

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The FCFCSOC was created by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors in 2001, as explained in its bylaws, "To exercise oversight and review of systems and services which affect children focusing on, but not limited to, the foster care system. To that end, the FCFCSOC shall do the following: A. Advise and make recommendations for continuous and lasting system improvements, and B. Provide a forum for community input related to the FCFCSOC purpose. Additionally, the FCFCSOC...shall participate in lawfully constituted multi-disciplinary review teams that review cases involving child abuse or neglect and participate in Department of Children and Family Services internal review committees."

The primary responsibility of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee (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 consists of Education, Mental Health, Continuum of Care, and Recruitment, Development, Support, and Public Relations.

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 the death of a child associated with the child welfare system occurs.

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

Mission

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

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.

Changes Moving Forward

Over the past few years the work of the FCFCSOC has moved away from its stated purpose and instead consisted of regular subcommittee meetings which served as valuable interagency/organization communication forums, but are no longer driven by

an overarching, clear direction from the full FCFCSOC. Subcommittees are: 1. Children's Mental Health, 2. Education, 3. Recruitment, Development, Support and Public Relations, 4. Continuum of Care Reform.

Given the above, FCSOC has begun a review of its current structure and identified priority issues/goals to be addressed and recommended process to address these issues/goals. This is preliminary and efforts are currently in progress to finalize the list of issues. This current effort and information will also inform a new strategic plan to be developed in 2018-19 which will guide FCSOC into the future. The preliminary results of this work are indicated below.

Overview of Subcommittees

The Education Subcommittee's focus 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 recommendations to assist the child welfare system to be more effective and efficient for the educational success of foster youth.

The Mental Health Subcommittee's focus 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), 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 service children in foster care.

The Continuum of Care Subcommittee's focus is to ensure that all children in foster care live with a committed, permanent and nurturing family. It, also, ensures individualized and coordinated services and supports, and focuses on limiting the use of congregate care to short-term, high quality, and intensive interventions. The committee consists of members that include community representatives, local community agencies and DSS.

The Recruitment, 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. Subcommittee members include community representatives, Foster Family Agencies, Fresno State Renaissance Scholars, DSS and local educational partners.

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. The current membership list is included in this report.

Priority issues to be addressed:

1. Establish mechanisms to allow information to reach all 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.
2. Re-establish methods and procedures to perform oversight of the foster care system and engage in review of foster care cases as necessary, as authorized by Standing Order No. 03-01.
3. Re-establish regular communication with appointed Fresno County Supervisors to confirm expectations and report progress in FCSOC's work.
4. Engage in in-depth review of causes associated with high Social Worker turnover and the impacts it has throughout the foster care system, with the goal of lowering turnover rates.

Processes to meet identified issues/goals:

1. Finalize and prioritize the issues list.
2. Restructure subcommittees to support the review of issues to allow FCSOC to make recommendations to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors.
3. Re-establish involvement with FCSOC by Fresno County Superior Court and law enforcement.
4. Identify other disciplines and groups that should be represented on FCSOC to improve its oversight ability and encourage applicants to apply to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors to fill vacant seats.

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 them for successful adulthood. Positive outcomes for youth provides significant dividends, as more effective citizens are added to our communities. FCSOC recommends increased support in 2018-19 for the expansion of services for youth preparing for adulthood, including housing and budget assistance, life skills training, and a lifelong linkage to a responsive and supportive adult.

