

CALIFORNIA FAMILY TO FAMILY HIGHLIGHTS REPORT: 2007

Northern Cluster

Information contained in following report was self-reported by participating Family to Family counties to highlight their work and accomplishments for 2007.





2007 Highlights from the F2F Counties

California Family to Family Initiative

Northern Counties: Glen, Humboldt, Placer, Sacramento, Solano, Tehama and Trinity

Glenn

Year Funded Began: 2004

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF RESOURCE FAMILIES (RDS)

- Since implementation of F2F, there has been an increase in the number of county licensed resource homes. Two AmeriCorps members support recruitment efforts by making weekly contact with resource families and updating the placement availability list prior to the start of each weekend.
- Placement in county licensed foster homes has increased, placement in family agency homes has decreased, and placement in group homes is stable, but at a low rate. Use of relative/non-relative extended family members (NREFM) placements has increased in the point in time data, but efforts are continuing to increase the number of *initial* placements with relative/NREFM. In 2007, two resource family/relative/NREFM appreciation events were held.
- No state or federally funded respite care is provided for resource families, but many families set up informal respite care “exchanges.”
- Due to the emphasis on front-end Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings, resource parents often do not attend TDMs. Ninety percent of TDMs are attended by at least one birth parent. PRIDE training for new resource families is provided by Butte Community College serving Glenn and Butte counties.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- The Parent Education Network (PEN), a Butte-Glenn non-profit organization, has embraced the values of F2F, attended a F2F convening and regularly attends TDMs.
- A Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program has been established in Glenn County. Child welfare staff participated in the CASA volunteer training and welcome the additional support for cases.

TEAM DECISION MAKING

- Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings are mandatory for imminent risk of removal and emergency removal cases. Protocol, supported by a “firewall” and compliance monitoring by two child welfare supervisors and a program manager, is in place to ensure that front-end TDMs occur. TDMs have been used for placement moves, but are not yet required. Staff changes and prolonged vacancies in 2007 have delayed further implementation of TDMs.
- TDMs address safety and risk through the use of the Comprehensive Assessment Tool (CAT), though it is not yet used consistently for all TDMs.
- Due in part to the size of the county, there is not broad participation by community representatives in TDMs. The judge and attorneys have expressed support for TDMs due to the decreased number of contested and continued hearings as well as decreased filing of juvenile court petitions as a result of the practice.
- The draft plan to implement Icebreakers was completed by an AmeriCorps member.

- When TDMs were first introduced, staff buy-in for participation was low due to “time concerns.” Now, social work staff can not imagine life without them. Implementation of TDMs has increased the sense of “shared decision making” and helped improve relationships with families, service providers and youth. As needed, TDMs have been held at detention facilities/jails to allow in-person participation of the parent(s).
- During 2007, a total of 63 TDMs were held, which was an increase from the 41 TDMs held in 2006. This total included 16 imminent risk TDMs, 40 emergency placement TDMs, 6 placement moves, and 1 exit from placement TDM.

SELF EVALUATION

- The Self Evaluation team supports F2F work as well as other child welfare evaluation needs. The team has been meeting more frequently to “catch-up” on Self Evaluation work/needs. The TDM database has been reviewed and cleaned up to ensure that meaningful, reliable data is collected and used for evaluation. An Outcomes and Accountability Manager position was created.
- Data is gathered from Business Objects, the UC Berkeley (UCB) website, TDM database, and SafeMeasures. Data reports are run and reviewed weekly.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

- Emancipation Conferencing, beginning at age 15 and a half, has been implemented and conferences will be held annually. All foster youth participate in the Youth Employment Services (Y.E.S) program, a collaboration between Employment Services and the Office of Education to provide youth with job seeking skills, Regional Occupational Program (ROP) credits, and work experience. The Transitional Housing Plus Program (THP+) has been implemented and an application has been submitted for the Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP).
- Former foster youth have participated in Recruitment, Development and Support of Resource Families (RDS) activities, including participating in a speaker’s bureau for recruitment presentations.
- The County California Youth Chapter (CYC) was re-activated in 2007.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- Two Parent Advisory Boards are in place for two of the Family Resource Centers (FRCs) and another board is in place for the Mental Health Services Children’s System of Care. Parent and relative caretakers have participated in planning various events and committees.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Law enforcement, the District Attorney’s office, and other county agencies have been meeting during 2007 to discuss the need for additional domestic violence services within the County.

