



SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

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CalWORKs
Children's Services
Aging and Community Services
Mary Graham Children's Shelter

March 14, 2008

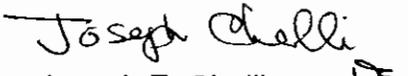
Linda Hockman, Chief
California Department of Social Services
Office of Child Abuse Prevention
744 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Hockman:

Please find enclosed the San Joaquin County 2008 Child Welfare System Improvement Plan and a copy of the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors Order approving the plan. An electronic copy has also been sent to Donald Henderson of your staff.

If you have any questions, please contact David Erb, Deputy Director – Children's Services, at (209)468-1190 or at erbdav@cws.state.ca.us.

Sincerely,


Joseph E. Chelli
Director

JEC:DE:jlc

Enclosures

cc: David Erb, Deputy Director – Children's Services





SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

JOSEPH E. CHELLI
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February 29, 2008

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CalWORKs
Children and Adult Services
Mary Graham Children's Shelter

Board of Supervisors
222 East Weber Avenue
Stockton, CA 95202

Dear Board Members:

**RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE THE SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY
CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR 2008-2009**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors approve the 2008-2009 San Joaquin County Child Welfare System Improvement Plan (a copy of which is on file with the Clerk of the Board).

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:

As part of the Federal Performance Improvement Plan, the California Department of Social Services requires counties to undergo a Children and Family Services Review (CFSR) process. The System Improvement Plan (SIP) is the third requirement of the CFSR. The first requirement was a Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR), which was conducted in March 2007 and focused on placement stability of youth in foster care. The second requirement was the Child Welfare Self-Assessment, which was approved by the Board of Supervisors on November 6, 2007 (B-07-1104).

It is now recommended that the Board of Supervisors approve the SIP. The PQCR, Child Welfare Self-Assessment and the SIP were completed in a partnership of the Human Services Agency and the Probation Department, with community participation.

The SIP focuses on the following areas:

Human Services Agency-Child Welfare Services

- Recurrence of child abuse
- Re-entry into foster care following reunification
- Placement stability



Board of Supervisors
RECOMMEND TO APPROVE THE SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY
CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR 2008-2009

February 29, 2008
Page 2

Probation Department -- Juvenile Division

- o Local systemic efforts
- o Case review system: process for parent-child youth participation in case planning

The initial SIP covers the period of April 1, 2008 through March 31, 2009. SIP updates will occur annually for the subsequent two-year period. The entire CFSR cycle will begin again in 2011.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Total Cost

Approving the SIP has no direct costs; however, many of the activities in the SIP are offered through State and federal funds which are awarded to contract agencies after Board approval.

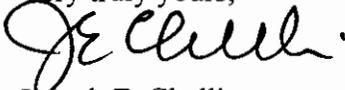
Net County Cost

There is no net county cost.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN UPON APPROVAL:

If the Board approves the San Joaquin County Child Welfare SIP for 2008, the San Joaquin County Human Services Agency will submit it to the California Department of Social Services, Children's Services Operations Bureau for approval.

Very truly yours,



Joseph E. Chelli
Director

JEC-DE:jlc

Attachment

cc: David Erb, Deputy Director - Children Services
Adrian J. Van Houten, Auditor-Controller
Chris Hope, Chief Probation Officer

Clerk of the Board for meeting of March 11, 2008



BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF SAN JOAQUIN, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

B-08- 278

MOTION: GUTIERREZ/MOW/5

**RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE THE SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY
CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR 2008-2009**

THIS BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DOES HEREBY:

Approve the 2008-2009 San Joaquin County Child Welfare System Improvement Plan (a copy of which is on file with the Clerk of the Board).

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the above order was passed and adopted on March 11, 2008, by the following vote of the Board of Supervisors, to wit:

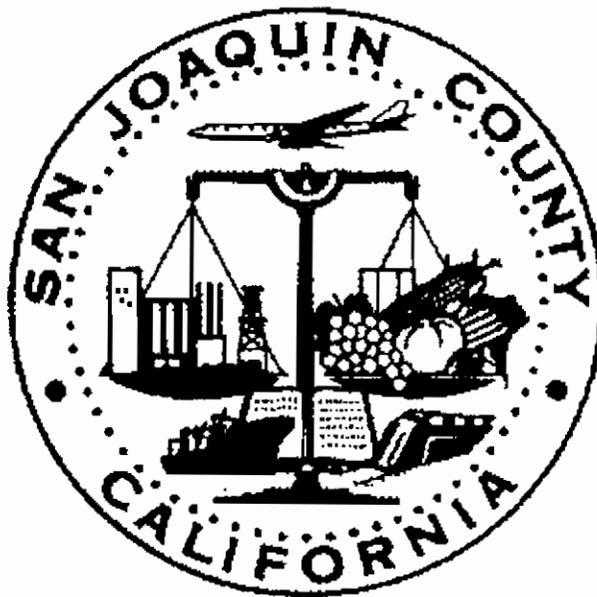
AYES: RUHSTALLER, ORNELLAS, GUTIERREZ, MOW, VOGEL
NOES: NONE
ABSENT: NONE
ABSTAIN: NONE

LOIS M. SAHYOUN,
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
County of San Joaquin
State of California



Lois M. Sahyoun

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY
California Child and Family Services Review
County System
Improvement Plan



March 2008

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SIP COVER SHEET

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

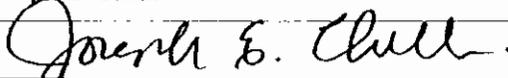
County:	San Joaquin
Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:	Human Services Agency – Children's Bureau
Period of Plan:	April 11, 2008 – March 31, 2009
Period of Outcomes Data:	(1) Quarter ending December 30, 2007
Date Submitted:	(2) March 14, 2008

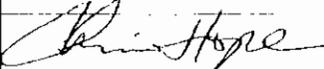
County Contract Person for County System Improvement Plan

Name:	David Erb
Title:	Deputy Director – Children's Services
Address:	P.O. Box 201056, Stockton, CA. 95201
Phone/Email	(209) 468-1190 erbdav@cws.state.ca.us

Name:	Larry King
Title	Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer
Address:	575 W Mathews Road, French Camp, CA 95231
Phone/Email:	(209) 468-4069 lking@sjgov.org

Submitted by each agency for the children under its care

Submitted by:	County Child Welfare Agency Director (Lead Agency)
Name:	Joseph E. Chelli
Signature:	

Submitted by:	County Chief Probation Officer
Name:	Chris Hope
Signature:	

Introduction:

The April 1, 2008 through March 31, 2009 San Joaquin County System Improvement Plan (SIP) continues to build upon issues identified in the original SIP on 2005 and the subsequent SIP updates in 2006 and 2007. Differential Response and Post Reunification Services continue to be central to the outcome areas related to recurrence of abuse and foster care re-entry. Building up collaborations of non-profit agencies providing early intervention and preventive service through neighborhood based services was heavily emphasized in the previous SIP.

Following our Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) the week of March 8, 2007 and our County Self-Assessment of November 2007, we have added a third SIP component for improving placement stability in Child Welfare Services.

The San Joaquin County Probation Department has chosen to focus on social systemic factors which affect their service delivery and their case review system.

I. SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP) NARRATIVE

1. Identify Local Planning Bodies

The following planning bodies have had input in the San Joaquin County Self Assessment and the System Improvement Plan:

- **San Joaquin County Human Services Agency** – Managers and supervisors in Child Welfare Services
- **San Joaquin County Probation Department** – Managers and Supervisors in Juvenile Probation
- **Children's Services Coordinating Commission** – Commissioners, some of whom are appointed by the Board of Supervisors, who coordinate community efforts in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
- **Promoting Safe and Stable Families Advisory Committee** – Public and private agency representatives, parent and community members, who focus on the Promoting Safe and Stable Families contacts for the provision of child abuse and neglect prevention services.

The following individuals contributed to or reviewed this report:

- David Erb, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency, Children's Services Coordinating Commission
- Don Pilcher, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Kathy Stanley, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Bea Gomez, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Jeanne Fuhrman, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Dale Fritchen, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Sheila Standridge, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Melissa Gust, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency

- Lynette Estep, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Chris Hope, San Joaquin County Probation Department
- Stephanie Bays, San Joaquin County Probation Department
- Larry King, San Joaquin County Probation Department
- Marcia Olmos, San Joaquin County Probation Department
- The Honorable Jose Alva, Judge, Superior Court of San Joaquin County
- Cathy Long, San Joaquin County Office of Education
- Jamie Biaocchi, San Joaquin County Office of Education
- Lori Dixon Court Appointed Special Advocate
- Bill Mitchell, San Joaquin County Public Health
- Patty LaMar/Foster Parent
- Barbara Patton, Foster Parent
- Libby Gaedtke, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Michael Perez, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Katy Forrest, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Sally Castillion, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Robin Heringer San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Terri Courtney, San Joaquin County Human Services Agency
- Kim Suderman, San Joaquin County Mental Health Services
- Children's Services Coordinating Commission
 - Dennis Newlin, Chair, Community Based Organization
 - Carol Davis, 1st Vice-Chair, Community Volunteer
 - Dawn Custer, Community Volunteer
 - Bonnie Mayer, Community Volunteer
 - Evelyn Moore, Community Volunteer
 - Dan Bonnet, San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office
 - Robin Toschi, San Joaquin County Juvenile Probation
 - Sgt. Chris Stevens San Joaquin County Sheriff's Department
 - Valerie Sims, Licensing Agency
 - Staci Johnson, Medical Services
 - Reina Hudson, Mental Health
 - Vincent Hernandez, Education
 - Amelia Adams, Faith-Based Community
 - Patricia Hill, Board of Supervisors Representative, 4th District
 - Lorie Machado, Board of Supervisors Representative, 5th District
- Harder + Company, Community Research

2. Findings That Support Qualitative Change

A. Discussion of System Strengths and Areas Needing Improvements

San Joaquin County March 2007 Peer Quality Case Review:

The San Joaquin County's Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) further demonstrated the strong commitment both the Child Welfare Services and Probation have in building on their many strengths in order to improve service delivery to the families and children they serve. A tremendous amount of information was gathered and the results will need to be further prioritized and addressed to ensure that the positive direction in which both the agencies are currently moving continues.

San Joaquin County Child Welfare Services:

Child Welfare Services chose placement stability as their area of focus. Although this outcome is not one that CWS is currently working on in their System Improvement Plan (SIP), it is one that directly affects children and families well being on a day-to-day basis and therefore are committed to reviewing the strengths and challenges of current practices associated with it. The County currently has a low rate of placement with relatives and this issue was a subset of placement and placement stability that CWS wanted to explore. CWS wanted to particularly focus on placement decision-making and the quality of relationships between the County and care providers.

Structured interviews were conducted to gather information on placement stability. CWS looked at twelve (12) cases and interviewed fifteen (15) social workers. Three (3) of the cases had different social workers assigned at different times and was it was beneficial for two (2) social workers to be interviewed on those cases. Of the twelve (12) cases selected, ten (10) cases had multiple placements, and two (2) cases had one (1) placement in 2006.