The FCSOC is pleased to present the Fourteenth Annual Report to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors

DISTRICT APPOINTEES

DISTRICT 1 APPOINTEES

Brandy Swisher – Community Advocate
Marilyn Bamford – Uplift Family Services
Vacant

DISTRICT 2 APPOINTEES

Mark Allen – School Administrator, Retired
Oscar G. Williams – Community Activist
Vacant

DISTRICT 3 APPOINTEES

Joe Martinez – Community Relations and Outreach Manager, Fresno County
Economic Opportunities Commission Sanctuary and Youth Services, Chair
Tracy Kashian – Lance-Kashian & CO.
David J. Criner – Saint Rest Baptist Church

DISTRICT 4 APPOINTEES

Richard Bailey – Child Welfare Attorney
Dr. Kenneth D. Bird, MD – Public Health Physician, Retired
Vacant

DISTRICT 5 APPOINTEES

Pamela Hancock – Fresno County Superintendent of Schools
Coreen Campos – CEO, Focus Forward, Vice Chair
Breanne Read – CASA

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Supervisor Sal Quintero – Supervisor Chair
Steve Rapada – Proxy

EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Background/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.

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 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 Subcommittee and FCSOC monthly meeting minutes).

Subcommittee members included are: *Chairperson*, FCSOC Board Member (former MHS Educational Liaison and retired FUSD Special Education Administrator); Fresno County Department of Social Services (DSS): Educational Liaisons and Supervisor; Fresno Unified School District (FUSD): Educational Liaison, Social Workers and Program Manager; Central Unified School District (CUSD) Educational Liaison, and CUSD Director of CWA/Student Services; Fresno County Superintendent of Schools: Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) Education Specialists and Director; Foster Family Agency (FFA) representatives: Uplift Family Services, Director and Social Worker; Transitions Children's Services, Social Worker and Northstar Family Center, Social Worker; Juvenile Justice Commission, Board member; California Youth Connections (CYC), Staff member; CSUF Renaissance Scholars Program, Program Director. Additional input and discussion was provided by the FCSOC Board Chairman, DSS Staff and additional 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 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.

Educational Liaison Report

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.

DSS Program Manager and Social Work Supervisor provided oversight data monthly to enable discussions about reasons for school changes, and to study the effectiveness of the “*Potential School Change Form*” (PSCF) to communicate and improve stability.

Potential School Change Form (PSCF)

The on-line PSCF was fully implemented at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year. Information obtained from the “reasons for school change” provided a means for discussion on improving advocacy for school stability. The need to keep new social workers updated on the process and issues of school stability became apparent in discussions. Plans to provide on-going training to new staff was determined a priority. A training video was proposed and developed in January 2018, in collaboration with Central Unified, FUSD Educational Liaisons, and FYSCP.

Goal for 2017-2018 School Year: Track and provide PSCF data for TK through 6th, 7th to 8th, 9th through 11th and 12th. Utilize the PSCF information and process to analyze each group, study the impact on high school students and minimize any school changes in 12th grade. Educational Liaisons reported efforts to keep school changes only during Winter Break and Summer Break.

Results: TK through 6th, 62 school changes for foster children (62% at break); 7th to 8th, total of 25 (76% at break); 9th through 11th with 31 (48% at break); 12th had no changes during regular session (2 during break). 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.

Special Education Laws

Education Liaisons reviewed the challenges for Social Workers to understand and navigate the regulations for foster youth receiving or needing Special Education services. Central Unified and FYSCP, collaborated with Education Liaisons to develop a training video and participated in a Social Worker training in April 2018 to share the video. Feedback from the training was positive and it was deemed necessary for all in-coming staff.

Independent Living Program (ILP) Graduation

Education Liaisons provided updates on senior planning, culminating with the ILP Graduation Event. The May 18, 2018 event was extremely successful. College scholarships were awarded to several youth. The Rotary Club provided two scholarships for \$400/semester to attend Fresno City College and Focus Forward provided one \$250 scholarship. The event featured entertainment provided by foster youths, and included an inspirational speaker, praised by the graduates

Access to Higher Education

Annual Event planning input and updates for planning were reviewed. A total of 110 high school foster youth participated in the October event. The increase number of students was the result of school district collaboration to enable District youth to attend during a school day with transportation provided by Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, *Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program*. A Middle School event for Access to Education took place in March at CSUF. There was an increase in the number of attendance, with 72 students from 5 districts, and 19 participating schools. A FYSCP student survey was reviewed and the event received positive feedback.

