

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

.788



FROM: Department of Public Social Services

SUBMITTAL DATE:
9/2/05

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.

Marie Whittington, Chief Probation Officer <i>Edward R. Vaughn</i>	Cynthia Hinckley, Director DPSS <i>S. Blakeley for C. Hinckley</i>
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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 05/06

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*

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

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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. This is the third quarterly progress report submitted to the Board. Prior progress reports were submitted on January 25, 2005 (Agenda #2.5) and June 7, 2005 (#2.18).

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

CH:SL:clh

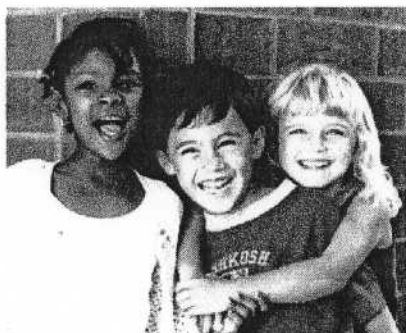
CALIFORNIA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW
Riverside County DPSS– Children’s Services

System Improvement Plan (SIP)
Quarterly Report 3: April – June 2005



Cynthia Hinckley, 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, resource families (formerly known as 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).

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

CBO Involvement:

Goal: Children's Services will decrease the rate of recurrence of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed by increasing community involvement in the support and stabilization of low to moderate risk families.

Milestone

Achieved: In April of 2005, voluntary advisory sub-committees were formed for each region to initiate county-wide Family to Family implementation. Children's Services has established an Advisory Committee comprised of community partners for the Family to Family (F2F) Initiative, and have expanded our F2F sub-committees to include community partners. There are four sub-committees: (1) Team Decision-Making (TDM) sub-committee will develop policy on how to conduct TDM's; (2) Recruitment, Training and Support (RTS) sub-committee will identify how to recruit, train and support resource families (formerly known as foster families); (3) Self-Evaluation sub-committee will evaluate progress in improving outcomes for children and families; and (3) Community Partnerships sub-committee will increase community partnerships through identification of potential new members. Each sub-committee meets twice a month.

Data Management:

Goal: Children's Services will ensure accurate and consistent data entry in CWS/CMS. This will improve our ability to assess safety and risk factors associated with resource families and reduce the rate of abuse and/or neglect in foster care.

Milestone

Achieved: Children's Services has performed practice reviews which indicate that all data has been accurately entered in CWS/CMS with regard to referrals of child abuse in out-of home care. Additionally, Children's Services staff participate in

analysis/review workgroups that have been established to: (1) define reports and report content, (2) create report queries, (3) test report validity, (4) interpret business needs based on report findings, (5) define and implement standards for disposition and allegation conclusions for out-of-home referrals, and (6) provide recommendations to Children's Services and community partners regarding areas for improvement.

As a result of these workgroups, a database has been developed to track all out-of-home investigations to include the types of abuse and neglect and the conclusion of each investigation. The Out of Home Investigation (OHI) Regional Manager currently reviews all referral allegations received by Children's Services for referrals of out of home abuse. Children's Services has continued its collaboration with Community Care Licensing in that Children's Services assesses for abuse and neglect, while Community Care Licensing assesses for licensing violations.

Additionally, Riverside County Children's Services participated in a statewide workgroup, wherein California Department of Social Services issued an All County Letter (ACL) with procedures that closely mirror Riverside County practices. Further review indicates, Riverside County Children's Services continues to implement practices that are consistent with the Welfare and Institution Code (WIC). Since the implementation of the SIP, the rate of abuse in out-of-home care has been reduced from 1.4 % to .93 %.

Quality Assurance:

Goal: Children's Services staff will implement a Quality Assurance process to confirm changes in critical work practices identified by CWLA.

Milestone

Achieved: A Quality Assurance (QA) review of Structured Decision Making (SDM) was completed with a focus on consistency and accuracy.

In addition to the areas targeted for quarterly review, in January 2005, the Regional Managers identified the following three priority areas to be reviewed by December of 2005:

- 1) Emergency Response (ER)/Technical Assistance, Review assessment & Consultation Team (TRAC): Children's Services completed an assessment of the TRAC program and as a result, current policy is being revised to enhance regional social work practice on all investigations. Further, TRAC policy is being redefined to incorporate additional high risk-criteria. The revised policy will provide improved staff competence, consistency of services and increased safety of children.
- 2) Structured Decision-Making (SDM) Utilization Supervisory Review: Children's Services has developed and implemented a case reading tool that has undergone three internal reviews, two of which have been validated by the Children's Research Center. Currently, Riverside County Children's Services is one of the first to implement the supervisor case reading tool.

- 3) Reduction of Foster Care Re-Entry
Children's Services has ensured that all social workers have been trained to provide families, who have recently reunified, with three months of direct Family Maintenance supervision, prior to case closure. This will result in consistency of case practice and improved outcomes for children and families.

Goal: Staff will use SDM consistently and accurately.

Milestone

Achieved: QA conducted an SDM review of all referrals and cases and found that social workers are using SDM consistently and accurately.

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:

Family to Family (F2F):

Goal: Children's Services will implement a standardized resource family training process for recruitment, selection, and retention across the county and across agencies.

Milestone

Achieved: One of the major cornerstones to Family to Family is that, "recruitment is everyone's responsibility". Therefore, Children's Services' effort to support and maintain resource families remains ongoing and is supported by continued education and trainings for social workers. In April 2005, Children's Services participated in training for approximately 250 selected staff. This training focused in part on the recruitment and support of resource families. In May 2005, Children's Services participated in a Family to Family cluster meeting in San Diego and developed a plan to better recruit, support and retain resource families. In June 2005, Children's Services conducted three days of Family to Family training for staff, caregivers, resource families and foster youth. Selected staff and community partners also attended the Family to Family national conference convened in Denver, Colorado, which focused on the principles of recruitment, training and support of resource families.

Goal: Children's Services will improve the recruitment and retention of high quality resource families within the child's community.

Milestone

Achieved: Children's Services continues in its efforts to implement a quality resource family recruitment process that is more neighborhood-based, culturally sensitive and located primarily within the child's community. Several workgroups have been established to review, modify and build upon the recruitment plan. Additionally, in May 2005, the recruitment and retention contracts were expanded to include

relative caregivers. As a result of the recruitment and support efforts in the 92201 zip code, the Desert Region has identified 7 new resource families.

Central to recruitment efforts, Children's Services also recognizes the importance of ensuring that foster/adoptive parents are supported throughout challenging situations which may occur during the process of fostering children and encouraging them to become partners in service access, reunification and maintaining the child's connection with the birth family. As a result caregiver support contracts were expanded to provide support 24/7 on an on-call basis. Additionally, in April 2005, Children's Services established the RTS sub-committee to assist in the planning and the development of PRIDE (Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education) Training. This training is specifically designed to support the care and supervision of children placed in out-of-home care. In June 2005, final plans for the training of Children's Services staff were developed and the first training was successfully implemented in July 2005. The RTS continues to meet twice a month.

Structured Decision Making (SDM):

Goal: Children's service will improve its ability to assess safety and risk factors associated with resource families and reduce the rate of abuse and/or neglect in foster care.

Milestone Achieved: Children's Services is currently in the process of developing an assessment tool, similar to Structured Decision Making (SDM), to more effectively assess resource families. In June 2005, Children's Research Center conducted an initial case reading in the development of the safety and risk assessment tool. In conjunction with the development of the assessment tool, Children's Services continues to revise policies and procedures, implement change as needed and finalize a training curriculum for the utilization of this tool for out-of-home referrals.

Specialized Services:

Goal: Children's Services will increase the competence of Children's Services social workers and supervisors in the assessment and development of safety plans. Children's Services will increase the competence of community partners' in their delivery of services to children and families where children were not removed. Children's Services will also decrease the rate of reoccurrence of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed by increasing community involvement in the support and stabilization of low to moderate risk families.

Milestone Achieved: Children's Services has collaborated with community partners to develop a Differential Response (DR) Program to assist those children and families who would benefit from services where a more intrusive intervention is not appropriate. The funding source Riverside County has identified to fund DR is Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF). The requirements for the development of the 3-year spending plan for PSSF were changed this year and counties were permitted to extend existing service agreements for up to twelve

months. DR will be funded and implemented when the new PSSF agreements are finalized.

System Improvement Plan Outcome Indicators:

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.

	Current Status (as of 07/01/05)	Riverside County Baseline (as of 01/01/04)	Federal Standard
1C. % of Child Abuse in Foster Care (% of children that had a substantiated allegation within the past nine months).	0.93	1.40	0.57
2A. % of Recurrence of Abuse/Neglect when children were not removed. (% of children not removed who had an allegation (substantiated or inconclusive) and whose next event was another substantiated allegation after 3, 6 or 12 months).	9.5	11.4	N/A
3F. % of Admissions who were re-entries (For all children who entered foster care during the most recent 12 month study period, what percent were subsequent entries within twelve months of a prior exit).	11.5	11.1	8.6

Source: CWRC\CSWMS Reports, CSSR Berkeley current reports as of 07/14/05

1. Riverside County has continued to reduce the rate of abuse in out-of-home care. Riverside County has been a leader in the development of the statewide policy for investigating allegations of abuse in out-of-home care.
2. The recurrence of abuse/neglect when children are not removed from their homes has been reduced by almost 2% since the beginning of the System Improvement Plan. It is believed that this decrease is closely correlated to the consistent use of the Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools.
3. The percent of children re-entering foster care has remained fairly static. However, it is believed that by enhancing services to families through our partnerships with the community this rate will decrease.