

**FRESNO COUNTY
FOSTER CARE AND OVERSIGHT
COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REPORT
TO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**REPORTING ACTIVITIES FROM
JULY 2021 THROUGH JUNE 2022**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fresno County Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee (FCFCSOC) hereby referred to as "FCSOC" was created by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors in 2001. According to its bylaws, the purpose is "To exercise oversight and review of systems and services which affect children focusing on, but not limited to, the foster care system. The committee shall:

- A. Advise and make recommendations for continuous and lasting system improvements
- B. Provide a forum for community input and dissemination of information related to the FCSOC purpose

To meet its' primary responsibility the FCSOC is guided by an adopted mission and vision statement.

Mission

The mission of the FCSOC is to provide oversight for and promote communication between the Board of Supervisors (BOS), the Department of Social Services (DSS), Behavioral Health Board, its related agencies, and the community, with an emphasis on providing information and recommendations that improve the child welfare system to be more effective and efficient in order to better serve the needs of the children and youth in foster care.

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.

Key Responsibilities

The FCSOC shall participate in lawfully constituted multi-disciplinary reviews when system issues and improvements are appropriate.

The primary responsibility of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee is to focus on 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 committee'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 consists of Education and Mental Health. Other subcommittees will arise has deemed necessary to support the 2022-23 Department of Social Services (DSS) initiatives.

Changes Moving Forward

The FCSOC has evolved from its 2001 stated purpose to offering resources at regular subcommittee meetings that are deemed valuable interagency/organization communication forums. In Fall 2021, in response to the public spotlighting the challenge of hard-to-place children and youth in the child welfare system, FCSOC hosted a timely community forum consisting of elected officials, community partners and interested parties to offer insight and suggestions. FCSOC followed up with two strategic planning

sessions that included Mary Dolas, Presiding Judge Juvenile Justice; Catherine Huerta, consultant and former Fresno County DSS Director; Susan Anderson, former BOS (2001-2012) member who created FCSOC; and, Sanja Bugay, incoming Fresno County DSS Director. These four individuals provided history, findings, and vision that allowed the committee to recalibrate its 2022-23 goals. In summary, FCSOC will work closely with DSS to provide support and oversight to the systemic changes identified in the Critical Areas document (Appendix A) which was based on recent interviews and data collection identified in the Critical Overview document (Appendix B) provided by the DSS Child Welfare Services Division.

In addition, FCSOC will continue to participate in the following subcommittees:

1. Education falls under the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Foster Youth Executive Advisory Committee to avoid subject and meeting duplication.
2. Children's Mental Health is under the Behavioral Health Board
3. Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) will also be added in 2022-23

Overview of Subcommittees

The focus of the Education Subcommittee is 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. The Education Subcommittee is the Fresno County Superintendent of School Foster Youth Education Executive Advisory Committee (FCSS-FYEEAC). Additional information is provided in Appendix C.

The focus of the Mental Health Subcommittee is on mental health issues that affect all children in Fresno 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. Additional information is provided in Appendix D.

Committee Membership

1. The Board of Supervisors has filled six FCSOC vacancies since last year 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 work with FCSOC to fill the remaining vacancy.

**Fresno County Foster Care and Oversight Committee
DISTRICT APPOINTEES
July 2022**

DISTRICT 1 APPOINTEES

**Jill Stepke
Karina Perez
Wendy Yribarren**

DISTRICT 2 APPOINTEES

Tracy Kashian – Lance-Kashian & Co., vice chair
Maisie Young, Supervisor of Student Support Services, District Foster Liaison

DISTRICT 3 APPOINTEES

Elizabeth Thomas – Intensive Services Foster Parent,
Foster Parent Association President
Patricia Miller – Intensive Services Foster Parent
James Martinez – Fresno County Board of Education Trustee

DISTRICT 4 APPOINTEES

Richard Bailey – Child Welfare Attorney
Rose Mary Alanas
Connie N. Waldrop – Gill Insurance

DISTRICT 5 APPOINTEES

Pamela Hancock – Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, co-chair
Wilma Tom Hashimoto– CASA of Fresno and Madera Counties, co-chair
Edward Avila – Juvenile Justice and EOC Commissioner

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Supervisor Sal Quintero – Supervisor Chair
Ari Martinez - Proxy, Chief of Staff
Rocky Vang – District Director

Committee Priorities

2021 Priority Issues

1. Establish mechanisms to allow 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.
Outcome: Continuous improvement to increase dissemination of information.
2. Re-establish annual communication with appointed Fresno Board of Supervisor to provide update of FCSOC's work.
Outcome: Goal met
3. FCSOC to request representation to Juvenile Court Executive Meetings in order to facilitate communication.
Outcome: Goal met, co-chairs attend meetings.

