

SIP Cover Sheet

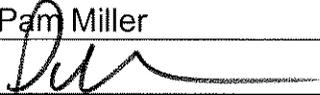
**California's Child and Family Services Review
System Improvement Plan**

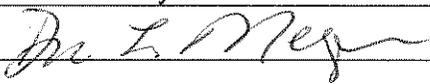
County:	Yolo
Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:	Yolo County Department of Employment and Social Services, Child Welfare Services
Period of Plan:	2008-2010
Period of Outcomes Data:	Quarter ending January 31, 2008
Date Submitted:	March 6, 2008

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Submitted by each agency for the children under its care

Submitted by:	County Child Welfare Agency Director (Lead Agency)
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Signature:	

Submitted by:	County Chief Probation Officer
Name:	Don L. Meyer
Signature:	

**YOLO COUNTY
SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN
(SIP)**

**California Child and Family Services Review
(C-CFSR)**

I. SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN NARRATIVE

A. Local Planning Bodies

Throughout the last three years we have worked closely with our staff and our local community partners in the first round of the California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR) process. This culminated with our Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) which was held in March 2007. In July 2007 we began the C-CFSR cycle again with our second Self-Assessment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The County of Yolo, Department of Employment and Social Services, would like to thank all of the Self-Assessment Team members listed below for their hard work, commitment and contributions to this effort. This report would not have been possible without their expertise and dedication. The following is a list of those local stakeholders who participated during the course of the self-assessment meetings and development of our System Improvement Plan (SIP).

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEAM

- | | |
|--|---|
| • County Mental Health Department | Patricia Osuna, Clinic Supervisor |
| • County Probation Department | Marjorie Rist, Juvenile Probation Manager
Brenda Gage, Juvenile Placement Supervisor |
| • Department of Employment and Social Services, Child Welfare Services | Michele Haddock, Assistant Director
Kimberly Byrd, Division Manager
Alissa Wilfrid, Supervisor
Kathleen Sutton, Supervisor |
| • Department of Employment and Social Services, Quality Improvement | Diana Williams, Chief Deputy Director
Tonia Burns, Division Manager |
| • County Office of Education | Jessica Larsen, Foster Youth Services Advocate
Lori Perez, Foster Youth Outreach Specialist |
| • County Health Department | Judy Lehman, Public Health Nurse |

Timely Response

Permanency and Stability:

Reunification Within 12 Months
Reentry Following Reunification

Systemic Factor:

Quality Assurance System

C. Self-Assessment Summary

Attachment A, Yolo County Self-Assessment Summary

II. SIP PLAN COMPONENTS

Following the Self-Assessment, input from local planning bodies and the PQCR, five California Child and Family Services Review outcome measures were selected for inclusion in Yolo County's System Improvement Plan:

- S1.1 No Recurrence of Maltreatment
- 2B Timely Response
- C1.1 Reunification Within 12 Months
- C1.4 Reentry Following Reunification
- Quality Assurance System as a Systemic Factor

Yolo County's past and present performance on each of these outcome indicators, improvement goals, strategies, rationales, and milestones are outlined in the attached System Improvement Plan. Systemic factors, education and training needs, technical assistance needs, the roles of other partners, and regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals are described as well.

Outcome/Systemic Factor: S1.1 No Recurrence of Maltreatment

County's Current Performance:

Yolo County's performance on this measure for the baseline measurement period (07/01/2002 – 06/30/2003) was 91.3%. We had a high level of performance in the quarter ending December 2006 with performance at 92.6%, and our current performance for the quarter ending January 2008 is 88.3%. The national standard/goal for this outcome measure is 94.6%.

Improvement Goal 1.0

Improve Recurrence of Maltreatment outcome data.

Strategy 1. 1

Ensure that all staff utilize Structured Decision Making (SDM) beginning at point of referral and continuing throughout all service components to case closure.

Strategy Rationale

SDM is an evidence-based assessment tool used by all social workers. It provides reliability and consistency in evaluating child risk and safety decisions. A process to assess social worker utilization of the SDM tools will help ensure that social workers appropriately utilize SDM tools in an effort to reduce recurrence of maltreatment.

Milestone		Timeframe		Assigned to	
1.1.1	Monitor individual and unit SDM usage and compliance via SafeMeasures.		June 2008 and ongoing		CWS Manager and Supervisors
1.1.2	Develop a policy and procedure for routine monitoring of compliance with SDM usage.		January 2009		CWS Supervisors and Analyst
1.1.3	Ensure all staff receive initial and ongoing SDM training.		July 2009		Staff Development

Improvement Goal 2.0

Increase use of available resources and enhance current services to prevent subsequent referrals.

Strategy 2.1

Continue to use Differential Response (DR) Path 1 referrals.

Strategy Rationale

By utilizing community-based early intervention through Differential Response, families are less likely to be re-referred to Child Welfare Services. Incorporating DR referrals into daily practice will result in stronger internal prevention practices and philosophy and will assist families in identifying potential resources.

Milestone	2.1.1 Continue to work with CalWORKs managers and supervisors to assess how more effectively to refer families to DR.	Timeframe	January 2009	Assigned to	CWS and CalWORKs Managers, Supervisors and Analysts
	2.1.2 Work with CWS ER Supervisor to maximize referrals to DR.		September 2008		CWS Manager, ER Supervisor and Analyst
	2.1.3 Work with CalWORKs Supervisors to fully maximize available services.		January 2009		CWS Supervisors, Analyst and CalWORKs Supervisors
Strategy 2.2 Continue to use Differential Response (DR) Path 2 referrals.			Strategy Rationale By utilizing community-based early intervention through Differential Response, families are less likely to be re-referred to Child Welfare Services. Incorporating DR referrals into daily practice will result in stronger internal prevention practices and philosophy and will assist families in identifying potential resources.		
Milestone	2.2.1 Modify existing tracking tool for Path 2 referrals to ensure sufficient data is captured and data extraction is maximized.	Timeframe	September 2008	Assigned to	CWS ER Supervisor and Analyst
	2.2.2 Review policies and procedures for DR Path 2 and Voluntary Family Maintenance, and develop guidelines for assessing cases for referral to these two programs.		January 2009		CWS ER and FM Supervisors and Analyst
	2.2.3 Continue to meet monthly with DR provider for case review, data collection and coordination for purposes of information sharing and problem solving.		Ongoing		CWS ER Supervisor and DR provider
Strategy 2.3 Develop coordinated case review processes with service providers and ensure staff is aware of available services for children and families.			Strategy Rationale Increased interaction between staff and service providers will promote communication regarding barriers that families may be having and availability of services.		

Milestone	2.3.1 Develop coordinated case review process with service providers.	Timeframe	July 2009	Assigned to	CWS Division Manager and Supervisors
	2.3.2 Update chart titled SERVICE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO CWS CLIENTS each fiscal year and as service options are added.		September 2008		CWS Analyst
Strategy 2.4 Develop mechanisms for supporting Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM) as well as other prevention services for families and children with a substantiated referral.			Strategy Rationale Findings suggest that the recurrence rate is highly impacted by the availability of VFM services. Increased VFM services should help decrease recurrence.		
Milestone	2.4.1 Identify opportunities for and barriers to services for families who could benefit from voluntary services.	Timeframe	January 2009	Assigned to	CWS and Probation Managers
	2.4.2 Explore fiscal strategies to enhance service array.		July 2009		CWS and Probation Managers
	2.4.3 Research sustainability and enhancement strategies employed by other counties and draft recommendations.		July 2009		CWS and Probation Managers
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Array: Our PQCR and Self-Assessment processes identified lack of communication between staff and service providers. Increasing coordinated case reviews and case staffing will enhance and improve lines of communication. • Quality Assurance: A case review system specific to outcome indicators needs to be developed. • Fiscal Issues: Anticipated state budget cuts will detrimentally affect services to children and families. 					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During our PQCR process, staff identified an ongoing need for SDM training specific to their service component, as well as training in the ER portion of SDM for staff that provide standby/call back duties. • Strategies for family engagement. • Need clear guidelines and education around confidentiality issues across programs and agencies. 					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.					
Incorporate community partners in prevention strategies for children and families. Increase communication among county agencies and community partners to improve services and address partnership issues as they emerge.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.					
Resolution of issues surrounding confidentiality will encourage more joint case planning with community and interagency partners.					

Outcome/Systemic Factor: 2B – Timely Response					
County's Current Performance: Yolo County's current performance in this category is 86.4% compliance rate in the category of "Immediate Response" and 73.9% in the "10 Day Response" category for Quarter 2 of 2007. This is significantly lower than our baseline data for the period 04/01/2003 – 06/30/2003, which was at 95% in the category of "Immediate Response" and 86.2% in the category of "10 Day Response".					
Improvement Goal 1.0 Improve referral response time in both immediate and 10 day response measures.					
Strategy 1. 1 Improve accuracy of CWS/CMS data entry.			Strategy Rationale Analysis revealed data entry significantly impacts this performance measure. Specifically, inaccuracy in counting days and recording contacts/attempted contacts in CWS/CMS significantly impacted our performance on this measure. Improvement in the accuracy and timeliness of data entry will increase the overall compliance rate.		
Milestone	1.1.1 Continue to develop and implement policies and procedures for CWS data entry.	Timeframe	June 2009	Assigned to	CWS Analyst and Supervisors
	1.1.2 Continue to train staff on CWS/CMS data entry issues.		September 2008		CWS Supervisors
	1.1.3 Continue to identify and monitor areas of non-compliance.		September 2008		CWS Supervisors
Strategy 1. 2 Continue to assess Immediate and 10-Day Response processes.			Strategy Rationale Development of more efficient and consistent internal process will maximize available response time.		
Milestone	1.2.1. Continue to identify points of delay.	Timeframe	September 2008	Assigned to	CWS Supervisors
	1.2.2 Continue to utilize SafeMeasures to track compliance.		September 2008		CWS Supervisors
	1.2.3 Continue to assess current staffing patterns to ensure timely response compliance.		September 2008		CWS Division Manager and Supervisors

Improvement Goal 2.0 Develop a comprehensive quality improvement/assurance process to track program and regulation compliance.					
Strategy 2.1 Continue to develop and improve quality improvement/assurance practices.			Strategy Rationale Improving quality assurance by ensuring uniform adherence to standards and practices will result in services that meet performance requirements.		
Milestone	2.1.1 Develop policies and procedures for routine monitoring of response activity by Supervisors and Managers.	Timeframe	September 2009	Assigned to	CWS Analyst and Supervisors and Quality Improvement Division
	2.1.2 Ensure utilization of monitoring system.		September 2009		Quality Improvement Division Analyst
	2.1.3 Identify and monitor areas of non-compliance.		September 2009		Quality Improvement Division Analyst
	2.1.4 Develop standardized data reports to make outcome data available to and easily readable by staff.		June 2008		Quality Improvement Division Analyst
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. Develop and implement a comprehensive quality improvement/assurance process to track program and regulation compliance.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. All staff who performs the Emergency Response (ER) function will receive comprehensive training on compliance issues. In the past, outcome measures were counted differently in computing compliance dates. All staff needs training on this compliance factor and training on the SafeMeasure tool that can assist with tracking compliance deadlines. Additionally, staff that performs standby/call back duties will receive comprehensive training on the ER process, CWS/CMS data entry requirements and compliance deadlines. Lastly, all staff that performs the ER process will receive refresher training on compliance deadlines and CWS/CMS data entry requirements and accuracy, both initially and on an ongoing basis.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. CWS Division and Quality Improvement Division at DESS will work together to develop a comprehensive quality improvement/assurance process to track program and regulation compliance.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. Resolution of issues surrounding confidentiality will encourage more joint case planning with community and interagency partners.					

Outcome/Systemic Factor: C1.1 – Reunification With 12 Months (Exit Cohort)					
County's Current Performance: Our current performance in this outcome measure for the period of 07/01/2006 – 06/30/2007 is 52.8%. Our baseline (07/01/2002 – 06/30/2003) performance was 54.9%. Following this, our performance went up to a high of 67.7% then fell to 49.0% over the next one-and-one-half years. Our performance has since remained relatively consistent, falling between the high 40's to the mid-50% range. The national standard/goal for this outcome measure is 75.2%.					
Improvement Goal 1.0 Improve County performance in the length of time it takes for children to exit foster care and reunify, and increase the percent of children who reunify in less than 12 months.					
Strategy 1. 1 Ensure that all staff utilizes Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools throughout all service components to case closure.				Strategy Rationale A key purpose of best and evidenced-based practice is to ensure that children are consistently protected from harm while removing as much subjective bias as possible from the decision making process.	
Milestone	1.1.1 Monitor individual and unit SDM usage and compliance via SafeMeasures.	Timeframe	June 2008 and ongoing	Assigned to	CWS Manager and Supervisors
	1.1.2 Develop a policy and procedure for routine monitoring of compliance with SDM usage.		January 2009		CWS Supervisors and Analyst
	1.1.3 Ensure all staff receives initial and ongoing SDM training.		July 2009		CWS Supervisors and Analyst
Strategy 1. 2 Child Welfare Services and collaborative efforts are matched to the needs and strengths of children, families, kin and communities.				Strategy Rationale Direct services provided by contracted collaborative partners must be designed to ensure that services and supports for families meet their needs and address child safety/risk factors in order to promote child well-being and improved outcomes.	
Milestone	1.2.1. Regular assessment and evaluation of contracted services (client satisfaction, numerical and outcome objectives, use of best practices) to capture service utilization and effectiveness.	Timeframe	July 2009 and ongoing	Assigned to	CWS Analyst
Improvement Goal 2.0 Ensure that Child Welfare Staff actively involve families, a family's natural support system, and agency and community partners in case planning.					

Strategy 2.1 The Wraparound program was implemented in January 2008 with training scheduled for February and first clients to be referred to the program in March 2008.		Strategy Rationale By developing expanded family based services, children can safely be returned to and maintained in their homes with the provision of ongoing services to preserve and enhance family functions, thereby reducing the number of children re-entering foster care.			
Milestone	2.1.1 Develop policy and procedure for Wraparound Services for CWS and Foster Care staff.	Timeframe	February 2008	Assigned to	Quality Improvement Analyst
	2.1.2 Work with partner agencies (ADMH and Probation) and FamiliesFirst to ensure fidelity to the Wraparound standards and to monitor implementation and development of the program.		July 2008		CWS Division Manager, Supervisors and CWS Analyst
Strategy 2.2 Enhance coordination with the Linkages program to support and stabilize families who are reunifying.		Strategy Rationale Establishing stronger Linkages with CalWORKs services will assist clients, as they reunify, to access the services and supports they need to be successful.			
Milestone	2.2.1 Work with CalWORKs and CWS Managers, Supervisors and staff to develop a teamwork approach to enable this program to be more successful.	Timeframe	Ongoing	Assigned to	Linkages Team
Strategy 2.3 Review and revise visitation practices and protocols to increase the number of parents visiting, and provide parents and caregivers with hands-on training and support.		Strategy Rationale During our self-assessment process, flexible visitation was identified as a barrier to successful reunification. Research demonstrates that parents who visit reunify. By establishing flexible visitation practices in a teaching modality which includes not only the parents but the children and caretakers, parents will be better able to parent successfully upon reunification.			
Milestone	2.3.1 Identify best practice models that can be implemented in Yolo County.	Timeframe	September 2009	Assigned to	CWS Analyst
	2.3.2 Review existing protocols on visitation prior to reunification and revise as necessary to encourage supportive, progressive visitation prior to reunification, when appropriate.		Ongoing		CWS Supervisors

Strategy 2.4 Develop a systemic effort to promote positive relationship with the Court.		Strategy Rationale Yolo County's self-assessment indicated that a positive relationship between CWS and Probation and the Juvenile Court is critical both in supporting staff in their roles and in achieving good outcomes for families.			
Milestone	2.4.1 Improve administrative communications with the Court through monthly meetings with the Judge or through other avenues as available.	Timeframe	Ongoing	Assigned to	CWS Division Manager
	2.4.2 Get feedback from County Counsel and finalize confidentiality policy and procedure for CWS Handbook.		September 2008		CWS Division Manager and Analyst
Strategy 2.5 Continue roll-out of the Child Care Subsidy Program.		Strategy Rationale This funding will follow the child if his/her placement changes as long as the new placement is in Yolo County, or within 25 miles from the home of removal. The program is intended to maintain a stable home environment, strengthen county foster care recruitment efforts, and encourage visitation with parents to strengthen reunification efforts.			
Milestone	2.5.1 Ensure all staff is aware of the program and the eligibility requirements, and are utilizing the program whenever possible.	Timeframe	Ongoing	Assigned to	CWS Supervisors and Analyst
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. Yolo County CWS will ensure that staff is fully trained on policies and procedures and that an accountability system is in place to monitor consistent, agency-wide implementation.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. When the confidentiality policy is finalized, comprehensive training for CWS staff will be scheduled.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Buy-in and support from CalWORKs to ensure Linkages programs works to its full potential. Feedback from County Counsel on confidentiality policy.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.					

Outcome/Systemic Factor: C1.4 – Reentry Following Reunification (Exit Cohort)

County’s Current Performance:

Our current performance in this measure for the time period of 04/01/2005 – 3/31/2006 is 26.3%. This is above the national standard of 9.9% and is an increase from our baseline (07/01/2001 – 06/30/2002) performance of 8.0%.

Improvement Goal 1.0

Decrease the percent of foster care reentry.

Strategy 1. 1

Ensure that all staff utilizes Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools throughout all service components to case closure.

Strategy Rationale

SDM is an evidence-based assessment tool used by all social workers. It provides reliability and consistency in evaluating child risk and safety decisions. A process to assess social worker utilization of the SDM tools will help ensure that social workers appropriately utilize SDM tools in an effort to reduce recurrence of maltreatment.

Milestone	1.1.1 Monitor individual and unit SDM usage and compliance via SafeMeasures.	Timeframe	June 2008 and ongoing	Assigned to	CWS Manager and Supervisors
	1.1.2 Develop a policy and procedure for routine monitoring of compliance with SDM usage.		January 2009		CWS Supervisors and Analyst
	1.1.3 Ensure all staff receives initial and on-going SDM training.		July 2009		CWS Supervisors and Analyst

Strategy 1. 2

The Wraparound program was implemented in January 2008 with training scheduled for February and first clients to be referred to the program in March 2008.

Strategy Rationale

By developing expanded family-based services, children can safely be returned to and maintained in their homes with the provision of ongoing services to preserve and enhance family functions, thereby reducing the number of children re-entering foster care

Milestone	1.2.1. Develop policy and procedure for Wraparound Services for CWS and Foster Care staff.	Timeframe	February 2008	Assigned to	Quality Improvement Analyst
	1.2.2 Work with partner agencies (ADMH and Probation) and FamiliesFirst to ensure fidelity to the Wraparound standards and to monitor implementation and development of the program.		July 2008		CWS Division Manager, Supervisors and CWS Analyst

Improvement Goal 2.0 Continue to improve support for children and families.					
Strategy 2.1 Continue to improve support for children and families and improve utilization of available resources.			Strategy Rationale Improved access to services will help ensure family stability and will assist in preventing reentry to care.		
Milestone	2.1.1 Continue to identify barriers.	Timeframe	July 2009	Assigned to	CWS Manager, Supervisors and Analyst
	2.1.2 Continue to perform staff training.		Ongoing		CWS Supervisors and Analyst
	2.1.3 Regularly assess and evaluate contracted services to capture services utilization and effectiveness.		Ongoing		CWS Manager, Supervisors and Analyst
Strategy 2.2 Continue to increase individualization of case planning in Probation.			Strategy Rationale Improved access to services will help ensure family stability and will assist in preventing reentry to care.		
Milestone	2.2.1 Continue to identify strategies necessary to increase individualization of case plans.	Timeframe	July 2009	Assigned to	Probation Managers and Supervisors
	2.2.2 Continue to develop policies and procedures for individualized case planning.		July 2009		Probation Managers and Supervisors
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. Continued in-depth analysis of factors associated with reentry following reunification.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Continued training on SDM for staff, community partners and other agencies.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Community partners, other county agencies and staff will be familiar with program changes and support putting new processes and services into practice. All parties will continue to engage in ongoing partnership and dialog to address emerging issues.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.					

Systemic Factor: Quality Assurance System					
County's Current Performance: Yolo County developed a Quality Assurance Division in 2006 and then recruited and hired a staff member for the CWS Quality Improvement Unit in 2007.					
Improvement Goal 1.0 Enhance CWS and Juvenile Probation's capacity to analyze data, including the identification of trends, to improve the implementation of policies and procedures.					
Strategy 1. 1 Develop the capacity and process to present C-CFSR data to CWS and Probation Managers, Supervisors and staff.			Strategy Rationale This will ensure that C-CFSR data is shared with affected parties.		
Milestone	1.1.1 Develop standardized data reports to make outcome data available and easily readable for staff.	Timeframe	June 30, 2008	Assigned to	Quality Improvement Division Analyst
	1.1.2 Identify areas for improvement and monitor compliance levels.		July 31, 2009		Quality Improvement Division Analyst
Strategy 1. 2 Determine the type of Quality Assurance System needed for Juvenile Probation.			Strategy Rationale This will ensure that the Quality Assurance System functions at an optimal level to facilitate improvement in data entry and data analysis.		
Milestone	1.2.1. Convene a workgroup that assesses the present Juvenile Probation Quality Assurance System and make recommendations for changes or improvements to increase outcome measures.	Timeframe	July 2008	Assigned to	Probation Managers, CWS Division Manager, Analysts
Strategy 1. 3 Improve standardized practice and data entry throughout Child Welfare.			Strategy Rationale This will create consistency for data extracted for data analysis.		
Milestone	1.3.1 Convene a workgroup in CWS comprised of social workers and clerical support staff to identify challenges to data entry and make recommendations and an action plan.	Timeframe	July 2008	Assigned to	CWS Staff
Improvement Goal 2.0 Increase communication regarding CWS and Probation data information with community stakeholders and staff.					
Strategy 2.1 Promote ongoing communication with community stakeholders to			Strategy Rationale This will ensure community stakeholders receive the information they		

define data report needs.		need, and promote ongoing partnership and collaboration.			
Milestone	2.1.1 Gather information from community stakeholders on their data needs.	Timeframe	September 2008	Assigned to	CWS Manager, Supervisors and Analyst
	2.1.2 Develop an easy-to-understand data packet for community stakeholders to update them on current data analysis and trends.		January 2009		CWS Analyst
Strategy 2. 2 Promote ongoing communication with CWS and Probation staff to define data report needs.			Strategy Rationale This will ensure that CWS and Probation staff receives the needed information and will promote ongoing partnership and collaboration.		
Milestone	2.2.1 Gather information from staff on their data needs.	Timeframe	September 2008	Assigned to	CWS Manager, Supervisors and Analyst
	2.2.2 Develop an easy-to-understand data packet for staff to update them on current data analysis and trends.		January 2009		CWS Analyst
Improvement Goal 3.0 Obtain information from social work staff, and from children and families receiving child welfare services, on social work practice and its impact on service delivery.					
Strategy 3.1 Create an assessment process.			Strategy Rationale This will enable gathering of information about the CWS processes that impact the delivery of CWS services.		
Milestone	3.1.1 Create a survey tool for staff to complete to determine what services are most needed.	Timeframe	January 2009	Assigned to	CWS Supervisors and Analyst
	3.1.2 Create a survey tool for families to complete to identify their service needs.		July 2009		CWS Supervisors and Analyst
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. These systemic changes will support improvements in the CWS Outcomes.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Further training will occur on CWS Outcomes and Accountability Data for staff, community partners and other agencies.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Support from community partners to identify data needs and increase communication will positively impact outcomes.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.					

V. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

Throughout the self-assessment process, Yolo County has relied on a traditional greeting among the Masai tribe of Africa—“Kasserian Ingera”—which means “How are the children?” as our guiding principals. Over time, we hope to be able to respond with “Sapati Ingera”—The “Children Are Well.”

C-CFSR OUTCOMES

1. **Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.**
2. **Children are maintained safely in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.**
3. **Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry to foster care.**
4. **The family relationships and connections of the children served by the CWS will be preserved as appropriate.**
5. **Children receive services appropriate to their educational needs.**
6. **Children receive services adequate to their physical, emotional and mental health needs.**
7. **Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs.**
8. **Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.**

A. DISCUSSION OF SYSTEM STRENGTHS AND AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENTS:

The Yolo County Department of Employment and Social Services Child Welfare Self-Assessment was an informative process. Overall, we believe that the Yolo County Child Welfare Services program has many strengths and staff deliver child welfare services in a manner that addresses child safety, permanency, and child/family well being. Further, we believe that a combination of system and performance issues impact our outcomes. These need to be addressed in order for us to improve our overall performance. We believe that systems issues need to continue to be addressed expeditiously in order for us to have an accurate picture of our performance.

At the conclusion of this self-assessment process, as in our first self assessment process, team members had a much greater understanding of the CWS system as well as increased insight into the breadth and complexity of the system. There was also acknowledgement that CWS cannot be effective in fulfilling our goals in isolation of community services and that clear and frequent

communication between partners is critical to building strong partnerships, be they intra-agency communication, working with other agency staff, with individual family members or caregivers, or the courts.

Yolo County is fully committed to providing services to children and families in the most effective as well as efficient manner possible consistent with outcomes defined. Based on the self-assessment process, areas we believe need to be addressed in order to achieve a more accurate profile and/or to improve our performance as reflected in the quarterly Outcome & Accountability County Data Report areas are identified below

The integrity of our CWS/CMS data is a critical area. Continuing attention to existing data contained in CWS/CMS is needed in order to determine our present level of accuracy and completeness, whether there is duplication of information, omission of critical information, and/or whether information has been properly recorded in the appropriate fields and notebooks within the system in order for it to be statistically available and accurate. Clean up of current data as well as timely entry of data, i.e. documentation of investigations, is critical.

Continuing to establish clear and comprehensive policies and procedures for what, where, when, and how information is documented in CWS/CMS by staff and standardizing these processes for staff will enable us to better review and evaluate our data as well as identify our continuing gaps in performance. Further, it will assist us in better understanding additional training needs of staff and develop training plans accordingly.

Similarly, standardizing data entry requirements in all future cases should ensure worker consistency in using the system and increased social worker competency and proficiency in using CWS/CMS. Steps have been initiated to address data “clean up”. Weekly monitoring of caseloads by child welfare management and supervisors using the tools available within CWS/CMS as well as SafeMeasures has been implemented and will continue.

Throughout the self-assessment, several themes emerged regardless of which Outcome was discussed.

Court issues: (effecting reunification and reentry) Due to the two year rotation schedule of the judges, judges often do not have the opportunity to see a case through to completion, or see the end outcome of many cases. The suggestion has been made to schedule regular meetings with the courts to discuss the challenges we face and calendar scheduling issues. The obstacle to this solution will be availability of meeting times.

Coordinated case reviews between service providers and staff: (effecting reunification, reentry, placement stability, and least restrictive placements) The problem of poor communication with service providers has been addressed by this group. Meetings need to be scheduled with service providers to conduct coordinated case reviews. This has been accomplished in the past, but more recently, scheduling difficulties due to time constraints have occurred.

Transportation and bilingual services: (effecting reunification and reentry) Lack of transportation for clients located in West Sacramento and rural areas of the county have been identified as an obstacle. Other funding sources need to be considered. Lack of available

funding also hinders obtaining necessary bilingual services. This may potentially be addressed through staff recruiting, and recruitment of bilingual interns. Another option may be to require bilingual services to be provided by contracted service providers. The group also identified the need for more outreach for bilingual foster homes.

More in-home services needed: (effecting reunification) There is always a waiting list with these services. The expansion of these services is hindered by funding availability.

Visitation issues: (effecting reunification and reentry) The need for weekend and evening visitation, as well as offering a more home-like environment has been identified. A new building is being planned which will offer a better environment. After hours visitation continues to be a problem with staffing. We may consider having staff scheduled to work shifts during these hours to eliminate overtime costs.

Support Hotline: (effecting reentry) This suggestion will be looked at. Staffing availability is the biggest issue in implementation.

Placement Officer: (effecting placement stability and least restrictive placement) This position is also to be considered.

Mentoring Program: There is a grant which provides mentoring for new foster parents. The possibility of having foster parents mentoring birth parents was discussed as a tool to assist reunification. There are confidentiality and safety concerns that may make this difficult.

Standard talking points: This would ensure that complete information is provided to relatives who are thinking about taking the placement of a child. It may be easy to tailor a pamphlet to address their needs. This has already been accomplished. The brochure was printed in November 2007.

Short-term placements: This is to reduce the number of placements a child has. Crisis Nursery is available for ages 0-5. We need to look at the possibility of licensed foster homes becoming designated as shelter homes. Further research is to be conducted. Greater utilization of Family Finders was also discussed.

Foster home recruitment: (effects least restrictive placement) To address the limited funding available for foster home recruitment, the group suggested exploring the possibility of seeking donations from service clubs and ecumenical outreach, and targeting diverse events for recruitment.

Other strategies which have been implemented, or are in the planning stages of implementation to assist in performance improvement include:

- Structured decision making was implemented last year.
- Wraparound Services for Children. (Beginning January 2008)
- Foster Parent Child Care Program. (Beginning in November 2007)
- Family Life Skills Program (will continue with DESS funding)

Yolo County recognizes the importance of family relationships and will continue to give priority consideration to placement with relatives when appropriate and in the best interests of the child. We believe that we can expand our current practice of assessing possible placement with interested and appropriate relatives. Despite this goal as a first priority for consideration, there is still a need for non-relative caregivers. Available out of home placement resources within Yolo County remains a serious problem. The number of county licensed foster homes has remained low which seriously impacts our ability to maintain children in their communities and school, and to make the most appropriate placement selection consistent with the child's needs and

cultural ties. Lack of local resources also impact on-going family relationships and impede reunification efforts. Implementation of the Foster Parent Child Care program seeks to keep children close to their birth families, community and school district. We are fortunate to have a very strong foster and kinship care education program through our partnership with Woodland Community College. The knowledge, skill, and other information about child development, behaviors, separation and loss r elative and non-relative caregivers acquire through these trainings are invaluable.

It is essential that we increase our recruitment and retention of caregivers and that they be provided with on-going support, information, and resources in order to ensure that children's physical, emotional and mental health needs are addressed timely and effectively. Implementation of the Specialized Care Increment in October 2006 seeks to keep foster children in lower level placements by providing additional funding to foster parents for additional care and supervision needed to enhance the child's functioning.

Statewide, past and present youth in the foster care system have voiced concern with their lack of preparedness for transitioning from foster care to young adulthood. We believe that our current services meet minimum standards but can be improved upon through increased community and intra-agency services. Probation staff cite a lack of understanding on how to refer eligible children to ILP and additional training will address this issue.

B. PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW (PQCR) FINDINGS:

Yolo County conducted its first PQCR in March 2007 with the final report going to CDSS in May 2007.

PQCR FOCUS AREA CHILD WELFARE: RE-ENTRIES TO FOSTER CARE WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF REUNIFICATION (3F)

This focus area is an element of the County's, already in-process, System Improvement Plan. In addition, in reviewing the County's quarterly reports from the State the County noticed that the percentage of children re-entering foster care subsequent to reunification or guardianship had increased. While the State average increased a small amount the county percentage increased significantly. The county wished to delve deeper into the practices affecting re-entry into foster care both to learn about strengths of current practice and challenges associated with this focus area.

PQCR FOCUS AREA PROBATION: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AS IT RELATES TO FOSTER CARE RE-ENTRY

Probation chose to focus on the area of community engagement as it relates to foster care re-entry. This area was also chosen because it is related to the CWS focus area and since many of the children in Probation also have contact with Child Welfare; the Department felt that in perusing like focus areas the County as a whole would gain a better understanding of the strengths and challenges of practice in serving Yolo County's children and families. The recommendations for both Child Welfare Services and Probation are included here.

Recommendations

CHILD WELFARE RECOMMENDATIONS

System and Policy Changes

1. Collaborative relationships

- Improve collaborative relationships with clients, Alcohol Drug and Mental Health and the Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Center
- Improve collaboration and engagement in general with community partners.
- Form interdisciplinary collaborative teams to support decision making and improve service delivery to clients
- Need to develop guidelines and policies for exchanging of information among community partners and inter-agencies

2. Community Based Services

- Develop and disseminate eligibility criteria for services, especially FamiliesFirst
- Improve alcohol/drug assessments. There is currently a lack of confidence in them
- Improve the tracking of referrals to services
- Develop a mechanism to apply for Victim/Witness early on in a case.
- Implement a domestic violence program
- Develop a mechanism for meeting with Community Based Organizations on a regular basis
- Develop a process where the social worker indicates the child welfare objectives up front when making referrals to community based organizations
- Include the community based organizations in meetings with the family to go over objectives, treatment plan and progress
- Re-look at current referral process to make it more efficient with more direct communication
- Assist community based organizations with funding development and monitoring processes

3. Changes among staff

- Formalize the transfer of cases procedure and transfer summary form
- Create a formal staffing process prior to children returning home
- Further utilize differential response for low risk cases

4. Visits and placements

- Evaluate visit frequency. Yolo is conservative with visits; visits gradually increase to avoid having to take steps backwards
- Eliminate the culture of distrust regarding relative placements

5. Working with families

- Evaluate the requirement that a parent get a job as a required condition of family reunification

- Look at the issue of the court ordering Family Maintenance against the recommendation of the social worker; FM contributes to large caseloads

6. Court

- Eliminate the requirement that social workers take every case to court. It does not contribute to effective time management, and due to the adversarial relationship between the Court and the Department it puts undue stress on the social workers. They do not feel respected by the Court
- Improve CASA relationships. They can be problematic and inconsistent.
- Create a Court Officer/Presenter position
- Explore ways that Department and County Counsel can foster better relationships with the Court and attorneys
- Explore ways to re-instate drug court

7. SDM

- Use SDM tools early in the case to confirm case decisions.

General

1. Staffing and workplace

- Explore ways to reduce caseload size
- Explore the possibility of Increasing pay for social workers so that they do not go elsewhere
- Improve retention of social workers and actively recruit new social workers
- Improve work environment (i.e., building)
- Improve working relationships between community service providers and Department staff
- Provide standardized training for new employees
- Hire or train more Spanish speaking staff, provide cultural competency training for all
- Explore the possibility of developing agency liaisons for community and inter-agencies.
- Explore the possibility of hiring more social service aids
- Explore the possibility of implementing a SB163 wraparound program
- Explore ways to use blended funding to bring a designated child welfare therapist to be co-located in the CWS office to develop relationships, make treatment recommendations and help monitor family progress

2. Working with parents

- Eliminate the requirement that parents must find work before reunification
- Require more in-home parenting and lengthen existing parenting classes
- Have more face-to-face contact with parents

3. Services

- Provide more services
- Improve services in outlying communities
- Offer more Spanish-speaking services

- Explore options for providing social workers with formalized updates on available resources and services

4. Visitation

- Institute county-wide policy to get all parties on the same page with regard to visits

5. Training Needs

Social workers cited several areas where training would be helpful. However, some also pointed out that their schedules are already so full that making time for additional training would be difficult.

Suggested training topics included the following:

- SDM mini sessions
- Cross training and relationship building with community partners
- Relationship and team building training between the department and the legal community
- Safety plan development/ DV plans
- Cultural training for all social workers, especially on Latino culture
- Childhood chronic neglect, effects of drugs on kids, complexities of parents' issues
- Alcohol/drug treatment/substance abuse dynamics
- Mental health
- Cross-agency training about agency's roles (multi-disciplinary approach)
- Understanding the complete referral process for services
- Eligibility criteria for FamiliesFirst
- Training on court timelines (due to new judge)

6. State Technical Assistance

The following were identified as areas needing state technical assistance:

- Provide more SDM training and practice
- Mandate caseload maximums so social workers are not overloaded (even when there's a shortage of social workers)
- Provide more money for services and employees
- Provide more computer forms that can be imported into CWS/CMS

7. Resource Issues

The following were identified as resource needs:

1. Service Needs

- Transitional housing
- Mental Health services
- Increased duration of services for clients
- Family Living Skills program — the grant runs out soon
- Local foster homes
- More resources in West Sacramento

- In-home parent educators
- In-Home Services
- Need more FamiliesFirst model services
- Spanish speaking service providers
- Counseling services – particularly those that start early
- Transportation
- Parenting classes that are specific to child's age and stage
- Increase drug treatment – particularly out-patient treatment
- Teen parenting classes
- Regional Center Services (they are currently overloaded-there are no services for developmentally disabled clients)
- Services for parents without Medi-Cal

PROBATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. General

- Initiate Wraparound services before placement.
- Explore the feasibility of hiring a special projects coordinator to seek funding for vocational services, ILP, educational services etc.
- Review protocol for substance abuse services. Provide residential treatment prior to outpatient treatment.
- Acquire more community partners.
- Increase family services.
- Improve transition services, and keeping children stable.
- Provide more funding for discharge planning.
- Reduce time in placement, with support.
- Increase structure after kids return home. Implement after care plans with services.
- Involve the whole family in the case plan from the beginning. Continue to engage the family. Don't let it just be "the kid's fault."
- Improve follow-through to keep kids medicine-compliant.
- Ensure that there is no lag time between probation officers when cases transfer.
- Increase funding for services to older kids. Transitional housing and after care services.
- Utilize a team approach to ID services for kids, keep them engaged and accountable and linked to services.
- Consider having a commissioner to hear juvenile cases (300's & 602's) to increase continuity.

2. Training Needs

- Placement core/Div 31 training.
- New workers need to go to placement core early, or prior to starting job.
- In-house training on mission, regulations, policy and culture of the department.

3. Services

- Increase support and services for children and families upon re-entry to the community.
- Ensure that substance abusing minors go to residential treatment first and outpatient treatment later.

- Need SB163 Wraparound services.
- Develop more wraparound services.
- Provide in-county ILP services.

4. Work with clients

- Move from generic case plans to case plans tailored to the individual.
- Work more with the family while the child is out of home.
- Obtain court orders to keep kids med-compliant.
- Treat the family while the child is in placement.
- Merge placement and in-home supervision caseloads.
- Provide a clothing allowance.
- Improve the availability of POs after-hours for spot checks.

5. Collaboration

- Have probation officer present case to a multi-agency group before and after placement.

6. Institutional changes

- Explore ways to ensure that treatment is driving the desired outcome for an individual, not by fiscal concerns.
- Explore the feasibility of on-going hiring practices to alleviate staff shortages.
- Explore the issue of shifting workloads and its impact on families and probation officers.
- Develop joint funding for services when CWS and Probation have children in common, include mental health/Medi-cal funding if feasible.
- Reduce the pressure of the priority being to return a child to the home within 9 months.

7. State Technical Assistance

The following were cited as areas needing state technical assistance:

- Split funding; provide more for probation services.
- Provide information on how to make a case plan and what needs to be put into a case plan.

8. Resource Issues

- Identify more Mental Health & Alcohol/Drug services.
- Develop a mentoring program.
- Develop more wraparound services for family.
- Develop ILP services in-county.
- Develop more family services.
- Develop more vocational services/education/ILP.
- Develop funding sources and services for youth 18 yrs – 21 yrs old.
- Consider a team approach to ID services for kids and families to keep them engaged and accountable and linked to services.