



ALPINE COUNTY  
SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN  
UPDATE

April 2013

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

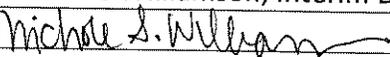
# COUNTY OF ALPINE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP) UPDATE

March 2013

## A. CWS Cover Sheet

California's Child and Family Services Review System Improvement Plan	
County:	Alpine
Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:	Alpine County Health and Human Services
Period of Plan:	10/22/2010-10/22/2013
Period of Outcomes Data:	03/31/2012
Date Submitted:	November 15, 2012

County System Improvement Plan Contact Person	
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Submitted by each agency for the children under its care	
Submitted by:	County Child Welfare Agency Director (Lead Agency)
Name:	Nichole Williamson, Intèrim Director
Signature:	

Board of Supervisors (BOS) Approval	
BOS Approval Date:	(Not required for SIP Update)
Name:	
Signature:	

## B. CWS Narrative

The following is Alpine County's second update of its 2010-2013 System Improvement Plan (SIP), approved by the Alpine County Board of Supervisors on 12/07/10 and submitted to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on 02/15/11. This update provides updates on the effect of the County's ongoing efforts to achieve the improvement goals set forth in the SIP.

As noted on our website, Alpine County has the smallest population of all counties in California (1,102 people is the 2011 estimate from the United States Census Bureau) with most of the population being concentrated around a few mountain communities: Markleeville, Woodfords, Bear Valley and Kirkwood. Since 1996, Alpine County has not seen much of a population increase.

Presently, only one school, Diamond Valley School, could be found in Alpine County. Diamond Valley School primarily serves kindergarten through eighth grade, including a Community Day Class that has a few high school-aged students who would not function successfully in a traditional high school setting. High School students residing in Alpine County go to Douglas High School, which is located in the State of Nevada. The current number of students in attendance at the Diamond Valley School shifts between mid-90s to 100 on any given year.

Of the children in attendance at Diamond Valley School, a majority of them have Native American ancestry and reside on tribal lands. Within Alpine County is a tribal community, Hung-A-Lei-Ti, located in Woodfords which is home to the Washoe Tribe. Since 1996, the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California has had exclusive jurisdiction (Federal Register / Vol. 61, No. 15 / Tuesday, January 23, 1996) over affairs occurring on its tribal lands in Alpine County. Aside from having a Tribal Court, the Washoe Tribe has a Social Services Coordinator who works on Child Welfare issues occurring on its tribal lands located in the State of Nevada as well as its lands in Alpine County.

Per month, with such a small population of children, Alpine County sees a relatively low number of referrals compared to other counties. In any given month, Alpine County will receive at least one referral per month. Of the number of referrals received over the period of a year, more than half of those referrals will be forwarded to the Social Worker employed by the Washoe Tribe (as an Evaluated Out referral). Alpine County currently has one Social Service Worker III primarily working in Child Services and one Social Service Worker III primarily working in Adult Services.

Alpine County has hired an attorney, Maureen Geary, who specializes in Native American issues, especially the Indian Child Welfare Act. She will not be representing Alpine County in any legal capacity, rather negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding related to the provision of Child Welfare Services on Washoe Tribal land. At this time, she is reviewing all documents related to the Washoe Tribes exclusive jurisdiction and California Welfare & Institution Codes. The first meeting between the

Washoe Tribe and Alpine County is on March 25, 2013 at the California Department of Social Services.

The Washoe tribe has submitted a Title IV-E plan to the federal government and is waiting for a response to the plan. The Washoe tribe has asked Alpine County to assist them in meeting their required share of cost as outlined in Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10553.11(a). This request will be addressed in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Washoe Tribe and Alpine County.

Due to the low number of referrals received at any given time, Alpine County has shifted its time, energy, and resources to focusing on preventative services. As such, Alpine County has been committed to implementing a Differential Response Program so as to assist families with resolving issues that may eventually lead to a child being at risk for abuse and/or neglect. Alpine County has hired a consultant, Research Development Associates, to write County specific Division 31 Policies & Procedures, which will include Differential Response protocols. The entire manual will be complete by March 31, 2013 and adopted and implemented immediately

The relatively small size of Alpine County makes it very easy to identify those few families that may present as being moderate to high risk. To avoid the potential for having such families involved in the Child Welfare system, Alpine County has partnered with its community service providers to help provide families with the services they may need. From child care assistance to in-home parenting program to mental health and substance abuse treatment services, Alpine County has the ability to coordinate the provision of services to a families' need before a problem escalates to the point of being a referral. For example, Alpine County has the ability to allow its Child Welfare Social Worker to engage in the issue of school truancy, which is something not typically dealt with by a Social Worker in the Child Welfare field. Because truancy can prove to be one problem in a wide range of problems, Alpine County has been committed to using this problem as a means to initiate interactions with families and to help assess for their needs. In this respect, Alpine County has partnered with the school district and law enforcement not only to eliminate the problem of truancy, but has provided an avenue by which one problem can be alleviated through Differential Response before it escalates.