Three teams (3) of three (3) persons each, none of who was an employee of the San Joaquin County Human Services Agency or San Joaquin County Probation Department, conducted the interviews. All team members were from partnering counties. There were nine (9) partnering County interviews from Santa Cruz, Napa, Sacramento, Contra Costa, Butte, and Stanislaus Counties. Each of the three (3) teams had two (2) CWS social workers and one (1) probation staff social worker to bring collaboration and interdisciplinary knowledge to the interview process.

In addition to collecting information through social work interviews, CWS conducted seven (7) focus groups: foster family agencies, child welfare youth, foster parents and licensing staff, relative placements, supervisors (two (2) groups), and mental health providers. The information gathered from these focus groups proves invaluable as CWS moves forward in improving quality of services.

Strengths and Promising Practices:

Members of the interview teams and focus groups identified factors that have a positive effect on the stability of out-of-home placements.

Dedication of Social Workers:

- San Joaquin County child welfare social workers display a great deal of dedication to the children and families they work with. Social workers ask parents about relatives and connected adults in a child's life during the emergency response investigation. They make referrals to the concurrent planning unit immediately upon a child being detained
- Children report that some social workers are "great" and will go "above and beyond" to help; that they take the time to talk and to get to know the child. Social workers displayed an "I will work as hard as you do" attitude to the children which inspires them. The children reported that the social workers asked about their family's culture and values and what mattered to the child. In general youth felt that social workers get to the issues that make it unsafe for the children to be in the home and "try to get you home"
- Social workers are encouraging and supportive of foster parents. They strive to keep foster parents calm, and try to provide objective perspectives on their interactions with the children. When necessary, the social worker tries to get mental health services in the foster home for the child as soon as possible, to help stabilize the placement
- Social workers strive to form good relationships with the children they serve. Workers recognize that children in the system are fragile and they go the extra mile to see them as often as possible. They also understand the importance of discovering and building on a child's strengths
- Social workers strive to provide parents and children with visitation as deemed appropriate. At a minimum, social workers comply with the mandated rules involving compliance visits. This practice fosters positive relationships between the children, caregivers, and foster family agencies
- When social workers do immediate relative assessments, children have been able to be quickly placed with relatives
- Some social workers treat foster parents as team members. One example is that when a child was being transitioned to an adoptive home, the social worker created a transition plan with the foster parent. The foster parent "mentored" the adoptive family about the characteristics and needs of the child, the adoptive family had visits in the foster home and then the child had visits in adoptive home prior to placement. Everyone worked as a team placing the child's needs as the priority

Supervision and Opportunities for Staff:

- Social workers report that strong, supportive supervision makes it much easier to serve children and families. They also appreciate a wide variety of training that is available to them
- Supervisors review placement decisions and discuss them with social workers on a regular basis. Supervisors emphasize permanency. They assess the effectiveness of potential permanency for each potential caregiver and try to find children a home that can care for them throughout their childhood and youth
- The unit directors and division chiefs are available to review cases with supervisors and social workers to ensure that children do not get placed in inappropriate homes

Concurrent Planning:

- Having the concurrent planning staff was cited repeatedly as extremely helpful. Referral to Concurrent Planning starts immediately, freeing the social worker up so that the social worker can stay focused on the child
- When the assessments are done in the home, the home meeting is a positive process. It was stated that social workers work well with potential caregivers

Foster/Relative Placements:

- There were many aspects of foster placement that were deemed promising. There are a large number of homes available to provide care, including immediate care and there are homes available that provide care to large sibling groups
- There are social workers that work as a team with foster family agencies and trust the Foster Family Agencies (FFA's). Team Decision-Making (TDM) is a very good supportive practice and adds to stability of the child. Foster family agencies being included in TDM's are helpful in engaging the FFA as a partner with child welfare in providing high quality care for children
- The Mary Graham Children's Shelter and Walter Britton Visitation Center provide excellent support to foster family agencies. They are seen as positive supports to social work practice.
- Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS), Family Intervention and Community Support (FICS), and wrap-around services are helpful support to foster family agencies
- Relatives feel supported by the child's social worker once the child is placed. They report feeling that the social workers are available when needed and listen to the caregiver. Relatives understand their role in supporting the biological parent as well as the child and try to be a mentor for the whole family
- Licensing of County foster homes is a positive practice. Licensing staff will "drop everything" to find the best home for a child and get them quickly placed there. They work well with other social work staff. There are many County foster homes available for placement and many homes now are not "career" foster homes. The families are doing it because they are truly committed to children and want them in their lives
- County foster homes report that licensing and social worker staff is very supportive. They return phone calls and answer questions effectively. They also praised the satellite social worker in always responding to them and giving them needed information
- Children placed at the Mary Graham Children's Shelter felt supported by each other. Children feel like other children going through the same situation understand them and this makes the transition easier; making them feel less lonely and frightened.

Relationships with Community Partners:

- Mental health services are consistently provided to children and families, including foster families when needed. A triage team meets weekly at the Mary Graham Children's Shelter and at the Human Service Agency to discuss needs and provide services
- Mental health is co-located with child welfare and therefore social workers have immediate access to practitioners to have questions answered, discuss cases and get services
- Mental health and social workers have built positive relationships where they have personal "check-in" with each other to help facilitate effective service delivery and placement stabilization to children and families

Challenges:

Interviewees and focus group participants identified a number of barriers and challenges to achieving placement stability and permanency for children. The following were the most prominent recurring themes in this area.

Concurrent Planning:

A recurring theme throughout the interviews and focus groups is that the concurrent planning process to place children with relatives and non-relative caregivers is taking too long and is unduly restrictive of placing children with connected caregivers. Barriers notes were:

- Mandated in-person orientation required for all caregivers that must be completed before the child can be placed. These orientations are not always offered or not offered at times that working caregivers can attend. Also they are prohibitive to potential caregivers who work out of the area
- The required psychosocial assessment takes a long time and might be re-evaluated to see if it is prohibitive of placing children with connected caregivers. It was reported to take between sixty (60) days to four (4) months to complete a relative assessment. The assessment can conclude that the potential caregiver meets the State requirements for placement but that the Department does not recommend placement for other reasons. Social worker staff outside of concurrent planning is often unclear as to the reasons behind the conclusions
- Potential caregivers reported that they are misled initially by staff that say that the process will be done quickly and then do not hear from staff until the relative calls again, upset
- Relative caregivers reported that when the child is already placed in their home and they are awaiting placement approval they are told that payment will be retroactive considering the time that it takes for approval; however this is untrue and places an undue financial burden on the caregiver
- Relatives are not seen as a viable permanency option unless they are willing to adopt children right up front
- Relatives can be viewed by staff as being “too elderly” to care for children, “too young” to have the skills to parent effectively, not the right race to parent the child effectively, as well as same-gender couples are viewed in a negative manner, etc.
- It is reported that social workers will tell potential relatives that they are unsuitable for placement because they have a criminal history. This deters the relative from applying for placement
- Relatives do not follow-through with Livescan in a timely manner, which can hold up placement process
- There is a reluctance to use criminal history waivers on a case-by-case basis; it is hard to get through the waiver process for relative placements at the County. Old offenses are slowing down the process and keeping the child from being placed quickly. Some of the relatives are poor and there is no effort to offer assistance or advise that would assist them in completing the process
- Because of delays in the process, attorneys can recommend placements to the Court that may not be desirable and the Court will order it.
- Team decision-making could be used to assist with finding and supporting permanent placements quickly
- Relatives do not get training in caring for children and in supporting family reunification. They do not get cultural sensitivity training and can be unsupportive of children and their family values. Relative caregivers do not have kinship support services
- Immediate relative placements could be better supported with developing a practice of social workers being able to utilize emergency CLETS and being trained on how to do immediate relative placements
- There is no mechanism for comprehensive relative searches
- Permanency prognosis practices need to be re-evaluated regularly to develop timely, fluid and flexible permanency plans
- Concurrent planning is done in the front end of CWS practice, particularly with infants but not systematically with children who are in long-term care

Foster Care:

- Foster family agencies often used because of the support that they provide to social workers. Foster family agencies provide placement matching and home finding, case management, visitation and report writing support to social workers that have reported caseloads of between thirty (30) to forty (40) cases
- The current placement process is prohibitive of timely permanency placements of children. It often takes four (4) months for a permanent placement to be determined and approved for a child. By this time the child has settled in and is connected to the temporary home. In looking at what is in the best interest of the child, it does not make sense to move the child. Foster families have now adapted to this informal process and use “temporary” foster care as a “backdoor” to adopting children
- There is often inadequate communication between the foster parent and social worker. Social workers do not often see children in the homes. Foster parents reported seeing the social worker once in twelve (12) months. Foster families report being “in the dark” about the child and the family and that information sharing could be improved
- It is reported that there are times when children are changing foster homes and that there is not enough notice given. Foster families and FFA’s do not feel that they are part of a team
- According to foster parents, attorneys have not visited with the children in their care and children have not been asked to come to court
- Foster parents are confused about the County processes and differences between satellite and long-term foster care
- Foster family agencies move children among their agency homes but often do not inform the social worker until afterwards. There is a sense that if the children move within the FFA that it be not considered another placement move, when in fact for the child it is
- Foster parents feel the “overwork” and “overwhelm” of the social worker. They feel guilty for calling them and try to handle things on their own. Foster parents feel responsible for diagnosing what services a child needs and for monitoring and giving feedback on visitation
- Social workers will tell foster parents to go over and pick up children or take them to other foster parents without facilitating the process. Foster parents have encountered problems with other foster parents who may not want the child to move
- Foster family agencies do not always understand what goes behind reunification decisions and how those decisions are made. FFA’s feel like “hired help” that must perform but want to be partners with the County. They would like to understand the Case Plan and the Case Plan goals. Foster parents want to partner with the biological parents and support them but they do not have the information or relationship to do this
- It was reported that the Mary Graham Children’s Shelter is old and outdated. (The MGCS is a new facility. Some of the youth interviewed has their initial placements at the old shelter before the new MGCS was built)
- Children felt that much of the CWS staff did not care about them and are “just working for the money”
- Children reported that the standards for foster parents do not seem high. Some foster homes provide the bare minimum and favored their biological children
- Children reported that some group homes feel like a warehouse to children and that staff do not care. Some group homes are good and offer good services that support growth

Services:

- Staff feels that there is a general lack of appropriate services for children and families. One specific program that would be beneficial is a parenting class that would target families with children of all ages, not just very young children. Staff feels that foster parents lack training in general. Also, children are often sent back home too quickly without receiving needed services
- Referrals to mental health are not coming from the front end of CWS services
- Social workers feel that referrals to mental health are slow and require unnecessary paperwork that is a barrier to accessing timely services for children and families
- A more positive collaboration and communication between CWS, mental health, foster parents and biological parents is desired
- It is difficult to access therapeutic behavioral counseling, wrap-around services and services offered through the Family Intervention and Community Support Agency. There is a need to expand these services
- Social workers feel they could do better follow-up on accessing timely services for the children if they had more time to spend on cases
- The Walter Britton Visitation Center does not allow food or drink during visitation and does not foster the most natural setting possible in which the parents and children can engage in a positive way

Relationship with Attorneys and the Court:

