



# Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee

*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.*

December 11, 2018

## Summary

1. It has been several years since the Fresno County Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee (FCSOC) met its mission of examining the function of the Foster Care System and making recommendations to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors.
2. The FCSOC has re-committed itself to meeting its mission and purpose for creation by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors in 2001.
3. High priority has been assigned to reestablishing lines of communication with all involved in the Foster Care System to become informed of issues that need to be corrected.
4. High priority has also been assigned to identifying causes of high turnover among social workers, with the goal of making meaningful recommendations for improvement to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors.

## Remarks

### Richard Bailey

Mr. Chairman and Board members:

Thank you for this opportunity to address you today. I sit on the Fresno County Standards and Oversight Committee. I want to thank Supervisor Buddy Mendes for appointing me to the Committee. I am overwhelmed by the steadfast support Supervisor Mendes has shown for the Committee and for the work of protecting Fresno County's at risk children.

Its purpose is to exercise oversight and review of systems and services affecting Fresno County kids. Its focus is the foster care system. That system includes all aspects of work performed by the Fresno County Department of Social Services, the dependency court and allied service providers. Oversight starts with detention decisions for children. It includes the agency and court processes that flow from that decision. Informal supervision is also covered.

The Committee's purpose is to advise the Board and make recommendations for continuous and lasting improvements in services provided to children and families related to the foster care system. The Committee is also required to provide a forum for community input related to Fresno's foster care system.

For that purpose the Committee has been given broad authority by this Board and the Court to gather information and observe proceedings. The Committee is required to prepare an annual report to this Board. Committee members and members of this Board keep in touch. This allows the Committee to reflect the ongoing concerns of this Board.

The Committee was established in 2001 to act as the eyes and ears of this Board. The current Board intends to once again carry out this mission.

**Brandy Swisher**

Mr. Chairman and Board members thank you for giving us this time. Particular thanks to Supervisor Brian Pacheco for appointing me and supporting my work on this Committee.

Back in 2001, the Committee adopted a set of underlying assumptions. They apply today. I'm not going to read the whole list. But, here are some examples:

*This is an exploration not an investigation*

*This is problem solving, not blame placing*

*This is about systems not individuals.*

*This is about children's needs and about adults needs only to the extent that they contribute to satisfy children's needs*

*This is designed to develop recommendations for the Board of Supervisors, not to run the day-to-day operations the Department of Social Services.*

*This is an opportunity to give voice to a wide variety of individuals and groups.*

*This is an opportunity to partner with the public servants we employ in order to improve services to children.*

*This is an opportunity to create something that lasts longer than we do.*

These principles continue to guide the Committee in its approach to its efforts.

I thank the Board for this opportunity to explain the Committee's work. This year's set of objectives is laid out in the memo provided in today's binder. What you'll see in that text is the high level of motivation of the FCSOC to do the best for Fresno County's most vulnerable children.

**Richard Bailey**

Of current issues before the Committee, several are worth mentioning. First, the Committee is interested in assisting the Board in helping the department deliver world-class services. That includes supporting the amazing people to deliver those services and their retention. It also means helping the Board look for ways to meet the needs of department clients, including children and their families, as well as service providers.

**Brandy Swisher**

Based on my recent experience as the grandparent and caretaker of a foster child, I believe your Board should support implementation of the client-centered approach to protecting children that the County has already adopted. I know that Fresno County can provide leadership in this area, and I know the consequences to vulnerable children, families, and foster providers when it isn't done. I have seen the harm that can be done by people in the system through action and through inaction, and I have seen the good work of social workers who have true hearts for serving children. I am on FCSOC because I came to my Supervisor for help when no one would listen or help. My family received help we desperately needed, and it was suggested that I could be part of the solution by applying for a seat on the committee. I did, and that's how I am here today.

