Tulare County

California - Child and Family Services Review

2011 County Self-Assessment

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"Every child in California lives in a safe, stable, permanent home, nurtured by healthy families and strong communities."

Final Report: September 14, 2011

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California's Child and Family Services Review County Self-Assessment Cover Sheet	
County:	Tulare
Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:	Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency
Period of Assessment:	December 31, 2007 Through September 30, 2011
Period of Outcome Data:	Through September 30, 2010
Date Submitted:	August 30, 2011
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County Self-Assessment Cover Sheet (continued)

Submitted by each agency for the children under its care	
Submitted by:	County Child Welfare Agency Director (Lead Agency)
Name:	John M. Davis
Signature:	
Submitted by:	County Chief Probation Officer
Name:	Janet Honadle
Signature:	

County & Community Partners	In Collaboration with: Name(s)	Signature
Board of Supervisors Designated Public Agency to Administer CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF Funds	Beth Wilshire	
	Irma Rangel	
County Child Abuse Prevention Council	Beth Wilshire	
Parent Representative	Sheryl Jones	

As Applicable[1]	Name(s)
California Youth Connection	N/A
County Adoption Agency (or CDSS Adoptions District Office)	John M. Mauro, L.C.S.W., Tulare County Adoptions Manager
Local Tribes	Loleta Garfield, ICWA Coordinator – Tulare River Indian Reservation
Local Education Agency	Jim Vidak, Superintendent – Office of Education

Board of Supervisors (BOS) Approval	
BOS Approval Date:	August 30, 2011
Name:	Mike Ennis, Chairman
Signature:	

☐ Name and affiliation of additional participants are on a separate page with an indication as to which participants are representing the required core representatives.

[1] As applicable, provide the name of a representative from each of these entities as pertinent to relevant outcomes (the adoption composite would include a representative that was engaged in that portion of the CSA, likewise, IEP measure (5A), IWCA (4E), etc. No signature is required.

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California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR)

Tulare County
2011 County Self-Assessment

Introduction:

Assembly Bill 636 (AB 636) requires the State of California and its counties to measure outcomes and ensure accountability for its Child Welfare Services (CWS) program. The California Outcome and Accountability System was developed in accordance with the provisions of the California Welfare and Institutions Code 10601.2 focusing primarily on measuring the outcomes in Safety, Permanency, and Child and Family Well-Being. Tulare County completed its current System Improvement Plan (SIP) in January 2009 and its most recent Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) in January 2011. The following report is Tulare County's Self-Assessment which includes a review of the period between the County's 2008 Self Assessment and this review period through September 2011.

The data gathered for this report reflects the County's Quarterly Outcome Data for the period of 2007 through the quarter ending September 30, 2010. This data will reflect the change in outcome measures over time and will compare to the federal and state percentages for that same time period. Each of the identified outcome matrices will be followed by the County's analysis of the data and any recommended changes to policy and practice, where applicable.

The Self-Assessment Report integrates information for the Probation Department, Child Welfare Services, and Prevention wherever possible for ease in reading.

I. Guiding Principles of the County Self-Assessment (CSA)

The following are the guiding principles for the CSA. Their intent is to ground the CSA in common language and values and to assist in the integration of the CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF needs assessment and the CSA. They are:

- The goal of the child welfare system is to improve outcomes for children and families in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being.
- The entire community is responsible for child, youth, and family welfare, not just the child welfare agency. The child welfare agency has the primary responsibility to intervene when a child's safety is endangered.
- To be effective, the child welfare system must embrace the entire continuum of child welfare services, from prevention through aftercare services.
- Engagement with consumers and the community is vital to promoting safety, permanency, and well-being.
- Fiscal strategies must be considered that meet the needs identified in the CSA.

- Transforming the child welfare system is a process that involves removing traditional barriers within programs, within the child welfare system, and within other systems.

A. Lead Agencies:

The lead agencies for conducting the County Self-Assessment (CSA) report are the Tulare County Child Welfare Services and the Tulare County Probation Department. These agencies have overall responsibility for the completion of the County Self-Assessment. Child Welfare Services is responsible for all areas related to children who are receiving child welfare Title IV-B and IV-E funded services. The County Probation Department is responsible for assessing outcomes for foster children under its direct supervision who are receiving child welfare services who are in out-of-home placement.

The local Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) and the Tulare County Board of Supervisors' designated commission over Promoting Safe and Stable Families funds, the Children's Services Network (CSN), were active participants in the development of the CSA.

Prevention network partners have provided consultation on how CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF fund related activities can positively affect outcomes. Their primary role is to provide input in the areas of child abuse prevention and intervention regardless of whether the child or family has or has not received child welfare or probation services. Together, these partnering agencies identify the programmatic strengths and needs as these relate to their distinct populations, linking services to outcomes and aligning initiatives, goals, action plans, and funding sources.

B. County Self-Assessment (CSA) Team Composition:

Below is the list and affiliation of the CSA Team for Tulare County:

Name	Affiliation
Beth Wilshire	Child Abuse Prevention Council
Charlotte Wittig	Juvenile Court Commissioner
Irma Rangel	Children's Services Network/FRC
Cathy Volpa	County Health Department
Cheryl Duerksen, Ph.D.	County Mental Health
Juliet Webb	CWS Division Manager
John Mauro	CWS Manager – Adoptions & Licensing
Bob Browne	CWS Manager – Continuing Services
Mary Ann Cantu	CWS Manager – Emergency Response
Gary Kupfer	CWS Manager – QI, Training, & Court

Laurel Hernandez	CWS Administrative Specialist
Javier Robles	CWS Analyst
Debbie Benavente	County's Prevention Services Liaison
Deborah Hernandez	CWS Supervisor – Court Unit
Marie Focha	CWS Supervisor - ILP
Kathleen Trevino	CWS Supervisor – Adoptions
Heidi Pearson	CWS Supervisor – Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU)
Liz Mason	CWS Supervisor – Foster Care Licensing
Leticia Castaneda	CWS Supervisor – Emergency Response
Sylvia Jauregui	CWS Social Worker – Emergency Response
Enrique Sanchez	CWS Social Worker – ILP Program
Jane Dutton	CWS Social Worker – ILP Program
Courtney Venegas	CWS Social Worker – Continuing Services
Loleta Garfield	Tule River Indian Tribe
Janet Honadle	Probation Chief
Jose Gonzalez	Probation Manager
Michelle Bonwell	Probation Supervisor
Ryan Valentine	Probation Officer
Christie Walls	Foster Parent
Jennifer Tarvin	Youth Representative
Sheryl Jones	Parent Consumer
Marilyn Barr	CASA of Tulare County
Janet Hogan	First 5 – Tulare County
Linda Paredez	Foster Care Education - COS
Cheryl Lennon-Armas	Children's Mental Health
Rob Schimpf	County Sheriff's Department
Marilyn Rankin, Ed.D.	Tulare County Office Of Education
Janie Elson	Family Resource Center
Gloria Guzman	Central Valley Regional Center
Soledad C. Gammage	Central California Training Academy

Input into the County's Self-Assessment was provided by the participants listed above. As part of the overall needs assessment process undertaken for this review cycle, Tulare County's Children's Services Network and the Child Abuse Prevention Council membership developed an additional planning group – the Child Protection Planning Committee (CPPC). The CPPC is comprised of leaders and members of the prevention-focused entities listed above and include Child Welfare Services and Probation Department representatives. CPPC membership also includes consumers and representatives of community-based organizations. Membership in the CPPC is open to any individual wishing to participate and take an active role in helping to define how programs,

services, and strategies can best address child abuse and neglect in Tulare County.

The CPPC is in the process of framing specific child abuse prevention goals and strategies along the service continuum so that all parties at the table are working together to address services, needs, and gaps. This work will directly support the development of an integrated System Improvement Plan (SIP) which is due in January 2012. The next SIP plan will have been informed by the needs assessment presented here that takes into consideration the CPPC's input and guidance for the development of a comprehensive and responsive plan for improving the lives of Tulare County's children and families. The CPPC will continue to provide guidance for future county-wide and county-driven endeavors with the goal of preserving children and families in safe and nurturing communities.

II. Demographic Profile

Tulare County has used available demographic data to paint a picture of the environment in which out families and children reside. This section identifies and analyzes demographic issues that impact the achievement of desired outcomes.

A. Demographics of the General Population

1. County Profile:

Centrally located within the State of California, Tulare County is situated in a geographically diverse region. The County includes an area of 4,863 square miles. Mountain peaks of the Sierra Nevada rise more than 14,000 feet in its eastern half. Meanwhile, the extensively cultivated and fertile valley floor in the western half has allowed Tulare County to become the second-leading producer of agricultural commodities in the United States. In addition to substantial packing/shipping operations, light and medium manufacturing plants are increasing in number and are becoming an important factor in the County's total economic picture.

Tulare County, part of the Central San Joaquin Valley of California, shares borders with Kern County to the south and Fresno County to the immediate north. Tulare County shares its western border with Kings County. The general character of Tulare County is rural farmland with three densely populated cities (Visalia, Tulare, and Porterville) and several rural unincorporated communities scattered between the Sierra Nevada Mountains and valley floor neighbors. The County presents opportunity for all-season outdoor recreation activities which include hiking, boating, water and snow skiing, and

fishing. The County also boasts a central location to the Sierra Nevada and the coastal areas, a family-oriented lifestyle and affordable housing, all of which has proven attractive to people from all areas of the state and the country.

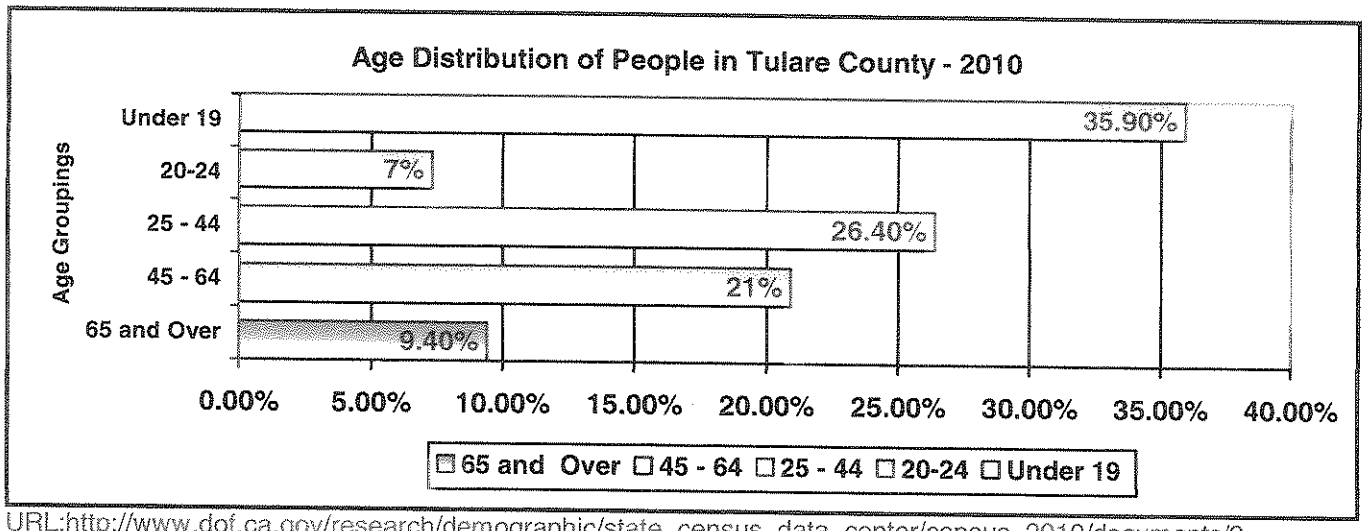
a. Tulare County Population:

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 Population Estimates, Tulare County was the eighteenth most populous county in California with a 2010 population of 442,179. [URL: http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographics/state_census_data_center/census.2010/documents/2010census_pop-rankers.xls]

i. Age Distribution:

Age distribution of the County population is presented in the graph below. It reflects that 35.90% of the population is below 19 years of age, 9.4% are older than 65 years, 7.30% are between 20-24 years, 26.9% are between the ages of 25 and 44 years, and 20.9% are between the ages of 45 and 64 years.

These data reflects that Tulare County's population has grown in the last few years. Coupled with other demographic data presented later in this report, the growth has come in the increasing number of younger children and families from ethnic minorities. The current age distribution as presented here may also be indicative of the need for Tulare County to view the needs of these particular age groups with regard to the services, supports, and impact they each will have on existing resources.



URL:http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/state_census_data_center/census_2010/documents/2010Census_DemoProfile1.xls]

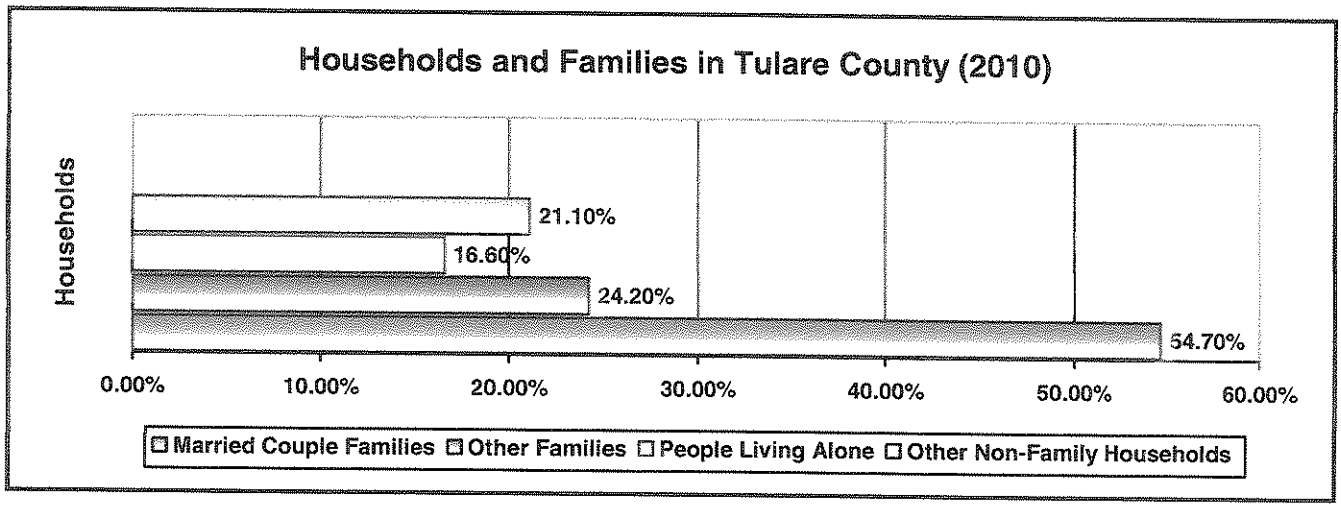
ii. Households and Families:

According to the US Census data for 2010 there were 130,362 households in Tulare County. The average household size was 3.36 people and the average family size was 3.74 persons. By comparison, the state's average household size was 2.90 and the average family size was 3.45, both lower than the household composition in Tulare County.

Families made up 78.90% of the households in Tulare County. This figure includes both married-couple families (54.70%) and other families (24.20%). Non-family households made up 21.10% of all households in Tulare County. Most of the non-family households were people living alone (16.60%).

At first glance the one thing that stands out about this data is that Tulare County has larger family groups than the state as a whole. And the data for household composition, while not analyzed closer, may be contributed to the increasing population of a couple of ethnic groups – Hispanic/Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander that tend to have larger families. The trend has implications for how the County meets the service demands for families and for how agencies respond to the need for scarce resources that are at times lacking or shrinking in the current economic downturn.

Another trend noted in the data is a growing number of families where no one is related. From anecdotal information, people are looking to "get by" by pooling resources. As other indicators presented here attest to, high unemployment rates and a scarcity of jobs leads to people to look for solutions to help them get by – a trend not likely to change dramatically in the near term.



http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/state_census_data_center/census_2010/documents/DP2010-Tulare_County.pdf

iii. Nativity and Language:

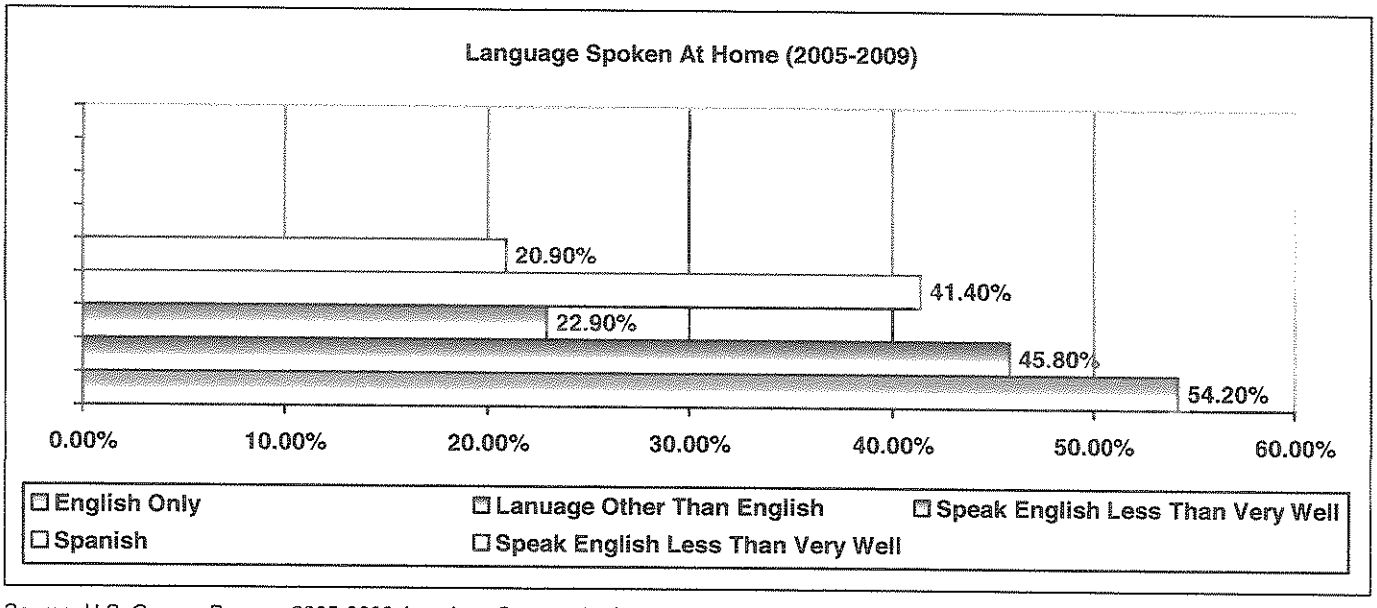
Twenty-three percent of the people living in Tulare County in 2010 were foreign born. Seventy-seven percent were native, including 64 percent who were born in California.

According to the American Community Survey (2005-2009), among the population that is at least five years old living in Tulare County, 54.20% spoke only English, and 45.80% spoke a language other than English at home. Of those speaking a language other than English at home, 41.40% spoke Spanish while 20.90% of those reported that they did not speak English "very well."

From this data, we conclude that there is a changing demographic in the County that is expected to become more pronounced in coming years. The challenges for agencies include having staff that are

sensitive to the service needs of non-English speaking constituencies, or staffing patterns that are reflective of the populations being served, and to ensure that communication (written, oral, or otherwise) is understood by those receiving it.

In a review of the data for young children, we note a growing trend of speaking native language in the home. This may be due to a value of maintaining cultural identity by raising children who are bilingual. The influences of ethnic minorities are noted in the ethnicity data presented below which indicates that Hispanic/Latinos make up the majority of the County's population. A closer review of the data indicates that the Hispanic/Latino population changes are more noticeable in smaller rural areas of the County.

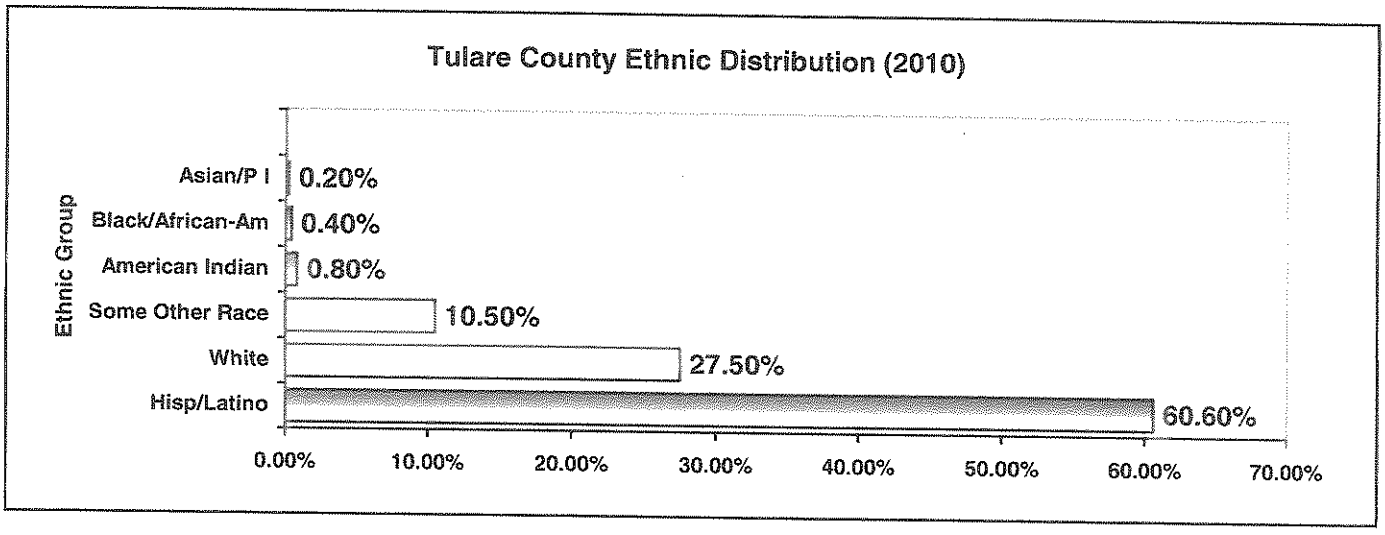


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey
www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release

iv. Ethnicity of County Population:

Tulare County's ethnic makeup has continued to reflect the same changes noted in other parts of the state – a growing minority population. Below is the data from the 2010 U. S. Census Bureau. It is noted that the local Hispanic or Latino population accounts for 60.60% of the total County population, while the population of people identifying themselves as White alone accounts for 27.50%. Other ethnic group

representations in the County include Black or African American (0.40%), American Indian (0.80%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (0.20%). The balance of Tulare County's population is accounted for by people claiming two or more races in the data. See the table below for the representation of the data.



URL: www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/state_census_data_center/census_2010/documents/DP2010-Tulare_County.pdf

v. Demographic Projections:

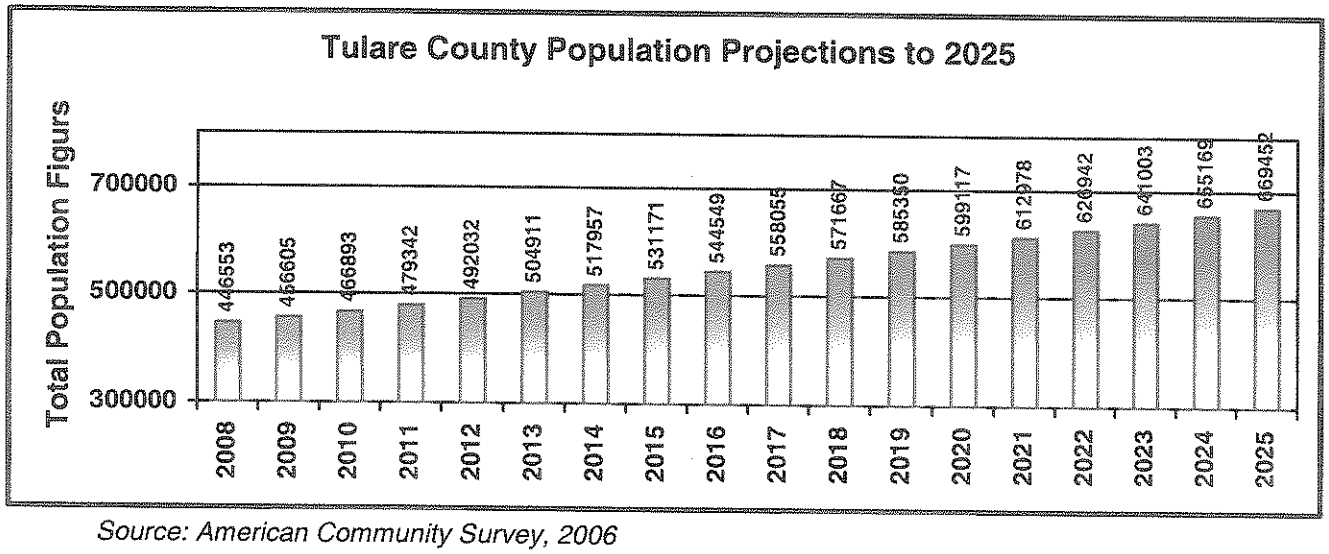
Tulare County's population, according to the American Community Survey 2005-2009, grew by 1.6% between January 01, 2009 (440,780) and January 01, 2010 (447,814). The County has projected population growth to 479,342 by the end of 2011 and 599,117 by 2020. This is a total increase of 41% - the fourth highest growth out of all eight San Joaquin Valley counties and greater than California's 20% estimated growth. [www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release]

Within Tulare County, population shifts in several towns reflected similar growth during the period between January 2009 and January 2010. Specifically, the following table reflects population changes and the percent of change during the period:

City	Total Population		Percent Change
	01/01/2009	*01/01/2010*	
Tulare County	440,780	447,814	1.6%
Dinuba	21,204	21,542	1.6%
Exeter	10,646	10,752	1.0%
Farmersville	10,753	10,971	2.0%
Lindsay	11,665	11,800	1.2%
Porterville	51,975	52,960	1.9%
Tulare	58,414	59,535	1.9%
Visalia	123,473	125,971	2.0%
Woodlake	7,757	7,927	2.2%
Balance of County	144,893	146,356	1.0%

Source: American Community Survey, 2005-2009
[www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release]

Projections by the US Census Bureau in 2006 showed that by year 2025 the total population for the County will have a median age of 27.5 years, younger than the median age of 29.3 years posted for 2005-2009. Tulare County's population is projected to increase by 63 percent over the 2006 population of 419,909 to an estimated 669,452 persons by 2025. The table below outlines the annual growth projections for the period of 2008 through 2025:



Source: American Community Survey, 2006

2. Active Tribes in the County:

The only federally recognized tribe based in Tulare County is the Tule River Indian Reservation, established in 1873. The Tule River Indian Reservation is estimated to cover almost 85 square miles of rugged foothill lands of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The

reservation is located in a remote rural area of the County approximately 20 miles east of the city of Porterville. According to the American Community Survey of 2005-2009, there were 2,752 people identified as American Indian living in Tulare County. No exact figures are available for the number of Native Americans living on the Reservation.

The Tule River Indian Reservation has been focused on improving the livelihood of its members. Over the years the Tribe has developed several on-site facilities to accommodate member needs. Among the facilities at the reservation are: a child care center with a Head Start Program, a health center that offers medical, dental, vision, prenatal and post-natal services, a housing office, and a recreation center with a gymnasium.

