

assister shared, "for the most part, they'll receive a notice the day after the interview has already passed."

Our review of 100 randomly sampled comments from the GetCalFresh's enrollment survey³⁶⁷ found that the most common complaint in Riverside County was the challenge of communicating with the County. Fifteen percent of these comments describe deep frustration after trying multiple times to reach case workers and leaving many messages, often never to hear back. Others describe waiting indefinitely to receive promised correspondence or follow-up. Without a reliable way to resolve questions, high rates of procedural denials are not surprising. An interview with a community-based application assistant confirmed that this is a common experience; she shared, "there's just no getting through." Curiously, the key performance indicators that the County tracks related to phone service show that there were low call abandonment rates (the rate at which callers hung up before receiving service was 1.86%) and that there were low average wait times (23 seconds).³⁶⁸ It may be that clients get through to a worker's voicemail, but never hear back.

The second most common procedural reason for denials was missing verifications.³⁶⁹ Local community-based assisters indicate that it is common for applicants to receive mailed notices for verification requests after the date when the verifications are required. The California Department of Social Services' CalFresh Management Evaluation identifies several County practices that may contribute:

1. **Over-verification.** "Requesting information that is not mandatory" and "requesting additional verification of household circumstances above what is required to make an eligibility determination."
2. **Overly-specific documentation requirements.** "Limiting the scope of verification that can be provided by requesting specific documents, when other documents may suffice."
3. **Difficult timing.** "Ensuring that households are not being requested to provide verifications prior to the interview and are given time after the interview to provide [the documents]."³⁷⁰

While there are mechanisms for applicants to access online systems to upload verification documents, they are not well used. DPSS' 2020-2021 goal for self-service utilization was 55 percent of clients, but they only reached 37 percent.³⁷¹ DPSS has also posted a variety of "Self

³⁶⁷ The enrollment survey is administered via text message to see if applicants are successfully enrolled at 40 days for general applicants and at 35 days for expedited service applicants.

³⁶⁸ Self-Sufficiency VOIP Phone Call KPIs.

³⁶⁹ Shalaun Jones, *CalFresh Application Denials by Reason*

³⁷⁰ Riverside DPSS's August 2020 response letter.

³⁷¹ Riverside County DPSS, *Annual Report*, 53.

Service Videos" on their website to support clients and community-based organizations in navigating the online system to create accounts, upload required documents, and submit periodic reports.³⁷² Unfortunately, the videos have limited language accessibility (mostly English). Furthermore, providers who support applicants for these types of programs are uncertain if the videos will be helpful since applicants are distracted by larger crises in their lives and tend to engage in the application process in a haphazard, rushed way. For those with accounts, it is often hard to remember required login information, creating additional friction and frustration that can lead applicants to postpone, sometimes indefinitely, the next steps in the process.

Overall, the CalFresh application process provides a stark example of how county residents in need of services may experience Self-Sufficiency programs as a whole, at a time when stress and trauma make it even more challenging to overcome the bureaucratic and technological barriers they encounter.

Recommendations

1. **Require DPSS to leverage the county-wide Integrated Health and Human Services Delivery System effort to streamline data-sharing protocols and practices between its internal programs.** Improved data sharing has the potential to dramatically increase the ease of social workers' review of existing service connections, supported or streamlined enrollment processes for shared clients, and targeted referrals to outside resources.

For example, broadened access to the California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS) systems for DPSS' in-house social workers for at-risk populations (e.g., OPG, APS, CSD social workers) would allow them to see application status and progress notes for clients already accessing Self-Sufficiency programs. New guidance³⁷³ from the State of California Office of Health Information Integrity (CalOHI) might provide specific scenario-based opportunities for streamlining service coordination, both within DPSS and county-wide. Recently introduced California Senate Bill (SB) 1054³⁷⁴ may provide additional clarity about the circumstances under which protective services agencies, specifically, are exempt from confidentiality requirements.

³⁷² <https://rivcodpss.org/apply-for-benefits/self-service-videos>.

³⁷³ California Health and Human Services, "State Health Information Guidance (SHIG)," <https://www.chhs.ca.gov/ohii/shig/>.

³⁷⁴ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB1054.

More specific recommendations come, in part, from leaders and staff in other counties that have attempted similar data integration projects.³⁷⁵ This effort may require an internal planning process within DPSS that parallels the county-wide effort.

The Integrated Health and Human Services Delivery System Implementation Plan should include: The specific procedural, technical, and policy-level data sharing barriers that currently inhibit fully client-centered services delivery, program enrollment, and/or outreach efforts; concrete steps to remove those barriers; and a list of protocols that will be developed to leverage enhanced data sharing to improve client access to services. Specifically, DPSS should:

- a. Create a plan to prioritize training and supporting staff in accessing and interpreting new information that will become available through increased data sharing.
- b. Maximize opportunities to share de-identified data for large-scale analytics and targeted outreach—this type of data sharing is governed by different laws than viewing individual records. Include a list of priority opportunities, and a work plan for implementing them. (For example, see the memorandums of agreement for the Children's Data Network.³⁷⁶)
- c. Create protocols for documenting the legal basis for each step of the data sharing. A knowledge base of these rationales allows smooth transitions when staff turnover is high and serves as a resource for applying the same logic to similar situations.
- d. Develop and articulate an umbrella approach that avoids the need to reinvent sharing agreements. All participating programs and providers need to agree, contractually, to follow the same data protection procedures, such as following HIPAA standards and scheduling regular audits. (For example, the City of San Francisco provides clients a form to sign that specifies that various programs and agencies constitute a "network of services" within which data sharing will occur for certain specific purposes.)

³⁷⁵ Transformation Planning for an Integrated Health and Human Services Delivery System, December 16, 2021 presentation; Sonoma County's Accessing Coordinated Care and Empowering Self-Sufficiency (ACCESS) initiative and San Diego County's ConnectWellSD's system are two other examples of integrated data hubs that combine client information across multiple systems to provide care management tools that support improved client outcomes, from which the County is already gleaning important learnings. San Francisco County has also engaged in many years of efforts to improve data sharing across departments.

³⁷⁶ <https://www.datanetwork.org/>.

2. **Create a plan involving DPSS and OPG to improve screening, referral, and enrollment systems to ensure that all clients are systematically connected to the full suite of supportive services that they may need, regardless of whether those services are administered by DPSS, other County departments, or community-based service providers.** This should be done as a part of the county-wide Integrated Health and Human Services Delivery System effort, which prioritizes client-centered service delivery models as a core goal. Specifically DPSS should ensure that the Integrated Health and Human Services Delivery System Implementation Plan includes provisions to:

- a. Invest in automated screening tools to support integrated enrollment. For example, the State of Pennsylvania has worked with Benefits Data Trust to develop a tool that includes a progressive series of questions to efficiently identify the programs for which applicants might be eligible.
- b. Develop agency-wide protocols for DPSS staff to systematically connect clients to referral hubs. For example, the independent website CVHIP.com was recommended by a community service provider as a good place to search for services in Riverside County, though most people would also need case management support to identify and apply for benefits.³⁷⁷
- c. Ramp up ongoing communication with clients about additional services. For example, San Francisco invites applicants to opt in to receive text messages, allowing the City to notify them about a broader range of support services available. Similarly, Code for America has tested machine-learning generated referrals to additional resources for CalFresh recipients, with a 14 percent response rate.
- d. Expand the use of multidisciplinary teams between DPSS programs and across the county, to better assess needs and provide holistic support for clients. For example, Riverside County could develop targeted service integration models that provide client-centered experiences for certain high-need populations. Local funding will allow for program design that centers the needs of those populations rather than the constraints of outside funding streams.