Hearing from people in the system – professionally or personally – about what is wrong and what it right is critical. There is no mechanism for that now. Expanding the Committee's outreach to the court, this Board, the department and the larger community is important in meeting the Board's mandate. Keeping in close touch with this Board, the court, and children and families in the system, foster care providers, and the department, is key to providing a useful service.

On behalf of the Committee, I want to thank the Board for this opportunity to serve. Members of the Committee are looking forward to continuing its work in 2019.

# **Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee Member Roster 2018**

**District 1:** Brandy Swisher, Marilyn Bamford

**District 2:** Oscar Williams, Mark Allen, Tracy Kashian

**District 3:** Sal Quintero, Joe Martinez, David Criner

**District 4:** Dr. Ken Bird, Richard Bailey

**District 5:** Coreen Campos, Pamela Hancock, Breanne Read



## Board Agenda Item 5

DATE: December 11, 2018

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Joe Martinez, Chair, Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee

SUBJECT: Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee 2017-18 Annual Report

### RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

**Accept the 2017-2018 Fresno County Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee annual report and planned actions for 2018-2019.**

The Fresno County Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee (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."

### ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

There are no viable alternative actions.

### FISCAL IMPACT:

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

### DISCUSSION:

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.

This year's FCFCSOC annual report has a different format than years past. Typically, a collection of subcommittee reports are submitted, along with a list of informational presentations held throughout the year for the full FCFCSOC. As in years past, the four subcommittee reports are presented here as attachments. However, because the full FCFCSOC has spent the past year identifying issues and processes that require review and examination, the synthesized results of that work are presented here as a list of priority issues and processes by which to address them. The goal is to present recommendations for foster care system improvement to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors.

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In the coming year the FCFCSOC plans to create a concise strategic work plan to move forward in its intended work. Foremost in that effort is finalizing a list of issues of concern submitted by FCFCSOC members drawn from their collective professional and personal experiences, and collected from County staff during FCFCSOC meetings and related meetings.

**Among top-priority issues that will be addressed in the coming year are:**

1. Re-establishing mechanisms to allow information to reach the FCFCSOC from clients and stakeholders in the foster care system. Examples include foster children, foster families, biological families, social workers with the County and in foster family agencies, legal counsel for children and families, and judges. No such mechanisms exist at present.
2. Re-establishing mechanisms and procedures to engage in review of foster care cases as necessary to perform oversight of the foster care system, as authorized by Standing Order No. 03-01.
3. Re-establishing regular communication with appointing Fresno County Supervisors to confirm expectations and report progress in FCFCSOC's work.
4. Engaging in in-depth review of causes of high social worker turnover and the impacts it has throughout the foster care system, with the goal of lowering turnover rates.

**Processes accomplish these goals:**

1. Finalizing and prioritizing the issues list.
2. Restructuring subcommittees to support the review of issues to allow the FCFCSOC to make recommendations to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors.
3. Re-establishing involvement with the FCFCSOC by Fresno County Superior Court and law enforcement.
4. Identifying other disciplines and groups that should be represented on FCFCSOC to improve its oversight ability, and encourage applicants to apply to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors to fill vacant seats.

Attachments: 1) A working general categories list of issues and concerns brought forward by members and Fresno County staff, 2) A list of working guidelines adopted by FCFCSOC, and 3) Reports from the four subcommittees.

As the FCFCSOC continues the work of realigning its focus and subsequent actions with its original purpose, it may discover that analysis, data collection, review, and other skilled assistance is necessary, which may require a source of funding to perform. Should this come to pass, an explanation of such needs and a proposed budget will be submitted to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors to consider.

The members of the FCFCSOC are committed to presenting the Fresno County Board of Supervisors with recommendations for lasting and meaningful foster care system improvements in the coming year. It is also committed to re-establishing regular contact with appointing Supervisors to ensure accountability for progress.

**ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:**

FCFCSOC 2017-18 Annual Report

Attachment 1

Attachment 2

**CAO ANALYST:**

Ronald Alexander