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



**FROM:** Department of Public Social Services

**SUBMITTAL DATE:**  
5/25/06

**SUBJECT:** Strategic Plan Progress Report for January through March 2006

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** That the Board of Supervisors receive and file the attached Strategic Plan Progress Report.

**BACKGROUND:** On December 13, 2005 (Agenda #2.11), the Board approved the submission of the System Improvement Plan to the California Department of Social Services. 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 (Chapter 678, Statutes of 2001), enacting 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 reports to the Board quarterly.

*Susan Jones*  
for 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	<b>Positions To Be Deleted Per A-30</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Requires 4/5 Vote</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION:** **APPROVE**

*Lisa Brandt*

**County Executive Office Signature**

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

**Prev. Agn. Ref.:** 03/14/06 (#2.9) | **District:** All | **Agenda Number:**

2.7

**FROM:** Department of Public Social Services  
**SUBJECT:** Strategic Plan Progress Report for January through  
March 2006

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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 sixth progress report submitted to the Board. The most recent report was submitted and received by the Board on March 14, 2006 (#2.9).

The Director of DPSS therefore requests the Board receive and file the attached report.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** N/A

CH:SL:mg

RIVERSIDE COUNTY DPSS – CHILDREN’S SERVICES

# Strategic Plan

## Progress Report: January-March 2006



**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 Outcomes 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 provide an analysis and understanding of a county's current performance.
- ♦ County System Improvement Plans (SIP) that detail 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 Outcomes 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.

# 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:

#### **Staff Trainings**

- On February 10, 2006, a Parents as Partners training was provided to staff, community partners and birth/resource parents. A total of 118 individuals were in attendance. The focus of the training was to provide concrete methods and tools to facilitate the shift from "working with clients" to "partnering with families".

#### **Family to Family**

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

- As of March 28, 2006, a total of 108 Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings have been held in the Metro and Desert Regions. The TDMs have been instrumental in involving staff, birth parents, family members and community partners in the development of clear child safety plans and the identification of appropriate placement decisions.
- Staff, parents, and community partners, who have participated in TDMs, have provided positive and encouraging feedback. Comments received include: "Wish all of my clients could have a TDM", "We had an opportunity to do real social work and assess the needs of the family", "Great experience", and "I was extremely impressed with the open and non-threatening, as well as understanding atmosphere, thank you." Additional comments from a parent included, "I needed this."

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

- Community Care Licensing (CCL) has provided training for Children's Services staff in order to increase resource family licensing capacity in the Desert Region.
- As of January 2006, a total of 31 resource families are now available in the 92201 area, representing an 82% increase over 12 months.
- Recruitment and support contractors have continued their activities for targeted recruitment of resource families in the 92201 zip code as well as the 24/7 peer support to all existing resource families.
- Foster care appreciation functions/events are occurring countywide. The Desert region hosted an "Evening Out" in December. Dinner and childcare was provided to foster parents. Additional events have been planned for the months of May and June.

## **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**

- Children's Services has reached out to over 300 traditional and non-traditional community partners including: Administrative Services, Income Maintenance, Gain, DPSS Contracts & Fiscal, school districts, educators, law enforcement including the Desert Hot Springs Chief of Police and the Indio Police Department, as well as the local tribes of Torres Martinez and Morongo. The Community Partnerships have been fostered through a number of venues to include: TDM Preparedness Trainings, Advisory Committee Meetings, Sub-committee meetings, foster parent appreciation events, neighborhood meetings, tribal membership meetings, community partnership forums and collaborative meetings with Prevent Child Abuse Riverside County (PCARC).
  - Children's Services has also been involved with several community partnership events and fairs to include: Court Appointed Special Advocates' (CASA) Reactive Attachment Disorder event, the "Day of the Child" in Desert Hot Springs, the Valley Connection, open house events hosted by the Family Resource Centers and many others that focus on family wellness strategies.
  - The Desert Region has continued to host quarterly Neighborhood Meetings, and as of March 28, 2006, began hosting Quarterly Task Force Meetings. Both the Neighborhood and Quarterly Task Force Meetings have brought a variety of community partners to the table including: local agencies and concerned persons, Riverside County Sheriff's Department, Indio Police Department, local community churches, teachers, counselors, and neighborhood service providers. The purposes of these taskforces are to develop new resources while providing increased coordination of services for those working with children and families.
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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**