IMMIGRATION

- There is no formal agreement in place with the Mexican Consulate, but child welfare has worked with the consulate on two child welfare cases. Due to the low incidence of immigration related cases, there is also no contract in place with an immigration attorney.

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

- A narcotics task force has been developed with law enforcement and local Department of Justice representatives. The task force has partnered with child welfare when appropriate.

Humboldt

Year Funded Began: 2004

RECRUITMENT DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF RESOURCE FAMILIES

- The Community Partners Foster/Kinship Care Focus Group meets monthly to discuss joint recruitment efforts and to develop messages for the community about resource families and F2F concepts. In 2007, 18 new foster homes were licensed and 43 relative/non-related extended family member (NREFM) homes were approved.
- New Directions, a local Foster Family Association, provides supportive services to resource families (funded by AB2129). Services include a mentorship program, PRIDE training, monthly support groups, assistance with the licensing process, classes, and an annual two-day conference for resource families. New Directions also sponsors foster parents to attend state and national foster parent conferences.
- In August 2007, a new supervisor position focused on recruitment and retention efforts was created.
- The hard work of resource families is honored through the annual Foster Parent Association luncheon and Winter Holiday Dinner parties, joint efforts between child welfare and New Directions.
- Respite care for resource families is provided as needed. The care is funded through the Specialized Care Incentive and Assistance Program (SCIAP), the county-only respite account, the Wraparound Fund, and Title IV-E/SB163. In late 2007, program managers from CalWORKs/Welfare-to-Work (WTW) and child welfare met to create a plan to train CalWORKs/WTW participants as foster care respite workers.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- The Foster Parent Association meeting was combined with the Community Partners meeting to increase resource families' participation.
- Deepening partnerships with community-based Family Resource Centers (FRCs) was a priority for 2007. Activities to support this focus included holding the Incredible Years parenting class at a FRC, supporting the delivery of Differential Response (DR), and co-locating Assisting Families to Access Change through Resources (AFACTR) AmeriCorps staff at FRCs. An AFACTR AmeriCorps worker was also co-located at child welfare to assist with recruitment efforts, support resource families through the licensing process and organize on-going resource family trainings.
- Approximately 30 percent of Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings were held at community sites with community representatives participating in 33 percent of the meetings.
- Child welfare worked with local Indian tribes to assess the potential to create an Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Unit. Recruitment of Native foster homes continues through the partnership with the Oregon Research Institute's Recruiting Rural Parents for Indian Children (RRPIC) program.
- Bi-monthly meetings are held with child welfare and the Social Work program at Humboldt State University (HSU) to discuss educational needs of new social workers, and share updates and information on the county personnel process.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

- Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings are held for imminent risk of removal/emergency placements, placement changes, and exits from placements. Full implementation of TDM for emergency response was completed in 2007 and all placement changes must now have a TDM. All types of TDMs are now mandatory. For 2007, a total of 180 TDMs were held. This total included 25 for imminent risk, 52 for emergency placements, 81 for placement changes and 22 for exit from placement.
- The Humboldt County Probation Department also began implementing TDMs in February 2007. TDMs are held within the department to make decisions about imminent risk of placement, placement change and reunification.

- Icebreaker meetings have not yet been fully implemented.
- No new TDM firewalls were implemented during 2007. Current firewalls include: 1) TDM Facilitators request a list of all youth who have entered into care, changed placements, or exited care for each month (at the end of the month) to verify that TDMs were held and 2) placement staff direct social workers to request a TDM as part of the placement search process.
- In 2007, resource families participated in 80 percent of placement change TDMs and 57 percent of exit from placement TDMs.