2022 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 Critical Areas document (Appendix A) which was based on recent interviews and data collection identified in the Critical Overview document (Appendix B) provided by DSS Child Welfare Services Division. As the 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 Fresno County website is functioning well and meeting the needs of the public and the FCSOC. The website link is: <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/social-services/administration/foster-care-standards-and-oversight-committee/contact-fsoc>

Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors

1. Continue to prioritize support for youth under the care of the County's Child Welfare System, 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 (Appendix A).

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.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2022-23

Consistent with our mission, our 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 Fresno County.

Appendix A Critical Areas

***Document provided by Department of Social Services
Draft: Fresno County Child Welfare Work Groups**

August 2022

(1) Standby

- Short term workgroup
- Long term workgroup – aimed at developing roles & responsibilities as well as a scheduling

(2) Review and Enhance Social Worker Training

- Obtain Fresno State Training Academy assistance in existing training plan /program evaluation
- Conduct a comprehensive analysis and redesign of existing SW training (in house, contracted and academy components)
- QPI training
- De-escalation training
- Client engagement training
- SOP Academy training contract
- Core Practice Model Training

(3) Workforce Wellness and Supports

- Creating a program / supports to address secondary trauma with staff

(4) Court Improvement process

- Continue participating in the Court Improvement Coalition Meetings and develop action plans to address identified issues
- Review data for court hearings issues delay and develop an action plan
- Review court writing specialization workload and process
- Develop detail behind the county counsel MOU to define roles and responsibilities for attorney staff and support staff
- Develop training so SW are familiar with county counsel roles
- Review counsel role in SW training and support
- Standard Orders and findings template review
 - a. Concern about visitation

(5) Specialization Review

- Review and Reduce Specialized functions and redirect staff to caseloads
- Minimize task-based approach in managing social worker caseloads
- Review supports currently provided internally and contracted out (ie. parenting, visitation) and make appropriate adjustments

(6) FFPSA Prevention Planning

- Developing a County Plan

- Mapping existing efforts and developing a sustainability strategy for existing efforts

(7) Complex Needs Youth

	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Apr 2022	May 2022
Entries	81	85	106	94	76
Placement Changes	169	145	198	192	180
Kids in Office (Daily Census -Duplicated)	111	97	180	218	228
In Office <24 Hours	54	72	111	163	161
In Office 24-72 Hours	4	8	20	20	9
In Office >72 Hours	5	1	3	3	6

1. Redesign Emergency Placement and Resource Family Home Approval Processes
2. Address State Findings from February 2022 Audit related to Resource Family Approval
 - a. We are under a monthly State Technical Assistance plan to address findings
3. Improve Family Finding activities and expectation
4. Partner with CDSS (county visit planned for end of June) to develop additional system improvement steps and county specific technical assistance
5. Pursue Contracting Out for Emergency Home Placements
6. Complete the MOD C Shelter Application and staffing request
7. Complete in-depth case reviews of high needs youth cases
 - a. Identify policy and practice issues that lead to current issues and low outcomes
 - b. Connecting these efforts with CFSR
8. Review partnership approach and services provided by Behavioral Health, Education and CVRC and identify opportunities for improvement for multi-system involved youth

(8) Emergency Response (ER) Process Review

1. Contract with Evident Change for Structured Decision Making (SDM) tool fidelity use for Hotline and Emergency Response Teams
2. Review ER protocols related to Safety Plans, Detention Decisions, Child and Family Team meetings, and Voluntary Family Maintenance
3. Review child removals and holds that do not result in detentions
4. Address issues of law enforcement and social worker conflict related to holds
5. Review roles and responsibilities for placement