- There exists an adversarial relationship between CWS social workers, the Court and attorneys. Staff reports that in one case, an attorney threatened a social worker with a lawsuit (regarding placement)
- Staff feels that attorneys have too much power when it comes to placement. Social workers also believe that the Court is unrealistic about requiring seven (7) day notices to an attorney when moving a child
- CWS workers and the legal community do not work as a team; this slows down the reunification process
- Attorneys do not visit with their children clients often enough
- In Court, relatives are allowed unsupervised visits without being completely assessed. Later, there might be something found in their background that prohibits unsupervised visits which can lead to further traumatization of the child(ren)

Teaming and Training Issues:

- There is a general desire for more opportunities for foster parents, social workers, foster family agencies, mental health workers, parents, the legal community and youth to work together as a team, particularly around placement decisions
- Social workers that serve cases together often don't have time to communicate with each other
- Placement decisions are made in a variety of places by a social worker or a concurrent planning work or by an attorney due to the constraints of the current system
- The San Joaquin Delta College system is very cumbersome for foster parents to use as they have to sign on as a registered student and this is a difficult process for someone who wants to take a class. There is no coordinator to assist foster parents and relative caregivers with on-going training and caregivers often do not get flyers about upcoming trainings. Caregivers lack skills in providing care to children with difficult behaviors

- There are no support groups offered for foster parents and relative caregivers to foster mentoring, communication sharing and support
- Caregivers do not get training in cultural and value issues regarding caring for CWS children and that has lead them to make mistakes in providing care to children
- Social workers are not all aware and trained on providing immediate relative placements
- There is no cross-training provided for social workers, mental health providers, foster family agencies, parents and the legal community to foster appreciation and understanding among all of the stakeholders and service providers
- It would be beneficial to provide TDM's for placement decisions throughout the life of the case and collaborative TDM training to social workers and all community based and inter-agency involved organizations as well as families
- There is no policy in place for communication among units and social workers for transferring cases. Social workers state that there is no hand-off procedure, transfer summary or team staffing when cases are moved to a different unit and/or worker
- Training is needed for shelter staff on providing effective services and high quality interactions with youth

Recommendations:

Concurrent Planning:

- Review current relative and NREFM assessment process to see where it might be expedited. Consider a different orientation process for families to meet the regulation requirements. Following placement, focus on orientation, training and permanency issues
- Consider providing all interested relatives in placement with a questionnaire to fill out instead of the social worker doing a psychosocial evaluation of all relatives. The ones that fill it out and turn it in are the ones that are very interested and can be further assessed
- Review the current prognosis assessment process and consider implementing throughout the life of the case
- Utilize criminal history waiver process more fully
- Consider embracing relative placement as a viable permanency option for a child regardless of whether or not the relative formally adopts the child
- Give relatives a deadline for getting their live-scan done and assist them with the barriers that prevent them from following through
- Consider the feasibility of implementing a mechanism for completing comprehensive relative searches
- Increase communication with Concurrent Planning: CMS monthly contacts, emails to social workers and documentation
- Analyze the practices in Concurrent Planning Unit to improve communication between units, allow social worker to do emergency CLETS for relative placements
- Eliminate personal biases in regards to relative placements
- Standardize the concurrent planning criteria
- Improve collaboration between case carrying social worker and concurrent planner
- Implement concurrent planning throughout the life of the case
- Provide family preservation funding to assist with family placement preparation

Foster Care:

- Consider the feasibility of having a placement liaison that matches children with foster homes. Consider the development of a policy to use County foster homes first before FFA homes. Consider ways to provide support for social workers that use County foster homes so that it is not a burden on them
- Utilize FFA less frequently and give them less control over placement change decisions
- Consider ways to expedite the placement process so that children are put into permanent homes much faster
- Consider supporting social workers in visiting children in the foster home more often and developing stronger partnering relationships with foster parents
- Review practices and the facility at the Mary Graham Children's Shelter to assess current caregiver/child interactions
- Consider ways to better team with foster families and foster family agencies. Communicate the case plan goals and the reasons for decisions when they are made

Teaming:

- Consider ways to build better relationships with the legal community and have on-going communication and meetings. Consider ways to cross-train together in order to build appreciation and respect for each other and to foster congruent relationships
- Consider ways that foster parents, mental health workers, parents, attorneys, and parents can work as a team to make decisions and to support healthy capacity building of the family
- Consider the feasibility of expanding the TDM process for all placement decisions throughout the life of the case
- Explore the development of a policy and procedure for communication among units and social workers for transferring cases. Consider developing a transfer summary document, conjoint staffing and introduction of new staff by the old staff to child, parent and foster parents
- Explore ways to provide more collaborative team building practices among mental health practitioners and the Agency

Training Needs:

- Provide better foster parent training; consider the addition of a foster parent training/support liaison
- Offer mentoring/training program for social workers new to a unit
- Provide training for supervisors on conflict resolution and management skills
- Hold mandatory training regarding concurrent planning laws and practices
- Train foster parents in regard to parenting difficult behaviors; provide support groups for relatives
- Train foster parents on understanding the importance of the child and family's values and culture and how to implement that knowledge in working with the children
- Provide shelter staff with engagement training with youth
- Increase training and use of the TDM process throughout the life of a case
- Provide cross-training with the Court system to increase the social workers understanding of the legal process and attorneys understanding of the social worker process
- Provide collaborative training for foster parents, social workers, FFA's and community partners in the Pride training and on an on-going basis

- Provide teaming training for social workers, foster parents, FFA staff, community partners, youth etc. to ensure that they foster reciprocal relationships and all parties involved have a common goal of supporting children and families; assisting the family in solutions focused capacity building
- Provide training to foster parents on the differences between satellite and long-term foster care, how they should view it and what they can expect regarding the differences and procedures from the Agency

System and Policy Changes:

- Explore ways to decrease caseloads and provide more support to social workers so that they have more time to spend with caregivers, children and families
- Explore the feasibility of providing more clerical support to social workers
- Consider ways to improve the Livescan process
- Consider ways to expand the TDM process
- Consider ways to improve communication between the units

State Technical Assistance:

- Funding for additional social workers
- Funding for a new Livescan machine
- More financial incentives for foster parents to encourage them to maintain placement
- Fix the Medi Cal process so that children placed out of County can access mental health services in that area
- Provide funding for the expansion of team decision-making
- Provide money to increase staffing in the Concurrent Planning Unit
- Assistance with team-building and understanding between the San Joaquin County Court System, legal community and CWS social workers
- Funding for relatives for home repairs to encourage placements
- Analyze waiver process to make sure there is no discrimination taking place

Resource Issues:

- Consider the development of parenting classes that provide skills for parenting older children
- Develop in-home supportive services for families and foster families and for transitioning children back in the home
- Consider ways to expand the Wrap-around, TBS and FICS services. Currently, there can be long waiting lists
- Consider ways to offer better training for foster and relative caregivers
- Provide additional preventative programs for substance abuse
- Consider how to offer kinship services to relatives
- Consider the development of additional medically fragile foster homes
- Develop additional group homes that offer mental health services to youth and a process for placing child more quickly into an appropriate care facility

It is an interesting point that many of the areas of improvement may have either a direct or indirect effect on the issue of disproportionality in the CWS.

San Joaquin County Probation Department:

The Probation Department selected the topic of placement stability. Probation has an AWOL rate that leads to a high rate of placement cases returning to Court. By focusing on placement stability during the PQCR process, Probation hoped to answer three main questions:

1. Why are wards running from placements?
2. Are appropriate wards being ordered to placement by The Court?
3. Are we placing wards in appropriate programs for their treatment needs? And if not, how can Probation improve its practices?

Structured interviews were conducted to gather information on Probation youth placement stability; particularly, around understanding what practices contributed to stable placements and what were the challenges that lead to multiple placements.

Probation reviewed all out of home placement cases and selected the cases that best represented the most common placement and family reunification practices. Twelve (12) cases were selected for review. Probation wanted to include cases that had multiple placements, as well as cases that had one successful placement. Six cases were chosen that had more than one placement and six (6) cases were chosen that had one successful placement.

The Probation officer interview tools were designed to gather information about practices associated with placement stability of youth, and the strengths and challenges of practice around disrupted placements.

As identified during the PQCR, the Probation Department has several strengths and promising practices.

Probation Officers' dedication to the minors they work with was overwhelmingly cited as one of San Joaquin County's strengths. Probation officers stay focused on juveniles during visits, listening carefully to determine their needs. Probation officers are careful to acknowledge good behavior and positive qualities. The probation officers outline very clearly what a child needs to do to be successful, and they hold the children accountable to encourage responsibility. They also encourage the youth to get involved in different activities.

In order to make the best placement choices, probation officers make an effort to get to know the facilities and programs with which they work. Probation officers understand that a good program leads to success with the child and to minimal re-placements. Parents and youth agree that probation officers do a very good job at this.

Probation officers have good working relationships with their placement programs. Should an issue occur, the probation officer is notified immediately. This practice ensures that problems are quickly addressed and resolved. Probation officers routinely meet with their clients monthly, as mandated.

Children being placed out-of-state have their cases reviewed by the mandated Special Multi-Disciplinary Assessment and Referral Team (SMART). Prior to the children being placed out-of-state, the SMART committee must approve their case. As a result, most youth placed out-of-state have been successful in their placements.

Probation officers utilize monthly parent meetings, held in the evenings at the Probation Department. These meetings are in an effort to encourage family involvement in the reunification process at a time that is convenient for the parents.

As well as the above noted strengths, several challenges were identified during the PQCR process.

High caseloads and excessive paperwork are the biggest challenges facing San Joaquin County probation officers. There is widespread anxiety about time management and scheduling. Staff feels that there are too many case management documents to complete, especially when caseloads are nearing forty (40). Additional clerical staff to assist with paperwork would allow probation officers to spend their time focusing more on the children in placement.

Parents feel that probation officers focus on the child and not on the family. They believe there is a lack of communication regarding the status of the case. Parents feel they are not offered services, like counseling and transportation, and often children are placed very far away. There are no encouraging practices to keep the family involved with the child.

Children feel that probation officer's change frequently (some children have had six (6) and that they do not develop relationships with the kids. Children report that "they are all business" and that they only get a call from the probation officer when they do something wrong.

Sometimes there is no vehicle for probation officers to use when doing placement visits. Further, the Department has no four wheel drive vehicles, which would be useful in some situations. It is also difficult coordinating schedules with other probation officers when they are out of the office doing visits.

Probation officers feel that they would benefit from additional training on mandated placement regulations to stay current with policy changes.

There is confusion about funding for miscellaneous items (e.g. bus tickets, air fare, and gas cards).

Probation officers report that a flex schedule would be more efficient to allow for travel time, and meeting with parents and families outside the traditional working hours, as well as give them more time to seamlessly complete follow-up paperwork and reports on the day of the occurrence.

Specific placement challenges included: there is no assessment tool specific to finding an appropriate placement; there is insufficient transportation for family visits; some families are located far away from the child's placement; there is a fundamental lack of services in some placement settings; there is no Federal Medi-Cal when placing a child out-of-state; there is a lengthy process in securing Medi-Cal coverage; children feel that making them wait for thirty (30) to sixty (60) days to visit with their parents is restrictive and disrupts the parent/child relationship; and children feel that there is a lack of vocational training that would keep them busy at the placements and give them something to do with their future.

