

I. SIP Narrative

1. Local Planning Bodies

In 2006, Madera County conducted its second, countywide Self- Assessment, followed by the County's System Improvement Plan. Over the last year, Madera County has continued in its efforts toward improving outcomes for children and families in Madera County. Representatives from the community, foster parents, foster children, child-care providers, education, law enforcement, probation, behavioral health, public health, community based organizations, parents, and Child Welfare Staff continue to be involved and included in these efforts. Participants have also included representatives from the Madera County Child Abuse Prevention Council and the Madera County Interagency Children and Youth Services Council. These meetings have provided the continued foundation for the activities put forth in Madera County's Self Assessment Plan and System Improvement Plan, as required by AB 636. These discussions continue to provide an arena for stakeholders and internal CWS staff to engage in dialogue, while addressing system improvement areas and developing community approaches toward improving children and family outcomes.

This report represents the continued efforts of Madera County and includes Behavioral Health Services, Public Health, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CALWORKS), Temporary Assistance to needy Families, First 5 Madera County Children and Families Commission, Madera County Office of Education, California Department of Social Services Adoptions, Madera County Community Action Agency, Madera Work Force Investment Board and Youth Council, the Housing Authority of the City of Madera, Madera County Local Planning Council, CASA, and the Interagency Children and Youth Services Council. Both Child Welfare Services and Probation have collaborated in developing protocols for provision of services for youth and their families.

Included in this document are areas in which data was available as reported in the County's Self Assessment and System Improvement plan previously submitted in 2007.

2. Share findings that support the qualitative change

In 2006, focus groups were facilitated in an effort to allow Community Partners a forum to provide structured feedback on their experiences with Madera County Child Welfare/Probation. The following questions were presented:

1. In regards to CWS/Probation families that you serve, what strategies are most effective?
2. What CWS/Probation practices increase the effectiveness of collaboration?
3. What challenges are there in service delivery?
4. What CWS/Probation practices impede collaborative efforts?
5. Could you share thoughts of how CWS/Probation might improve services to families, especially through collaborative efforts?
6. How do CWS/Probation outcomes interrelate with your organization?

There continues to be openness between partnering agencies, as well as the ability to provide constructive feedback on system strengths, as well as areas identified as needing improvements. A common theme from these forums was the increased willingness to continue the dialogue and activities that would resolve and increase service provisions through out the county that would meet the needs of our families and children.

From these meetings and through the assessment of the outcomes, the agency continues to concentrate its efforts on organizational shifts and social work practice. Improvements will be realized through training, supervisor monitoring, compliance review process and formalized policy and procedures.

3. Summary assessment from the Self Assessment

Section (V) of County Self Assessment Plan attached.

II. SIP Plan Components

Madera County continues to make great strides in establishing and maintaining relationships and collaborative efforts with other service organizations and agencies. As outlined in this report, these local initiatives provide comprehensive services to children and families of Madera County. The following is an outline of the outcomes assessed and the continued areas of focus.

INDICATORS	INCLUDED IN PLAN	NOT INCLUDED IN PLAN	Prior data	Current Data	Standard
<p>Indicators (1A and 1B): Recurrence of Maltreatment</p> <p style="text-align: right;">S1.1 (was 1A) (1B was deleted)</p> <p>Although not included in the System Improvement Plan, Madera County was successful in ensuring that there was limited recurrence of maltreatment. The data reflects that the rate of <u>no</u> recurrence of maltreatment went from 88.7% to <u>no</u> recurrence of maltreatment at a rate of 90.5%. The County implemented the use of Structured Decision Making (SDM) to help guide decision making; assessing risk and safety in a structured manner. In addition, Family Group Decision making strategies were implemented to allow participation of the family and their support systems. In addition, Madera County is a Linkages County, which further provides coordinated services between Child Welfare, Cal Works eligibility and Welfare to Work. Supervisors and social workers will continue to integrate the use of SDM, Safe Measures, Family Group Decision Making and the Linkages model to improve outcomes in this category.</p>		X	88.7% (05/06)	90.5% (06/07)	94.6%

