



**FOSTER CARE STANDARDS AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE
FRESNO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Fiscal Year 2015-2016

Mission Statement

The mission of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee (FCSOC) is to provide oversight for and promote communication between the Board of Supervisors, the Department of Social Services and its related agencies, and the community, with emphasis on providing information and recommendations that make the child welfare system more effective and efficient.

The FCSOC is pleased to present the twelfth Annual Report to the Board of Supervisors.

Vision

A Community enhanced by a compassionate and responsible child welfare system that provides prevention, early intervention, and nurtures the developmental and therapeutic needs of abused and neglected children and their families.

Committee Membership

Your Board has filled FCSOC vacancies with committed and experienced members who have enhanced representation in the areas of education, children's mental health and child advocacy. We encourage Board members to fill any remaining vacancies. A current membership list is included (Attachment A).

Subcommittees

A primary responsibility of the FCSOC is to pay mindful attention to the structures and functions of the local child welfare system and to represent the public interest in the delivery of services. In addition, part of the FCSOC's mission is to improve communication through outreach and coordination with the work of other community groups. To assist in this coordination, the FCSOC has subcommittees that are comprised of the Education Subcommittee, Mental Health Subcommittee, the newly formed Continuum of Care Subcommittee (2016), and the newly combined Recruitment, Development Support, and Public Relations Subcommittee. Each subcommittee has their own objective and goals. In perhaps its most important role, the FCSOC convenes an additional ad hoc subcommittee to provide a third party review and report to the Board of Supervisors when a child death with associations to the child welfare system occurs. The FCSOC also participates in the County Coroner's Death Review process.

The Education Subcommittee's focuses on issues of education for youth in foster care. With a committee that consists of members from local school districts, Foster Family Agencies, local community agencies and Department of Social Services representatives, this subcommittee addresses significant educational issues and presents recommendations that will assist the child welfare system to be more effective and efficient for the educational success of foster youth. Attachment B includes an Annual Report for this subcommittee.

The Mental Health Subcommittee's focus is on issues of mental health that affect all the children in Fresno County, which include youth in Foster Care. With a membership that includes community representatives, staff from the Departments of Social Services and Behavioral Health, and local community agencies, this subcommittee ensures that the availability of psychiatry and inpatient treatment, school-based services and other access to mental health services are met to service children in Foster Care. Attachment C includes an Annual Report for this subcommittee.

The Research, Development, Support, and Public Relations Subcommittee's focus is on the recruitment, development, and support of foster parents while also elevating awareness of Foster Care throughout Fresno County. The primary goals of the subcommittee are to provide optimal, up-to-date training to foster parents while highlighting the many success stories and positive outcomes for caregivers and youth in Foster Care. Representation for this subcommittee includes community representatives, Foster Family Agencies, Fresno State renaissance scholars, and staff from the Department of Social Services and local educational partners. Attachment D includes the Annual Report for this subcommittee.

Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors

The FCSOC recommends your Board prioritize support for youth under the care of the County through its local child welfare system to achieve positive outcomes and prepare for successful adulthood. This return on investment into positive outcomes for youth provides significant future savings as more effective citizens are added to our communities. FCSOC recommendations for 2016-17 include support and expansion for services to youth preparing for adulthood, including housing and budget assistance, life skills training, and a lifelong linkage to a responsive and supportive adult.

**Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee
2016 Annual Report
Attachment A**

The mission of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee is to provide oversight for and promote communication between the Board of Supervisors, the Department of Social Services and its related agencies and the community, with emphasis on providing information and recommendations that make the system more effective and efficient.

DISTRICT 1 APPOINTEES

Charlene White – Community Advocate
Marilyn Bamford – Uplift Family Services
Vacant

DISTRICT 2 APPOINTEES

Mark Allen – Educational Liaison, Mental Health Systems, Inc
Nancy Horn – Fresno Unified School District
Vacant

DISTRICT 3 APPOINTEES

Brad Castillo - Administrator, Kids Kasa Foster Care
Dr. Jacqueline Smith Garcia – Community Advocate
Joe Martinez – Community Relations and Outreach Manager,
Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission Sanctuary and Youth Services

DISTRICT 4 APPOINTEES

Nathan Lee – Executive Director, Court Appointed Special Advocates of Fresno and Madera
Counties
Vacant
Vacant

DISTRICT 5 APPOINTEES

Barbara Foster – Project Director, Specialized Foster Parent Training,
Social Welfare Evaluation, Research, and Training, California State University, Fresno
Coreen Campos - CEO, Focus Forward
Ike Grewal – County of Fresno, Department of Behavioral Health

Education Subcommittee

Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee
2015 - 2016 Annual Report

Subcommittee Background/Purpose

The purpose of the Education Subcommittee is to: 1. Enable the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee (FCSOC) oversight and communication between the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Board of Supervisors; 2. Provide a network of communication about significant education issues affecting foster youth and 3. Present recommendations that will assist the child welfare system to be more effective and efficient for the educational success of foster youth.