The PQCR also set forth a list of recommendations that are specific to the Probation Department. They were as follows:

Training Needs:

- Provide cross-training with Foster Care Eligibility workers in regards to medical coverage
- Provide training on Community Care Licensing and Independent Living Programs
- Provide probation officers with training on engagement and communication with family members

System and Policy Changes:

- Consider ways to reduce caseload sizes to twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) per probation officer. This would ensure that probation officers have time to build relationships with minors and their families and actively engage in the family reunification process
- Consider the feasibility of offering flex time so probation officers can meet with families and children at times that are convenient for the parent/family
- Educate stakeholders (Court, Juvenile Hall Administration, Attorneys, etc.) on the time requirements to properly assess children's needs, find an appropriate placement, and complete required paperwork (eligibility determination, Interstate Compact approval, and SMART)
- Consider ways to provide more clerical support, including support specific to placement
- Allow placement officers an opportunity to attend the annual Northern California Placement Conference (NCPC)
- Develop an organized process to gather information about placement programs, including opportunities to visit said programs
- Increase child welfare eligibility staff dedicated to probation
- Improve relations with eligibility workers to increase information sharing, including access to records, eligibility status, and federal funding
- Improve placement options for non-federally eligible children
- Designate a CPS liaison/contact person for communication purposes
- Encourage and facilitate getting mental health support for children in remote counties

Resource Issues:

- Consider the purchase of a four-wheel drive vehicle to make placement visits in isolated areas
- Need miscellaneous funding for transportation and birth certificates/records
- Increase technical support; i.e., laptops, scanners, email, PDA's
- Need a placement assessment tool to ensure appropriate placement for minors
- Develop more transportation resources for parents
- Develop higher level in-state placement facilities, particularly for arsonists and heavily involved gang members

The ultimate goal of the PQCR was to identify ways to improve the Child Welfare Services and Probation's practices relating to it. The Probation Department has already embraced many of the recommendation contained in the PQCR and has started to address several of these challenges.

As mentioned elsewhere in this Child Welfare Self Assessment, the Department is implementing Evidence-Based Programs and an associated validated risk assessment that will benefit placement in securing an appropriate placement. Also, planning has started with HSA/CWS to begin cross training with Foster Care Eligibility workers.

Most importantly, the Department went before the Board of Supervisors and secured an additional probation officer position for the Placement Unit for Fiscal Year 2007-2008. This additional officer will reduce the average caseload size from 35 to 27, thus allowing the probation officer more time to work with each minor and their family, complete thorough reports, assessments, and paperwork, as well as give them additional time to attend such extracurricular events as the Northern California Placement Conference. Additionally, the Department also dedicated an additional Senior Office Assistant to be dedicated to the Placement Unit's clerical support functions.

Finally, the Department has adopted a trial flex-time schedule for placement officers that will allow them to work a 9/80 flexible schedule, thus giving them more time in a day to complete placement visits, family visits, and associated case paperwork to assist in the reunification process.

Community and Provider Surveys:

A Community Survey and a Provider Survey were developed and disseminated to gather input about strategies for preventing child abuse and neglect and assisting parents experiencing stress and anger. English and Spanish Community Surveys were distributed to San Joaquin County families. An online Provider Survey was distributed in English to professionals who work with children and families. A total of 1,105 Community Surveys and 141 Provider Surveys were completed. Survey findings are presented below.

SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT), Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), and Promotion Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Plan

The following is a summary of findings from the needs assessment. Results from the Community Member and Provider Surveys are presented in the tables below, followed by a discussion of overall findings from the needs assessment.

Survey Results

Question 1	Response Choices	Community Members	Providers
Which of the following are problems for parents in SJ County? (Check your <u>top two</u> choices.)*	Not enough jobs	55%	28%
	Not enough good child care	18%	8%
	Crime and violence	47%	46%
	Drugs	34%	49%
	Not enough affordable housing places where families live and work	40%	40%
	Lack of recreation activities for families	20%	8%
	Lack of good schools for children	13%	7%
	Other	6%	11%
Question 2	Response Choices	Community Members	Providers
What can our Commission do to prevent child abuse and neglect? (Check your <u>top two</u> choices.)*	Help for parents experiencing stress (hot lines, counselors, crisis nurseries, etc)	52%	52%
	Classes to help parents solve family problems	53%	43%
	Training for people like teachers, school nurses, doctors, to identify signs of family stress or abuse	33%	27%
	Information (ads, brochures) about child abuse in English and other languages	22%	12%
	Help for parents to deal with crime and drugs in their neighborhoods	44%	46%
	Other	5%	16%

Question 3	Response Choices	Community Members	Providers
How can our Commission help parents experiencing stress and anger get the help they need? (Check your <u>top two</u> choices.)*	Parent groups or programs offered close to home (such as at a school or community center)	51%	45%
	Home visits to help parents learn parenting and other skills	37%	42%
	Classes for parents (housing, jobs, parenting classes, money management)	47%	36%
	Better ways to connect families to the services they need (at a "one-stop" center, resource fairs, etc.)	39%	54%
	More child care and activities so parents can get a break	33%	12%
	Other	3%	6%
Question 4	Response Choices	Community Members	Providers
If their children have been taken in to foster care, what do you think parents need to help them be reunited with their kids more quickly? (Check your <u>top two</u> choices.)*	Treatment programs for abuse, drug addiction, or other problems	65%	68%
	One-on-one counseling from their case worker or social worker	42%	36%
	Support to help them follow their case plan and manage their daily lives	54%	70%
	To be treated fairly by child welfare services regardless of their race or culture	38%	10%
	Other	5%	10%
Question 5	Response Choices	Community Members	Providers
After a family has been reunited, what kinds of support do you think parents need so the children are not removed again? (Check your <u>top two</u> choices.)*	Regular follow up by a case manager for support, mentoring and connection to service programs	65%	74%
	Community groups (church, support groups, elders/mentors, resource centers)	30%	29%
	Stable jobs and housing	56%	42%
	Affordable child care	27%	10%
	Help with a drug or alcohol problem	34%	36%
	Other	4%	5%
Question 6	Response Choices	Community Members	Providers
How can community organizations be more effective in serving San Joaquin County's families? (Check your <u>top two</u> choices.)*	More neighborhood programs for families	51%	43%
	Staff that speak the same language as the people they are serving	36%	36%
	Better ways for agencies to work together to help families	42%	35%
	More parent involvement in solving family problems	42%	37%
	Partnerships between county agencies and community groups (like churches, community centers)	37%	38%
	Other	2%	9%

Overall Findings

Parents are struggling to gain basic life skills.

According to the community survey respondents, the biggest problem faced by parents in the county is not enough jobs. Non-White respondents were more likely to indicate not enough jobs as a problem than were White respondents. Secondary data shows that high school graduation rates have declined over the last three school years, and those dropping out are predominantly African American, Hispanic/Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander. Following jobs, crime and violence, not enough affordable housing, and drugs were the next most pressing problems. These concerns were echoed in the provider survey, with drugs as the top problem, followed by crime and violence and housing.

These responses indicate that parents are struggling to provide for their families in very basic ways. These struggles create stress and anger for parents. When asked how to help parents experiencing stress and anger, community members' top choices were parent groups or programs close to home and classes for parents (on finding housing and jobs, parenting, money management). This suggests parents need assistance with basic life skills for managing their daily lives and families.

Drugs, Crime and Violence

Drugs and crime and violence are serious issues confronted by the county's parents. Community members put them in their top four concerns and they were the top two responses identified by providers. In addition, both community members and providers indicated that to prevent child abuse and neglect they would like the Commission to help parents deal with crime and drugs in their neighborhoods. Furthermore, treatment programs, including those for abuse and drug addiction, were among the top two responses for both providers and community members when asked what parents whose children are in the system need to help them be reunified with their children.

Parenting Education, Support Groups, Classes

Survey responses show that parents want to improve their parenting skills and manage family problems and gain life skills. Classes to help solve family problems were the top answer given by community members about how to help prevent child abuse and neglect. In addition, parent support groups and programs, followed by life skills classes (housing, jobs, parenting, money management), were the two most common answers to how the Commission can help parents experiencing stress and anger get the help they need.

Similarly, in write-in comments providers suggested that classes on topics such as anger management, communication, and family life/parenting should be offered in middle school to engage youth before they reach adulthood.

Crisis Support and Linking of Families to Services

Help for parents during times of stress (such as hot lines, counselors, crisis nurseries, etc.) was the second most common response for community members and the top choice for providers to the question of how the Commission can help prevent child abuse and neglect.

When asked how the Commission can help parents experiencing stress and anger get the help they need, providers indicated as their top choice that better ways are needed to connect families to the services they

need. While 39% of the overall community survey respondents selected this option, previous service users were statistically more likely to select it (46%, n=282).

Neighborhood-based Programs & Involve Parents in Problem Solving

Both providers and community members selected more neighborhood based programs for families as the best way community organizations could be more effective in meeting the needs of families. On the community member survey, White and African American respondents were statistically more likely to select this option than Hispanic/Latino respondents. Parent involvement in solving family problems was also supported, and community members who had past experience with services for a family problem were statistically more likely to select this option than those who had not.

Other survey responses suggest a preference for locally accessible services. Community members rated classes for parents (housing, jobs, parenting, money management) and parent groups offered close to home as the best ways to help parents experiencing stress and anger.

Disparities

A serious racial disparity is evident in the secondary data reported through the CWS/CMS. With regard to child maltreatment referral and substantiation rates, roughly three times as many maltreatment referrals are made for Black/African American children than for White and Hispanic/Latino children (who comprise the majority of the child population.), while their rates of substantiation are similar to other groups. Black/African American children have the highest incidence of first entry into foster care (almost three times the next highest rate for Hispanic/Latino children, see Exhibit 21). Black/African American children are over represented in the foster care system. The proportions for the Hispanic/Latino and White cohorts in foster care mirror the County's total child population. Similar comparisons for Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American children indicate that these children are in the system at lower percentages than they represent in the County's child population. Yet for Black/African American children, we again see a disparity. These children comprise 8.6% of the county's child population, but they make up 23.4% of those in foster care (See Exhibits 4 and 25).

In addition, data show that African American girls and women also have the highest rate of low birth weight babies and the second highest rate of teen births (See Exhibits 27 and 28). African Americans also have the second highest high school drop out rate (Exhibit 10).

The analyses of responses by African Americans to the community survey did not suggest a prevailing attitude that they receive unequal treatment with regard to the foster care system. A full 38% of the community member survey sample chose this option, but only 31% of African American respondents (n=151) indicated that parents whose children are in the system "need to be treated fairly regardless of race or culture" to help them be reunited with their children more quickly. By contrast, Hispanic/Latino respondents were statistically more likely to choose this response option (41%, n=547).

Culturally & Linguistically Competent Services

Hispanic/Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander respondents to the survey requested more linguistically diverse service delivery in answer to the question about how community organizations can be more effective and in the open-ended question inviting comments. In addition, a higher proportion of Hispanic/Latino community members (41%, n=547) reported that parents need "to be treated fairly by child welfare services regardless of their race or culture" in order to be reunited with their kids than

community members who identified as Asian/Pacific Islander (36%, n=113), African American (31%, n=151), or White (26%, n=154). In addition, written comments on the survey requested “more culturally sensitive” and “multilingual services.”