SELF EVALUATION

- Self Evaluation work is supported by the use of Business Objects, Safe Measure queries, an Access database for foster parents, the UC Berkeley (UCB) website quarterly data reports, and the TDM database. A Child Welfare Services (CWS) workgroup meets weekly to review data and strategize about practice changes to improve outcomes.
- Staff also met throughout 2007 to monitor progress of the System Improvement Plan (SIP). Goals identified in the SIP included reducing the recurrence of maltreatment, building partnerships with Native American tribes, and recruiting, retaining and training resource families.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS

- The California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) provides support for the Humboldt Offers Permanency for Everyone (HOPE) project. In addition, child welfare supervisors were trained by CPYP to look at permanency issues with social workers throughout the child welfare process.
- In July 2007, the current Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) was expanded to include the Transitional Housing Program for Emancipated Foster/Probation Youth (THP+). There are currently six spaces available for youth with plans to expand to include additional spaces.
- Former foster youth were hired to work in the Independent Living Skills (ILS) program in Transition-Aged Youth (TAY) positions. These former foster youth mentor and provide case management services to current foster youth, assist with planning for the California Connected by 25 Initiatives (CC25I), and work with local colleges to develop programs to help former foster youth apply for and succeed in college. ILS is working on developing a core group of youth presenters. In the past year, foster youth have presented at a foster parent conference, the local Beyond the Bench conference, a Foster Parent Appreciation lunch, and a work summit in Sacramento.
- Youth continued to have a high rate of participation in their TDMs. Of youth 10 years of age and older, 71 percent participated in their TDMs, and of youth 14 years of age and older, 83 percent participated in their TDMs.
- All staff have been trained on the Humboldt Offers Permanency for Everyone (HOPE) project, the County's permanency project. Training has been provided on how to facilitate HOPE case consults and how to supervise to permanency using the Family Finding and Engagement (FFE) Model. Both probation and mental health have also been trained on the FFE model. Staff are inviting more partners and professionals involved with cases to HOPE case consultations. Participating partners include Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), foster parents, tribal representatives, and therapists. In addition, participation of state adoptions on case consultations has increased.
- Permanency is discussed in academy core supervision training.
- Child welfare staff provided training for new CASAs, which included training on permanency.

CALIFORNIA CONNECTED BY 25 INITIATIVE

- Humboldt was accepted into the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) during 2007. During the first year, work focused on developing a CC25I One-Stop location and youth positions to provide peer mentoring and act as ambassadors for foster youth to schools, employment, and community services. Other activities have included analyzing cross-systems data, mapping local programs and resources, exploring models and best practices, and conducting focus groups with foster youth in order to create a local comprehensive strategy and implementation plan to improve outcomes in the areas of secondary/postsecondary education and employment/career pathways.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- Work on developing the Parent Partner program continued in 2007. A job description and qualifications for the Parent Partner position were established and potential applicants were solicited from child welfare supervisors and social workers.
- Birth parents actively participated in TDMs held during 2007, attending 59 percent of all meetings held. Participation was highest in exit from placement TDMs (96 percent), followed by imminent risk TDMs (76 percent), emergency placement TDMs (71 percent) and placement move TDMs (36 percent).

Placer

Year Funded Began: 2004

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF RESOURCE FAMILIES

- Since implementing F2F activities, the Children's System of Care (CSOC) has increased both the overall number of families participating in orientation and initial training, and the number of families willing to foster and adopt older children.
- CSOC has increased the percentage of children with two or fewer placements, as well as the percentage of children placed with siblings. There has also been a reduction in the percentage of children placed in group homes, although the use of an emergency shelter for initial placement inflates group home rates.
- A foster parent liaison housed at CSOC facilitates interaction between staff and resource families, and conducts exit interviews with resource families to identify how CSOC can be more effective. Based on the results of the interviews, CSOC has developed two psycho-educational support groups—one for foster and adoptive parents of older children, and one for the youth themselves. Needs identified through communication with resource parents and exit interviews are being incorporated into the local community college's foster care and kinship education program.
- A campaign has been launched to have current resource families recruit new families. Successful recruitment efforts are rewarded by gift cards. Ongoing recruitment efforts include regular items in the local newspaper featuring a Resource Family of the Month.
- The 2007 SIP called for recruiting individuals to provide respite care for resource families. Most families are arranging for informal respite care.
- Resource families regularly participate in TDMs for placement changes and reunification. Resource families, birth parents and youth are invited to participate in resource parent training sessions.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- CSOC has been able to strengthen its partnerships with many community partners, including the Child Abuse Council and Family Resource Centers (FRCs). These partners participate in F2F work groups, provide space for Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings, and offer services to resource families. They also participate regularly in the Accountability Workgroup overseeing progress on the County's System Improvement Plan (SIP). Sierra Adoption Services collaborates with CSOC through a unique public-private collaboration to recruit, train, and support resource parents; assist resource parents in preparation for TDMs; and participate on the Recruitment Workgroup. Koinonia Family Services works closely with CSOC and Sierra Adoption Services to plan and oversee resource family placements. They also recruit, train and support resource families.
- During the past year, CSOC has strengthened relationships with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs). A CSOC employee participates in CASA training sessions, and serves as an ongoing liaison with the organization to maintain positive working relationships.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

