

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

832



**FROM:** Department of Public Social Services

**SUBMITTAL DATE:**  
03/03/06

**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 December 13, 2005 (Agenda #2.11), 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 require demonstration of efforts to improve those outcomes. While the State requires an annual report, DPSS will report to the Board quarterly.

*Cynthia Hinckley*  
Cynthia Hinckley, Director

<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 05/06

<b>SOURCE OF FUNDS:</b> 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 Martez*

- Policy
- Policy
- Consent
- Consent

**Prev. Agn. Ref.:** 9/14/04 (#3.45); 1/25/05 (#2.5); 6/7/05 (#2.18); 9/13/05 (#2.14); 12/13/05 (#2.11) | **District:** All | **Agenda Number:** **2.9**

**FROM:** Department of Public Social Services  
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**BACKGROUND (Cont.):**

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

1. Building the capacity of social workers and other staff, in conjunction with community partners, to deliver quality services.
2. Improve community collaboratives and ensure shared responsibility for outcomes.
3. Monitor county performance to ensure safety, permanence, and well-being of children and families.
4. Monitor the oversight requirements of supervisors and managers who are the critical instruments of change.

The most recent progress in these areas is reflected in the attached report. This is the fifth progress report submitted to the Board. Prior progress reports were submitted on January 25, 2005 (Agenda #2.5), June 7, 2005 (Agenda #2.18), September 13, 2005 (Agenda #2.14), and December 13, 2005 (Agenda #2.11).

The Director of DPSS therefore requests the Board receive and file the attached County System Improvement Plan Progress Report.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** N/A

CH:SL:dc

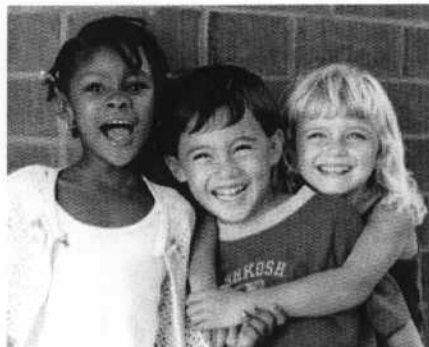
RIVERSIDE COUNTY DPSS – CHILDREN’S SERVICES

# **Strategic Plan**

## **Progress Report: October-December 2005**



**Cynthia Hinckley, Director:  
Department of Public Social Services**



*"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)**

## Overview

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In 2001, the California Legislature passed Assembly Bill (AB) 636, the California System Improvement and Accountability Act. In tandem with efforts being required by the federal government, California's efforts are focused on improving outcomes for children who are served by the state's child welfare system.

A comprehensive approach to oversight and accountability, California's new system measures and monitors the performance of each of the state's county child welfare systems. It operates on the philosophy of continuous improvement, interagency partnerships, community involvement and public reporting of outcomes. The new system will allow the State to gauge its performance against national standards while also measuring the performance of counties on other critical outcomes and tracking improvement over time.

Highlights include:

- ♦ Quarterly data reports that are now sent to each county providing data on outcome measures related to child safety, permanency and well-being.
- ♦ County Peer Reviews that utilize qualitative information not measured through data to identify both best practices and areas for improvement.
- ♦ County Self-Assessments (CSA), undertaken with community partners, that provides analysis and understanding of a county's current performance.
- ♦ County System Improvement Plan (SIP) that details the steps a county will take to improve its child welfare performance and guide implementation and monitoring efforts.

### ***A Comprehensive Action Plan***

In its commitment to achieve better outcomes for children and families who are at risk of abuse or neglect, Child Protective Services in Riverside has been proactive in soliciting the involvement and assistance from outside agencies. Our partner agencies assist us to obtain impartial reviews and recommendations for improvement of internal policies, procedures, tools, partnerships and overall social work practice. The information and recommendations for improvement derived from these reviews and initiatives have laid the framework for the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is a subset of the Department of Social Services Integrated Plan and incorporates our vision, mission, and values while setting in place a comprehensive action plan to ensure the safety, stability and well-being of children.

The following identifies the key oversight reports and initiatives whose combined recommendations, serve as the context for the Strategic Plan:

### **Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) Report, 2001, 2003**

In 2001 Riverside County engaged the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) to perform a comprehensive review of the County's Child Protection System and report their findings. Numerous recommendations have been implemented. In addition, in 2003 Riverside County DPSS Children's Services Division requested that the Child Welfare League of America institute a practice review of selected cases. This review resulted in several recommendations for changes in policy and practice focused on the emergency response program. These recommendations were then integrated into a county-wide plan developed and implemented by the management team in the regions.