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Director (and tribal member) has developed a relationship with Tulare County CWS and Probation as well as other County run programs. It is common for ICWA staff to manage a variety of social service needs for tribal members, both on and off the reservation. According to internal data reports developed using Business Objects software, for the month of July 2011, Tulare County received 15 referrals on children identified as Native American. The same "Monthly Countywide Fact Sheet" report for July 2011 also reflected that a total of 15 Native American children were in an active CWS case. The Probation Department does not currently serve any Native American children in their Juvenile Probation Placement Unit's caseload.

Tulare County remains sensitive to all Native Americans living in the County. This includes both Tule River tribal members and Native Americans from other tribes. The County remains sensitive to handling cases involving American Indian children in accordance to regulation and with respect to tribal mores, customs, and traditions.

3. Education Profile:

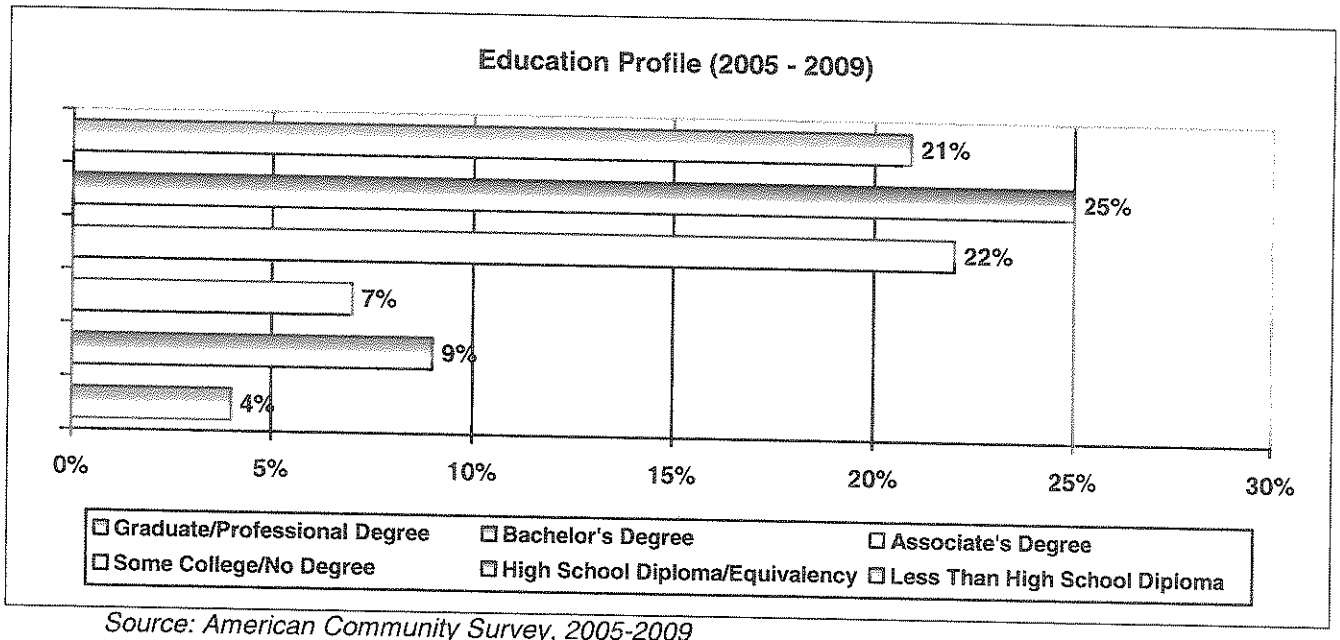
According to the American Community Survey for 2005-2009, Tulare County data reflects that 21% of the County population had less than a high school diploma and 25.10% of people 25 years and over had graduated from high school. California's data reflects that the population of adults over age 25 without a high school diploma was estimated to be 10.50% for 2009. [www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release]

Twenty-two percent (22%) of Tulare County's population has some college education but no degree while 13% of the County population had earned a bachelor's degree or higher and just over four percent (4.10%) had a graduate or professional degree. There are two community colleges in Tulare County but no public universities that provide bachelor or graduate professional degrees. Tulare County residents may opt to travel to Fresno or Kern County where California State Universities are located.

In contrast, California data reflects that 23.10% of the population over 25 years of age had a high school diploma or equivalent, 19% had a bachelor's degree, and 10.80% had a graduate or professional degree.

Data for total school enrollments in Tulare County was 127,170 in 2005-2009. Nursery school and kindergarten enrollment was 13,000 and elementary or high school enrollment was 92,000 children. College or graduate school enrollment was 22,000.

As reported above, Tulare County faces challenges to having its population find success in education. These figures demonstrate that the state as a whole has found more success in getting its citizens to graduate from high school and a larger number of its population to pursue college and graduate degrees. Tulare County's employment data may be used here to point to another inhibitor, industries seeking technical skills and the lack of employment opportunities for those seeking professional degrees in other fields.

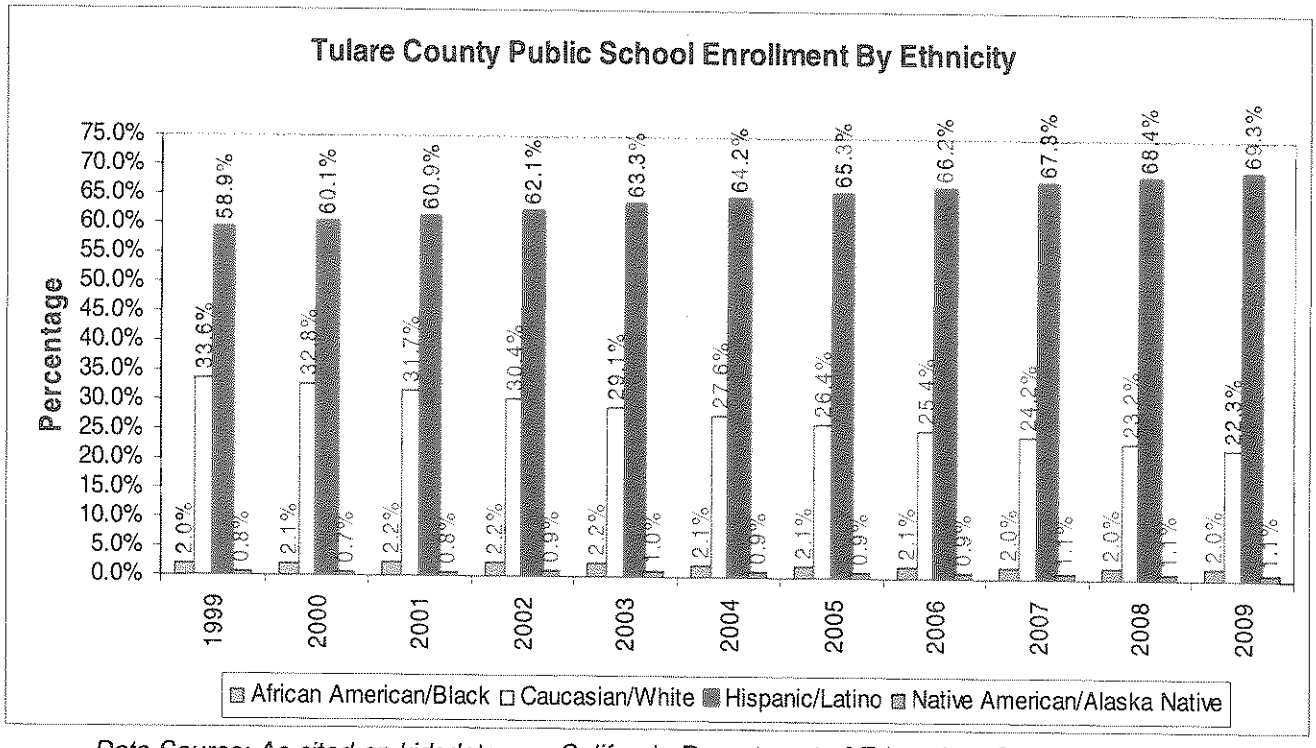


Source: American Community Survey, 2005-2009
[www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release]

a. Children Attending School:

The Tulare County public school system consists of 182 schools consolidated into 47 school districts with enrollments estimated to be 127,170 students countywide in 2009. A growing percentage of these enrolled students are English Learners, defined by the California Department of Education as students who lack the language skills needed to succeed in regular instructional programs.

The following graph provides data for school enrollments by ethnicity for the period 1999 to 2009. The data points to increases in the enrollment numbers for Hispanic / Latinos which grew from 59.9% posted for 1999 to 69.3% in 2009. Conversely, White children enrollments decreased from 33.6% in 1999 to 22.3% in 2009. No analysis of the significance of the trends noted here has been undertaken for this report.



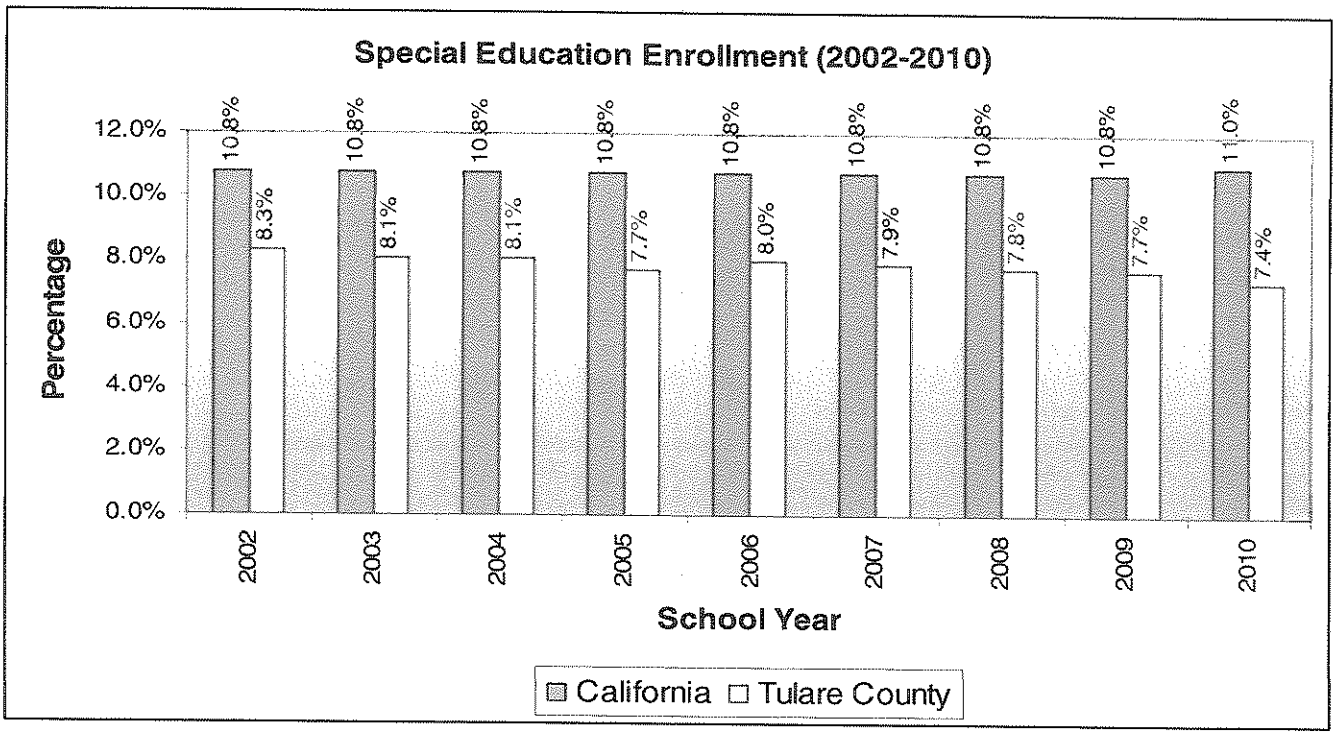
Data Source: As cited on kidsdata.org, California Department of Education, California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS). URL: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/studentdatafiles.asp August 2009).

b. Children Attending Special Education Classes:

Approximately 7,500 students from birth to age 21 are served by special education in 34 small school districts; another 13 school districts in Tulare County do not provide special education classes. The Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) operates programs to meet the needs of disabled students and meet each student's educational needs.

The following table lists special education enrollment numbers for Tulare County students between the ages of 0 and 21 years for the period of 2002 and 2010. State data for the same period is also included for purposes of comparing local figures to statewide data. No conclusions are drawn from the data presented here. However, data does reflect that Tulare County has fewer enrolled students in Special Education services than the state. Information found in a publication posted on the Tulare County Office of Education website [http://www.tcoe.org/Special/index.shtm] about their Special Services Division reflects that the County provides such services as Designated Instructional Services (DIS), Special Day Classes (SDC), and Bright Start Parent/Infant

Program for young children with or at risk of having disabilities.



Source: [http://www.kidsdata.org/data/region/dashboard.aspx?loc=359&cat=12]

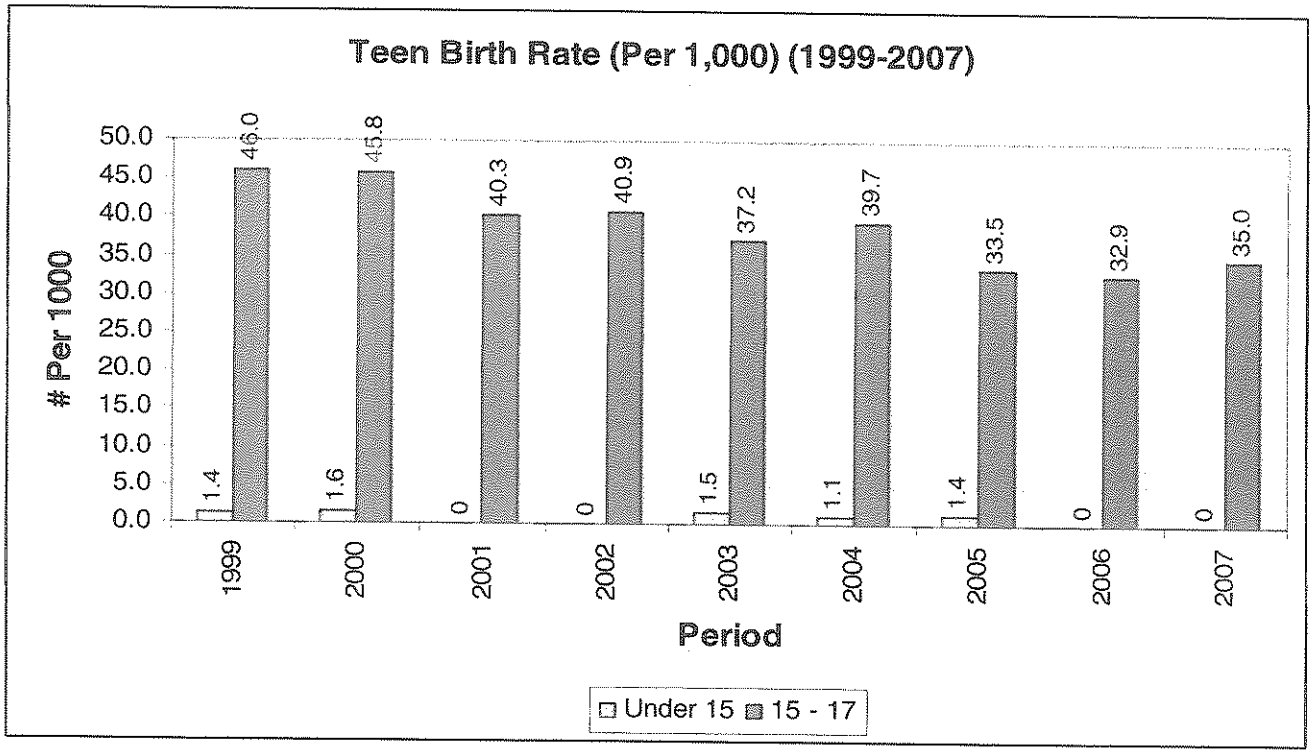
c. Children Born To Teen Parents:

The rate of births to teens in Tulare County reflects a declining trend since 1999 when 46 teens per 1000 gave birth to a child; in 2009 the teen birth rate dropped to 36 and the most current rate for 2010 was 35 teens per 1000 births. Comparatively, California's rate in 2007 is 19.9 teens (ages 15-17), lower than the County's rate. While it appears that the trends are heading downward, Tulare County has consistently had higher rates than the rest of the state; something that may not be surprising as evidenced by other demographic trends already noted in this report.

Teen births present significant barriers for the parent and the infant during a very important period of their development. Research has found that these young mothers face challenges to finishing education, and to becoming self-sufficient adults. Children of teen mothers are at even higher risk than the mother and are more likely to have academic, cognitive, and behavioral difficulties that can persist.

Tulare County has relied on the Cal-Learn and the Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) to address and impact the rate of births to teenagers. Additionally, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Collaborative is increasing public awareness of the consequences of teen pregnancy. *[Source: Tulare County Children's Services Network Report Card for 2010.]*

The following graph reflects the number births to teen girls through age 17. The data is defined as number births per every 1,000 youth of the same age in the population.

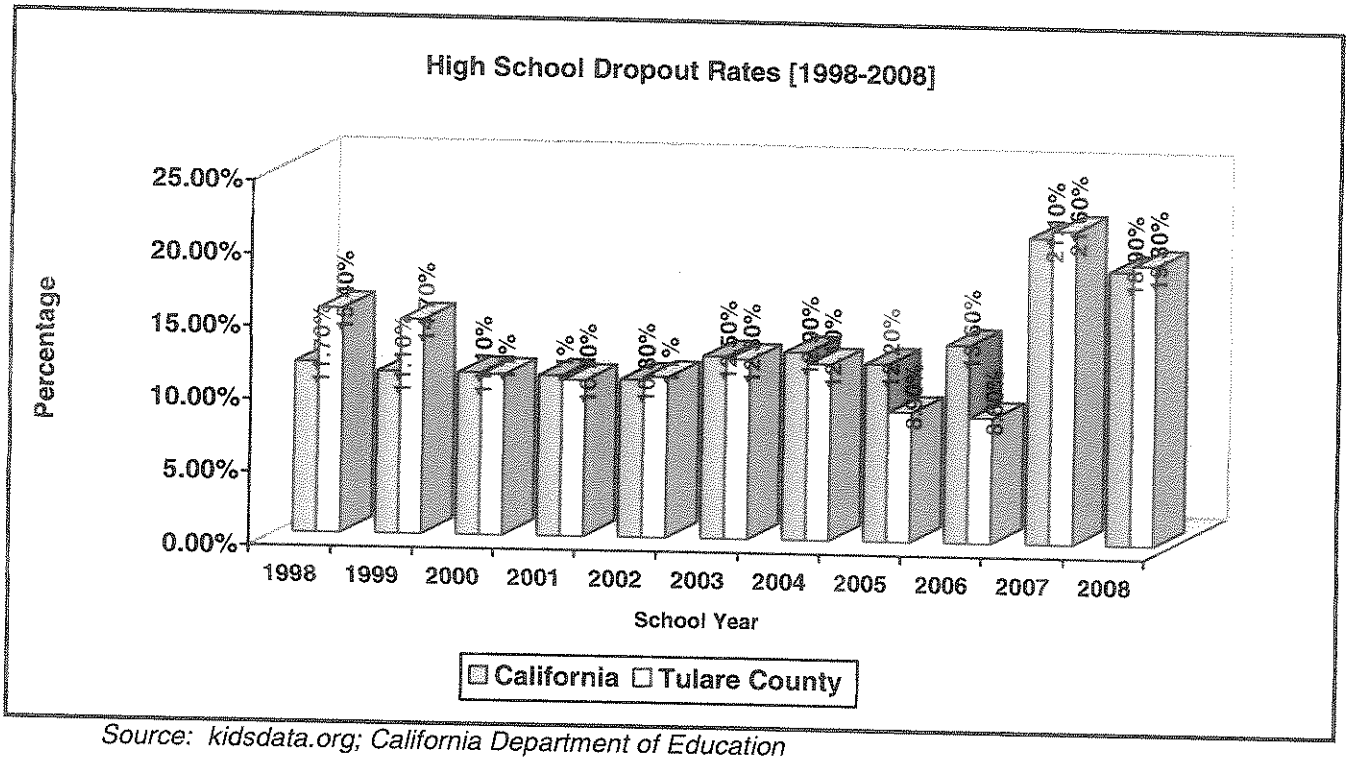


URL: http://www.kidsdata.org/data/region/dashboard.aspx?loc=359&cat=44&vai=true

d. Children Who Are Leaving School Prior To Graduation:

Research findings detail that students who drop out of high school are more likely to become economically disadvantaged adults. As these students become parents they may also face greater challenges caring for their children. These challenges can often lead to substance abuse, increased poverty, higher risk of abuse and neglect for their children, and other health and mental health issues.

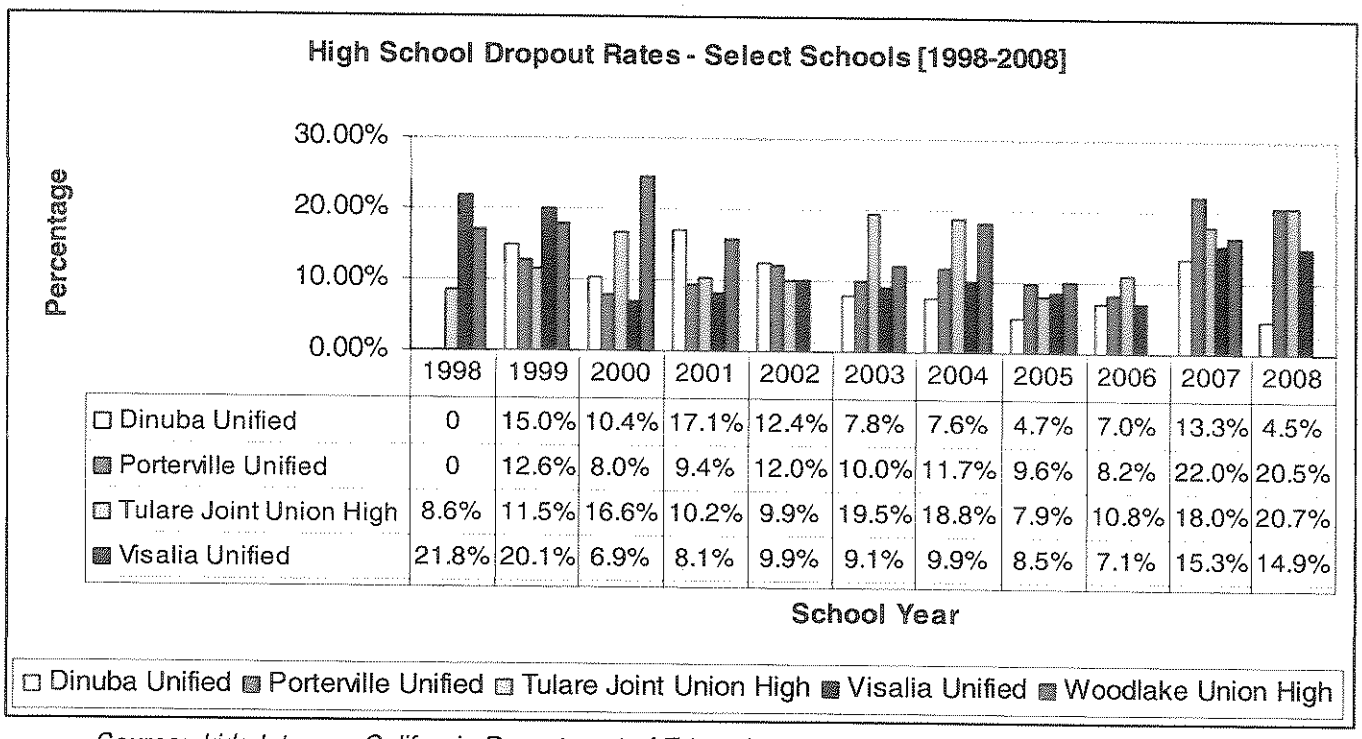
The following graph presents data for California and Tulare County for youth who have dropped out of school before completing their academic requirements for graduation. Significant increases are noted in the drop out rates for both the school years of 2007 and 2008 for the state and the County. However, Tulare County's high school drop out rates for the school years of 2005 and 2006 were lower than rates for the state. URL: http://www.kidsdata.org/data/region/dashboard.aspx?loc=359



Source: kidsdata.org; California Department of Education

The following chart is included to more closely examine high school drop out rates for select school districts. Data for smaller school districts have not been included for this report. It is noted that the second and third largest school districts in Tulare County, Porterville Unified School District and Tulare City School District, posted dropout rates closer to 20%. In contrast, the Dinuba Unified School District, a rural school, had high school dropout rates decrease from 13.3% in 2007 to a dramatic low of 4.5% for 2008. The Visalia School District, the County's district with the largest enrollment figures reported a dropout rate of 15.3% in 2007 which decreased slightly to 14.9% for 2008.

Tulare County schools, as have all California schools, have faced many challenges to effecting positive changes to their educational outcomes due to the economic downturn. The lack of funding for educational supportive services, tutoring, remediation, services for special needs children, and assistance for second-language learners are reflected in this data. Higher class sizes have not helped and the trend looks gloomy for the near future. These factors may well lead to increasing demands for services and may have a negative impact on outcomes for children in the Child Welfare and Probation systems.