3. **Strengthen DPSS messaging (verbal, written, and in any follow-up) to clients to ensure that they can maximize the benefits from Self-Sufficiency programs.**

Specifically, DPSS should:

- a. Develop multilingual materials, along with text and email follow-up messaging on ways to use and maximize benefits. Develop translations in partnership with

³⁷⁷ <https://cvhip.com/>, an initiative of Desert Healthcare District and Foundation.

- native speaker translators and tested with clients. Identify distribution times for physical materials and digital follow-up messages. Monitor uptake rates for promoted services.
- b. Create a plan to systematically promote the availability of health care navigators to ensure that Medi-Cal clients get actual health care and not just insurance.
 - c. Systematically include guidance on how to stretch CalFresh benefits. (For example, some agencies promote an app called Propel.³⁷⁸ As another example, DPSS could provide information on how to use CalFresh benefits at farmer's markets.)

4. Streamline DPSS enrollment experiences to ensure that more eligible clients, especially those experiencing high stress and instability, get approved for benefits.

Specifically, DPSS should:

- a. Conduct an analysis of current enrollments and procedural denials for Self-Sufficiency programs for low income adults associated with recent APS, CSD, and OPG cases. Use baseline analysis to set quarterly improvement targets.
- b. Review existing benefits access and enrollment experiences from a client-centered, trauma-informed approach. Consider engaging a user-focused design consultant to support an initial review and to develop ongoing feedback structures. This work should include engaging stakeholders (clients, eligibility technicians, community-based application assisters) to identify targeted areas where more trauma-informed service delivery approaches would reduce procedural denials and/or improve benefit access. Develop a plan for testing improvements.
- c. Create additional liaisons, including dedicated eligibility specialists, to support ASD, CSD, and OPG social workers with streamlined interviewing and verification processes. Social workers may provide collateral contact or attestation verifications on behalf of clients to improve access to benefits. Our survey indicates that social workers who support high risk populations are overwhelmed by their workload and they too would benefit from streamlined processes for their clients. This should include a focus on CalFresh applications for non-dependent minors (NMDs) and youth under the care of CSD who lack food access.
- d. Increase the usage and impact of text and email campaigns that let people know what the next steps are in the enrollment and benefits access process, before it's too late. This is especially important for reducing denials due to missed

³⁷⁸ This free mobile app helps enrollees keep track of benefits and save money. See Propel, "Propel," Accessed June 9, 2022.

interviews. This may require Riverside County to advocate for better opt-in mechanisms and message delivery design in BenefitsCal. Code for America described that they have tested a variety of approaches for maximizing opt-in rates, resulting in more than 90 percent of applicants opting in to receive texts and/or email. Requiring clients to log into a mobile app to receive messages is a barrier to communication.

- e. Experiment with strategies for reducing CalFresh denials due to missed verifications. Options might include³⁷⁹ improved cross-agency verification document access (with appropriate consent structures);³⁸⁰ more diverse options for easy smartphone document upload options;³⁸¹ well-timed verification reminders and check-ins with support; more personalized verification guidance, and stronger support for applicants to self-attest; and mechanisms to funnel benefits applicants to community-based partners who can offer additional support. Increase BenefitsCal portal and text messaging opt-in rates. Implement reminder messages for key enrollment processes (e.g., interviews, verification document upload) using industry best practices with regard to messaging and timing. Decrease the percentage of applications denied due to procedural reasons.

Our recommendations for data sharing, better integration of services, better ongoing communication, and improving enrollment processes all require rethinking human services from a client-centered, trauma-informed, and holistic point of view. If DPSS and Riverside County can invest in and embrace a less fragmented approach, they have the opportunity to transform the experiences of the hundreds of thousands of county residents that seek support and increase their chances of getting the benefits and services they need to achieve stability.

³⁷⁹ Many of these strategies are based on Code for America's work running experiments to assess the effectiveness of various strategies to reduce denials due to missed verifications. While people applying for benefits via their channels currently benefit from those learnings, benefits access could be improved by implementing similar approaches for other applicants. Some of these could be achieved via existing texting platforms. Others might require coordination with other counties that have shared responsibility for changes to the CalSAWS system. See *Overcoming Barriers: How GetCalFresh Helps Applicants Submit Verifications*.

³⁸⁰ Rebooting NYC has specific suggestions on how to achieve this type of approach.

³⁸¹ Some CA counties have partnered with GetCalFresh to promote their LaterDocs option to all applicants, not just to applicants who apply via the GetCalFresh app. This does seem to increase the number of documents that people submit.

Chapter 6: Policy and Procedure Manuals

CSD's, OPG's, and ASD's policy and procedure manuals (Policy Manuals) should outline—in concise and easily understandable terms—the statutorily mandated standards of care for each child and conservatee. Because the Policy Manuals are the foundation of CSD, OPG, and ASD training and staff responsibility, they are not expected to be—nor should they be—complete treatises with numerous references to statutory and regulatory provisions. What they must be, however, is the first-look resource that sufficiently describes the required everyday, client-centered policies and practices that all staff must execute for the benefit of children and conservatees under their care. Additionally, the Policy Manuals should direct staff to additional, detailed resources to answer frequently asked questions or questions about more nuanced, “client-specific” standards of care. Organizing information this way will encourage client-specific thinking and will support staff in delivering knowledgeable, dynamic services. Each child and conservatee is unique, so the Policy Manuals should not be seen as all there is to know, but rather guides that encourage and empower staff to provide adaptive care.

To this end, we reviewed the Policy Manuals to determine their ease of access and organization. We also assessed the extent to which they outline client-centered policies at the core of the Welfare & Institutions Code, Probate Code, and Child Welfare Services Code, which together articulate the majority of CSD's, OPG's, and ASD's statutory responsibilities. Examples include the number of times a social worker should visit a child in foster care, policies for maintaining a conservatee's estate, and how quickly and in what manner County personnel respond to incoming reports of child or dependent-adult abuse.

Our Policy Manuals review yielded three key takeaways:

1. They are not easily accessible;
2. They are both over- and under-inclusive, i.e., hundreds of pages are devoted to data entry practices in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) data system, but far fewer pages emphasize the client-centered standards of care that should govern CSD, OPG, and ASD staff's daily responsibilities; and
3. Their organization is not structured to mirror CSD, OPG, and ASD staff's workflow.

Accessibility

The modern workforce is on the move. Mobile devices are rapidly supplanting the traditional desktop or laptop computer. This is particularly true with respect to staff who split time between home, office, and field. For many, smartphones and tablets with iOS and Android operating systems are their notepads, research tools, data-entry points, calendars, and organizers. For the CSD, OPG, and ASD Policy Manuals to be effective tools, they must be easily accessible and readable with this current technology. This means more than simply being able

to download a PDF version of the Policy Manuals to smartphones. Instead, the County should invest in an iOS and Android app that provides mobile-friendly, interactive versions of the Policy Manuals.