The Education Subcommittee is a deliberative committee that meets monthly to identify, inform and encourage resolution of issues and concerns that will improve the educational outcomes of foster youth. A report of the identified educational issues and recommendations are communicated at a monthly FCSOC meeting and discussed with the DSS administrative team, FCSOC Board Members and members of the community (detailed information is available in the Subcommittee and FCSOC monthly meeting minutes). The Chair of the Subcommittee is FCSOC District 2 Board Member and MHS Fresno Family Connections, Educational Liaison, Mark Allen. Subcommittee members include the Fresno County Department of Social Services (DSS) Educational Liaisons: Erika Mendoza, Faviola Elicea, Vickie Klassen, Chantel Boyd, Supervisor, Danielle Nieto, and Program Manager, Dalvin Baker; Fresno Unified School District (FUSD): Educational Liaison, Jeff Belcher, Program Manager, Nancy Horn; Central Unified School District (CUSD): Educational Liaison, Maise Young and CUSD Director of CWA/Student Services, Dr. Kevin Torosian; Fresno County Office of Education, Foster Youth Educational Services Education Specialist, Liz Torres, Director, Pam Hancock; Foster Family Agency (FFA) representatives: Uplift Family Services, Marilyn Bamford, Director and Social Worker, Jeamy Vigil; Transitions Children's Services Yolanda Garcia, Miriam Flores; Northstar Family Services, Ma Thao; Juvenile Justice Commission Ed Avila; and FCSOC Chairman Joe Martinez. Additional input was periodically provided by additional DSS Staff and Foster Family Agency Social Workers.

Focus of Subcommittee Activity

Although many educational issues were addressed, the following were the primary focus of the monthly meetings which provided the basis for information sharing and policy recommendations presented to the FCSOC Board and DSS Administration. The Subcommittee serves as a sounding board to support the education-focused work as well as providing community input. Standing agenda items are addressed at each meeting followed by a discussion of any emerging issue.

DSS Educational Liaison Report

1. School Stability

“School stability” supports the value of maintaining youth in their school of origin, unless it is in their “best interest” to make a change. It includes reviewing current legislation, advocacy efforts, training and coordinating with the overall DSS workforce.

- Educational Liaison Program Manager and Supervisor provided oversight data to enable discussions for the reduction of school changes and study the effectiveness utilization of the “Potential School Change Form” (PSCF). By January 2016, there were 158 documented school changes (46% in August), 38% permanency placement, 13% “best interest” (i.e. safety risks, special needs), and 46% care provider request. June 2016, a follow-up oversight indicated an additional 77 moves but without significant percentage data results. Because the new on-line PSCF (1/16) included recommended specificity changes, the committee agreed to utilize the 8/15 to 6/16 results as a baseline for 2016-2017 oversight and subsequent recommendations.
- Potential School Change Form (PSCF): A recommendation to revisit the content and efficiency of the PSCF was initiated by the Educational Liaison team, Education Committee and school district liaisons (Fresno, Clovis, and Central). The Committee provided the recommendation in October 2015, for expanded specificity in “good cause” requests and creating an “on-line” PSCF. Procedural and form changes were continually reviewed by the Committee with the final product going “live” January 2016. The implementation of the PSCF received recognition by the Stuart Foundation, Educational Liaison staff providing a statewide presentation at the *Child Welfare Educational Summit* in Sacramento and a requested workshop for Contra Costa County.
- Education Template for Court Reports: January 2015, concerns were presented that the Court Template was limited and did not provide significant decision making information related to students identified with disabilities. Of particular concern were special needs students with emotional disabilities. Recommended revisions were reviewed and the draft was considered too long and requiring extensive training to new staff. The Committee agreed to put the template “on-hold” to reconvene the project in October 2016.