(9) Placement Search & Practices

- Responsibility for placement
- Placement support v. placement responsibility
-

(10) FURS

- Review of use and effectiveness
- Review of promotional and educational materials

- Screening of needs from RFAs and youth
- Redesign of agreement to meet stated needs

(11) Housing and Shelter

- Redesign use for The Flats and El Puente
- Redesign of HSP and BFH

(12) RFA Review

- State's audit response
- Ensure processing of applications within 90 days

(13) ISFC Review

- Mapping out ISFC home determination and ISFC kid need, payment approval, payment issuance, deposits, claiming and access of funds
- ISFC program development
 - Staffing review
 - ISFC home/parent support needs

(14) RFA supports

- Single worker; Resource parent should have a worker of their own to call with needs
- Respite for all not just relatives and ISFCs
 - Mockingbird – satellite home
- Childcare – expanding the use of Bridge childcare
- Visitation Centers—education on considerations of Resource Family schedules/providing multiple choices to families
- Emergency providers – perception that we wouldn't provide support including answering our phones and grappling with child issues
- Perception of Department or SW dishonesty; worry that it's lack of info and would prefer to be told that
- Transportation
- Communication or lack of communication; missing what use to be;
 - "Let's Talk"
 - "Town Hall"
- Request to share info on Foster Parent Association when we recruit
- Review level of care process and questionnaire
- Relook at the training for Foster Parents
 - We used to require 20 hours; now it is 8
 - Use of foster parent college – there is a worry of Resource Parent not knowing where the resources are
 - Need practical training and things – ie. hair care training
 - VMS Counseling services as a resource
- No support groups

- Would participate in conversations, redesigns and supports but need us to pay attention to childcare
- Transportation reimbursement for visits and
- Mental Health / Wellbeing supports for Foster Parents
- Need to explain FURS and need to potentially redesign FURS so it's actually helpful; providers want more than a phone call

Goals presented to FCSOC

- Partner across the department to ensure access to resources (cash aid, medical, food, employment, home visitation, childcare, housing, etc)
 - Goal: Implement a robust Linkages Program (AB 429 & AB 135)
- Partner across systems for a multi-system involved youth; key partnerships include Behavioral Health, Education, CVRC, Probation and Health
 - Goal: Review AB 2083 Operationalized plans:
 - Information Sharing
 - Common Case Management
 - Interagency Placement Committee and Qualified Individual Process
 - Ensure efficient and effective services to youth:
 - Behavioral Health assessment, services and access to care
 - CVRC assessment, services, and placement options
 - Education IEP assessment, services and placement options; preservation of school choice and ensuring graduation
 - Health Plans – CalAIM Enhanced Case Management services
- Partner with the community-based organizations, FFAs, Resource Homes, CASA, CVRC, Office of Ed, etc to expand available services to youth and families
 - Implement Families First Prevention Act – Part 1 Prevention Services
 - Ensure that services are available across all program components
 - Review the effectiveness of Family Urgency Response System (FURS)
 - Review after care plans and high fidelity wrap services
- Partner with all placement agencies to develop Emergency Homes for youth needing intensive assessment or have identified high level needs
 - Work with the State to Implement AB 2944 homes
 - Goal is to have sufficient number of homes on contract (3 to 5) with no eject no reject rules and placement capacity of up to 1 to 2 months per occurrence
 - Goal is to eliminate the need for shelter care
- Review Emergency Response Operations:
 - Evaluate the use of Structured Decision Making Tool –(Evident Change)
 - Evaluate the Safety Plans use and practice
 - Evaluate the Safety Organized Practice training and use

- Placement Approach Review at Initial Removal:
 - Review Emergency Placement practices
 - Review RFA role in initial placements
 - Review CFT practices at removal and placement decision protocols
 - Review family finding practices
 - Review immediacy of partner participation with assessments and service provisions to ensure availability of in home/accessible services that aid in lower-level placements

- Review departmental organization and specialization of functions to help mitigate high caseloads
Review the court process and attorney supports to ensure timely outcome for youth and families