With app-based technology, staff can access the Policy Manuals from wherever their duties take them. Moreover, app-based technology allows for the Policy Manuals to be dynamic, living documents. They can be easily updated to incorporate the latest best practices and distributed to personnel with a few clicks. Furthermore, app-based technology can foster creative, intuitive organization, prioritizing the client-centered information, materials, and resources that personnel reference on a daily basis. Through an app, seamless integration of additional resources, such as checklists, contact information, and highly specific, situational resources can be immediately accessed. This will make service provision more efficient, minimizing the time between problem identification and solution implementation that often plagues staff.

Organization

Staff need quick access to targeted guidance. To this end, the Policy Manuals should be organized based on workflow. Instead of reading like textbooks—i.e., an amalgamation of various policies and procedures, they should function as on-the-job aids that deliver information in parallel with staff's day-to-day workflow. This way the Policy Manuals themselves will serve as checklists, providing supervisory guidance to staff wherever they may be. Additionally, best practices and problem-specific resources can be incorporated (especially via direct link through an app-based system), which will encourage a higher level of care when at all possible.

Ultimately CSD, OPG, and ASD staff will come to view the Policy Manuals as on-the-job assistants, and less as educational tools to be reviewed once or twice for minimal competence or only after knowledge of certain tasks and/or procedures are forgotten.

Client-centered Standards of Care

As currently drafted, the CSD, OPG, and ASD Policy Manuals are both over- and under-inclusive. They are not approachable because they are inundated with hundreds of pages of administration-specific procedures, including data-entry procedures for the CWS/CMS. While data entry and information management are certainly important, the balance of information suggests that these tasks are the priority, or, at the very least, deserve the same attention as client care. That is not the case. The Policy Manuals must emphasize through information presentation and delivery that client care is the priority of CSD, OPG, and ASD staff.

To this end, we combed through the Welfare & Institutions, Probate, and Child Welfare Services Codes to identify client-centered statutes and regulations. (See Appendices J-L). We then sought to determine where the Policy Manuals reference them. We discovered that they do not

mention many at all—or, to the extent they do, there is minimal information guiding staff on how best to comply or implement those standards of care.

To be clear, the Policy Manuals should not be quoting and extensively incorporating every relevant client-centered statute and regulation. Instead, they should summarize the key care provisions, with implementation guidelines included. Moreover, any excluded client-centered care provisions should be incorporated into on-boarding and other training materials. These materials can then be included in a “resources” tab in the app programs that we recommend should be developed without delay.

Recommendations

We recommend that Riverside County modernize the CPS, OPG, and ASD Policy Manuals by taking the following steps:

1. **Develop an application on iOS and Android platforms that includes the Policy and Procedure Manuals**, as well as additional resources designed to ensure the delivery of a uniform, minimum standard of care by all CPS, OPG, and ASD staff.
2. **Reorganize the Policy and Procedure Manuals to track the day-to-day workflow of CPS, OPG, and ASD staff.**
3. **Redraft the Policy and Procedure Manuals to prioritize knowledge and implementation of client-centered responsibilities** from the Welfare & Institutions, Probate, and Child Welfare Services Codes. To the extent any client-centered responsibilities are not included in the Policy and Procedure manuals, they should be in easy-to-understand materials provided to CPS, OPG, and ASD personnel, or better yet, always available for reference through the CPS, OPG, and ASD apps.

Chapter 7: Looking Ahead

Implementation Support and Strategies

This report provides high-impact recommendations to achieve excellence in serving vulnerable children and adults. For areas needing improvement, we offer a path forward grounded in best practice. Following this path will give Riverside County the opportunity to make systemic change and become an exemplar throughout the country.

The Board of Supervisors Ad Hoc Committee on Inter-Departmental Systems Improvements for Protection of Vulnerable Children and Adults is well placed to provide this support. Created in December of 2021, it has emphasized the importance of "a culture of continuous improvement, critical inquiry, and willingness to adjust our operations as we encounter challenges to seek to deliver the best service possible."³⁸² To that end, the committee is currently examining system changes the County has undertaken to "improve outcomes for vulnerable children and adults under the County's care."³⁸³

The committee's current focus has numerous points of intersection with topics discussed in this report, including:

1. The Integrated Service Delivery System to address duplicate intake processes, barriers to service, and gaps in service.
2. Opportunities to expand the use of multidisciplinary teams for vulnerable individuals who will be served by more than one department.
3. DPSS's CQI initiative to evaluate operations using qualitative and quantitative data and to recommend process improvements.
4. Seeking legislative reform in partnership with the County Welfare Directors Association to facilitate information sharing between child and adult protective programs (Senate Bill (SB) 1054).
5. County Counsel-led efforts to expedite data-sharing agreements.
6. Recruitment and retention of staff who serve vulnerable populations.

To enact this report's recommendations, the committee should work closely with County leadership. Deploying the right resources is critical. To prioritize, plan, execute, evaluate, and iterate will require significant coordination and support. County staff is already stretched thin and will be unable to invest enough time on new initiatives to successfully implement them. Supervisors and front-line staff cannot absorb additional work under current conditions where attrition, vacancies, and workloads have hit unacceptable highs. Further, there are likely skills

³⁸² Van Wageningen, *Status Report*, 2.

³⁸³ Van Wageningen, *Status Report*, 4.

required that should be accessed from external sources. For these reasons, the County should create new leadership and project management positions charged with system integration and reform efforts. Unyielding commitment and financial backing from the Board of Supervisors is imperative for the systems-level change that is needed in Riverside County.

**Turpin Children's
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Welfare System**

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Turpin Adults' Experiences Under Conservatorship

PART 3

Overview of Findings

In January 2018, the Riverside County Superior Court appointed OPG as conservator for all seven adult Turpin siblings. For five of them, conservatorship ended in 2019. OPG continues to serve as conservator for the remaining two.

The heartbreaking Turpin cases presented a unique challenge for OPG. The Turpin siblings had experienced severe and long-term abuse and neglect by their parents. Their public profile was high, and their need for privacy was great.



Methods

As we turned from examination of OPG services generally to an inquiry into OPG services for the Turpins specifically, we began with scant information. In mid-May 2022, we received access to five partially unsealed court files and at the end of May, we secured a number of probate court investigator³⁹⁹ reports, as well as accountings and other court documents. Additionally, in late May, we received from OPG a detailed day-by-day log of the Turpin adult siblings' care from January 2018 through April 2022. In early June, we interviewed both the RUHS/BH Director and the OPG Director of Innovation/Integration, as well as the OPG deputy public guardian for the Turpin adults. In mid-June we received additional unsealed court files.

Limitations

We do not have a complete set of the probate court records for the Turpin adults. Nonetheless, we believe that we have sufficient information to provide a reliable and well-founded analysis.

The key topics below detail what we know about aspects of the Turpins' experiences critical to our investigation—and give a composite picture.