Education Support Matrix

The growth and breadth of support for foster youth since the onset of AB 490 was recognized and deemed complicated to navigate. Role clarification was identified by the Committee in 2016-17 as a necessary communication tool to further improve the delivery of Education Supportive Services. The *Matrix* delineated the types of educational services available through the various resources offered to children, and identifies which provider would be responsible for specific service in an effort to prevent duplication of services for children. The final *Matrix* was updated and available as an online resource through Google docs in December 2017.

Early Education

The significance of early intervention was reviewed monthly and barriers identified. In 2017-18, Head Start referrals increased to 57, with 27 for schools. A total of 209 Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) were recorded and caregivers, who were able to complete the ASQ in a timely manner, were recognized. In 2018, training will be provided to Family Reunification to expedite and address Early Education Intervention.

Youth Outreach

On March 28, 2018, a workgroup was held for foster youth to discuss and complete a survey related to their experiences in foster care. Education related to college tours and fees needed improvement, according to feedback from foster youth. Information on colleges, financial aid, AB12, and benefits was helpful to foster youth. Suggestion on the need for Social Workers and ILP workers to collaborate was advised. Foster Youth and

Educational Liaisons attended the Education Summit. Seven foster youth and one Educational Liaison attended the CYC Conference in Sacramento. They attended in support of AB2247, *Foster Youth Placement Stability* and the youth presented on the impact of frequent changes in home and school, and the challenges it create in receiving school credits.

District and Community Liaison Report

The School District Educational Liaisons and the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Education Specialists provided invaluable networking to FCSOC Subcommittee members and DSS concerning status and issues related to education of foster youth. Periodically, CSUF Renaissance Scholars Director and CYC provided input and information as well.

Fresno Unified School District: The Educational Liaison provided direction and informational data updates on high school seniors related to student success and graduation. The FUSD *Foster Youth Round Table* held quarterly, was attended by Subcommittee members. Feedback of the needs of foster youth was disseminated. Based on Community and Subcommittee input, FUSD has staffed and funded 10 Social Workers and two Academic Counselors dedicated to Foster Youth Support and expanded to include grades 6-12. In April 2018, all DSS foster youth applied for college admission and completed the FAFSA for financial support. Of these foster youth, 25 graduated (96%) from high school and are prepared for college, with four attending CSUF.

Central Unified School District: Provided valuable input regarding work with high school seniors and laws affecting foster youth. The district continues to have significant challenges with foster youth arriving with special needs, requiring specialized resources. Educational Liaison collaborated with CASA for training on education.

Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, FYSCP: Provided input on efforts and needs of foster youth applying for college. Interviewed and assisted youth with requirements for college applications. Coordinated information sharing and data from the Foster Youth Services Advisory. A position, *Content Specialist, Early Childhood* was added and will be collaborating with the Early Childhood DSS Educational Liaison for improved intervention and services in 2018. Three additional Educational Specialist were funded and staffed to serve foster youth. In 2017-18, 330 foster youth were served, and will include expansion to serve 8th grade youth on a pilot basis. FCSS FYSCP, was the statewide midsize winner for the FAFSA Challenge for the most youth completing their financial application.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE

Background/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 ensures the availability of psychiatric and inpatient treatment, school-based services and other access to mental health services are met to service children in foster care.

This committee is a joint committee with Children's Services Committee and Behavioral Health Board, which deals with all children's mental health needs and 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, six meetings were held. The meeting format included a speaker from a community resource, on-going subcommittee's reports, a report from DBH, group conversations with County staff to examine specific issues allowing the Subcommittee to spend more time on specific matters of interest, announcements and community comments, and other mental health related issued presented to the group. Membership in the Committee is open to anyone; therefore, different people may attend the meeting each month. However, there is a core group who attend most meetings.