- Review the use of and maximization of State Technical Assistance resources

Appendix B

Fresno County Child Welfare System – Data Overview

Critical Outcomes

1. Placement entries (4/21 to 3/22) AB 636 4b measure:
 - Relative placement 17% v. 33% state
 - County RFA 16% v. 22%
 - FFA 63% v. 32%

2. Safety:
 - SDM Risk Assessments completion 90.7% (standard = 90%)
 - SDM Safety Assessments completion 59.5% (standard = 90%)
 - FR component time open over 18 months 6.5% (standard < 10%)
 - FM comp time open over 12 months 9.5% (standard < 10%)

3. CFSR:
 - Recurrence of maltreatment in FC 7.2% v. 9.2% standard
 - Re-entry to FC 4.3% v. 8.3% standard

 - Permanency in 12 months – 20.3% v. 40.5% standard
 - Face to Face Contacts – 77.4% v. 95% standard
 - Case Plan completion – 73% v. 80% standard

4. Not in compliance with kids in the offices for less than 24 hrs:

	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Apr 2022	May 2022
Entries	81	85	106	94	76
Placement Changes	169	145	198	192	180
Kids in Office (Daily Census -Duplicated)	111	97	180	218	228
In Office <24 Hours	54	72	111	163	161
In Office 24-72 Hours	4	8	20	20	9
In Office >72 Hours	5	1	3	3	6

5. Child and Family team meetings are all scheduled online; need to transition these in person
 - CFTs are scheduled one month out

6. Visitation for kids are backlogged
 - Currently have 296 hours on the waitlist (32 hours first time referrals and 264 hours re-referrals)
 - Visitations are not progressing sufficiently and therefore contributing to delaying visitations

7. Average 66 delayed Court Hearings in Child Welfare over the past four months; 57% of the delays are due to staff caused issues (late report, incomplete report, etc)

8. We have a significant backlog in ER and level of non-compliance:
 - Of 1635 open referrals, 56% or 916 are over 30 days and beyond State approved timelines.
9. RFA processing timelines are over 200 days; State allowance is supposed to be less than 90 days.
 - RFA State Audit from feb 2022 provided a list of corrective action items

Child Welfare Division Functions	Number of Positions	%
Court Officers, Court Writers, support	40	7%
Hotline	17	3%
Emergency Response	109	19%
Family Reunification / Family Maintenance	83	14%
Voluntary Family Maintenance	15	3%
Permanency Planning	35	6%
Adoptions	34	6%
TDM, CFT, RFS, Various Supports	50	9%
Parenting, Visitation, Substance Abuse Services Coordination	28	5%
Resource Family Approval	32	6%
Foster Care Eligibility	40	7%
Program Specialist, Quality Assurance and Case Review	12	2%
Deputy & Support	3	1%
Vacant Positions	77	13%
Total Child Welfare Division	575	

Position Title	Number of Staff	%
Social Workers	329	57%
Social Work Supervisors	46	8%
Social Work Aides	37	6%
Eligibility Workers and Sups	33	6%
Clerical, Drivers, other support	122	21%
Program Managers	7	1%
Deputy	1	0%
Total Child Welfare Workforce	575	100%

Emergency Response:

	Referral Allegations	% of total
Physical Abuse	2,844	15%
Emotional Abuse	4,621	24%
Neglect	12,635	66%
Sex. Abuse	1,588	8%
Other/at risk	4,361	23%
Allegations of Abuse:	26,049	
Referrals:	19,024	

Program Component:	Total Cases	Average Per Worker
Family Reunification	1,211	33 to 43
Family Maintenance	253	34 to 43
Permanency Planning	1,556	24
Supportive Transitions	193	38
Total Cases	3,213	
Emergency Response Referrals		15/25/35
Voluntary Family Maintenance		10
Adoptions		28

Placements at the Initial Removal for 2021:

Placement Type:	Counts	Fresno %	Kings %	State
Pre-Adoptive	2	0%	0%	0%
Relative	186	18%	43%	34%
Foster Home	151	14%	44%	22%
FFA	678	64%	7%	32%
Court Specified	1	0%	0%	0%
Group Home	28	3%	2%	2%
Shelter	0	0%	0%	9%
Guardian	14	1%		0%
Missing	1	0%	4%	
Total Placements	1061	100%		