In the event that a Referral is received on a family, Alpine County has two Social Workers on staff having knowledge and experience working in the Child Welfare field. Both Social Workers are trained on all aspects of Structured Decision Making. Through SDM, the Child Welfare Social Worker has used "High" and "Very High" SDM risk score levels on 100% of the referrals in addition to following the Safety Decision within the Safety Assessment tool on 100% of the referrals to justify opening a case. Through SDM, in circumstances where a Recommended Decision (Low/Moderate - Do Not Promote/ High/Very High - Promote Do Not Promote/Promote) differs from the Planned Action (Promote/ Do Not Promote), the Social Worker has provided a logical explanation in the Family Risk Assessments completed to justify the reasoning on 100%

of the open referrals. Achieving 100% on the SDM outcomes is easily achieved considering the low volume of Referrals received per month and throughout the year.

In February 2013, Alpine County initiated a child removal under a Voluntary Family Reunification plan. This plan was conducted by having the parent directly involved in the decision-making process. Recognized as the expert on their family's needs and strengths, Alpine County saw the value of empowering the family to be actively engaged in the creation of the case plan as a means towards alleviating the issues that brought forth the child's removal and bridged the path towards the goal of reunifying the family a month later.

Alpine County continues to be committed to utilizing a Family-to-Family Team Decision-Making (TDM) model in place for its team decision-making approach. Of the two Alpine County Social Workers, one has been trained and is sufficiently experienced with facilitating the process. Alpine County utilized the TDM model for placement in the case discussed above.

Presently, Alpine County is utilizing Foster Family Agencies for placement. At this time there is not a licensed foster home in Alpine County, and we have had to utilize foster homes in neighboring counties.

The Washoe Tribe has exclusive jurisdiction of all Washoe enrolled and eligible enrolled children, therefore Alpine County is committed to conforming to the notice and transfer of custody requirements of Welfare and Institutions Code Section 305.5, as it pertains to the removal of an Indian child, who is a ward of a tribal court or who resides or is domiciled within a reservation of an Indian tribe that has exclusive jurisdiction over child custody proceedings as recognized in Section 1911 of Title 25 of the United States Code.

Welfare and Institutions Code Section 305.5(a) states: "If the tribe determines that the child is an Indian child, the state or local authority shall transfer the child custody proceeding to the tribe within 24 hours after receipt of written notice from the tribe of that determination." With that said, Alpine County finds it imperative to be able to receive assistance from the Washoe Tribe when it comes to identifying as being Washoe or non-Washoe children when involved in Child Welfare situations. Although Alpine County would like to see a formal and comprehensive inquiry process, neither of Alpine County's Social Workers are aware of a registry system aside from sending such inquiry directly to a specific tribe as well as to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Alpine County continues to have a positive working relationship with the Washoe Tribe. As no other county in California has a tribe maintaining exclusive jurisdiction, Alpine County is faced with a unique situation. At this time, Alpine County has been reluctant to intervene in matters on tribal lands unless such matters have been identified possibly as resulting in an emergency removal or placement as specified under Welfare and Institutions Code Section 305.5(f).

Alpine County continues to have a positive working relationship with the local school district, law enforcement, and service providers. This positive working relationship becomes evident in the collaborations, such as involvements in the Multi-Disciplinary Team. Presently, Alpine County has two Multi-Disciplinary Teams with differing functions. One MDT, identified as the Victims Response Team, functions as a multi-disciplined approach to responding to victims of specific interpersonal crimes such as domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse and sexual assault, in which the gathering of physical evidence and coordination of community resources and services to that victim is the goal. This MDT has been in place since 1999.

