



Board Agenda Item 7

DATE: September 6, 2022

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Pamela Hancock and Wilma Tom Hashimoto, Co-Chairs
Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee

SUBJECT: Annual Report - 2021-22

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Accept the Fresno County Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee report for activities from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

Approval of the recommended action will present the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee (FCSOC) Annual Report to your Board, in compliance with Management Directive 2700, section 2714.4. The FCSOC was created by the Board in 2001. The committee's goal is to support the Child Welfare System (CWS) to be more efficient and effective through providing adequate resources, better communication with agency partners and making recommendations for continuous and lasting system improvements for the betterment of the foster children and youth served in the County. This item is countywide.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

There are no viable alternative actions.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no Net County Cost associated with the recommended action.

DISCUSSION:

In accordance with its bylaws, the FCSOC (1) advises and makes recommendations for continuous and lasting system improvements and (2) provides a forum for community input related to the committee's purpose.

The FCSOC's key responsibilities include participation in lawfully constituted multi-disciplinary reviews when system issues and improvements are appropriate. This is done by focusing on the structures and functions of the local CWS and representing the public interest in the delivery of services.

In Fall 2021, in response to the challenges associated with hard-to-place children and youth in CWS, the committee hosted a community forum followed by two strategic planning sessions that provided history, findings, and vision that allowed the committee to recalibrate its 2022-23 goals. FCSOC will work closely with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide support and oversight to the systemic changes identified by DSS based on interviews and data collection.

From July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, the FCSOC consisted of subcommittee meetings which served as interagency/organization communication forums. The subcommittees were:

- Education
Focused on issues of education for youth in foster care and consists of members from local school districts, Foster Family Agencies, local community agencies and DSS. This subcommittee addresses significant educational issues and presents data and makes recommendations to assist the child welfare system to be more effective and efficient for the educational success of foster youth. This subcommittee is the Fresno County Superintendent of School Foster Youth Education Executive Advisory Committee.
- Mental Health
Focused on mental health issues that affect all children in the County including foster youth. It consists of members from the community, DSS, the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), FCSOC and local community agencies. This subcommittee ensures the availability of psychiatric and inpatient treatment, school-based services, and access to other mental health services are met to serve children in foster care. It is co-chaired by both a member of DBH and FCSOC.

Through the annual report, Attachment A, the FCSOC identifies issues and processes that require review and examination with the goal of presenting recommendations for foster care system improvement to your Board.

Priority issues to be addressed:

1. Continue to work with DSS to improve dissemination of information to reach stakeholders in the foster care system, including foster children, foster families, biological families, County Social Workers, Foster Family Agencies, legal counsel for children and families and judges. No such mechanisms exist at present. Explore current DSS website location resources and having a directory of resources available for stakeholders.
2. Work closely with DSS to provide support and oversight to the systemic changes identified in the department's Critical Areas document, which is based on recent interviews and data collection identified in the department's Critical Overview document. As work groups develop and analyze data, metrics for improvement will be established in conjunction with FCSOC committee members.
3. Ensure the system for the public to contact the FCSOC utilizing the County's website is functioning well and meets the needs of the public and FCSOC. The website link is:
<https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/social-services/administration/foster-care-standards-and-oversight-committee/contact-fcsoc>

FCSOC recommends that your Board:

1. Continue to prioritize support for youth under the care of the County's CWS, to achieve the best positive outcomes and prepare them for successful adulthood. Positive outcomes for children and youth provide significant dividends, as more effective citizens are added to our communities.
2. Continue the increased support in 2022-23 by supporting the systemic changes identified in the DSS Critical Areas document.
3. Support the expansion of mental health services and mentorship to support the unique needs and mitigate the trauma experienced by the children and youth in foster care and those youth who have crossed over to the juvenile justice system.

4. Support the expansion of services and support for youth who are preparing for adulthood, including high school graduation, housing and budget assistance, life skills training, and a linkage to a responsive and supportive adult/mentor.

5. Improve the academic outcomes for students in foster care by supporting the practice of making a school move only when a child or youth has completed the school year, or determine it is in the child/youth's best interest to move schools.

Consistent with the FCSOC's mission, the goal is to support the Child Welfare System to be more efficient and effective through providing adequate resources, better communication with agency partners and making recommendations for continuous and lasting system improvements for the betterment of the foster children and youth served in the County.

REFERENCE MATERIAL:

BAI #6, August 10, 2021
BAI #31, September 10, 2019
BAI #5, December 11, 2018

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

Attachment A

CAO ANALYST:

Sonia M. De La Rosa