- During 2007, CSOC continued Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings for family reunification, all placement changes and some permanency placements. The County's pilot to implement initial removal TDMs, however, is off to a slow start. Although specific protocols and some staff training were completed for initial removal, staffing changes precluded significant progress on implementation.
- Between January and December 2007, 278 TDMs were completed, including 9 for initial removal, 155 for placement moves and 114 for exit from placement.
- To ensure that caseworkers schedule and convene TDMs, a TDM data base and tracking system have been implemented. Currently, the manager responsible for TDMs receives monthly Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) data on all children who have reunified with their parents/guardians and compares it to the list of TDMs that have been held or scheduled. The manager also reviews court notes and places phone calls to social workers to remind them to schedule a TDM prior to reunification. Similar procedures have been developed for initial removal TDMs.
- The TDM scheduler employed by the Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) participates in TDMs as a community representative.

SELF EVALUATION

- Self Evaluation is handled by the Child Welfare System Improvement Accountability Team. The team includes representatives from FRCs and other community partners, as well as county managers and staff. At each bi-monthly meeting, the team reviews progress on the federal and state outcomes, as well as the System Improvement Plan (SIP), which incorporates many F2F strategies and activities.
- The Accountability Team and F2F workgroup measures progress using the UC Berkeley (UCB) website and quarterly reports, the TDM database, SafeMeasures, and, to a limited extent, Business Objects.
- Until recently, very limited data was available to measure the impact of changes in practice. With more data now available, particularly from SafeMeasures, managers and staff regularly use data to justify changes in practices, such as convening TDMs or working with birth parents to reduce placement changes and reunify children more quickly. Caseworkers now acknowledge that changes in practice can, over time, reduce workloads. Inadequate resources and staff capacity for in-depth data analysis continue to be a challenge.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

- CSOC, in conjunction with Sierra Adoption Services, has implemented Destination Family, a program designed to promote permanency for youth 11 to 18 years of age. Destination Family has recently produced a video available to the community featuring three youth as well as foster and adoptive parents.
- Additional support for youth permanence is available through the five-year Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant that provides additional funding for transition aged youth, including funding for two youth mentor/advocates (including a former foster youth) who work directly with youth and participate in CSOC advisory councils. The youth advocates work directly with youth involved in CSOC's RAFT (wrap-around) program.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- In partnership with Koinonia Family Services, Family Connections, and most recently, Sierra Adoption Services, CSOC has successfully implemented Icebreaker meetings. Between January and December 2007, intake and Icebreaker meetings were held for 14 families, and intake without subsequent meetings for 16 families. A database for Icebreakers has been implemented, but has not yet provided adequate data for quantitative evaluation. Anecdotal qualitative data indicate that both foster and birth parents are pleased with the process, and that Icebreaker meetings have strengthened and improved relationships between birth and foster parents.
- In partnership with United Advocates for Children and Families, CSOC has developed a family advocate program that offers support and guidance to families within the system. Family advocates participate in committees and planning efforts.

DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE

- FRCs all work closely with CSOC on Differential Response (DR). CAPC employs a Community Engagement Specialist who schedules and participates in visits for Path 2 clients, and acts as a bridge between CSOC and the different agencies responsible for implementing DR.