³⁹⁹ The court investigator is an employee of the Riverside County Superior Court, whose role is to conduct investigations on behalf of the Court in conservatorship and guardianship cases.

Summary of Findings

Areas of Strength

[REDACTED]

- Through the County's contract with a law firm, the Turpin siblings (as well as other OPG clients) had access to appointed counsel for legal representation.
- In addition to managing conservatorship estate funds, OPG established and manages a Special Needs Trust for each of the Turpin adult siblings.
- The assets and disbursements shown in OPG conservatorship and trust accountings for the Turpins are reasonable and show no irregularities.

[REDACTED]

Areas of Concern

- Infighting among the Turpins' appointed counsel, the District Attorney, and County Counsel for OPG detracted from the legal representation the Turpins needed, and was a source of stress for the adult Turpin siblings.
- County Counsel did not file timely accountings on behalf of OPG for the Turpins' estates, or for the Special Needs Trusts established.
- In some instances, County Counsel's restrictive practices may have impeded timely care and services for the Turpins.
- There is a marked lack of communication and coordination among those responsible for different pots of money that affect the Turpin siblings—OPG, the SAFE Family Justice Center, and the JAYC Foundation. The County should bring these stakeholders together to facilitate planning for the Turpins' access to and use of the funds.

[REDACTED]

The Turpin Adults' Entry into the Public Guardian System

Establishment of the Conservatorships

On January 14, 2018, the 13 Turpin siblings were taken from their parental home to [REDACTED]

On January 22, 2018, County Counsel, working with OPG, filed seven petitions for both temporary and general probate conservatorship.⁴⁰² County Counsel also made a motion, granted by the Court, to seal the Turpin records to protect their privacy. [REDACTED]

The following day, OPG was appointed as temporary conservator of the person and the estate for all seven adult Turpin siblings (two men and five women), who ranged in age from 18 to 29 years. [REDACTED]

Care and Placement for the Turpin Conservatees

⁴⁰⁰ State terminology differs. In California, the term *conservator* refers to a court-appointed surrogate who manages an adult's personal affairs, property, or both. The term *guardian* refers to a court-appointed surrogate for a minor. A general probate conservatorship is a court case where the court appoints a responsible person or organization (called the "conservator") to care for an adult (called the "conservatee") who cannot care for himself or herself or manage his or her own finances.

⁴⁰¹ Cal. Prob. Code, §2355.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Analysis of the Turpin Case

1. Enrollment in Public Benefit Programs

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In January 2018, the deputy public guardian applied for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for each of the seven adult siblings, which the Social Security Administration approved effective May 2018.

[REDACTED]

In March 2021, the deputy public guardian reimbursed the Social Security Administration for an SSI overpayment in July. We have no information on the circumstances that caused the overpayment.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

See section below on the conservatee accountings, OPG Special Needs Trusts and other monies donated to the Turpins. Donations that increase the Turpins' assets over the SSI level could cause an SSI overpayment, which would have to be paid back.

2. Housing

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Analysis.

[REDACTED]

3. Residential Decisions Concerning the Turpin Siblings

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Analysis.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4. **Medical Care and Services for the Turpin Siblings**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Analysis. [Redacted]

5. **RUHS/BH Services for the Turpin Siblings**

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

Analysis. [REDACTED]

6. Turpin Sibling Communication with OPG Staff: Client Voice

National guardianship standards provide that "the guardian shall encourage the person to participate, to the maximum extent of the person's abilities, in all decisions that affect him or her" and that the guardian "shall treat the person under guardianship with dignity."⁴¹⁷ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

National Guardianship Association, *Standards of Practice* (2013), Standard #3 and Standard #9.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

However, from the materials available to us, we have some evidence about the dynamics between the Turpin siblings and the professionals serving them:

- a. In June of 2018, some of the siblings sought the removal of their appointed counsel, claiming that the firm's lawyers were pressuring them, as explained in detail below in subsection 8. [REDACTED]
- b. The firm's lawyer alleged in a memo to the Court that OPG staff were not sufficiently responsive to the siblings' views concerning their move to the apartment complex. He maintained that the siblings were not happy with the planned move but "they are resigned to the choice made by the Public Guardian. In their view, cooperating with the Public Guardian will result in an earlier

[REDACTED]

termination of the temporary conservatorship."⁴¹⁹ It sounds as if they tried not to voice their opinions, not to disagree, in hopes that they could get out from under the conservatorships sooner.

[REDACTED]

As reported in a May 2022 news article,⁴²⁰ the oldest of the siblings has recently looked back on her conservatorship philosophically, and summarized it as follows:

There was bad, there was good that came out of it. We [had] a place to live. We got into therapy. There was a lot of stuff they didn't teach us. We ended up having to figure it all out. But all in all, I think it made me smarter in trying to figure out things, and I did real well figuring it out.

Analysis.

[REDACTED]

7. Educational Services and Opportunities for the Turpin Siblings

[REDACTED]

⁴¹⁹ Ex Parte Petition to Stay Any Change of Placement of Julianne Away From Her Siblings Pending Noticed Hearing by Public Guardian Regarding Placement, February 6, 2019, re the Temporary Conservatorship of Julianne Doe, Temporary Conservatee.

⁴²⁰ Rokos, Brian, "Jennifer Turpin Defends Public Guardian Employee 'To Clean My Conscience,'" *The Press-Enterprise* (May 23, 2022).

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Analysis. [REDACTED]

8. Access to Legal Counsel for the Turpin Siblings

Riverside County contracts with a law firm to provide legal representation to OPG clients—an important (and, nationally, all too rare⁴²¹) safeguard to help ensure OPG accountability and to enhance client voice. It was critical for the seven Turpin siblings to develop a trusting attorney-client relationship with the firm attorneys.

In addition to the adult siblings' appointed counsel, other attorneys were involved in the adult Turpin case. County Counsel represented OPG and the Riverside District Attorney was prosecuting the criminal case against the Turpin parents. In April 2018, a mere three months after the establishment of the temporary conservatorships, the relationships among these legal entities began to fray, leaving the siblings caught in the middle. The records unsealed by the Court show that there were heated conflicts over the nature and scope of the appointed counsel's representation, and about confidential meetings with the siblings.

In early April 2018, the District Attorney wanted to interview the Turpin siblings regarding the criminal case against their parents, and requested permission to subject them to neurological testing. The siblings agreed to the neurological testing and the Court allowed it to go forward. However, the Turpins' appointed counsel was rightly concerned about the siblings being interviewed without an immunity agreement and outside the presence of counsel. Their counsel drafted an immunity agreement for the District Attorney and OPG to sign on behalf of the siblings. The District Attorney did not believe that these measures were necessary. Nonetheless, on April 6, 2018, the judge instructed OPG to enter into the immunity agreement on behalf of the Turpin siblings.

Unfortunately, this was just the beginning of the adversarial relationship between the District Attorney and the firm. Over the next two months, the lawyers sparred back and forth, issuing threats of litigation and cease and desist letters regarding interaction with the siblings. Finally in June of 2018, the District Attorney requested that the firm be removed as counsel for the siblings, claiming it was working to sabotage the District Attorney's relationship with them. The District Attorney also argued that the firm's leading lawyer for the Turpins represented all seven conservatees even though individually they may have had potentially adverse interests that could present conflicts.

