

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

673



FROM: Department of Public Social Services and
Probation Department

SUBMITTAL DATE:

6/1/05

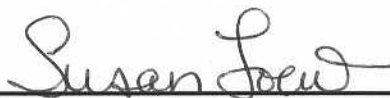
SUBJECT: County System Improvement Plan Progress Report

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors receive and file the attached 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.

for 
Marie Whittington, Chief Probation Officer


Susan Loew, Interim Director DPSS

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:	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

- Policy
- Policy
- Consent
- Consent
- Dep't Recomm.:
- Per Exec. Ofc.:

County Executive Office Signature 

RECEIVED
DEPT. OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
MAY 31 2005
EXT. 1111

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

2.18

FROM: Department of Public Social Services and
Probation Department
SUBJECT: County System Improvement Plan Progress Report

DATE: 6/1/05

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

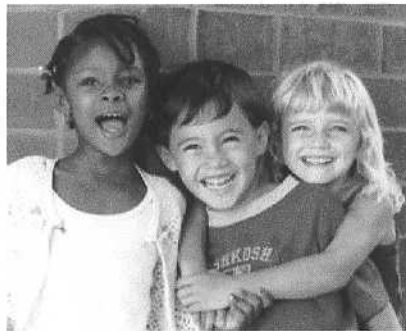
CALIFORNIA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW
Riverside County DPSS – Children’s Services

System Improvement Plan (SIP)
Quarterly Report 2: January – March 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 was 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

A) **Community Partnership:** Children's Services is very much aware that supportive services are essential to facilitate successful reunification of children with their families. Development of transition plans that effectively sustain families through appropriate community-based support is crucial. In an effort to expand accessibility and availability of treatment services, Children's Services completed a thorough analysis of all currently funded community-based programs. Through a collaborative process, Children Services and Prevent Child Abuse Riverside County (PCARC) jointly identified county service needs and prioritized funding for specific services. These services include: anger management, treatment for domestic violence, counseling, parenting, home visitation, and transportation services. Aligned with the county System Improvement Plan, contracts awarded for these services will address, or demonstrate a relationship toward achievement of the following program objectives:

- Reducing the rate of abuse and/or neglect in foster care;
- Reducing the rate of recurrence of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed subsequent to a child abuse investigation; and
- Reducing the rate of foster care re-entry.

Additionally, we are in the initial stages of implementing Family-to-Family (F2F) activities in the Desert, the first of our implementing regions, which will further our efforts to bolster community-based support. Children's Services recognizes that face-to-face engagement and relationship-building with partners are essential strategies to build a stronger service base that will support our children and families. After months of planning and preparation, the Desert core planning team held an informational session on F2F for traditional partners (service providers). The Desert team discussed the basic values of F2F as well as its well-documented successes in other states and counties. Of the 35 service providers that attended, 12 indicated interest to participate in planning and other future activities related to this new initiative. Approximately one third of

these were existing partners who currently provide support services through their Foster Family Association license.

- B) **Case Reviews:** Children's Services completes, on an ongoing basis, internal case reviews to ensure the quality of critical social work practices such as: assessment of safety and risk; case documentation; and supervision. The first of these quality practice reviews for 2005 involved the general utilization of the Standard Decision Making (SDM) tools for correct usage by staff, timeliness, and completion of all required elements needed for accurate measure of risk and safety. Preliminary analyses of the case review data shows improvement in staff's identification and documentation of specific safety and risk issues in the Emergency Response investigative narrative. Regional Managers, Supervisors and Staff Development will be provided with the final results of this review, which will highlight strengths and specific areas of improvement.

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, family case plan development, and recruitment/retention of caregivers, to name a few

Quarterly Accomplishments to Date:

- A) **Family to Family (F2F) Initiative:** Although much of the planning and activities around F2F have focused on preparing internal staff for change, Children's Services' efforts to support and maintain resource families have been ongoing. In response to the low number of foster homes in communities where there is a high *rate of removal*, Children's Services has developed two new approaches to recruit and retain quality foster parents:

The Foster Parent Recruitment Program focuses on increasing the number of foster homes available for placement by actively recruiting foster parents within targeted communities. By Winter 2004, two contracts were executed and vendors were assigned to specific Riverside County zip codes which represent areas in most need of additional foster family homes (e.g., the Desert Region and Hemet). As of March 2005, recruiters enlisted a total of 91 families who conveyed interest in becoming a foster parent. By the end of March, three of these families successfully completed the required 11-week adoptive/foster parenting training course.