Presentation Topics:

- City Without Orphans
- Continuum of Care Reform
- DSS: Process for tracking Child Welfare Mental Health referrals, and mechanisms for measuring timeliness of access
- DBH: Psychiatric services for children
- Turning Point: Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Program and Housing Challenges

Meeting Discussion Items during FY2017-2018

DBH updates were inclusive of topics such as:

- Staffing challenges
- Timeliness of access to mental health and psychiatric services

- Implementation of tele-psychiatry
- CANS implementation
- Clovis Unified not allowing providers to meet with children on school campuses
- Issues with many Central Valley Regional Center (CVRC) referrals not being approved (especially those in foster care)
- A large amount of out of county referrals

Psychiatric Services

Karen Kraus, University of San Francisco, Fresno Medical Education Program explained that her goal is to construct a viable system of psychiatric care for Children's Services at DBH. Some of her challenges are the lack of leadership (medical director), heavy workloads, impacted services, lack of resources, and a lack of support staff for medical providers. She is working to stabilize the workflow of tele-psychiatry, which includes 7 child psychiatrists and 1 nurse practitioner, and to support staff with strategic planning.

Several identified complaints from families and clients include: 1. Tele-psychiatry (wait time for face-to-face doctors is much longer), 2. Timeliness of service, and 3. Dissatisfaction with providers (usually psychiatrists). Will continue to work on addressing these complaints.

When asked about the accomplishments since March, Dr. Kraus mentioned the following: 1. Identification of challenges, 2. Integration of tele-psychiatry into the system of care, 3. Improved data systems to track transition of children through the system, 4. Plan for the improvement of client-centered care; and 5. System for responding to concerns of families and clients.

Child Welfare Mental Health Services

As noted in last year's report, several committee members expressed concern regarding waiting lists for child welfare clients to be evaluated for court-ordered mental health services. There are currently three providers of Child Welfare Mental Health Services that were initiated in response to the Katie A mandates (California Psychological Institute, Central Stars, and Uplift Family Services), which has increased access to mental health services for children in the foster care system and their parents/caregivers.

The three providers meet monthly to share resources and strategies to best serve clients and to support continuing collaboration among the agencies. The committee asked for quarterly updates and is a standing item on the agenda.

Continuum of Care Reform

The Committee continued to be kept informed of the changes taking place in the child welfare system. Assembly Bill 403 calls for the reform of congregate care (24-hour) for

children. Exactly how CCR will look is currently in process. Implementation has started and is in its early stages. Members of the Children's committee are very interested about the full implementation of CCR.

The CCR redesign is an overhaul on the concepts of group homes in terms of level of care that will help children stabilize, based on the child's level of need while assigned to these facilities. The State would like to avoid long-term care, and return and/or place the child in a permanent family setting. One of the aspects in achieving this goal is Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC), which will have a stronger mental health component. TFC will require that the foster family agency assign a licensed clinician to foster care caregivers to provide skills and training to address children's behaviors. Short Term Residential Treatment Program (STRTP) formerly Level 10, 12, and 14 facilities: the concept is to provide short term, high quality, and intensive intervention services to transition the child back or to place in a permanent family setting as soon as possible. Mental health treatment will be provided to the child in accordance to their level of need; services can intensify or reduce based on the child's needs.

The new system is complex involving various state agencies: Community Care Licensing (CCL) who handles the licensing of the Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) and Resource Family Agencies (RFA), the Department of Health Care Services is responsible for the mental health care certification processes, and a joint process of approval by existing agencies moving into this model including: DSS, Probation, and DBH.

CCR has developed an evaluation tool that is being used with FFA resource families to help determine the right level of needs for their clients. Once utilized, the evaluation tool would be modified based on learnings to create an evaluation tool that can be used across the board by all resource families. The State has also identified the CANS instrument: Child Adolescent Needs Strengths to be used to inform the care and/or treatment of children in the child welfare system. Therapeutic Foster Care: will include a full construct of training for family resource agencies that will be required to hire licensed mental health professionals to oversee therapeutic foster care services provided by the foster parent in the homes. The State recognizes the need to start behavioral health needs early on and appropriate level for everyone involved in serving children and families. Golden State has been identified as the Therapeutic Foster Care provider for Fresno County.