### **System Improvement Plan (SIP), 2004**

In response to the California Child Welfare Improvement and Accountability Act (AB 636), the System Improvement Plan (SIP) was created to address specific strategies and milestones for improving Riverside County's child welfare services. A key component of the SIP is the collaboration that occurs among public and private agencies, the Juvenile Court, parents, foster parents, youth, and other involved stakeholders. As a result of this collaboration, 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. The SIP was approved by the Board of Supervisors on September 14, 2004, prior to submission to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

### **Family to Family Initiative (F2F), 2004**

Riverside County has implemented the Family to Family Model through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The model is a systems change initiative which focuses on building community partnerships to increase resource families within neighborhoods; Team Decision Making with family and community participation in the decision making process; utilizing data for self-evaluation; and recruitment, training and support for resource families. This initiative provides Riverside County the opportunity to develop a community based foster care system and to reduce entries into care.

### **Internal Review Group (IRG), 2004**

Within this Division, a countywide review of case files was conducted by an external audit group to ensure continuity of practice standards. In addition, home visits were made to evaluate any practice or systemic issue which related to a decrease in positive outcomes.

### ***Strategies for Improvement***

The following section identifies the four strategies of the Strategic Plan and aligns these strategies to the Department's overall themes.

#### **I. Customer – Centered Service**

Strategy 1            Build the capacity of social workers and other staff, in conjunction with community partners, to deliver quality services.

#### **II. DPSS' Role as Part of A Larger Social Service Network**

Strategy 2            Improve community collaboratives and ensure shared responsibility for outcomes.

#### **III. Efficient Operations Delivering Maximum Impacts**

Strategy 3            Monitor county performance to ensure safety, permanence, and well-being of children and families.

Strategy 4            Monitor the oversight requirements of supervisors and managers who are the critical instruments of change.

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# Progress Report

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## I. Customer – Centered Services

**Strategy 1: Build the Capacity of social workers and other staff in conjunction with community partners, to deliver quality services.**

Develop and refine staff support tools, training and implement initiatives geared at ensuring compliance with child safety outcomes and quality of service for children and families. 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. Quality Practice is demonstrated by consistent work practice in safety and risk assessment family case plan development and recruitment of caregivers.

### Activities and Results to Date:

#### **Family to Family**

##### **Recruitment Development & Support of Resource Families**

- Two new recruitment and support contracts continued their activities: one for "targeted recruitment" of resource families in the 92201 target zip; while the other for "24/7 peer support" for all our existing resource families. A total of 31 resource families are now available in the 92201 zip code (82% increase over 12 months).
- As of September 2005, Placement supervisors are on-call 24/7 to provide additional support to caregivers.
- A centralized Inquiry Line (1-800-665-KIDS), with "customer-friendly" script is now in place. The new internal tracking database, which is still being improved upon, will accurately track the amount of time it takes from initial call of a potential resource home through training, to the placement of a child placement, and adoption finalization. Protocol for the 1-800 line ensures that a live person always answers all telephone inquiries.

##### **Team Decision Making**

- As of December 2005, 19 Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings have been held in the Desert Region, benefiting a total of 31 children. The TDMs have been instrumental in developing child safety plans and identifying appropriate placement decisions.
  - A TDM facilitator was hired for the Riverside, Metro region. TDMs are expected to occur in this region, starting January of 2006.
  - In December of 2005, training sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, was provided to all TDM facilitators.
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## **II. DPSS' Role as Part of a Larger Social Services Network**

### **Strategy 2: Improve community collaboratives and ensure shared responsibility for outcomes**

Establish a community-wide network that promotes child safety, permanence and family well-being as a "shared responsibility" with community partners. Children who are safe, healthy and well nurtured are more likely to grow into caring and productive adults and better parents. The Division must collaborate with community partners in a bold effort to increase the effectiveness of shared efforts to protect children and ensure their well-being.

### **Activities and Results to Date:**

#### **Building Community Partnerships**

- 11 community partners have attended and participated in the Desert Team Decision Making meetings. Community partners consisted of Public Health Nurses, Indian tribal members, school representatives, CASA volunteers and relatives.
  - As of December 2005, Team Decision Making meetings have resulted in the diversion of 5 Families from Juvenile Court filing and removal. During each TDM clear safety plans were developed by CPS staff, birth parents, family members and community partners.
  - Approximately 24 Regional planning and sub-committee meetings occurred within this reporting period. Each included community partners' participation and feedback.
  - Training of core Family-to-Family values for administrators and staff of Foster Family Agencies and Group Homes occurred in December of 2005.
  - In November of 2005, the Indio Juvenile Court, bench officers and attorneys were provided with training regarding Family-to-Family values and strategies with special focus on TDM goals and protocol. The training will be repeated as Family-to-Family rolls out to other areas of the county.
  - A System Improvement Plan forum involving staff and community partners was held on November 01, 2005. Participants were provided with opportunity for joint collaboration in the development of strategies to improve performance within targeted areas.
  - A proposal was submitted to expand Drug Court (Family Preservation Court) services. Additional Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funds were awarded for the expansion. A federal grant was also received to expand the Family Preservation Court to include families not under the formal supervision of DPSS and the Juvenile Court.
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### **III. Efficient Operations Delivering Maximum Impacts**

#### **Strategy 3: Monitor county performance to ensure safety, permanence, and well-being of children and families.**

AB 636, the Outcomes and Accountability Act, provides a consistent statewide standard for measuring and monitoring each county's performance. By tracking and measuring the results achieved for children, counties are able to improve the way they serve children and families in each community.

#### **Activities and Results to Date:**

##### **Quality Assurance Reviews**

- An internal review of Relative Assessment cases was conducted during December of 2005, with the goal of determining if sample cases would meet the 95% compliance rate requirements of the California Department of Social Services Relative Assessment Audit. Upon cursory review of cases drawn from September 2005, a compliance rate of 70% was found. Following the review, numerous changes were implemented within the Relative Assessment Unit to remedy the issues identified in the Quality Assurance reports. Changes include: the development of a more accurate data tracking system to ensure timely completion of relative assessment documents, and the restructuring of first line supervisory responsibilities to improve efficiency and oversight. A subsequent review is expected to occur in March of 2006. It is anticipated as a result of the recently implemented practice changes, the compliance rate will increase by the second review.
- The Emergency Response case review audit tool was developed and finalized. Reviews are scheduled to begin in January of 2006. The purpose of the reviews are to ensure that 90% of all emergency response cases reviewed meet policy and case practice standards and possess all required documentation.

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#### **Strategy 4: Monitor the oversight requirements of supervisors and managers who are the critical instruments of change.**

Ensure consistency and compliance with Children's Services policies and procedures as they relate to child safety outcomes and quality of service for children and families. Supervisors and managers play a significant role in the oversight of case practice issues and they must ensure that staff are in compliance with timeframes, regulations and policies. Supervisors and managers are the critical instrument for change. Fostering and instilling quality work practices will take Children's Services Division to a higher level of customer service.

#### **Activities and Results to Date:**

##### **Staff Trainings**

- In December of 2005, social workers across all programs were provided with additional training to improve the use of Structured Decision Making (SDM) in the assessment of families. Particular focus was placed on risk and safety issues and the appropriate assessment of visitations for cases leading to reunification, as well as the use of SDM tools in the development of case plans.

- A specialized training curriculum has been developed for the appropriate use of SDM tools on high risk investigations and responses to critical incidents. By March 2006, all staff will have received this additional training in safety and risk assessments.

## Data Supporting Overall County Progress

OUTCOME	Riverside County Baseline	Riverside County Current Performance	Federal Standard
<b>1C. % Of Child Abuse in Foster Care</b> (% of children that had a substantiated allegation within the past nine months).	1.4	<b>1.4</b>	0.57
<p>Riverside County has been a leader in the statewide policy for investigating and documenting allegations of abuse in out of home care. It is believed the consistent work practices of our out of home investigations unit, the implementation of the Parent Partner Program and the anticipated development of the Structured Decision Making tool for Resource families, will contribute to a significant decrease in this outcome over time.</p>			

OUTCOME	Riverside County Baseline	Riverside County Current Performance	Federal Standard
<b>2A. % Of Recurrence of Abuse/Neglect when children were not removed.</b> (% 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).	11.4	<b>10.0</b>	N/A
<p>Since the implementation of this improvement plan, this outcome has experienced a 1% reduction in recurrence of maltreatment. It is believed continued improvement will occur with the expanded implementation of the Team Decision Making (TDM) process. As previously discussed, within this reporting period the TDM process was influential in diverting 5 families from removal. It is anticipated, significant improvement will also occur as a result of the recent implementation of the Family Preservation Drug Court and the Differential Response Program, slated to begin in July of this year.</p>			

OUTCOME	Riverside County Baseline	Riverside County Current Performance	Federal Standard
<b>3F. % Of Admissions who were re-entries</b> (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).	11.1	<b>10.5</b>	8.6

The percent of children re-entering foster care has decreased by 0.6%. It is believed that a critical practice change requiring a minimum of three months of family maintenance services following reunification has contributed to this improved outcome. Additionally, staff have improved in their completion of the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA), Structured Decision Making tool, which substantially contributes to the development of relevant case plans.

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