The Parent Partner Program serves to improve the retention of foster homes through the provision of supportive and mentoring services to newly licensed foster parents. Parent Partner Mentors are now available to assist in providing an in-person response to caretakers when a request for placement change is received by Children's Services. Parent Partner Mentors work with foster parents countywide on a "24/7" basis. The goal is to provide new foster parents and caretakers with more timely response to any request for assistance; to address any questions and need for support as they navigate the foster care system; and most importantly, to ensure that manageable concerns do not escalate into

"crises" that could potentially result in placement changes. Planning of the "24/7" response protocol is now in progress, along with the development of a method for tracking and measuring program utilization and service activity.

- B) **Permanency for Foster Youth:** Children's Services is in the planning stages to identify and review cases of foster youth who are not currently adopted or in a legal guardianship. The purpose of this assessment is to find possible relatives or other appropriate adults who would be willing to adopt or accept guardianship for these youth.

Because we want to better enhance our ability to identify legitimate issues and barriers surrounding permanency for youth, Children's Services invited former foster youth to participate as speakers in foster parent recruitment events, as well as in staff development programs (e.g. unit meetings, staff F2F training, regional meetings, etc.). Additionally, we are in the planning stages of recruiting former foster youth as guest speakers for foster parent training classes. The goal is to provide staff and caregivers with unique insight into the needs and experiences of young men and women living in the foster care system. Our next step is to develop a process to measure the impact of youth participation on increasing interest in teen adoptions and guardianships.

- C) **Improved Child Placement Practices:** In order to reduce the number of times children change placements, the Group Home Unit is now conducting "Placement Save" meetings when a request to change a placement is received from a group home provider. This meeting involves the child, group home staff, the case-carrying social worker and their supervisor. The primary goal of the "Placement Save" meeting is to avoid disruption of the placement by problem-solving and identifying resources needed to stabilize the placement. Another practice change involved the assignment of medically fragile children to a centralized case load. Children assigned to this unit have received increased supervision from their social worker, earlier identification of important health-related issues, seamless coordination of specialized services, and expert health screening from a Public Health Nurse.

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.

Quarterly Accomplishments to Date:

- A) **Use of Child Welfare Services/Case Management System Data & Program Management Reports:** Core to our efforts to reduce recurrence of abuse and abuse in out-of-home care is appropriate placement of children in safe homes. Beginning in March 2005, Regional Managers received weekly reports of children who are placed in

out-of-home care homes or facilities which have recently been placed on administrative hold due to any one of the following reasons: abuse or neglect findings; corrective action pending; Community Care Licensing decertification; additional training needs; etc. This weekly report is used to inform social workers of potential placement considerations when using these homes. The report also serves as a cross-check to the accuracy of our placement information thereby ensuring each child is matched in a suitable home with appropriate services in place. Social workers find this report to be useful when supervising their placements and actively call in updates to our Placement unit.

B) Standardization of Best Practices: Regional Managers and Supervisors have recently implemented a performance-based coaching process. This process involves the review of day-to-day casework requirements which support the safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes established by AB 636 (California Child Welfare Improvement and Accountability Act). As part of this process a new personnel folder was designed to assist supervisors in organizing and recording their coaching efforts. By standardizing our coaching process, it is expected that the quality of service to children and families will improve, will be more consistent across the county, and will be delivered in timely manner.

Current performance reports by the state are beginning to show evidence of successful casework and supervision practices. When compared to current state averages and federal standards (see below) Riverside appears to be effective in achieving positive outcomes as follows:

- Children experience fewer repeat episodes of child maltreatment in Riverside when compared to the state average (1A, 1B);
- More of our children, who have been removed from their homes, will be returned home within 12 months when compared to the state average (3E, 3A);
- Most of our children will have 2 placements or less during their first year in care (3B);
- For those children who will be adopted, almost half will finalize adoption within 24 months of their removal from home (3D).

	National Standard	State	Riverside
1A. Recurrence of maltreatment (Fed)	6.1%	9.0%	7.4%
1B. Recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months	n/a	13.5%	10.8%
3E. % reunified within 12 months from latest removal from home (Fed)	76.2%	66.5%	79.7%
3A. % reunified within 12 months (for those who enter care for the first time)	n/a	36.0%	48.6%
3D. % adopted within 24 months of from latest removal from home (Fed)	32.0%	28.1%	45.7%
3B. % with no more than 2 placement settings within 12 months (Fed)	86.7%	84.1%	84.6%

Source: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/ccfsr>, 04/25/05