surveys were conducted with required stakeholders including: parents, caregivers, youth, judicial officers, court personnel, service providers and Children's Services staff. The questions asked were framed around the strengths and weaknesses of the Riverside County's Child Welfare Services System; strategies to improve services; and barriers to improve services.
 - Preparation for our Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR), which is a qualitative practice review that involves county peers as reviewers, began in April 2004 and the Review was conducted the week of May 24th. Designated internal staff along with neighboring county peers reviewed randomly selected cases to identify strengths and areas needing improvement in the county child welfare services delivery system and social work practices. The focus area for the Review was "Foster Care Re-entries". We examined practices that resulted in successful family reunification where the children did not re-enter the Child Welfare system, as well as those cases where re-entry did occur in less than 12 months. The PQCR, along with the Self-Assessment, will direct the development of the County System Improvement Plan, which will be submitted for Board of Supervisors' approval prior to submission to the State by September 30, 2004.

2. Improving the Emergency Response System

- Mandatory advanced ER training referenced in the previous quarterly update has been completed for all line staff in the Emergency Response, Central Intake and Court programs as well as for all new social workers as they are hired. The training addresses many of the practice issues identified as needing improvement and/ or consistent application.
- The Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings at Riverside County Regional Medical Center (RCRMC) for the Child Abuse (CAN) Team were recently reinstated and are chaired by the forensic physician for the CAN Team. Currently, one ER supervisor per region is assigned to attend the monthly MDT meeting in order to ensure thorough review and follow-up of all Child Protection Services (CPS) cases which received CAN assessments as well as to generate county-wide training benefits. A Steering Committee has recently been created, with members from CPS, the DA's office, RCRMC and each County law enforcement jurisdiction. The Steering Committee will direct, guide and oversee policies, procedures and practices of the CAN Team. Each member will serve as a liaison for their own agency to disseminate information, bring feedback to the Committee and in general, ensure a team approach is used in the operation of the CAN Team.

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

- The Department has recruited and trained 13 social workers who will begin to assume centralized responsibility for most of the activities required for "approving" relative and non-related extended family member homes for placement. These activities were previously performed by every placing social worker. The centralized unit will result in a more efficient and consistent approach to conducting relative approvals and better service to relatives who have agreed to care for dependent children.

4. Implementing a Family Centered approach based on utilizing the strengths and participation of the families served

- The Children's Services management team received technical assistance for implementation of the Family to Family Program from the Annie E. Casey Foundation in May. The Family to Family initiative which focuses on building community partnerships to increase resource families within neighborhoods and includes family participation in decision making will provide our county with an opportunity to redesign our foster care system to achieve a more family centered, neighborhood-based approach to family foster care.

5. Initiating the framework of an Alternative Response System to maintain children safely in their homes and in their communities

- The Differential Response Project (also known as an alternative response system) continues to grow and expand. Since this program was initiated in August 2003, and with the addition of the pilot project between the Riverside Sheriff's Office (RSO) and DPSS, 686 families have been referred to Catholic Charities for service. In May, DPSS, RSO and Catholic Charities participated in a meeting to explore further program refinements and expansion.

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 action plans brings DPSS closer to meeting the standards required for accreditation. Management keeps accreditation standards in mind as we move closer to attaining our goals by implementing the Priority Strategies as well as the components of AB 636, Redesign and the Performance Improvement Plan.

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

- The DPSS Children's Services Assistant Director continues to be actively involved in a statewide workgroup that is charged with developing a proposal to consolidate the relative approval process with licensing of foster homes under child welfare agencies across the state. It is expected that the consolidation of these two functions, licensing of foster homes and approval of relative homes, may result in one home study process in the future and not require the acquisition of the State licensing function. A conceptual model has been developed by a statewide group of Child Welfare Directors (CWDA) in collaboration with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) program, licensing and legal staff that will be presented to all Child Welfare Directors for approval in June. Subsequently, it will be presented to all Social Service Directors for their approval. At the same time, CDSS will be presenting the model through its administrative channels to garner support. If all entities support this direction, a legislative implementation plan will be developed by CWDA with the understanding that it would most likely be a two-year legislative bill.

FUTURE REPORTING

Beginning September 2004, we propose to transition from providing quarterly update reports on the 2001 CWLA recommendations to a quarterly update on the Riverside County System Improvement Plan (SIP) to the Board, in accordance with the requirements of AB 636, as well as our continued progress on the CWLA recommendations.