	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Dinuba Unified	0	15.0%	10.4%	17.1%	12.4%	7.8%	7.6%	4.7%	7.0%	13.3%	4.5%
Porterville Unified	0	12.6%	8.0%	9.4%	12.0%	10.0%	11.7%	9.6%	8.2%	22.0%	20.5%
Tulare Joint Union High	8.6%	11.5%	16.6%	10.2%	9.9%	19.5%	18.8%	7.9%	10.8%	18.0%	20.7%
Visalia Unified	21.8%	20.1%	6.9%	8.1%	9.9%	9.1%	9.9%	8.5%	7.1%	15.3%	14.9%

Source: kidsdata.org; California Department of Education

4. Children on Child Care Waiting Lists:

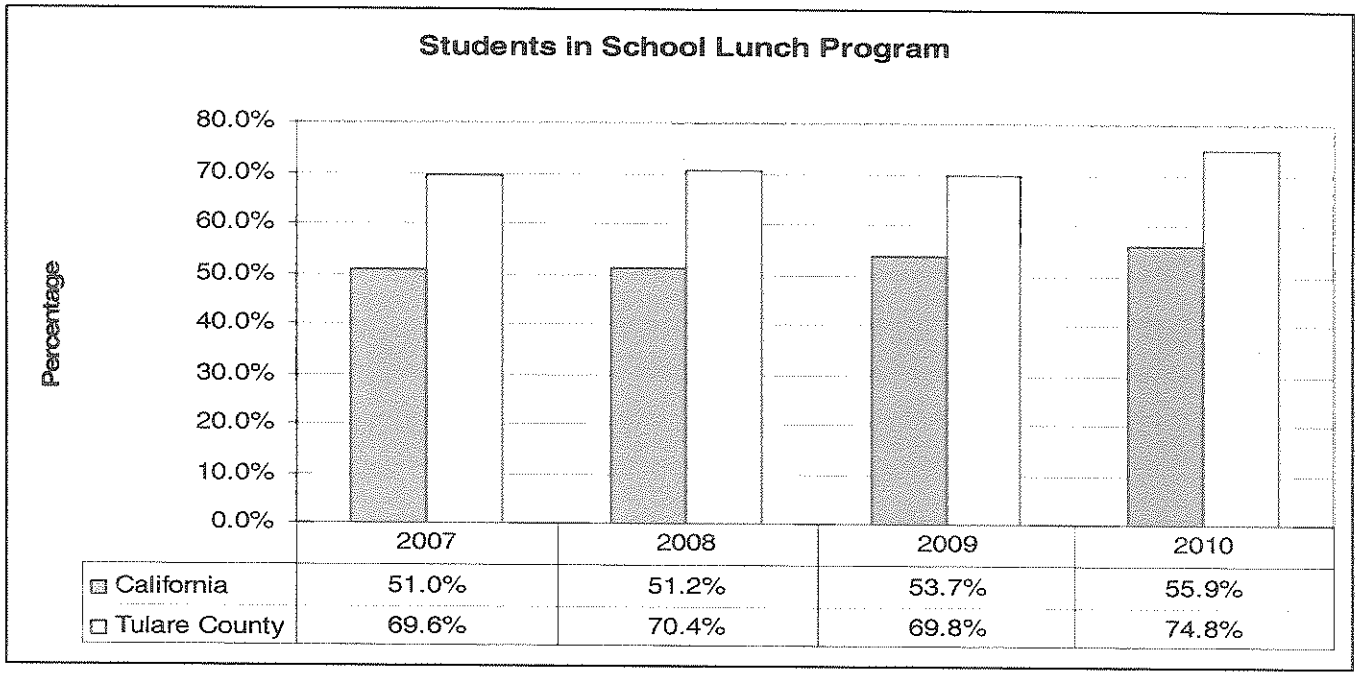
The availability of quality, affordable child care makes it possible for parents to work and helps children prepare for school. Child care for those in need and, in particular, subsidized child care for low-income families, is essential to helping children access early socialization experiences that will prepare them for kindergarten. Quality child care and preschool experiences can provide developmentally appropriate enrichment. Pre-literacy activities can provide children with the necessary social and cognitive skills to prepare them for later school success.

In 2008 there were an estimated 54,163 children between the ages of 0-13 years who had one or both parents working. At the same time there were 12,684 licensed child care slots; the remaining 41,479 children either received informal care or were unsupervised. Subsidized child care that is available to low income families is also in short supply and a barrier for families transitioning off public assistance.

Children left alone while parents work present challenges for the local systems (education, recreation, social services). These partners work to keep children safe by involvement in after school activities or clubs. Children left without appropriate and consistent supervision can wind up getting hurt, finding themselves in trouble, and find themselves caught in the Child Welfare and/or Probation systems.

5. Children Participating In Subsidized School Lunch Programs:

The chart below reflects data for children who participate in subsidized school lunch programs. It is noted that Tulare County's children have more participation than the statewide averages. Taken together with other data elements discussed in this report (County agrarian based economy, poverty rates, unemployment, and welfare program assistance) the findings are consistent with the level of participation in the school lunch programs.



	2007	2008	2009	2010
California	51.0%	51.2%	53.7%	55.9%
Tulare County	69.6%	70.4%	69.8%	74.8%

Data Source: As cited on kidsdata.org, California Department of Education, Free/Reduced Price Meals Program & CalWORKS Data Files.

6. Children Receiving Age Appropriate Immunizations:

Immunization is a measure of family access to and use of preventative health care. In California, eight different vaccines are currently recommended for children between birth and kindergarten age. The immunizations provide protection against 12 different organisms, preventing a number of serious and even fatal diseases, such as measles, chicken pox, tetanus, whooping cough, and polio. Immunization is a requirement for school entry and compliance with immunization regulations is measured at that time.

For Tulare County, the percentage of children 4-6 years of age in kindergarten with required immunizations slowly increased from 94.5% posted in 2001 to 96.9% in 2007 but declined to 95.9% in 2009. Tulare County rates have consistently been above the statewide rates for the period between 2001 and 2009.

A number of local efforts are in place to assure that children receive age appropriate immunizations. These include the County's participation in the Central Valley Immunization Information System (CVIIS) which records and organizes client immunization information, notices clients and providers of immunizations due, and calculates coverage rates based on patient history. Another program in Tulare County that assists these efforts is the Nurse-Family Partnership Program. This program has been instrumental in increasing the number of individuals who are informed and attend routine medical visits and has reduced the number of children who are not immunized. *[Source: Tulare County Children's Services Network Report Card for 2010.]*

7. Babies Born With Low-birth Weight:

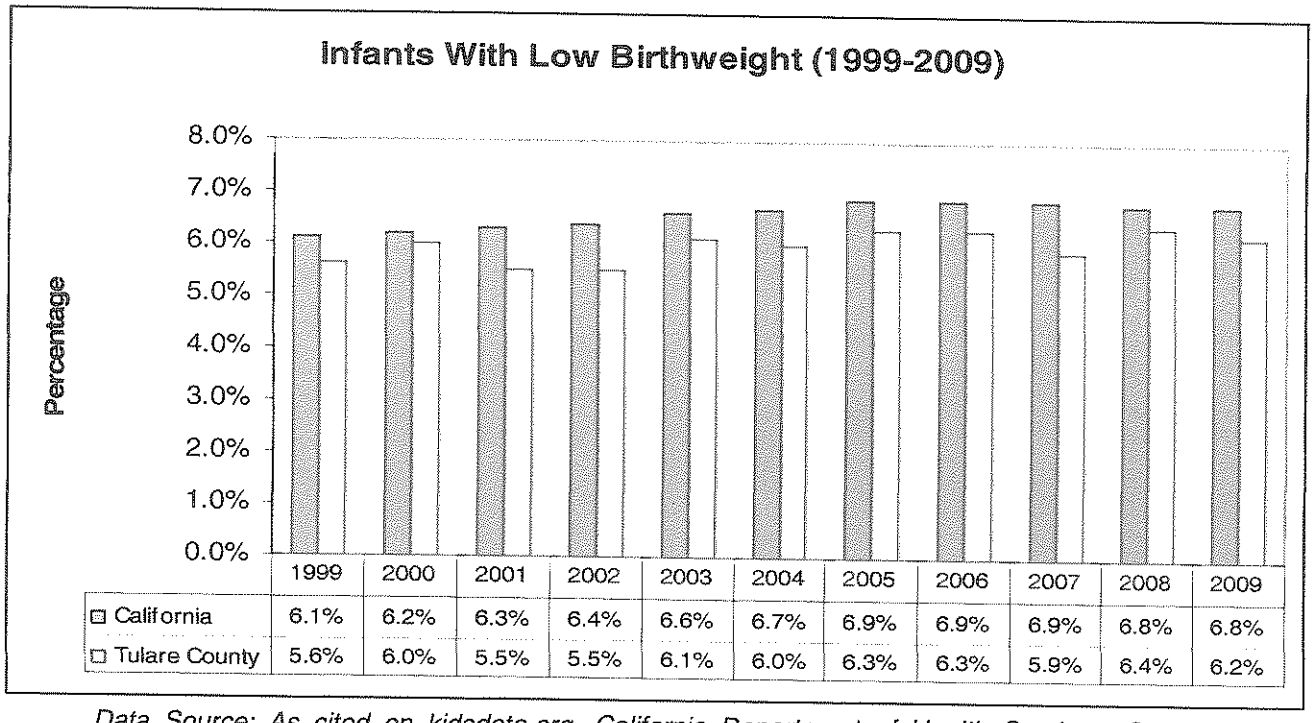
Low birth weight is measured by the number of infants who are born weighing less than 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds) and is expressed as a percentage of total live births per year.

Infant birth weight is affected by many factors, including the quality and timeliness of prenatal care, and is directly related to infant survival, health, and development. Low birth weight is a risk factor for a variety of developmental problems, including mental retardation, developmental delays, visual and hearing defects, and other difficulties. Infants born at very low birth weights (less than 1,500 grams or 3.3 pounds) are especially fragile.

In Tulare County the percentage of babies born at low birth weight increased from 5.6% in 1999 to 6.2% in 2009. During the same period the State average increased to 6.8%.

A number of promising and evidence-based practices have been implemented to address this issue for Tulare County's most vulnerable population. In addition to the Nurse-Family Partnership Program, Tulare County has the Comprehensive Perinatal Services program (CPSP) which focuses on improving the outcome of every pregnancy and decreasing the incidence of low birth weight babies. *[Source: Tulare County Children's Services Network Report Card for 2010.]*

The following table reflects low birth weight trend data for Tulare County and California for the period between 1999 and 2009.



	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
California	6.1%	6.2%	6.3%	6.4%	6.6%	6.7%	6.9%	6.9%	6.9%	6.8%	6.8%
Tulare County	5.6%	6.0%	5.5%	5.5%	6.1%	6.0%	6.3%	6.3%	5.9%	6.4%	6.2%

Data Source: As cited on kidsdata.org, California Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Section, CD-ROM Public Use Birth Files.

8. Infant Mortality Rates:

As used here, infant mortality measures how many infants die before their first birthday, per 1,000 live births.

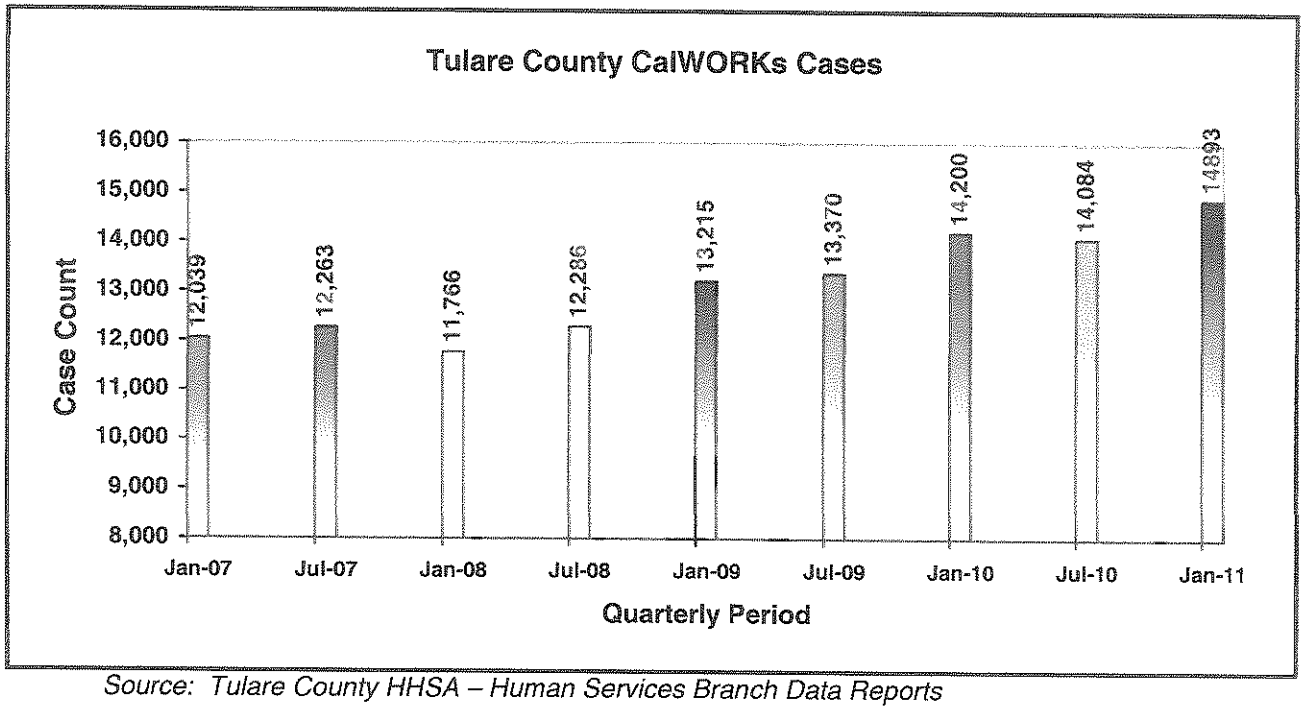
Infant mortality is correlated to poor prenatal care and low birth weight. Access to prenatal care and other preventative care after birth provide opportunities to identify and treat children for risk factors for infant mortality.

The infant mortality rate for Tulare County has decreased from 6.6 per 1,000 babies in the year 2000 to 5.2 per 1,000 in 2008. The County's rate for the year 2008 was slightly above the rate for California which posted a rate of 5.1 deaths per 1,000 live births.

To address this concern, Tulare County's Maternal, Child, & Adolescent Health Division is currently coordinating a campaign focused on increasing the number of healthy women and children. The effort will encourage healthy habits while addressing issues surrounding safe sleeping as well as preconception and the importance of prenatal care. *[Source: Tulare County Children's Services Network Report Card for 2010.]*

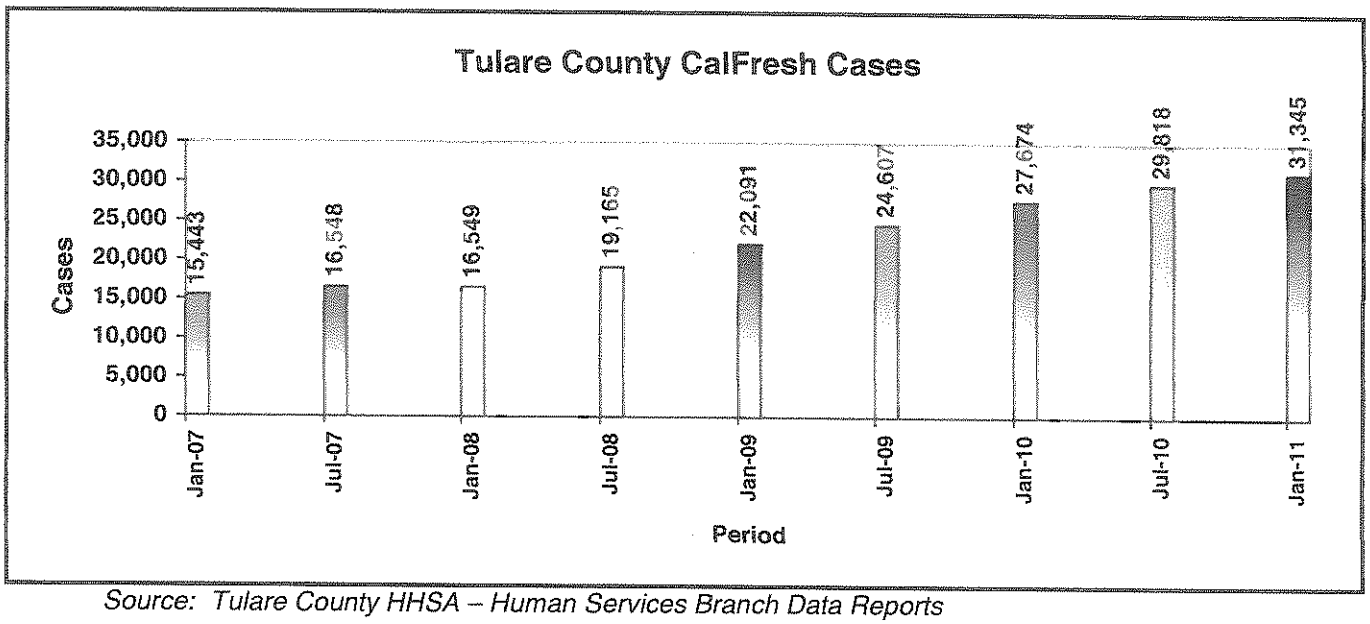
9. Public Assistance Participation Rates (CalWORKs):

Public Assistance Rates for Tulare County is presented in the tables below. The data reflect two quarters for each calendar year between January 2007 and January 2011 (the most recent data available).



Source: Tulare County HHSA – Human Services Branch Data Reports

Public Assistance data is also being presented for Food Stamp Only (CalFresh) cases in Tulare County for the same period cited above.

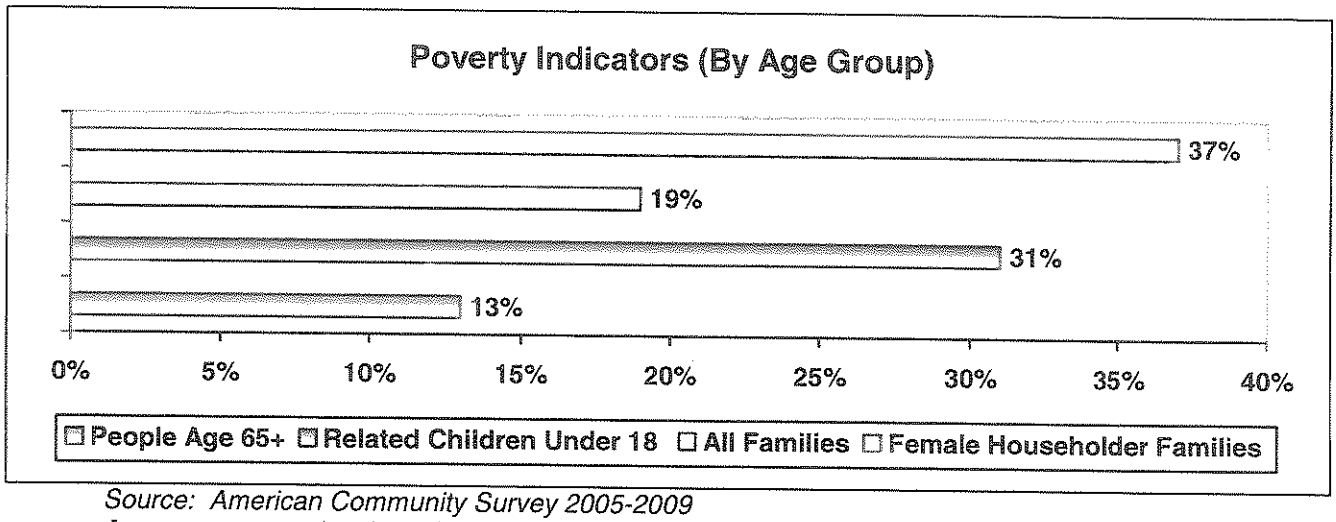


Source: Tulare County HHSA – Human Services Branch Data Reports

The trend since 2007 reflects an increasing demand in both public assistance rates for assistance to purchase food supplies by Tulare County residents. Taken into consideration with poverty rates, especially among youth age 0 to 18 years, it is no surprise to see the continuing demand. Local offices are inundated daily as are food banks, social service agencies, and faith-based organizations who regularly plead for community assistance to help feed the County's poor. To meet the continuing demand, the County has added staff to help process the requests for assistance; a trend not expected to decline until the County's economy improves.

10. Families Living Below the Poverty Level:

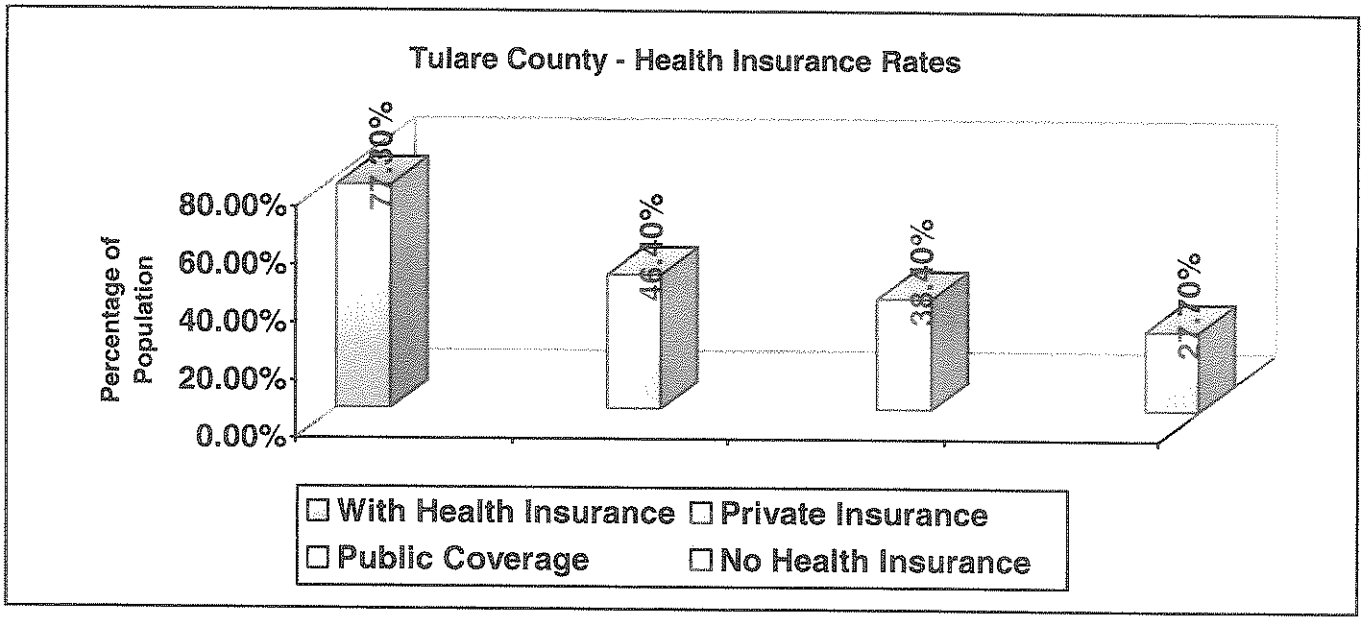
The data on poverty reflects that Tulare County's citizens are poor by definition and in most cases living below the national poverty levels. Female household families make up 37% of the poor in Tulare County and a smaller but growing population of people age 65 plus (at 13%) are also living at or below the poverty level. It is noted that almost one third of the County population's youth are considered poor. This is of concern as poverty is a risk factor for child abuse and neglect. These factors contribute to the increasing demand for services and assistance as noted in others areas of this demographic profile for Tulare County. [URL: [www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release]



Source: American Community Survey 2005-2009
[www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release]

11. Families With No Health Insurance:

According to data from the 2009 American Community Survey, the table below provides information related to health insurance status for families in Tulare County. It presents data according to the status of individuals for the total population. Comparison data for California reflects that 82% of the population has health insurance and 18% of the state's population is without some sort of Health Insurance.



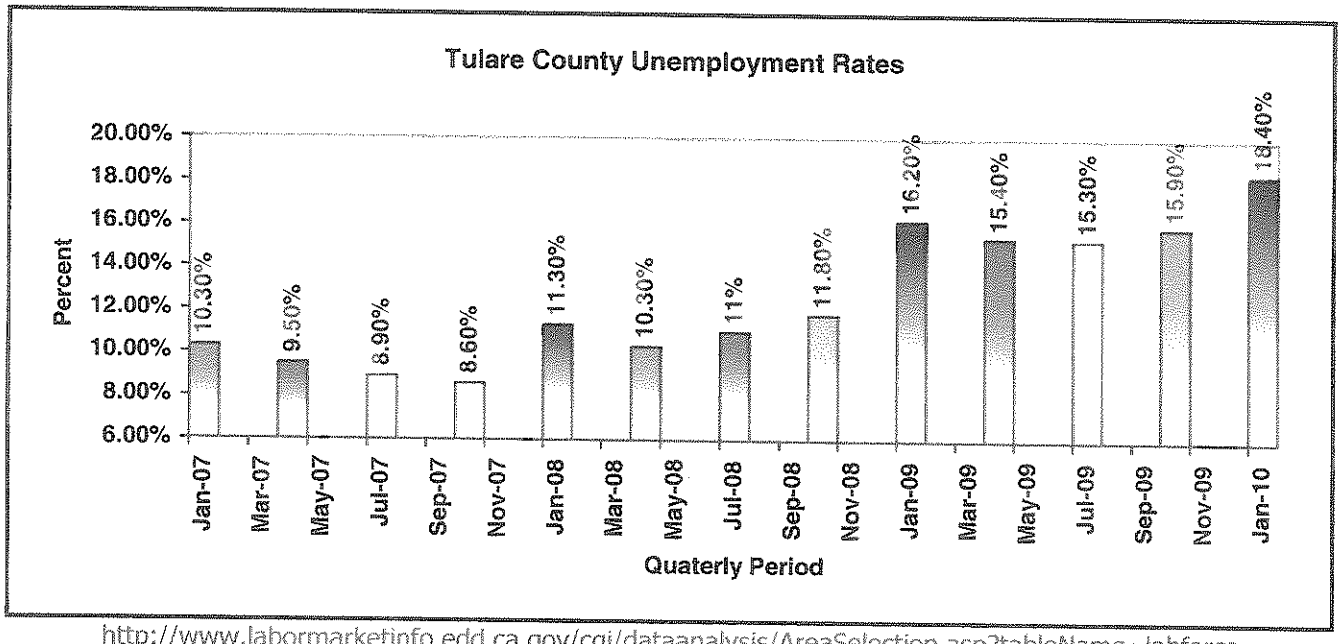
Source: http://www.kidsdata.org/data/region/dashboard.aspx?loc=359

Equally important is the data for health insurance coverage for children ages 0-18 years in Tulare County which reflects that 12.5%

of youth in the age group is without health insurance coverage (either via private insurance or public coverage). In contrast, it is estimated that 9.5% of California's 0-18 year old population has no health insurance.

12. County Unemployment Rate:

Tulare County's unemployment rates have steadily increased since July 2008 as reflected in the chart below. The County's economy is driven by an agricultural base followed by the service sector and government jobs. The rate has typically remained higher than many California locations. The chart below provides the data taken from the California Employment Development Department.



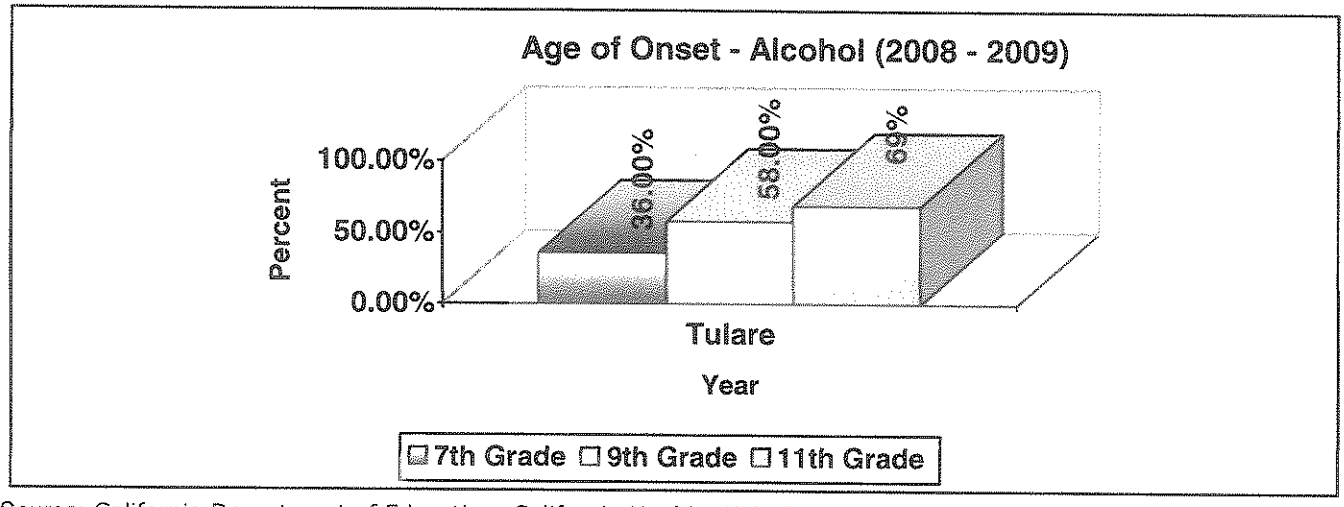
http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/cgi/dataanalysis/AreaSelection.asp?tableName=labforce

It is no surprise in Tulare County to see the increasing trend in the number of unemployed persons. Tulare County typically sees fluctuations in the unemployment rates due in large part to its agriculturally-based economy. Even with recent shifts in the service sector, the housing crisis that has besieged the nation beginning in 2008 has become entrenched. What this has done to demands for service and assistance can be seen in the previous graphs which paint a bleak social and economic picture of the current state in Tulare County. And, without some economic assistance or change in the current economy, Tulare County sees no immediate relief in sight. As such, the County and its collaborative community partners continue to look for ways to develop needed services with available resources through innovation and increasing partnerships.

