

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



849

**FROM:** Department of Public Social Services and Probation  
Department

**SUBMITTAL DATE:**  
1/11/05

**SUBJECT:** County System Improvement Plan Progress Report

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** That the Board of Supervisors receive and file the County System Improvement Plan (SIP) Progress Report.

**BACKGROUND:** On September 14, 2004 (Agenda #3.45), the Board approved the submission of the SIP to CDSS. Under the Board of Supervisors' leadership, Riverside County has emerged as a model statewide for our decade-long self-examination of the child protection system. The Board has commissioned three major external reviews of the county system and DPSS has commissioned numerous smaller-scale reviews.

The California Legislature passed AB 636, creating the Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability Act. The Act's goals require counties to focus more on the child welfare outcomes, rather than on the process of providing services, and requires demonstration of efforts to improve those outcomes. While the State requires an annual report, DPSS will report to the Board quarterly.

*Susan Loew*

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|--|-----------------------------------|
| Marie Whittington, Chief Probation Officer<br><i>Marie Whittington</i> | Susan Loew, Interim Director DPSS |
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|                       |                               |        |                         |          |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|----------|
| <b>FINANCIAL DATA</b> | 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:        | FY 04/05 |

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 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 *Dan Martinez*

- Policy
- Policy
- Consent
- Consent
- Dept' Recomm.:
- Per Exec. Ofc.:

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE  
 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AND PROBATION  
 OFFICE EXECUTIVE  
 JAN 11 2005 11:13 AM

**Prev. Agn. Ref.:** 9/14/04 (#3.45) | **District:** All | **Agenda Number:**

2.5

**FROM:** Department of Public Social Services

**DATE:** 1/11/05

**SUBJECT:** County System Improvement Plan Progress Report

**PAGE:** 2

**BACKGROUND (Cont.):**

The consolidated recommendations for action, which are expected to drive improvement trends for all outcome indicators, fall into three primary categories:

1. Outcomes and Accountability
2. Quality Practice
3. System of Supervision

The most recent progress in these areas is reflected in the attached report.

The Chief Probation Officer and Director of DPSS request the Board receive and file the attached County System Improvement Plan Progress Report.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** N/A

SL:clh

# **CALIFORNIA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW**

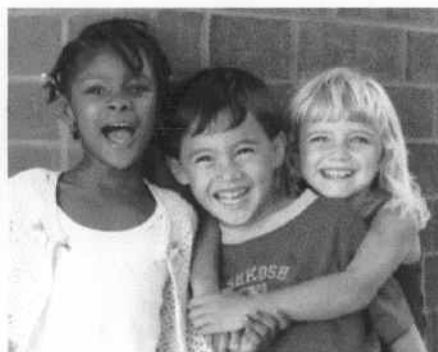
## **Riverside County System Improvement Plan (SIP) Progress Report**

January 2005



**Susan Loew, Interim Director  
Department of Public Social Services**

**Marie Whittington, Chief Probation Officer  
Riverside County Probation Department**



*"Critical to our success are people at the state, county, community, and neighborhood levels joining together in a comprehensive effort to ensure every child in California will live in a safe, stable, permanent home, nurtured by healthy families and strong communities."*

--Child Welfare Services Redesign, Stakeholders Group

Final Report (September, 2003)

## Background

The California Child Welfare Improvement and Accountability Act (known as AB 636) became effective January 1, 2004. This new legislation has been a major step toward improving child welfare services. The law emerged from growing concerns among legislators and child welfare stakeholders that existing accountability systems have focused too much on the process of providing child welfare services and not enough on the results. The Act provides a framework for measuring and monitoring each county's performance in ensuring the safety, permanence and well-being of children. The Act also:

- supports state and county partnerships;
- requires counties to publicly share their results for children and families and collaborate with community partners;
- requires county-specific System Improvements Plans (SIP); and
- encourages interagency coordination and shared responsibility for outcomes.

The new accountability process provides counties with data on child outcomes every quarter and requires demonstration of efforts to improve those outcomes. Counties began implementation of the Act by completing a comprehensive County Self-Assessment (CSA). Riverside County DPSS completed its CSA on June 28, 2004.

Following completion of the CSA, each county was required to create a System Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP addresses specific strategies and milestones for improving Riverside County's child welfare services. A key component of the SIP was the collaboration that occurred among public and private agencies, the Juvenile Court, parents, foster parents, youth, and other involved stakeholders. The SIP was approved by the Board of Supervisors on September 14, 2004, prior to submission to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

The Act requires that progress on the SIP milestones be reported annually to the State. DPSS, however, will also report quarterly progress to the Board of Supervisors. Three child welfare outcomes were identified for improvement in the SIP: (1) a reduction in abuse in out-of-home care, (2) a reduction in abuse when children are not removed from their homes, and (3) a reduction in re-entry into foster care.

In addition to the SIP, DPSS has initiated three (3) other recent reviews which have resulted in recommended changes to Riverside's Child Welfare system. These include the 2002 Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) report, the Family to Family (F2F) Initiative, and one internal departmental review. By combining these three assessments, reports and reviews with the SIP, Children's Services is able to complete an action plan that efficiently integrates activities for an improved child welfare system. The consolidated recommendations for action are organized into three (3) major categories which are expected to drive improvement trends for all outcome indicators:

- 1) Outcomes and Accountability;
- 2) Quality Practice; and
- 3) System of Supervision

## 1) Outcomes and Accountability

While former compliance reviews focused on process measurement, such as whether children were visited periodically, or social workers correctly filled out paperwork, these efforts were not indicators that a child was better off as a result. Thus, the new standards specified in AB 636 now measure outcomes in a manner that better illustrates the current and future welfare of children. For example:

- Are children mistreated again after they come to the attention of the child welfare system?
- Are children mistreated in foster care? How long do children have to wait before they are adopted or returned home?
- How many times do foster children move?