2. Supportive Transitions/Youth Outreach

- Education Plan: To meet the mission of Education Equals (Stuart Foundation), the development of Education Plans for 65 foster youth were created by conducting interviews with seniors and juniors. Education Plans were created and seniors were provided support for college applications, financial aid and planning after graduation. Updates about the increased school collaboration and school success stories were provided by the Education Liaisons.
- ILP Graduation: Education Liaisons updated the Committee on senior planning culminating with the ILP Graduation Event. The event was extremely successful on June 17, 2016, three scholarships were provided, 50 youth were able to access foster parent support monies for the after party at Blackbeard's the next day.

- Education Liaison/ILP collaboration: The Education Liaisons discussed the reorganization of joining with the ILP staff as a unit with the same Supervisor. To enhance transitions the Education Liaisons will provide the youth with classes related to education such as college, career and education rights.

3. Training/Communication

The Education Liaisons provide information to the DSS staff and care providers each month.

- Access to Higher Education: Annual Event planning input and updates for planning were reviewed. Ideas for a change in format and venue were discussed and implemented. Increased foster youth participation in 2016, will be the result of school district collaboration to enable youth to attend during a school day and transportation provided by Fresno County Office of Education *Foster Youth Education Services*.
- Education Equals (Stuart Foundation): Positive results from the Grant were discussed and sustainability planning was conducted. The significant educational improvements for foster youth were determined to be a direct result of the work accomplished by DSS Education Liaisons. Sustaining their positions was determined to be of paramount importance as the Grant discontinues in its last year.
- Education Support Matrix: The growth and breath of support for foster youth since the onset of AB 490 was recognized as phenomenal. Role clarification was identified by the Committee as a necessary communication tool to further improve the delivery of Education Support Services. The Committee provided initial input about the support positions (i.e. DSS Education Liaisons, School District Education Liaisons, FCOE Education Specialists, and School District Foster Youth Social Workers). An Education Liaison Supervisor created a draft of the Matrix of duties in August 2016. It continues to be developed. Input from all school districts is being provided. The plan for dissemination is by November 2016.

4. Early Education

- Health and Education Passport (HEP): A pilot group of Kindergarten foster youth's HEP were provided to respective teachers to enhance collaboration with the schools.
- Preschool: The significance of early intervention was reviewed and emphasized as a priority. Increase referrals were: HeadStart: July (25), August (8) and September (5). State PK/TK: August (11) September (4).

District/Community Liaison Report

Fresno Unified School District: Provided networking to FCSOC members and DSS Education Liaisons for issues related to foster youth in Fresno Unified. Education Liaison provided direction and informational data updates on high school seniors. The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was a topic of discussion and input was reviewed about the distribution of funds to benefit foster youth. The quarterly Foster Youth Roundtable to review the LCAP was attended by Subcommittee members and feedback for the needs of foster youth was disseminated. Based on last year's recommendation's, five additional Social Workers, dedicated for Foster Youth Support, were funded and expanded to grades 7-12.

Central Unified School District: Provided valuable input regarding work with high school seniors and laws affecting foster youth. District Liaison has identified all middle and high school foster youth with subsequent counseling.

Fresno County Office of Education, FYES: Provided input on efforts and needs of foster youth applying for college. Interviewed and assisted youth with requirements for college applications. On-going collaboration with DSS Liaisons and District Liaison at the meeting was provided.

Education Legislation

As new legislation was introduced into law, the information was disseminated and discussed with the Committee regarding its' impact on youth in foster care. Clarification of current legislation was a regular topic of discussion. Information from members serving on the California Foster Youth Education Task Force was provided. Training suggestions were discussed with the Educational Liaisons for adherence to the new laws.

AB 403 (*Continuum of Care Reform*) Discussion of the interpretation of the law and its implications to youth in group homes and foster homes and the effects on education was an on-going topic.

AB 854 (Foster Youth Services) Remakes Foster Youth Services Program to now serve youth that are open cases with DSS. An increase of 30% of youth will now be served by FYES.

CONTACT PERSON

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FCSOC Representative, District 2
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Annual Report Children's Mental Health Subcommittee

Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee
2015-2016 Annual Report

Subcommittee Background/Purpose

The focus of the Children's Mental Health Subcommittee is on issues of mental health that affect all the children in Fresno County, which include youth in foster care. With a membership that includes community representatives, staff from Department of Social Services and Behavioral Health, and local community agencies, this subcommittee ensures that the availability of psychiatry and inpatient treatment, school based services and other access to mental health services are met to assist children in Foster Care.

