



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Social Services
Department No.: 044
For Agenda Of: 8/22/23
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Daniel Nielson, Social Services Director
Director(s) (805) 346-7101
Holly Benton, Probation Department
(805) 803-8537
Contact Info: Marianne Reagan, Department of Social Services
(805) 681-4529

SUBJECT: Santa Barbara County System Improvement Plan 2022-2027

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence: N/A

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve the 2022-2027 Santa Barbara County System Improvement Plan developed in accordance with Assembly Bill 636, Chapter 678, Statutes of 2001, and the California Child and Family Services Review for submission to the California Department of Social Services; and
- b) Determine that approval of the above Agreement is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), finding that the execution of the Agreements are covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment, and where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment, the activities are not subject to CEQA.

Summary Text:

The Santa Barbara County System Improvement Plan (SIP) is the culmination of the California Child and Family Services Review process (C-CFSR). It is based upon the information learned from the County Self-Assessment (CSA) conducted in January of 2022, the Peer Review (PR) conducted in February and March of 2022, and aligned with the strategies of the State of California's Program Improvement Plan (PIP) submitted to the United States Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau.

The SIP was guided by a County planning team, comprised of Child Welfare Services (CWS), Probation, and Prevention staff. The goal of the SIP planning team was to ensure the process was informed by the county data and trends, guided by evidence-based and promising practices in the field, and above all, inclusive of community partners. The process would not have been possible without the assistance and contributions of the many stakeholders that participated in the activities that informed the process. The areas of focus for CWS are Permanency in 12 months and Re-entry to Foster Care. The area of focus for Probation is Permanency in 12 months. This process and report are in accordance with the format prescribed by SIP Planning Guide issued by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

Background:

Assembly Bill 636 (Steinberg), Chapter 678, Statutes of 2001, enacted the Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability Act of 2001. This law required CDSS to establish the California Outcome and Accountability System (COAS) in response to the Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) completed in 2004. The CFSR at the federal administrative level enables the Children's Bureau to: (1) ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements; (2) determine what is happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services; and (3) assist states to enhance their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes. Ultimately, the goal of the federal reviews is to help states improve child welfare services and achieve the following outcomes for children and families who receive services.

The C-CFSR improvement and accountability system is based on a philosophy of continuous quality improvement, interagency partnerships, and community involvement with an overall focus on improving outcomes for children and families. The COAS is a four-part system of continuous quality improvement incorporating a CSA, PR, SIP, and Quarterly Data Reports reflecting the County's performance on federal and state measures:

- **Safety**
 - Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
 - Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.
- **Permanency**
 - Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
 - The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.
- **Family and Child Well-Being**
 - Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
 - Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
 - Children receive services adequate to their physical, emotional and mental health needs.

In Santa Barbara County, the Department of Social Services is the primary agency for providing child welfare services to families who may be experiencing issues related to abuse and neglect. The Probation Department provides services to children, youth and families in the juvenile delinquency system. The Kids Network, an advisory group to the Board of Supervisors, serves as the entity through which prevention services are coordinated and funded through the CDSS Office of Child Abuse Prevention

(OCAP). Each of the County agencies partnered and participated in the self-assessment and system improvement process, and remain actively involved in many of the collaborations that support improved outcomes for children in Santa Barbara County.

The Santa Barbara County SIP report includes two parts as prescribed by the SIP Planning Guide issued by CDSS:

- Part 1 – This section includes the SIP narrative, CWS/Probation Placement Initiatives, and the Five-Year Strategy SIP Chart and Outcome Measures Action Steps Charts. This section explains the basis for which outcomes targeted for improvement were selected for the SIP. The charts outline specific improvement goals, strategies, action steps, timelines, and responsibility for completion.
- Part 2 – This section focuses on community child abuse prevention efforts and includes the Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT)/Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)/Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) narrative and five-year plan to meet the requirements for counties seeking funding through OCAP.