The judge overseeing the siblings' conservatorships ruled in mid-June that the appointed firm should not be replaced. The District Attorney appealed, increasing the acrimony and infighting. At the same time OPG (represented by County Counsel) and the appointed

⁴²¹ The National Guardianship Network's Fourth National Guardianship Summit recommendations urge "continuing representation by a qualified lawyer for the adult [subject to guardianship], appointed at the outset of the case..." See Recommendation 4.3, May 2021.

firm accused each other of acting improperly with respect to the siblings—each claiming the right to be present at any Turpin sibling interactions. The law firm filed a motion for instructions to determine the scope and nature of its representation.

Some of the siblings asked OPG and the judge overseeing their conservatorships to appoint new counsel for them. In June 2018, one of the Turpin conservatees stated in open Court that she no longer wanted the firm to represent her. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In late June, the Court ruled that the firm could meet with the siblings outside the presence of OPG and County Counsel, and that the firm should continue to advise the Turpins on matters related to the criminal actions against their parents, as well as matters relating to the conservatorships.

The aggravated disagreements among these entities often involved important issues that were legally germane to the siblings' interests. However, they were conducted in such a way that the siblings were confused and unsettled. [REDACTED] the siblings were caught in the midst of this legal turf war, and were trying their hardest to understand the issues and do the right thing. Clearly, it detracted from a constructive focus on protecting them from harm while enhancing their independence.

Analysis. Riverside County is forward-looking in supporting legal representation for OPG clients. Appointed counsel were vigorous in looking out for the interests and rights of the conserved Turpin siblings. Differences between the appointed firm, the District Attorney, and County Counsel were rooted in appointed counsel's advocacy role—they were doing their job as charged. Yet the constant wrangling may have interfered with the development of trusting and confidential attorney-client relationships, especially given the Turpins' vulnerability and lack of experience with such matters.

9. Role of County Counsel in Serving the Turpin Siblings

County Counsel for OPG ensures that legal requirements for conservatorships are met, and represents OPG in court. They are intensely aware of OPG's fiduciary role, and of the need to protect the privacy and confidentiality of OPG clients. Moreover, they are naturally focused on protecting OPG from liability. Because of these roles, as we observed in Part One of this report, County Counsel seems to maintain a defensive posture toward sharing information and collaborating with other County entities in the care of conservatees.⁴²³ They also may be reluctant to deviate from routine practices, even in unique cases such as those of the Turpins, which called for creative solutions. Additionally, according to our interviews, County Counsel caseloads are exceptionally high—with one attorney reportedly having over 400 cases.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

⁴²³ See Part One of the Report, Chapter 3 sections on "External Review, Outreach, Transparency" and "Interagency Coordination and Collaboration."

[Redacted text block]

Analysis. [Redacted text block]

10. Steps Toward Restoration of Rights: Post-Conservatorship Guidance

[Redacted text block]

[Redacted text block]

[Redacted text block]

[Redacted text block]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Analysis. [REDACTED]

11. OPG Accountability in Management of the Turpin Estates

a. Estate Accountings

As fiduciary for the estates of the five temporarily and two permanently conserved Turpin siblings, OPG had a duty to file timely accountings with the Court detailing all funds collected and expended on behalf of the siblings within one year of the establishment of the conservatorship of the estate.⁴²⁶ Under the California Probate Code, the first accounting was due after the first year of the conservatorship and every two years thereafter.⁴²⁷

i. Five Temporarily Conserved Turpin Adults

For the five Turpins whose conservatorships were terminated, a one-year first accounting was due in January 2019 (a year after establishment of

[REDACTED]

⁴²⁶ Cal. Prob. Code §2620.

⁴²⁷ Cal. Prob. Code § 2620(a).

the conservatorships). Moreover, final accountings for all five terminated conservatorships were due in December 2019 at the date of termination.

However, for four of these five conservatees, OPG only filed a "First and Final Accounting" on October 8, 2020 (approximately 21 months after the first accounting was due and 10 months after the final accounting was due).

For the remaining conservatee, OPG filed a First Accounting on February 15, 2021 (over two years late) and a Final Accounting on September 28, 2021 (over 21 months late).

Beginning in 2019, the Court overseeing the conservatorships issued an Order to Show Cause to County Counsel asking for an explanation of why such accountings were not filed within the time limits set by the Probate Code.

As noted previously, the deputy public guardian we interviewed stated that she sent several accountings to County Counsel for approval and transmission to the Court in a timely manner, but that County Counsel repeatedly lost them, contributing to an improper delay.

ii. **Two Permanently Conserved Turpin Adults**

Permanent conservatorships were established for two of the Turpin adults in April 2019. The first accounting for both of these estate trusts was therefore due in April 2020. However, no accounting was filed for either one until January 2021 (approximately 9 months late).

b. **Special Needs Trust Accountings for All Seven Turpin Adults**

OPG was appointed Trustee of the Special Needs Trusts that were established in April 2019 for the benefit of all seven adult Turpin siblings. These Special Needs Trusts also required that timely accounting statements be filed. The Trusts were established in June 2019. The Court ordered that the first accounting be filed on August 24, 2020. In November 2021, the Special Needs Trusts accountings had still not been filed, and thus the Court issued an Order to Show Cause to County Counsel and OPG and set a hearing for January 7, 2022. On January 6, 2022 the accountings were filed, and the Court on its own motion continued the hearing to February 2, 2022. These accountings cover the period June 24, 2019 through January 4, 2022 and thus there was a two and a half year period of time during which there was no Court oversight over the Special Needs Trusts.

Analysis. Every single accounting required in every Turpin adult case we reviewed was filed very late, often years past its due date. A key component of OPG's fiduciary duty as conservator is the timely filing of accountings. If the filings are late, transparency and accountability to the Court are impaired. While the pandemic was underway for part of these accounting periods, and while County Counsel indicated they had a high caseload (over 400 cases for one attorney, as noted in our Part One report), the statutory duty to file on time remains. Failing to observe and enforce those deadlines negatively impacted transparency and accountability.

12. OPG Management of Donated Funds Collected for the Turpin Siblings

The rescue of the Turpin children and adults was a national story. Across the state, the nation, and the world, people who learned of the atrocities the siblings had endured made financial donations to benefit them. These donations were all intended to benefit the 13 rescued Turpins, but much of the funding has not yet reached them.

Funds were donated to:

1. The RUHS (approximately \$400,000);
 2. City of Corona Chamber of Commerce (now passed on to and managed by SAFE Family Justice Center) (approximately \$209,000 in cash and another \$100,000 in in-kind donations); and
 3. JAYC Foundation (approximately \$1,000,000).
- a. **OPG Special Needs Trust**⁴²⁸

In April 2019, the Court established a Court-supervised Special Needs Trust for each conserved Turpin sibling, and appointed OPG as Trustee. Such trusts are designed to supplement public benefits. In the Turpins' case, the Trusts are to supplement their SSI income, in order to pay for extra things they may need beyond what SSI covers for basic needs. In July 2019, the \$400,000 raised by RUHS was divided into 13 parts and approximately \$30,000 per person was transferred to the Special Needs Trust for each of the siblings.