This committee is the union of the Children's Services Committee of the Behavioral Health Board, which deals with all children's mental health needs and the Children's Mental Health Committee of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee which is concerned with children in Foster Care. The Committee functions with co-chairs.

The following report focuses on the Foster Care system. This dedicated group of volunteers and those employed in youth servicing agencies, strive to advocate for children in the Foster Care system. While the committee does not make policy, it is informed on matters related to children's mental health, provides feedback to county staff and partners with them to better meet the needs of children in our community.

Attendance/Meeting Structure

During the report year, eleven meetings were held. At the beginning of the year, the meeting format included a speaker from a community group, on-going subcommittees reports, other items brought to the group and a report from the Department of Behavioral Health. Toward the end of the year, agency presentations evolved to group conversations, often with County staff to examine specific issues allowing us to spend more time on specific matters of interest. There were also announcements and community comment. On average 18 people attended each meeting.

Membership in the Committee is open to anyone; therefore, different people may attend the meeting each month which can make it difficult to have on-going discussions on a single issue. However, there is a core group who attend most meetings. These are California Psychological Institute, Patient Rights Advocates, Mental Health Systems, Turning Point of Central California, Kings View Behavioral Health Systems, Clovis Unified School District, Aspiranet, National Alliance on Mental Illness NAMI, Exodus, Department of Behavioral Health, Department of Social Services, Up Lift Family Services (EMQ FF) members of the Fresno County Behavioral Health Board, Central Stars Behavioral Health, Transitions Children's Services, Fresno Family Connections, members of the Fresno County Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee and interested community members.

Presentations

Holistic Cultural and Education Wellness Center
Parent Rights Advocates
Off-site meeting at the new First Five Lighthouse for Children
National Alliance on Mental Illness - Ending the Silence
Economic Opportunities Commission - Central Valley Against Human Trafficking

Meeting Discussion Item during 2015-2016

Waiting list for mental health services

As noted in last year's report, several committee members expressed concern regarding long waiting lists for child welfare clients to be evaluated for court-ordered mental health services. Two community agencies, Central Star Behavioral Health and Mental Health Systems – Fresno Family Connections increased the capacity along with California Psychological Institute (CPI) that was in its final contract year. The County program operated by the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) was phased out. During the transition period, approximately 400 children were waiting for evaluations for services. A backlog occurred because the need for services exceeded the capacity of the providers. DBH and Department of Social Services (DSS) recognizing the problem as well as responding to the concern by the Children's Committee and others, presented an item to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to increase the number of vendors providing mental health services. Two agencies (EMQ Families First/Up Lift Family Services and California Psychological Institute) which had responded to the initial RFP were offered contracts for services.

The Children's Committee suggested that the four providers meet monthly to share resources and strategies to better serve clients and that there be continuing collaboration among the four agencies. The belief was they would learn a great deal from each other as providing treatment in the community, at schools or consumer's home (for example) is much different than counseling in an office environment. The committee asked for monthly updates and it became a standing item on the agenda.

Inpatient service for children age 12 and Under

Upon the suggestion of a Committee member the group began a discussion on psychiatric services for children 12 years and younger, specifically in-patient. Susan Holt, Deputy Director, Department of Behavioral Health discussed with the committee in-patient services for this population. She indicated that the California Hospital Association reported that state-wide there are approximately 700 beds for youth under 18 years of age and that 100 of these beds are for 12 and under. Statewide there were only 12 youth who needed in-patient services in the State, with such few beds being occupied it would be nearly impossible fiscally to provide such services.

The discussion went on to consider that there might be more appropriate treatments for this population. If a child is having an acute psychological episode for a week, is treating the child outside of the family support system in the best interest of the child? Are there other services the child could receive in the context of family systems such as an intensive WRAP program?

Somewhat related were updates on Child Welfare Mental Health (CWMH). There has been an increase in the acuity for younger children. The outpatient program has also seen younger children with high acuity levels. How we help these children needs to be continued.

The committee also discussed Crisis Residential services as an option for children rather than inpatient hospitalization. The State is moving away from group homes and moving toward short-term residential treatment. Ongoing discussions occurred during FCSOC meetings which were shared in the Children's Committee regarding funding for these services through AB741 which would be the next level of care after leaving a crisis stabilization unit. (AB 741 was vetoed by the governor on 9/30/16 as sections conflicted with Federal regs. The Governor acknowledged the need and sent AB 741 back to be revised).