<p>Indicator 1C: Rate of Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care S2.1(was 1C) Madera County Child Welfare Services continues to work collaboratively with foster parents and Foster Family Agencies to address resource and training needs. To this end, a foster parent liaison position was created in 2006 to bridge the gaps and provide a communication link for foster parents. During this review period, there are no recorded abuse or neglect incidents in foster care.</p>		X	99.59% (05/06)	100% (06/07)	99.68%
<p>Indicator 2A: Recurrence of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed. 2A deleted Specific to abuse and neglect referrals determined inconclusive or substantiated, but not rising to the level of involuntary intervention, it is the county's practice to offer referrals to community services and/or Voluntary Family Maintenance. Madera County was committed to reducing the rate of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed by .9%. The county was successful with their efforts as the rate of abuse was reduced by 4.4 %, which is below the rate of the state average. Concentration on training and partial implementation of SDM, as well as greater utilization of various case staffing techniques, including interaction with multi-disciplinary teams, was necessary to positively impact this outcome.</p>		X			
<p>Indicator 2B: Timely Response 2B Immediate) 2B 10-Day Res Madera County continues to do well in the area of immediate response. Social workers are trained to be aware of the critical nature of these referrals, as</p>	X		97.2% (Q2 05) 86.3% (Q2 05)	95.0% (Q3 07) 85.1% (Q3 07)	90 90

well as the necessity to respond in a timely manner. However, improvement continues to be needed in the area of 10-day response.					
Indicator 2C: Timely Social Work Visits 2C Although not included in the County's System Improvement Plan, Madera County will continue to focus on improving and monitoring compliance in this area. Social Work Supervisors will continue to use reports from Safe Measures to assist in monitoring compliance and identifying any areas of training. Furthermore, this area is being developed around PSSF discussion in order to formulate a more comprehensive approach.		X	96.9% Jan 05	81.2% Q3 07	90%
Indicators 3E and 3A: Children in Foster Care who are reunified in 12 months C1.1 (was 3E) C1.3 (was 3A) A significant number of children remain in out-of-home placement for longer periods and/or are not reunified with parents. The risk factors for families that are referred impact a family's successful participation in involuntary services ordered through Juvenile Court. The major reason for removal of children from their home of origin is substance abuse, primarily methamphetamine, which impacts over 80% of Madera County's Child Welfare cases. A lack of local drug treatment programs that are specifically indicated for methamphetamine addiction continues to be a significant resource barrier to reunification of children. Madera County is working alongside 3 other Central Valley Counties and the SWERT, to better understand implications on practice; and to work towards best practice development in serving "meth" impacted families.		X	62.0% (05/06) 38.3% (04/05)	74.1% (06/07) 35.8%(06/07)	75.2% 48.4%

<p>Indicators: 3D and 3A: Length of Time to Exit Foster Care to Adoption C2.1 (was 3D)</p> <p>The Department continues its efforts in adhering to time limits for swift permanence for children. There is an ongoing focus on both the reunification plan and the concurrent plan as soon as a child enters foster care. The department, like other counties, deals with court continuances, personnel changes, and unavailability of appropriate adoptive homes. Madera county does not have an adoptions component internally. This necessitates coordination between State Adoptions, along with collateral partners. The department strives to shorten the length of time to exit foster care to adoption.</p>		X	33.3% 05/06	25.5% (Q3 07)	36.6%
<p>Indicators: 3B and 3C: Multiple Foster Care Placements C4.1 (was 3B)</p> <p>Madera County has not experienced dramatic changes since the last assessment, but has improved in the Federal Standard. Contributing factors to the challenge of placement stability include placement of relatives required to go through the Relative Approval Process before children can be placed in their home. The Department continues to collaborate with its interagency partners to seek strategies for improving outcomes in these areas. Those strategies continue with the Family Team Decision Making and Multidisciplinary staffings.</p>	X		86.8% (05/06)	87.2% (06/07)	86%
<p>Indicator 3F and 3G: Rate of Foster Care Re-entry C1.4 (was 3F)</p> <p>As indicated in the most recent Self Assessment</p>	X		8.3%	5.5%	9.9%