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Unique among California counties, Placer County administers child welfare services as an integral part of the Children's System of Care (CSOC). CSOC is a fully integrated, full-scale system which provides a continuum of services including Child Welfare Services, Adoptions Services, Foster Care Licensing, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Foster Care Eligibility, portions of Probation, Foster Youth Services, Alternative Education and elements of Community Health programs. Because all services are administered through integrated CSOC teams and funded through a unified budget, mental health and substance abuse services are more accessible to families involved in the child welfare system.
- CSOC works closely with an extensive private provider network. All providers contracting with CSOC, as well as county agencies, are required to use the Placer County Outcome Screen to evaluate family strengths and service needs. The screen assesses family needs in a holistic fashion, measuring success in five outcome areas: keeping the family 1) safe, 2) healthy, 3) together (at-home), 4) in school or at work and 5) out-of-trouble. Mental health and substance abuse issues are identified in the screen.
- The County continues to implement a \$10 million, 5-year grant from SAMHSA to implement four strategies: 1) Parent Partnerships, 2) Family Conferencing, 3) Cultural Competency and 4) Evidence-Based Practices. All staff, from clerical staff to the director, are participating in training to increase cultural awareness and cultural competency.

- Methamphetamine use is prevalent in Placer County and a primary reason for removal. In 2006, Placer County started the Meth Project, a system-wide pilot project to implement training and best work practices related to methamphetamine treatment and prevention. In its initial stages, the project is working to create community wide awareness of how to stop methamphetamine use. Unfortunately, the program has been discontinued due to budget constraints.
- In 2007, CSOC developed a comprehensive training protocol and integrated training plan for all county child welfare services, mental health, juvenile probation and public health nursing, practitioners and community partners who work with families.

Sacramento

Year Funded Began: 2004

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT OF RESOURCE FAMILIES

- Recruitment efforts continue to focus on communities with high rates of removal and historically low numbers of resource homes. Efforts have focused on developing partnerships with school districts located within these communities to support increased information sharing. Outreach efforts to the school districts continue to be a priority and engagement efforts include mass mailings and developing internal contacts.
- Neighborhood orientations for recruitment of resource parents are held quarterly in targeted communities. A brochure has been created to assist with targeted recruitment efforts to the Native American community.
- Two Resource Family Liaison positions, one of which is Spanish speaking, have been created. The liaisons provide assistance to resource parents and relative caregivers in navigating the child welfare system.
- The County collaborated with the Foster Parent Association for their state conference held in October 2007. The County sponsored 20 resource parents to attend and help facilitate workshops.
- The Kinship Supportive Service Program was launched in November 2007. The program focuses on improving outcomes for children and families in kinship care, and providing support to families so their children do not have to enter the child welfare system. In addition, support services are provided to kinship families who are currently in the child welfare system.
- An Icebreakers Workgroup was established in October 2007. Members of the workgroup include internal and external partners, parents, youth and resource/kinship families/parents. The workgroup is developing a plan to implement Icebreaker meetings, which will include using the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) model to conduct small tests of change.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Work continues to focus on strengthening community and faith-based partnerships. Outreach and partnership development is moving to a regionalized model focused on building networks and developing grassroots partners within each region.
- The Faith-Based Initiative is a partnership between Child Protective Services (CPS), Casey Family Programs and the Sacramento Valley Region Care Coalition. The focus of the partnership is to strengthen families at the neighborhood level and will be supported by the following activities: developing a resource guide, holding a "Faith Fair," and organizing donation items through congregations for families in need.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

- Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings are mandatory for all reunification, permanency and placement changes. Each program is also working to increase utilization of TDMs for children. An implementation plan has been developed for front end TDMs. As of the end of February 2008, a total of 887 TDMs had been completed, which impacted 1,268 children, with 75 percent of these children remaining at home or in their current placement.
- A TDM Parent Leader position has been created through AmeriCorps. The Parent Leader is available to birth parents to help explain the value of the TDM process and attend TDMs as a support and resource.
- A partnership has also been created with Foster Youth Services (FYS) to have FYS information available at all TDMs that involve a school-aged child and to have FYS staff attend TDMs whenever possible.