- In March of 2006, the Quality Assurance Unit completed an annual review of the SDM Supervisor Referral/Case Tool. Results of the findings indicate overall progress with regards to improved efficacy and utilization of the tool. Intake and Emergency Response staff, on average are meeting the 90% compliance rate. Challenges continue to exist for Family Maintenance and Family Reunification programs. Although training to mitigate these issues was provided to staff in December of 2005, the benefits have yet to materialize in the annual report. It is anticipated that the compliance rate will increase by the next quarterly review.
- An internal review of Emergency Response (ER) cases was conducted during January of 2006. The goal of the review was to determine if the sample cases met Riverside County's DPSS policy requirements. Upon initial review of cases drawn from June through August 2005, it was found that 73% of the cases reviewed met "best practice" or "adequate" standards. Recommendations to remedy the issues have been identified and are slated to be provided to Regional Managers. Recommendations include: increased social worker participation in mandatory case staffings, development of utilization tools to assist in the appropriate documentation of services and increased clarification of policy on Department of Justice (DOJ) notification.

##### **System Improvement**

- On March 30, 2006, Children's Services submitted an updated System Improvement Plan (SIP) to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). The information obtained from the updated County Self Assessment (CSA), completed and submitted to CDSS on December 30, 2005, and the recommendations and strategies received from SIP Community Forums held in May and November of 2005, were incorporated in the development of the updated SIP. Based on a review of the available data and the feedback received from community partners, Children's Services has elected to continue to focus on the following areas of needed improvement:
    - Rate of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Out-of-Home Care.
    - Rate of Recurrence of Abuse/Neglect in Homes Where Children Were Not Removed.
    - Rate of Foster Care Re-entry.
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### **III. Efficient Operations Delivering Maximum Impacts** **(continued)**

#### **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 - Risk and Safety Assessment**

- In March of 2006, all emergency response and court dependency social workers participated in mandatory training. Particular focus was placed on risk and safety issues to include high risk investigations and response to critical incidents. Social workers also received training to address issues unique to Stand By Call Back (SBCB). Training for social workers of remaining programs is expected to be completed within the next reporting period.
  - Children's Services is currently working with Staff Development Division (SDD) to create an efficient tracking system for all staff who participate in mandatory, specialized trainings. The tracking of training attendance through SDD is expected to provide a more accurate account of staff participation, thereby increasing the competency and knowledge base of staff.
  - On a monthly basis, supervisors provide copies of completed evaluations and Performance Improvement Plans to Assistant Regional Managers. Children's Services has reached the 90% compliance rate with regards to the completion of all Employee Performance Evaluations.
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## Data Supporting Overall County Progress

OUTCOME	Riverside County Baseline	Riverside County Current Performance	State	Federal Standard
<b>1C. % Of Child Abuse in Foster Care</b> (% of children that had a substantiated allegation within the past nine months).	1.40	<b>1.05</b>	0.66	0.57
In March of 2006, the methodology for capturing data for this indicator was changed. As a result of change in the methodology, as well as quality practice improvements, a .35% decrease has been observed. Riverside County continues to be 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 more significant decrease in this outcome over time.				

OUTCOME	Riverside County Baseline	Riverside County Current Performance	State	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>	8.6	N/A
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 and the coordination of services between Children's Services and community partners who work with children and families. It is anticipated, significant improvement will also occur as a result of the recent implementation of the Family Preservation Drug Court as well as the Differential Response Program slated to begin in July of this year.				

OUTCOME	Riverside County Baseline	Riverside County Current Performance	State	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>	10.1	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), of the Structured Decision Making tool, which substantially contributes to the development of relevant case plans. Community partners are also becoming more informed of the challenges posed when providing services to children and families and have been influential in the development of new resources.				