Contra Costa County
Children & Family Services
A Bureau of the
Employment & Human Services Department

System Improvement Plan
First Annual Report

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California's Child and Family Services Review
System Improvement Plan

County:	Contra Costa
Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:	Children and Family Services
Period of Plan:	2010 - 2012
Period of Outcome Data:	*Quarter ending June 30, 2008*
Date Submitted:	

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Contra Costa County Children & Family Services

Systems Improvement Plan 2010 – 2012
First Annual Report

Submitted August 4, 2011
(Updated September 2011)

Valerie Earley
Director, Children & Family Services Bureau, EHSD

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REPORT NARRATIVE

Introduction and Overview

Selected Outcomes and Strategies

Contra Costa County's current Systems Improvement tri-annual plan spans 2010 to 2013. This report is the first annual report for the plan that was submitted last year.

Two outcomes and one Systems Factor were selected for this SIP plan. These are:

- Increasing timely social worker contacts (Outcome 2C)
- Increasing the percentage of youth who have been in care at least 2 years who exit to permanency (Outcome C3.1)
- Decreasing the disproportionate number of African American Children who enter foster care (Systemic Factor)

As stated in our Systems Improvement Plan document submitted last year, the decision to focus on 3 specific areas provides an opportunity for Contra Costa to more closely monitor performance and track success of strategies than a more ambitious SIP with a greater number of selected outcomes. Given the environment of the past few years and anticipating the continuation of fiscal constraints and tight budgets, the Self Assessment/SIP team and staff determined that impacting performance in these three critical areas would have the greatest impact on children and families we serve. As this first year of this SIP period ends, it is even more apparent that the overarching values and concerns that direct Contra Costa's decision making – safety of children, family engagement, and inclusion of family in case planning – are supported by the strategies that were defined for these outcomes.

These three strategies were selected for different reasons:

Timely Social Worker Visits

Contra Costa has consistently worked on increasing timely social worker visits. This was an outcome selected for work in our previous SIP so many of the strategies are ongoing and continuing from work in previous years. As this SIP was created, Contra Costa was in recovery from significant staff cut-backs and compliance in this area was below 90%. Contra Costa believes that compliance in contact frequency and assuring quality of contacts directly impacts many other outcomes in Children's Services. The goal for this SIP is to strive for 100% compliance but target performance at 90% or better. As stated in this report, Contra Costa has made significant strides in

timely contacts for the first year of the SIP period and congratulates staff for the success. For the next 2 years, the focus will be on sustaining timeliness and focusing on quality of contacts.

Improving Outcomes for Children in Long Term Foster Care

Contra Costa second selected outcome for this SIP is C3.1, increasing number of youth exiting to permanency who have been in placement for 2 years or longer because Contra Costa's performance does not meet either state or federal standards. As Contra Costa continues to work on strategies defined for this SIP, other proposals and approaches to improve performance in this area are also being explored such as focused case reviews for all children still in Long Term Foster Care after 2 years, family inclusive and focused meetings as children enter and move through the Child Welfare system with renewed attention on permanency, and family engagement strategies such as Motivational Interviewing.

Disproportionality of Removals for African American Children

Efforts to reduce the disproportionality and disparity for African American children removals are also continuing from the previous SIP. Though awareness of personal biases and attention to family culture is becoming part of the culture, impact on performance outcomes has not yet reached the desired levels. Some of the work directed to impact the Long Term Foster Care concerns will also support performance improvement in this area though the timelines to realize successes may take longer to directly change disproportionality. Work continues on strategies defined for this SIP.

Project Leadership

Contra Costa County Children Services, under the direction of Valerie Earley, has five Division Managers and a Research and Development Manager that serve as the Administrative Team. This team is directly involved in the writing the Systems Improvement Plan and planning, implementing, and managing the strategies.

Either the Director or one of the Managers is assigned to each of the strategies under the two Outcomes and one Systemic Factor. These strategy Project Managers track the progress and report back to the Project Management Committee. When workgroups are convened for a strategy, it is the responsibility of the Project Manager to provide lead direction to the workgroup, supporting the lead supervisor in chairing and managing areas assigned to them, advocating for resources needed (such as staff, trainers, policy analysts to write policy) and presentations to request input or support. helping the supervisor frame

The Project Management Committee is a monthly meeting to coordinate all new activities and initiatives. This is the primary forum for planning, reporting progress, and tracking SIP activities.

Changes from Original Plan and Progress to Date

There have been no changes to outcomes or strategies from the original Systems Improvement Plan submitted last year.