Figure 34 shows the assets and disbursements for both the conservator accounts and the Special Needs Trust accounts for each of the seven adult Turpin conservatees.

⁴²⁸ Special Needs Trusts were also established for the Turpin minors. OPG declined to accept appointment as Trustee for the minors' Special Needs Trusts and the Trustee for those trusts is attorney Dennis Sandoval. We petitioned the Court for those records, but our requests are still pending. We therefore have not reviewed the Turpin minors' Special Needs Trusts records.

Figure 34: Overview of Conservator and Special Needs Trusts for 7 Adult Turpins

ACCOUNT	TURPIN 1	TURPIN 2	TURPIN 3	TURPIN 4	TURPIN 5	TURPIN 6	TURPIN 7
SPECIAL NEEDS ASSETS	\$31,835.11	\$28,758.88	\$34,385.32	\$31,834.02	\$29,720.47	\$30,347.55	\$28,738.48
SPECIAL NEEDS DISBURSEMENTS	\$2,344.62	\$1,199.43	\$23,951.56	\$8,023.21	\$4,175.71	\$4,606.67	\$2,439.43
SPECIAL NEEDS NET	\$29,490.49	\$27,559.45	\$10,433.76	\$23,810.81	\$25,544.76	\$25,740.88	\$26,299.05
CONSERVATOR ASSETS	\$69,442.95	\$55,267.54	\$62,876.64	\$69,114.55	\$61,508.60	\$79,362.57	\$54,915.34
CONSERVATOR DISBURSEMENTS	\$66,984.64	\$53,246.06	\$59,368.91	\$65,817.00	\$58,523.71	\$77,351.62	\$52,542.70
CONSERVATOR NET	\$2,458.31	\$2,021.48	\$3,507.73	\$3,297.55	\$2,984.89	\$2,010.95	\$2,372.64
TOTAL ASSETS	\$101,278.06	\$84,026.42	\$97,261.96	\$100,948.57	\$91,229.07	\$109,710.12	\$83,653.82
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$69,329.26	\$54,445.49	\$83,320.47	\$73,840.21	\$62,699.42	\$81,958.29	\$54,982.13
NET ASSETS REMAINING	\$31,948.80	\$29,580.93	\$13,941.49	\$27,108.36	\$28,529.65	\$27,751.83	\$28,671.69

Examples of disbursements were for outings, trips, a bicycle or bicycle equipment, and furniture. The oldest sibling used her funds to pay off loans for her schooling. Figure 35 shows the assets and disbursements from the Special Needs Trust for one of the seven sibling accounts.

Figure 35 Representative Accounting From One Special Needs Trust Account⁴²⁹

SPECIAL NEEDS	TURPIN
Assets:	
RUHS	\$28,414.75
1/7 Property from parents	\$1,844.18
Interest	\$88.62
Total Assets:	\$30,347.55
Disbursements:	
Apartment Deposit	\$800.00
Christmas	\$225.00
Household	\$1,400.00
Rent	\$215.00
SSI overpayment	\$1,863.44
Utilities	\$103.23
Total Disbursements:	\$4,606.67
Net:	\$25,740.88

_____ as reported in the press—at times, the Turpins have needed money to pay for housing and food. It is unclear whether the Special Needs Trust funds were available for these purposes and to what extent they were or could have been used.

b. Other Donated Funds

None of the other donations described previously have been transferred to the Special Needs Trusts or made available to the Turpin minor children or adults, except sporadically. Some of the adult Turpins report that they have been given gift cards from the SAFE Family Justice Center and can ask SAFE staff for things they need, but others say they have experienced housing and food insecurity.

⁴²⁹ Note that the Turpin siblings' SSI funds are for the payment of basics like rent and food, whereas the Special Needs Trusts are for other expenses to enhance the quality of life. In this Special Needs Trust accounting, the rent and apartment deposits as well as the SSI overpayment reimbursement should have come from SSI or the conservator estate trust, not from the Special Needs Trust. Timely filings are important to identify such errors, which could have jeopardized this Turpin adult's SSI eligibility.

[REDACTED] the court documents that we reviewed give varying answers as to why the funds from the SAFE Family Justice Center and the JAYC Foundation were not collected and placed into the Special Needs Trusts for the benefit of the Turpins. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In an unsealed court filing, the Turpin's appointed-counsel confirmed that "the Public Guardian assert[ed] that since the funds are held by outside charitable entities and not specifically titled in the name of the conservatee or the conservatorship estate, and since the needs of the Conservatee are being met by public benefits supplemented by funds from a Court-supervised special needs trust, the Public Guardian does not have a duty or the ability to marshal [sic] the charitable funds." [REDACTED]

The SAFE Family Justice Center stated in a February 2022 press release⁴³⁰ that the funds are "a restricted donation from the Corona Chamber Foundation to be used to provide for, or to hire the variety of services that may be needed for the Turpin siblings in the future, as they work to adapt to their new lives." The funds are "not to be used to supplant any funding for services that the County of Riverside or the State of California would and should provide to these victims of abuse."

According to the press release, as of February 2022, the SAFE Family Justice Center had expended \$41,587.92 on items such as transportation, food, lodging, emergency needs, recreation, and other client-identified requests. The SAFE Foundation director said the donor specifically sought out a non-County entity to ensure that any monies would not be considered assets that could be used to deduct from any County or state benefits. She emphasized that the SAFE funds are not in a trust, and are not assets that belong to the Turpins.

The JAYC Foundation began collecting the funds in December 2021, following the airing of the ABC 20/20 program on the Turpins. It has not yet begun to disburse them.⁴³¹ The January 3, 2022 probate court investigator's report for one

⁴³⁰ SAFE Family Justice Centers for Riverside County, "SAFE Family Justice Centers Restricted Fund," February 4, 2022.

⁴³¹ Rokos, Brian, "Turpins Lack Access to \$1 Million in Donations, Attorney Says," *The Press-Enterprise* (March 11, 2022).

of the two remaining conservatees states a clear concern to the Court as to "why the Public Guardian has not advocated for the conservatee [and by extension other Turpin siblings] to ensure that she is receiving her portion of the donations" and questions whether the Court should "order the public guardian to investigate any and all donations intended for the conservatee, and whether these donations should be placed in the conservatee's Special Needs Trust as were previous donations. It appears that donations are being obtained and managed without Court oversight, and are not being provided to the estate of the conservatee."



Analysis. It is unclear why County Counsel ever directed OPG not to marshal the donated funds meant to support the Turpin children and adults. It is clear, however, that OPG's failure to marshal these funds has resulted in the lack of Court oversight over the SAFE and JAYC funds, and may have resulted in food and housing insecurity for at least some of the Turpin siblings, in direct contravention of the donors' wishes.

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Appendix A: The Larson LLP Subject Matter Expert Team

Erika Weissinger, PhD, M.P.P.