<p>Plan, the Department is refining the provision of its traditional staffing process to include: Staffing at critical points – crisis, placement moves and potential placement moves; and full implementation of Family Team Decision Making. In addition, utilization of the SDM Re-Assessment tool has been implemented to help guide the decision making process. This reflects data gathered prior to the implementation of Structured Decision Making and other systemic changes such as regular case conferencing/staffing and the inclusion of community partners such as the Healthy Beginnings Program and the Lake Street Center. The County has improved in the Federal outcomes during this review period; however, the state outcomes reflect a decrease.</p>			(4/05-3/06)	(10/05-9/06)	
<p>Indicators 4A and 4B: Siblings placed together and children placed in least restrictive settings.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"> 4A All Siblings 4A Some Siblings 4B See attached </p> <p>Many families in the Madera County CWS System are larger sibling groups. While active efforts are made to place siblings together, considerations are given for language needs, food preferences, educational and medical needs, often times making it difficult to place all sibling groups in the same home. Madera County has made improvement in these outcomes and remains above the state average.</p>		X	<p>41.1% (2006) 74% (2006)</p>	<p>53.5% (2007) 78.1% (2007)</p>	
<p>Indicator 4E: ICWA Placement Preferences</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"> 4E Relative 4E Non Rel/Ind SCP </p>		X	<p>57.1% (Q3 05) 0</p>	<p>33% (Q2 07) 0</p>	

<p align="center">4E Non Rel/Non ind SCP</p> <p align="center">4E Non Rel Enth SCP Missing</p> <p>Madera County actively engages the ICWA representatives as early as possible to request placement assistance. The Department's outcomes currently reflect a higher rate than the state average.</p>			<p align="center">42.9% (Q3 05) 0</p>	<p align="center">66.7% (Q2 07) 0</p>	
<p>Indicator 8A: Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood</p> <p>Madera County Department of Social Services provides an array of services and activities for youth transitioning from foster care. These services are designed for eligible youth between the ages of 15 ½ and 21 in order to assist and prepare them in their transition from foster care into adulthood. Services are provided based on the needs and goals identified in the Transitional Independent Living Plan.</p>		<p align="center">X</p>			

Through the efforts and outcomes revealed in the County's second Self Assessment Plan, Child Welfare Services has been focusing their efforts on creating a cultural shift within the agency to improve social work practices. As discussed earlier, efforts toward improvement have been fostered through training, supervisor guidance and monitoring, compliance review process, and formalized policy and procedures.

1. Training

Formal training has been conducted for identified staff and has included the following areas:

- A. Structured Decision Making – Utilization of the Decision Tree Assessment Tool. -
- B. Data Entry on 10-Day Response Referrals
- C. Screening regulations and process.
- D. Family Team Decision Making – facilitator training, application model and process.
- E. Family-Centered, strength –based Social Worker case presentation.

2. Supervisor Guidance and Monitoring

The Supervisor plays one of the most important roles in creating a positive work environment, with an emphasis on professional growth and development of social work staff. Through clear expectations, on-going training and regular monitoring of work performance and case outcomes, the supervisor and social worker have fostered positive outcomes for the children and families served. Supervisors continue to provide appropriate services and best practice techniques to ensure reasonable service delivery.

Supervisor expectations include the use of Safe Measures, as well as CWS/CMS case review to ensure provision of mandated services. It will further be used to identify trends and formulate training plans for individual or groups of social workers. Through trainings provided, supervisors have assisted their staff in transferring their knowledge into social work practice, while monitoring their performance and the application of new techniques.

3. Compliance Review Process

In Madera County's efforts to improve outcomes for our children and families, it is imperative to track the activities that lead to these improved outcomes. Madera County is establishing a compliance review process that will review and assess program activities and their relation to the identified outcomes.

4. Policy and Procedures

As identified in the System Improvement Plan, Madera County implemented training on those identified activities needing improvement. These activities align with meeting our strategies and ultimately the improvement goals. Madera County will ensure that Policy and Procedures are developed and distributed to all staff that coincides with training and expectations.

The following strategies have the potential to initiate affects on the County's improvement outcomes:

Improvement Goal 1.0: Madera County was doing well in the area of Immediate Response Referrals. Social Workers were trained to be aware of the critical nature of these referrals, as well as the necessity to respond in a timely manner. However, there was improvement needed in the area of 10 Day Response Referrals. Further clarification about the differentiation between a 10 Day Response Referral and an Immediate Response Referral was necessary. Timeframe 10/1/07 to 9/30/08.					
Strategy 1.1 Core Training on Emergency Response Timeframes and Documentation.				Strategy Rationale: Timely response needs to be accurately documented.	
Milestone	1.1.1 Development of internal core curriculum.	Timeframe	10/1/2007	Assigned to:	Program Manager Social Services Supervisors
	1.1.2 Training hosted quarterly to in-service staff on correct data entry on CWS/CMS		Quarterly, beginning 10/1/2007		Program Manager Social Services Supervisors
	1.1.3 Training review compliance process established.		180 days		Deputy Directors Program Manager Social Work Supervisors Social Service Analyst
Strategy 1.2 Timely Initial Referral Assignment			Strategy Rationale: Once referrals are assigned timely, they can be allocated to staff timely, improving response timeframes.		
	1.2.1 Staffing needs and allocation between crisis and non-crisis staff determined through review of referral volume projections and output expectations.	Timeframe	90 days	Assigned to:	Social Work Supervisors, Program Manager, Clerical Supervisor
	1.2.2 Implementation of an efficient and timely Referral Assignment policy and procedure.		120 days		Clerical Supervisor, Social Work Supervisors, Program Manager

	1.2. 3 All staff trained and knowledgeable on the screening process.		180 days Continuing and on-going for new-staff		Program Manager Social Work Supervisors
Strategy 1.3 Implementation of the SDM assessment decision tree.			Strategy Rationale: Standardize screening process to ensure increased compliance response times.		
Milestone	1.3.1 All staff trained on decision tree tool.	Timeframe	90 days Completed and on-going for new staff	Assigned to:	Program Manager Social Services Supervisors
	1.3.2 Internal review that ensures full utilization of decision tree assessment. (Case Review)		120 days and quarterly program integrity review to ensure compliance. Completed and Ongoing		Program Manager Social Services Analyst
	1.3.3 Implementation of Policy and Procedure guide in alignment with utilization of decision tree.		180 days Completed		Program Manager Social Work Supervisors
Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan. As noted in the discussion on the outcomes targeted by Madera County for its Self Improvement Plan, Child Welfare Services concentrated on improvement of social work practices. This occurred utilizing micro and macro strategies, including: formal training sessions, hands-on practical experience, structured supervisory intervention, and implementation of policy and procedures.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Madera County has utilized the Central California Regional Training Academy to provide training on Structured Decision Making, as well as specific utilization of the Decision Tree assessment.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Madera County continues with the identified system improvement changes needed to improve outcomes in the areas of safety. Our partners are included in our collaborative efforts in order to continue building our partnerships, enhancing the array of services available, and creating agency policy and procedures.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. No regulatory or statutory changes are needed to support this improvement goal.					
Systemic Factor: Training and internal Policy & Procedures, as well as development of a training review compliance process.					

County's Current Performance: Madera County continues to perform well in the area of Immediate Response Referrals, from 92.9% in Q3 2003 to 97.2% in Q2 2005, and most recently 95.0% in Q3 2007. However, improvement is still needed in the area of 10-Day Response Referrals. The data reveals that there is a decrease in timely response from 86.3% to 85.1%. Our efforts to improve this outcome has been challenging as we have contended with staffing assignments coupled with staff experience.

Madera County Implemented policy and procedures, along with training and development of a training review compliance process in order to afford staff, supervisors and program managers the training and tools necessary to increase outcomes. The following are the actions taken:

Training

- Quarterly in-service trainings: Structured Decision Making, Safe Measures, documentation and investigation timeframes.
- SDM Training provided to staff, which has effectively demonstrated compliance in utilization of the SDM tool.
- On-Call training was provided on 02/21/2008, which provided direction to staff on the completion of the SDM Hotline tool with all reports that were received after hours.

Emergency Response Unit Structure

- The current structure was adjusted to provide equity in assignments in all the designated geographical service locations, as well as an adjustment to the 10 day and immediate response assignments.
- Additional referral assignments were distributed to on-going Social Workers outside of Emergency Response to not only address workload issues, but to also provide cross training to other staff.

Policy and Procedures

- Supervisor Team has reviewed and updated current Policy and Procedures in Emergency Response.
- The Supervisors have developed a Case Transfer/Case Closure document that assists staff and supervisors on monitoring compliance
- Implementation of Un-interrupted Processing Time (UPT), where staff are afforded a block of time to process their work with out interruptions.
- Tools provided to staff to assist with timely documentation entry, e.g. recorders and utilization of Office Staff to input narratives.