SELF EVALUATION

- Data is used to drive decision making processes as well as educate staff and external partners. Data is pulled from the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) on a monthly basis to run reports for all programs. In addition, a quarterly Data Book is produced and shared with partners. The Data Book includes an overview of each program, including the number of monthly referrals, the number of families who have reunified, and the number of youth in the Independent Living Program (ILP), etc.

FOSTER YOUTH, PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

- Two Youth Leader positions, funded through Child Protective Services, AmeriCorps and the Child Abuse Prevention Council (CPAC), are in place to provide the youth perspective on child welfare improvement areas. This has included work on F2F, the Heart Gallery and the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP). In addition, the Youth Leaders present at local university Masters of Social Work (MSW) classes and at new social worker trainings.
- In addition, the Independent Living Program (ILP) has a youth advisory board, PAUSE (Paying Attention Using Self-Evaluation), which is a core group of former foster youth who facilitate a bimonthly support group for current foster youth with a focus on transition issues. Work in 2007 was specifically focused on family finding, permanent connections, and healthy relationships. PAUSE members and California Youth Connection (CYC) members participate on child welfare committees and panel presentations during conferences. The local CYC chapter facilitated the annual CYC Day at the Capitol. PAUSE, CYC, and the youth leaders actively engage foster youth as co-facilitators at all of the ILP classes and workshops, and to participate in foster parent orientation sessions to recruit resource families for older youth.
- All cases assigned to the ILP and Adolfo Housing Programs are required to note the youth's permanent connection.
- Sacramento's Permanent Program changed its name to Permanency Services Program. The new name was celebrated at the November 2007 all-staff meeting. As part of the celebration, each unit presented a youth that the unit selected to champion for permanency. Time was spent presenting each youth, hearing about the permanency services that are available and each unit then discussed what they were going to do to achieve permanency for the youth they selected.
- In January 2007, Sacramento began the process of holding a permanency staffing (formerly the Adoption/Guardianship Staffing) on every case. These are conducted by supervisors who have been trained on the process. Staffings are held once a week for Permanency Services and Family Reunification cases.

- The County revised the review form to assist supervisors and workers in discussions around permanency. The form includes information regarding: recommendations for the child/youth in regard to permanency; how the caseworker arrived at the recommendations; what steps have been made towards achieving the recommendations; what services were used, such as Case Mining, US Search, Destination Family, Capital Kids are Waiting (CAP Kids, a public/private collaboration between Sierra Adoption Services and Sacramento County), or other services; what the child wants; who are the significant adults in this child's life; what is their relationship to the child and what do they want; what does the caregiver want; what is the parent's involvement with the child and would it benefit the child to become re-involved with the parent and what is the parent's involvement in services.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- The Shared Leadership Task Force (i.e. a Parent Leader program) is in its fifth year and has over 11 active parent members who work with child welfare management, staff, community, and families. The Task Force developed a video, "A Families Journey—What you need to know about Child Protective Services," that continues to be utilized for training staff, community partners and birth parents.
- The Task Force meets monthly and provides a forum of support for members as well as review proposed changes to the system. Additional participation opportunities for parent leaders include participating in the hiring and training of new social workers, presenting weekly to new parents entering the system, presenting at PRIDE trainings, participating in the Education Breakthrough Series Collaborative and the Icebreakers Workgroup, and supporting the development and implementation of the Early Intervention Family Drug Court.

ELIMINATING RACIAL DISPARITY AND DISPROPORTIONALITY

- A management level workgroup was convened in June 2007 to begin to address issues of disparity and disproportionality. Work of the group has included looking at baseline data for the County, reviewing decision points that impact disparity and disproportionality, and reviewing promising practices from other jurisdictions. The workgroup will also be looking at how to train staff on issues of disparity and disproportionality.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- A weekly Domestic Violence Peer Review has begun to address issues of domestic violence and help link families to community resources when needed.