Placements on 5/5/2022:

Placement Type:	Counts	%
Relative / Mentor	693	30%
RFA - Resource Home (County & FFA)	1,077	46%
Foster Family Agency	91	4%
Group Home	86	4%
Supervised Independent Living	99	4%
Guardian Home – Voluntary	233	10%
Guardian Home – Dependent	36	2%
Other	29	1%
Total Placements	2,344	100%

Placement Count	No of Placements	%
One	896	38%
Two	653	28%
Three to Five	584	25%
Six or More	211	9%
Total Placements:	2,344	100%

Appendix C

EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Background and Purpose

The purpose of the Education Subcommittee is to:

1. Enable the FCSOC oversight and communication between 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.

Meeting Format

FCSOC approved the dissolution of the FCSOC Education Subcommittee. Education matters for students in foster care were transferred to the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Foster Youth Executive Advisory Committee. The committee is attended by a core group of districts foster liaisons, DDS Education Liaisons, juvenile probation, and agency representatives. The committee 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 the monthly FCSOC Board meeting and presented for discussion with the DSS administrative team, FCSOC Board Members and members of the community (detailed information is available in the and FCSOC monthly meeting minutes and the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Foster Youth Executive Advisory Committee minutes.

Focus of Subcommittee Activity

Moving schools, absenteeism, suspensions, and expulsions all impact and increase learning loss, falling behind and not graduating from high school. The educational outcomes for students in foster care are the poorest of all student subgroups, including migrant, special education, homeless, and socioeconomically disadvantaged. Although many educational issues were addressed, 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 are discussed below. The Subcommittee serves as a sounding board to support 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.

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, and training and coordinating with the overall DSS workforce. Research indicates that academic success improves when a child or youth has at least one caring responsible adult in their life and maintains school stability. The “Potential School Change Form (PSCP) is a process that supports school stability.

Potential School Change Form (PSCF)

In previous years, DSS Program Manager and Social Work Supervisor provided oversight data to enable discussions about reasons for school changes, and to study the effectiveness of the “*Potential School Change Form*” (PSCF) to communicate and improve school stability. The on-line PSCF was fully implemented at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year is being utilized by social workers. Information obtained from the “reasons for school change” provided a means for discussion on improving advocacy for school stability, however, due to the pandemic, this data was not collected for the 2019-20, 2020-21, or 2021-22 school years. Below are the last reported outcomes for 2017-18 school year. School move data will be requested for the 2022-23 school year.

Historical data 2017-18 Results:

TK- 6: 62 school changes for foster children (62% at break)

Grades 7-8: total of 25 (76% at break)

Grades 9-11: 31 (48% at break)

Grade 12: no changes during regular session (2 during break).

Historical Summary: Analyzing the grade levels by groups improved the ability to study the reasons for changes and provide interventions. As a result, 2018 was the first year that all foster youth were able to remain stable throughout their entire senior year. Please note the 7.5% increase in the 2019-20 graduation rate below.

Goal for 2022-23

Track and provide PSCF data for grades Transitional Kindergarten (TK) to 6, grades 7-8, and grades 9-12. PSCF information will be analyzed and identify the impact on high school students. The goal is to improve school stability by minimizing school changes grades TK-11 and eliminate any school changes in grade 12.

Graduation Rates

Graduation rates for students in foster care are significantly lower than the graduation rates for all students. Research indicates that just one school move can result in 4-6 months of academic loss. Goal: Identify procedures to reduce the number of school moves during the school year and eliminate school moves for students who are seniors.

School Year	All Student Graduation Rate %	Foster Graduation Rate %	Difference Between All Student & Foster Graduation Rates %	Change in Foster Graduation Rate % From Previous Year
2017-18	81.5	49.8	-31.7	--
2018-19	81.7	48.4	-33.3	-1.4
2019-20	80.3	55.9	-24.4	+7.5
2020-21	81.7	48.5	-32.6	-7.4
2021-22	80.4	48.5	-31.9	-0

Independent Living Program (ILP)

ILP serves youth ages 14-22 and provides a supportive and caring environment where the goal is to provide every youth with the opportunity to be prepared with life skills. Youth can learn about basic living, banking and finance, housing, and job readiness skills. ILP also supports youth with crisis intervention and substance abuse awareness.