Areas that will also be address are the following:

- Screening Training needed for all staff

Improvement Goal 2.0 Decrease the number of children who have more than two placements by 3.0%.					
Strategy 2.1 Conduct Family Team Decision Making staffings with all families where a child(ren) has been detained.			Strategy Rationale: Family involved staffings increases participation and cooperation, while providing avenues for identification of special needs of the children, and increasing reunification time frames. By conducting purposeful placements, this prepares partners to meet children's needs, while linking to necessary services, and allows for concurrent planning and successful permanence.		
Milestone	2.1.1 Key staff trained on facilitating Family Team Decision Making staffings.	Timeframe	90 Days Completed	Assigned to:	Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
	2.1.2 Social Work staff trained on the purpose, format and expected outcomes of Family Team Decision Making staffings		90 Days Completed		Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
	2.1.3 Policy and procedure completed on Family Team Decision Making Staffings and staff trained process.		120 days Completed		Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
Strategy 2.2 Conduct Family Team Decision Making staffings for all potential placement changes and 7 day notices and include resource parent.			Strategy Rationale – Timely staffings that address placement difficulties, as well as inclusion of the resource parent will assist in stabilizing placements and foster necessary linkage to additional services for the child as identified in the staffings. .		
Milestone	2.2.1 In-service trainings provided for all placement partners, including foster parents and foster family agencies, Behavioral Health, Healthy Beginnings, Education and Public Health.	Timeframe	90 Days Completed and On-going	Assigned to:	Program Manager Social Work Supervisor

	2.2.2 Scheduling format implemented that accommodates multiple staffings, while reducing delays or conflicts.		90 Days Completed		Program Manager Social Work Supervisor
	2.2.3 Master list of facilitators created who are trained in Family Group Decision Making for rotational scheduling.		90 Days Completed		Program Manager Social Work Supervisor
	2.2.4 Training to be provided to Staff on placement assessment and risk factors to assist in determining potential placement disruptions.		120 days to be completed next review period.		Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
Strategy 2.3 Conduct quarterly in-service meetings with resource families in order to continue with collaborative decision making and address systemic issues.			Strategy Rationale -The Resource Families are integral partners, working towards meeting the placement needs of the children in their care. On-going collaborative efforts with staff and the resource families will create a stronger partnership between the two entities who are working toward providing for the best interest of the children.		
Milestone	2.3.1 Specific topics surrounding placement stability identified in collaboration with placement resource providers through on-going discussions.	Timeframe	90 Days On-going	Assigned to:	Social Worker Foster Parent Liaison, Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
	2.3.2 Meetings calendared and coordinated with the foster parent associations and Foster Family Agency Interagency Committee.		90 Days Completed and On-going		Social Worker Foster Parent Liaison, Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
	2.3.3. Survey conducted with Resource Parents on collaborative efforts between the county and the placement community.		120 Days On-going		Social Worker Foster Parent Liaison, Social Work Supervisor,

				Program Manager
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Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals. Madera County continues to address the complex needs of parents and their children involved in the child welfare system. By inviting families in a team approach, with all players having an equal voice, this has allowed for more innovative placement decisions that meet the best interest of the child, while improving family engagement. Continued support and collaboration is occurring with our County Behavioral Health to support parents, as well as joint family counseling on those cases that progress toward stability. Madera County will continue to work with its collaborative partners in this endeavor, including Behavioral Health, Public Health and the resource placement providers as systemic issues arise.

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Madera County has received training through UC Davis on Multi-disciplinary interventions.

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. CWS will continue in its collaborative partnerships with Public Health, Behavioral Health, and the Resource Providers.

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. No regulatory or statutory changes are needed to support this improvement goal.

Systemic Factor: On-going training and collaboration with placement providers.

County's Current Performance: For Improvement Outcome C4.1, Madera County increased the number of children who only experienced two or more placements by .4%, reporting 86.8% in 05/06 increasing to 87.2% in 06/07. The Department continues with its efforts to increase placement resources, including the recruitment efforts of the foster parent liaison position. Madera County continues to conduct regular staffings with its partners, including Behavioral Health and Public Health and is now regularly including the resource placement providers.

Improvement Goal 3.0 Decrease the number of children who re-enter foster care by 2.3%.