Home Visiting for Hispanic/Latino Families

Home visiting is a strategy for culturally competent service delivery with Hispanic/Latino families. Statements made by community members and the community survey findings reveal a preference by Hispanic/Latino families for home visiting. While home visiting was the fourth most popular response for how to help parents experiencing stress and anger (indicated by 37% of total sample), analysis of this question by race/ethnicity showed that a significantly higher proportion of Hispanic/Latino respondents (44%, n=547) identified this option than other race/ethnicity categories. Similarly, when community members were asked to indicate the location where they would feel most comfortable receiving different types of services, Hispanic/Latino respondents were statistically more likely to select “the home” for receiving parenting classes (41%, n=461) and help with money management, finding a job or housing (29%, n=447). These findings suggest that programs targeting Hispanic/Latinos should consider the use of home visiting as the mechanism for service delivery.

Case Management & Community Support for Families in the System

Two responses stood out for both community members and providers when asked what parents whose children have been taken into foster care need in order to be reunited with their children – treatment programs for abuse and drug addiction and support to help follow their case plan and manage their daily lives. While 54% of the overall respondent group selected the latter, community members with experience of services were statistically more likely to select it (62%, n=282).

When asked about the kind of support that parents need after being reunified, the community and the provider respondents agreed that regular follow up by a case manager was most important, with stable jobs and housing following as second. Further analysis showed that a significantly higher proportion of community members who had accessed services in the past (41%, n=282) additionally identified community groups (such as church, support groups, elders/mentors, resource centers) in answer to this question than did those who had not. Prior service users were also more likely to choose affordable child care as a type of support needed by parents during post-reunification (23%, n=282). In addition, write in comments by both providers and community members noted the need for “more effective” and “more compassionate” social workers and case managers.

II. SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (COMPONENTS)

As a result of the San Joaquin County Child Welfare Self Assessment, several areas for system strengths and areas needing improvement were identified. With the recommendation of the California Department of Social Services that counties only address three to four outcome indicators or systemic factors each year, San Joaquin County will be addressing the following outcome indicators or systemic factors in this SIP:

Child Welfare Services:

- Recurrence of maltreatment
- Re-entry into foster care
- Placement stability

Outcome indicators to be addressed over the future course of the Children and Family Service Review process in San Joaquin County include:

Permanency Outcomes:

- Length of Time to Exit Foster Care to Reunification.
- Length of Time to Exit Foster Care to Adoption.
- Multiple Foster Care Placements.
- Siblings Placed Together in Foster Care.
- Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood.

Differential Response

Differential Response Services are provided to families as an early intervention and prevention service aimed at reducing the recurrence of substantiated child abuse and neglect referrals, thereby strengthening families to improve outcomes for the families and children.

The Differential Response Program will operate as follows:

- Utilizing financial resources from the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funding and Child Welfare Outcome and Improvement funding, will issue three grants: 1) Domestic Violence, 2) Spanish speaking clients, 3) general neglect cases. Incoming referrals that are Path I cases, evaluated out due to not meeting the definition of child abuse or neglect or appear to be low risk will be referred to the most appropriate agency for assessment, information and referrals. Some of these cases will be referred to case management services. CWS will also refer out Path II cases where a social worker has gone to the home, investigated and assessed the situation and determines they are low to medium risk and the client would benefit from the services of a CBO instead of entering the CWS. These cases will be referred to the community-based organization (CBO) that is most suited to meet their needs for case management services.
- A monthly meeting of all of the agencies providing differential response services is coordinated and facilitated by Child Welfare Services. This meeting has been instrumental in the ongoing evolution of improving services, communication, policy and procedures, cross-training, and problem-solving
- Each of the non-profit agencies providing differential response case management services are required to use a case management software program designed specifically for San Joaquin County. Technical assistance and ongoing program update support is provided through a contract with The San Joaquin

County Data Coop. This program provides the ability to not only document case management activities, but to also provide monthly, quarterly and annual reports for the service providers

- An agency with experience in dealing with domestic violence, through a contract with CWS, will receive differential response referrals for low risk domestic violence cases with children in the home. They will also accompany CWS staff for joint responses on medium to high risk cases

Post Reunification Services:

Post reunification services will be made available to assist families who have had their children in the Child Welfare System make a smooth transition from foster care back to the family. Two months prior to a family being reunified, the Family Reunification/Maintenance social worker will refer the parent(s) to a community-based organization that has been selected through the Request for Proposal process in order to arrange for a Team Decision Making (TDM) conference. Representatives from all identified community and agencies, along with the parent(s), relatives and friends come to the table to assist the family in putting a plan together to ensure the parent(s) have all the necessary components of their case plan completed. Goals are set for when the children are returned, and the parent(s) know who they can count on for assistance and an understanding on what is expected to ensure the children can be kept in the home. Following the TDM, the CBO will provide case management services for a minimum of three months. This enables the family to have contact with a community-based organization that can help them connect with community services.

Placement Stability:

As concurrent planning begins responding to the concurrent planning recommendations in the Peer Quality Case Review, they are working on streamlining documentation and paperwork; and developing trainings to identify and examine personal and institutional biases to ensure timely placement of the child. The Child Welfare Division Chief will review any case in which a child had an approved relative/NREFM home but placement was not made with the approved party.

A minimum of two recruitment activities per month and building additional training segments into the PRIDE and relative/NREFM trainings will identify a broader base of potential foster parents and appropriately trained them in working with the unique issues that many of the children in CWS possess. The development of the San Joaquin County Foster Family Association 24-hour crisis line and respite care for permanent placement foster parents will give foster parents a place to turn, peers to connect with, and needed respite care that will assist in maintaining permanent placements.

To increase the number of relative/NREFM placements, a concurrent planning social worker will attend every disposition hearing to obtain as many relative names as possible. This combined with contracting with a relative search engine will assist in identifying as many relatives/NREFM as possible to ensure, when possible, a child can remain within their own family and/or community.

Joint Assessment Meetings (JAMs) will be held twice a week with all pertinent personal to review incoming cases and begin permanent placement planning. Those cases where a family was not chosen will continue to return to the JAM process until the appropriate placement is completed, ensuring successful permanent placement for each child.

Probation:

- Social Systemic Factors
- Process for parent/child/youth participation in case planning

Out of Home Placement:

The San Joaquin County Probation Department identified several challenges affecting the service delivery to youth in out of home placement. Reducing the caseload size of Placement probation officers from 40 to 25-30 youth per caseload helps to ensure probation officers have time to build relationships with youth and their families and actively engage in the family reunification process. By requesting funding from the County General Fund for an additional placement officer, caseloads would be reduced to the recommended levels.

To negotiate through the Meet and Confer process with the San Joaquin County Probation Officers Association and Probation Administration, the development of a 1-year pilot project offering flexible work hours to specified probations units. This would allow for a workweek that can include evening and weekend hours.

Review current organizational structure of the Juvenile Division and analyze clerical support resources and duties. This would allow existing support staff assigned to the Placement Unit to provide additional clerical support.

Case Review System: Process of Parent-Child-Youth Participation in Case Planning:

Implement a system to ensure that every youth and parent/guardian is interviewed before the probation officer completes/updates the case plan. Presently, there are some circumstances where the youth and /or parent/guardian are not interviewed and the probation officer relies solely on his/her personal knowledge and/or prior case history to develop the case plan.

Clearly explain to the youth and parent/guardian the purpose of the case plan and their individual roles and responsibilities. Presently, the case plan is designed to primarily address tasks to be completed by the youth with little or no emphasis on parental responsibilities.

Implement a validated risk assessment tool to identify the youth's criminogenic needs in the development of a case plan. Currently there is no assessment of the risk factors associated with the youth's delinquent activity.

Develop a dedicated Assessment Unit to perform initial assessments of all youth referred to the Probation Department and develop required case plans. Currently there is no tool in place to objectively assess a youth's risk factors.

Improve the probation officers' ability to gather meaningful information during their interviews with the youth and parent/guardian. This would provide training on how to effectively solicit meaningful information from the youth and parent/guardian.

Outcome/Systemic Factor: Outcome Measure C1.4 - Re-entry into Foster Care following reunification

County's Current Performance: For the time period of 7/1/05 through 6/30/06, the County's current performance for re-entry into foster care following reunification was 13.9% versus 12.0% for the State.

Improvement Goal 1.0: To decrease the re-entry rate to 8.6%, the Federal standard

Strategy 1.1: Referrals of Families to the Team Decision Meeting Reunification Program, prior to reunification. Funding will be provided through Promoting Safe and Stable Families. **Strategy Rationale:** Through the TDM process, with follow-up post-reunification services for those families reunified, re-entry into foster care will be decreased.

Milestone	Timeframe	Assigned to
1.1.1: All family social worker units with supervised Family Reunification cases will refer families to TDM prior to the final decision to re-unify.	Ongoing 4/1/08 to 3/31/09	CWS Family Reunification Social Workers
1.1.2: A community-based agency, under contract, will coordinate and facilitate all TDM meetings.	Ongoing 4/1/08 to 3/31/09	Community Based Agency

Strategy 1.2: Provide Case Management services to all families in which children are re-unified.

Strategy Rationale: By providing post-reunification services case management, in addition to the limited services of CWS Social Workers, the provider can be available weekly to problem solve, coordinate services and provide general assessments in an effort to minimize family crisis and re-entry of children into foster care.

Milestone	Time frame	Assigned to
1.2.1: After the TDM process has been completed, case management services will be provided.	4/1/08 to 3/31/09	Community Based Agency
1.2.2: Provide follow-up TDM meetings	4/1/08 to 3/31/09	Community Based Agency, CWS, and Public and Private Agencies

Improvement Goal 2.0: To reduce the disproportionate number of African American children referred to Child Protective Services, with substantiated referrals and the number entering foster care.

Strategy 2.1: Conduct training for all CWS staff **Strategy Rationale:** Continued training should lead to enhancement of culturally competent practice.

Milestone		Timeframe	Assigned to
2.1.1: Two trainings will be provided to all CWS staff.		4/1/08 to 3/31/09	CWS and contracted consultant
2.1.2: Training for managers and supervisors on curriculum for supervising cases, taking into consideration cultural and fairness and equity issues.		4/1/08 to 3/31/09	CWS and contracted consultant

Strategy 2. 2: Conduct training for Community Partners

Strategy Rationale: Further training of Community Partners should enhance the practice of cultural competence in prevention/early intervention work

Milestone		Time frame	Assigned to
2.2.1: Two Community Forums		4/1/08 to 3/31/09	CWS and contracted consultant

Improvement Goal 3.0: To reduce the number of parents relapsing into substance abuse.

Strategy 3. 1: Prior to reunification, all parents with a substance abuse problem will be referred to appropriate treatment services

Strategy Rationale: By providing substance abuse treatment services prior to reunification, parents will have the opportunity to become sober, with on-going support services, reunification rates should increase and rates of re-entry into foster care should decrease.

Milestone		Timeframe	Assigned to
3.1.1: Parents with substance abuse problems will be immediately referred to treatment services upon the initiation of Dependency Proceedings		Ongoing 4/1/08 to 3/31/09	CWS, Substance Abuse Treatment Providers
3.1.2: Parents with substance abuse problems will be assigned to the Dependency Drug Court for monitoring by the Dependency Court Judge		Ongoing 4/1/08 to 3/31/09	Dependency Court Judge

<p>Discuss changes in identified systemic factors needed to further support the improvement goals.</p> <p>The most important systemic factor affecting this outcome continues to be the fiscal shortage that keeps public and private service providers from being able to provide prevention and early intervention services to at-risk families. HSA continues to address this issue through the pooling of resources in community collaborative in order that the costs are shared with a wide range of partners.</p>
<p>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.</p> <p>Training and staff development continue to be strong elements of our redesign effort. As San Joaquin County expands to a countywide approach through the utilization of Team Decision Making, comprehensive training modules will continue to be used.</p>
<p>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.</p> <p>HSA will continue to partner with the Community Partnership for Families, a multi-agency consortium serving the entire county. The Partnership will continue to staff the Family Success Teams and work closely with HSA and other key county departments – Probation, Public Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Services – in delivering services and conducting TDMs. HSA has also provided training to other agencies on fairness and equity issues. These agencies are not responsible to look within their organizations for change.</p>
<p>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.</p> <p>N/A</p>

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

County's Current Performance: For the time period of 7/1/06 through 6/30/07, the county's current performance for no recurrence of Maltreatment is 93.3%, versus 92.5% for the state.

Improvement Goal 1.0: To Increase no recurrence of maltreatment to 95%

Strategy 1.1: Continue the transition into using the Structured Decision Making (SDM) tool for determining risk and safety issues for children referred to Child Welfare Services (CWS). Cases referred to CWS will be initially assessed to determine the appropriate response by CWS. Cases investigated and determined to be substantiated or inconclusive will undergo a safety assessment and the case will be referred for appropriate services.	Strategy Rationale: Use of the SDM tool should enhance the ability of CWS to investigate and conduct safety assessments to determine appropriate services. The strategy should result in lowering the recurrence of maltreatment by connecting families with services to reduce safety issues for families and build upon family strengths.
<p>1.1.1: Conduct initial case assessments on referrals to CWS to determine appropriate response of the evaluate out, ten-day response or immediate response.</p> <p>1.1.2: Upon the initial investigation of referrals to CWS, complete a safety assessment.</p> <p>1.1.3: Following the results of the safety assessment for cases which were substantiated or inconclusive, a risk assessment is completed. The case is referred to appropriate services, which include community referral for Differential Response Case Management Services or Juvenile Court Intervention.</p> <p>1.1.4: Utilize the Team Decision Making (TDM) process for appropriate cases, after completion of SDM safety assessment, to determine appropriate service plan, including possible Family Maintenance Services and Family Reunification Services.</p>	<p>Ongoing 4/1/08 – 3/31/09</p> <p>Ongoing 4/1/08 – 3/31/09</p> <p>Ongoing 4/1/08 – 3/31/09</p>
<p>Milestone</p>	<p>Timeframe</p>
<p>Assigned to</p>	<p>CWS Intake and Assessment Program/Cover Center Supervisor</p> <p>CWS Intake and Assessment Program Social Workers and Supervisors</p> <p>CWS Intake and Assessment Social Workers and Supervisors</p> <p>CWS Intake and Assessment Program, CWS, Juvenile Court Intake Program, Voluntary Family Maintenance Program</p>

<p>Strategy 1.2: Continue the differential response program for Path 1 and Path 2 referrals. Funding will continue to be provided through Promoting Safe and Stable Family funds and through Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Program funds.</p>	<p>Strategy Rationale: Path 1 Differential Response referrals evaluated out of Child Protective Services (CPS) to community-based agencies, allows for voluntary early intervention and prevention services, with a goal of reducing the number of cases referred to CPS and the number of cases substantiated and re-substantiated. Path 2 Differential Response cases, which CPS responds to directly, often times with a community partner, will refer cases which do not require further CPS services, to community-based agencies for Differential Response Case Management Services. These cases will include previously substantiated cases of medium to low risk, which could benefit from case management services and prevent recurrence of maltreatment.</p>
<p>Milestone</p> <p>1.2.1 Refer up to 50 cases per week to community based agencies contracted to provide Path 1 DR Assessments.</p> <p>1.2.2 Refer up to 60 cases per month of Path 2 and 3 Differential Response cases to community-based DR case management services</p> <p>1.2.3 Coordinate and facilitate monthly DR collaborative meetings with contracted CBO's for training, problem solving, sharing of information, and updates</p> <p>1.2.4 Continued refinement and support for the DR Case Management/Data System.</p> <p>1.2.5 Continued assignment of CPS staff to law enforcement agencies for joint response on child abuse, neglect, and domestic violence referrals.</p> <p>1.2.6 Joint response of CPS and San Joaquin County Mental Health clinicians for referrals with possible mental health issues for parents or children.</p> <p>1.2.7 Joint response of CPS and San Joaquin County Public Health Foster Care Nurses for cases with medically fragile children.</p>	<p>Timeframe</p> <p>Ongoing 4/1/08 to 3/31/09</p> <p>Ongoing 4/1/08 to 3/31/09</p> <p>Ongoing 4/1/08/ to 3/31/09</p> <p>Ongoing 4/1/08 to 3/31/09</p> <p>Assigned to</p> <p>CWS</p> <p>CWS and Contracted Agencies</p> <p>CWS and Contracted DR Agencies</p> <p>Contracted Data Agency, Contracted DR Agencies, CWS</p> <p>CWS, Tracy Police Department, Stockton Police Department</p> <p>CWS and San Joaquin County Mental Health</p> <p>CWS and San Joaquin County Public Health</p>

Strategy 1.3: Parenting classes for parents not referred to the Child Welfare system. Classes would address general parenting issues and be offered throughout San Joaquin County. Funding will be provided by CAPIT and CBCAP funds.		Strategy Rationale: By providing parenting classes and an early intervention/prevention strategy, it is anticipated that fewer families would be referred to Child Welfare services.	
Milestone	1.3.1 To offer parenting classes to 250 identified participants	Timeframe	7/1/08 through 6/31/09
Milestone	Strategy 1.4: Twenty-four hour, seven days a week crisis hotline for children and parents in which children may be at risk of child abuse and neglect. Hotline staff would provide telephone crisis counseling and home assessments/contacts as necessary, in order to assist families with resolving crises and referring to the appropriate community services. Funding will be provided through CAPIT and CBCAP funds.	Timeframe	7/1/08 through 6/31/09
Milestone	1.4.1 To receive up to 100 calls per month and make 10 home calls per month.	Assigned to	Contracted Agency
Milestone		Assigned to	Contracted Agency

Improvement Goal 2.0: To reduce the disproportionate number of African American children referred to Child Protective Services, with substantiated referrals and the number entering foster care.

Strategy 2.1 Conduct training for all CWS staff		Strategy Rationale Continued training should lead to enhancement of culturally competent practice	
Milestone	Timeframe	Assigned to	
2.1.1 Two trainings will be provided to all CWS staff	4/1/08 to 3/31/09	CWS and contracted consultant	
2.1.2 Training for managers and supervisors on curriculum for supervising cases, taking into consideration cultural and fairness and equity issues.	4/1/08 to 3/31/09	CWS and contracted consultant	
Strategy 2.2 Conduct training for Community Partners		Strategy Rationale Further training of Community Partners should enhance the practice of cultural competence in prevention/early intervention work.	
Milestone	Timeframe	Assigned to	
2.2.1 Two community forums	4/1/08 to 3/31/09	CWS and contracted consultant	
<p>Discuss changes in identified systemic factors needed to further support the improvement goals. Identified systemic factors needed to further support improvement goals including increased funding for the provision of early intervention/prevention services for at-risk children and families. Currently, limited CAPIT, PSSF and CBCAP funds are utilized.</p> <p>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Training and staff development continue to be strong elements in our DR improvement activities. Although our needs are minimally met, increased funding for on-going training for specific evidence based practices would be beneficial.</p> <p>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. N/A</p>			

Outcome/Systemic Factor: Outcome measures C4.1, C4.2, and C4.3 – Placement Stability

County's Current Performance:

In San Joaquin County during the year of 2006, the percentage of children with two or fewer placements; in care eight days to twelve months was 69.4%; the state percentage was 81.6%. The percentages of children with two or fewer placements; in care at least 12 months but less than 24 months, 41.5% in San Joaquin County; the state average was 60.9.

Improvement Goal 1.0 To decrease the number of placements for children in care eight days or longer to two or less placements by 25%.

Strategy 1.1 Increase the number of County permanent placement homes immediately available for placement will make certain less homes.

Milestone		Timeframe		Assigned to	
1.1.1 Conduct a minimum of two recruitment activities monthly to reach a larger segment of San Joaquin County.		04/01/08 – 03/31/09		CWS/Licensing	
1.1.2 Build additional training segments onto the PRIDE training and the relative/NREFM trainings designed to better educate foster parents of the following issues: How to care for drug exposed infants; how to better work with the bio-family during the reunification process; how to handle teen issues; anger issues the child presents; long term issues: ADHD, depression, runaways, bipolar, etc.		08/01/08 – 03/31/09		CWS/Licensing	
1.1.3 Assist in creating a networking system with the San Joaquin County Foster Family Association designed to provide 24-hour crisis line and respite care for permanent placement foster parents.		04/31/09 – 03/31/09		CWS/Licensing San Joaquin County Foster Family Association	

Strategy 1.2 To increase the number of relative/NREFM placements		Strategy Rationale: To keep the child within their own family and/or community
Milestone		
1.2.1. Have a concurrent planning social worker attend every disposition hearing in order to obtain as many relative names as possible	04/01/08 – 03/31/09	CWS/Concurrent Planning
1.2.2. Contract with a relative search engine to identify as many possible relatives and how to contract them as possible.	04/31/09 – 03/31/09	CWS/Concurrent Planning Relative Search Engine
1.2.3. Mail letters regarding placement needs to all potential relatives/NREFM's within 3 working days after receiving the contact information with a 10-day timeframe for response.	04/01/08 – 03/31/09	CWS/Concurrent Planning
1.2.4. Begin relative/NREFM evaluation process on all relatives who expressed interest immediately.	04/01/08	CWS/Concurrent Planning
1.2.5. Evaluate the current Concurrent Planning system for documenting and evaluating relative/NREFM placements to eliminate duplication, slow and cumbersome paperwork, and develop a system that can place a child in appropriate homes within 14 days following the disposition hearing. Examples are: social workers being able to utilize emergency CLETS and being trained on how to do immediate relative assessments; examine the necessity of currently required psychosocial assessment; to not eliminate a relative because they may not express a wish to adopt a child initially.	04/01/08 – 03/31/09	CWS/Concurrent Planning/Court/Adoptions
1.2.6. To examine personal biases, institutional biases, etc. to determine if possible relative/NREFM placements are held to a higher standard than necessary. To eliminate any unnecessary restrictions in ensuring timely placement of the child. Examples are: age (to young/to elderly); racial bias; same-gender couples; lack of consistency in how criminal waivers are addressed.	04/01/08 – 03/31/09	CWS/Concurrent Planning
Timeframe		
Assigned to		

