

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



January 3, 2003

John Kersey, Associate Director
Self Sufficiency Unit
Administration for Children and Families
Department of Health and Human Services
Region IX
50 United Nations Plaza
San Francisco, CA 94102

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON ADVANCE COPY OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
REVIEW REPORT

Dear Mr. Kersey:

Thank you for sending us the advance courtesy copy of the final California Child and Family Services Review Report, received in our office on December 20, 2002. We certainly appreciate what an intense process this review has been for the Administration for Children and Families as well as for California.

This report represents the first time that ACF has assessed California's Child Welfare Services program with the new CFSR instrument. The review is most timely because, as you know, we are in the process of redesigning our Child Welfare Services program through the Stakeholders Group. Our practice is based on the principle of "best interest of the child." Accordingly, we have built flexibility into our system so that each child and family's unique set of circumstances is considered in setting goals and measuring outcomes. In addition, we are establishing a process for monitoring progress on a case-by-case basis as we strive to fully meet all federally established outcomes for children and families served by program

Consistent with your request, we are limiting our responses to the draft report to those areas involving factual errors and misrepresentations of the whole picture. The attached document cites the federal comments that we would like to have modified in the final report and the state's responses that reflect what would be more accurate in our view. There are other areas that have been discussed in previous discussions and correspondence. We do not waive those concerns but believe that the performance improvement plan process will provide a better opportunity to address them.

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For the CFSR Report to be the most successful in effecting change, we believe it should be balanced and maintain perspective using information from all sources. The report should document both strengths and areas for improvement to ensure that we are all focused on the real issues. As it currently stands, the draft report over emphasizes negative comments from a few stakeholders and undervalues the results of the onsite review and information contained in the Statewide Assessment. Stakeholders' opinions and beliefs provide valuable feedback but should be reflected as such throughout the report. As the report does not identify the broad category of the stakeholder (such as foster parent, adoptive parent, foster youth or child advocate), it is difficult to determine whether a comment is germane or credible enough to appear to sway an entire conclusion on findings.

Should you have any questions regarding the state's responses to the draft report, please call me at (916) 657-2614 or Wes Beers at (916) 445-3146.

Sincerely,

SYLVIA PIZZINI
Deputy Director