The Committee expressed a willingness to work with DBH and DSS to facilitate appropriate services for children 12 and younger. Recommendation: to follow-up with County staff to continue discussions.

Continuum of Care Reform

The Committee was kept informed of dramatic changes that will be made in the child welfare system. Assembly Bill 403 calls for the reform of congregate care (24-hour) for children. Exactly how CCR will look and how it will be implemented is still in process but is planned to start in January 2017. Members of the Children's committee are very interested about the implementation of CCR. Several meetings have been devoted to this topic in the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee which are shared with the Children's Committee.

Parent/Youth/Foster Care Committee Participation

The committee has on-going discussions on how to diversify membership in the Committee. Invited speakers, consumers and youth organizations, to name a few have been encouraged to join the group. Members have indicated that they would reach out to other organizations such as California Youth Connection and Renascence. Each month we discuss options but with limited success. Next year the group is going to invite willing families to come and share their experiences with the various agencies with which they have had contact. Additionally, flyers will be distributed by Committee members. Recommendation is to continue the committee's efforts.

Health Information Exchange Workgroup

This year the Committee voted and approved the Mental Health Information Exchange Brochure. This project has been in development for several years with the majority of the work done this year. The process brought community service providers, Fresno County, Foster Families agencies, Foster parents, Department of Social Services, Department of Behavioral Health and others to develop a brochure which would be useful to providers, consumers and others involved in working with Foster Care Families. Among other benefits, this document will help caregivers and social workers to understand the mental health services available, will also help Foster parents understand the treatment their child is receiving. The Committee followed its progress from initial concept design to completion. This group had vision and commitment to developing a tool which will be used by so many for so much benefit.

Psychiatric Health Facility – Central Star Behavioral Health

The Committee had been following the development of the program from the beginning. An excellent status report of the program was given during the year: Recommendation: Brief updates on a regular basis.

Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) in Tollhouse

A Committee member reported that the girls in the program, after watching the movie *McFarland* wanted to have a Quinceanera. Staff from (YEP) announced the project and that they needed donations. The community and the Committee helped.

Recommendation: In addition to traditional mental health services we consider supporting self-esteem projects with our county's youth.

Recruitment, Development, Support & Public relations Subcommittee

Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee
FY 2015-2016 Annual Report

During this past year the Recruitment, Development and Support Subcommittees was merged with the Public Relations Subcommittee and the Quality Parenting Initiative which all had similar goals. In merging these committees' activities we have been able to create a comprehensive work plan which has been used to obtain funding through a State of California grant known as the "Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention and Support." In the spring of 2016, Fresno County DSS received approximately \$513,387 in federal funding and Title IV-E drawdown. The plan that was proposed to the State was generated from the work plan these combined groups established, which represented the voice of our community. For the 2016-2017 fiscal year, Fresno County DSS has received additional funding in the amount of \$827,715 and Fresno County Probation received funding of \$183,081.

Subcommittee Background/Purpose

In order to further the mission of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee, a sub-committee to address the recruitment, development and support of foster parents was established by the Committee.

The Public Relations Subcommittees primary purpose is to elevate the awareness of foster care throughout Fresno County. Our primary goal is to highlight the many success stories and positive outcomes for caregivers and youth in foster care which will ultimately have a positive impact on the image of child welfare in general.

Throughout the year, the Public Relations Subcommittee was represented with participation from the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee (FCSOC), the Department of Social Services (DSS) staff, Fresno State renaissance scholars and several Foster Family Agencies.

The Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) focus is to develop a statewide approach to recruiting and retaining high quality care givers to provide excellent care to children in California Child Welfare System. Dedicated staff, community partners and resource families meet monthly to strategically discuss ways to change the brand of foster parents to a more positive one and also to highlight and reward the work they do. The QPI CA website is <http://www.qpicalifornia.org/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout the year, the RDS/PR/QPI sub-committee was represented with participation from the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee (FCSOC), the Department of Social Services (DSS) administration, program and staff, foster parents, relatives, community members, and more than 10 Foster Family Agencies.

A major focus for the RDS/PR/QPI sub-committee was on the development of a comprehensive work plan focused on creating actions that the group could move forward with during the year.