IMMIGRATION

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is in place with the Mexican Consulate and meetings are held on a regular basis to discuss issues and specific case situations as needed. Participation at quarterly meetings has expanded to include Sacramento Child Advocates and Public Health Nursing to enhance communication and coordination between the department and the Department of Social Services in Mexico (DIF).

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS AND MENTAL HEALTH

- The County has partnered with the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug, Stars/Bridges and the Juvenile Courts to obtain a five year grant to implement an Early Intervention Family Drug Court. This project will enable the department to work with partners to establish a voluntary drug court, modeled after the successful Dependency Drug Court, with a focus on families with a child prenatally exposed to drugs and who will be participating in the Informal Supervision Program. Parent Leaders have been actively engaged in the development and implementation of the Early Intervention Family Drug Court.

EDUCATION

- The County is one of ten national jurisdictions participating in the Casey Breakthrough Series on Improving Education Stability and Continuity for Youth in Out-of-Home Care. The goal of the project is to enhance work on educational outcomes, including parent and youth engagement. The Youth Leaders have been conducting county-wide presentations to solicit the use of the “Fav 5” youth advocacy card.
- Through a partnership with the County, Casey Family Programs, California State University Sacramento, the University of California Davis, and several educational institutions, a regional Guardian Scholars Program has been implemented. The County, Casey Family Programs and several community partners have developed youth support groups and organized social mixers at local community colleges.
- A project is being piloted to have Public Health Nurses meet privately with the older youth who attend Emancipation Conferences. The nurses provide the youth with health education and transition resources.

Solano

Year Funded Began: 2005

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT OF RESOURCE FAMILIES (RDS)

- Efforts to recruit and support resource families have included creating a relative/non-relative extended family member (NREFM) social worker position to ensure that home approvals are completed and to provide additional services to individuals navigating the foster care licensing application process.
- Two community forums were held to increase foster parent input and participation. A plan was developed to prioritize recruitment efforts for homes for teens, medically fragile children and siblings.
- Resource families and parents are included in Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings and on other committees.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Relationships were strengthened with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), Family Resource Centers (FRCs), the Solano County Office of Education, private foster family agencies and other service providers. CASA co-hosted the annual foster care barbeque with the County. The Office of Education helped educate school districts about child welfare services. Joint meetings were held between child welfare and the Vallejo Unified School District (the F2F target area). The courts, CASA, the County Office of Education, child welfare staff and minors’ attorneys are working together on a task force to improve awareness and the implementation of AB490.
- A Youth Action Team (YAT) and a Parent Action Team (PAT) were established. Youth and parent consumers participated in foster parent pre-service training. Youth were part of the selection process for the Independent Living Skills contract service provider. The Parent Action Team is designing a resource guide for parent consumers. Parents attended an all staff meeting to build social worker awareness of birth parent issues and concerns.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

- Initial rollout of the Team Decisionmaking (TDM) strategy began on December 1, 2006. During 2007, all families from Vallejo whose children were at risk of being removed from their homes participated in TDM meetings. Over the course of the year, 89 TDMs were held, serving a total of 105 children.

- To support the implementation of emergency response and imminent risk TDM meetings, a TDM subcommittee met weekly to debrief recent TDMs and to further define the TDM protocol. The subcommittee specifically addressed the areas of domestic violence, safety factors and privacy versus confidentiality in relation to TDM practice.
- The philosophy of “Once a TDM family, always a TDM family” has been adopted. Children and families who have had an initial TDM are required to have subsequent TDMs prior to any placement change. Children currently served under any child welfare program become eligible for the TDM process if they have at least one eligible sibling.
- The TDM and Building Community Partners (BCP) workgroups worked together to identify potential community representatives and strategize how to get these representatives “to the TDM table.” Service providers and extended family members have been regular participants in the TDM process.

SELF EVALUATION

- The Self Evaluation workgroup has demonstrated great partnership efforts in mapping all first entries into care data. This includes specific subsets such as ethnicity, allegation type, sibling status, etc. The maps were presented at the foster parent conferences, community meetings and to the Board of Supervisors. Trends have been able to be identified from analyzing maps from 2006 and 2007. The Building Community Partnerships (BCP) workgroup has been utilizing these trends to target their efforts for recruiting community representatives and service providers.
- The Self-Evaluation workgroup is also partnering with other community-based organizations to share information from their various databases to gain a broader view of service needs across the county. Data has also been collected to map current foster homes and begin to define a preliminary understanding of disproportionality within the child welfare system.

