



# RESOLUTION No. 06-591

## OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF NEVADA

### RESOLUTION APPROVING THE NEVADA COUNTY SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2006) OF THE COUNTY'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM.

WHEREAS, in February 2001, the California Legislature enacted the "Child Welfare System and Accountability Act" (AB 636) to ensure that the critical needs of children and families in the child welfare system were met; and

WHEREAS, spurred by federal, state and local initiatives to improve outcomes for children and families, county-administered child welfare systems were required to conduct self-assessments and develop self improvement plans that matched new requirements for accountability for outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 04-513, adopted October 19, 2004, approved the first Self Assessment of the Child Welfare System and System Improvement Plan (SIP); and

WHEREAS, this is the second three-year cycle for the County's self assessment and System Improvement Plan (SIP); and

WHEREAS, Nevada County has received funding during fiscal year 2006/07, from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to continue to advance Child Welfare Service program reforms, and develop recommendations for the County's Child Welfare System Improvement Plan (SIP); and

WHEREAS, the County's Child Protective Services Department in conjunction with community partners developed Nevada County's Self Assessment of the Child Welfare System; and

WHEREAS, the process of conducting the self assessment involved detailed data analysis as well as surveys and gathering community input; and

WHEREAS, three major themes were identified to be of eminence: prevention, collaboration with community partners, especially Family Resource Centers and Behavioral Health, and a reduction of caseload size to support the social worker's ability to more effectively engage clients in case planning and reunification efforts; and

WHEREAS, this is in-line with the State's redesign recommendations of greater focus on prevention and early intervention strategies that reduce further involvement with the local child welfare system.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Nevada County Board of Supervisors approves the Nevada County System Improvement Plan (SIP) 2006 of the County's Child Welfare System.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Nevada at a regular meeting of said Board, held on the 12th day of December, 2006, by the following vote of said Board:

Ayes: Supervisors Nate Beason, Sue Horne, John Spencer, Robin Sutherland & Ted S. Owens.  
 Noes: None.

ATTEST:

Absent: None.

CATHY R. THOMPSON  
 Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Abstain: None.

By Cathy R. Thompson

Nathan H. Beason, Chair

THE FOREGOING INSTRUMENT IS A  
 CORRECT COPY OF THE ORIGINAL 06-591  
 ON FILE IN THIS OFFICE

ATTEST: December 13, 2006

CATHY R. THOMPSON  
 Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
 COUNTY OF NEVADA

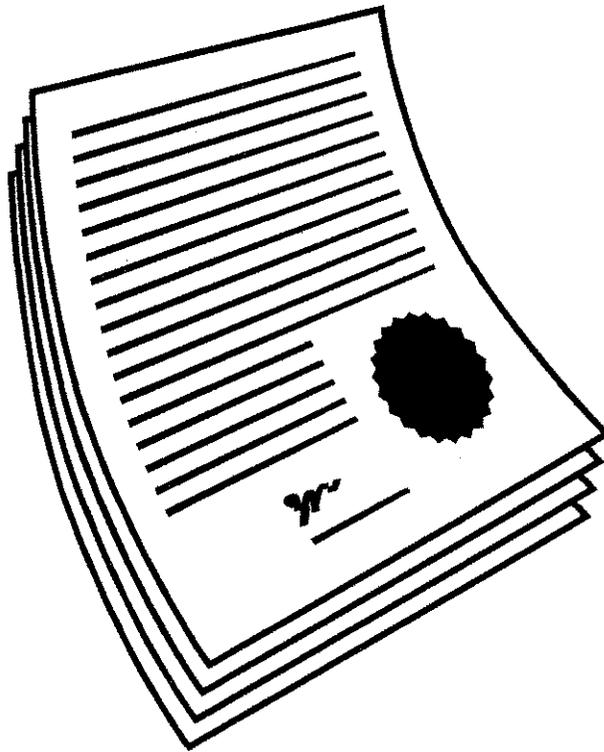
By J.P. Hunter Deputy

DATE	COPIES SENT TO
12/13/06	DSS
	A-C*

**California Child and Family Services Review**



# **Nevada County System Improvement Plan 2006**



SIP Cover Sheet

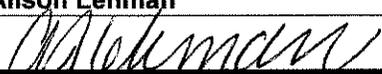
**California's Child and Family Services Review  
System Improvement Plan**

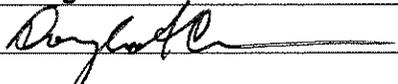
<b>County:</b>	<b>Nevada</b>
<b>Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:</b>	<b>Nevada County Child Welfare Services</b>
<b>Period of Plan:</b>	<b>2006-2008</b>
<b>Period of Outcomes Data:</b>	<b>Quarter ending June 30, 2003</b>
<b>Date Submitted:</b>	<b>December 15, 2006</b>

**County Contact Person for County System Improvement Plan**

<b>Name:</b>	Rachel Pena, MSW
<b>Title:</b>	Child Welfare Services Program Manager
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**Submitted by each agency for the children under its care**

<b>Submitted by:</b>	<b>Department of Social Services Director (Lead Agency)</b>
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Alison Lehman</b>
<b>Signature:</b>	

<b>Submitted by:</b>	<b>County Chief Probation Officer</b>
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Doug Carver</b>
<b>Signature:</b>	

1. In addition to the outcomes and systemic factors (and any items from the PQCR, if applicable) needing improvement, the County may address any additional areas for improvement at its option.
2. Counties will need to attach a list of individuals/groups that participated in the development of the SIP.
3. Counties will need to attach a copy of the agenda item or approved Board Action to the CDSS at the time of SIP submission.

## Nevada County System Improvement Plan

### I. SIP Narrative

#### Executive Summary:

Nevada County is a small, mostly rural county in the Sierra Nevada Foothills. Three urban centers account for about half of the county's 100,000 people. Challenges facing Nevada County include high housing costs and rising rates of methamphetamine production and use. Important strengths include collaborative capacity, dedicated and effective county leadership, and active community agencies. Research shows that focus areas of improvement within Nevada County Child Welfare Services (CWS) must address recurrence of maltreatment and children's re-entry into foster area.

Nevada County engaged various stakeholders including agencies, community members, local planning bodies, and County representatives, through surveys, interviews and meetings to facilitate quality perspective for the Nevada County Self Assessment 2006. The Self Assessment was completed prior to composing the System Improvement Plan and provides the research behind this plan. The System Improvement Plan (SIP) will directly address:

- Outcomes 1A and 1B: Recurrence of Maltreatment
- Outcome 2A and Systemic Factor B: Recurrence of maltreatment when children are not removed and increased family participation in case planning
- Outcomes 3F and 3G and Systemic Factor E: Reentry into foster care and Service Array

Strategies focused on improving performance on specific indicators will improve outcomes for other indicators as well. Important goals include: increasing access to mental health services and family support services, increasing services to older children, recruiting and retaining skilled social workers, increasing preventative strategies and services, and improving foster family recruitment and retention. These will be accomplished using strategies which include increased communication and collaboration with different agencies and county branches, rectifying staffing deficits and training needs within CPS, and researching, introducing, and implementing evidence-based tools and systems.

## 1. Local Planning Bodies

Nevada County engaged an array of diverse stakeholders in preparing the 2006 Self Assessment and correspondent System Improvement Plan. Input was garnered through questionnaires and meetings, targeted surveys and interviews, as well as ongoing work with local planning bodies. Inclusive involvement encompassed perspectives from consumers (parents), social workers, courts (judges), law enforcement, as well as a variety of private non-profit partners and county branches (Community Health, Behavioral Health).

### Nevada County Child Abuse Prevention Council and Family Preservation:

The Nevada County Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) is comprised of many non-profit organizations, County representatives (including CPS managers and Family Preservation team members), law enforcement, courts, and private citizens. Nevada County has two CAPCs, the Tahoe Truckee CAPC and the Western Nevada County CAPC. Nevada County CAPCs focus on public education campaigns, strengthening families, and leveraging funding through encouraging collaboration.

In 2003, Western Nevada County CAPC meetings united with Family Preservation Team meetings. Family Preservation is a collaborative consisting of entities receiving PSSF or CAPIT funding with the purpose of monitoring services provided and facilitating communication and effective collaboration.

### First 5 Nevada County:

First 5 Nevada County administers funds allocated to the county through the California Children and Families Act. Nevada County has a very active, prevention-oriented First 5 Commission. Currently Nevada County Director of Health and Human Service Agency (HHSA) is the vice chair and the Director of Department of Social Services (DSS) serves as a commissioner. Child Protective Services (CPS) is currently receiving funds from First 5 to provide Family Preservation services to Path 2 families. Nevada County First 5 also completed a comprehensive 2006 Needs Assessment, focused on the state of children 0-5 and their families. This information has been useful in preparation the Nevada County Self Assessment.

### Family Connections Collaborative:

The Family Connections collaborative was established in 2001 with First 5 funding to bring together service providers in an effort to provide more effective, coordinated prevention services. This group actively sponsors child- and family-focused events and education, and provides a forum for service providers to share information. Ad hoc committees are formed around certain issues, and the nascent Nevada County Drug Free Coalition is growing out of this collaboration.

### Children's System of Care (CSOC) Group:

An important group composed of higher level members of Nevada County Government, including Director of the Health and Human Services, Director of Probation, Juvenile Probation Program Manager, CWS Program Manager, Director of Behavioral Health, Director of the Department of Social Services meet on a regular basis to focus specifically on developing cohesive wraparound services. A primary focus is the expansion of Behavioral Health Services to include CWS and probation youth.

### Nevada County Drug Free Coalition:

Although the Drug Free Coalition is newly formed, becoming staffed in November 2006, it has played an important planning role in identifying and developing responsive strategies to the needs of youth and teens in Nevada County. Focus will remain on youth/teen substance use prevention, with prevention strategies focusing on youth engagement, recreation and participation opportunities and parent education.

## **2. Findings that Support Qualitative Change**

Data collection techniques employed to accomplish the Nevada County 2006 Self Assessment and corresponding System Improvement Plan include extensive county-specific data on outcome measures derived from the Child Welfare System Case Management System (CWS/CMS), community meetings, interviews, and surveys. Other data was collected through web research, as well as drawn from research performed by First 5 contractors for their 2006 Needs Assessment, which include phone and face-to-face interviews with parents and focus groups with different community sectors.

### CWS/CMS System:

Information from the CWS/CMS system is included in a variety of ways. Primarily, the UC Berkeley Child Welfare Research Center provided county specific data reports through their web based research project. Some information was also gleaned through program management reports provided on the CWS/ CMS computer system and through research into some specific cases. Further, Business Objects allowed for pulling reports from specific fields in the CWS/CMS system.

(Note: Nevada County began the use of SafeMeasures this October 2006, and it is anticipated that this will provide further data for future self assessment and improvement. )

### Surveys:

Surveys were used to gain information and evaluate priorities for service improvement and perspectives on systemic factors. Surveys were provided to the community at large through a mass mailing to an array of stakeholders, and a targeted campaign for social worker input was implemented. Eighteen responses were received from the community at large and 15 from social workers and CWS staff. This information has been integrated into the System Improvement Plan in the prioritization of increased family support services as well as improving agency collaborations (Systemic Factor G).

### Community Meeting:

A community meeting was held on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006 to engage key stakeholders in a discussion of systemic factors. Twenty-two people attended the meeting, representing a wide array of perspectives. Stakeholder input was also provided through Nevada County CWS staff's ongoing collaboration with many local planning bodies and engagement of key stakeholders in other ways, as well as the depth of representation at this meeting.

The November 15<sup>th</sup> gathering was key in eliciting important information and insight into Nevada County's strengths, challenges, and strategies for improvement. Salient themes included the need for increased family support, especially in the forms of in-home services (e.g. parenting, life skills, advocacy) and mental health resources. A lack of accessible, affordable mental health for children, parents, families, foster parents and families and guardians is continually identified as

an area for improvement. Strategies to meet identified challenges include the recruitment and retention of CPS social workers, increase preventive efforts with community organizations and increase family/youth input in case planning. Input from this group is incorporated directly in the self-assessment and reflected in the self-improvement plan components and strategies.

\*Attached is a list of 76 individuals who were included in information dissemination, mailings, invitations, focus groups, meetings, surveys, or otherwise involved in Self-Improvement Plan development.

### **3. Summary of the Self Assessment**

#### **A. Discussion of System Strengths and Areas Needing Improvements**

***Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.***

*System Improvement Plan:* This outcome must and will be included in the Self Improvement Plan. The need for Nevada County's children to be safe from abuse and neglect will drive the increase in prevention and in-home family support services, both within Child Welfare Services and with community agencies.

*Strengths:* In this outcome area strengths include: 1) reliable foster care placement resources, and positive social worker relations with foster families, 2) Nevada County has positive impacts on families newly entering the system, (due to low rates of reentry for first time entries) including services provided by community-based agencies and organizations, 3) Family Preservation Services, and 4) Differential Response Services.

*Needs:* Nevada County needs to improve our current rates of recurrence of maltreatment. This measure reflects the percent of children who were victims of child abuse/neglect with a subsequent substantiated report of abuse/neglect within specific time periods. It is both a state and federal outcome measure. Nevada County has a rate of 11.8%, compared to the State average of 8.4%.

Opportunities for amelioration include: 1) Development and/or expansion of mental health services for children, parents, and families, 2) Increased availability of family education and supportive in-home services, 3) Recruitment and retention of skilled social workers to allow for more frequent follow up visits and more family involvement in case planning.

***Outcome 2: Children are maintained safely in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.***

*System Improvement Plan: 2A*, Recurrence of maltreatment where children were not removed will be addressed in the SIP plan and will include strategies to increase family input in case planning, increase mental health services available to families, as well as support stable placements and effective parenting practices.

*Strengths:* Nevada County has very dedicated and quality social workers, and it is unusual that Nevada County does not meet timeframe obligations. The addition of SafeMeasures (October 2006) and an additional supervisor position are strengths that we expect will be reflected in subsequent reporting periods.

*Needs:* Nevada County did not meet the target for timely responses (10-day response compliance). Nevada County currently rates at 88.9% and has reported a target of 90% in the next reporting period. The County experienced high staff turnover due to the County's enhanced retirement this past reporting period, which may have contributed to not meeting the State target. It also recognized the need to increase CPS staffing levels. The County Board of Supervisors increased staff in CWS this past Fiscal Year by adding an additional Supervisor and .5 FTE Public Health Nurse. We project the increased staffing will support CWS' effort in meeting the target for timely response in the next reporting period. There will also be a renewed focus on the recruitment and retention of skilled workers as well as ongoing staff training. CWS will also increase staff training on how to effectively engage families in services. *(For rate of recurrence, many strategies employed in improving performance on indicators 1A and 1B (Recurrence of Maltreatment) apply to 2A as well.)*

***Outcome 3: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry to foster care.***

*System Improvement Plan:* This outcome will be included in the system improvement plan, along with Systemic Factor E, Service Array. Focal strategies will be increasing services to older youth (including independent living programs and transitional housing for youth) and increasing number and variety of placement options. Strategies addressed in 2A, including an increase in mental health services provision and increased family input into case planning will also positively affect this outcome. In addition, a move toward increased collaboration with community partners, including Probation and Behavioral Health, which is addressed in all SIP components, will help increase the service array and delivery of services in Nevada County.

*Strengths:* Nevada County does well in its foster care placements, where our children do not experience a high number of placement changes. Strengths include available community resources and strong CWS efforts toward timely reunification. We also work well with State Adoptions and Sierra Adoption Services on older youth adoptions, and these outcomes are very good. Recent implementation of Structured Decision Making (SDM) is seen as a strength and is expected to have a positive impact on this outcome measure.

*Needs:* Decrease the number of Nevada County's children re-entering and the duration of time in foster care. Increased sufficient family input into case planning, as well as insufficient support services to families (birth, foster, or guardian), specifically mental health services, can directly contribute to higher performance on these indicators. Substance abuse treatment needs and mandated timeframes create a serious dilemma for courts and CWS. We need to expand/increase 1) Family Support Services, 2) Mental Health Services, 3) Supports to Older Children (ILP and THP), and 4) Availability of placement options.

***Outcome 4: The family relationships and connections of the children served by the CWS will be preserved, as appropriate.***

*System Improvement Plan:* This outcome will not be included specifically in the System Improvement Plan. However, goals and strategies addressing 3F and 3G and Service Array,

which include foster family recruitment and retention, directly and positively affect this outcome as well.

*Strengths:* While Nevada County has a small pool of foster families, social workers know them well and are therefore knowledgeable about the options available.

*Needs:* Because the pool of foster families is small, it becomes difficult to keep siblings together, particularly if any of the siblings has special needs or behavior problems or is a teenager. These circumstances make foster placements harder to find for any child and may necessitate placing siblings apart in order to find home which meet their needs. As previously stated, there is a need for increased placement options. In-home therapeutic foster care services to maintain placements and support foster parents could help with this. Increased recruitment and retention of foster parents would also help. Solutions may include the development and deployment of recruitment strategies including increasing the pool of families, training, and ongoing support to quality families, including relatives.

***Outcome 8: Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.***

*System Improvement Plan:* Again, while this indicator is not specifically targeted in the SIP, strategies to address reentry into foster care and service array, specifically services to older youth, are intended and expected to impact this outcome.

*Strengths:* We have an excellent ILP program that is contracted through the school district which provides services to foster and probation youth. The ILP coordinator and support staff keep close contact with youths in and graduated from the ILP program. They are incredibly dedicated and committed and go above and beyond to provide support for the young adults with whom they work.

*Needs:* The ILP coordinator repeatedly highlights the need for transitional housing for foster youth ages 16 to 18 as well as affordable or transitional housing for children aging out of the foster care system.

Our foster youth are facing the same housing crisis that all lower-income residents of Nevada County face. They are unable to afford housing and are spending time living transiently with

various friends and family members. Many children become homeless, making it very difficult to maintain employment or succeed in school. We have recently submitted letters of intent to develop and implement both THP and THP plus programs to provide housing options for transition aged youth.

## **Summary Assessment of Systemic Factors**

### **A. Relevant Management Information Systems**

*System Improvement Plan:* This factor will not be addressed in the system improvement plan.

*Strengths:* Nevada County has supported the use of CWS/CMS and has worked to ensure that all staff is trained on the application. We continue to work with UCD for onsite training and have been rated well in overall knowledge and full utilization of the application.

*Needs:* One challenge with respect to the CWS/CMS system is the lack of internet access on State computers. We are in the process of working with the State to develop a concurrent county LAN access which will resolve this problem. DSS is also working with the IS Department to provide additional support on the State systems. Increased staff training on ad hocs has been identified as a focus as well. CWS sees great advantages for Probation to gain access to CWS/CMS. This would allow for information sharing on placement management and Health and Education Passports.

### **B. Case Review System**

*System Improvement Plan:* This will be included in the SIP, specifically related to improved parent and youth participation in case planning.

*Strengths:* Strengths include an excellent, solid relationship between CWS and the Court system; Nevada County's use of a Unified Family Court; and effective collaboration prior to court date, and lack of an adversarial juvenile court environment. Timely notification is now accomplished through one clerk having responsibility for this duty. Finally, Nevada County's Courts and CWS together are strategizing on how to better locate parents not present in child's life, such as a cooperative arrangement with Child Support Services or the DA.

*Needs:* Nevada County is working to improve one specific aspect of our case involvement: parent and youth input into case planning. The importance of family input/involvement must be communicated thoroughly to staff. Because soliciting this input and ensuring quality family involvement on case planning requires additional time for social workers, greater staffing is necessary to really positively impact this outcome. However, we believe that the use of the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment Tool through SDM will also support better outcomes. In addition, with stable supervision and management structure constantly reiterating the importance of parent involvement in case planning, and monitoring for this outcome, we expect to see this need filled. We have scheduled UCD training on Family Engagement, Strengths-Based Practice, and Case Planning this fiscal year.

### **C. Foster / Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention**

*System Improvement Plan:* This systemic factor will not be included specifically in the system improvement plan. However, addressing CFRS Outcome Indicators 3F and 3G and Service Array will address this systemic factor as well.

*Strengths:* Strengths are seen as the quality of the small pool of families that we do have, the positive relationships between these families and CWS, and relationships with other agencies (Nevada County Superintendent of Schools, Sierra Adoption Services) providing foster/adoptive services.

*Needs:* It is repeatedly identified throughout the self-assessment that Nevada County is in need of a greater pool of placement resources, especially fost-adopt families and particularly those wanting to adopt older children. Further, it is necessary to support foster parents in these ways: 1) Providing, perhaps requiring, increased training, especially on standard issues 2) Providing respite services 3) Providing mental health services to children and families.

### **D. Quality Assurance System**

*System Improvement Plan:* This systemic factor will not be addressed in the system improvement plan.

*Strengths:* Excellent, thorough oversight and a full management staff within CPS are strengths for quality assurance. The beginning of SafeMeasures in November 2006 is a strength for our quality assurance system.

*Needs:* Improving retention of social workers would positively impact this systemic factor.

## **E. Service Array**

*System Improvement Plan:* This systemic issue will be addressed in the system improvement plan, along with 3F and 3G, re-entry into foster care, specific to increasing supports for older youth, increasing mental health services, and providing services to foster families. Many outcomes demonstrate a need for these services. We need to be able to provide services quickly for as long as they are needed. Families need to be able to access parent support resources and mental health help prior to crisis and a child's removal from the home. Our Behavioral Health Department is working closely with CWS to development strategies.

*Strengths:* A wide array of programs, services, agencies, and collaboratives exist in Nevada County to support families with prevention, treatment, and advocacy. Collaboration continues to improve across the county.

*Needs:* Focus groups, interviews, and data report that Nevada County is in need of increased availability of mental health services for it's families, lower caseloads, recruitment and retention of staff, training, and in-home support services for families at risk of entering CPS or those already in the system. These support services must be available at all stages of CWS participation, including prior to a substantiated allegation, in a timely fashion, and for long term treatment. As mentioned elsewhere, ILP services for teens, especially transitional housing, as well as preventative recreational opportunities for all teens are needed.

CPS is exploring the implementation of a parent partner program designed to support families through the CWS process by pairing them with families who have successfully achieved reunification.

Within CWS, social workers will be trained on family engagement, and the need to involve families in decision making. With the increase percentage of Spanish speaking families interfacing with the Department, Nevada County recognizes the need to recruit bilingual CWS staff, employ more court interpreters, and provide more bilingual resources within the community.

## **F. Staff/Provider Training**

*System Improvement Plan:* Again, while this systemic factor will not be directly addressed in the System Improvement Plan, staff and provider training will be a component strategy for improving other outcomes (such as recurrence of maltreatment and reentry into foster care.)

*Strengths:* Our contractual relationship providing ongoing trainings from UC Davis is an important asset. Nevada County First 5 Commission and Nevada County Child Abuse Prevention Council also support an array of trainings for service providers and community members, including mandated reporter trainings, diversity education, poverty workshops, etc. Some training for foster families is provided by Sierra Adoption Services and Nevada County Superintendent of Schools.

*Needs:* Due to the newly implementation of Differential Response (DR) and Structured Decision Making (SDM), there is an identified need to offer training to social workers and Family Advocates providing differential response services on how to effectively engage parents in services and work with families through a strengths-based approach.

DR is a community based prevention and early intervention program. CWS is working with community agencies to provide a broader set of responses to suspected child abuse and neglect reports. Family Resource Centers engage families voluntarily to address issues of safety and risk, and improving access to community services.

SDM is risk assessment tool for the purposes of standardizing our risk assessments.

### **G. Agency Collaborations**

*System Improvement Plan:* This systemic issue will not be addressed in the Self Improvement Plan. With new leadership in the County and the community, we feel that this collaboration is taking place and will continue to flourish in the current climate. Differential Response, the active First 5 Commission, and the new collaboration with both Child Abuse Prevention Councils, the Coalition for a Drug-Free Nevada County, and all of the other collaboration projects mentioned here highlight the good work being done in this area already.

*Strengths:* Collaboration, historically somewhat challenging in Nevada County, has improved significantly over the past year. Effective collaboration is supported by new leadership in the Nevada County Health and Human Services, CWS, Behavioral Health, by a dedicated, family-oriented staff, and by an active First 5 Commission committed to prevention and outreach.

*Need:* A primary need to inform policy makers and key stakeholders on the outcomes of the programs on an ongoing basis.

*Strategy:* Create a public awareness campaign to educate the community, policy makers and key stakeholders on program outcomes on an ongoing basis. Another strategy is to share successes and more personal stories of children and families who have been served by the work the community and CWS has been doing together.

*There are a number of needs and strategies in this area:*

*Need:* Knowledge of and effective referral to available community services.

*Strategy:* Create a list of agencies within county and specific services provided. The County is working on a Web-based Directory at this time.

*Need:* Funding for diverse services.

*Strategy:* Utilize existing grant writing assistance to find diverse funding for CPS and community partners.

*Need:* While new county staff has provided collaboration opportunities, there is a lack of institutional knowledge which may be detrimental to efficient collaboration and service provision.

*Strategy:* Ensure proper training of new hires and familiarize them with history, policy, and available services in the county.

*Need:* Implement greater collaborative efforts on a prevention basis (e.g. with courts and CASAs) and to improve family preservation outcomes.

*Strategy:* Recruit and retain skilled social workers to support effective prevention efforts, as well as family involvement.

*Need:* Increase access to mental health services

*Strategy:* Collaborate with Prop 63 wraparound services and continue to work with the CSOC policy committee. Creatively support behavioral health to be able to offer services to children in the CWS system.

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Data collection techniques employed to accomplish the Nevada County 2006 Self Assessment and corresponding System Improvement Plan include extensive county-specific data on outcome measures derived from the Child Welfare System Case Management System (CWS/CMS), community meetings, interviews, and surveys. Other data was collected through web research, as well as drawn from research performed by First Five contractors for their 2006 Needs Assessment, which include phone and face-to-face interviews with parents and focus groups with different community sectors.

CWS/CMS System:

Information from the CWS/CMS system is included in a variety of ways. Primarily, the UC Berkeley Child Welfare Research Center provided county specific data reports through their web based research project. Some information was also gleaned through program management reports provided on the CWS/ CMS computer system and through research into some specific cases. Further, Business Objects allowed for pulling reports from specific fields in the CWS/CMS system.

(Note: Nevada County began the use of SafeMeasures this October 2006, and it is anticipated that this will provide further data for future self assessment and improvement. )

#### Surveys:

Surveys were used to gain information and evaluate priorities for service improvement and perspectives on systemic factors. Surveys were provided to the community at large through a mass mailing to an array of stakeholders, and a targeted campaign for social worker input was implemented. Eighteen responses were received from the community at large and 15 from social workers and CWS staff. This information has been integrated into the self-improvement plan in the prioritization of increased family support services as well as improving agency collaborations (Systemic Factor G).

#### Community Meeting:

A community meeting was held on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006 to engage key stakeholders in a discussion of systemic factors. Twenty-two people attended the meeting, representing a wide array of perspectives. Stakeholder input was also provided through Nevada County CWS staff's ongoing collaboration with many local planning bodies and engagement of key stakeholders in other ways, as well as the depth of representation at this meeting.

The November 15<sup>th</sup> gathering was key in eliciting important information and insight into Nevada County's strengths, challenges, and strategies for improvement. Salient themes included the need for increased family support, especially in the forms of in-home services (e.g. parenting, life skills, advocacy) and mental health resources. A lack of accessible, affordable mental health for children, parents, families, foster parents and families and guardians is continually identified as an area for improvement. Strategies to meet identified challenges include the recruitment and

retention of CPS social workers, increase preventive efforts with community organizations and increase family/youth input in case planning. Input from this group is incorporated directly in the self-assessment and reflected in the self-improvement plan components and strategies.

\*Attached is a list of 76 individuals who were included in information dissemination, mailings, invitations, focus groups, meetings, surveys, or otherwise involved in Self-Improvement Plan development.

### **3. Summary of the Self Assessment**

#### **A. Discussion of System Strengths and Areas Needing Improvements**

***Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.***

*System Improvement Plan:* This outcome must and will be included in the Self Improvement Plan. The need for Nevada County's children to be safe from abuse and neglect will drive the increase in prevention and in-home family support services, both within Child Welfare Services and with community agencies.

*Strengths:* In this outcome area strengths include: 1) reliable foster care placement resources, and positive social worker relations with foster families, 2) Nevada County has positive impacts on families newly entering the system, (due to low rates of reentry for first time entries) including services provided by community-based agencies and organizations, 3) Family Preservation Services, and 4) Differential Response Services.

*Needs:* Nevada County needs to improve our current rates of recurrence of maltreatment. This measure reflects the percent of children who were victims of child abuse/neglect with a subsequent substantiated report of abuse/neglect within specific time periods. It is both a state and federal outcome measure. Nevada County has a rate of 11.8%, compared to the State average of 8.4%.

Opportunities for amelioration include: 1) Development and/or expansion of mental health services for children, parents, and families, 2) Increased availability of family education and

supportive in-home services, 3) Recruitment and retention of skilled social workers to allow for more frequent follow up visits and more family involvement in case planning.

***Outcome 2: Children are maintained safely in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.***

*System Improvement Plan:* 2A, Recurrence of maltreatment where children were not removed will be addressed in the SIP plan and will include strategies to increase family input in case planning, increase mental health services available to families, as well as support stable placements and effective parenting practices.

*Strengths:* Nevada County has very dedicated and quality social workers, and it is unusual that Nevada County does not meet timeframe obligations. The addition of SafeMeasures (October 2006) and an additional supervisor position are additional strengths that we expect will be reflected in subsequent reporting periods.

*Needs:* Nevada County did not meet the target for timely responses (10-day response compliance). Nevada County currently rates at 88.9% and has reported a target of 90% in the next reporting period. The County experienced high staff turnover due to the County's enhanced retirement this past reporting period, which may have contributed to not meeting the State target. It was also recognized the needs to increase CPS staffing levels. The County Board of Supervisors increased staff in CPS this past Fiscal Year by adding an additional Supervisor and .5 FTE Public Health Nurse. We project the increased staffing will support CPS' effort in meeting the target for timely response in the next reporting period. There will also be a renewed focus on the recruitment and retention of skilled workers as well as ongoing staff training. CPS will also increase staff training on how to effectively engage families in services was also identified and is included in the SIP. (*For rate of recurrence, many strategies employed in improving performance on indicators 1A and 1B (Recurrence of Maltreatment) apply to 2A as well.*)

***Outcome 3: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry to foster care.***

*System Improvement Plan:* This outcome will be included in the system improvement plan, along with Systemic Factor E, Service Array. Focal strategies will be increasing services to older youth (including independent living programs and transitional housing for youth) and increasing number and variety of placement options. Strategies addressed in 2A, including increase in mental health services provision and increased family input into case planning will also positively affect this outcome. In addition, a move toward increased collaboration with community partners, including Probation and Behavioral Health, which is addressed in all SIP components, will help increase the service array and delivery of services in Nevada County.

*Strengths:* Nevada County does well in its foster care placements, where our children do not experience a high number of placement changes. Strengths include available community resources and strong CPS efforts toward timely reunification. We also work well with State Adoptions and Sierra Adoption Services on older youth adoptions, and these outcomes are very good. Recent implementation of Structured Decision Making (SDM) is seen as a strength and is expected to have a positive impact on this outcome measure.

*Needs:* Decrease the number of Nevada County's children re-entering and the duration of time in foster care. Increased sufficient family input into case planning, as well as insufficient support services to families (birth, foster, or guardian), specifically mental health services, can directly contribute to higher performance on these indicators. Substance abuse treatment needs and mandated timeframes create a serious dilemma for courts and CPS. We need to expand/increase 1) Family Support Services, 2) Mental Health Services, 3) Supports to Older Children (ILP and THP), and 4) Availability of placement options.

***Outcome 4: The family relationships and connections of the children served by the CWS will be preserved, as appropriate.***

*System Improvement Plan:* This outcome will not be included specifically in the System Improvement Plan. However, goals and strategies addressing 3F and 3G and Service Array, which include foster family recruitment and retention, directly and positively affect this outcome as well.

*Strengths:* While Nevada County has a small pool of foster families, social workers know them well and are therefore knowledgeable about the options available.

*Needs:* Because the pool of foster families is small, it becomes difficult to keep siblings together, particularly if any of the siblings has special needs or behavior problems or is a teenager. These circumstances make foster placements harder to find for any child and may necessitate placing siblings apart in order to find home which meet their needs. As previously stated, there is a need for increased placement options. In-home therapeutic foster care services to maintain placements and support foster parents could help with this. Increased recruitment and retention of foster parents would also help. Solutions may include the development and deployment of recruitment strategies including increasing the pool of families, training, and ongoing support to quality families, including relatives.

***Outcome 8: Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.***

*System Improvement Plan:* Again, while this indicator is not specifically targeted in the SIP, strategies to address reentry into foster care and service array, specifically services to older youth, are intended and expected to impact this outcome.

*Strengths:* We have an excellent ILP program that is contracted through the school district which provides services to foster and probation youth. The ILP coordinator and support staff keep close contact with youths in and graduated from the ILP program. They are incredibly dedicated and committed and go above and beyond to provide support for the young adults with whom they work.

*Needs:* The ILP coordinator repeatedly highlights the need for transitional housing for foster youth ages 16 to 18 as well as affordable or transitional housing for children aging out of the foster care system.

Our foster youth are facing the same housing crisis that all lower-income residents of Nevada County face. They are unable to afford housing and are spending time living transiently with various friends and family members. Many children become homeless, making it very difficult to maintain employment or succeed in school. We have recently submitted letters of intent to

develop and implement both THP and THP plus programs to provide housing options for transition aged youth.

## **Summary Assessment of Systemic Factors**

### **A. Relevant Management Information Systems**

*System Improvement Plan:* This factor will not be addressed in the system improvement plan.

*Strengths:* Nevada County has supported the use of CWS/CMS and has worked to ensure that all staff is trained on the application. We continue to work with UCD for onsite training and have been rated well in overall knowledge and full utilization of the application.

*Needs:* One challenge with respect to the CWS/CMS system is the lack of internet access on State computers. We are in the process of working with the State to develop a concurrent county LAN access which will resolve this problem. DSS is also working with the IS Department to provide additional support on the State systems. Increased staff training on ad hocs has been identified as a focus as well. CPS sees great advantages for Probation to gain access to CWS/CMS. This would allow for information sharing on placement management and Health and Education Passports.

### **B. Case Review System**

*System Improvement Plan:* This will be included in the SIP, specifically related to improved parent and youth participation in case planning.

*Strengths:* Strengths include an excellent, solid relationship between CWS and the Court system; Nevada County's use of a Unified Family Court; and effective collaboration prior to court date, and lack of an adversarial juvenile court environment. Timely notification is now accomplished through one clerk having responsibility for this duty. Finally, Nevada County's Courts and CWS together are strategizing on how to better locate parents not present in child's life, such as a cooperative arrangement with Child Support Services or the DA.

*Needs:* Nevada County is working to improve one specific aspect of our case involvement: parent and youth input into case planning. The importance of family input/involvement must be

communicated thoroughly to staff. Because soliciting this input and ensuring quality family involvement on case planning requires additional time for social workers, greater staffing is necessary to really positively impact this outcome. However, we believe that the use of the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment Tool through SDM will also support better outcomes. In addition, with stable supervision and management structure constantly reiterating the importance of parent involvement in case planning, and monitoring for this outcome, we expect to see this need filled. We have scheduled UCD training on Family Engagement, Strengths-Based Practice, and Case Planning this fiscal year.

### **C. Foster / Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention**

*System Improvement Plan:* This systemic factor will not be included specifically in the system improvement plan. However, addressing CFRS Outcome Indicators 3F and 3G and Service Array will address this systemic factor as well.

*Strengths:* Strengths are seen as the quality of the small pool of families that we do have, the positive relationships between these families and CWS, and relationships with other agencies (Nevada County Superintendent of Schools, Sierra Adoption Services) providing foster/adoptive services.

*Needs:* It is repeatedly identified throughout the self-assessment that Nevada County is in need of a greater pool of placement resources, especially fost-adopt families and particularly those wanting to adopt older children. Further, it is necessary to support foster parents in these ways: 1) Providing, perhaps requiring, increased training, especially on standard issues 2) Providing respite services 3) Providing mental health services to children and families.

### **D. Quality Assurance System**

*System Improvement Plan:* This systemic factor will not be addressed in the system improvement plan.

*Strengths:* Excellent, thorough oversight and a full management staff within CPS are strengths for quality assurance. The beginning of SafeMeasures in November 2006 is a strength for our quality assurance system.

*Needs:* Improving retention of social workers would positively impact this systemic factor.

## **E. Service Array**

*System Improvement Plan:* This systemic issue will be addressed in the system improvement plan, along with 3F and 3G, re-entry into foster care, specific to increasing supports for older youth, increasing mental health services, and providing services to foster families. Many outcomes demonstrate a need for these services. We need to be able to provide services quickly for as long as they are needed. Families need to be able to access parent support resources and mental health help prior to crisis and a child's removal from the home. Our Behavioral Health Department is working closely with CPS to development strategies.

*Strengths:* A wide array of programs, services, agencies, and collaboratives exist in Nevada County to support families with prevention, treatment, and advocacy. Collaboration continues to improve across the county.

*Needs:* Focus groups, interviews, and data report that Nevada County is in the need of increased availability of mental health services for it's families, lower caseloads, recruitment and retention of staff, training, and in-home support services for families at risk of entering CPS or those already in the system. These support services must be available at all stages of CWS participation, including prior to a substantiated allegation, in a timely fashion, and for long term treatment. As mentioned elsewhere, ILP services for teens, especially transitional housing, as well as preventative recreational opportunities for all teens are needed.

CPS is exploring the implementation of a parent partner program designed to support families through the CPS process by pairing them with families who have successfully achieved reunification.

Within CPS, social workers will be trained on family engagement, and the need to involve families in decision making. With the increase percentage of Spanish speaking families interfacing with the Department, Nevada County recognizes the need to recruit bilingual CPS staff, employ more court interpreters, and provide more bilingual resources within the community.

## **F. Staff/Provider Training**

*System Improvement Plan:* Again, while this systemic factor will not be directly addressed in the System Improvement Plan, staff and provider training will be a component strategy for improving other outcomes (such as recurrence of maltreatment and reentry into foster care.)

*Strengths:* Our contractual relationship providing ongoing trainings from UC Davis is an important asset. Nevada County First 5 Commission and Nevada County Child Abuse Prevention Council also support an array of trainings for service providers and community members, including mandated reporter trainings, diversity education, poverty workshops, etc. Some training for foster families is provided by Sierra Adoption Services and Nevada County Superintendent of Schools.

*Needs:* Due to the newly implementation of Differential Response (DR) and Structured Decision Making (SDM), there is an identified need to offer training to social workers and Family Advocates providing differential response services on how to effectively engage parents in services and work with families through a strengths-based approach.

DR is a community based prevention and early intervention program. CWS is working with community agencies to provide a broader set of responses to suspected child abuse and neglect reports. Family Resource Centers engage families voluntarily to address issues of safety and risk, and improving access to community services.

SDM is risk assessment tool for the purposes of standardizing our risk assessments.

### **G. Agency Collaborations**

*System Improvement Plan:* This systemic issue will not be addressed in the Self Improvement Plan. With new leadership in the County and the community, we feel that this collaboration is taking place and will continue to flourish in the current climate. Differential Response, the active First 5 Commission, and the new collaboration with both Child Abuse Prevention Councils, the Coalition for a Drug-Free Nevada County, and all of the other collaboration projects mentioned here highlight the good work being done in this area already.

*Strengths:* Collaboration, historically somewhat challenging in Nevada County, has improved significantly over the past year. Effective collaboration is supported by new leadership in the Nevada County Health and Human Services, CPS, Behavioral Health, by a dedicated, family-oriented staff, and by an active First 5 Commission committed to prevention.

*Need:* A primary need to inform policy makers and key stakeholders on the outcomes of the programs on an ongoing basis.

*Strategy:* Create a public awareness campaign to educate the community, policy makers and key stakeholders on program outcomes on an ongoing basis. Another strategy is to share successes and more personal stories of children and families who have been served by the work the community and CWS has been doing together.

*There are a number of needs and strategies in this area:*

*Need:* Knowledge of and effective referral to available community services.

*Strategy:* Create a list of agencies within county and specific services provided. The County is working on a Web-based Directory at this time.

*Need:* Funding for diverse services.

*Strategy:* Utilize existing grant writing assistance to find diverse funding for CPS and community partners.



<p><b>Strategy 1.2</b> Monitor Differential Response pilot program for families likely to re-enter child welfare system within 12 months.</p>	<p><b>Strategy Rationale</b> A grant-funded pilot program will provide evidence of successful practices that can be expanded and continued.</p>	
<p><b>Milestone</b> 1.2.1. Analyze reports from Differential Response pilot program and provide results to Differential Response multi-disciplinary team for review of effectiveness of program</p>	<p><b>Timeframe</b> January, 2007</p>	<p><b>Assigned to</b> Program manager Supervisors Community partners</p>
<p><b>Notes:</b></p>		

<b>Improvement Goal 2.0</b> Increase community access to information regarding recurrence of maltreatment		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Community partners who provide prevention services to children and families are crucial partners in reducing the recurrence of maltreatment. Dissemination of information and increasing understanding on the part of these organizations is an important part of affecting this outcome.	
<b>Strategy 2.1</b> Provide updated outcome and accountability data reports quarterly to multi-disciplinary prevention teams.		March 2007	Program manager Supervisors
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>2.1.1</b> Provide updated reports to SMART at each meeting that falls immediately after data update.	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>
	<b>2.1.2</b> Provide updated reports to Differential Response multi-disciplinary team at monthly meeting.	March 2007	Program manager Supervisors
<b>Strategy 2.2</b> Discuss data with key stakeholders. Incorporate findings from 1.0		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Facilitating agreement and understanding among stakeholders about priorities for response to maltreatment trends will positively affect recurrence of maltreatment.	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>2.2.1</b> Agendize time in meetings with Differential Response Team and SMART team to discuss data from quarterly reports, sharing and incorporating findings from 1.0 (nature of abuse).	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>
		Beginning January 2007	Program manager (with reports from supervisors re: recurrence of abuse)

<b>Improvement Goal 3.0</b> Increase services in key areas in order to provide more family support services and be more available to families.			
<b>Strategy 3.1</b> Increase Family Preservation services through a temp and/or contract with Marriage and Family Therapist.		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Families will benefit from access to mental health services, a need continually identified by CWS stakeholders.	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>3.1.1</b> Contract and/or recruit and hire MFTI	<b>Timeframe</b> March 2007	<b>Assigned to</b> Program manager
	<b>3.1.2</b> Orient MFTI to begin visits with Path 2 and other FP referrals.	June 2007	Program Supervisors Family Preservation Team
<b>Strategy 3.2</b> Recruit and retain skilled social workers		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Being fully staffed will provide opportunity for increased family support visits and increased family and youth input into case planning, two components of reducing recurrence of abuse and neglect.	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>3.2.1</b> Create budget objective related to retain quality staff	<b>Timeframe</b> July 2007	<b>Assigned to</b> Program Managers
	<b>3.2.2</b> Increase contracts for services to community based organizations	July 2007	Program Manager
<b>Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.</b> Nevada County has experienced high turn over in staff due to the enhanced retirement. In July of 06 Nevada County had 200 vacancies county-wide. DSS was greatly impacted and lost experienced workers.			
<b>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.</b> Child Welfare System staff needs to be trained on Differential Response pilot program and Family Preservation roles and resources, including what services can be provided and types of appropriate referrals.			
<b>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.</b> Community organizations providing service to children and families are critical to the goal of reducing the occurrence and recurrence of abuse and neglect. An important role will be played by family resource centers as they link families to an array of available services. Through this process, it is hoped that Nevada County can quickly connect families with services they need as well as identify gaps in services.			
<b>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.</b> None identified at this time. Nevada County CWS has already worked with County Counsel to resolve confidentiality issues.			

<p><b>Outcome/Systemic Factor:</b>  Safety Factor 2A: Recurrence of Abuse/Neglect in homes where children were not removed and Systemic Factor B—Case Review and Planning, parent and youth participation in case planning</p>			
<p><b>County's Current Performance:</b>  Nevada County's current performance does not meet the target, with 9.4% recurrence of abuse or neglect in homes where children were not removed. Nevada County's rate is higher than state average, although the county fluctuates above and below the target in different reporting periods. Rates are generally equal across ethnic and gender lines, and high rates are probably attributable to high social worker caseload and lack of available support services, specifically mental health. Stakeholder input suggests that Nevada County does not adequately include parents and youth in case planning.</p>			
<p><b>Improvement Goal 1.0</b>  Increase family participation in case planning.</p>			
<p><b>Strategy 1.1</b>  Ensure that CWS workers utilize a family-centered approach and engage with parent partners when possible.</p>			
<p><b>Strategy Rationale</b>  Increasing CWS workers knowledge of, and reinforcing practice of family-centered approaches will support facilitation of family input.</p>			
<p><b>Milestone</b></p>	<p>1.1.1  Fully implement SDM family strengths and needs assessment tool</p>	<p>March 2007</p>	<p>UCD and CWS training coordinator (mandatory attendance for CWS staff)</p>
	<p>1.1.2  Train CWS staff (mandatory) and DR partners (optional) on family engagement strategies and strengths-based practice through UC Davis training</p>	<p>June 30, 2007  (intended annual training)</p>	<p>UCD and CWS staff</p>
	<p>1.1.3  Explore grant or allocation funding for Parent Partner Program Coordinator to recruit and train parent mentors, and create program protocols.</p>	<p>January 2007</p>	<p>Program Manager</p>
<p><b>Strategy 1.2</b>  Analyze practicality of bringing Team Decision Making (TDM) evidenced-based practice to Nevada County.</p>		<p><b>Strategy Rationale</b>  Team Decision Making is an evidence-based practice which improves outcomes for children and families. Consistence use of TDM in all new detentions or possible detentions increases family involvement.</p>	

Milestone		Timeframe		Assigned to
1.2.1. Research Evidence-Based Clearing House on information regarding Team Decision Making.		July 2007		Supervisors Community partners
1.2.2 Set up a review committee to analyze whether or not TDM is appropriate for Nevada County.		August 2008		Program manager Supervisors Court Services Worker
1.2.3 Produce brief written analysis regarding strengths and barriers of implementing TDM in Nevada County. If determined a "good fit", begin development of implementation plan.		January 2008		Program manager Review Committee partners
<b>Strategy 2. 3 (Same as Strategy 2.2 for Outcome 1 above)</b> Focus on the recruitment and retention of skilled social workers. See milestones and timeframes above.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Increased social worker hours will provide opportunity for increased family support visits and increased family and youth input into case planning, two components of reducing recurrence of abuse and neglect.	

<b>Improvement Goal 2.0</b> Increase availability of mental health support services to families		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Children's System of Care (CSOC) committee meets with the specific goal of creating wraparound services to all at-risk families, CWS families, and foster/guardian families. As mental health is a primary need, a practical system of wraparound services for Nevada County will include appropriate mental health services which will reduce recurrence of maltreatment. Nevada County Behavioral Health is the logical provider for these services, and opportunities must be identified to increase provision capacity.	
<b>Strategy 2.1</b> Foster functional, supportive relationship with Nevada County Behavioral Health Department.		Beginning January 2007	
<b>Milestone</b>		<b>Assigned to</b>	
2.1.1 Jointly participate in Children System of Care meetings.		Program Manager (meets with Director of Department of Social Services, Director of Health and Human Services; Director, Behavioral Health; Director, Probation; Juvenile Probation Program Manager; Juvenile Court Judge)	CWS Supervisors
2.1.2 Joint participation in SMART team			CWS Supervisors
2.1.3 Joint participation in placement committee			CWS Supervisors
<b>Strategy 2.2</b> Advocate for evidence-based practices that support placement stability and effective parenting		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Introducing and consequently implementing functional evidence-based practices will foster understanding by key stakeholders and improve specific performance in these areas by providing quality support services to children and families.	
<b>Milestone</b>		<b>Assigned to</b>	
2.2.1 Introduce concept of PCIT-type model for parent training and visitation and research possible effectiveness for Nevada County			Program manager

<p><b>2.2.2</b> Introduce concept of Therapeutic Foster Care model to group and research possible effectiveness for Nevada County</p>	<p>March 2007</p>	<p>Program manager</p>
<p><b>Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.</b> Work with the new leadership of Behavioral Health and other branches of county to achieve goal 2.0. This will be achieved through specific measures (i.e. concrete collaborative efforts) as well as dedication by CWS and Behavioral Health.</p> <p><b>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.</b> As outlined specifically above, goal 2.0 requires training CWS staff on family engagement strategies and strengths-based practices.</p> <p><b>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.</b> The roles of Health and Human Services Agency Director, Behavioral Health Director, and Department of Social Services Director are critical to achieving increased capacity for Behavioral Health. These roles will be to support the development and maintenance of functional collaborative relationships and strategically and creatively assess opportunities for Behavioral Health to increase service delivery.</p> <p><b>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.</b> None identified at this time.</p>		