Graduation

The 2022 ILP Graduation Event was again held as a drive through event due to COVID-19. The event was held May 5, 2022. ILP received donations of gift baskets to celebrate the youth. Youth participated in day of photos and received frames, gift baskets, certificates, letters from the Courts, and snacks. Foster and Probation youth were rewarded for their hard work and celebrated for their accomplishment.

Access to Higher Education

The annual event was cancelled due to the pandemic and restrictions for social gatherings.

Early Education

There is a significant improvement in educational outcomes when there is early intervention and early enrollment in an early education program. The information below was provided by Fresno County Head Start and Early Head Start. The Head Start and Early Head Start programs reported a total of 109 enrollments for foster children.

Early Education Program	Ages	Number of foster children enrolled
Head Start	ages 3-5	98
Early Head Start	ages 0-3	11
Total enrollments		109

District and County Liaison Report

The School District Educational Liaisons and the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools County Liaison provided invaluable networking to FCSOC Subcommittee members and DSS concerning status and issues related to education of foster youth.

Fresno Unified School District

FUSD hosted 3 *Foster Youth Round Tables* that were held virtually for 21-22 school year, however, FUSD anticipates moving Round Table meetings to in person for the 22-23 academic school year. Subcommittee members several of the scheduled FUSD Round Tables. Feedback of the needs of foster youth was disseminated as was the success of foster youth students. FUSD has funded 22 Clinical School Social Workers and two Academic Counselors dedicated to Foster

and Homeless Youth. Clinical School Social Workers provide ongoing social/emotional services to students in grades K-12 and Academic Counselors provide targeted academic interventions to youth grades 8-12.

Central Unified School District

Schools returned to in person learning and there was outreach to each student who was in foster care and provided supports that are needed. Central Unified focused on social emotional health in addition to academics. Interventions included: Intervention Counselors (every site), School Psychologists (every site), Intervention Specialist (secondary), SAFE Team (district level), All4Youth/mental health (every site), Comprehensive Youth Services (Madison, Steinbeck, Teague, and Tilley), Prodigy - Substance Abuse intervention (secondary), CenCal (secondary), SROs (secondary).

Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS)

FCSS provided input on efforts and needs of foster youth in addition to services provided to students. This included applying for college, transportation challenges, communication between districts and child welfare, and overall issues county-wide. FCSS assisted 106 seniors with financial aid applications (94% completion rate), and college and dorm applications and was the statewide midsize winner for the FAFSA Challenge. In 2021-22, 685 foster youth were served. The county-wide education Foster Focus data base which is a county-wide data base that includes data from the state education CALPADS database, districts, and from the CWS child welfare system, has improved in quality of information allowing social workers to access student school history. FCSS trained 33 social workers and 296 school personnel on education rights of foster youth, students with special needs, ways to support academic success, and provided information on the services provided by FCSS. FCSS' Youth Leadership Academy was a year-long program that focused on developing leadership skills and developing student's strengths. There was a strong focus on the positive and what each student had to offer. The Leadership Academy will be expanded to include both high school and middle school students in 2022-23.

Appendix D

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE

Background and Purpose

The focus of the Children's Mental Health Subcommittee is on issues of mental health that affect all children in Fresno County including foster youth. It consists of members from the community, DSS, the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), and local community agencies. This subcommittee stays current on the availability of psychiatric and inpatient treatment, school-based services and other access to mental health services are provided.

This is a joint committee that is co-chaired by a member of the FCSOC and the Behavioral Health Board. The bi-monthly meetings provide an opportunity to have various agencies share about the services for local children and youth with behavioral health needs. The committee receives data updates from the Department about the services provided and while the committee does not make policy, it is informed on matters related to children's mental health, data, and provides support to better meet the needs of children in our community.

Meeting Format

The meeting format included a speaker from a community resource, on-going subcommittee's reports, an update from DBH, group conversations with County staff to examine specific issues allowing the Subcommittee to spend more time on specific matters of interest, and other mental health related issued presented to the group. There is no appointed membership; therefore, the Committee is open to anyone which results in various agencies and different people may attend the meeting. It is noted; however, that there is a core group who attend most meetings.