T e h a m a

Year Funded Began: 2004

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF RESOURCE FAMILIES

- Recruitment, Development and Support of Resource Families (RDS) efforts have been supported through work with the local Foster Family Association (FFA), adoption partners, the Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council (CAPCC), members of the County Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, and Foster Parent Liaisons.
- The RDS Workgroup coordinated a foster month awareness event that included a live broadcast on a local radio station from a park where children’s activities had been organized. This event was successful in building awareness.
- To support RDS work, data reports are run to review where children are placed by school district, which is more valuable than reviewing zip code level data based on the geography of the county. Though there are not a high number of group home placements, efforts are made to prevent placement in group homes whenever possible. In addition, efforts continue to focus on ensuring children and youth are placed close to home and/or with some or all of their siblings. These efforts are supported through a major local FFA that is on-board with the F2F values and practices.
- A flyer specifically targeting non-relative extended family members (NREFMs) was developed to recruitment at schools and the response to the outreach effort has been very positive. In addition, outreach to the general community has been conducted to solicit the donation of goods/funds to support foster parent development and support activities and recognition efforts for foster parents.

- Each social worker is required to attend at least one class/evening in each PRIDE session and introduce themselves to the new foster families. In addition, the County's Foster and Homeless Youth Services (FYS) Coordinator attends one evening/class of each PRIDE session to meet new families.
- Respite care is not provided through child welfare, though some staff, such as the Foster Parent Liaison, are available to help foster parents locate a respite provider. Discussions on improving respite options and provision in Tehama County have begun.
- Resource families and parents regularly attend Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings and all workgroups are open to participation by the community, foster parents and birth parents. Opinions and comments from resource families and parents are sought for workgroups and committees. Both birth parents and youth participant in PRIDE sessions.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Despite some challenges, work on Building Community Partnerships (BCP) continues to be a focus for child welfare and the community, and collaborative efforts continue to grow and improve. The local chapters of Rotary, Kiwanis, Exchange Club and Soroptomist International have all joined in the effort to support children and families. Connections with existing partners have been improved and/or strengthened, including with law enforcement and schools. Efforts continue to better identify and engage non-traditional partners.
- Community representatives attend some TDMs and it is a goal to continue to increase participation.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

- Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings are mandatory for placement disruptions and reunifications.
- The use of TDMs is helping to highlight the importance of considering the educational needs of children/youth and the negative impacts of multiple placement changes on education.
- Data reports for TDMs have been developed and continue to be refined. Supervisors and management continue to support firewalls through holding staff accountable to convene TDMs.
- Community representatives, defined as a member of the parents' or child's community but not necessarily a personal relation, are invited to attend TDMs by child welfare. More community representatives need to be identified and oriented to the TDM process to increase participation levels. One challenge of being a rural county is the lack of typical "neighborhoods."
- Social workers are responsible for following up on any developed safety/action plans. Currently, there is no formal firewall in place to ensure plans are completed.
- Icebreakers are currently not mandatory and holding a meeting is up to the discretion of the social worker. The F2F Coordinator, program manager and supervisors all encourage use of the practice. Data is not currently collected on the meetings. Anecdotal evidence suggests that when the meetings are held, they are successful.

SELF EVALUATION

- Self Evaluation Team members include the program manager, social worker supervisors, a system support analyst, the program analyst (also the F2F Coordinator), and other interested staff who attend periodically. Community members and partners are invited to attend meetings, but they tend to prefer to review the "packaged data products," rather than attend meetings. Data is shared with the community through newspaper articles as well as personal contacts and outreach events. Data is reviewed with child welfare partners and stakeholders at the quarterly meeting of the Children and Family Leadership Team (CFLT).

- Data is collected through the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), the UC Berkeley (UCB) web site, the TDM database, