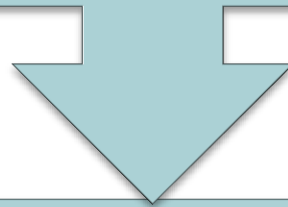


# Response to the Child Welfare Safety Net Task Force Report

County Executive Office & Department of Social Services  
June 7, 2016

# Background

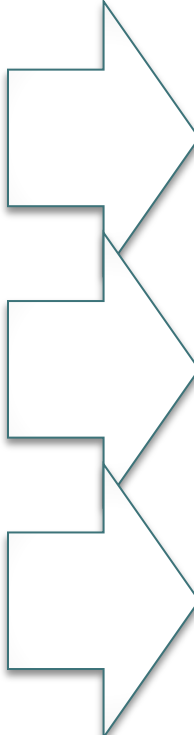
On April 14, 2015 the Board of Supervisors approved and authorized the convening of a Child Welfare Safety Net Task Force (Task Force) for the purpose of assessing the overall system of public and community based child welfare services in Santa Barbara County that address the needs of children (and their families) who become, or are at risk of becoming, dependents of the court under Article 6, Section 300 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.



Each Supervisor subsequently appointed one member from his or her District with knowledge of child welfare, child development, and family systems issues to serve on the Task Force.

# Task Force Charter

The charter of the Task Force was to conduct a holistic assessment of the strengths, weaknesses and gaps of the Child Welfare System in Santa Barbara County and produce a report for the Board of Supervisors which:

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- Acknowledges what parts of the system are currently working well and why.
  - Identifies and makes recommendations regarding areas of the system that could be improved.
  - Identifies and makes recommendations regarding existing needs not currently addressed by the system and what could be done to fill those gaps.

## Task Force Recommendations

On April 5, 2016, the Task Force presented its report to the Board of Supervisors with the following recommendations:

The Creation of a County Chief Child Advocate Position.

Specific Responsibilities of the County Chief Child Advocate.

Additional Recommendations.

## CEO and DSS Assessment

Many of the goals of the position are being achieved by the Department.

Further enhancements can be made through improved communication and coordination.

Task Force Report provided new perspectives on ways to use existing resources and processes.

## CEO and DSS Assessment Cont'd

To improve coordination and collaboration among County departments, as well as facilitate collaboration among partner agencies:

- Interagency Policy Council (IAPC), will ensure recommendations of the task force are sentinel issues.

To enhance communication and public information to ensure awareness of issues within the Child Welfare System:

- County Communications Manager/PIO may support DSS in communications strategy.

## CEO and DSS Assessment Cont'd

To address strengthened accountability, monitoring of service quality, community involvement, strategic planning, collaboration and communication DSS will:

- Utilize the California Children and Family Services Review (CFSR) process.

To monitor the growing issue of child sex trafficking and legislative proposals that impact the Child Welfare System the County will:

- Continue to coordinate aggressive multi-agency response.
- Work in concert with legislative advocates to ensure CWS matters are on County “watch” list.
- Work with the Legislative Committee of the BOS to review and respond.

## CEO and DSS Assessment Cont'd

The following listing provides highlights of key activities or strategies anticipated to address the twelve additional recommendation of the Task Force:

Enhance training programs for resource families

- Continue to work with Quality Parenting Initiative.
- Refer to Children's System of Care.

Develop a sustained public relations campaign

- DSS and County Communication Manager/PIO to develop comprehensive communications strategy.



## CEO and DSS Assessment Cont'd

**Create vehicle to share vital case information with partner agencies**

- Consider as part of IAPC coordination.
- Address through CSFR process.

**Facilitate path and communication to promote reconciliation**

- Continue to work with Quality Parenting Initiative.
- Address through CSFR process.

**Recruit and retain social workers and review recruitment process**

- Retain new recruitment manager to expedite hiring.
- Continue to reduce caseloads for Social Workers.

## CEO and DSS Assessment Cont'd

Implement technology updates to assist in reporting and record keeping

- CDSS/County working on implementation of the Child Welfare Services-New System.
- Testing to begin in 2016.

Establish retreat for stakeholders

- Continue quarterly stakeholder meetings.
- Continue convenings in conjunction with CFSR.

Identify and recruit bilingual and bicultural mental health service providers

- Address through the Cultural Competency Committee with Director of Behavioral Wellness and Assistant CEO.

Develop processes to encourage early assessment for prenatal substance abuse

- Consider as part of IAPC coordination.

## CEO and DSS Assessment Cont'd

Encourage the development of short term (level 13) mental health placements

- DSS and Behavioral Wellness to address through Continuum of Care Reform and engagement with local providers.

Continue funding to partner agencies assisting the Child Welfare System

- Continuing DSS funding to key partner agencies.

Focus on youth sex trafficking and legislative updates to Child Welfare System

- Continue collaboration with Human Trafficking Task Force
- Continue aggressive multi-agency response.

## In Conclusion

The CEO and DSS would like to thank the Task Force for its work over the last year and the well thought out recommendations they have provided on behalf of the children of Santa Barbara County.