A Multi Disciplinary Team & Protocol Development Meeting was initiated on June 13, 2012, on July 18, 2012, and on August 29, 2012. By August 29, 2012, a Child Abuse & Neglect Response And Investigation (CANRI) Multi-Disciplinary Team Protocol was presented. Alpine County's Multi-Disciplinary Team is currently comprised of a Core Team of First Responders, including Law Enforcement, Child Welfare, District Attorney, and Behavioral Health. In the event that a MOU with the Washoe Tribe can be completed, it will be Alpine County's intention to have representatives (law enforcement and social services) from the Washoe tribe present for MDT meetings as Core Team members.

Alpine County's Multi-Disciplinary Team meets monthly to reviews open Child Protective Services cases, all referrals during the past month, and any families considered high risk of involvement in the Child Welfare System. The MDT has written policies and procedures and a confidentiality agreement for all attendees.

Alpine County employs a part-time Chief Probation Officer. The Probation Officer is a member of the Multi Disciplinary Team and the Alpine County Child Abuse Prevention Council. It is expected that the Probation Officer will participate in the PQCR, CSA and SIP process.

Alpine County has contracted for a Division 31 Policies & Procedures Manual with Resource Development Associates. The projected completion date for the Policy & Procedure Manual is 3/31/13. The goal is that Alpine County's Policy & Procedure Manual will include sections specifically identified in this SIP, such as utilizing the Structured Decision Making tool, performing Differential Response, facilitating Family Decision Making and Multi-Disciplinary Team, as well as outlining the role of Alpine County Health & Human Services with the Washoe Tribe.

Alpine County Health & Human Services

SIP Component Template

<b>Measure S1.1: No Recurrence of Maltreatment</b>			
<b>County's Current Performance: No data</b>			
<b>Improvement Goal 1.0: Alpine County will maintain a no recurrence rate of 95%, which is above the National Standard of 94.6%.</b>			
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Develop a Policies & Procedures Manual for Child Welfare Services based on Division 31 Regulations.	<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT	<b>Strategy Rationale:</b> The development of a Policies & Procedures Manual based on Division 31 Regulations will provide a consistent practice in Child Welfare Services.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP		
<input type="checkbox"/> PSSF			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A			
<b>Milestone</b>  <b>1.1.1</b> Develop a Policy & Procedure Manual based on Division 31 Regulation for Child Welfare Services.	<b>Goal Timeframes</b> Completed and fully implemented by 06/30/2013		Assigned to  ACHHS Director
	<b>Goal Timeframes</b>		
	<b>Goal Timeframes</b>		
<b>2013 Update:</b> Alpine County has contracted with Resource Development Associates to write a County specific Manual. The projected completion and implementation date for the Policy & Procedure Manual is 06/30/2013.			

<b>Strategy 2.</b> All components of Structured Decision Making will be utilized by Child Welfare Services social workers.	<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT	<b>Strategy Rationale:</b> The use of all components of Structured Decision Making on a consistent basis by social workers will ensure that the risk issues have been addressed and resolved to ensure the continued safety of children in the home.
	<input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP	
	<input type="checkbox"/> PSSF	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	
	<b>1.2.1</b> Ensure all staff are trained on all aspects of Structured Decision Making.	<u>Goal Timeframes</u> Completed
	<b>1.2.2</b> 100% of referrals scored as "Very High" or "High" risk levels as a result of SDM will result in CPS opening a case. If discretionary overrides are performed the resulting risk level score will be used to make a referral determination. If a case is not opened, then the narrative in the case plan must provide a logical explanation.	<u>Goal Timeframes</u> Completed
	<b>1.2.3</b> 100% of response priority trees completed.	<u>Goal Timeframes</u> Completed
<b>1.2.4</b>	<u>Goal Timeframes</u>	<b>Assigned to</b>
		CPS Social Worker ACHHS Director
		CPS Social Worker ACHHS Director
		CPS Social Worker ACHHS Director
		CPS Social Worker

100% or Family Risk Assessment completed per Policies & Procedures.	Completed	ACHHS Director
<p><b>1.2.5</b></p> <p>100% of narratives will be consistent with Safety Assessment Tools.</p>	<p><u>Goal Timeframes</u></p> <p>Completed</p>	CPS Social Worker ACHHS Director

**2013 Update:**

Alpine County has two Social Workers on staff having knowledge and experience working in the Child Welfare field. Both Social Workers are trained on all aspects of Structured Decision Making. Although Alpine County has two Social Workers, one Social Worker primarily works in Child Welfare while the other Social Worker primarily works in Adult Services. The current Alpine County Child Welfare Social Worker has been employed since September 2010. The Child Welfare Social Worker uses "High" and "Very High" SDM risk score levels on 100% of the referrals in addition to following the Safety Decision within the Safety Assessment tool on 100% of the referrals to justify opening a case. In circumstances where a Recommended Decision (Low/Moderate - Do Not Promote/ High/Very High - Promote Do Not Promote/Promote) differs from the Planned Action (Promote/ Do Not Promote), the Social Worker has provided a logical explanation in the Family Risk Assessments completed to justify the reasoning on 100% of the open referrals.