Three (3) workgroups were established:

- Care Giver Recruitment
- Support & Retention
- Communication and Training

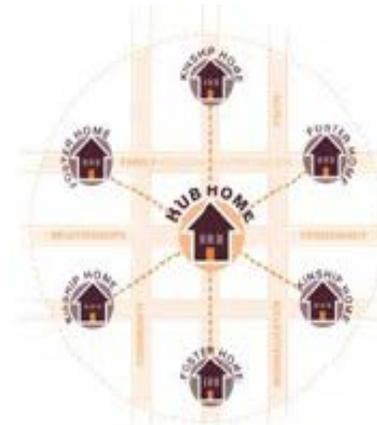
In October 2015, the California Department of Social Services released the requests for the “Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention and Support” (FPRRS) funding. Since the group had worked diligently on the work plan, we were prepared for this funding and requested \$2 million dollars. We only received \$513,387 and were approved to do the following activities:

- Resource Family “Hub” Mentors
- Media Resource Family Campaign
- Preventive-Supportive Financial Assistance for Relatives
- Staffing to Improve Direct Services/Supports to Resource Families
- Resource Family Gift Cards to families upon placement
- Financial Support for Minor’s Extracurricular Activities

Synopsis of funding

1. **Resource Family “Hub” Mentors - Mockingbird Family Model**

- The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is an award-winning, innovative – yet intuitively old-fashioned – model of foster care delivery that intentionally creates community.
- In every MFM Constellation, six to ten families live in close proximity to a licensed foster care family – a Hub Home – who assists in navigating bureaucracy and offers peer support, social activities and respite care.
- This is a totally different way foster care is supporting families 24/7 and helps eliminate some of the isolation our Foster Families sometimes feel. We will create a community of foster homes that work to support each other with respite, training and social events, all benefitting not only our foster families, but the children who are placed in their homes.



2. **Media Resource Family Campaign & Recruitment**

- We partnered with **iHeart Radio** who are producing audio commercials in English and Spanish to broadcast across six local radio stations 117 times weekly. The six radio stations represent people from various diverse social and economic backgrounds. The ads began airing in April 2016. Hopefully you have heard one of the advertisements or maybe someone you know has. If any interest arises from this recruitment approach please don’t hesitate to contact us because we would like to hear from you. We are tracking inquiries to determine if interest was generated from these commercials ads.



- **N & R Publishing** have also done a Newspaper Supplement with a focus on Foster/Resource Parents, called “BE A HERO”. This 12 page insert is in English and Spanish and features stories of Fresno County families who have stepped up and opened their homes to Fresno County children and families. There are many heartwarming stories from fellow foster parents.



- **Foster Family Friendly Business project.** We wanted to get our community involved in acknowledging our care providers and relative families. One way of doing this is by partnering with our local businesses and major retailers to offer resource parents a discount on food and services from their business. Each business will display a “Foster Family Friendly Business” cling in their window letting the community and our Foster Families they support them in helping Fresno Families and children in times of need. That business owner will give our Foster Parents a discount on whatever they deem appropriate.
- **Provide a grant to the Foster, Adoptive, Kinship, and Parent Association of Fresno County.** FPRRS funded a small grant to the Association to develop and manage a website to aid in recruitment, retention and support of all care givers in Fresno County. Site has information on events, trainings, QPI and many other resources families may need. Website address is: <http://www.fresnoresourcefamilies.org>



3. **Preventive-Supportive Financial Assistance for Relatives.** DSS has provided financial assistance to relatives and mentors to assist with Probate filing costs, costs for finger printing, well water testing, car seats, pool fences, bedding, furniture, or any exceptional needs a minor may have. This prevented many children from coming into the system and provided support to relative and mentors.
4. **Staffing to Improve Direct Services/Supports to Resource Families.** DSS allocated one (1) social worker and one (1) office assistant and used Title IV-E dollars to support the FPRRS funding grant. This saved DSS the cost of those 2 positions for 6 months.

5. **Resource Family Gift Cards.** DSS provided gift card to the resource family, relative, or mentor at the time of initial placement for every child entering a new placement, based on the child's needs. This money was used to meet immediate and/or exceptional needs the child may have had when coming into care. Typically resource families and relatives usually paid for initial placement items out of their own pockets and waited to be reimbursed, which could put a strain on the family. This gift card defrayed that cost and was appreciated by the families.

6. **Financial Support for Minor's Extracurricular Activities.**

- DSS was able to provide funding for over 300 children and youth to participate in extracurricular activities this past summer. Care providers were eager to have children involved in activities that taught skills and allowed children to have fun and enjoyment. An additional benefit was that it gave the care provider a bit of respite while the child was in the program.
- DSS also sponsored a sober graduation event at Blackbeard's for all of our youth graduating from High School.
- DSS sponsored a sibling event at Blackbeard's for over 100 siblings who may be in different foster or relative homes.
- DSS sponsored a GONA (Gathering of Native Americans) for our youth with Native American backgrounds.



Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention and Support (FPRRS) funding for 2016-2017

In July of 2016, the Department received notice from the California Department of Social Services that we had received continued FPRRS funding for the coming fiscal year. The Department received an allocation of \$827,715 and Probation also received an allocation of \$183,081. Each Department has separate plans but we have met and discussed how we can coordinate our messaging especially with finding Resource Homes.

For the Department we will continue working on the six (6) initiatives from the previous fiscal year and will include several new projects:

1. **Training for Resource Families, Relatives, and Mentors.**

- With the onset of Resource Family Approval (RFA) and Fresno County moving forward with utilizing the Mockingbird Family Model, additional training for care providers will be needed in various behavioral and engagement styles. Fresno County DSS will explore opening our onsite and online pre-service training.
- Development of a digital library and a tablet check-out process where foster parents can take training home to do at their leisure. This can increase and improve the training of our Foster Parents as a whole.

2. **Child Care & Temporary Respite**

- Planned child care for resource families, relatives, and mentors. One to two times per month at specified dates and times, caregivers would be able to utilize specified child care centers free of charge. In addition, child care will be provided for all Fresno County DSS events that care providers are invited to, removing child care as a barrier to them attending a training, meeting or workgroup.

3. **Semi-Annual Caregiver Conference**

- Twice per year, Fresno County DSS will sponsor an event during which caregivers can meet with the Director and Deputy Director, obtain information on upcoming systematic changes that impact them, provide a forum for discussion and a venue for building support networks with other caregivers.
- This will allow caregivers to meet with Fresno County DSS leaders will improve the caregiver's feelings that their concerns are being heard. Dissemination of pertinent information will assist the caregivers with preparing for upcoming changes, and providing this information in a large group forum allows for relationship building among attendees which can lead to improved support networks for caregivers and improved retention.

4. **Emerging Technologies**

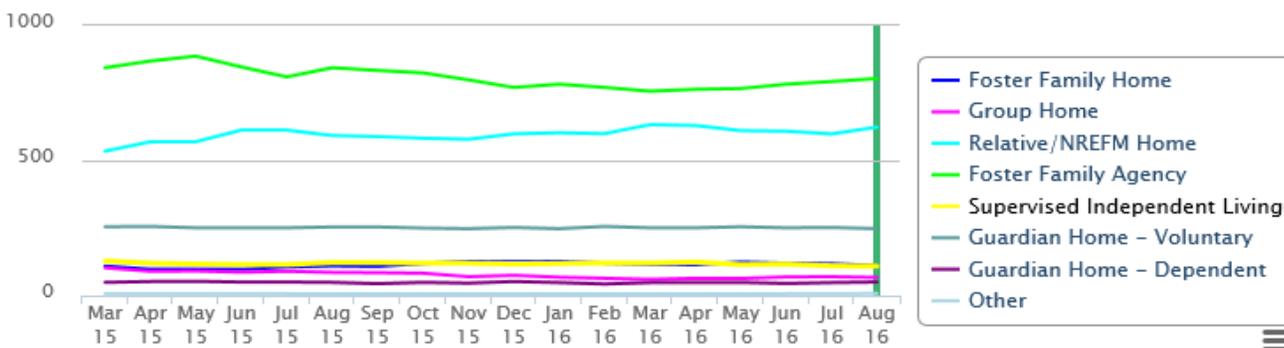
- Fresno County DSS intends to utilize electronic technology such as SKYPE and conference calling to make meeting and training more accessible for care givers, thereby allowing expanded access to information and feedback from our care providers, including relatives.
- Additional support for family finding:
 - Train staff including social workers and office assistants to help with family finding.
 - Development of databases that would better help track parents and relatives.
 - Office supplies and electronic devices [such as Smartphone, Equipment for Skype, Color Printers & Ink, Phone Headsets].
 - Purchase access to databases that would be useful for family finding i.e. (Ancestry.com, Genealogy.com, or LexisNexis – We have a current contract but it would need to be amended to add additional funds and increase the number of licensed users).