Dr. Weissinger received her PhD in Public Policy from U.C. Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy at U.C. Berkeley in 2013. Her dissertation examines reasons for attrition among foster care adoption seekers. She formerly served as data and research manager at JBS International, where she oversaw data collection and analysis for the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) conducted by the Children's Bureau. While there, she led a mixed-methods research team in writing reports on topics including placement stability, adoption, the Indian Child Welfare Act, and CFSR process improvement. From 2000 to 2005, she worked for the District of Columbia's Child and Family Services Agency as part of a turnaround team with Deloitte Consulting that helped the Agency emerge from court receivership. Dr. Weissinger currently teaches at U.C. Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy and the School of Social Welfare, where she completed a postdoctoral fellowship. There, she helped create a qualitative database documenting the lives of children in foster care. She is a former Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and the board treasurer for Waterside Workshops, a local nonprofit that provides vocational education to young people emerging from foster care and the juvenile justice system. She is a co-parent and friend to many children and young adults touched by the foster care system.

Jill Duerr Berrick, PhD

Dr. Berrick is a Distinguished Professor of Social Welfare and the Zellerbach Family Foundation Professor at U.C. Berkeley. She also holds a joint appointment at the University of Bergen, Norway. Dr. Berrick's research focuses on the child welfare system and efforts to improve the experiences of children and families touched by foster care. Her interests target the intersection of poverty, child safety, parenting and the service systems designed to address these issues. For over three decades, Dr. Berrick has conducted a range of studies examining child welfare services for vulnerable families. She has written or co-written 11 books and numerous articles on topics relating to family poverty, child maltreatment, child welfare, and international comparative child protection policies. Her most influential works have examined the benefits and limitations of kinship foster care; the characteristics of highly effective foster caregivers; and the human impacts of poverty-related policies for children and families at risk of foster care involvement. Her most recent book, *The Impossible Imperative: Navigating the Competing Principles of Child Protection* (Oxford University Press), lays out a framework for conducting principled practice by child welfare professionals.

Pamela B. Teaster, PhD, M.A., M.S.

Dr. Teaster is a Professor and the Director of the Center for Gerontology at Virginia Tech. She is the North American Representative of the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the Immediate Past President of the Board of Trustees for the Center for Guardianship Certification, and she serves on the Editorial Boards of the Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect and the Journal of Trauma, Violence, and Abuse Review. Dr. Teaster is a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America and the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education and is a recipient of the Isabella Horton Grant Award for Guardianship (National College of Probate Judges), the Rosalie Wolf Award for Research on Elder Abuse (NAPSA), the Outstanding Affiliate Member Award (Kentucky Guardianship Association), and the Distinguished Educator Award (Kentucky Association for Gerontology). Former president of the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, she has received funding from public and private sources. Her areas of scholarship include the abuse of elders and vulnerable adults, guardianship, end-of-life decision making, ethical treatment of older adults, and public policy and public affairs. She has published over 250 scholarly articles, reports, and book chapters and is the editor/author of six books.

Erica F. Wood, J.D.

Ms. Wood received her B.A. from the University of Michigan and her J.D. from the George Washington University. Ms. Wood served as assistant director of the American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging, and was associated with the Commission from 1980 to 2020, when she retired. She continues to work in the law and aging field, especially adult guardianship. At the ABA she worked primarily on issues concerning adult guardianship, health and financial decision-making, legal services delivery, dispute resolution, health and long-term care, and access to court. She has participated in national studies on public guardianship and guardianship monitoring; played a role in convening national consensus conferences on guardianship; and directed a project on Working Interdisciplinary Networks of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS). Prior to 1980, she served as staff attorney at Legal Research and Services for the Elderly, National Council of Senior Citizens. In 2013 she received the Isabella Horton Grant Guardianship Award from the National College of Probate Judges. In 2016, she was appointed by the Virginia Governor to the Commonwealth Council on Aging, where she serves as Legislative Chair. She is a former member of the Arlington Commission on Aging, and a current member of the Virginia Center on Aging Board, the Virginia Public Guardianship and Conservatorship Advisory Board, and the Virginia Supreme Court WINGS.

Todd M. Franke, MSW, PhD

Dr. Franke is Professor in the Luskin School of Public Affairs, Department of Social Welfare. He has decades of experience in conducting cross-sectional and longitudinal research in fields including child welfare, education, juvenile justice, mental health and adolescent violence. His experience includes data analysis (multivariate, predictive analytics, machine learning), psychometrics, data visualization, and linking large existing datasets together for the social

good. He has worked on numerous evaluation projects in these areas and is currently the editor of *Youth* and the senior co-editor of the *American Evaluation Association* journal, *New Directions in Evaluation*. In the area of child welfare, he has examined the child welfare system and the related systems involved in the lives of children and families (e.g., health, mental health, juvenile justice, education, housing), workers and worker training, as well as children and families. He has received over \$120 million dollars in funding. He recently completed a study examining the link between children in out-of-home care and early childhood education through a project funded by the Administration for Children and Families. In addition to working with the Center of Excellence at UCLA around trauma-informed practice/training, he is on the leadership team for the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families, and the Associate Director of the UCLA Center for Healthier Children and Families. Dr. Franke currently oversees, in collaboration with LA DCFS, the training provided to all new and current staff at the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services as well as the cross-training that is beginning to occur between county agencies and for service providers and families.

Appendix B: Detailed Methods

Children's Services Division

Interviews and Focus Groups

We conducted 40 one-on-one interviews and held six focus groups with 37 participants. Interviews and focus groups were semi-structured. The interview and focus group guides can be found in Appendix C. We informed all respondents that their views would be anonymized to encourage candid responses.

We conducted and recorded most interviews and focus groups via Zoom with verbal consent to record, and we transcribed the recordings for further analysis. Members of one focus group and several one-on-one interviews opted out of being recorded, so we took careful notes of their responses, including some verbatim quotes. We conducted most of our interviews and focus groups using a team-based approach in which there was more than one facilitator and there were sometimes multiple note-takers. We conducted a few interviews in-person. We analyzed interview transcripts using Dedoose, a qualitative data analytic software.

Our respondents can be grouped into the following categories:

- Current and former CSD staff, including leadership, managers, supervisors, and social workers.
- Representatives from external partners, including SAFE Family Justice, CASA, and Foster Family Agencies.
- Experts from organizations including: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Programs, Implematix, the John Burton Foundation, and Chapin Hall.

We did not interview or survey DPSS Human Resources or Finance Teams. Nor did we interview clients of CSD, including children, youth, parents, relatives, or resource parents, with the exception of some Turpin siblings and some individuals involved in the Turpins' care.

Additionally, there were a number of entities we sought to interview but who were unresponsive or declined. These include:

- CSD's Out of Home Investigations (OHI) Unit, due to their need to prioritize mission critical work
- Superior Court Judicial Officers due to their inability to comment on specific cases
- Most Foster Family Agency (FFA) leadership and current staff (we received responses from two out of 68 Directors in our request for interviews)

Survey

We conducted a survey designed for case carrying social workers, supervisors, and leadership. The survey contained the following sections:

1. Services and support for children
2. Services and support for parents
3. Services and support for TAY
4. Resource parents
5. Workplace assessment

Most survey questions included a seven point Likert scale. For example, Likert scales were used when asking participants to describe placement and service availability and quality for groups 1–3 above. We also asked open-ended questions about these domains and coded the open-ended responses for themes. The complete survey is presented in Appendix D.