In order to effectively address these questions, Children's Services will: collaborate on services provided by community partners; train community partners on standardized risk and safety assessments; further refine recruitment efforts; and develop resources to train and retain both foster home and relatives caregivers.

### **Quarterly accomplishments to Date**

The State has learned that the indicator of "abuse in out-of-home care" has many issues that contribute to the inaccuracy of this measure, and has created a statewide workgroup to address the problem. Riverside County staff continue to be active members of this workgroup.

## 2) Quality Practice

Quality Practice relates to the core of everything Children's Services must do to intervene in the life of a child and the child's family. This area is demonstrated by consistent and quality social work practice in such areas as safety and risk assessment, development of case plans for families, recruitment and retention of caregivers, to name a few.

### **Quarterly Accomplishments to Date:**

- A) **Family to Family (F2F) Initiative:** Family to Family Riverside County received a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation of \$100,000 to implement this Initiative. This strength-based model emphasizes building community partnerships with traditional and non-traditional partners who are strong leaders in their communities. The partners provide support in a team decision-making meeting, along with the parents and social workers, to determine the best placement for the child. The model requires public awareness in the community so that residents can become foster parents and allow the child to remain in their own school and community, near their friends and families. Of significance, F2F has been shown to reduce entries into foster care and to minimize the number of changes in a child's placement.

## 2) Quality Practice (continued)

After review of highest percentage of child abuse and child removals from the home (compared to other zip codes in Riverside County), Children's Services has selected zip codes 92201 (Indio) and 92507 (Riverside Metro) to begin F2F implementation. It is expected that by April 2006, the Desert (Indio) Regional Manager and Supervisors will begin reaching out and engaging community partners to become active participants in the implementation of F2F.

- B) **Relative Assessment Unit (RAU):** The Relative Assessment Unit was implemented this quarter. Recent legislation mandated that all relatives be 'approved' for placement in a formal, structured manner -- the same way that foster parents are licensed to receive placements of children. Historically, Riverside County has been extremely successful in the placement of children with relatives; this new unit of several social workers and supervisors, will allow for a centralized approval function and faster processing of safe placements. Children's Services has significantly reduced the time it takes to assess and approve a relative placement for safety concerns and ensure compliance with state statute. As of June 16, 2004, there were 1,597 active relative placements. During this quarter the Relative Assessment Unit reviewed all of these placements in compliance with state statute. RAU continues to provide Children's Services managers with weekly updates of placements in need of staffing or intervention.
- C) **Consolidation of Caregiver Training and Home Study Assessment:** All potential foster parents and adoptive parents must be trained before they can be licensed to provide foster care. This training was separate until recently, when the training was consolidated. Professional social workers who complete the home study for family strengths also conduct the 11-week training course. Interactions facilitated through these training courses also allow social workers to learn much more about potential care providers, resulting in better assessments of their strengths, weaknesses, and would-be parenting capacity.

## 3) System of Supervision

Supervision is the key component that will bring about improvements to both outcomes and quality practice. Supervisors play a significant role in the oversight of case practice issues; they must also ensure that social workers are in compliance with timeframes, regulations and policies. Supervisors are the critical instruments for change, fostering and instilling quality practices that will take Children's Services to the next level. Supervision issues include such areas as timely and accurate entry of data into the automated system; review of court orders, visitation orders, and updated child photos; routine random caseload audits; staff training needs; unit meetings and many more.

### 3) System of Supervision (continued)

#### Quarterly Accomplishments to Date:

- A) **Family-to-Family Supervisors' Forum:** On November 17, 2004, DPSS Staff Development hosted a full-day Family-to-Family Supervisors' Forum for 105 participants, including DPSS Children's Services Regional Managers, Supervisors, Program Specialists, and Office Support Supervisors. The goal of this forum was to provide an orientation to the Family-to-Family model and its four core strategies.

During this workshop format, Supervisors learned how Family to Family will:

- decrease the overall number of children coming into out-of-home care;
  - reduce the lengths of stay of children in out-of-home care;
  - improve the screening of children being considered for removal from home, and determine what services might be provided to safely preserve the family;
  - assure scarce family foster home resources are provided to only those children who in fact must be removed from their homes;
  - increase the number and quality of foster families to meet projected needs;
  - develop a network of family foster care that is neighborhood-based, culturally sensitive, and located in the communities in which the children live;
  - involve foster families as team members in family reunification efforts;
  - reunify children with their families as soon as that can safely be accomplished based on the family's and children's timing; and
  - reduce reliance on institutional or congregate care.
- B) **DPSS Core Supervisory Academy:** The Supervisory Academy was developed to further hone the skills of Children's Services supervisors, and more importantly, to positively promote Division changes in an atmosphere of support and encouragement. Given the critical role of Supervisors as instruments of change, the curriculum focused on key leadership techniques that facilitate and reinforce the "transfer of learning" process. During this quarter the first Supervisor Academy (beginning in October 2004) was offered and completed. Six (6) additional Supervisor Academies are scheduled between November 2004 and March 2005.