The RDS/PR/QPI sub-committee continues to support full monthly trainings on Trauma Focused Parenting through its pre-service training for caregivers & relatives; providing rate stabilization for caregivers who care for special needs children through the modification of the Special Care Increment (SCI) rates; supporting engagement of caregivers with bio parents with the introduction of the new visitation model; providing support, encouragement and building rapport with caregivers at the annual Let's Talk conference and providing caregiver I.D. badges to increase their visibility and add credence to the work that they do.

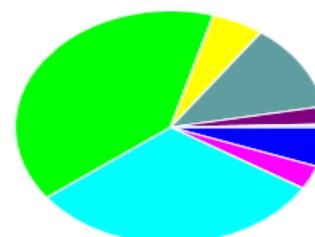
Approved Relative Caregiver Funding Option

The Approved Relative Caregiver (ARC) funding option has had a positive impact in the increase in relative and mentor caregivers for the year and has allowed the Department to keep pace with the growing demand for qualified caregivers. The chart below illustrates nearly a 28% increase in relative and Non-related Extended Family Members for fiscal year 2014-15, the largest increase of all categories.

The chart below illustrates how placements have fluctuated within the various placement categories.



Placement Type	Count	%
Foster Family Home	111	5.5%
Group Home	67	3.3%
Relative/NREFM Home	624	30.9%
Foster Family Agency	804	39.8%
Supervised Independent Living	109	5.4%
Guardian Home - Voluntary	248	12.3%
Guardian Home - Dependent	50	2.5%
Other	8	0.4%
Total	2,021	100%



Development

In July of 2015, the Department has been utilizing a trauma informed care giver training as pre-service for potential resource families and relatives/mentors. This training has been established by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is an evidence-based model that helps caregivers recognize the signs and symptoms of complex trauma in children and offers recommendations for what they can do to help the child heal.

During this past year, we offered the 24 hour training 12 times and have averaged 30-35 participants per session at Fresno City College. Additionally, in conjunction with Fresno State Training Academy, we have offered our Foster Family Agencies five (5) Train the Trainer sessions so they can offer their families the same training. Within this next year we plan to add Spanish and weekend classes training roster for pre-service training.

Support

During the 2015-16 fiscal years, we completed the following QPI action items:

- Attended QPI state and national conferences.
- Provided feedback to the State on the www.QPICalifornia.org Website and On-Line Training Portal.
- Caregivers participated in a live web event called “Just In Time Training” for credit hours.
- Provided ID Badges for County Foster Parents.
- Recommitted to the use of Life Books.

Annual Let's Talk Conference

The 2016 Let's Talk Conference hosted nearly 450 attendees which included foster parents, relative caregivers, and community partners. This year's theme was focused on "Commercially Sexually Exploited Children" (CSEC). The keynote speaker was author/speaker, Carissa Phelps. Carissa has been an advocate for CSEC youth and children, has authored a book and has a Documentary out on the same subject. Carissa also met with the Department Social Workers, and with the Independent Living Program youth and was praised for her ability to connect.

Resource Family Town Hall Meeting

On September 23, 2016 the Department had its first Town Hall meeting with over 200 in attendance. Items discussed:

- Continuum of Care Reform (CCR)
- Resource Family Approval (RFA)
- Accomplishment of the RDS/PR/Quality Parenting Initiative committee
- Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention and Support (FPRRS) funding
- A presentation by Lisa Paine-Wells from Kids Insight on the TOP Assessment tool and Care provider's roles.



Evaluations and feedback from the event were very positive and care givers appreciated the forum to ask questions and get updated on the changes going on in Child Welfare in California.

Looking Forward

Consistent with our mission, our goal is to make the system more efficient and effective through providing adequate resources, better communication with our agency partners and developing effective working relationships.

The initial version of the Caregiver Handbook was released over a year ago and has become a staple resource for many of our caregivers. This handbook is scheduled to be reviewed and updated in 2016.

The current FFA master agreement has been in place for more than two years. This agreement has facilitated understanding of roles and responsibilities between the County and all foster family agencies. Due to legislative changes such as the Continuum of Care Reform which will go live in 2017, the committee plans to review this agreement and make any necessary changes to align it with pending changes in Child Welfare. The master agreement will be updated once all of the Continuum of Care Reform aspects have been put into place.