<p>1.2.7 Conduct two trainings to all CWS staff on culturally competent practice which address fairness and equity issues.</p>	<p>4/1/08 – 3/31/09</p>	<p>CWS and contracted consultant</p>
<p>1.2.8 Child Welfare Division Chief to review any case in which a child had an approved relative/NREFM home but placement was maintained or new placement made with a non-relative/NREFM home.</p>	<p>04/01/08 – 03/31/09</p>	<p>Child Welfare Division Chief</p>

<p>Strategy 1.3 Coordinate and facilitate Joint Assessment Meetings (JAM's) to review every child that enters the system to assess placement.</p>		<p>Strategy Rationale: Reduce the time a child is placed in a FFA home, Satellite Home, Mary Graham Children's Shelter, or temporary County Foster Home and be placed in an appropriately matched permanent placement home.</p>	
<p>Milestone</p> <p>1.3.1 To conduct two JAM meetings per week with all pertinent personal at the meeting to review incoming cases and begin permanent placement planning.</p> <p>1.3.2 Develop a method of tracking each case reviewed by the JAM team, ensuring success for each child.</p> <p>1.3.3 JAM's develop dialogue among all divisions and/or units that will assist in consistency in placement issues, identify training needs, etc.</p>	<p>Timeframe</p> <p>04/01/08 – 03/30/09</p> <p>04/01/08 – 03/30/09</p> <p>04/01/08 – 03/30/09</p>	<p>Assigned to</p> <p>CWS/Concurrent Planning/Court/Adoptions</p> <p>CWS/Concurrent Planning</p> <p>CWS</p>	
<p>Discuss changes in identified systemic factors needed to further support the improvement goals. Identify systemic factors that hinder the process of ensuring a child two or less placements and make required changes to current policies and procedures.</p>			
<p>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Provide funding to assist Foster Family Association in establishing a 24-hour crisis line and coordination of respite care Training and staff development regarding current laws in Concurrent Planning and Licensing. Additional funding to assist in recruitment and the cost of a relative search engine.</p>			
<p>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Partnering with outside agencies, community groups, faith-based organizations, educational system, media, etc. to work with County Foster Family Coordinator to identify additional avenues of connecting with and recruiting permanent placement foster homes. Identify and contract with a relative search engine to quickly identify as many relatives of children in the CWS as possible.</p>			
<p>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. N/A</p>			

Outcome/Systemic Factor: Systemic Factor H: Local Systemic Factors

County's Current Performance:

Through the Peer Quality Case Review process, the Probation Department identified several challenges affecting the service delivery to the youth in out-of-home placement.

Improvement Goal 1.0

Reduce the caseload sizes of Placement probation officers from 40 to 25-30 youth per caseload to help ensure probation officers have time to build relationships with youth and their families and actively engage in the family reunification process.

Strategy 1.1

Request funding from the County General Fund for an additional placement officer.

Strategy Rationale
By adding an additional placement officer, caseloads would be reduced to the recommended levels.

Milestone	Timeframe	Assigned to
1.1.1 Write a Supplemental Funding Request for the addition of a Probation Officer I/II.	April 15, 2007	Juvenile Division Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer
1.1.2 Meet with the County Administrator to justify need for additional probation officer.	May 2007	Probation Administration
1.1.3 Hire additional Probation Officer I/II and assign to the Juvenile Placement Unit.	September 17, 2007	Juvenile Division Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer

Improvement Goal 2.0

Offer flexible work hours to allow the probation officers to meet with families and children at times that are convenient for the parent.

Strategy 2.1

Negotiate through the Meet and Confer process with the San Joaquin County Probation Officers Association and Probation Administration, the development of a 1-year pilot project offering flexible work hours to specified probation units.

Strategy Rationale

Traditionally, probation officers work a standard Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. workweek, which does not allow for evening appointments.

Milestone	Timeframe	Assigned to
2.1.1 Allow probation officers to work a flex time schedule.	January 7, 2008	Chief Probation Officer
2.2.2 Hold monthly parent meetings in the evening and schedule individual appointments with parents.	Ongoing	Juvenile Division Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer and Placement Probation Unit Supervisor
2.1.3 Monitor increased availability for evening appointments with parents/guardians.	Ongoing	Juvenile Division Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer and Juvenile Division Probation Unit Supervisors

Improvement Goal 3.0

Provide more clerical support to the Placement Unit probation officers to assist with the large volume of required paperwork, which would allow the probation officers to spend more time focusing on the youth in placement.

Strategy 3.1

Strategy Rationale

Review current organizational structure of the Juvenile Division and analyze clerical support resources and duties.

The existing support staff assigned to the Placement Unit consisted of one Senior Office Assistant, which was not able to provide enough clerical support.

Milestone		Timeframe		Assigned to	
3.1.1 Meet with Placement Probation Unit Supervisor and the Clerical Support Supervisor of the Juvenile Division to assess responsibilities and allocation of resources.		September 2007		Juvenile Division Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer	
3.1.2 Redistribute workload and assign second clerical support to the Placement Unit.		September 2007		Juvenile Division Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer	
3.1.3 Provide cross training to all support staff in the Juvenile Division to act as back-ups to the Placement Unit when the need arises.		July 2008		Juvenile Division Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer and Clerical Support Supervisor	

Discuss changes in identified systemic factors needed to further support the improvement goals.

The San Joaquin County has been working on implementing the recommendations identified in the Peer Quality Case Review process.

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.

Probation Supervisors and Administration are responsible for ensuring probation officers and support staff assigned to the Placement Unit are knowledgeable and proficient in all Division 31, California Department of Social Services, and Title IV-E requirements, as well as position expectations.

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.

The University of Davis Extension Learning Center, as well as the California Department of Social Services can assist the Probation Department in providing training and training materials. Otherwise, this is an internal Probation Department function, not requiring the assistance of other County partners.

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

None

Outcome/Systemic Factor: Systemic Factor B: Case Review System: Process for Parent-Child-Youth Participation in Case Planning

County's Current Performance:

The Probation Department prepares case plans in accordance with federal and state law. Case plans are initiated on all minors that are detained at the time of their arrest, and on those who have been cited and referred to the District Attorney for the filing of a petition. The case plans are reviewed and updated every six months. Although every effort is made to obtain the involvement of the minor and parent/guardian in the development of the case plan, there are circumstances where that is not possible and the case plan is developed without their participation or input.

Improvement Goal 1.0:

Improve the parent-child-youth participation and input in the case planning process and increase their understanding of the role they play in the supervision and treatment plan.

Strategy 1.1

Implement a system to ensure that every youth and parent/guardian is interviewed before the probation officer completes/updates the case plan.

Strategy Rationale

Presently, there are some circumstances where the youth and/or parent/guardian are not interviewed and the probation officer relies solely on his/her personal knowledge and/or prior case history to develop the case plan.

Milestone		Timeframe	Strategy Rationale	Assigned to	
1.1.1	Develop policies and procedure requiring each youth and parent/guardian is interviewed.	May 15, 2008		Juvenile Division Assistant Deputy Chief Probation Officer	
1.1.2	Train probation officers on the policies and procedures.	May 30, 2008		Juvenile Division Probation Unit Supervisors	
1.1.3		Monitor compliance with policies and procedures by conducting random case file reviews and regular case audits.	Ongoing	Juvenile Division Probation Unit Supervisors	
Strategy 1.2			Clearly explain to the youth and parent/guardian the purpose of the case plan and their individual roles and responsibilities.	Strategy Rationale	
Presently, the case plan is designed to primarily address tasks to be completed by the youth with little or no emphasis on parental responsibilities.					
1.2.1		Train probation officers on the purpose of the case plan.		May 30, 2008	Juvenile Division Probation Unit Supervisors
1.2.2		Train probation officers on the importance of assigning responsibilities to the parent/guardian as well as themselves.	May 30, 2008	Juvenile Division Probation Unit Supervisors	

	1.2.3 At the time of each monthly parent meeting, review the parent's/guardian's responsibilities and monitor their compliance regarding the case plan.	Ongoing	Juvenile Division Probation Unit Supervisors and Probation Officers
Improvement Goal 2.0: Improve the probation officer's ability to gather information from the youth and parent and apply that information to the development of a meaningful case plan.			
Strategy 2.1		Strategy Rationale	
Implement a validated risk assessment tool to identify the youth's criminogenic needs in the development of a case plan.		Presently, case plans are developed targeting conditions of probation with no assessment of the risk factors associated with their delinquent activity.	
Milestone		Timeframe	
2.1.1 Implement a validated risk assessment tool.	July 1, 2008	Deputy Chief Probation Officer of Field and Court Services	
2.1.2 Train staff on the use of a validated risk assessment tool.	June 1 st – 30 th , 2008	Outside Consultant	
2.1.3 Train staff on how to interpret results of the validated risk assessment tool and target interventions to target specific risk factors.	September 1 st – 30 th , 2008	Outside Consultant	
Strategy 2.2		Strategy Rationale	
Develop a dedicated Assessment Unit to perform initial assessments of all youth referred to the Probation Department and develop required case plans.		Presently, there is not a tool in place to objectively assess a youth's risk factors and the initial assessment is conducted throughout the Juvenile Division by a variety of staff, with little consistency.	
Milestone		Timeframe	
2.2.1 Realign existing personnel resources to form a dedicated Assessment Unit responsible for conducting the initial assessment and required case plan for all youth referred to the Probation Department.	June 15, 2008	Deputy Chief Probation Officer of Field and Court Services	
2.2.2 Train all staff in the Assessment Unit to incorporate assessment results into a meaningful case plan.	September 1 st – 30 th , 2008	Outside Consultant	
2.2.3 Train all juvenile probation officers on conducting reassessments of each youth every six months, or with a significant change in circumstance, and revising the case plan in accordance with changes in the youth's risk needs and protective factors.	June 1 st – 30 th , 2008	Outside Consultant	
Milestone		Assigned to	

Strategy 2.3
 Improve the probation officers' ability to gather meaningful information during their interviews with the youth and parent/guardian.

Strategy Rationale
 Presently, probation officers have received little or no training on how to effectively solicit meaningful information from the youth and parent/guardian.

Milestone		Timeframe		Assigned to	
2.3.1 Train all juvenile probation officers on motivational interviewing techniques.		August 2007 – April 2008		Outside Consultant	
2.3.2 Ensure probation officers receive ongoing support and follow-up training on motivational interviewing techniques.		Ongoing		Motivational Interviewing Liaisons	
2.3.3 Ensure probation officers are incorporating their motivational interviewing skills in their interaction with youth and parent/guardians.		Ongoing		Juvenile Division Probation Unit Supervisors and Motivational Interviewing Liaisons.	

Discuss changes in identified systemic factors needed to further support the improvement goals.
 San Joaquin County Probation Department's implementation of a validated risk assessment and associated Evidence-Based Practices will result in improving parent-child-youth participation in case planning.

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.
 The Probation Department has contracted with an outside consultant, Assessment.com, to assist in implementing Evidence-Based Practices in the Juvenile and Juvenile Detention Divisions. In addition, the consultant is responsible for providing training to all staff in using a validated risk assessment, developing Title IV-E Case Plans, and Motivational Interviewing techniques.