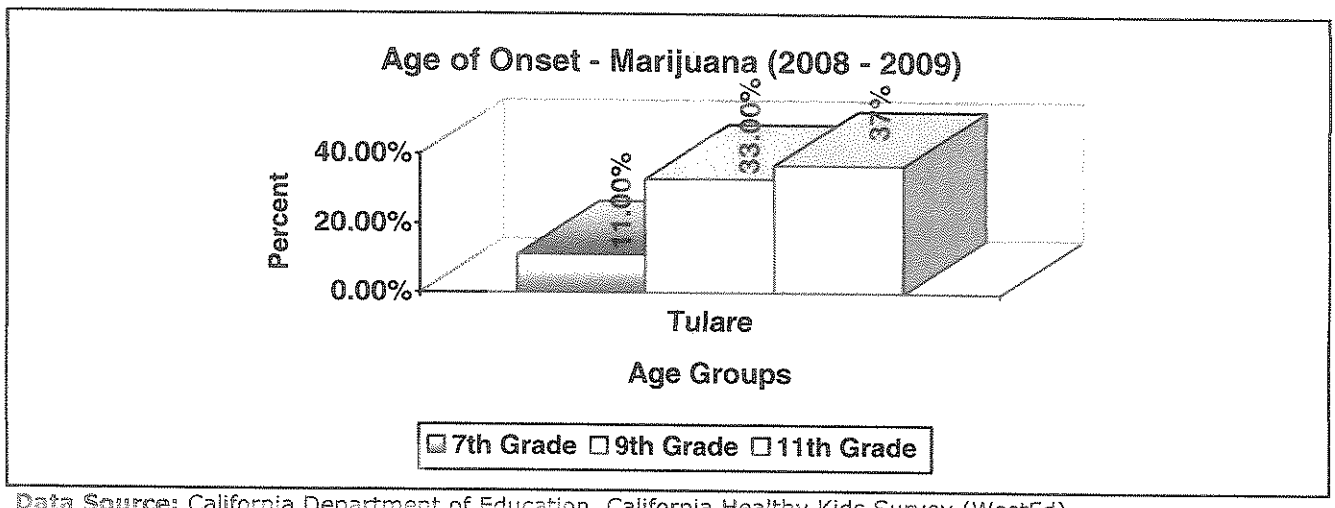
13. County Rate of Alcohol and Substance Abuse:

Data for this section was obtained from the Strategic Plan for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Report for 2010-2013. The report was developed by the Tulare County HHSA – Alcohol and Drug Program Prevention Services unit. Elements of the following data are presented for their relevance to the CWS system, its services and systemic factors, and for furthering collaborative efforts to meet the needs of the County's children.

The following graphs present select data indicators on alcohol and marijuana use of school-aged children as collected from the California Healthy Kids Survey (2009). These two measures are the most relevant to the purpose of the report. No other conclusions are drawn from the data for purposes of this report.



Source: California Department of Education, California Healthy Kids Survey (WestEd). http://www.wested.org/chks As cited on kidsdata.org, a program of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health.



Data Source: California Department of Education, California Healthy Kids Survey (WestEd). http://www.wested.org/chks As cited on kidsdata.org, a program of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health.

Alcohol Use:

In the 2009 school-based surveys, 36% of 7th graders reported having one full drink, 58% of ninth graders reported initiating alcohol use, and 69% of 11th graders reported lifetime use of alcohol. The 2005 scores are slightly higher than scores reported for 2001. In comparison, statewide data is slightly consistently lower than the rates posted for Tulare County.

Marijuana Use:

In the same surveys, 11% of 7th graders reported having tried marijuana, 29% of 9th graders reported initiating use, and 37% of 11th graders reported use of marijuana. The state's average rates are also slightly lower than Tulare County's figures.

Implications:

The data presented here is limited in scope; however, some conclusions can be drawn from it in relation to the other demographic data already presented above. Tulare County's children who have reported their use of alcohol and marijuana presents risks for them and for the County. It illustrates the need to advocate for and support substance abuse programs for youth in Tulare County. This will take the entire community to ensure prevention services are available in schools and communities to serve substance abusing youth and youth who demonstrate risk of substance abuse.

Analysis of Demographic Data:

The above data paints a bleak picture for at-risk factors for families in Tulare County. There are high unemployment rates, low education levels, high poverty rates, and high public assistance rates. Also noted are troubling trends in the rate of teen pregnancies and high school drop outs. For families working low wage jobs, there is a large gap between available/affordable child care and the need for such to support working families. The depressed economy, a significant stressor, only adds to the trends already described above which become significant risk factors that may well translate into higher child abuse referral rates and a continued demand for service and support for children and families.

B. CWS Participation Rates

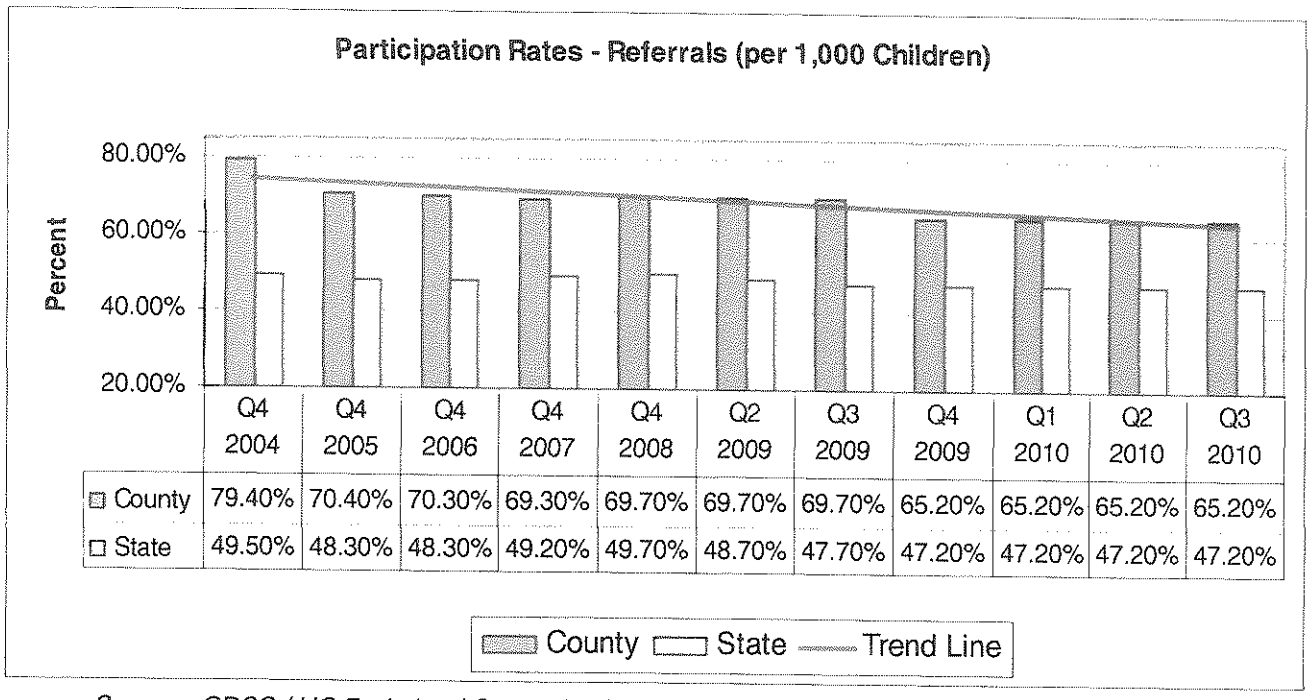
1. Number of children age 0-18 in population:

   For the year 2002, there were 128,332 children in Tulare County under the age of 18 years. During the latest period of review ending in April 01, 2010 (2010 U.S. Census), the population of children ages 0-18 years had grown to 144,124 children, or 32.60% of the County's population.

   [*http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/state_census_data_center/census_2010/documents/2010_AdvanceGQ_STCOPL.xls*]

2. Number and Rate of Children with Referrals:

   The Table below presents data taken from the CWS Outcomes System Summaries for the period of 2007 through September 2010 (Q3 – 2010). This measure represents an unduplicated count of children age 18 and younger in referrals during the review period per 1000 children younger than age 18 in the population.



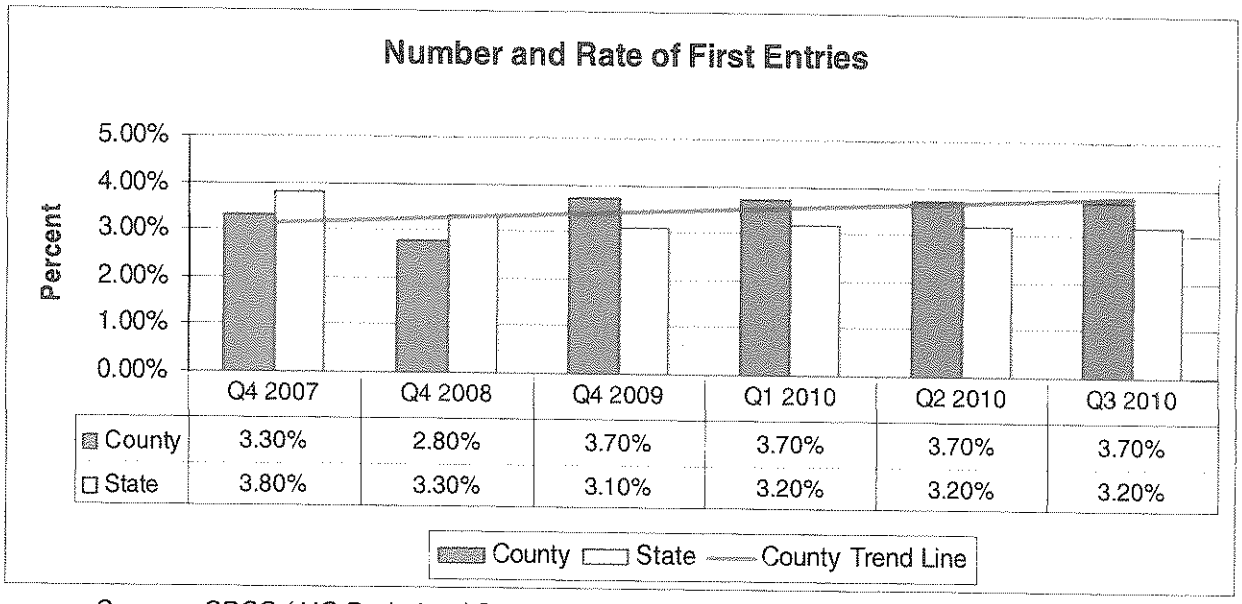
Source: CDSS / UC Berkeley / Center for Social Services Research, CWS/CMS Dynamic Report [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare]

Analysis:

It is noted that while Tulare County's referral rates have steadily declined during the period reflected above, County rates are still 18% higher than the rates for California as a whole. Some of the reasons noted for the decrease in referral rates are increased partnerships with community service providers, an increasing frequency of child abuse and neglect identification training to the community, implementation of the Structured Decision Making (SDM) tool in Tulare County provide more consistent risk assessments for abuse and neglect, and the support of community-based Family Resource Centers (FRC) in various communities in Tulare County. The FRCs provide much needed social services and supports to children, youth, and families in Tulare County.

3. Number and Rate of First Entries:

The Table below presents data taken from the CWS Outcomes System Summaries for the period of 2007 through September 2010 (Q3 – 2010). The data is an unduplicated count of children <18 years entering a child welfare supervised episode of at least 5 days duration for the quarterly period being reviewed, per 1000 children <18 in the population.



Source: CDSS / UC Berkeley / Center for Social Services Research, CWS/CMS Dynamic Report [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare]

Analysis:

It is noted that the County's trend in the rate of first entries has remained constant since December 2009. In comparison, the State trend has also remained steady a half percent below County numbers during the first three quarters of 2010.

A couple of reasons for the flattened trend are the implementation of prevention strategies including a team of staff to focus work with Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM) families. The work of the VFM team has focused on taking families with marginal risk factors present and providing them with immediate and intensive case management services.

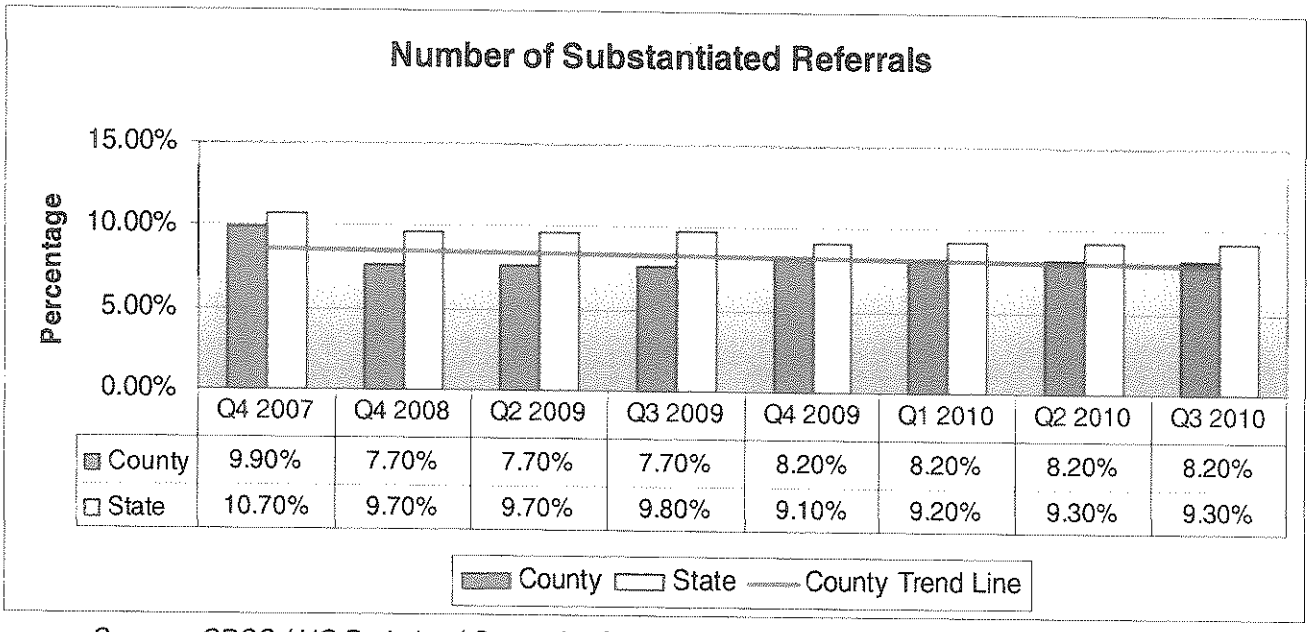
A second prevention strategy is the further development of the Differential Response (Path 1 and Path 2) collaboration with the local Family Resource Centers. Both of these activities have provided a number of families who are new to the child welfare system with support, resources, and referrals to appropriate services to help the families overcome the issues which brought them to the attention of the CWS system.

Thirdly, the County continues to increase collaborative efforts with local services providers and community organizations to address child abuse and neglect prevention which has helped to keep the number of first entries static. With these collaborative partnerships comes a greater service capacity which the County hopes that the number of first entries will go down as we move forward. The County will continue collaborating with community service providers to find more ways to decrease the number of children and families entering the system, increase the

County's ability to identify and serve families in need earlier through prevention-focused efforts, and ensure that children and families live in safe and nurturing communities.

4. Number and Rate of Children with Substantiated Referrals:

The Table below presents data taken from the CWS Outcomes System Summaries for the period of 2007 through September 2010 (Q3 – 2010). The data is an unduplicated count of child clients <18 in referrals during the indicated period that had substantiated allegations, per 1000 children <18 in the population.



	Q4 2007	Q4 2008	Q2 2009	Q3 2009	Q4 2009	Q1 2010	Q2 2010	Q3 2010
County	9.90%	7.70%	7.70%	7.70%	8.20%	8.20%	8.20%	8.20%
State	10.70%	9.70%	9.70%	9.80%	9.10%	9.20%	9.30%	9.30%

Source: CDSS / UC Berkeley / Center for Social Services Research, CWS/CMS Dynamic Report [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare]

Analysis:

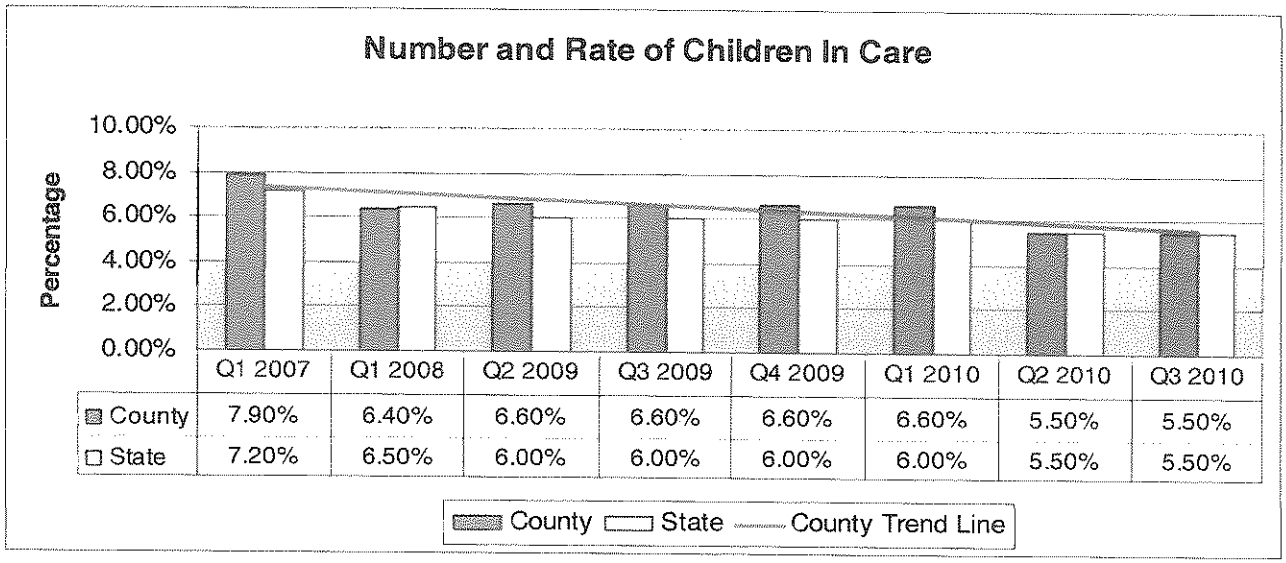
Staff of the CWS Screening Unit is systematically using the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Hotline Tools to help screen for appropriate referrals. County social workers responding to referrals are using the SDM Safety Assessment Tools when assessing risks to the safety of children. The consistent use of these tools has led to more consistent assessments of referrals and a decreasing trend in substantiated referrals, a trend noted in the statewide data as well. Tulare County notes an increase in the number of referrals for the period under review. The County has also seen a reduction in the number of active cases in the period since 2007, a trend that mirrors the state-wide experience. The County believes that increasing collaboration between prevention-focused service providers and agencies whose role is intervention in cases of

abuse and neglect has led to better focus on developing community-based and driven services for children and families in need.

Tulare County has been consistently below the State in substantiated referrals rates since 2007. A consistent approach to evaluating risk factors has resulted from the County's use of Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools in the period since the last self-assessment. A closer review of data for 2010 related to disparity is that Hispanic/Latino children appear to be slightly over represented in referrals, substantiation, and rate of placement while White children are underrepresented in referrals and placement. No conclusions have been drawn related to the trends noted other than to point to various social and economic factors which may help contribute to the propensity of Hispanic/Latino referrals.

5. Number and Rate of Children in Care:

The Table below presents data taken from the CWS Outcomes System Summaries for the period of 2007 through September 2010 (Q3 – 2010). The data is the number of children < age 19 in child welfare supervised foster care during the period under review, per 1000 children < age 19 in the population.



	Q1 2007	Q1 2008	Q2 2009	Q3 2009	Q4 2009	Q1 2010	Q2 2010	Q3 2010
County	7.90%	6.40%	6.60%	6.60%	6.60%	6.60%	5.50%	5.50%
State	7.20%	6.50%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	5.50%	5.50%

Source: CDSS / UC Berkeley / Center for Social Services Research, CWS/CMS Dynamic Report [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare]

Analysis:

The County notes a declining trend in the number of children in care. As discussed above on first entries and substantiated referrals, the County has implemented a couple of strategies that has accounted for a slowing trend in the growing caseloads seen in earlier periods; namely the use of VFM, SDM and Differential Response. A closer review of data for 2010

related to disparity is that Hispanic/Latino children appear to be slightly over represented in referrals, substantiation, and rate of placement while White children are underrepresented in referrals and placement. No conclusions have been drawn related to the trends noted other than to point to various social and economic factors which may contribute to the propensity of Hispanic/Latino referrals.

In the Outcomes section of this report, Tulare County will additionally analyze its data and develop recommendations to further define the goals for future work of the child welfare service system in the .

III. Public Agency Characteristics

A. Size and Structure of the Agencies:

Child Welfare Services (CWS) is a division within Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA). HHSA is an agency comprised of Human Services (public assistance programs, child welfare services, and adult services), Public Health, and Mental Health. At the time of this report the CWS Division has 217 total positions. Prior to June 2011 when the County's Board of Supervisors approved a request from CWS to add 25 new positions, the CWS Division had 192 positions. The new positions will add social workers and provide staff to support program and administrative activities in the new fiscal year (2011/2012).

The Child Welfare Services Division includes Emergency Response (ER), Family Maintenance (FM), Family Reunification (FR), Permanent Placement (PP), Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM), Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU), Relative Assessment (RA), Licensing, Quality Improvement (QI), Training, Adoptions, Independent Living Program (ILP), Court Unit, and a Group Home Unit. The CWS Division Manager reports to the HHSA Director of Human Services and is responsible for the day to day operations. See the attached Organizational Chart in the Appendix section of this report.

A Chief Probation Officer, appointed by the Tulare County Superior Court Judges, heads the Tulare County Probation Department.

The department consists of an administrative section, fiscal services, adult services, juvenile services, and juvenile institutions. The department has 351 members, with 36 assigned to administration and fiscal services, 134 to field services, and 181 to juvenile institutions. During the timeframe, Probation has increased staffing by three additional administration staff, eleven field supervision staff and six institution staff.

Of the Probation staff, 134 provide direct services to juveniles who are not detained in a secure facility. Of the 134 positions, 48 provide direct supervision of minors, with three (3) positions allocated for supervision of minors who have been placed by the Juvenile Court into group homes, foster homes, or the homes of suitable relatives/non-relatives (Placement Unit). A Supervising Probation Officer supervises these three (3) officers.

The Placement Unit is responsible for the placement and care of youth in foster care who are also on formal probation. The process begins with the identification of the individual needs of each youth then once determined, locating an appropriate placement in the least restrictive family-like environment possible to address those needs. In addition to this function, the unit officers are responsible for the care and custody of each youth to include: monthly visits with the minors, parent(s) and care providers and making appropriate referrals for services as necessary. Officer caseloads consist of group home placements, rate classification level (RCL) 8-14; foster care; and suitable relative/non-relative placements, throughout the state. The officers and supervisor network with mental health, managed care, CWS, schools, other probation departments and care providers to ensure individualized appropriate services are being provided to meet the youth's needs.

1. <u>County Operated Shelter:</u>

   Tulare County Child Welfare Services does not / has not operated an emergency shelter or assessment home. Instead of investing in an emergency shelter Tulare County is choosing to explore alternative emergency placement options. At the last PQCR Review conducted in January 2011, it was recommended Tulare County implement a number of strategies to help improve placement stability rates. Tulare County is looking at improving front end processes by:

   - Assessing children's needs and making the best placement matches possible in the least restrictive and most family-like setting possible,
   - Implementing Team Decision Making meetings and convening all interested parties to the table to help make all placement decisions,
   - Expanding the use of Family Finding and Engagement at intake and for children who have been in care for long periods and re-connecting them to families and communities they came from, wherever possible,
   - Intentionally recruiting short term placement beds with County licensed foster parents that can be used for temporary care while the relative home assessments are completed, and

- Streamlining the relative placement assessment and review process to allow for the use of emergency relative placement.

These strategies are seen as offering the best approach to positively impacting placement stability rates, family engagement, and for placing children in the least restrictive placement possible from their first entry into care.

The Probation Department does not have an emergency shelter or assessment home. The Probation Department does maintain a 24 hour Juvenile Detention Facility. However, this facility is not utilized as an emergency shelter or assessment home. Once it is determined that a youth is in need of placement in foster care, the search for an appropriate placement begins, much the same as child welfare, pursuant to Division 31 requirements. Within Tulare County, one (1) Foster Family Agency (FFA) will routinely serve Probation foster youth and three (3) group homes within the County meet the needs of our children.

2. County Licensing:

The County's licensing team is managed by the Adoption Child Welfare Services Manager supported by a supervisor, three social workers and an office assistant. Tulare County CWS, through agreement with the State of California, continues to recruit, train, and license its own foster family and adoptive homes. The County's licensing team uses the state-approved curriculum for training it provides.

Since the last County Self Assessment, Tulare County completed a strategic foster parent recruitment, training, and retention plan. Many of the action items from this plan have been implemented over the last two fiscal years. These include the completion of the strategic plan, implementation of the PRIDE curriculum, recruitment and media marketing campaigns (this is ongoing), and organization of the new Foster Parent Executive Board. Licensing staff continue to collaborate with the existing licensed foster family home providers to ensure a safe and stable home for children.

Although the Probation Department conducts its own relative approvals (see discussion below), the department does not license foster or adoptive homes.

3. County Adoptions:

The Adoptions Unit was modified since the last Self Assessment because of staff losses due to budgetary constraints. Tulare County continues to hold a license to provide County adoption services. The Adoptions Unit is managed by a CWS Manager and includes a CWS Supervisor, a new lead worker, and is supported by eight adoptions social workers, one paralegal, and one Social Worker III who case manages the Adoption Assistance Payment (AAP) caseload.