DBH, DSS and Probation are continuing to work together in this process. DBH is currently developing a master agreement based on the State licensing protocols and/or framework with stringent requirements and criteria that providers must meet, including accreditation. The State has released protocols for STRTP that providers must follow and requires them to submit their program statement for review and approval by DBH, DSS, and Probation. Once approved, the program statement is then sent to the State for final approval. The emphasis of the entities involved are working together to implement this framework.

Parent/Youth/Foster Care Committee Participation

The committee has on-going discussions on how to diversify membership in the Committee. Speakers have been invited. Consumers and youth organizations have been encouraged to also attend the meetings. Members have reached out to other organizations to attend and options are discussed each month. Families willing to participate are invited to attend meetings and share their experience of working with the various agencies.

Committee provided suggestions for the upcoming year for ways to involve youth and parent/caregivers by inviting participants to provide feedback or input on a specific topic at meetings similar to stakeholder sessions, or to request to attend foster parent meetings that are currently held.

Agenda Items and Goals for 2018-2019: (Key data points determined to be inclusive of measurable)

- Access to Child Welfare Mental Health Services
- Access to Psychiatric Services
- Access to mental health or Central Valley Regional Center(CVRC) services for those with developmental delays
- Continuum of Care Reform & AB1299
- Defined data collection and reports from DBH to be provided each meeting
- Parent/Youth/Foster Care Committee Participation
- School based mental health services
- TAY and family Housing
- Youth transitional programs,

CONTINUUM OF CARE REFORM SUBCOMMITTEE

Background/Purpose

On October 11, 2015, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. signed legislation that comprehensively reforms placement and treatment options for youth in foster care. Assembly Bill 403, (Stone D. Monterey) sponsored by the CDSS, builds upon years of policy changes to improve outcomes for youth in foster care.

This effort known as CCR draws together a series of existing and new reforms to our child welfare services program designed out of an understanding that children who must live apart from their biological parents do best when they are cared for in committed nurturing family homes. AB 403 provides the statutory and policy framework to ensure services and supports provided to the child or youth and his or her family are tailored toward the ultimate goal of maintaining a stable permanent family. Reliance on congregate care should be limited to short-term. Therapeutic interventions are just one part of a continuum of care available for children, youth and young adults.

“Continuum of care” refers to the spectrum of care settings for youth in foster care. It can range from the least restrictive and least service-intensive (i.e. a placement with an individual foster family or extended family member) to the most restrictive and most service-intensive (i.e. a group home with required participation in mental health treatment and limits on when the youth can leave the facility). Continuum of Care Reform is a comprehensive framework that supports children, youth and families cross-placement settings (from relatives to congregate care) in achieving permanency. This includes increased engagement with children, youth and families, increased capacity for home-based family care, limited use of congregate care, and systemic and infrastructure changes: rates, training, accreditation, accountability and performance, and mental health services.

CCR builds on California’s current reform efforts Approved Relative Caregivers Program (ARC), Resources Family Approval (RFA) Program, Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI), Child and Family Teaming, and Pathways to Mental Health.

Implementation efforts for CCR will occur in stages between now and 2021 in child welfare services, and in succeeding years in probation foster care.

AB 403 implements the following policy changes:

- Updates the assessment process so that the first out of home placement is the right one.
- Establishes core services and supports for foster youth, their families, and resource families;
- Strengthens training and qualifications for resource families providing care to foster youth and congregate care facility staff;

- To the extent that the children are provided needed services and support, transitions children from congregate care into home-based family care with resource families;
- Transforms group homes into a new category of STRTP's;
- Revises the foster care rate structure;
- Requires STRTP's and treatment foster family agencies to be certified by counties through their mental health plans;
- Evaluates provider performance.