The following table identifies progress on the strategies at the end of the first year of the SIP. Part 2 of this document, the matrix of activities gives detailed information on each of the strategies:

Timely Social Worker Visits

There are three strategies with 10 milestones/activities:
Completed: 2
Ongoing: 3
Started: 1
In Progress: 4
Not yet started: 0

Improving Outcomes for Children in Long Term Foster Care

There are 7 strategies with 21 milestones/activities:
Completed: 3
Ongoing: 3
Started: 5
In Progress: 5
Not yet started: 5

Disproportionality of Removals for African American Children

There are 3 strategies with 14 milestones/activities:
Completed: 0
Ongoing: 8
Started: 4
In Progress: 0
Not yet started: 2

Organizational Support for Performance Improvement Work

Research and Evaluation

In 1997, the statewide Child Welfare System/ Case Management System (CWS/CMS) was implemented in Contra Costa. This gave a much broader scope of data recorded about children and families and services provided by the agency. With the award of a federal Systems of Care grant in 2003, the county was able to hire a Children's Services Research and Evaluation Manager. A year and a half ago, a permanent position was created for this function. This manager is a member of the CFS Administrative Team and attends all meetings at that level. Contra Costa Children & Family Services has so integrated data into decision-making; it is difficult to remember how business was conducted without this resource.

Contra Costa has made a commitment to integration of data evaluation to support planning, direction, and decisions. Evaluation is critical in all areas including management of federal grant initiatives, outcomes evaluation, workload monitoring and management, and performance evaluation.

Data driven decision making has impacted the county's Self Assessment, supported the planning for the Systems Improvement Plan, and supported the various workgroups and managers in assessing "best practice" and "evidence based" efforts as the county moves forward to implement SIP activities.

Case and Performance Reviews

There are a variety of meetings with a focus on performance that support work on the SIP. These include:

Program Committee

Program Committee membership consists of a broad representation of CWS staff and programs as well as Program Analysts and Staff Development trainers. The role of Program Committee is to establish projects, work issues, and recommend changes to the Administrative Team. The committee also serves as a forum for reviewing some of the strategies and activities in the SIP prior to finalization and implementation.

Children's Services Leadership Team

Membership to this committee includes the Administrative Team, all supervisors in CFS including Benefits and Clerical, Program Analysts and Staff Development Specialists, and the Parent Partner/Family Engagement Coordinator. This is a forum for sharing information with

and hearing concerns and issues specifically regarding policies, procedures, and operational issues. The agenda varies with meetings coordinated by the Administrative Team, meetings led by supervisors, trainings, and/or case review discussions.

Project Management Team

Originally established to provide collaboration and management of multiple avenues that were impacting policy and procedures such as federal grants, state initiatives, and Systems Improvement Plan strategies and activities, this committee continues to be a clearing house that coordinates all changes that affect policy and procedures. This is critical to avoid duplication, ensure consistency, and monitor for adherence to guiding principles and values of Contra Costa Children's Services. The added benefit is a forum for monthly check-ins on work being done on SIP strategies. Membership consists of the Administrative Team including the Research and Evaluation Manager, Program Analysts and Staff Development Specialists with leadership roles in initiatives and policy. In the past few months, a broader invitation was extended to all CFS Supervisors. The addition of these supervisors with direct access to operational issues has enriched discussions and enlivened the focus on impact to day to day operations.

Case Review Meeting

Case Review meetings function as a systematic mechanism to support consistent and comprehensive case planning and management incorporating collaborative decision-making. This meeting focuses on review of specific cases that identify trends and issues and/or training needs that impact more broadly the ongoing work. Cases reviewed are sometimes high profile or problem cases or are randomly selected cases for review of a specific area of concern. The membership of this committee is the Administrative Team but frequently discussions are taken to other forums for more staff involvement in problem solving and/or raising awareness of issues. In addition, staff invested in the cases being reviewed (usually assigned workers and supervisors) and/or staff in other counties that may be able to give new insight are invited for discussion of specific cases.

Children's Services Administrative Team Meeting

CSAT is a weekly meeting that is comprised of the CFS Director and CFS Division Managers. The purpose of this meeting is to address operational and administrative matters that impact CFS clients and workforce. The objectives of this meeting include sharing information about Child Welfare related programs, Federal, State

and EHSD issues that impact CFS, and making practice and policy related decisions generated from these discussions. Additionally, this meeting is used to track projects, monitor staffing allocations and assignments, and review statistical analysis related to workload, operations and staffing. Finally this meeting is used to develop and encourage a team approach to managing the CFS Bureau and to distribute assignments as needed to manage the Bureau's needs. The desired outcomes of this meeting include 1) increasing communication amongst the administrative team, 2) making decisions and disseminating those decisions in a timely manner via policy, memorandum, or via Division Meetings; 3) improving and implementing operational best practice and consistency among the Divisions; and 4) ensuring Managers are kept abreast of the current policies and directives.