Tulare County continues to contract with AspiraNet, Inc. to provide a pre and post-adoption support program called the Resources, Education, Advocacy, Crisis Intervention and Hope (REACH) program. This program provides post-adoption crisis counseling, support groups, and a newsletter. It also conducts targeted child available studies to assist in finding adoptive placement for available children in the foster care system.

The Probation Department does not have an internal process to support adoption of foster youth.

4. Additional CWS Support Units:

Along with the three units already listed here, CWS has created and / or restructured two units to improve certain targeted outcomes – improving permanency planning efforts, improving placement stability rates, and focusing on least restrictive placement. These units and the functions they will perform are described below:

a. Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU):

The Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU), a new team developed in 2011, will lead CWS-wide efforts to improve placement stability, family engagement, and permanency for foster children in Tulare County. The PPAU team is currently staffed with one supervisor and three social workers with plans to expand the team to six social workers.

Among the service activities that the PPAU staff will integrate into practice are: Placement Matching, Concurrent Planning, Family Finding, and Team Decision Making. The details of the work for this team are being defined at the time of this report. Some of what is planned for this team is being

driven in part by a review of the prior SIP and the most recent PQCR.

b. Relative Assessment Team:

Since the last self-assessment, the County has restructured the Relative Assessment Team beginning in 2009, to more efficiently conduct the relative home assessment functions and complete the criminal background check process. The streamlining of this function has ensured that relatives and non-related extended family member (NREFM) homes are assessed quickly after the detention process to expedite the placement of children with relatives.

The Relative Assessment Team is managed by a CWS Manager who is supported by a supervisor, six social workers and an office assistant. During the last PQCR, the County found it can increase emergency placements once cooperative relationships are developed with local law enforcement to run background checks. New work has begun to allow CWS to have access to the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) information more consistently while in the field. This will increase the likelihood that relatives and NREFM's are assessed on an emergency basis and children are placed quickly when homes are cleared.

The Tulare County Probation Department's Placement Unit consists of three (3) probation officers with one (1) assigned the responsibility for assessing and clearing relatives/non-relatives identified as a possible placement option for youths who either have the possibility of being or who are ordered into out-of-home placement. This officer performs the Suitable Relative / Non-Relative Extended Family Member home assessments. This officer conducts the home assessment, completes the necessary paperwork, conducts the background checks and seeks exemptions when individuals have criminal history, as well as carrying the Suitable Relative / Non-Relative Extended Family Member caseload. The two remaining officers have also been trained in the relative approval process and can fill in when necessary.

B. County Government Structure:

1. Staffing Characteristics:

In the time since the last CSA, Tulare County, like most California counties, experienced decreases in CWS and County funding. The funding decreases resulted in two major staff lay-off events and a hiring freeze implemented by the County's Board of Supervisors.

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors very recently approved Child Welfare Service's request for additional staff. This request included 10 social workers, one (1) Lead Worker (to support CWS Supervisors), one (1) Supervisor, and one (1) CWS Manager. Over the last year Child Welfare Services has experienced increases in new referrals. Additionally, there has been a loss of staff to job turnover, staff shifts, and retirement. Tulare County CWS has also determined that there is a need to increase administrative staff to support envisioned system improvements and closer monitoring of data and performance on outcome indicators. The new administrative support staff recently approved by the Board of Supervisors includes one (1) Division Manager, two (2) new Policies and Procedures Specialists, one (1) Statistical Research Analyst, , one (1) CWS Family Advocate, three (3) Licensed Social Workers, one (1) Supervising Licensed Social Worker, one (1) CWS Trainer, and additional support staff that include one (1) Supervising Office Assistant and one (1) Administrative Aide.

In the time since the last CSA, Tulare County Probation, like most California counties, has also experienced decreases in county funding. The funding decreases resulted in a hiring freeze implemented by the County's Board of Supervisors. The Placement Unit is comprised of one (1) supervisor and three (3) probation officers.

a. Turnover rates:

Staff turnover rates for CWS have continued to be in the range of 20% to 25% over the last three years. This vacancy rate translates to 30-40 new staff a year. Couple this with the fact that social workers sometimes move from one unit within CWS to another which can be disruptive to caseloads. Additionally, since 2006, CWS has had three different Deputy Directors. These staff changes can add to the lack of stability and consistent support that the children in our caseloads need.

As reported above, CWS will provide some relief to staff by adding social worker positions, by realigning targeted staff to work with youth in our Permanency Planning caseload, to centralize Team Decision Making, and increase Family Finding efforts. New staff is also being added to support policy development and training.

The Probation Department's turnover ratio for institutional staff, comprised of Probation Correctional Officers and Institution Supervisors, falls within the normal bounds for probation departments throughout the state. The vacancy rate for Probation Officers is extremely low, providing a stable workforce for the department.

b. Practice Contractors:

Child Welfare Services (CWS) continues to employ community-based organizations to assist with providing supportive services to families to provide a safe and stable environment for children. Probation does not contract directly for services, however utilization of Children's' and Adult Mental Health, Independent Living Program, Wraparound, Special Case Investigation Unit (SCIU), and Substance Abuse Education are utilized by Probation to meet the needs of its youth.

Below is a list of contractors utilized by CWS and Probation to provide support to children and families:

Service Provider	Services Provided
AspiraNet, Inc.	Post Adoption Services, Permanency Services (for children in foster care), Transitional Housing Program Plus, and Intensive Treatment Foster Care
Cal State University Fresno (CSUF) – Central California Training Academy	Infrastructure Development and staff training
Children's Research Center (CRC)	SafeMeasures® and Ad Hoc Reporting
Community Services Employment Training (CSET)	SafeCare Parenting Classes
Central County One Stop (Turning Point)	Mental Health Services
Classic Status LLC	Transportation for ILP Youth
College of the Sequoias (COS)	ILP Workshops for Youth
College of the Sequoias (COS)	Pride Training for Foster Parents
Cutler / Orosi Educational Center	SafeCare Parenting Classes / Differential Response (Path 1 & 2)
Bud Darwin	ILP Workshops for Youth
Dinuba Children's Services	Children's Mental Health Services
Family Builders Foster Care	Intensive Treatment Foster Care (ITFC)
Family Preservation Community Services	Wraparound
Family Services of Tulare County	In-Home Parenting Education, SafeCare Parenting

	Classes, and Parenting Wisely
Family Services of Tulare County	Domestic Violence Victim Support, Child Abuse Treatment, Batterer's Intervention Program, Anger Management, Co-Parenting Classes
Family Services of Tulare County	Parenting Classes with SEA Curriculum (community classes)
Family Services of Tulare County	Supervised Visitation Centers
Global Drug Testing	Random Drug Testing Services
Hands On Communication	Interpreting and Tutoring Services
Jay Perko, DDS	Orthodontia
Job Care	Drug Testing Services
Koinonia Family Services	Contract Beds
Lindsay Healthy Start	SafeCare Parenting Classes and Differential Response (Path 1 & 2)
North County Mobile Unit (Turning Point)	Mental Health Services
One-Stop Porterville	Mental Health Services
Osborn Consulting	ICWA Expert
Parenting Network	In-Home CPR Training
Parenting Network	Respite Care for CWS Parents
Parenting Network	SafeCare Parenting Classes and Differential Response (Path 1 & 2)
People Empowering People	ILP Workshops for ILP Youth
Placement Services Orientation (POS)	Drug and Alcohol Screening and Assessment
Porterville Adult Mental Health	Adult Mental Health Services
Porterville Youth Services	Children's Mental Health
Richard Carrillo, Ph.D.	ICWA Expert
Sequoia Youth Services	Children's Mental Health
South County Mobile Unit (Kings View)	Mental Health Services
Special Case Investigative Unit (SCIU)	Psychological Evaluations and Reports (Children/Adults)
Sunset Communications	Answering Service for On-Call
To Your Health – Child Health & Safety Program	Child Seat and Safety Installation Classes
Tulare Youth Service Bureau (TYSB)	Children's Mental Health Services & Sexual Abuse Treatment Counseling
Turning Point of Central California	Substance Abuse Services – Youth
Turning Point of Central California	Wrap 24/7 Support
Visalia Adult Mental Health	Mental Health Services
Visalia Youth Services (VYS)	Children's Mental Health
Woodlake Family Resource Center (FRC)	SafeCare Parenting Classes and Differential Response (Path 1 & 2)

c. Worker Caseload size by Service Component:

Tulare County CWS has separated into two major functions; Emergency Response and Continuing. Under Emergency Response, Tulare County CWS has a Screening Unit and Emergency Response Units headed by a supervisor who is supported by several social workers in four different locations county wide. The Continuing Units are all centralized in Visalia.

At the time of this report, CWS social workers in the Continuing Units are carrying a "mixed" caseload of Family Maintenance (FM), Family Reunification (FR), and Permanency Planning (PP) cases. The caseloads for CWS Continuing staff over the last 12 month period have averaged 35.6 cases per social worker.

Tulare County has been using the following standards to capture and report staff caseloads by service components. It is important to note that for internal purposes, Tulare County CWS is reflecting standards that include SB 2030 (the workload study) and the outdated State's SFY 1985 standards. The table below presents a point-in-time snapshot of the caseload data in March 2010 and is not reflective of assigned caseloads, but rather a tool used for internal review of workload.

	SB 2030 Minimum Standard (April 2000)	SB 2030 Optimum Standard (April 2000)	State Workload Standard (SFY 1985)	Tulare County Average Cases per/FTE (March 2010)
Emergency Response (ER)	13	9.9	15.8	26.3
Family Maintenance (FM)	14.2	10.2	35	31.9
Family Reunification (FR)	15.6	11.9	27	40
Permanency Placement (PP)	23.7	16.4	54	31.4

Data Source: SafeMeasures® data for Tulare County and CDSS data from SB 2030 Workload Study.

The Probation Department's juvenile probation officers carry cases from family reunification through permanency placement, the officers' caseloads average 15.

2. Bargaining Unit Issues:

At the time of this report, the most recent negotiations between the County and represented bargaining units were concluded. Tulare County, like many other counties, has instituted a number of measures to help trim budget deficits. These measures include work furloughs of 40 hours, a hiring freeze (which can be exempted for CWS), and a freeze on step increases and/or promotions. These factors have also impacted caseworker turnover rates in Tulare County.

There are no collective bargaining issues that negatively affect the provision of services by the Probation Department.

3. Financial / Material Resources:

a. Child abuse prevention partners work with a core group of councils identifying the needs of the community to prevent child abuse. Members of these councils include Child Welfare Services, Mental Health, Public Health, Tulare County Office of Education, Probation, the Sheriff's Department, Family Resource Centers, a foster care parent advocate, and other community partners.

i. Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC):

The Tulare County Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) is the Board of Supervisor's appointed independent agency responsible for reviewing funding recommendations for the County's Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant (CBCAP), Children's Trust Fund (CTF), and Child Abuse Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT) grants. CAPC is a non profit community council.

The CAPC participates in the CAPC/CSN Joint Allocation Committee to provide recommendation for the Tulare County Board of Supervisors for distribution of money from the Children's Trust Fund, Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment, and Community Based Child Abuse Prevention to local community-based organizations.

ii. Children's Service Network (CSN):

The Tulare County Children's Service Network (CSN) serves as a collaborative informational exchange regarding issues, events, research, initiatives, and programs affecting children and families in Tulare County. CSN was designated by the Board of Supervisors to review the funding recommendations for Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) programs and is Tulare County's PSSF Collaborative. The CSN actively promotes information exchange and service integration between health and human service providers from both governmental and community based systems. Services funded with PSSF funds are geared to support community goals to prevent child abuse and neglect and positively impact child welfare outcomes.

iii. Joint Allocation Committee (JAC):

The CSN and the CAPC formed a Joint Allocation Committee (JAC) to conduct a shared planning process as approved by the Board of Supervisors in October 2006. The JAC is responsible for child abuse prevention requests for proposals (RFP) and grant funding recommendations for all child abuse prevention-focused allocations which includes the following: Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF), Child Abuse Prevention Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT), Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), and Children's Trust Fund (CTF). All agreements from these funding sources are based on a competitive bid process. The committee submits their recommendations for review with CSN and CAPC.

iv. Child Protection Planning Committee (CPPC):

The CPPC is comprised of leaders and members of the prevention-focused entities listed here and include Child Welfare Services and Probation Department representatives. Other CPPC members come from consumers and community-based organizations. Membership in the CPPC is open to any individual wishing to participate and take an active role in helping to define programs, services, and strategies to address the prevention and intervention efforts surrounding child abuse and neglect in Tulare County.

b. Supportive and Therapeutic Options Program (STOP) Allocation:

For the FY 2009/2010 and 2010/2011, the County contracted with Family Services of Tulare County (a private, non-profit agency) to deliver in-home parenting services using the SafeCare® model. This program is an evidence-based practice that provides home-based training for parents with children aged 0-7 who are at-risk or have been reported for child abuse and neglect. There are three modules: parent/child interactions, home safety, and infant/child health. Through its collaborative efforts with Tulare County Mental Health, this evidence-based program will be funded using Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds for fiscal years 2011/2012 through 2013-2014.

For the upcoming FY 2011/2012, a new STOP plan has been submitted to the State to redirect these funds. With the passage of AB 12 Tulare County is in the process of developing a plan to serve youth who choose to stay in the foster care system after the age of 18 as non-minor dependents. Tulare County will set aside two staff to provide case management services to youth once they turn 18; identifying and developing specific services needed by the youth, developing a strength-based assessment, and linking youth to community-based services.

4. Political Jurisdictions:

As already discussed in this report, CWS and Probation maintain partnerships with the Child Protection Planning Committee (CPPC), Children's Services Network, and Child Abuse Prevention Council. These committees have membership from political jurisdictions including the Tule River Indian Tribe, Tulare County Office of Education, College of the Sequoias, Tulare County Sheriff's Department, and various city representatives. Many other community entities and members support the work of this group to the benefit of the entire community.

C. *Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) Summary:*

Tulare County gained valuable information from its 2011 PQCR Review which will lead to improved outcomes in placement stability (CWS) and permanency (Probation) for youth. Much of what was shared by peers, staff, caregivers, and youth echoed a strong desire to improve child welfare practice and ultimately the lives of children and families.

Many of the findings from Tulare County's PQCR were validated by the information found in the literature review process. Specifically, for Child Welfare Services the findings echoed in research were:

- Multiple placement changes for children younger than five (5) years impacts brain development. Children with multiple moves experience higher levels of trauma and loss and have a higher tendency to exhibit mental health disorders and behavior problems.

- Children who move quickly from their first placement have a higher probability of multiple moves later. Child behavior problems are the largest reason for placement change. Child behavior problems lessen when they have a stable relationship with a caretaker. Children with relatives experience more stability.

- Positive relationship between the child and their social worker minimizes placement changes / disruptions. The more accessible and positive the relationship with the social worker, the fewer placement changes. The retention of social workers is important since the social worker relationship with the child is important.

After reviewing all the PQCR information, there were three major categories of recommendations being taken forward by CWS:

The first is that CWS intends to expand and refine two practices already in place in CWS: Family Finding and Case Staffings. Tulare County CWS uses Family Finding in some cases but desires to institutionalize the practice. Additionally, Tulare County will implement a more formal Team Decision Making (TDM) model to complement the current work staff are doing in case staffings. Both will lead to increased engagement of children and families, strengthening relationships between staff, children, and the families they serve, and increased placement stability for children.

Next, CWS has committed to become more intentional in its approach to placement matching. To achieve this CWS would explore a process that allows for the collection of data (foster parent profiles and child assessments) to find the best placement match for children. The act of being intentional in matching children with homes will not be enough without some effort to provide training and support to caretakers. These endeavors will require commitment of time and resources. The opportunity to explore support for caregivers will lead to stronger relationships for all and result, in the short term, in more stable placements and, in the longer term, stable and healthy children and families.

And lastly, it was determined that there is a need to improve the internal processes of collecting and recording information (child assessments, placement matching, placement preservation efforts, etc.). This will require a review of existing staff resources to address the time consuming process. The CWS Quality Improvement Unit has begun conducting focused reviews of outcome measures and presenting their findings to managers and supervisors. The presentations provide opportunity to review findings, discuss barriers and opportunities, and help identify training needs. A second method used by staff is their access to SafeMeasures®. SafeMeasures® is used by staff to monitor performance and to identify when there are lags to inputting of data to increase the consistency in maintaining complete records in CWS/CMS.

Child Welfare Services will address the listed recommendations above in the outcomes review and analyses section of this report. Strategies will be

discussed to improve placement stability rates and to infuse current practice with approaches aimed at improving community relations, strengthening relationships between CWS, foster parents, children, and biological parents, and evaluating the results of these efforts over time.

For Probation, the Permanency literature review findings echoed were:

- Nearly half of released youth offenders are re-arrested within a few years of their release.

- Although many youth are referred for appropriate services, few youth actually receive the necessary services.

- Social/environmental factors associated with elevated risk of prolonged juvenile justice involvement included unmet service needs and/or prior services involvement with special education, child welfare, social services, and mental health and/or substance abuse treatment.

After reviewing all the PQCR information, there are three major recommendations being taken forward by Probation:

First, there is a need for the expansion / refinement of two practices already in place in Probation: Family Finding and case staffings. Both will lead to increased engagement of children and families, strengthening relationships between staff, children, and the families they serve.

Second, Probation will develop training material specific to meet the needs of probation foster youth and expectations for probation to improve collaboration.

The third recommendation is to identify network of resources, establish connections within each area that will assist youth in receiving services and transitional planning.

D. Child Welfare Outcomes:

Tulare County, like all California counties, tracks performance on outcomes under the California Outcomes and Accountability System (COAS). This section of the report will outline the County's outcomes and process measures for child welfare, probation, prevention, and services to provide an overview of the scope and adequacy of existing child and family services.

Tulare County used the most recent Quarterly Outcome Report for April 2011 (Q3-2010 – September 2010) for the matrices that follow. The source for data is the Quarterly Data Reports that are prepared in a partnership between the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Center for Social Service Research (CSSR) – UC Berkeley. These data reports can be found at the CDSS website http://www/childsworld.ca.gov/PG1358.htm. Additional information is available at the Center for Social Service Research Child Welfare Dynamic Report System's website – http://cssr.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports.

To understand the information best, the following definitions are provided for reference:

- Data Indicator: Refers to the two safety measures and the four permanency composites for which national standards have been developed.
- Composite: A data indicator that incorporates state performance on multiple permanency-related individual measures.
- Component: A primary part of a composite that may include one or more measures.
- Measure: A specific statement that addresses a desired outcome within a given composite (for example, the percentage of reunification occurring in less than 12 months).

The following matrices present data on major outcomes of Safety, Permanency, Child and Family Well-Being. Following this section of the report, Systemic Factors will be reviewed and discussed in detail. The source data reference for all of the following matrices is: [Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Excel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Winn, A., Lou, C., & Peng, C. (2009). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California.* Retrieved [month, day, year], from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare.

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

Safety Outcome: No Recurrence of Maltreatment: Measure S1.1

This measure answers the question: Of all children with a substantiated allegation, what percent had another substantiated allegation of abuse/neglect within 6 months?

County's Current Performance:

For the 6-month period from October 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 96.20%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
S1.1	No Recurrence of Maltreatment	10/01/09	03/31/10	331	344	96.20%	Yes	4.0%

From the baseline year of 2002, the percentage of children who have had another substantiated allegation of abuse within six (6) months has improved from 92.50% to 96.20%. Current performance is above the national standard of >94.40% as well as statewide performance of 92.90%.

Analysis: The following issues impact performance on this outcome measure.

The County continues to meet compliance for this outcome measure. Social workers use Structured Decision Making (SDM) to assess the family at different intervals to determine the level of risk and safety for the child and family. SDM is designed to prevent flaws on determining the accurate level of risk and safety. The results of the SDM assessments completed by social workers are used to develop family-focused individualized case plans. Examples of the planned community and agency services include Family Resource Centers and Voluntary Family Maintenance to provide support to families. These" voluntary service" programs provide a case manager who can be alert to signs of the stressors that contribute to abuse/neglect which can lead to the recurrence of maltreatment.

In a review of other factors that could impact performance on this outcome, the County notes that the economic situation at present may impact the services being offered to parents. It has been noted that one vendor's decreased funding resulted in the closure of some parenting classes. A second factor that can negatively impact this and related outcomes for reunification and permanency has to do with the processing of referrals to service providers. The current practice can often delay services from being approved in a timely manner. Also of consideration is the impact of staff turnover and the time it takes to train new staff, which may impact the County's ability to sustain current performance in future quarters.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this outcome measure. Tulare County is not anticipating including this measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

- To continue the use of SDM at key decision points in the life of a case to determine level of risk and safety to children and families.
- To provide training of SDM for new social workers and annual training for seasoned social workers.
- To collaborate with more community-based organizations to identify and deliver services and support to children, youth, and families. These services may be funded with CAPIT. CBCAP, and/or PSSF funds.
- To streamline the current CWS referral processes for requesting services/supports.

Safety Outcome: No Maltreatment in Foster Care: Measure S2.1

This measure answers the question: For all children in a County supervised or Foster Family Agency child welfare supervised foster care placement during the review period, what percent had a substantiated allegation of abuse or neglect by a foster parent during that time.

County's Current Performance:

For the period from October 01, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 99.67%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
S2.1	No Maltreatment in Foster Care	10/01/09	09/30/2010	1,209	1,213	99.67%	No	-0.30%

From the baseline year of 2002/2003, the percentage of children who have been maltreated while in a County supervised home or Foster Family Agency (FFA) home has fallen just below the national goal. Note that scores are reported in the positive versus the negative so the higher the score the fewer the number of children who are abused while in care. Current performance is 99.67%, which accounts for 4 children being impacted during the reporting period and is below the national standard of >99.68% but above statewide performance of 99.56%.

Analysis:

Tulare County's data reflects a slight dip from the national standard since the last assessment period. The County has improved its data entry efforts for this and other measures, which is reflected in a steady positive trend line hovering within range of the federal standard.

Strategies incorporated recently which will have a positive impact on this measure include a commitment by Tulare County to audit Licensed Foster Family Homes (FFHs) annually (vs. every 5 years). Another strategy is improving communication and oversight with Foster Family Agencies (FFAs). To address this, Tulare County implemented quarterly CWS/FFA meetings. During these meetings many topics are discussed including increased placement stability. A memorandum of understanding between Tulare County CWS and the FFAs has been finalized to formalize expectations. In strengthening the relationship with FFAs via quarterly meetings the County expects improvements to services, less placement movements, and open communication; both keys to helping ensure child safety. A third strategy is the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) respite care program. This program provides foster parents much needed time to relax and regroup from the stresses of parenting foster children.

The change to conducting an annual audit of licensed FFHs will increase oversight and allow evaluators to monitor the physical and/or environmental condition of the home and any changes to the composition of the household that might affect the child's risk and safety. Coupled with the required child contacts in the home by CWS social worker, it is anticipated that performance for this measure will remain at or above the compliance threshold.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this outcome measure. Tulare County is not anticipating including this measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

- To continue quarterly meetings between the FFA's and CWS to strengthen communication and oversight.
- To increase social worker visits with each foster child for the purpose of continuously conducting assessments and monitoring child and care provider interaction.
- To keep foster parents informed of services available such as Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS), Wraparound, CWS Registered Nurse (RN) support, respite care, etc.
- To evaluate the findings from the annual audits of foster homes and develop system improvements as needed.
- To continue supporting foster parents with the PSSF funded respite care program.

2. Safety 2 (Child Welfare Services): Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate. The following two matrices are process measures.

Safety Outcome: Timely Response to Abuse/Neglect Referrals: Measure 2B (Immediate)

This measure answers the question: What percent of children had a timely response to Immediate Response referrals? Immediate Response referrals require the County to respond within 24 hours of receipt of a report of suspected abuse/neglect.

County's Current Performance:

For the quarterly period of July 1, 2010 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 98.60%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
2B	Timely Referral Response (Immediate)	07/01/10	09/30/10	354	359	98.80%	Yes	5.20%

From the baseline period of 04/01/03 to 06/30/03, the percentage of referrals with a timely response has improved from 93.70% to 98.80%. This process measure is compliance driven, one of two outcome measures tied to child welfare procedural requirements. The County's current score for this measure is 98.60%, above both the state's compliance goal of >90% and statewide performance of 97.20%.

Analysis: The analysis for both Immediate and 10-Day Response are found following the next matrix.

Safety Outcome: Timely Response to Abuse/Neglect Referrals: Measure 2B (10-Day)

This measure answers the question: What percent of children had a timely response to a 10-day referral?

County's Current Performance:

For the quarterly period of July 1, 2010 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 92.60%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
2B	Timely Referral Response (10-Day)	07/01/10	09/30/10	673	727	92.60%	Yes	50.30%

From the baseline period of 04/01/03 to 06/30/03, the percentage of referrals with a timely response has improved from 61.60% to 92.60%. This process measure is compliance driven, one of two outcome measures tied to child welfare procedural requirements. The County's current score for this measure is 92.60%, above the state's compliance goal of >90% and below statewide performance score of 93.50% posted for the period.

Analysis: The following analysis is for both Immediate and 10-Day Response. The following issues have been identified for these outcome measures:

The County continues to meet compliance for both Immediate and 10-Day Referral Response measures. Child safety is the number one priority for Tulare County. CWS supervisors and social workers continue to use Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools to assess risk and safety of children referred for services. The SDM tools allow staff to determine the correct response to child abuse/neglect allegations and aid to deliver consistency to referral investigations. SDM is designed to clearly define the level of risk and safety to a child.

Tulare County has Emergency Response (ER) offices in four geographic locations to assure timely response to immediate referrals. In a review of recent referral data, the County will be looking at trends as to which region referrals seem to cluster. To be sure the trends are not protracted, the County will evaluate data and analyze workload and staffing patterns to maintain performance at or above the current compliance threshold of more than 90%.

Tulare County continues to monitor performance for these outcome measures by having social workers and supervisors use SafeMeasures® as a case management tool and as an alert to overdue referrals. Social workers understand the importance of responding and assessing the allegations of abuse/neglect and the monitoring helps to enforce the expectation that response time lines are a top priority task. The challenge in the current system faced by staff is balancing the demands for immediate attention to high priority referrals (Immediate) and the 10-Day referrals while coordinating responses with the local Family Resource Centers.

Tulare County began implementing the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funded Differential Response program four years ago. At the time of this report, the County is moving forward with its Family Resource Center (FRC) partners to put into practice Path 2 referrals wherein CWS and FRC staff will make joint home visits. The County embraces this practice shift as it moves to broaden community involvement in increasing support to families. However, despite increased collaboration, staff still experience challenges to meeting deadlines. As reported earlier, staff losses in the last two years have impacted caseloads. The loss of staff and the current economic forecast offers no relief except to look for system efficiencies to meet service demands. The County is committed to maintaining its focus on child safety and looking for ways to provide support to social workers.