Committee Activity

The Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) Subcommittee continues to meet monthly. The workgroup provide updates to CCR implementation through data sharing and partnership. Ongoing topics of discussions are Resource Family Approval (RFA), Level of Care Protocol (LOCP), Group Home conversion to STRTP, Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC), and newly issued All County Letters (ACL's). DSS share data and information with the Subcommittee to keep them informed of the expansion of CCR in Fresno County. Teaming and collaboration regarding system issues and barriers to CCR are also discussed. Managers in attendance gather the items of discussions to take back to Child Welfare Leadership for further dialogue and review. Practice and policy are then adapted and relayed to the broader child welfare system. A major product from this workgroup in the past year is the new interim licensing standards regarding bedroom sharing. The workgroup established a new form and policy to meet the licensing standard that is now utilized with new placements of youth.

Vision/Mission/Moving Forward

The goal of the Continuum of Care Reform Committee is that all children live with a committed, permanent and nurturing family, with individualized and coordinated services and supports. Focus is on permanent family and preparation for successful adulthood. When needed, congregate care is a short-term, high quality, intensive intervention that is just one part of a continuum of care available for children, youth and young adults. Future goals are to support and inform the full implementation of the LOCP as well as Child and Adolescent Strengths and Needs (CANS) assessments.

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT SUBCOMMITTEE/QUALITY PARENTING INITIATIVE (RDS/QPI)

Background/Purpose

The mission of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee is to provide oversight for, and promote communication between the Board of Supervisors and the Department of Social Services, along with its related agencies and the community it serves, while emphasizing the provision of information and recommendations that make the system more effective and efficient. The committee also works to assure that children who cannot be protected in their own home will be placed with a safe and stable family member, or with a family from their own community or neighborhood. In order to further this mission, a sub-committee to address the recruitment, development, and support of foster parents was established by the Oversight Committee.

The Public Relations Subcommittee's 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 that will ultimately have a beneficial 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 caregivers in order to provide excellent care for children in the 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, as well as to highlight and reward work that has been done. The QPI CA website is <http://www.qpicalifornia.org/>

The Recruitment, Development, and Support Subcommittee have merged with the Public Relations Subcommittee and Quality Parenting Initiative—organizations which all have similar goals. This new committee, known as the RDS/QPI committee has been able to maximize the planning for the State of CA grant funding known as the Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support (FPRSS). For the 2017-18 fiscal year, Fresno County DSS received \$827,715 and Fresno County Probation received \$342,978 in federal funding and Title IV-E drawdown. The DSS and Probation plan, which was proposed to the state, represented the voice of our community as it was generated from the work plan these combined groups established. In 2018, the California Department of Social Services received funding for "Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support" (FPRRS). As part of the plan for 2018, DSS and QPI continued its work from the previous year and added new components where it was needed, learning from the previous year's process.

Funding received have been used for the following:

- Establishment of the first Mockingbird Family Model Constellation in California
- Media resource family campaign
- Continued preventative-supportive financial assistance for relatives
- Continued resource family gift cards to families upon placement
- Financial support for minor's extracurricular activities
- Establishment of Town Hall Meetings for resource families
- Training for resource families

Subcommittee Activity

The RDS/QPI sub-committee was represented with participation from the FCSOC, DSS administration, program staff, foster parents, relatives, community members, and Foster Family Agencies. The Subcommittee had a brief break this year. Participants recognized that attendance has dropped and the Subcommittee was struggling with completing action steps and goals. The break was taken in February 2018 and restarted June 2018, based on feedback from the Town Hall meeting. It was agreed that action steps will be worked on by the whole group and not breakout groups with one major task focused on at a time. QPI will also continue to work on improving communication with care providers. A document entitled "Important Contact Numbers" was distributed to care providers and community partners to assist care providers in knowing who to contact for various issues and concerns. The next major action step is revamping of Fresno County resource family webpage. Care providers agreed to assist and provide feedback to update and make the webpage more user friendly.