Inclusion of Staff in Planning

Contra Costa's CFS Director and Administrative Team are committed to sharing information with and including staff in clarifying agency goals, setting direction and focus, planning implementation and procedures, and identifying and addressing impact of changes.

Quarterly meetings are held in each of the major operational offices so staff can meet with the Director to hear budget and staffing information and share what's working and areas of concern. Informal Brown Bag Lunches with supervisors provide another forum to discuss issues and operational concerns. Supervisors are also invited to head teams for planning SIP, grant, and other activities. The innovative work of these supervisory lead teams also serve to generate understanding of and motivation for success of strategies and changes.

Successes and Challenges

Successes

Performance Improvement

Significant improvement in performance with face to face contact compliance began with a discussion with Social Work supervisors at County Leadership Team meeting that focused attention on the significance of timely, quality contacts for case management and continued focus on permanency. The commitment of supervisors to increase staff awareness of the benefits of contacts compliance and the safety risk in not maintaining regular face to face contacts and to more closely monitor compliance was a key factor in the performance improvement. Workers' subsequent commitment to meet mandates and assure documentation in CWS/CMS is timely continues. Contra Costa recognizes staff efforts to improve performance in this area and acknowledges the commitment to quality work that is expressed in the improvement.

Case Reviews

Use of case reviews to focus attention on an area of concern has been an important tool for quality assurance and control. Focused reviews in training sessions to demonstrate what works, meetings specifically held to review actions on a difficult case, ongoing meetings that have a primary agenda to review areas of practice by looking at a random sample of cases all support identification of practice trends that are working or need revision. The value of this type of review is manifested through rich discussions that consider options and consequences and through the use of real cases that bring concepts to reality and give heart to the ideas being discussed. Contra Costa continues to find more forums and uses for case reviews as a model for performance improvement.

Integration of Data into Decision Making

The concept of integrating data into decision making is not new and has been mentioned in most review reports as a key component of successful performance improvement over the past five years. But, since this is such a part of Contra Costa's way of doing business, a list of successes that did not include data integration would be incomplete.

Staff Involvement in Change Strategies

The inclusion of supervisors and staff in discussions about vision, direction, and strategy direction has created a stronger team for the bureau.

Challenges

Budget Environment – Though Contra Costa Children's Services has responded to budget cuts in the past years proactively by evaluating and restructuring for efficiency in work practices, organization, and service costs, the continued fiscal environment places constraints when considering options to improve performance. There is also an impact on staff morale when much of the department communications include discussions of budget impact on staffing and salaries.

Hiring Evaluation Manager -- A recruitment effort has been initiated to fill the recently vacant Research and Evaluation Manager position. In the interim, a combination of efforts and resources will be utilized to continue the evaluation activities for the SIP and other projects and initiatives.

Staff Retirements/Resignations – Proposals for salary and benefits reductions in light of the current county budget are resulting in a higher percentage of staff separations from county employment. Ongoing efforts to rehire previously laid off Social Workers and to begin new recruitments when that list is exhausted continue; so far, Children & Family Services Bureau is maintaining staff at the level anticipated and budgeted.

Principles into Practice – This is not a new challenge but continues to surface as expected. When new strategies are presented in trainings and implemented in practice, the initial response is the intention to implement but in reality the move into practice requires ongoing focus, reorientation, training, and monitoring.

Economic Outlook and Subsequent Stress to Families – Economic outlook in Contra Costa and California as a whole continues to be bleak. Though there have been dramatic increases in applications for public assistance in all of the benefit programs, Children's Services has not yet seen an increase in number of referrals or cases. Historically, the increase in referrals for suspected child abuse and neglect based on stressful economic situations is not seen for 12 to 18 months following decline. Contra Costa tracks closely changes in participation rates so will be aware of trends as they occur.

Fiscal Cuts to Partner Agencies – As budgets tighten, collaboration between agencies becomes more strained as less staff and/or resources are available to address children and families needs. In some instances, resources previously available are losing funding altogether such as the closing of one of only a few residential substance abuse facilities for moms and their children, Corbin House

(previously funded by First Five). SIP initiatives that include agency partners may need adjusting to reflect budget realities; at this time, none of the strategies have been directly impacted by partner agency budget cuts.