Strategy 3.1 Continued utilization of Structured Decision Making for children in out-of-home care.	Strategy Rationale: Utilization of structured guidelines will lead to consistent and appropriate decision making regarding safety and risk associated to children.
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Mi	3.1.1 Key staff trained on SDM and case presentation at staffings.	Ti	90 Days Completed and on-going	As	Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
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	3.1.2 Case Review Form used to monitor SDM full utilization.		120 Days Completed and On-going		Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
	3.1.3 Implement review compliance process to ensure SDM utilization system wide.		120 Days Completed and On-going		Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager, Social Service Analyst
Strategy 3.2 Intensify Family Maintenance services immediately following successful reunification by increase system contact.			Strategy Rationale: When children are returned home, new family dynamics present and there is a great need to ensure that safety is closely monitored.		
Milestone	3.2.1 Train staff on intensity and comprehensive assessment during family contacts.	Timeframe	90 Days Completed	Assigned to	Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
	3.2.2 Increase collaborative efforts with other service entities and secure resource providers who are serving the family.		120 Days Completed and On-going		Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
	3.2.3 Implement review compliance process to ensure increased services intensity.		180 Days Completed and On-going		Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager, Social Services Analyst
Strategy 3.3 Utilization of Family Team Decision Making for reunification efforts.			Strategy Rationale: When parents and family are involved in the decision making process, reunification efforts are more likely to be successful, thus reducing failed compliance efforts.		
Milestone	3.3.1 Staff trained on Family Team Decision Making.	Timeframe	90 Days Completed	Assigned to	Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
	3.3.2 Partners and collaterals are included on the Family Team Decision Making Team		90 Days Completed		Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager
	3.3.3 Implemented review compliance process to ensure Family Team Decision Meetings have occurred.		120 Days Completed		Social Work Supervisor, Program Manager, Social Services Analyst
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. Madera County will continue its efforts toward the team collaboration approach, allowing for comprehensive decisions when returning children home, or assessments that children remain at home. We continue to use our support from our partners at Behavioral Health, Public Health, and Resource Placement Providers and through the Linkages Program.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Madera County received training on Family Team Decision Making.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. CWS will continue in its collaborative partnerships with					

Public Health, Behavioral Health, and the Resource Placement Providers.
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. Training and collaboration with placement providers.
Systemic Factor: On-going training and monitoring of SDM utilization and conducting Family Decision Making staffings.
County's Current Performance: For Improvement Outcome C1.4, Madera County decreased the number of children who re-enter foster care from 8.3% for 4/05-3/06 to 5.5% in reporting period 10/05 – 9/06. This reflects a decrease of 2.8% which exceeds the stated improvement goal of 2.3%. The Department continues its efforts to utilize SDM and Family Group Decision Making model to assess and monitor the return and safety of the families and children being served. Furthermore, Madera County continues to use multidisciplinary partners, including Behavioral Health, Public Health, Resource Placement Providers, and the collaborative efforts of the Linkages Program.

PROBATION

Improvement Goal 4.0 Probation Officer assigned to placement meet with parents or willing relatives and other collaborative agencies to identify needs and develop an exit plan to help the youth with a smooth and successful transition and to ensure compliance with aftercare requirements.					
Strategy 4.1 The department of Probation will participate in training provided by CWS, UC Davis and various other trainings that focus on issues pertaining to Safety Outcomes, Child well-being, Permanency Outcomes, ILP, Health and Education , Educational rights for children in placement, issues and challenges of youth in aftercare.			Strategy Rationale: Probation staff assigned to youth in out of home care have been trained in many of the important areas mentioned in Strategy 1.1. However additional training is needed to obtaining better outcomes and understanding of the challenges facing youth in their transition to a less restrictive/structured environment when released from placement to parents or to live independently.		
Milestone	4.1.1 Designated Probation staff will participate in all outcome training afforded to Child Welfare Services and Behavioral Health Services.	Timeframe	Ongoing and when training is available.	Assigned to:	Probation Supervisor, Placement Staff, Program Manager
	4.1.2 Probation will monitor/track its current performance as it relates to the number of children in aftercare and work in conjunction with Public Health, CWS , Behavioral Health and other resources to implement a transition/aftercare action plan to		Participated and on-going		Ongoing - when necessary