For this self assessment report Tulare County requested an ad-hoc report from a contractor, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency/Children's Research Center (NCCD/CRC), on ethnic disparity. The NCCD/CRC ran a query of data from CWS/CMS data. Tulare County reviewed the report of data for the past three calendar years, 2008/2009/2010,

for evidence of ethnic disparity in referral data and finds that there is none noted for the period. Tulare County staff remains sensitive to this issue and with annual staff training on cultural sensitivity they will remain mindful in their work with families.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this outcome measure. Tulare County is not anticipating including this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

- To continue the use of SDM to determine appropriate referral response and to monitor timeliness of response using SafeMeasures®.
- To conduct annual reviews of ER standards and expectations with all experienced and new ER social workers upon their completion of the 23.5 days of the California Common Core for social workers (Core) training and quarterly thereafter, until they have passed their probationary period.
- To explore the addition of and use of clerical support to enter referrals in CWS/CMS to help social workers focus on timely and accurate assessments and find other efficiencies that provide more time to social workers for their field work with children and families.
- To continue the PSSF funded Differential Response program.
- To expand Differential Response Path 2 with the FRC's and evaluate its implementation for efficiencies.
- To explore the use of new technology (e.g., IPAD, Touch Pads, laptops, etc.) that will allow social workers to document their case notes while in the field.
- To continue the practice of having CWS supervisors monitor timely response to referrals on a weekly basis using SafeMeasures®.
- To explore the development of improved Core training to better define ER standards and expectations.

Safety Outcome: Timely Social Worker Visits with Child: Measure 2C

This measure answers the question: What percentage of all the children who required a monthly social worker contact received a monthly visit?

County's Current Performance:

For the period ending September 30, 2010, 91.20% of the children in care received their required monthly visit with the social worker.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
2B	Timely SW Visits – Month 1	07/01/10	07/31/10	1,053	1,133	92.90%	N/A	N/A
2B	Time SW Visits – Month 2	08/01/10	08/31/10	1,039	1,112	93.40%	N/A	N/A
2B	Time SW Visits – Month 3	09/01/10	09/30/10	1,016	1,114	91.20%	Yes	36.70%

From the baseline period (April, May, and June 2003), the County's compliance with this measure has improved by 38.50%. The scores for the third month of each review quarter are used to arrive at the outcome score used for compliance measurement. The County score of 91.20% as of September 2010 is above the state compliance rate of >90% and just shy of the state's compliance score of 92.30% for the same period.

Analysis: The following issues have been found to impact this outcome measure:

The County's compliance for this outcome measure has remained above the 90% rate. Tulare County continues to use a model that calls for supervisors to review SafeMeasures® data with their staff to monitor performance and to identify training issues. This monitoring continues and is a key component in ensuring that monthly contact visits are conducted timely. However, recent performance has been inconsistent as evidence by a review of recent data in SafeMeasures®.

A number of factors have been identified as having an impact on performance for this and other outcomes in this report. Tulare County has experienced two major layoff events since the last assessment, leaving staff with larger caseloads. The prospect that staffing will return to levels of three years ago seem unlikely. High staff turnover also contributes to the challenge of providing consistent social work on cases. Added to the reduction of staff is the increased demand for social worker time as they work to meet more stringent child contact requirements. Another challenge is that the County caseloads have a number of sibling groups who are not always placed together and in fact may be placed away from the County. This will require that the social worker travel to other counties to make contact. An additional item that taxes staff

time is the time a social worker is in court. The County's Juvenile Court is in a remote location adding travel time, which adds to time away from a social workers' ability to make regular contacts.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this outcome measure. Tulare County is not anticipating including this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

- To explore a system for meeting the contact requirements for children placed out-of-county which provides relief to social workers who are managing increasing caseloads and casework demands.
- To explore ways to decrease caseloads that approach or exceed state caseload standards resulting in providing more time to social workers to complete quality face-to-face visits with the child in their homes.
- Review the current process requiring social workers to be present in court for hearings (a time management issue).
- To continue having CWS supervisors use SafeMeasures® to monitor caseload activity and discuss the results with their staff.
- To explore the use of clerical support to enter data in CWS/CMS to help social workers meet caseload demands and / or find other efficiencies that provide more time to social workers for their field work with children and families.
- To explore the use of new technology (e.g., IPAD, Touch Pads, laptops, etc.) that will allow social workers to document their case notes while in the field.

3. Permanency 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry to foster care. The following tables present process measures. The first such measure is #2C - Timely Visits, addressed in the prior table.

   a. Permanency Composite - Reunification: The following charts provide performance data for four (4) separate measures under this composite. They each measure reunification rates.

Permanency Outcome: Reunification within 12 Months (Exit Cohort) - Measure C1.1

This measure answers the question: What percentage of all children discharged to reunification, how many were reunified within 12 months of removal. Children with a current placement of "trial visit" are included in the count of children reunified if that visit lasted at least 30 days, its start date fell within the 11 months of the latest removal date, and it was the final placement before the child was discharged from foster care to reunification.

County's Current Performance:

For the period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, 61.70% of children were discharged to reunification within 12 months of removal.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C1.1	Reunification within 12 Months	10/01/09	09/30/10	153	248	61.70%	Yes	1.0%

From the baseline year of 2002/2003, the percentage of children who have reunified has increased 61.10% to 61.70%. Current performance is **below** the national standard of >75.20% and below the statewide performance of 64.80%.

Analysis: See the analysis and recommendations for this outcome measure, C1.2, and C1.3 below.

Permanency Outcome: Median Time to Reunification (Exit Cohort) – Measure C1.2

This measure answers the question: What was the median length of stay (**in months**) for children discharged to reunification? Children in foster care less than 8 days were excluded from the median calculation. Children with a current placement as "trial visit" were included if the visit lasted more than 30 days, its start date fell within the 11 months of the latest removal date, and it was the final placement before the child was discharged from foster care to reunification.

County's Current Performance:

For the period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, children reunified on average within 10 months of removal.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C1.2	Median Time to Reunification	10/01/09	09/30/10	N/A	248	10 Months	No	20.5%

From the baseline year of 2002/2003, the median time in length of stay for children discharged to reunification has increased from 8.3 months to 10 months for the most recent period of review. The County's current performance for this measure is above the national standard of <5.4 months and above the statewide performance of 8.3 months.

Analysis: See the analysis and recommendations for measures C1.1, C1.2, and C1.3 below.

Permanency Outcome: Reunification within 12-Months (Entry Cohort) – Measure C1.3

This measure answers the question: What percentage of children reunified within 12 months of removal for children first entering foster care? The measure is comprised of children entering foster care for the first time during a 6-month period. The 12 month cutoff to reunification is based on the latest date of removal from the home with children in care for less than 8 days excluded. Children with a current placement of "trial home visit" are included in the count of children reunified in less than 12 months if that visit lasted at least 30 days, its start-date fell within 11 months of the latest removal date, and it was the final placement before the child was discharged from foster care to reunification.

County's Current Performance:

For the period from April 01, 2009 through September 30, 2009 (a six-month period), the County's score for this measure was 44.30%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C1.3	Reunification Within 12 Months	04/01/09	09/30/09	93	210	44.30%	No	-3.0%

From the baseline period of January 01, 2002 through June 30, 2003, the percentage of children who were reunified within 12 months was 45.70%. Since the baseline period, current performance has decreased to 44.30%. This is below the national standard of >48.40% and is above the statewide performance of 44.20%.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome and help to explain the trend for the preceding outcome measures. Tulare County anticipates including the C1.2 and C1.3 outcome measures in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

As reported earlier, Tulare County, along with the rest of the state, has experienced a down economy which has led directly and indirectly to higher caseloads and less staff time and resources available to dedicate to each case. Tulare County believes that the current economy has created more stressors on families. Higher caseloads and court demands impede a social worker's ability to increase efforts and time spent on helping families reunify more quickly. The increase in economic stressors has led to more referrals and a longer period for families in reunification to resolve practical barriers to reunification, e.g., difficulty in securing adequate housing, services, etc. Another impact that is noted is that the system for getting parents into treatment for mental health and drug and alcohol issues often can is too long, often can sometimes take longer than the allowed period for completing reunification plan. The initial assessment typically happens in a timely fashion; however the time from assessment to the start of treatment can be long and adds challenges to readying children for reunification. Another barrier to obtaining services is transportation. Tulare County has many rural pockets with limited public transportation.

Recommendations:

- Consider exploration of specialized caseloads. This may offer smaller caseloads assigned for family maintenance and family reunification workers which will allow more time for intense case management services.
- Strengthen the current collaboration between CWS and TulareWORKs to help families in the current economy.
- Continue to collaborate / explore new collaborative efforts between CWS and MH/AOD to streamline the process and decrease the time between assessment and delivery of treatment.
- Provide training to social workers on substance abuse, recovery, relapse, and the treatment process which can help social workers support the efforts of parents working to resolve such issues.
- Develop a policy that supports a more proactive and family-focused approach to mental health treatment and services; the policy should require social workers to be more interactive with mental health providers.
- Have family group staffings that includes the family's informal network prior to the dispositional hearing and at regular intervals thereafter. Invest greater numbers of family and community resources in the planning and execution of the case plan.
- Explore development of a Parent Partners program to help guide and encourage parents through the CWS and Juvenile Court systems.
- Consistently utilize Structured Decision-Making (SDM) to determine a family's readiness to be safely reunited.

- Provide SDM training for new staff at the point of hiring and semi-annually for all staff.

Permanency Outcome: Reentry Following Reunification (Exit Cohort) – Measure C1.4

This measure computes the percentage of children reentering foster care within 12 months of a reunification discharge. The denominator is the total number of children who exited foster care to reunification in a 12 month period; the numerator is the count of these reunified children who then reentered care within 365 days of the reunification discharge date. Discharge to reunification is defined as a discharge to parents or primary caretaker(s).

County's Current Performance:

For the period from October 01, 2008 through September 30, 2009, the County's score for this measure was 24.20%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C1.4	Reentry Following Reunification	10/01/08	09/30/09	64	265	24.20%	No	20.40%

From the baseline year of 2001/2002, the percentage of children who have reentered the CWS system was 20.10%. Since the baseline period, the County's scores have increased to 24.20%. This national standard for this outcome measure is <9.90%. Tulare County's score of 24.20% is also above the state's average score for this measure during this review period of 12%.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome measure. Tulare County anticipates including this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

One issue identified for this measure is the tendency for social workers to maintain family visits at one hour per-week throughout the first six months of the case. Therefore, when the parent reunifies and enters into family maintenance they do not have realistic expectations of how things will be when the child comes home. Social workers need to use their discretion to work toward increasing the frequency and duration of visits between children and parents prior to reunification. As appropriate, facilitating the ability for unsupervised and overnight visits should be explored, to increase chances of successful reunification and decreased recidivism. As previously noted, the time it take to get parents into treatment / services can take too long; often longer than the allowed period of time for completing the reunification plan. The depressed economy has also made families much more reliant on stressed community support system post-reunification.

The Differential Response program provided by local Family Resource Centers (funded by PSSF) has been a positive service to reduce reentry following reunification. This program provides community-based supportive services and resources to at-risk families. In addition, social workers have used CAPIT and CBCAP funded programs to provide

parenting leadership and parenting classes to families working towards reunification. SafeCare in home parenting funded by the Mental Health Services Act is another program offered to strengthen families once they have been reunified.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this measure.

- Consider exploration of specialized caseloads. This may offer smaller caseloads assigned for family maintenance and family reunification workers which will allow more time for intense case management services.
- Increase the frequency of child/family visits as the reunification process moves forward. Have weekend visits before the child returns home and gradually extend the visit period (e.g., one week, two weeks, etc.) until the child is reunified to assess child and family readiness for reunification.
- Have family group staffings that includes the family's informal network prior to the dispositional hearing and at regular intervals thereafter. Invest greater numbers of family and community resources in the planning and execution of the case plan.
- Develop better exit plans for families leaving family maintenance.
- Work with the local Family Resource Centers' Differential Response Path II program (funded by PSSF) to help families get resources in their communities once their CWS case closes. Working with these community-based providers, families will identify what types of aftercare services are needed and the FRC's will either provide the needed service, develop new services, or steer families to existing services/programs. The Child Protection Planning Committee CPPC) is looking at where service gaps are being identified and available resources are being evaluated so that gaps in services are targeted for new programs / program expansions.
- Use the County Self-Assessment and SIP to address unmet needs and determine the future use of prevention funds. This assessment is currently being conducted by the Child Protection Planning Committee (CPPC) (see page 8 – 9) and will inform the SIP. The Joint Allocations Committee will use these results to help target CAPIT, CBCAP, CTF, and PSSF funded programs using a Request for Proposal process that will be commence upon release of the SIP early in 2012.
- Explore the development of a Parent Partners program to help guide and encourage parents through the CWS and Juvenile Court systems.
- Use SDM in a prospective manner to predict the success and need for ongoing services of families leaving the dependency system.
- Provide SDM training for new staff at the point of hiring and semi-annually for all staff.
- Consider exceeding 12 months of FM services in post-reunification cases if the risk level determined by SDM remains in the Moderate or High categories.

b. Permanency Composite – Reunification - **Probation**: The following charts provide performance data for four (4) separate measures under this composite. They each measure reunification rates.

Probation - Permanency Outcome: Reunification within 12 Months (Exit Cohort) - Measure C1.1

Of all children discharged from foster care to reunification during the year who had been in foster care for 8 days or longer, what percent were reunified in less than 12 months from the date of the latest removal from home?

County's Current Performance:

For the period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, 37.5% of children were discharged to reunification within 12 months of removal.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C1.1	Reunification within 12 Months	10/01/09	09/30/10	3	8	37.5%	Negative	3.1%

From the baseline year of 2002/2003, the percentage of children who have reunified has decreased 40.6% to 37.5%. Current performance is below the national standard of >75.2% and below the statewide performance of 67.1%.

Analysis: See the analysis and recommendations for measures C1.1, C1.2, and C1.3 below.

ion - Permanency Outcome: Median Time to Reunification (Exit Cohort) – Measure C1.2

Of all children discharged from foster care to reunification during the year who had been in foster care for 8 days or longer, what was the median length of stay (in months) from the date of latest removal from home until the date of discharge to reunification?

County's Current Performance:

For the period from October 2009 to September 2010, children were reunified within 16.3 months in care after removal.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C1.2	Median Time to Reunification	9/01/09	10/30/10			16.3%	Negative	3.7%

From the baseline year of 2002/2003, the median time length of stay for children discharged to reunification has increased from 12.3 to by 16.3 an increase of 3.7%. Current performance is above the national standard of <5.4% and above the statewide performance of 8.3%.

Analysis: See the analysis and recommendations for measures C1.1, C1.2, and C1.3 below.

Probation - Permanency Outcome: Reunification within 12-Months (Entry Cohort) – Measure C1.3

Of all children entering foster care for the first time in the 6-month period who remained in foster care for 8 days or longer, what percent were discharged from foster care to reunification in less than 12 months from the date of latest removal from home?

County's Current Performance:

For the period from January 01, 2009 through June 30, 2009 (a six-month period), the county's score for this measure was 50%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C1.3	Reunification Within 12 Months	01/01/09	06/30/09	1	1	50%	Positive	35.7%

From the baseline period of January 01, 2002 through June 30, 2003, the percentage of children who were reunified within 12 months was 14.3%. Since the baseline period, current performance has increased by 35.7%. This is above the national standard of >48.4% and is above the statewide performance of 44.20%.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome and help to explain the trend for the preceding outcome measures. Probation anticipates including the C1.2 and C1.3 outcome measures in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

As reported earlier, Tulare County, along with the rest of the state, has experienced a down economy which has led directly and indirectly to less staff time and resources available to dedicate to each case. Tulare County believes that the down economy has created more stressors on families. These stressors have led to longer periods of time for the family to address practical barriers necessary for reunification. An additional increase of youth in foster care in need of long term extensive therapeutic intervention before reunification can occur has delayed the reunification process. Another barrier to reunification is parental involvement.

Recommendations:

- Improve techniques to engage families and youth in process
- Increase the frequency of child/family visits throughout the reunification process.
- Implement Team Decision Meeting (TDM) staffings including the family's informal support network (i.e., relatives, friends, neighbors, others, etc.) at regular intervals and at the time of exit.
- Improve exit plans for youth and families. Work with community-based providers to determine what type of aftercare services are needed and then steer families to them or help to develop them. This has already started to occur with the Child Protection Planning Committee where service gaps are being identified and available resources being evaluated so that gaps in services are targeted.

Probation - Permanency Outcome: Reentry Following Reunification (Exit Cohort) – Measure C1.4

Of all children discharged from foster care to reunification during the year, what percent reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the date of the earliest discharge to reunification during the year?

County's Current Performance:

For the period from October 01, 2008 through September 30, 2009, the county's score for this measure was 4.3%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C1.4	Reentry Following Reunification	10/01/08	09/30/09	1	22	4.3%	Positive	2%

From the baseline year of 2002/2003, the percentage of children who have reentered the Probation System was 6.3%. Since the baseline period, the county's scores have decreased by 2%. This national standard for this outcome measure is <9.90%. Tulare County's score of 4.3% is also below the state's average score for this measure during this review period.

Analysis: Tulare County's performance for the outcome measure C1.4 is better than the national standard and statewide performance posted for the period under review.

Recommendations:

- It appears the improvement in this measure can be attributed to effective case management, appropriate individualized assessment of services, ensuring services were received by youth and family and engagement of the youth and family. In addition, it appears smaller caseloads with more individualized attention allowed for greater direct service to youth and families.
- Our goal is to continue to provide effective services the youth and families we serve.

c. Permanency Composite 2 - Adoptions:

Permanency Outcome: Adoption Within 24 Months (Exit Cohort) - Measure C2.1

This measure answers the question: What percentage of children were adopted within 24 months of removal? The denominator is the total number of children who exited foster care to adoption during the specified year; the numerator is the count of these exiting children who were adopted within 24 months of the date of latest removal from the home. Only placement episodes ending in adoption are included.

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 41.90%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C2.1	Adoption Within 24 Months	10/01/09	09/30/10	52	124	41.90%	No	-17.10%

From the baseline year of 2002/2003, the percentage of children who were adopted within 24 months was 50.60%. Since the baseline period score of 50.60%, the County's scores have decreased to 41.90%. The national performance standard is >36.60% and the state's average score for this outcome was 32.00% during the most recent reporting period. Tulare County is above both the national standard and state performance.

Analysis: The analysis and recommendations for the following three outcome measures can be found after the matrix for C2.3.

Permanency Outcome: Median Time to Adoption (Exit Cohort) - Measure C2.2

This measure answers the question: Of all children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption during the selected period, what percent were discharged less than 24 months from the date of the latest removal from the home?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 27.10%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C2.2	Median Time to Adoption	10/01/09	09/30/10	N/A	124	27.10%	No	12.90%

For the baseline year of 2002/2003, the number of children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption during the review period was 24%. In the period since the baseline score was set, Tulare County's score has increased to 27.10%; an increase of 3.10%. The national performance standard for this measure is <27.30%. The state's average score for the same period was 30.70%.

Analysis: The analysis and recommendations for the preceding two outcome measures are found following the matrix for outcome C2.3 below.

Permanency Outcome: Adoption Within 12 Months (17 Months in Care) - Measure C2.3

This measure answers the question: Of all children in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer on the first day of the selected period as of the beginning of the year, what percent were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption within 12 months?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 25%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C2.3	Adoption Within 12 Months	10/01/09	09/30/10	81	324	25%	Yes	138.10%

From the baseline year of 2002/2003 score of 10.50%, the percentage of children who were adopted within latest 12 months of having been in care for 17 months improved to 25%. Current performance is above the national standard of >22.70% as well as statewide performance of 19.50%.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome and help to explain the trend for the three preceding outcome measures. Tulare County is not anticipating including this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report. Tulare County's performance for the outcome measure C2.3 is above the national standard and statewide performance posted for the period under review.

Greater efficiencies throughout CWS have resulted in a reduction of unnecessary delays in cases getting to Adoptions once reunification efforts have been determined not to be in the child's best interest. Recent changes noted below will contribute to improving performance on the length of time children are in care. These efficiencies are a result of more systematic tracking of critical functions and responding in a more prescribed fashion when placement and other problems are determined. Some tracking strategies include timely court report submissions, using adoption case progress reports, and reducing the number case continuance reports.

While the Adoptions Unit has undergone significant staffing changes in the last two years, the unit has maintained adoption workers who are highly productive which has resulted in an average production of more than ten finalizations per year per worker. A strong and efficient mentoring system in the unit assists in getting the new adoption workers trained. The practice of assigning a single adoption worker to complete the child study and home study in matched cases has

resulted in a more efficient process and made accountability easier. The individualized services from the beginning to the end of the adoption process allowed for minimal disruption and continuity of care.

As previously discussed, Tulare County CWS has recently assigned staff to a new unit, the Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU), whose functions and roles are being finalized at the time of this report. The unit was developed in part to address the growing number of cases in the Permanency Planning (PP) caseload in Tulare County. Of importance for this caseload is the anticipated role of the PPAU in finding permanency for these youth by supporting concurrent planning efforts, utilizing Team Decision Making (TDM) to review and discuss placement options, using Family Finding to find connections for these youth and exploring permanency options in a more consistent manner.

Finally, two continuing activities have helped the adoptions unit with their work. First, the ongoing contract between the County and a provider for the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funded REACH program (Resources, Education, Advocacy, Crisis Intervention and Hope) has been beneficial in providing pre and post-adoption services for families. Secondly, the County's participation in regularly scheduled "matching meetings" where staff from various counties share child available studies with community partner organizations has assisted in adoptive placements of hard to match children in Tulare County.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this measure.

- Develop stable and well trained adoptions staff.
- Routinely staff cases when problems or delays are discovered in adoption cases.
- Work to develop and implement a more consistent concurrent planning process and policy that involves the Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU).
- Develop and implement Private Adoption Agency Reimbursement Program (PAARP) to clean up the backlog of home studies and then begin completing unmatched home studies.
- Identify and implement methods to increase education and support services for foster family's undecided about adoption.
- Implement more consistent Family Finding efforts with the new PPAU.
- Continue with PSSF funded REACH program for pre and post-adoption services.

Permanency Outcome: Legally Free Within 6 Months (17 Months In Care) - Measure C2.4

This measure answers the question: Of all children in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer and not legally free for adoption on the first day of the selected six-month period, what percent became legally free within the following six months?

County's Current Performance:

For the 6-month period from October 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 5.10%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C2.4	Legally Free Within 6 Months	10/01/09	03/31/10	9	177	5.10%	Yes	6.80%

From the baseline six month period in 2002, the percentage of children who were adopted within six months has decreased from 4.40% to 5.10%. Current performance is below the national standard of >10.90% and the statewide performance of 6.80%.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome. Tulare County is exploring inclusion of this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

Tulare County has made positive progress for this outcome measure most likely due to the positive changes reported for the prior measures. One factor that caused this measure to remain below performance standards is that of the juvenile court system continuing to work together to keep from creating a large pool of legal orphans by not freeing children within the foster system for adoptions without first identifying strong prospective adoptive parent(s). This is the standard practice for local children, and viewed as a positive practice. Conversely, children not typically freed for adoption may have one or a combination of factors which may include age, severe mental health/behavioral issues, and/or other special needs that are deemed "too difficult" for adoptive placement without intensive services/supports. And, based on anecdotal information, adoption's staff report seeing an increasing trend in detaining larger sets of siblings and older youth; these of course take a longer time to place in adoption and there are not many foster families equipped and ready to take on large sibling sets.

A review of the caseload data suggests that children who are over age eleven have the option to consent to their adoption. This can be a barrier as some children wish to return to their family despite there being no hope that this is possible. Children with special needs or significant mental health issues may also present challenges for the County and may influence outcomes for this measure. These children are less likely to be adopted and often families with every good intention to adopt, end up opting not to as such problems become clearer after initial placement.

Tulare County is currently working to strengthen concurrent planning and bring consistency to the practice. Tulare County believes that inconsistent concurrent planning efforts and staff turnover have impacted this outcome negatively.

As reported in the prior outcome measures for this composite, Tulare County has recently added a new Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU). One role for the new PPAU is to assist with seeking homes for a large pool of children in the Permanency Planning service component. It is anticipated that the development of the PPAU will have a positive impact for this outcome measure. One of PPAU's primary functions will be to screen and assess relatives, other families, and foster parents for possible placement of the children represented here into their homes, thus increasing the number of placement options available for children and youth without a permanent connection to a family.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this measure.

- Revise the County Planned Permanency Living Arrangement (PPLA) protocol to include new practices like Family Finding and Team Decision Making (TDM) that will lead to permanent connections for this population.
- Strengthen concurrent planning for youth in the permanency planning service component.
- Implement within the PPAU a home evaluation and assessment process to identify stronger permanent placement options for youth.
- Utilize findings from home assessments to prepare prospective foster families to take older kids and large sibling sets.
- Continue and explore the expansion of the pre and post-adoption support and education services to families through the contracted provider via the REACH program.

Permanency Outcome: Adoption Within 12 Months (Legally Free) - Measure C2.5

This measure answers the question: Of all children in foster care who became legally free for adoption during the selected 12-month period, what percent were discharged to a finalized adoption within the following 12 months?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009, the County's score for this measure was 49.10%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C2.5	Adoption Within 12 Months	10/01/08	09/30/09	56	114	49.10%	No	-19.90%

The baseline year, 2001 / 2002, the percentage of children who became legally free within 12 months was 61.30%. As of the latest period under review the County's score fell to 49.10%. The state's average performance score for this measure for the same review period was 63.10%. The national standard for this measure is >53.70%.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome and help to explain the downward trend. Tulare County anticipates including this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

One reason that has caused the decrease in finalized adoptions is the reduction of staff. A restructuring of the Adoptions Unit, partially based on lower funding allocations, changed the prior structure of the unit from three teams and twenty social workers to one team with one supervisor and nine staff. Prior to the restructuring, adoptions cases were co-managed. Two social workers were assigned to each child case with one responsible for case management and preparation of the case for finalization, and the other for the child study and the home study. Now both of these functions are performed by one social worker. Since the restructuring, the County has acknowledged the need to improve efficiencies in the way the work was being performed for children awaiting permanency. This resulted in the development of the PPAU Unit; a change that the County anticipates will lead to positive outcomes for this and related measures.

The County has also noted that parents are increasingly exercising their right to appeal the termination of parental rights which has delayed moving children into adoptive placements. Additionally, the County has noted an increasing volume of the Selection of Permanency Plan (WIC 366.26) hearings scheduled in 2009 which had a negative impact on rates for this measure. The County will be reviewing data for 2010 to see if the trend has continued and will address these findings in the System Improvement Plan report.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this measure.

- Work with County Counsel to improve the process of the adoption worker's voice in the courts at the Selection of Permanency Plan (WIC 366.26) hearings.
- Increase pre and post-adoption support and services to families who choose to adopt children
- Explore ways to decrease staff turnover and bring some stability to the staffing of the Adoptions Unit.
- Explore the feasibility of reestablishing the use of a CWS clinician in the Adoption Unit to provide support to parents and youth who are anticipating or have taken an adoptive child into their home. Children for whom new family connections are made will need support to adjust to new family assuring the placement is compatible and permanent.
- Continue to strengthen post-adoption services and support to ensure placements are secure and stable and that parents and children receive needed support.