Meeting Focus

The Department and FCSOC have been concerned with the decline in the mental wellness of children and youth due to the impact of the pandemic. With sheltering in-place, distant learning, and the trauma of normalcy being disrupted yet again for children in the foster care system, depression and self-harm rates were increasing at alarming rates. Without intervention, 1 in 4 foster youth experience PTSD and are more likely to suffer from drug addiction, mental health issues and/or chronic unemployment.

Hard to place youth due to behavior which may be attributed to mental illness has been identified as a challenge for Fresno County. The Continuum of Care Reform Act promotes the placement of children in family settings and to avoid long-term care facilities. The greatest difficulty is housing children with complex emotional and behavioral health needs. A Therapeutic Foster Care Program is necessary for these children. This is an intensive program for foster parents and the support services that are required.

Eating disorders have become an increasing concern for the community. These disorders are complex physical and behavioral health illnesses. A treatment team has been created by the Department to serve the needs of children with these disorders.

Human Trafficking – As high as 88% of the youth that have been victims of Human Trafficking have also spent time in the foster care system. This is an alarming statistic that must be addressed while youth are in the Child Welfare System.

By the age of 26, 36% of the foster youth report at least one episode of homelessness and 43% have been incarcerated.

Intervention

Fresno County ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Network of Care has trained more than 1000 individuals since May 2021. Individuals receiving the ACEs training represent a wide gamut of local agencies that serve the most at-risk children and youth. Children and youth in the foster care system are often identified with a high ACEs score; thus, they can be treated, and effect of trauma mitigated with proper referral and recommendations.

Mental Health Programs

The Youth Wellness Center at Heritage provides access to children's behavioral health services. Children may receive services and care coordination by calling, walking-in or by referral. A post-hospitalization team provides follow-up to clients after psychiatric hospitalization.

All4Youth is a partnership program between the Department of Behavioral Health and the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools to provide behavioral health services in schools. The partnership is in year five of a planned five-year rollout to include all school districts in the county.

As part of the All4Youth partnership program, DBH and FCSS jointly developed a proposal for grant funding and, on behalf of the partnership, DBH was awarded a \$6 million grant from the Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA) to develop four Wellness Centers on or near school campuses to provide mental health prevention and intervention services through education and training about trauma and mental health. Reducing stigma around mental health will encourage families to seek needed services. The Wellness Centers are located in underserved areas of Fresno, Clovis, Fowler, and Riverdale.

For those youth who become involved in the justice system and encounter a time of incarceration at the Juvenile Justice Campus, the County's contracted in-custody health provider Wellpath, ensures that their physical and mental healthcare needs will be provided. All youth are evaluated and assessed for mental health needs. The mental health goals include improvement in mental health symptoms, reduction in suicide ideation and attempts, and timely response to requests for services. Diversion programs are important to avoid the incarceration of youthful offenders. These efforts have been successful, as shown by the reduction in the numbers of youth currently incarcerated.

The Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is a new state-mandated program through which youth in foster care and former foster youth, and their families, can reach out for support in difficult times. The state operates a centralized support call line and for matters which require additional local support, a response team is deployed locally to support the youth and family, preserve placement, and avoid crisis and hospitalizations.

DBH provides a continuum of services across levels of care for youth who are Medi-Cal beneficiaries; services including outpatient services, crisis care, short term residential therapeutic services, and acute psychiatric inpatient care are among those provided by DBH and their network of care. Foster youth have access to specialized services through specific contracts through which providers are fully dedicated and trained to serve this population. Foster youth also have access to the full continuum of DBH services, based on their needs.

In the FY 21/22, a total of 1,557 youth with a foster care aid code received services from the Department of Behavioral Health. Of those youth 54 experienced a stay in the Crisis Stabilization Center operated on behalf of DBH by Exodus Recovery and a total of 373 youth received services in one of 12 different Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs.

Both DBH and DSS have newly appointed Directors and they are collaborating on strategies to strengthen care coordination efforts for all youth with an emphasis on those youth with the most complex needs.