Performance Measure:

The CFSR assesses State performance during a specific time period on 26 child welfare outcomes pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being. In order for California to achieve compliance with the CFSR, Assembly Bill 636 instituted the federal measures and a series of state outcome measures that provide key indicators of program performance, processes, and delivery of critical client services.

The COAS Quarterly Outcome Data Reports provide the basis for understanding Santa Barbara County's performance over time as a means of continuous quality improvement, not for point-in-time comparisons across counties. Point-in-time comparisons of Santa Barbara County's performance does not in and of itself provide a valid picture of those factors that ultimately contribute to client outcomes as those are readily influenced by internal business process decisions; access and availability of critical client services; a multitude of community factors; and the varying roles and impact of stakeholders, and the simple economy of scales indicating that relatively small numbers create significant variability in percentage based measures. The quarterly outcome data itself yields a more comprehensive picture on where improvements might be needed when considered in conjunction with additional internal data sources and analysis along with departmental and community contextual considerations. As identified in the CSA, the complexity of family issues including poverty, substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, cultural differences, the presence of more children with complex behavioral/emotional needs, and larger family sizes provides some of the contextual relevance to the outcome measures provided.

The SIP serves as the operational agreement between the State and the County defining actions the County will implement to improve outcomes for children and families based on the findings in the CSA. While there were several priority areas addressed in the CSA, CWS will concentrate efforts to improve performance on two primary Outcome Measures: Permanency in 12 months (P-1) and Re-entry to Foster Care (P-4). Probation will concentrate its efforts on one Outcome Measure: Permanency in 12 Months (P-1).

The P-1 measure looks at all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period, and tracks what percent discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care. Permanency includes reunification, guardianship, or adoption for this measure. The P-1 measure was addressed in the last SIP with varied success. Compared to the state of California as a whole, Santa Barbara County has done both better and worse over the last five years in achieving permanency in 12 months for children in care. Chronic issues such as complexity of cases, youth with higher needs, and court continuances have affected this outcome. In addition, COVID related factors such as staffing levels, lack of in-person services, and an increase in the number of children entering care in 2020 have also impacted this outcome. Even with these challenges, CWS continues to improve on this measure and recently met it for the first time. The goal will be steady improvement in this measure through continued implementation of practices and services that promote timely permanency, such as the utilization of cultural brokers, and improved family finding and engagement.

The P-4 measure looks at all children who exited foster care into permanency during a 12-month period, and re-entered into foster care within 12 months of their exit. Permanency in this measure includes legal guardianship or reunification with a parent. Analysis of this measure over a five-year period shows some fluctuation, however, CWS has not met the measure until recently when re-entry numbers dropped significantly. The goal will be steady improvement in this measure through continued implementation of practices and services that prevent re-entry including the development of a case review process for all re-entry cases and standardized family preservation protocols and practices to bolster family preservation and support the needs of families who have reunified.

The Department of Social Services and County Probation Department will reconvene a SIP review committee annually to assess progress and make adjustments to the plan for inclusion in the requisite annual updates.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes

Narrative:

The activities outlined in the SIP will be accomplished within each department's currently adopted FY23-24 operating budgets, which are primarily comprised of state and federal funding. The adoption of the SIP does not create an additional financial obligation for the County. Significant resources are invested, however, in the implementation of the SIP's objectives and inasmuch; demonstrate the County's commitment to improving outcomes for the children and families we serve.

Staffing Impacts:

Legal Positions:

0

FTEs:

0

Special Instructions:

Please scan, email and send one (1) original copy of the minute order and signature page for submission to CDSS to:

Department of Social Services

Attn: Juliza Hernandez, Administration, 3rd Floor
2125 S. Centerpointe Parkway
Santa Maria, CA 93455

Email: jherna@countyofsb.org

Attachments:

1. Attachment 1 – Santa Barbara County System Improvement Plan – October 2022-2027

Authored by:

Marianne Reagan, DSS Division Chief