	address the needs of youth returning home or living independently.		Conducted and on-going		
	4.1.3 Consultation with Behavioral Health clinicians, treating psychiatrist public Health and other agencies to determine appropriate strategies for youth's successful and stable transition home or independent living during the after care component of placement.		On-going		Probation Supervisor or designee.
<p>Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. The Probation Department is understaffed and without sufficient human resources to effect significant systemic change as result of State and County budget concerns. Collaboration with parents and aforementioned agencies was coordinated and followed through so youth's transition are timely and coordinated. Collaborative meetings and continuous monitoring between agencies and parents or guardians regarding the youth's transitional adjustment are conducted. The probation department has attended trainings to better meet the needs of youth in transition.</p>					
<p>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Addressed in the milestones.</p>					
<p>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Child Welfare Services, Behavioral Health, Public Health and other youth resource agencies are partners in meeting the needs of youth in placement and during aftercare. The Probation Department will continue to consult with and work collaboratively with these agencies to ensure better outcomes for youth in placement and transitional youth in aftercare component of placement.</p>					
<p>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. None identified</p>					
<p>Outcome/Systemic Factor For the Probation Department: On-going training and collaborative efforts to better meet the needs of youth in Aftercare Component of placement.</p>					
<p>County's Current Performance: The probation department tracks placement youth when they transition back into the community and home environment to monitor their adjustment. The Department has attended trainings to enhance skills and knowledge to better meet the needs of youth in aftercare, including a Multidisciplinary Interventions training provided by UC Davis. The assigned Officer meets monthly with Behavioral Health and public Health so as to collaborative assist and track transitioning youth, either back home or into transitional housing.</p>					

1. Strategies for the Future

The SAP revealed a lack of protocol and direction to staff in regard to the necessity of a comprehensive assessments and thorough evaluations of the emotional and behavioral health of drug exposed children entering foster care, with periodic updates throughout a placement episode. Also, identified was a lack of resources to support substitute care providers and, too few resource families in the community. As a result, placement disruption was too frequently due to a child's emotional/developmental concerns and the related negative behaviors. These disruptions directly impacted the rate at which the child became emotionally stable enough to return home or to be considered a suitable candidate for adoption. It is notable that Madera County experiences a large first entry rate into foster care of children who are older than six years of age, typically children who are more difficult to match to an adoptive family exacerbating these outcomes. Additionally, after the completion of the SAP, we identified that staff was inconsistent in their application of policy relating to the early identification of relatives and concurrent home matching. These factors impacted outcome indicators 3D and 3A, now outcome C2.1, as well as 3B and 3C, now outcome C4.1. In order to address these factors, Madera County put forth efforts in providing permanent lifelong connections for our foster youth. Through these efforts, Madera County has become involved in the California Permanency for Youth Project and is receiving technical assistance from the project. Madera County continues to work with youth in Long Term Foster Care, while also conducting activities system wide that provides early identification of relatives or others connected to the child.

Madera County continues with its on-going collaborations with its Mental Health Partners while establishing roles and responsibilities in our multi-system approach. Areas addressed have been the delivery of services, multi-system staffings, and the continuum of care for children served by the county system. Furthermore, Behavioral Health continues in their goals to meet the requirements of the Mental Health Service Act, targeting Prevention and Early Intervention. As one of the stakeholders, Madera County has been involved in the development stages in guiding and directing program development.

Madera County continues to address health access to the 0-5 population through the First 5 Child Health Initiative. The First Parent's Program continues to be available and is being provided in Chowchilla and at a mountain facility. This primary prevention program makes phone contact to offer information, education, and referral services to first time parents throughout the county. First Parent's Program also makes monthly home visits for up to a year after the child is born. The program links with existing providers to create a referral system that both encourages access to the First Parent's Program, as well as to a variety of community services to which the pregnant mother/first time parents may be connected depending on their needs.

First Five received a Cowell Foundation Grant to serve families through the Family Resource Center (FRC) This funding has been utilized to leverage CWS funds in order to out-station a Social Worker at the FRC. This CWS assignment has provided capacity at the FRC to meet the information and referral needs of Madera County residents while concurrently completing risk assessments. The Child Welfare Social Worker responds to families presenting with more emergent issues. The Social Worker conducts initial risk assessments and completes referrals to community partners to meet the needs of the family, as well as responds appropriately to families who present with issues rising to the level of CWS intervention. Further, an Ameri-Corp volunteer employed by the FRC is utilized to case manage those families who are not otherwise referred to other agencies for assistance.

In order to further monitor and improve our identified improvement goals, Madera County is establishing a Quality Assurance position, which will be effective June 2008. It is anticipated that our Quality Assurance will further assist in identifying areas of improvement, so as training and corrective actions can be further targeted and implemented.