Strategy 3.	<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT	Strategy Rationale:
	<input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP	

Implement the Differential Response Program		<input type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	Providing clients with services through Differential Response is expected to assist clients with the provision of services to assist the resolution of family issues that place children at risk for abuse and neglect.
Milestone	<b>1.3.1</b> Develop Differential Response protocols.	<u>Goal Timeframes</u> 06/30/2013	Assigned to
	<b>1.3.2</b> Ensure all staff and community partners are trained on the Differential Response program and protocols.	<u>Goal Timeframes</u> 06/30/2013	
	<b>1.3.3</b> Implement and monitor Differential Response program to ensure the implementation is in accordance with the protocols.	<u>Goal Timeframes</u> 06/30/2013 & ongoing	
<b>2013 Update:</b> Due to the low number of referrals received yearly in which a majority does not meet the criteria for in-person investigations, Alpine County has been committed to implementing a Differential Response Program so as to provide clients with services in an effort to assist those families with resolving issues that may eventually lead to a child being at risk for abuse and/or neglect. Alpine County has not yet developed a Differential Response protocol, but anticipates having a formal process with trained staff and community partners providing direct services in place by 06/30/2013.			



<b>Strategy 5</b> Develop a Multi-Disciplinary Team	<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Developing and implementing a Multi-Disciplinary Team will allow Child Protective Services and other Child Welfare Services providers to improve communication and information sharing with the goal that clients will receive improved and coordinated services.			
	<b>Milestone</b>	<u>Goal Timeframes</u>		Assigned to		
		1.5.1	Develop a protocol for a Multi-Disciplinary Team.		Completed	CPS Social Worker ACHHS Director
		1.5.2	Train staff and other services providers on Multi-Disciplinary Team protocols.		Completed	CPS Social Worker ACHHS Director
1.5.3	Implement a Multi-Disciplinary Team and monitor protocols.	Completed & ongoing monitoring	CPS Social Worker ACHHS Director			

**2013 Update:**

Alpine County developed a fully functional Multi Disciplinary Team in October 2012. The Team has been meeting monthly.

Alpine County's Multi-Disciplinary Team is currently comprised of a Core Team of First Responders, including Law Enforcement, Child Welfare, District Attorney, Behavioral Health, and representatives (law enforcement and social services) from the Washoe

tribe. The Core Team

Alpine County's Multi-Disciplinary Team is also comprised of a secondary set of responders identified as Support Service Partners, including Probation Department, Victim-Witness Program/Advocates, Alpine County's Victim Response Team (Multi-Disciplinary Interview Team, Sexual Assault Response Team/Examiners), Public Health, Alpine County Office of Education, Alpine County's Education Truancy Team, Public Assistance Services (CalWorks, Tribal TANF), and Community-based support services and non-profit organizations. The Core team will meet monthly according to a published annual calendar. In addition, an emergency MDT meeting may be called aside from the monthly meetings.

**Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals.**

Encourage community partners to participate in a Multi-Disciplinary Team, especially Washoe Tribal Social Services.  
Encourage the provision of evidence based services, especially for families with referrals to CPS.

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

None

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

Participation in a Multi-Disciplinary Team.

Provide evidence based programs to children and families, especially families who have a CPS referral.

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

An Memorandum of Understanding between Alpine County Health & Human Services and the Washoe Tribe regarding jurisdiction and services to Washoe and non-Washoe Native American children.

Alpine County Health & Human Services

SIP Component Template

**Outcome 2**

**Measure 4E (1): ICWA Eligible Placement Status (the continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children)**

County's Current Performance: No data

**Improvement Goal 2.0: 100% of all Native American children placed in out-of-home care will be identified as Native American and placed with the appropriate tribe within one month.**

**Strategy 2.1**

Native American children will be identified and placed in Indian Child Welfare Act preferred placements.

**Strategy Rationale**

Placing Native American children in Indian Child Welfare Act preferred placements ensures the child's heritage and culture is protected.

