



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

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

Agenda Number:

Department Name: Social Services
Department No.: 044
For Agenda Of: August 9, 2011
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Tme:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Kathy Gallagher, Department of Social Services Director
Director(s) (805) 681-4501
Patricia Stewart, Chief Probation Officer
(805) 882-3652
Contact Info: Melissa Hoesterey, Social Services Operations Division Chief
(805) 346-7248
Brian Swanson, Probation Manager, Juvenile Division
(805) 739-8606

SUBJECT: Child Welfare Services and Probation System Improvement Plan 2009 and System Improvement Plan Update for 2010

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence: N/A

As to form: Select_Concurrence

Recommended Actions: That the Board of Supervisors approve the 2009-2012 Santa Barbara County System Improvement Plan (SIP) and the 2010 Update 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 (CDSS).

Summary Text: Santa Barbara County Child Welfare Services (CWS) conducted its third Self-Assessment from January - May 2009. The reports provided by CDSS combined with Safe Measures reports and internal data analysis sources provided sufficient data to inform the Self-Assessment process. As in the previous Self-Assessments, Santa Barbara County focused on obtaining extensive input from our many public and private partners, believing that their knowledge of and experience with CWS and Probation were critical in identifying the strengths, needs, and gaps in our service delivery system. The process focused on completing a gaps analysis with several existing groups who are integrally involved in promoting the safety and well-being of children and families such as KIDS Network, the Child Abuse Prevention Council; CWS Team meeting targeting all CWS supervisors/managers, and the Juvenile Court "Brown Bag" obtaining input from key stakeholders in the legal process. In addition, focus groups were arranged to solicit input from all CWS/Probation line staff and all service providers, including an invitation to the Foster Parent Association and several foster parents. CWS also extended an opportunity to our foster youth to provide feedback regarding the CWS/Probation service delivery

system. In total, more than 150 people representing the public, private, and consumer sectors participated in the gaps analysis process used to inform the County Self-Assessment (CSA). Many CSA participants/organizations were invited to join the System Improvement Plan Workshop.

The System Improvement Plan (SIP) is 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, the SIP has concentrated efforts to improve performance on three primary Outcome Measures (Reunification within 12 months, Re-Entry Following Reunification, No Recurrence of Maltreatment) along with the Systemic Factor of maximizing staff resources to allow them to spend more time with clients. The Department of Social Services and County Probation Department have participated in the 2010 annual review and recorded the progress on the Santa Barbara County System Improvement Plan Update - March 2011 to inform the Board of the efforts made to achieve the milestones included in the original 2009 System Improvement Plan. Given delays at both the State and local level, this System Improvement Plan is coming before the Board at this time for approval, yet has continued to serve as the operational guide for CWS and Probation in compliance with the California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR) mandates.

The C-CFSR designates the County Probation Department as an equal partner with CWS and our County Probation partners were participants in the self-assessment and system improvement process, as well as actively involved in many of the collaboratives that support improved outcomes for children in Santa Barbara County. Probation outcome measure data continues to improve and although not yet fully aligned with the existing Federal and State Measures, achievement has been made in the areas of reunification and re-entry. Probation's training in, and use of, the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) is also in progress and will assist in the accuracy and efficiency of data collection. Relevant outcome measure data for Probation has been included in the SIP, but is not required in all areas of measure. The areas of greatest relevance in this SIP to both agencies is improving outcomes for youth reunifying with their families from the foster care system and preventing re-entry into care.

Background:

Assembly Bill 636 (Steinberg), Chapter 678, Statutes of 2001, enacted the Child Welfare Services Outcome and Accountability Act of 2001. This law required the California Department of Social Services (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 actually 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:

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 families.

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 adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Within California, the purpose of the COAS enacted in 2004 is to significantly strengthen the accountability system used in California to monitor and assess the quality of services provided on behalf of maltreated children and/or children in the foster care system. As such, the COAS operates on a philosophy of continuous quality improvement, interagency partnerships, community involvement, and public reporting of program outcomes.

Performance Measure: The CFSR assesses State performance during a specific time period on seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to safety, permanence, and well-being and on seven systemic factors. In order for California to achieve compliance with the federal CFSR, Assembly Bill (AB) 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. Since our last System Improvement Plan completed in 2006, there has been a change in the Federal Measures with the creation of four Permanency Composites distilled into fifteen individual measures. The addition of the composites further complicated an already complex outcome reporting structure.

The 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. Even point-in-time comparisons of Santa Barbara'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; 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 is less than intuitive for child welfare and juvenile probation professionals and 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 increasing complexity of family issues including substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, poverty, gang participation, 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.

The System Improvement Plan addresses the high priority outcome measures identified during the Self-Assessment process to enhance County Child Welfare Services' and Probation's performance in meeting the following State and Federal Outcome Measures:

- Reunification within 12 months
- Re-Entry Following Reunification
- No Recurrence of Maltreatment

While performance on the measure Reunification within 12 months indicates a downward trend in achieving the standard, an analysis of the numbers actually reflects that the change in performance is a direct result of more children reunifying with their families altogether than in previous years. In other words, the decline in performance is actually attributed to a positive outcome, which is the increased total number of children exiting foster care to reunification. There have been almost

twice as many children reunifying annually in the last 3 years than in previous years, yet about the same number of children reunify within 12 months. In total, more children reunifying with their families is an altogether improved outcome for those families. Probation data indicates a positive trend on this measure besting the National Standard during the July 2009 to June 2010 review period. Recent data reports indicate that CWS has continued to improve on the measure of Re-Entry Following Reunification trending downward towards the state average, while recent Probation data indicates success in achieving this measure. CWS also continues to improve on the measure No Recurrence of Maltreatment during the first half of 2009 which indicated a performance of less than 1% (or 1 family) shy of the state average. However, the second half of 2009 indicated a decline in the total number of substantiated allegations during the six month period as well as an increase of 18 additional substantiated allegations over the previous period moving the county further away from the State average.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes

Fiscal Analysis:

Narrative:

The System Improvement Plan is cost neutral to Santa Barbara County, focusing on maximizing current resources, expanding service delivery through community collaboratives, and seeking independent funding to support the improvement goals identified in the plan.

Staffing Impacts: None

Legal Positions:

FTEs:

Special Instructions: Please send an original copy of the minute order and signature page for submission to CDSS to:

Department of Social Services
Attn: Administration, 3rd Floor
2125 S. Centerpointe Parkway
Santa Maria, CA 93455

Attachments:

Santa Barbara County System Improvement Plan - September 2009.
Santa Barbara County System Improvement Plan Update – March 2011.

Authored by:

Melissa Hoesterey, (805) 346-7248

cc:

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