Because CSD did not have targeted email lists for case-carrying workers, we sent the survey to the entire department describing the purpose of the survey, the topic areas, and letting participants know that they could skip any questions that were not relevant to them. Due to this structure, the number of respondents varies by question. The most respondents for any one question were 290 and the fewest were 199. A total of 116 respondents identified their job classification as SSP I/II or III. CSD reported having 204 staff in the SSP job classification. Thus, the response rate for this job classification is 57 percent. We were challenged to identify an overall response rate reflective of the total number of respondents because of a lack of available information about current staffing levels for the range of job classifications who participated in the survey.

We included our thematic analysis of the open-ended questions and summarized the Likert scale results in the body of the report where the responses were relevant to our discussion. The quantitative summary of findings can be found in Appendix E.

Data Sources

In addition to surveys and interviews, we obtained aggregate data from the [California Child Welfare Indicators Project \(CCWIP\)](#), housed at UC Berkeley.⁴³² We also received limited snapshot data from Riverside County's data dashboard in the form of a screenshot. We requested and received data from the County on a myriad of topics, including:

⁴³² Daniel Webster et al., "California Child Welfare Indicators Project reports."

- Staffing and turnover trends;
- High-level contract information with Foster Family Agencies (FFAs); and
- Internal presentations and reports

Recommendations

Our recommendations are based on best practices found in the literature, evidence-based approaches, where available, and ideas generated from our inquiry with the County staff and partners.

Public Guardian

Methods

Methods for examining the Riverside County OPG were undergirded by the purpose of the present investigation and the first and second national public guardianship studies.^{433, 434} The two national studies offered five criteria upon which to base the effectiveness of public guardianship programs:

- Adequate staffing and funding;
- Safeguards for due process;
- Specified staff-to-client ratios;
- Office should not be dependent upon collection of fees for service; and
- Office should coordinate services, work as an advocate for the client, and educate professionals and the public regarding conservatorship.

Using these criteria as a baseline, we investigated the Riverside County OPG in order to discern the extent to which OPG assists its clients in securing access to their rights, benefits, and entitlements.⁴³⁵

Procedures

The examination included five steps: (1) conducting legal research of court cases involving OPG in the past five years; (2) developing and sending an in-depth survey to the Riverside OPG for completion; (3) conducting, recording, and transcribing Zoom interviews with key interviewees;

⁴³³ Windsor C. Schmidt et al., *Public Guardianship and the Elderly*. (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1981).

⁴³⁴ Teaster et al., *In the best interests*.

⁴³⁵ Teaster et al., *In the best interests*.

(4) performing an in-depth analysis of data collected; and (5) preparing and distributing a final report.

We interviewed 12 key actors from the following domains: (1) Riverside OPG staff, (2) attorneys contracting Riverside County, (3) APS staff, (4) aging network and elder justice professionals, (5) victim advocates, and (6) persons who were protected by the Riverside OPG.

Measures

We developed an in-depth survey⁴³⁶ for the Riverside OPG leadership to complete (the survey is presented in Appendix F). In addition, we created interview guides for each domain of persons interviewed. The questions built upon the in-depth survey questions and addressed topics including client referrals to the program, screening for least restrictive alternatives, sufficiency of program's client-staff ratio, relationship of OPG with the court, relationship with providers of care and services, internal and external accountability mechanisms, decision-making by program staff, and stakeholders' perceptions of the program. Interviews were pre-arranged and utilized a snowball method of interviewee identification.

Dissemination of the In-depth Survey

We sent the in-depth survey via e-mail to the administrator of the Riverside OPG and sent follow-up questions to clarify answers to the original survey questions.

Interview Transcription

We conducted all of the interviews. Interviews were transcribed using the NVivo transcription service. Transcripts were checked for accuracy by a third investigative party. Copies of the transcripts were sent to other members of our team for reading and coding as applicable.

Data Analysis

We each read and coded the transcribed interviews. We separately determined patterns and themes arising from the interviews and then were in contact two-four times weekly to discuss responses to survey questions and themes emerging from the content of the interviews. We conducted multiple readings of the interview transcripts; read running notes taken during each

⁴³⁶ We created an in-depth survey based on the original work we did for state and national studies we have conducted and tailored the questions for the Riverside County OPG. We emphasize that there was only one survey created and distributed and that we will use the term *survey* throughout this section of the report. The survey was intended for completion by only one respondent, the Riverside County OPG.

interview; and examined pertinent documents provided by the individual respondents. Multiple data sources allowed for triangulation of data.

The variety and depth of responses to our interview questions was the focus of our analysis, rather than *how many* interviewees expressed a particular belief or attitude. As is customary in qualitative studies, analysis of data occurred throughout the study.

Self-Sufficiency Programs

We examined benefits adequacy and service delivery effectiveness of the DPSS Self-Sufficiency programs broadly and especially for adults experiencing high instability such as is common for TAY in foster care and conserved adults. We gathered data through document review, interviews with County personnel, focus groups, surveys, consultation with subject matter experts, and review of program performance metrics.

Interviews and Focus Groups

Our interviews and focus groups can be grouped into the following categories:

- Current DPSS Self-Sufficiency program leadership;
- Regional Managers directly involved with coordination of services between CSD and CalWorks programs;
- Staff from two nonprofits that provide regular assistance to individuals applying for Riverside's Self-Sufficiency programs;
- Current and former management and leadership level personnel from other California counties with experience connecting at-risk populations with Self-Sufficiency programs and other related supports; and
- Questions related to Self-Sufficiency programs access and adequacy were also included in select focus groups and interviews with CSD, ASD, and OPG staff.

Interviews were semi-structured. Most interviews and focus groups were recorded via Zoom with verbal consent and transcribed for further analysis.

Survey

Questions related to availability and quality of food, housing, cash assistance, and employment supports were included in the survey that was distributed to CSD staff.

Data Analysis

We conducted independent analysis of publicly available data on a variety of CalFresh performance indicators from the California Department of Social Services' CalFresh Data

Dashboard⁴³⁷ and CF296 – CalFresh Monthly Caseload Movement Statistical Report,⁴³⁸ both accessed January 7, 2022. Riverside County provided internal reports on CalFresh and Medi-Cal denial reasons, churn rates, and VOIP phone call key performance indicators. Finally, the county provided access to a data dashboard with metrics related to CalFresh applications that come to the county through the GetCalFresh platform. The GetCalFresh data dashboard included open-ended comments that GetCalFresh applicants shared during their 25-day enrollment survey. We coded a random sample of 100 comments to identify themes.

To understand the adequacy of various benefits in the context of Riverside County's cost of living, we used data from the University of Washington's Self-Sufficiency Standard for California 2021 (<http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/california>).⁴³⁹

⁴³⁷ <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/data-portal/research-and-data/calfresh-data-dashboard>.

⁴³⁸ <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/research-and-data/calfresh-data-tables/cf296>.

⁴³⁹ Center for Women's Welfare, "Self Sufficiency Standard- California," School of Social Work at the University of Washington, Accessed June 6, 2022.