- |                                     |       |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | CAPIT |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | CBCAP |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | PSSF  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A   |

**Milestone**

**2.1.1** 80% of Native American children are appropriately identified and placed in an ICWA

**Timeline**

6/30/13

**Goal Timeframes**

**Assign**

CPS Social Workers

preferred placement				ACHHS Director
<b>2.1.2</b> 90% of Native American children are appropriately identified and placed in an ICWA preferred placement	<u>Goal Timeframes</u> 6/30/13			CPS Social Workers ACHHS Director
<b>2.1.3</b> 100% of Native American children are appropriately identified and placed in an ICWA preferred placement	<u>Goal Timeframes</u> 6/30/13			CPS Social Workers ACHHS Director

**2013 Update:**

To date, Alpine County has not had an opportunity to place a child in an ICWA-preferred placement. The Washoe Tribe has exclusive jurisdiction of all Washoe enrolled and eligible enrolled children, therefore Alpine County is committed to conforming to the notice and transfer of custody requirements of Welfare and Institutions Code Section 305.5, as it pertains to the removal of an Indian child, who is a ward of a tribal court or resides or is domiciled within a reservation of an Indian tribe that has exclusive jurisdiction over child custody proceedings as recognized in Section 1911 of Title 25 of the United States Code.

<b>Strategy 2.2</b> Conduct a Team Decision Making utilizing the Family-to-Family model session subsequent to all placements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>CAPIT</b>	<b>Strategy Rationale.</b> Involving families and communities in the decision making process will identify any resources, cultural or otherwise, that may not have been identified by Child Welfare Services staff.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>CBCAP</b>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>PSSF</b>	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>N/A</b>	

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>2.2.1</b> 100% of all families receive a Team Decision Making session utilizing the Family-to-Family model prior to placement.	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Goal Timeframes</b> Completed	<b>Assigned to</b>	CPS Social Workers ACHHS Director
<p><b>2013 Update:</b></p> <p>Alpine County has been committed to utilizing the Family Decision Making model. Alpine County has developed a protocol that incorporates a Family-to-Family Team Decision Making approach for Child Protective Services referrals resulting in a child removal. In February 2013 Alpine County utilized the Family Decision Making model prior to a voluntary removal of a child and placement in foster care. This was not an ICWA case; however the same procedure would be followed with a Native American family.</p>					

<b>Strategy 2.3</b>	<p>A formal notice of removal and inquiry process to determine if a child is an Indian child with the Washoe tribe will occur within 24 hours of a child's removal on tribal lands.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> CAPIT <input type="checkbox"/> CBCAP <input type="checkbox"/> PSSF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<p><b>Strategy Rationale</b></p> <p>A more comprehensive inquiry may be necessary to identify a child's Native American heritage.</p>	<b>Assigned to</b>	CPS Social Workers ACHHS Director
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>2.3.1</b> 100% of inquiries are posed within 24 hours.	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Goal Timeframes</b> 6/30/13	<b>Assigned to</b>	CPS Social Workers ACHHS Director

**2013 Update:**

Welfare and Institutions Code Section 305.5(a) states: "If an Indian child, who is a ward of a tribal court or resides or is domiciled within a reservation of an Indian tribe that has exclusive jurisdiction over child custody proceedings as recognized in Section 1911 of Title 25 of the United States Code or reassumed exclusive jurisdiction over Indian child custody proceedings pursuant to Section 1918 of Title 25 of the United States Code, has been removed by a state or local authority from the custody of his or her parents or Indian custodian, the state or local authority shall provide notice of the removal to the tribe no later than the next working day following the removal and shall provide all relevant documentation to the tribe regarding the removal and the child's identity." Welfare and Institutions Code Section 305.5(a) further states: "If the tribe determines that the child is an Indian child, the state or local authority shall transfer the child custody proceeding to the tribe within 24 hours after receipt of written notice from the tribe of that determination."

Alpine County finds it imperative to be able to receive assistance from the Washoe Tribe when it comes to identifying children as being Washoe or non-Washoe, especially when a Child Welfare-related situation occurs on tribal lands. Alpine County will be committed to contacting the Washoe tribe within 24 hours after the removal of a child residing on tribal lands in order to provide notice of the removal as the first step in the process of initiating the transfer of the child custody proceeding to the tribe upon receipt of written notice from the tribe.

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

None

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

Assistance from Washoe Tribe identifying children as Washoe or non-Washoe.

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

Memorandum of Understanding between Alpine County and the Washoe Tribe for the provision of Child Welfare Services on Washoe Tribal Land.