Mockingbird Family Program

The Mockingbird Family Program had a brief hiatus this year. The former DSS hub home had to leave the Family Model constellation due to personal, family reasons. DSS released a Request for Application to recruit a new hub home. Several applicants, with a wealth of knowledge and expertise, have applied. An applicant was selected and contract negotiations have started to secure a new hub home.

The Mockingbird Family organization completed a fidelity assessment of the Fresno program in May 2018. The results of the fidelity assessment were positive and encouraging. Fresno County was found to be on target for a program in its first year. The constellation was found to have formed tight, cohesive bonds that have allowed relationships to continue and grow during the period without a hub home, and the Mockingbird Family Liaison was given excellent reviews for her leadership in maintaining the constellation.

Media Resource Family/Foster Parent Campaign

The iHeart media campaign ended in March 2018. DSS chose not to continue this radio campaign as it was cost prohibitive and did not appear to produce any significant numbers of new care providers for foster children.

Preventive-Supportive Financial Assistance for Relatives

DSS continues to provide 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 while it provided support to relatives and mentors. Preventative services continue to be provided to relatives/mentors which prevented children and youth from becoming involved in the Fresno County Child Welfare Services system. Supportive services also continue to be provided to relatives/mentors which allowed children/youth to remain in their care.

Resource Family Gift Cards

DSS provided gift cards based on the child's needs to resource families, relatives, or mentors at the time of initial placement for every child entering a new home. 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 pay for initial placement items out of their own pockets and wait to be reimbursed, which could put a strain on the family. This gift card offset that initial cost and was appreciated by the families.

Financial Support for Minor's Extracurricular Activities

DSS was able to continue providing funding for children and youth to participate in extracurricular activities this past year. Care providers were eager to have children involved in activities that taught valuable skills and allowed children to enjoy themselves. An additional benefit was that it gave the care provider a bit of respite while the child was in the program.

Town Hall meetings for Care Providers

Town Hall meetings allow care providers, DSS, and Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) to share information and discuss changes in state laws and other related practices. The Town Hall meeting on April 5, 2018 included the discussion of the RDS/QPI subcommittee as the meeting was on hold for restructuring. The DSS QPI liaison, Cathi Huerta, presented on the mission, vision, and goals of the subcommittee. After the presentation, care providers broke out into small groups and their feedback was sought as to the restart of QPI and other services. Feedback was compiled and DSS took immediate action on several recommendations. First, DSS reinvigorated the reimbursement of extracurricular activities for foster youth. Second, DSS took a deep

look at how to communicate with our care providers and community partners. DSS is now regularly contributing to the Facebook closed group for Fresno care providers by posting new updates or information and resources that can be useful to providers.

Training for Resource Families, Relatives, and Mentors

With the Continuum of Care Reform moving forward, additional training is needed for our care providers. To meet those needs, Fresno DSS has expanded our orientation and pre-service training. New Resource Family Orientation has been averaging about 100 families per a month. New Pre-service classes, in English and Spanish, started at the West Fresno Office, and it has seen an average of 55 participants per month.

Emerging Technologies

Fresno County DSS has purchased equipment to begin using electronic technology, such as SKYPE and conference calling, to make meeting and training more accessible for caregivers, thereby allowing expanded access to information and feedback from our care providers, which includes relatives.

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

Annual Let's Talk Conference

The 2018 Let's Talk Conference hosted nearly 350 attendees, which included resource families, foster family agencies (FFA), community partners, and Department of Social Services Staff. This year, Child Welfare Services continued its efforts to support the vision of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) by focusing on Levels of Care. Subject matter experts presented on the five Levels of Care Domains: Physical, Behavioral/Emotional, Education, Health, and Permanency/Family Services.

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. Future goals include the creation of a respite program for care providers and a mentoring program for new care providers.