The Probation Department does not have data for this measure from the Berkeley Website (http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/C2M1.aspx). Traditionally youth in probation foster care enter care at age 16, or above, and not adopted nor are parental rights terminated to allow a youth to be legally free for adoption. Youth typically are returned to their parents at or before age 18 or emancipated to adulthood

c. Permanency Composite 3 – Long Term Care

Permanency Outcome: Exits to Permanency (24 Months in Care): Measure C3.1

This measure answers the question: Of all children in foster care for 24 months or longer on the first day of the selected 12-month period, what percent were discharged to a permanent home by the end of the 12 month period and prior to their 18th birthday? Cases Included: All children in foster care for two years or more on the first day of the 12 month period.

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 25.80%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C3.1	Exit to Permanency 24 Months	10/01/09	09/30/10	72	279	25.80%	Yes	15.10%

The baseline year of 2002 / 2003 score for this outcome was 22.40%. During the most recent period of review the percentage of children who were discharged to a permanent home has increased to 25.80%. Current performance is below the national standard of >29.10% and better than the state's score for this measure of 24%.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome. Tulare County anticipates including this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

Tulare County has made some progress for this measure, however, scores are still below the federal goal but better than the most recent scores posted for California. As discussed in an earlier portion of this report, economic factors and fiscal constraints have had an impact on Tulare County and influence scores for this composite and the respective measures. Reduced staffing is a contributing factor that has led challenges in obtaining permanency for children. The decrease in the number of experienced adoptions social workers due to turnover, reductions, and reorganization has led to some inefficiency in adoptions. In another area of the CWS Division, high caseloads held by continuing workers impact scores for this outcome measure. Permanency Planning (PP) cases get less attention as Family Reunification (FR) and Family Maintenance (FM) cases take more time and have more issues (instability of placements and case management of planned services for the child and the family). If a child is stable in long-term foster care the social worker may have the tendency to spend less time on the case. They will make contacts and ensure everything continues to go well, but not necessarily continue to look at biological parents and search for other family members as placement options.

One process issue that may have a negative impact on the length of time children remain in care is the inconsistent practice of ongoing concurrent planning. As an ideal, concurrent planning should begin at the point of intake and continue throughout the life of the case being revisited with any status review hearing or change of circumstance. Prioritizing tasks and processes sometimes takes a secondary consideration with inflated caseloads, staff turnover, and an increasing influx of new referrals demanding attention.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this measure.

- Continue to place an emphasis on staff stability by assessing skills, providing training, and providing support for the work they do.
- Implement Family Finding across the CWS Division.
- Support the full development and implementation of the Permanency Placement Assessment Unit (PPAU).
- Explore the feasibility of developing specialized continuing caseloads. The current system assigns a mix of continuing cases (FM, FR, and PP) to staff. Each service component requires a different intensity of case management and specialization may allow workers to focus appropriate case management on their cases. Specialization will allow staff to more closely monitor and re-evaluate the cases at each status review hearing; allow them more time to work on Family Finding, mobility mapping and other activities that will result in improved outcomes for children. The PP caseload workers would have larger caseloads than those working FR and FM and still allow them to focus on developing better permanent plans for children in their caseloads.
- Have family group staffings that includes the family's informal network prior to the dispositional hearing and at regular intervals thereafter. Invest greater numbers of family and community resources in the planning and execution of the case plan.
- Implement the practice of Mobility Mapping to help uncover as many informal supports as possible. Invite these supports to TDM's.
- Participate in Private Adoption Agency Reimbursement Program (PAARP) to decrease the home study backlog and get adoptable kids into a permanent home faster.
- Review the concurrent planning process and adjust current policy and training to fit with the current structure and staffing of the organization.

Permanency Outcome: Exits to Permanency (Legally Free at Exit): Measure C3.2

This measure answers the question: Of all children discharged from foster care during the 12-month review period who were legally free for adoption, how many were discharged to a permanent home prior to their 18th birthday.

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 94.80%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C3.2	Exits to Permanency	10/01/09	09/30/10	127	134	94.80%	No	-4.10%

The baseline year of 2002 / 2003 score for this measure was 98.80%. For the current period the percentage of children who were discharged from foster care during the 12-month review period and free for adoption decreased to 94.80%. The national performance standard is >98% while the state's average score for this outcome was 96.50% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome. Tulare County anticipates including this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

As discussed in an earlier portion of this report, economic factors and fiscal constraints have had an impact on Tulare County and influences scores for this composite and the respective measures. One such example that may contribute negatively to the scores for this outcome is that adoptive home studies may not be done in a timely manner and / or delayed by inadequate cooperation from adoptive families. Social workers tend to leave children in stable placement but not necessarily continue to look at biological parents and search for other family members as placement options. Tulare County finds that some children are being freed for adoption before they are truly ready to exit CWS and thorough evaluations have been conducted. As these children's behaviors escalate, foster parents find that there were issues they were not aware of nor fully prepared to handle; thus children and families wind up not being well-matched. At times social workers may not take time to explain a child's behaviors well to the potential adoptive family causing a child placed for adoption to be removed as the family changes their mind. Unfortunately, Tulare County does not have enough adoptive or foster care homes willing to take children with special needs, true for many children who are included in the group for this outcome measure.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this measure.

- Continue to place an emphasis on staff stability by assessing skills, providing training, and providing support for the work they do.

- Match kids and families better. Incorporate this goal into the mission of both the Adoptions Unit and PPAU.
- Have more consistent ongoing mental health assessment, planning, and treatment for minors with a permanent plan of adoption. Make sure that mental health treatment or services include the prospective or actual adoptive parents. The treatment must focus on not only on the symptomology of the minor but also on the successful integration of the child into the adoptive family.
- Have family group staffings that includes the family's informal network prior to the dispositional hearing and at regular intervals thereafter. Invest greater numbers of family and community resources in the planning and execution of the case plan.
- Participate in Private Adoption Agency Reimbursement Program (PAARP) to decrease the home study backlog and get adoptable kids into a permanent home faster.
- Review the policies, practice, and training for staff on the importance of readying dependent children for emancipation.

Permanency Outcome: In Care 3 Years or Longer (Emancipated/Age 18): Measure C3.3

This measure answers the question: Of all children in foster care during the 12-month review period who were either discharged to emancipation or turned 18 in care, what percent were in care for three years or longer?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 45.50%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C3.3	In Care 3 Years or More	10/01/09	09/30/10	20	44	45.50%	No	3.40%

For the baseline year 2002/2003 the percentage of children who were either discharged to emancipated or turned 18 while in care was 43.90%. Since the baseline period score, the County's scores have increased to 45.50%. The national performance standard is <37.50% and the state's average score for this outcome was 59.60% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome. Tulare County anticipates including this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

One observation the County made during PQCR was that the longer children were in care the harder it was to find permanency for them. In reviewing this outcome measure there are a recurring number of issues that contribute to current performance. One such factor is the high caseloads held by continuing workers. Permanency Planning (PP) get less attention as Family Reunification (FR) and Family Maintenance (FM) cases take more time and have more issues (instability of placements and case management of planned services for the child and the family). Secondly, the County finds that when a child is in stable long-term foster care the social worker will make contacts and ensure everything continues to go well, but not necessarily continue to look at biological parents and search for other family members as placement options. Finally, children in the PP caseloads who have been in care for more than three years may have more severe behaviors that limit their ability to be adopted or to have a legal guardian, leading to longer stays in foster care. One factor that may also contribute to the trend is that in local practice, social workers place kids in foster family agencies (FFAs) at the point of intake (the County does not operate an emergency shelter). The County finds that FFA's are less likely to take adoptive placements because that decreases the money they may receive over the life of the placement. At the point of exit for youth in foster care, scarce resources and services leave many emancipated youth in poverty, unconnected to family, under-educated, and vulnerable to social stigmas of mental health and substance abuse.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this measure.

- Develop a new policy that requires the PPAU Unit and/or the case-carrying social worker to re-evaluate the biological parents and / or available relatives / NREFMs every 6 months and/or at every WIC 366.3 post permanency hearing.
- Develop a new policy that the child must be interviewed and a mobility map completed every year to help find connections for the child.
- Implement Family Finding across the CWS Division.
- Develop a unit dedicated to permanency – PPAU.
- Explore the feasibility of developing specialized continuing caseloads (see previously listed recommendation for further detail).
- Have TDM staffings at every review hearing that continuously involves the family's formal and informal support system.

d. Permanency Composite 3 – Long Term Care – **Probation**:

Probation - Permanency Outcome: Exits to Permanency (24 Months in Care): Measure C3.1

Of all children in foster care for 24 months or longer on the first day of the year, what percent were discharged to a permanent home by the end of the year and prior to turning 18?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the county's score for this measure was 16.2%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C3.1	Exit to Permanency 24 Months	10/01/09	09/30/10	3	5	16.2%	Negative	6.9%

The baseline year of 2002 / 2003 score for this outcome was 23.1%. During the most recent period of review the percentage of children who were discharged to a permanent home has increased to 16.2%. Current performance is below the national standard of >29.10% and the state's score for this measure of 24%.

Analysis: See the analysis and recommendations for measures C3.1and C3.3 below.

Probation – Permanency Outcome: Exits to permanency (legally free at exit): Measure C3.2

Although there is data in this area on the Berkeley website, it appears this data is not correct as mentioned above because parental rights are not traditionally terminated for probation foster children. Therefore Probation youth are typically not legally free at exit.

http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/C3M2.aspx

Probation - Permanency Outcome: In Care 3 Years or Longer (Emancipated/Age 18): Measure C3.3

Of all children in foster care during the 12-month review period who were either discharged to emancipation or turned 18 in care, what percent were in care for three years or longer?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the county's score for this measure was 91.7%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C3.3	In Care 3 Years or More	10/01/09	09/30/10	11	1	91.7	Negative	6%

For the baseline year 2002/2003 the percentage of children who were either discharged to emancipated or turned 18 while in care was 85.7%. Since the baseline period score, the county's scores have increased to 91.7%. The national performance standard is <37.50% and the state's average score for this outcome was also at 59.60% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome. Probation anticipates including Measure C3.1 and C3.3 in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

It appears as mentioned earlier that youth continue to enter foster care in need of long term extensive therapeutic intervention. A process issue may be, as youth have been relatively stable in care the probation officer may have left assessment of needed services up to the caregiver, treatment provider instead of ensuring the process is moving forward effectively. An additional issue may be family involvement, the longer a youth remains in care the families at times tend to decrease their involvement. There has been an overall decline in the number of Probation youth placed in care. The Probation Department over the last few years has focused its efforts on improving services to youth and families, to prevent their removal, and to sustain them in the home. The Probation Department has accomplished this by providing focused training for all staff on collaborative case planning, family engagement efforts, and motivational interviewing.

Recommendations:

- Continuously assess case for progress toward identified goals
- Conduct regular internal case staffings to ensure appropriate services are received
- Conduct Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings and include all interested parties; the child, the family and formal and informal supports.

- Expand family finding efforts
- Implement the practice of Mobility Mapping to help uncover as many informal supports as possible. Invite these supports to TDM's.

e. Permanency Composite 4 – Placement Stability

Permanency Outcome: Placement Stability (8 Days to 12 Months in Care): Measure C4.1

This measure answers the question: Of all children (Age 0 to 17 years) in foster care during the specified 12-month period who were in care for > 8 days but < 12 months, what percent had 2 or fewer placements?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 83.20%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C4.1	Placement Stability (8 Days to 12 Months)	10/01/09	09/30/10	366	440	83.20%	Yes	10.80%

For the baseline year of 2002 / 2003 the percentage of children in foster care who were in care for >8 days and < 12 months who had 2 or fewer placement was 75.10%. Since the baseline period, the County's scores have increased to 83.20%. The national performance standard is >86% and the state's average score for this outcome was 83.60% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome. Tulare County does not anticipate including this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

The County's most recent PQCR focused on this outcome measure with an added focus on initial placement choices. The literature review conducted for the 2011 PQCR helped to shed light on issues around the stability rates for children in foster care. In a review of practice, the County found that staff tended to place children in foster family agency homes initially while the relative home assessments were in progress. This practice was based on a number of factors that staff identified. The most common of these factors were a lack of foster home placement options and the difficulty in placing larger sibling groups in foster care due to current licensing standards. The practice led to a tendency to have multiple placement changes for children (the initial placement in FFA, then to a more permanent placement with relatives).

A related practice that effected placement stability rates was staff practice when a "seven-day notice" was received from caregivers to move a child. Suggestions for practice improvement included reviewing the circumstances surrounding the issues and working towards strengthening a placement by improving communication and providing additional services and/or supports to keep the placement intact. Information gathered from youth and parents during the most recent PQCR pointed to Tulare County needing to strengthen relationships between children and staff. It was noted that social workers

exhibited much passion in working with the children in their caseloads. Caregivers also reported a desire to do better but needed additional support that includes respite care and focused training to help them manage difficult child behaviors, an often-cited reason that caregivers requested that a child be moved.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made for this measure.

Among the recommendations being made to improve placement stability rates for children in care during their first 12 months in foster care are:

- Increase concurrent planning to help identify permanent homes for children earlier in their stay in child welfare.
- Implement the Team Decision-Making (TDM) strategy to engage children (when age appropriate), foster parents (or other caregivers), and biological parents in making placement decisions.
- Implement / expand the Family Finding strategy to help identify familial connections for youth.
- Improve the emergency relative home assessment and approval process so that children are placed in the least restrictive setting at the point of detention, or soon thereafter.
- Thoroughly gather information about the child to help better match the child with the placement home.
- Institute the practice of an "ice-breaker" visit between the child and the caregiver (foster parent/relative, etc.) so the child knows where they are going, who they will be living with, and be assured a connection to their families and communities, when appropriate.
- Explore the development of new training and related policies that requires a TDM to be held each time a seven-day notice is given by a caregiver. The goal of the TDM for this purpose would be to address the issues behind the request, an exploration of training and / or supports that might be employed to preserve the placement, and to explore better placement matching if a child's movement is necessary.

Permanency Outcome: Placement Stability (12 to 24 Months In Care): Measure C4.2

This measure answers the question: Of all children (Age 0 to 17 years) in foster care during the specified 12-month period who were in care for more than 12 months but less 24 months, what percent had 2 or fewer placements?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 56%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C4.2	Placement Stability (12 to 24 Months)	10/01/09	09/30/10	177	316	56%	No	-6.00%

For the baseline year of 2002 / 2003 the percentage of children in foster care who were in care for > 12 months and < 24 months who had 2 or fewer placement was 59.60%. Since the baseline period, the County's scores have decreased to 56%. The national performance standard is >65.4% and the state's average score for this outcome was 63.20% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: See the analysis and recommendations for the outcome measures C4.2 and C4.3 after the next matrix.

Permanency Outcome: Placement Stability (At Least 24 Months In Care): Measure C4.3

This measure answers the question: Of all children (Age 0 to 17 years) in foster care during the specified 12-month period who were in care for at least 24 months, what percent had 2 or fewer placements?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 25.80%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C4.3	Placement Stability (At Least 24 Months)	10/01/09	09/30/10	96	372	25.80%	No	-32.50%

For the baseline year of 2002 / 2003 the percentage of children in foster care who were in care at least 24 months who had 2 or fewer placement was 38.20%. Since the baseline period, the County's scores have fallen to 25.80%. The national performance standard is >41.80% and the state's average score for this outcome was 32.70% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence the outcomes for C4.2 and C4.3. Tulare County anticipates including this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

This population of children and those in the companion measure whom have been in care longer than 24 months was reviewed previously by the County. Among the findings from the review were that children were often moved at the request of foster parents due to child behaviors. Foster parents felt the need for additional training and support to help meet the needs of the children in their care. Another finding from the prior review was that foster family agencies (FFAs) often moved children between certified homes of the particular agency, sometimes unbeknownst to social workers. The County has since established policy for getting reports from FFAs and improved communication by implementing quarterly CWS/FFA meetings.

Another need identified was the lack of foster homes in which to place children, especially larger sibling groups. In order to retain foster homes it was determined that the County should provide additional support to foster parents. Some supports identified were to improve information and communication, include foster parents in a county-wide team approach, and provide direct supports such as the currently implemented PSSF funded respite care program. Improved training to help caregivers work with children exhibiting difficult behaviors or mental health issues was another identified need. In working on these items the County will improve the likelihood that children will remain in their communities and schools (the family connections outcomes) and placed in the least restrictive placement setting possible.

Findings from the literature review suggest that better placement matching (and child assessments) coupled with strengthening relationships with social workers and caregivers improve placement stability rates. It was discovered that multiple placement disruptions lead to further placement instability as increased losses experienced by children cause more behavioral and psychological issues. More behavioral and psychological problems in turn lead to greater placement disruptions, a vicious cycle supported by data. Children in foster care need permanent connections and relationships with people who care. Among the strategies considered after the last review were to increase concurrent planning, to implement family finding to reconnect these children to their families whenever possible, and to implement a case staffing process. Foster parents expressed the need for more support for their roles as caregivers. As a result, regular meetings between CWS and the foster parents have been implemented, and a recruitment, training, and support plan have been developed.

Recommendations:

Among the recommendations already outlined to help improve placement stability, Tulare County CWS will:

- Continue regular meetings between foster parents and CWS.
- Continue the quarterly meetings between CWS and Foster Family Agency (FFA) operators to review and discuss issues and concerns about youth in care.
- Increase concurrent planning at the point of intake and with each review hearing to help identify permanent homes for children earlier in their stay in child welfare.
- Implement the Team Decision-Making (TDM) strategy to engage children (when age appropriate), foster parents and biological parents in making placement decisions and for building supportive relationships.
- Implement the use of Team Decision Making meetings to review placement stability and encourage family engagement.
- Develop a strategy that will require that staff conduct a TDM staffing any time a seven-day notice is given by a caregiver to address the issues leading to the request and to identify what additional training and/or supports can be provided to preserve the placement.
- Explore the development of "ice breaker" visits between the child and prospective care givers so the child knows when, where, and with whom they will be placed.
- Implement/expand the Family Finding strategy to help identify permanent connections for youth.
- Improve social worker / child contacts to review/discuss placement issues/strengthen relationships.
- Conduct child assessments for the purposes of placement matching.
- Develop, staff, train, and implement the Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU) within CWS to work with children who have been in care for longer than 24 months, to coordinate the TDM meetings, and to support its intake process by leading concurrent planning efforts and expanding Family Finding.
- Identify training and/or support needs for caregivers and jointly develop the resources to meet those needs. This includes providing all available child information to caregivers at the time of, or shortly after, the child's placement into the home, maintaining regular contact with caregivers, and strengthening relationships.
- Continue to implement the 2009 strategic foster parent recruitment, training, and support plan elements (media, training, and support). This includes the PSSF funded respite care program.
- Improve social worker / child communication to review and discuss placement issues while strengthening relationships.

f. Permanency Composite 4 – Placement Stability - **Probation**

Probation Permanency Outcome: Placement Stability (8 Days to 12 Months In Care): Measure C4.1

Of all children (Age 0 to 17 years) in foster care during the specified 12-month period who were in care for > 8 days but < 12 months, what percent had 2 or fewer placements?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the county's score for this measure was 78.6%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C4.1	Placement Stability (8 Days to 12 Months)	10/01/09	09/30/10	11	3	78.6%	Negative	11.9%

For the baseline year of 2002 / 2003 the percentage of children in foster care who were in care for >8 days and < 12 months who had 2 or fewer placement was 90.5%. Since the baseline period, the county's scores have decreased to 78.6%. The national performance standard is >86% and the state's average score for this outcome was 83.60% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence this outcome. Probation anticipates including Measure C4.1 in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

Practice issues related to this measure include difficulty in locating foster families willing to accept the placement of a minor who has the "probation" label. The probation officer may respond reactively rather than proactively when 7-day notice is received by attempting to see if there is anything that can be done to sustain the placement. The majority of Probation's youth are placed in group homes. Many of those youth in care has committed sexual offenses and will require extensive treatment and 24-hour supervision before they can be safely returned to their home.

Recommendations:

- Implement the Team Decision-Making (TDM) strategy to engage children (when age appropriate), foster parents (or other caregivers), and biological parents in making placement decisions.
- Expand the Family Finding strategy to help identify familial connections for youth.
- Thoroughly gather information about the child to help better match the child with the placement home.

- Explore the development of new training and related policies that requires a TDM to be held each time a seven-day notice is given by a caregiver. The goal of the TDM for this purpose would be to address the issues behind the request, an exploration of training and / or supports that might be employed to preserve the placement, and to explore better placement matching if a child's movement is necessary.

Probation - Permanency Outcome: Placement Stability (12 to 24 Months In Care): Measure C4.2

Of all children (Age 0 to 17 years) in foster care during the specified 12-month period who were in care for more than 12 months but less 24 months, what percent had 2 or fewer placements?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the county's score for this measure was 91.7%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C4.2	Placement Stability (12 to 24 Months)	10/01/09	09/30/10	22	2	91.7%	Positive	25%

For the baseline year of 2002 / 2003 the percentage of children in foster care who were in care for > 12 months and < 24 months who had 2 or fewer placement was 66.7%. Since the baseline period, the county's scores have increased to 91.7%. The national performance standard is >65.4% and the state's average score for this outcome was 63.20% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: See the analysis and recommendations for measures C4.2 and C4.3 below.

Probation - Permanency Outcome: Placement Stability (At Least 24 Months In Care): Measure C4.3

Of all children (Age 0 to 17 years) in foster care during the specified 12-month period who were in care for at least 24 months, what percent had 2 or fewer placements?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the county's score for this measure was 47.6%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
C4.3	Placement Stability (At Least 24 Months)	10/01/09	09/30/10	10	11	47.6%	Positive	13.2

For the baseline year of 2002 / 2003 the percentage of children in foster care who were in care at least 24 months who had 2 or fewer placement was 34.4%. Since the baseline period, the county's scores have increased to 47.6%. The national performance standard is >41.80% and the state's average score for this outcome was 32.70% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: Tulare County's performance for the outcome measure C4.2 is better than the national standard and statewide performance posted for the period under review.

It appears at this stage in care the probation officer and youth have developed a collaborative cohesive partnership toward the identification of goals and services provided. It further appears the youth is focused and motivated to complete the identified goals and develop independent living skills. The majority of youth in this measure are placed in group homes; it appears placement stability can be attributed to a good placement match of services needed for the youth versus provided at any particular home. In addition, Probation works closely with all youth and care providers to ensure appropriate services are provided and that needs identified are being met.

Recommendations:

- Our goal is to continue to improve and provide effective services the youth and families we serve.

g. Permanency Composite: Process Measure 1: Child Welfare Services

Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood

Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood: Measure 8A – Education

This measure answers the question: Of the number of youth reported for the review period how many youth passed the high school proficiency exam and received a certificate of proficiency. This measure includes foster youth who have neither completed the minimum requirements for graduation, nor passed the GED exam, but have elected to take the California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE), and passed the same.

County's Current Performance:

For the most recent review period, the County's score for this process measure was 80%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
8A	Children Transitioning to Self Sufficient Adulthood	07/01/10	09/30/10	8	10	80%	N/A	N/A

Baseline data for this process measure began in the December 2008 Quarter. The County's performance for that initial period was 42%. In comparison, since the initial measure the County's performance has improved to 80%. There is no federal standard. The state's average score for this measure during the same review period was 69.40%.

Analysis: See discussion following all of the 8A Measures

Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood: Measure 8A – Employment

This measure answers the question: How many youth obtained either full-time or part-time employment. This measure includes data for youth who had one or more full-time jobs and/or one or more part-time jobs during the period, whether concurrently or sequentially.

County's Current Performance:

For the most recent review period, the County's score for this process measure was 0%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
8A	Children Transitioning to Self Sufficient Adulthood	07/01/10	09/30/10	0	10	0%	N/A	N/A

Baseline data for this process measure began in the December 2008 Quarter. The County's performance for that initial period was 0% because the data collection and data entry were still being implemented. Data for this measure is reflective of 0% score because not youth became employed in Tulare County during the review quarter under review. There is no federal standard. The state's average score for this measure during the same review period was 30.10%.

Analysis: See discussion following all of the 8A Measures

Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood: Measure 8A – Housing

This measure answers the question: How many youth obtained either full-time or part-time employment. This measure includes data for youth who had one or more full-time jobs and/or one or more part-time jobs during the period, whether concurrently or sequentially.

County's Current Performance:

For the most recent review period, the County's score for this process measure was 90%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
8A	Children Transitioning to Self Sufficient Adulthood	07/01/10	09/30/10	9	10	90%	N/A	N/A

Baseline data for this process measure began in the December 2008 Quarter. The County's performance for that initial period was 0% because the data collection and data entry were still being implemented. For the current period under review the County's score is 90%. There is no federal standard. The state's average score for this measure during the same review period was 92.50%.

Analysis: See discussion following all of the 8A Measures

Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood: Measure 8A – ILP Services

This measure answers the question: How many youth obtained either full-time or part-time employment. This measure includes data for youth who had one or more full-time jobs and/or one or more part-time jobs during the period, whether concurrently or sequentially.

County's Current Performance:

For the most recent review period, the County's score for this process measure was 90%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
8A	Children Transitioning to Self Sufficient Adulthood	07/01/10	09/30/10	9	10	90%	N/A	N/A

Baseline data for this process measure began in the December 2008 Quarter. The County's performance for that initial period was 0% because the data collection and data entry were still being implemented. For the current period under review the County's score is 90%. There is no federal standard. The state's average score for this measure during the same review period was 89.40%.

Analysis: See discussion following all of the 8A Measures

Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood: Measure 8A – Connection With An Adult

This measure answers the question: How many youth obtained either full-time or part-time employment. This measure includes data for youth who had one or more full-time jobs and/or one or more part-time jobs during the period, whether concurrently or sequentially.

County's Current Performance:

For the most recent review period, the County's score for this process measure was 90%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
8A	Children Transitioning to Self Sufficient Adulthood	07/01/10	09/30/10	9	10	90%	N/A	N/A

Baseline data for this process measure began in the December 2008 Quarter. The County's performance for that initial period was 0% because the data collection and data entry were still being implemented. For the current period under review the County's score is 90%. There is no federal standard. The state's average score for this measure during the same review period was 93.40%.

Analysis: This analysis and recommendations relate to all ILP measures for 8A: HS Completion; Exit Outcomes: Housing, Employment, and Permanency Connection to Adult. Tulare County anticipates including these outcome measures in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

Tulare County lost funding and staff over the last couple of years which impacted the ILP staffing level by 50%. The ILP staff reduction means that they are not always able to devote systematic attention to services for post-dependency youth, thus the fluctuations seen in trend data. Tulare County will place an emphasis on the successful transition of youth exiting the foster care system and explore the utilization and development of additional support for these youth.

The sample size for Educational Outcomes in a given quarter is remarkably small. In a review of trend data, Tulare County found that some quarters the County did well and other quarters poorly. The long-term trend for the Education measure is positive and encouraging. Factors contributing to the trend include: inadequate staff time to track data systematically often relying on hand-tallying of results; outcomes are often linked to the seasonal variations (e.g., high school graduations in the spring). Tulare County continues to emphasize the importance of data trends over the long-term rather than performance in a given quarter.

Tulare County noted a negative long-term trend in employment data; as reported earlier to be related to a down economy. While the national unemployment is currently 9%, Tulare County's unemployment rate was last reported to be 18% while

unemployment rates are consistently in the 15%-20% range for the surrounding nine-county area. Previously, summer youth employment programs have offered a resource for the ILP youth, however, funding decreases to programs which previously were a resource coupled with the noted high unemployment rates has increased competition for scarce jobs leaving youth more often without the prospect of summer employment or gains in becoming self-sufficient and independent young adults.

A bright spot in the data is the positive trending for housing due to recent housing initiatives (e.g., Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP Plus)). The Independent Living Program (ILP) funding for rent and most recently Section 8 vouchers have opened up opportunities for emancipating youth to find housing on exit from foster care. Tulare County has taken opportunities to partner with various agencies to build the transitional housing that is available and hopes to continue to advocate for more housing units as local demand continues to be high.

Finally, Tulare County notes positive trending in Permanency Connection to Adults outcome measure (8A). This is related to more systematic focus by the Juvenile Court and by the County at each dependency review, and the systematic use of Emancipation Conferences six (6) months prior to the termination of dependency. These practices and the support of the courts on recognizing the importance of youth having permanent connections will continue to have a positive effect on this outcome measure.

Recommendations:

- Increase the amount of staff time for post-dependency services for ILP youth without reducing existing services for dependents and wards.
- Make sure that each youth exiting the dependency system is contacted at least once every six months until the youth reaches the age of 21.
- Improve record keeping for post-dependency services from the existing hand-tally system.
- Support the maintenance and increase in summer and other employment programs for youth. Discuss this topic with our community partners in interagency forums.
- Fully implement the new Section 8 program for emancipating ILP youth.
- Explore mentor programs or initiatives to increase the permanency connections with adults. Discuss this topic with our community partners in interagency forums.
- Increase the use of Family Finding for ILP-aged youth.
- Increase the use of case staffings to develop and review the case plan with ILP-aged minors. Among the goals of these case staffings is to increase the informal network for these youth, to get these support networks more deeply

invested and involved with the well-being of the minors as they emancipate the dependency system, and to determine any mental health, financial, housing, educational and/or vocational support that may be required.

- Evaluate the impact of AB 12 changes to current CWS program requirements for youth exiting the foster care system. Tulare County anticipates this will increase the number of youth who will be served with ongoing support as non-minor dependents.

Permanency 2: Process Measure 2: Siblings Placed Together in Foster Care [The continuity of family connections is preserved for children.]

Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Siblings Placed Together In Foster Care: Measure 4A (All)

This report provides point-in-time counts of sibling groups placed in Child Welfare supervised foster care. Report data are for children placed with all siblings. Sibling groups are identified at the County level, not the state level. A sibling group size of 'one' is used to signify a single child with no known siblings in the supervising County. Sibling groups are constructed from an unduplicated point in time count of all children who have an open placement episode in the CWS/CMS system. A set of sibling identifier variables (derived from the CWS/CMS Client Relationship table) and placement address variables (derived from the facility address information from the Placement Home table) are used to locate all whole, half, and step-siblings, as well as maternal siblings. (Age 0 to 20 years)

County's Current Performance:

For the reporting period date of October 1, 2010 (point-in-time (PIT)) the County's score for this measure was 57.20%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
4A	Sibling Placement (All)	10/01/10	10/01/10	306	535	57.20%	Yes	50.70%

For the baseline PIT of July 01, 2003 the percentage of all children who were placed with siblings was 38%. Since the baseline PIT measure, the County's score has increased to 57.20%. There is no national performance standard. The state's average score for this outcome was 54.30% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: See the discussion and analysis for the two outcome measures following the second matrix.

Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Siblings Placed Together In Foster Care: Measure 4A (Some / All)

This report provides point-in-time counts of sibling groups placed in Child Welfare supervised foster care. Report data are for children who are placed with all or some of their siblings. Sibling groups are identified at the County level, not the state level. A sibling group size of 'one' is used to signify a single child with no known siblings in the supervising County. Sibling groups are constructed from an unduplicated point in time count of all children who have an open placement episode in the CWS/CMS system. A set of sibling identifier variables (derived from the CWS/CMS Client Relationship table) and placement address variables (derived from the facility address information from the Placement Home table) are used to locate all whole, half, and step-siblings, as well as maternal siblings. (Age 0 to 20 years)

County's Current Performance:

For the reporting period date of October 1, 2010 (point-in-time (PIT)) the County's score for this measure was 75.90%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
4A	Sibling Placement (Some or All)	10/01/10	10/01/10	406	535	75.90%	Yes	18.20%

For the baseline PIT of July 01, 2003 the percentage of all children who were placed with siblings was 64.20%. Since the baseline PIT measure, the County's score has increased to 75.90%. There is no national performance standard. The state's average score for this outcome was 73.50% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: The following issues appear to influence these two 4A outcomes. Tulare County is not anticipating including these outcome measures in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

Tulare County has shown an increase since 2003 on the Sibling Placement measures. Tulare County's current performance is above the statewide performance level. During the most recent cycle of the Peer Quality Case Reviews (PQCR) held in January 2011, one observation made by visiting peers was the "passion" that local staff shared about "their kids". There is strong belief in staff locally that sibling groups are to be kept together whenever possible. To support that value, the County has begun the development of the Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU) to further develop resources to help place sibling groups together and to conduct child assessments and substitute caregiver assessments so that the County does a better job of matching kids and homes. Tulare County is hopeful that as the roles and responsibilities of the PPAU evolve their benefit will be seen in improved performance on several measures already outlined in this report.

Recommendations:

- Increase the number and percentage of children placed together and with relatives (this offers the best option for large sibling groups). Representatives from the Relative Assessment/NREFM Unit and the Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU) support the need to find flexibility in giving relatives exemptions for the number of children that can be accommodated in a bedroom, if it means siblings can be placed together.
- Review and implement the requirements found in AB 743 which became law on January 1, 2011. The new law will add requirements for social workers to comply with and document efforts to place children with family whenever possible.
- Develop curriculum that can be used to train CWS staff on using relative/NREFM placement options, rules, and the importance of keeping sibling groups together whenever possible.
- Utilize the Quality Improvement Unit to monitor the performance on relative placements and to review the qualitative nature of requirements to document active efforts to place children with relatives in compliance with AB 743.
- Explore the feasibility of waiving licensing regulations for a select number of small family homes specifically recruited to take sibling groups.

Permanency Outcome / Rate of ICWA Placement Preferences (4E (1))

These reports examine the point-in-time placement status of two overlapping groups of children: Indian Children [4E (1)] and children with a primary or secondary (multi) ethnicity of American Indian [4E (2)]. Placement relationship to a substitute care provider, and substitute care provider ethnicity into account. The resulting placement with relatives; with non-relative; Indian substitute care providers; with non-relative; non-Indian; non-relative substitute care providers with ethnicity missing in CWS/CMS; in group homes, and other placement.

County's Current Performance:

For the period of October 01, 2010 (point-in-time measure), Native American children were distributed into the following placement preferences: Relatives – 23.80%; Non-Relatives, Indian Substitute Care Provider (SCP) – 0%; Non-Relatives, Non-Indian SCP – 52.40%; Non-Relative, Ethnicity Missing – 14.30%; Group Home – 9.50%; Other – 0%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Child Count (n=21)	PIT Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
4E(1)	ICWA - Relative	10/01/10	10/01/10	5	23.80%	N/A	N/A
4E(1)	ICWA – Non-Relative, Indian SCP	10/01/10	10/01/10	0	0%	N/A	N/A
4E(1)	ICWA – Non-Relative, Non-Indian SCP	10/01/10	10/01/10	11	52.40%	N/A	N/A
4E(1)	Non-Relatives, SCP Ethnicity Missing	10/01/10	10/01/10	3	14.30%	N/A	N/A
4E(1)	Group Homes	10/01/10	10/01/10	2	9.50%	N/A	N/A
4E(1)	Other	10/01/10	10/01/10	0	0%	N/A	N/A

For the baseline period of October 2001, Native American children were distributed into the following placement preferences: Relatives – 63%; Non-Relatives, Substitute Care Provider (SCP) – 0%; Non-Relatives, Non-Indian SCP – 25.90%; Non-Relative – Ethnicity Missing – 11.10%; Group Home – 0%; Other – 0%.

The state's averages for ICWA placements for the most recent review period are [N=1,297]: Relatives – 38.50%; Non-Relatives, Substitute Care Provider (SCP) – 2.30%; Non-Relatives, Non-Indian SCP – 3.20%; Non-Relative – Ethnicity Missing – 20.90%; Group Home – 8.20%; Other – 0%. While the County's information does not show improvement the actual client count for American Indian children is low. The challenges here to improving on the current outcomes for this population are for the recruitment and certification of appropriate Indian homes. In comparison, we note some dramatic shifts in the placement preferences for Indian children living away from Indian relatives to non-Indian families.

Analysis: The analysis for this measure and the following are found below after the 4 (E)-2 measure.

Permanency Outcome / Multi-Ethnic Placement (MEPA) - (4E(2))

These reports examine the point-in-time placement status of two overlapping groups of children: Indian Children [4E(1)] and children with a primary or secondary (multi) ethnicity of American Indian [4E(2)]. Placement relationship to a substitute care provider, and substitute care provider ethnicity into account. The resulting placement with relatives; with non-relative; Indian substitute care providers; with non-relative; non-Indian; non-relative substitute care providers with ethnicity missing in CWS/CMS; in group homes, and other placement.

County's Current Performance:

For the period ending January 01, 2010, multi-ethnic American Indian children were distributed into the following placement preferences: Relatives – 14.70%; Non-Relatives, Indian Substitute Care Provider (SCP) – 2.90%; Non-Relatives, Non-Indian SCP – 55.90%; Non-Relative, Ethnicity Missing – 8.80-%; Group Home – 5.90%; Other – 11.80%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Child Count (n=34)	PIT Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
4E(2)	ICWA - Relative	10/01/10	10/01/10	5	14.70%	N/A	N/A
4E(2)	ICWA – Non-Relative, Indian SCP	10/01/10	10/01/10	1	2.90%	N/A	N/A
4E(2)	ICWA – Non-Relative, Non-Indian SCP	10/01/10	10/01/10	19	55.90%	N/A	N/A
4E(2)	Non-Relatives, SCP Ethnicity Missing	10/01/10	10/01/10	3	8.80%	N/A	N/A
4E(2)	Group Homes	10/01/10	10/01/10	2	5.90%	N/A	N/A
4E(2)	Other	10/01/10	10/01/10	4	11.80%	N/A	N/A

For the baseline period of January 2001, multi-ethnic Native American children were distributed into the following placement preferences [N=47]: Relatives – 57.40%; Non-Relatives, Substitute Care Provider (SCP) – 8.50%; Non-Relatives, Non-Indian SCP – 17%; Non-Relative – Ethnicity Missing – 10.60%; Group Home – 0%; Other – 6.40%. The state's averages for MEPA placements for the most recent review period are [N=2,131]: Relatives – 33.10%; Non-Relatives, Substitute Care Provider (SCP) – 2.10%; Non-Relatives, Non-Indian SCP – 38.80%; Non-Relative – Ethnicity Missing – 17.80%; Group Home – 6.90%; Other – 3.10%.

Analysis: The following analysis is presented here for both of the outcome measures that precede this analysis. The following issues appear to influence this outcome. Tulare County is not anticipating including these outcome measures in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

The analysis presented for the Outcome Measures for Least Restrictive Placements (4B) offer additional discussion of the findings of a system review. However, for these two related measures on placements of Indian and Multiethnic children, Tulare County finds that other more unique issues influence performance on these outcomes.

While the County's information does not show improvement, the actual client count for American Indian children is very low. One challenge to improving on the current outcomes for this population is for the recruitment and certification of appropriate American Indian homes. In comparison, the County notes some dramatic shifts in the placement preferences for Indian children living away from Indian relatives to non-Indian families. Since the last PQCR, Tulare County continues to collaborate with the Tule River Indian Tribal Council to address service delivery and to improve communications between the County and the tribe. Tulare County sees this endeavor as key to meeting the needs of this special population of children served by the Child Welfare Services agency.

As reported in other sections of this report, County placement practices are driven by deficits seen in the current system – that the lengthy processing and approval of relative homes for placement and a shortage of County foster homes that will take sibling groups due to regulatory limitations. A number of reasons and strategies have been outlined in earlier sections of this report. Finally, County social workers often face families who will not always share the names of other relatives who might be considered for placement. Even when parents cooperate, they may not always provide the names of family members they do not personally get along with further limiting placement options for the child.

Recommendations:

- Increase the number and percentage of children placed together and with relatives (with sensitivity to the child and family's cultural connections).
- Explore the possibility of developing a targeted recruitment for ICWA foster homes.
- Work with the Relative Assessment Unit and the Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU) to support the need to find flexibility in giving relatives exemptions for the number of children that can be accommodated in a bedroom, if it means siblings can be placed together.
- The implementation of Team Decision Making (TDM) as a mechanism to engage children and families to maintain family connections.

- Continue to develop and nurture a working relationship between Child Welfare Services and the Native American Tribes using the same concept of the quarterly meetings between Foster Family Agency (FFA) providers and Tulare County licensed Foster Family Homes. The joint meetings would provide opportunity CWS and the Tribe to share information, review outcome data, identify training opportunities, and to find mutual benefit in service planning, development, delivery, and evaluation.
- Assure that CWS staff receives Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) training regularly to support the need to keep cultural connections foremost in case planning for Native American children in the County's caseloads.

h. Permanency 2: Process Measure (4B): Least Restrictive Placements – Initial Placements

Permanency Outcome: Process Measure – Foster Care Placement In Least Restrictive Setting (First Placement): Measure 4AB

This measure answers the question: For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care for the time period (and stayed at least 5 days) during the 12 month study period, what percent were in kin, foster, FFA, group, and other placements (first placement type, predominant placement type)? What percent of the children in child welfare supervised foster care were in kin, foster, FFA, group, and other placements as the specified point in time?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month period from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010, the County's scores for this process measure were: (1) Relative 5.80%; (2) Foster Home 29.80%; (3) FFA 61.60%; (4) Group Home 0%; (5) Other 2.80%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
4B	Least Restrictive – Relative (Initial)	10/01/09	09/30/10	21	359	5.80%	No	-75.60%
4B	Least Restrictive – Foster Home (Initial)	10/01/09	09/30/10	107	359	29.80%	N/A	-40.10%
4B	Least Restrictive – FFA (Initial)	10/01/09	09/30/10	221	359	61.60%	N/A	197.20%
4B	Least Restrictive – Group Home (Initial)	10/01/09	09/30/10	0	359	0%	Yes	-100%
4B	Least Restrictive – Other (Initial)	10/01/09	09/30/10	10	359	2.80%	N/A	-36.90%

From the baseline period 2002/2003, the percentage of children in their initial placement settings were as follow: (1) Relative 23.90%; (2) Foster Home 49.70%; (3) FFA 20.70%; (4) Group Home 1.20%; and (5) Other 4.40%, scores posted for the most recent period have decreased except to note that group home placements have decreased over time and FFA Placements have risen sharply (197%) since the baseline year. There are no national performance standards for this process measure. The state's initial placement scores during the most recent review period were: (1) Relative 21.60%; (2) Foster Home 18.90%; (3) FFA 45.20%; (4) Group Home 11%; and (5) Other 3.30%.

Analysis: See the discussion about issues that may influence performance on the outcome measures for Initial and Point-in-Time (4(B) placements following the second measure.

i. Permanency 2: Process Measure: (4B) Least Restrictive Placements – Point-In-Time (PIT)

Permanency Outcome: Process Measure – Foster Care Placement In Least Restrictive Setting (Point-In-Time): Measure 4B

This measure answers the question: For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care for the time period (and stayed at least 5 days) during the 12 month study period, what percent were in kin, foster, FFA, group, and other placements (first placement type, predominant placement type)? What percent of the children in child welfare supervised foster care were in kin, foster, FFA, group, and other placements as the specified point in time?

County's Current Performance:

For the 12-month Point-In-Time (PIT) period of October 01, 2010, the County's scores for this process measure were: (1) Relative 26.20%; (2) Foster Home 10.40%; (3) FFA 38.50%; (4) Group Home 2.80%; (5) Other 21.10%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
4B	Least Restrictive – Relative (PIT)	10/01/10	10/01/10	214	816	26.20%	No	-26.50%
4B	Least Restrictive – Foster Home (PIT)	10/01/10	10/01/10	85	816	10.40%	N/A	-40.30%
4B	Least Restrictive – FFA (PIT)	10/01/10	10/01/10	314	816	38.50%	N/A	59%
4B	Least Restrictive – Group Home (PIT)	10/01/10	10/01/10	23	816	2.80%	Yes	-46%
4B	Least Restrictive – Other (PIT)	10/01/10	10/01/10	180	816	22.10%	N/A	26.40%

From the baseline period 2002/2003, the percentage of children who, at the Point-in-Time were in placement settings as follow: (1) Relative 35.70%; (2) Foster Home 17.50%; (3) FFA 24.20%; (4) Group Home 5.20%; and (5) Other 17.50%. There are no national performance standards for this process measure. The state's PIT placement scores during the most recent review period were: (1) Relative 32.80%; (2) Foster Home 9.80%; (3) FFA 29.60%; (4) Group Home 6.80%; and (5) Other 21%.

Analysis: See following discussion about both of the 4B Measures (Initial and Point-In-Time). Tulare County is anticipating inclusion of these outcome measures in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

Tulare County has been addressing practice around least restrictive placement outcomes as part of the last System Improvement Plan cycle and refocused on these outcomes for the recent PQCR review. Over the last few years, the County targeted practice shifts to improve initial placements with relatives and with County foster homes. The County has identified a number of barriers to increasing initial placement with relatives as noted earlier in the Placement Stability section.

The County finds that staff place children in Foster Family Agency Homes first while a relative's home is found, assessed, and approved and then move the child. This practice skews the data for initial placement. Some years back, to comply with licensing requirements the County developed a policy to ensure that the relative home assessments were completed prior to making any placement. Under that model, the County discovered that the relative home assessment process can sometimes take up to a month or more to complete. The delay impacts performance for these measures and makes it confusing for children and families. Anecdotally, the County finds that when children need to change their placement, relatives previously identified are inconsistently considered for placement and/or a new search for relatives is not being conducted.

Another barrier that impacts performance for these outcomes is that the County has no direct access to after-hours criminal records clearances and relies on local law enforcement agencies for assistance. This issue has kept the County from successfully implementing an emergency relative home placement process after-hours; something the County and staff agree will improve initial placement rates and improve placement stability outcome scores (children who connect with family often have more stable placement histories).

Since the last assessment and PQCR, the County has implemented strategies to both increase the number of available County foster homes and improve the quality of these homes. A few strategies implemented include:

- Conducting a targeted marketing plan to recruit additional foster family homes
- Implementing PRIDE (Parent Resource for Information, Development, Education - an evidence based program) to recruit and train foster parents
- Providing additional supports for foster parents such as the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funded respite care program.
- Ensuring foster parents have a voice by instituting the monthly Foster Parent Executive Committee

The County also believes that the implementation of Team Decision Making (TDM) will increase the likelihood that children will be placed into appropriate relative homes earlier in their stay in foster care. The County is in the process of reviewing a number of policies related to relative placement processes and expects that the development of TDM, Family Finding, and the PPAU unit will support County efforts to bring stability and closer family connections for foster children.

Recommendations: The following is a list of recommendations to improve placement with relatives or other less restrictive placement option:

- Develop a policy and training for Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings that are used to make all placement decisions (initial and any subsequent placement changes).
- Implement the Family Finding strategy to help identify familial connections.
- Implement the emergency placement policy for the relative home assessment and approval process so children are placed in the least restrictive placement upon detention.
- Train to and fully implement the Notification of Relatives policy.
- Continue to emphasize foster parent / relative / NREFM recruitment, training and support (such as the PSSF funded respite care program).
- Orient / train new and existing staff on the roles and responsibilities of the Relative Assessment and Permanency Planning Assessment Unit (PPAU).
- Develop and publish a CWS Newsletter which highlights positive or success stories of children placed with relatives, training opportunities, staff recognition, etc.
- Create public awareness of a process by which relatives of a child who has been removed from his or her parents or guardians may identify themselves to CWS.
- Support efforts to place siblings together by identifying relatives who could take them.
- Support efforts to improve relationships between CWS and local law enforcement agencies to gain access to Criminal Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) information to expedite criminal records clearances for relative placement after-hours.

j. Child and Family Well-Being 2: Children receive services adequate to their physical, emotional, and mental health needs.

Well-Being 3 – Process Measure: Timely Health Exams: Measure 5B (1)

This measure reports the percent of children who meet the periodicity schedule for medical assessments as specified in the Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) Program provider manual.

County's Current Performance:

For the 3-month period of July 01, 2010 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 95.10%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
5B (1)	Timely Health Exams	07/01/10	09/30/10	617	649	95.10%	Yes	11.30%

For the baseline period of 04/01/03 to 06/30/03, the percentage of children who had a health exam was 85.40%. Since the baseline period, the County's score increased to 95.10%. There is no national performance standard for this process measure, but the state's compliance score is >90%. The state's average score for this process measure was 87.40% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: Note: the discussion of 5B (1) is also serving as the discussion for analysis and recommendations for 5B (2).

Well-Being 3 – Process Measure: Timely Dental Exams: Measure 5B (2)

This measure reports the percent of children who meet the periodicity schedule for dental assessments following the CHDP provider information notice.

County's Current Performance:

For the 3-month period of July 01, 2010 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 80.20%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
5B (2)	Timely Dental Exams	07/01/10	09/30/10	398	496	80.20%	Yes	58.20%

For the baseline period of 04/01/03 to 06/30/03, the percentage of children who had a dental exam was 50.70%. Since the baseline period, the County's score increased to 80.20%. There is no national performance standard for this process measure, but the state's compliance score is >90%. The state's average score for this process measure was 65.20% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: This discussion covers both 5B (1), Health Exams and 5B (2), Dental Exams. Tulare County is not anticipating including these health outcome measures in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

The County exceeds the state average in both the medical and dental exams and the long-term trending is positive. Quarterly variations and especially small declines in these measures from quarter to quarter can be explained by staffing and staff vacancies in the ranks of the CWS Foster Care Nurses. Tulare County anticipates an improved prognosis with higher percentages, within the state's compliance goal of 90%, due to continued, proactive usage of the SafeMeasures® to target children who need to have a dental exam scheduled and completed. Additionally, there have been efforts by the CWS Nursing Supervisor to clean up data issues (e.g., the correction of the miscoding in CWS/CMS of nondependent, guardian minors so that those minors are no longer included in the child count as health and dental exams are not required for these minors).

Recommendations:

- Continue the proactive approach of the CWS Foster Care Nurses to utilize SafeMeasures® to determine which children are in need of having health and dental exams scheduled and completed by a given date.
- Continue the efforts of the Nursing Supervisor in CWS to determine data issues and other technical and practical barriers that impede the goal of reaching the 90% compliance; and overcome these barriers.
- Explore the need for additional Foster Care Nurses.
- Analyze the feasibility of assigning clerical assistance to the CWS Nurses.

Well-Being 3 – Process Measure: Authorized for Psychotropic Medication: Measure 5F

This report provides the percent of children in foster care with a court order or parental consent that authorizes the child to receive psychotropic medication.

County's Current Performance:

For the 3-month period of July 01, 2010 through September 30, 2010, the County's score for this measure was 11.40%.

Measure Number	Measure Description	Most Recent Start Date	Most Recent End Date	Numerator	Denominator	Most Recent Performance	Direction?	Percent Change
5F	Authorized for Psychotropic Medication	07/01/10	09/30/10	99	871	11.40%	N/A	242.30%

For the baseline period of 04/01/03 to 06/30/03, the percentage of children who were authorized to take psychotropic medication was 3.30%. Since the baseline period, the County's score increased to 11.70%. There are no national or state performance standards for this process measure. The state's average score for this process measure was 13.80% during the most recent reporting period.

Analysis: The following factors appear to have an impact on this outcome measure. Tulare County is anticipating including this outcome measure in the subsequent System Improvement Plan (SIP) report.

The court-approved use of psychotropic medications is trending upward and is slightly lower than the state's percentage. One note to the outcome data for this measure is that it is a fairly new area and the lower rates noted during the first few quarters of data were due to the County gearing up to begin to collect and track the data consistently in CWS/CMS. The County further notes that the increase noted may be closer to the true average which may be demonstrated as the data is collected over a few more quarters. It is not measured or indeed known if the prescribed and court-approved use of psychotropic medication is appropriate or not in individual cases. Tulare County is hesitant to criticize individual medical doctors, primarily psychiatrists and/or Juvenile Court commissioners and judges for over-reliance on psychotropic medications to manage behavior and depression/anxiety. The concern is that in some individual cases the prescription and approval of psychotropic medication may be out of lack of alternative, effective resources such as behavioral and/or cognitive therapies that may not have the instant behavioral effects, but may in the long run prove effective and may ameliorate the need to prescribe and approve psychotropic medication. It was mentioned by CWS staff at a recent PQCR wrap-up session that currently psychotherapy for minors tends to be individually focused on the child and not enough attention to giving the substitute caregiver guidance for effectively directing and managing the behavior of children and youth. In Tulare County, general behavioral management training for foster parents exists but is limited and can always be enhanced. This latter factor is one that often leads to placement disruptions and appears to be important to bringing placement stability in child placements and increased well-being of children.

Recommendations:

- Develop an internal oversight panel consisting of representatives from CWS Nursing, CWS social workers, CWS Clinicians, and Mental Health. The panel would review/develop policies, procedures, and individual case situations of children who are or may potentially be prescribed psychotropic medication. Recommend alternative treatments and interventions such as TBS, psychotherapy and parenting education where appropriate.
- Incorporate formal induction and ongoing training for social workers and substitute care providers about the use and effects of psychotropic medication, the exploration of alternative treatments, and when each intervention might be more appropriate.
- Research the existence and feasibility of the use of a standardized assessment tool that may be applied to individual children or youth related to the appropriateness of the use of psychotropic medication and alternative treatment options.

NOTE: Probation data cannot be extracted from the CDSS Child Welfare Report for the following measures:

- Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood: Measure 8A – Education
- Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood: Measure 8A – Employment
- Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood: Measure 8A – Housing
- Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood: Measure 8A – ILP Services
- Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood: Measure 8A – Connection With An Adult
- Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Siblings Placed Together In Foster Care: Measure 4A (All)
- Permanency Outcome / Process Measure: Siblings Placed Together In Foster Care: Measure 4A (Some / All)
- Permanency Outcome / Rate of ICWA Placement Preferences (4E (1))
- Permanency Outcome / Multi-Ethnic Placement (MEPA) - (4E(2))
- Permanency Outcome: Process Measure – Foster Care Placement In Least Restrictive Setting (First Placement): Measure 4AB
- Permanency Outcome: Process Measure – Foster Care Placement In Least Restrictive Setting (Point-In-Time): Measure 4B Well-Being 3 – Process Measure: Timely Health Exams: Measure 5B (1)
- Well-Being 3 – Process Measure: Timely Dental Exams: Measure 5B (2)
- Well-Being 3 – Process Measure: Authorized for Psychotropic Medication: Measure 5F