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.

Stakeholder meetings have been held with representatives from the Court, District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, and Lawyers Referral Services, as well as with various community-based treatment providers to advise them of the systemic changes in Probation practices. Future meetings will be held with local law enforcement agencies, various school representatives, and other County Departments.

Attachment A:

Executive Summary of the San Joaquin County Child Welfare Self-Assessment:

A. Discussion of System Strengths and Areas Needing Improvements

The 2007 County Self-Assessment process has determined that San Joaquin County has much strength in the provision of services to children and families. The most notable strengths include:

- Strong community collaboration among public and private agencies
- Strong community support for the Child Welfare Improvement effort
- Extensive service array
- Community focus on early intervention and prevention services
- Extensive training program for child welfare social workers
- Differential Response program implemented through four (4) community-based contractors and a regularly meeting work group focused on prevention
- Use of team decision-making
- Mental health services for children in foster care
- Progressive superior court programs, including Drug Court, Juvenile Drug Court, Juvenile Mental Health Court, Truancy Court, Teen Court, Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Family/Emancipation Conferencing Program
- SB 163 Wrap-Around Program
- Transitional housing for independent living youths
- Progressive participation by adoption program in statewide matching efforts
- Disproportionality working group to study, train, and engage community and system stakeholders in order to tackle the complex, institutional challenge of racial disparities in the Child Welfare Services
- Dramatic improvement on the part of child welfare staff with regard to consistent and accurate data being entered into Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS)
- Successful 2007 Peer Quality Case Review process studying placement stability, resulting in changes to concurrent planning and identification of best practices in other areas of the Child Welfare Services (CWS)
- Implementation of the Structured Decision Making Tool
- Use of “SafeMeasures” by Child Welfare Services

San Joaquin County Child Welfare Services and Probation, while recognizing their areas of strength, continue to examine the program areas requiring improvement. Many of these areas require “out-of-the box” thinking to utilize the ideas of staff, reallocation of resources and creative ways of providing funding sources. For example, one area that is being examined for improvement is lowering caseloads to assist in better opportunity for system coordination in compliance and best practice. This would directly connect to shorter stays in care for children and quicker reunification or adoption for children in the system.

As the Child Welfare System and Probation Department look to the future, the following focus areas remain crucial as innovative ways to resolve the current methods of doing the work are instituted. By applying the skill, talent and creativity required, San Joaquin County can continue assuring the priority remains providing best practice services remains the priority.

- Decrease social worker and probation officer caseloads across all programs. This will improve each social worker's and probation officer's ability to complete all tasks in a timely manner, including CWS/CMS and Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) input, court reports, case plans, compliance visits, support services to foster care provider, and direct services to parents and children. This will also directly impact length of time to reunification and length of time to adoption for children and families
- Increase the number of County licensed foster homes, relative placements and guardianships
- Increase placement stability of children in care. This includes changes in concurrent planning, training and support for foster and relative caregivers, and more system coordination
- Involve parents and children more significantly in the Case Plan process. This facilitates placement stability and family reunification activities
- Continue to support community-based differential response, focusing on prevention, recurrence, and re-entry
- Continue to direct resources (staff time and funding) toward the long-term task of fairness and equity issues (procedures, practices, attitudes) as related to the over-representation of Black/African-American children in Child Welfare Services
- Decrease the recurrence of child abuse and neglect
- Decrease time to reunification of children with parents
- Decrease time to adoption
- Decrease the re-entry of children into foster care

The California Children and Family Service Review outcomes are fully supported by all partner agencies in San Joaquin County. Listed here is a response to each outcome.

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

Through CWS efforts in implementing the community-based differential response path, the goal has been to significantly reduce entries and in-care numbers through prevention and early intervention programs. Though the improvements are modest, CWS is seeing a downward trend for rates of entries, children in care, and substantiated referrals. The exception to this progress is the disproportion with which Black/African-American children are represented in the system, as seen in referral and substantiation rates, in care rates, and entry rates.

Rates of no recurrence have consistently improved over the last three (3) years, though they are still slightly lower than the State's. Rates of no maltreatment in foster care have been consistently high. This is attributed to careful evaluation and application of concurrent planning values and practices to the matching of foster children with resource families.

Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes wherever possible and appropriate. San Joaquin County makes every effort for this to happen. The key is community resources available to work with families and the families' willingness to accept voluntary services. With regard to timely response and timely social worker visits, the County has made a concerted effort since the 2004 Community Self Assessment to rectify compliance problems around documentation in the CWS/CMS and, as is evident in the data, this institutional effort has yielded positive results. Rates of timely response now exceed the 90% federal benchmark. Not only has CWS improved internally on both measures, but also San Joaquin County rates exceed the State. The one exception is the most recent quarter of 2006 in

which a decrease was seen for timely response. This can be directly attributed to high caseloads for social workers and their desire to make face-to-face contact with children and families a priority over administrative tasks. By reducing social worker workloads, they will have more sustainable schedules, enabling them to achieve compliance in both visits and documentation.

Outcome 3: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations, without increasing re-entry to foster care. For the past four years, excluding 2006, San Joaquin County has had rates of reunification within twelve (12) months that are close to, or exceeding, the State's. One contributing factor to the drop that occurred in 2006 is the staff turnover that occurred in the family reunification program. This resulted in higher caseloads for the social workers in the program. In addition, court continuances and drawn out or contested cases prolonged the family reunification process and very likely impacted performance on this measure. Rates for adoption within twenty-four (24) months are improving, as are median times to adoption. While CWS believes that performance is going well, there is a commitment to increase the percentages of children safely reunified within twelve (12) months and adopted within twenty-four (24) months.

Unfortunately, rates for re-entry after reunification over the last three (3) years are much higher than the State's, although they decreased from 2005 to 2006. Black/African-American children re-enter the system at higher rates than other race/ethnicity cohorts. Although all parents must complete a reunification case plan prior to their children returning home, the ability to follow families after reunification is an issue. The differential response path is one way to continue services for families after the imminent risk has been reduced.

With regard to placement stability, being a County with a children's shelter, performance on these measures appears poor with much lower rates than the State for children with two (2) or fewer placements. The initial placement of a child in either the Mary Graham Children's Shelter or an affiliated satellite home is done quickly and is a temporary one. The second placement then actually becomes the concurrent plan placement. This is more of a procedural or data entry issue than a matter of over reliance on the shelter for placements. More relevant to performance on placement stability is the under use of relative placements. In studying this issue as part of the 2007 Peer Quality Case Review, system changes are already being examined in concurrent planning, foster parent training and case coordination. It is also quite difficult to maintain the more emotionally disturbed and behaviorally challenged children in placement. This is partly due to the lack of sufficient foster families or residential treatment programs that will care for these children. Increasing the number of County foster homes and providing appropriate training and support is essential.

Outcome 4: The family relationships and connections of children served by CWS will be preserved as appropriate. The County has a commitment to preserve sibling relationships by supporting and promoting placing siblings together if the special needs of a child do not indicate otherwise. If unable to place all siblings together, every effort is made to maintain regular contact among siblings. It must also be noted that the performance on this measure is in large part dependent upon having available resource families who can take sibling groups for placement.

While there are several types of placements available to foster children, the preference for those children who cannot safely return to their parents is a relative or non-related extended family member placement. However, the practice is to match the child to the most appropriate life-long resource. Data clearly shows

that rates of relative placements are much lower than the State's and reliance on Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) is much higher. Many relatives desiring to be a care provider have significant issues of concern and are unable to meet the same standards as licensed foster parents. For those who meet the standards, placements are made as efficiently as possible.

In addition, like many other counties, until recently San Joaquin County experienced a slow decline in County licensed foster homes. This can generally be attributed to the Particular Child Only cases now falling under the Relative/NREFM process, foster parents retiring from foster care, and foster-adopt homes no longer providing foster care upon adoption of the children in their home. This has resulted in more foster children being placed with FFAs, whose foster parents receive a higher payment rate and have access to a FFA social worker.

One of the biggest challenges is the placement stability of adolescents who require group home or residential treatment. These youth have usually been unsuccessful in a family home environment, and they often do not adjust to group home placement readily, and thus their number of placements is generally higher.

Outcome 5: Children receive services adequate to their physical, emotional and mental health needs. The County remains committed to ensuring that every child under the care of CWS has full access to programs that ensure their physical, emotional and mental health needs are met. Through a vast array of services outlined in Section III Systemic Factors, CWS has made continual efforts to continue collaboration with needed outside agencies as well as develop creative new approaches to ensure the ever-changing needs of the children are met. In addition, CWS has three (3) public health nurses on-site to assist social workers with these needs.

Outcome 6: Children receive services appropriate to their educational needs. Through collaboration with the San Joaquin County Office of Education, special training for social workers on children's education needs and collaborative programs with a variety of agencies, CWS strives to provide the children with an appropriate education. This is seen when the social worker examines placements within the child's current school district to ensure consistency in their education, school-based services through San Joaquin Mental Health – Children and Youth Services, and the work that the Independent Living Program does in college readiness, to name a few.

Outcome 7: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs. With the Family Conferencing and Team Decision-Making Programs working with families who have come to the attention of CWS, plans have been developed and put into place that have allowed the family to remain intact. The Differential Response Program allows CWS to refer Path I and Path II cases of low to moderate risk to four (4) non-profits who can assist them in resolving issues that if not corrected could bring the children into CWS. Three (3) of these programs work with families who are first coming to the attention of CWS and the additional program works with families who are reunifying with their children to ensure a smooth transition.

Additionally, the Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM) Program provides both social workers and Teaching, Demonstrating Homemakers to provide intervention and supportive services to families where the case is going to be formally dismissed, but would like to have continued social work oversight or they are referred to the VFM following a case staffing.

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

San Joaquin County is committed to the successful emancipation of its youth. The ability to help children transition to self-sufficient adulthood is directly related to: 1) the youth's desires; 2) the availability of employment; 3) the availability of housing; and 4) the availability and type of vocational training or college. Through the Office of Education and other community partners, CWS is able to offer an Independent Living Program Education/Training Program to those youth who choose to participate. In addition, there is a Transitional Housing Program. CWS has also continued the use of the family conferencing model in conducting emancipation conferences. Realistic plans have been developed as a result of implementation of this model.

The participation numbers for youth transition measures have increased each year for three (3) years, with higher numbers enrolling in college, receiving ILP services, earning their high school diplomas, or securing employment. These modest but promising increases may be tied to the development of a scholarship program under the leadership of the Mary Graham Children's Shelter Foundation. The program pays for costs of vocational training or college not covered by other funding sources and also includes mentoring by adult volunteers.



AGENDA ITEM SUBMITTAL FORM
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DATE: 2/29/08

DEPARTMENT: Human Services Agency

CONTACT & PHONE#: DAVE ERB 468-1190

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE THE SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR 2008-2009.

PROPOSED AGENDA PLACEMENT DATE: 3/11/08

PROPOSED CALENDAR: H&HS

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Department Head	Signature <i>Jr. Clute</i>	Date <i>2/26/08</i>
County Administrator	Signature _____	Date _____
County Counsel	Signature _____	Date _____

1/15/02

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