Systems Improvement Plan Outcomes and Strategies Update

Outcome 1	**Timeliness of Social Work Contacts (2C)**
Improvement Goal	Though Contra Costa ultimately seeks to have 100% compliance in Social Worker contacts, the goal set for this Improvement Plan period is a sustained 90% or greater compliance for the at the final year of the SIP. We expect to see gradual improvement during the first 2 years of the SIP.
Progress	At the beginning of this SIP, Contra Costa reported 78.7 % compliance for this outcome, compared to state average of 92.3 %. For the first quarter of 2011, compliance was above 90% (January 2011 was 93.8%, February 2011 was 93.1%, March 2011 was 92.6%), already meeting Contra Costa's SIP goal and exceeding the state goal of 90%. Efforts now will be to sustain this performance and to evaluate quality of contacts. Data Source: Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Williams, D., Simon, V., Hamilton, D., Lou, C., Peng, C., Moore, M., Jacobs, L., & King, B. (2011). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California.* Retrieved 6/9/2011, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare>
Strategy 1A	**Enhance use of Safe Measures by staff to manage visits; provide ongoing training to staff and supervisors.**

	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
	a) Assess ongoing use of Safe Measures by SW's and Supervisors.	1	Ongoing Priority 1	Safe Measures usage reports distributed to managers and reviewed. Usage has increased with continued emphasis and training; staff who use Safe Measures report the benefits and more staff seek assistance in its use.
	b) Retrain all staff in the use of Safe Measures to ensure they have a full understanding of the way the tool can assist in managing their caseload.	1 - 3	In Progress Priority 1	Classroom training for Social Workers and clerical support staff has been given in each office and at individual unit meetings. Training has been focused for workers at beginning levels. Advanced level training is planned. Recent training for Social Workers in time management included a component

				in use of Safe Measures. Supervisors have been strongly encouraged to use Safe Measures in staff conferences and as a support for worker evaluation in compliance and service delivery. Full utilization and access to specific report is being explored to support efficiency and compliance. Reports include: 1. Court Reports by Due Date 2. Case Plans Due/Overdue 3. Caseload management reports to plan coverage for vacancies 4. Assigning/tracking out of county placements and scheduling contacts for out of county placements
	c) Develop a recognition program for staff and supervisors demonstrating excellence in ongoing visits.	1 - 3	Completed Priority 1	Recognition program completed for staff with high compliance for contacts. When the administrative team began a campaign to improve compliance in contacts, presentations were made to staff to refocus on the importance of monthly contacts in assessing and managing safety issues and well being and in keeping attention focused on reunification and/or permanency. In response to this call for greater compliance in contacts Supervisors and Social Workers have made great strides in improving outcomes the rapid response was exhilarating. This SIP strategy was to devise a plan to recognize the efforts of staff's successes. Though Managers of districts continue to recognize staff in their respective

				districts, a letter of commendation from the full Administrative Team has been drafted to recognize staff consistent compliance above 90% and at the 100% mark for 6 consecutive months. In addition, the staff was rewarded at a recent Staff Appreciation symposium with a token gift. The Administrative Team acknowledges the work of staff in recognizing that compliance in contacts is a critical strategy in supporting families in Child Welfare.
Strategy 1B	**Continue Geographical assignment of cases and/or explore ways of reducing travel while increasing contact compliance.**			
	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
	a) Provide caseload data with location of families/children to staff.	1 - 3	In Progress	Referrals and cases are frequently assigned by geographical area. In some instances referrals and cases are assigned based on other criteria such as workers strengths with specific types of cases or assigning siblings to same worker. Occasionally, cases are assigned outside a geographical area in order to balance workload. Contra Costa is also focusing on training and tools to assist workers in managing workload by organizing visits to the same area on the same day thus reducing travel time. With the focus on contact compliance and through better caseload management techniques, compliance has been at or above almost 90% for the last year.
	b) Assess ability to manage visits for out of county placements which ensures primary assigned worker completes 75% visits.	1 - 3	In Progress	
	c) Monitor/refine geographic assignment considering workflow and different needs based on geographic area and strategy (i.e. TDM, DR, etc).	1 - 3	In Progress	

Strategy 1C	Train staff to policy changes regarding face to face contacts and waivers/exceptions.			
	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
	a) Assess training needs.	1	Completed Priority 1	Policy training for face to face contacts and waivers/exceptions was last completed in 2008. Assignment was given to the designated Program Analyst and Staff Development Specialist to review policy with staff. Training needs assessment and training plans were discussed at the Project Management Team meeting. This team trained supervisors, analysts, managers at the County Leadership Team meeting and also presented the same training in each of the major district offices for staff. A plan is underway to present another round of trainings in the next few months to reinforce staff understanding.
	b) Develop and train staff on regulations & policies for timely SW contacts.	1	Ongoing Priority 1	
	c) Provide visit exception report for mgrs and sups.	1 – 3	Ongoing	Contra Costa has eliminated visit exceptions. To support the removal of exceptions, the Research and Evaluations manager provided lists of cases with exceptions. A few cases remain with visit exceptions (23 children). These cases will be closely monitored and exceptions will be eliminated as the case plan revisions become due.
	d) Develop strategies for sups to increase quality of SW visits.	1 - 3	Started	The administrative team and the Project Management Team have been discussing and strategizing methods for monitoring quality of visits. In preparation for this, a small random sample of cases was selected and each member of the Project Management Team was given 3 cases to review for quality of contacts. A survey was given to guide the

				review, including identifying the staff completing the contact (are assigned Social Workers completing visits?), where was contact (are sufficient contacts in the home?), were children interviewed privately, was permanency discussed. At the March and April Project Management Team meetings, members presented findings. These findings will inform policy and staff development of areas requiring improvement. For example, Initial findings suggest that coding in CWS/CMS is not capturing all of the participants of contacts so training specific to this area is being planned. Next steps for this strategy also include: • Presentation at County Leadership Team (administrative team, managers, supervisors, analysts, and Staff Development Trainers) to share results of case review findings and initiate a dialog about what makes a quality contact. • Monitoring contacts for quality of contacts and visits as well as frequency. • Training to staff on what constitutes quality in a visit • Develop a template with these elements for each contact type, i.e., parent/child/caregiver.

Outcome 2	**Exits to Permanency after 24 months in Care (3.1)**
Improvement Goal	Increase the percentage of youth reaching permanency by 5% the first year and 10% the following years. At the end of year 3, performance would be 18.1%.
Progress	Performance in the July 2008 to June 2009 sampling was 14.2%; the national goal for this outcome is 29.1%. Most recent performance (from the January 2011 state report, 7/1/09 to 6/30/10 period) is 22.6 percent. This is a definite improvement and meets the SIP goal but does not yet meet the national standard of 29.1%. It is anticipated that continued focus will increase Contra Costa's performance during the next 2 years of the SIP. Data Source: CWS Outcomes System Summary for Contra Costa County – 12/22/10, Report Publication: JAN 2011, Data Extract: Q2 2010. Agency Child Welfare
Strategy 2A	Enhance family and caregiver engagement activities to support reunification and facilitate discussions about permanency options should reunification not be effective.

	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
a)	Develop staff training/education on permanency options and difficult dialogues /courageous conversations regarding permanency with parents and caregivers.	1	Started Priority 1	Training needs assessment has determined training is needed in 2 separate areas: 1) policy regarding the various permanency options and 2) how to initiate and have difficult dialogs regarding permanency with parents and caregivers. Needs assessment has been completed; training will be included in the training plan for the next Fiscal Year. One of the groups of parents with specific needs to be addressed is incarcerated parents. The Parent Partners have been working with detention facilities to establish collaboration with facility trainers and

				personnel to support the workers engagement and inclusion of the incarcerated parent in decisions regarding their child(ren). Parent Partners have been giving orientation sessions in the facilities to parents so they have a broader understanding of the involvement of Children Services in their children's lives. Conversations are underway to hold Team Decision Meetings in the detention facilities and to designate a point-person to aid communication between CFS and the facilities. Further work is to be done to present information, policy, and training to staff on dialogues with incarcerated parents.
	b) Increase use of team meetings to enhance permanency	1	Started Priority 1	There are a variety of meetings that support workers in making decisions at critical points in the Child Welfare case. These include a Permanency Review Team meeting, Kin Review meetings, as well as case consultation with the supervisor directly. In addition there are meetings held with parents/caregivers for their inclusion in decisions such as Team Decision Meetings. The administrative team and the Project Management Team are looking at all of these meetings and have started exploration in a new practice model that is more responsive to the needs of the child instead of the timeline and critical case points for Child Welfare services. The goal is to create one structure and format for a meeting that will be inclusive of families, youth, assigned worker and supervisor and a team of other staff reviewers, agency partners and consultants and the community. It is intended that the meeting utilize shared decision making techniques. This is a large undertaking and discussions have just begun. But the new model is intriguing and there is a level of enthusiasm as

				explorations continue.
	c) Implement visitation policy including transition from supervised to unsupervised for family	1 - 2	Started & Ongoing	Policy to guide a step-down model for supervision of Visitation has been completed and published. Work with contract agencies to provide Visitation supervision has also been implemented. Next steps include: • Evaluate practice to determine if Visitation plans reflect the policy. • Determine how supervisor/SW conferences and other case consultation meetings can support policy into practice.

Strategy 2B	**Improve individualized, culturally competent reunification services with multi-agency case coordination.**			
	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
	a) Continue Linkages; develop partnerships for streamlining services for families preparing to reunify.	1	Ongoing Priority 1	Contra Costa Children Services has been actively working with Workforce Services to determine the best approach for combining/consolidating case plans to support both efforts. Children's Services is clear that self-sufficiency of the family, as addressed in Workforce Services, is directly linked to the family's success in maintaining a safe and well family. Currently families received two separate case plans, one for Workforce Services activities and one for CFS. The goal is to provide a consolidated case plan that coordinates family requirements for both Workforce Services and Children Services. Work continues on a consolidated case plan.

	b) Increase use of wrap around services.	1	In progress Priority 1	A workgroup comprised of line staff, supervisors and managers has been created and has been meeting since July 2010. This group has been reviewing the current wraparound program and identifying service needs and gaps. A model has been developed and the next steps are to enhance a contract with a service provider. Addressing service needs of children in the Wrap program is intended to stabilize current placement and provide a structure that will support a move towards permanency.
	c) Continue work on cultural awareness through use of Parent Partners.	1 – 3	Ongoing	The unique role of Parent Partners enhances the county's ability to be culturally aware, sensitive, and responsive. Parent Partners can serve as "cultural brokers" between families and their service providers, social worker, attorney, and larger community. The Parent Partner Program has demonstrated outcomes of greater satisfaction among family members that they work with. These families report that they feel respected, heard, and understood.
Strategy 2C	**Identify at least one relative and send Notification of Relative information.**			
	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
	a) Develop and train staff team responsible for family finding activities.	2	In progress Priority 1	Contra Costa has developed the Relative Notification Process that meets the mandates of the new policy. Staff formerly identified as "Due Diligence" will now be called "Family Finding"; additional staff have been hired to complete the tasks and tracking as required
	b) Maintain contract with internet database search engine to search for relatives	2	Ongoing	

	and absent parents.			in the policy. The name change to "Family Finding" better reflects the enhanced efforts to locate, notify, and evaluate extended families for information, visitation, and evaluation of permanency options. This is not a new effort for Contra Costa but a continuation and enrichment of an already established procedure. Contra Costa has used an online search engine to locate relatives and continues to utilize that tool along with information provided by parents, youth, and children. The Lexus Nexus search engine contract has been continued.
	c) Train staff on how to have permanency discussions with located families.	2 - 3		Year 2 – 3 task, hold for further action.
Strategy 2D	**Develop strategies and practice expertise in early and continuous Concurrent Planning.**			
	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
	a) Retrain staff to concurrent planning process.	2		Year 2 task, hold for further action.
	b) Identify challenges and delays in concurrent planning and address issues.	1 – 2		Year 2 task, hold for further action.
	c) Measure compliance in concurrent planning.	2 - 3		Year 2 task, hold for further action.
Strategy 2E	**Engage fathers and extended families of fathers.**			
	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*

	a) Develop and implement fatherhood initiative survey.	1	Completed Priority 1	In conjunction with Fatherhood Initiative grant, Children & Family Services surveyed staff to determine inclusion of fathers in case planning and in engagement in case activities. Survey also queried staff's perception of role of fathers and father's extended family. Information is guiding next steps to address engagement of fathers.
	b) Plan strategies and train staff to engagement of fathers and families of fathers.	1 – 2	Started Priority 1	Recognizing the need for enhanced engagement of fathers, both resident and non-resident/non-custodial fathers, a task force has been created to explore activities to support staff in shift for more father inclusion. Supporting this, the Parent Partners continue to work with incarcerated parents, the majority of which are fathers promoting policy, procedures, and culture shifts to support father's, rights of fathers, and support for fathers in their involvement with their children. In addition, the Parent Partner group took lead in hosting focus groups with fathers to hear issues and give them a voice in identifying changes to be made in Child Welfare to support them. The Parent Partner Program has also participated in the planning and execution of a major cross training which was held in May 2011. This is a cross training between Children and Family Services and Alcohol and Other Drugs with some financial support from First Five. The title of the cross training is "Putting Families Back Together ", and the agenda included strategies of working with fathers and with parenting couples. There was also a focus group, experts on working with fathers, and a presentation of local services that work with fathers. There were

				providers from various disciplines included in this cross training. The influence of these initiatives is already being felt, with more attention to father's issues, more referrals to Parent Partners to utilize the father Parent Partner in communicating with fathers, and in language in policy and procedures that specifically address fathers and fathers' issues. One area that has been drawn into focus is the impact of Case Planning, substance abuse testing, visitation and other meetings, and scheduled court appearances on the father's ability to continue to or gain self-sufficiency through employment. Fathers have complained that it feels like and in many instances CFS has made them need to choose between pursuing regaining custody of removed children and continuing employment.
	c)	Measure contacts and listings of fathers in CWS/CMS.	2 - 3	Started Priority 1	To measure changes in numbers of fathers identified, contacted and engaged, this strategy will look at CWS/CMS and evaluate data to determine if more fathers are recorded in relationship table, included in contacts and visits, and included in case planning activities.

Strategy 2F	**Provide transition planning meetings for emancipating youth including assessment of educational needs.**			
	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
a)	Develop coordinated data exchange to	1	Completed	This has been completed and these reports are

		sups and staff regarding youth age 17 or older.		Priority 1	available in Safe Measures which is used to identify emancipating youth.
	b)	Hold transition planning meeting with youth within 6 months of emancipation.	2	Completed Priority 1	CCC has held transition meetings called Exit TDM's since 2006. Recently, the meetings have been updated to include requirements for the 90 day transition meeting and reflect other important areas such as permanency and life long connections. They are now called Youth Transition Meetings (YTM). Youth Transition meetings are held regularly for youth at age 17 and 90 days before emancipation. A Kick Off Meeting was held in January 11 to recruit community partners to participate in YTM's and to inform staff of the changes and enhances made to the meetings. Transition planning Team Decision Making meetings held regularly for youth emancipating. Reports from youth, participants and staff are very positive that these are beneficial in addressing issues, planning for future support and recognizing youth at this critical juncture in their life.
	c)	Utilize CWS/CMS to track accurate educational outcomes for youth.	1 - 3	In progress Priority 1	Data recorded in CWS/CMS Education notebook in the Health and Education passport is not complete and up to date. Strategies planned to address this: • Training needed for use of CWS/CMS HEP passport to track education. • Policy needed for tracking education status and services; consider clerical entry of data gathered and entered in court reports by SW's • Manual section published to track ILP services for children in CWS/CMS • Future activity: Link with education database

				(Web-based CWS/CMS)

Strategy 2G	**Increase recruitment of families that can offer permanence.**			
	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
	a) Complete a demographic profile and data analysis for children currently in care for 24 months or longer.	1	In progress	This activity was the focus of Contra Costa's PQCR completed last year so the task has been completed. Strategy is to review the PQCR and glean information that will further the effort to recruit families for permanency options. In addition, the new Relative Notification Process will support this strategy.
	b) Plan to increase use of community partners and regional offices in recruiting families to offer permanence.	2	In progress	The proposal to have Parent Partners assist in information gathering from families to identify relatives and receive parents input as permanency is explored is still being pursued.

Outcome 3	**Disproportionality/Disparity**
Improvement Goal	Reduce the incidence rate of removals for African American children by 5% per year. Performance when SIP created was 11.4/1000 children removed; goal at end of 3-year SIP is 10/1000.
Progress	Incidence rate at beginning of SIP period was 11.4/1000 African American children removed. Most recent data shows current incidence rate for African American Children entries to Foster Care (all ages) is 11.1 per 1000 children (Report Period Jan 1, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009), only a slight improvement. Data Source: Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Williams, D., Simon, V., Hamilton, D., Lou, C., Peng, C., Moore, M., Jacobs, L., & King, B. (2011). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California.* Retrieved 6/9/2011, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare>
Strategy 3A	**Continue to support staff in culturally and ethnically competent Family Engagement.**

	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
a)	Provide ongoing training for cultural knowledge and competence in communication and engagement of families, peers, and community partners including family culture not just ethnicity/race.	1 - 3	Ongoing	Staff Development continues to offer training sessions that focus on cultural and ethnic diversity issues. Recent discussions in planning next year's training calendar will assure these sessions continue to address populations where there is statistically relevant disparity in specific groups.
b)	Explore non-traditional resources and services relevant to case plan goals and support families in attaining goals in a manner that best matches the cultural values of the family.	1	Ongoing	Enhanced family participation in identifying services and service providers that will support families in creating/sustaining safe environments and well being for their children has been the topic in many previous meetings and in policy. However, anecdotal information suggests that though this is policy, SW's continue to revert back to tried and true service

				providers. More work remains to change the culture so that staff can trust and value services and providers that may be of the culture and/or faith of the family but may not be traditional services offered in the past.
	c) Develop conversation guides for supervisors to lead staff in discussions of disproportionality at all unit and review meetings every other month.	2	Ongoing	Director Valerie Early challenged managers and supervisors last year in a County Leadership Team meeting to continue the focus on diversity by having regular dialogues in Division Meetings and unit meetings on related topics. Managers and Supervisors are having those discussions. This is an ongoing effort.
Strategy 3B	**Provide a forum for discussing cultural and ethnic issues. Raise disproportionality and disparity awareness of staff, community and agency partners, legal entities, and community members.**			
	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
	a) Reconvene the Cultural Competency Oversight Committee	1	Started	A presentation to the Project Management Team shared previous work of the Cultural Competency committee and identified areas for continued focus. The committee reconvening is still planned and a new Manager will be appointed for facilitation.
	b) Address issues of personal bias and support staff in strength based language in written case documentation.	2	Started	Refocusing on the impact of language in how families and children are perceived is underway. Staff Development is looking for new training to support use of non-biased and non-inflammatory language in court reports, contact notes and other reports and verbally with families. It has been suggested that the Motivational Interviewing consultant may be useful in

				supporting staff further in awareness of this issue.
	c) Present information to mandated reporters to enhance awareness of how bias may impact families reported within their own organizations.	2		Year 2 task: Hold further action.
	d) Present regular data reports to staff on topics of disproportionality.	1 - 3	Ongoing	Contra Costa has used data evaluation for many years to focus on disproportionality and disparity. Distribution of these reports and dialogues with staff and partners continue to focus awareness on this topic.
	e) Re-establish regular training which addresses staff personal biases related to poverty vs. neglect and standards for adequate care of children.	1 - 3	Started	Staff Development continues to seek training resources for new and innovative training to address personal bias.
Strategy 3C	**African American children ages 5 and under will receive a TDM prior to entering care or within 7 days of being in care.**			
	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
	a) Continue TDM's for African American children under age 5 who are at risk of removal or immediately following removal.	1 - 3	Ongoing Priority 1	Policy in Contra Costa continues to be that every African American child under age 5 at risk of removal and/or removed receive a Team Decision Making meetings.
	b) Review compliance with children eligible for TDM vs. those served.	Ongoing 1 – 3	Priority 1	Statistics continue to show that compliance with this policy is not at 100%. Historically and recently the compliance rate for TDM's prior to or immediately following removal is 50%.
	c) Explore reasons TDM's not held and address issues.	Ongoing	Priority 1	

		1 – 3		Staff tend to hold TDM's for children at risk of removal but if a child has already been removed or if there is not time to hold a TDM prior to removal, the path for the case and child continues without the benefit of a review of alternatives. Staff list reasons for not holding TDM's as insufficient time for re-examination of the decision and ongoing pressures of moving forward with actions on other cases. It is planned to revisit discussions with staff regarding benefits of after-removal TDM's in focusing ongoing action and/or modifying the direction that appeared to be the best approach prior to the TDM.
	d) Develop case review process for African American children who have been removed.	Hold 2 - 3	Priority 1	Year 2 task, hold further action.

Strategy 3D	**Utilize feedback from consumers (parents and youth) to assist in improving culturally informed services.**			
	Activity	*Yr*	*Status Priority*	*Progress*
	a) Develop feedback mechanism from parents and youth who have been in our system.	1	Ongoing	Several avenues are already in place to receive feedback from parents and youth in the system including: ▪ Foster Parents and staff survey regarding placement issues ▪ Survey Cards in Office lobbies ▪ Father engagement surveys and focus groups ▪ PQCR interviews ▪ Discussions at Self Assessment forums ▪ Bay Area Academy focus groups ▪ Surveys to emancipating youth
	b) Analyze consumer information and look for ways to improve service delivery and service gaps.	2	Start	

				▪ Various focus groups and surveys held by Parent Partners to glean satisfaction with Child Welfare Services More activities are to be planned. ▪ Review previously gathered info: Family Engagement Surveys, Father Engagement Survey, Self Assessment Discussions, PQCR;s, Focus Groups by Bay Area Academy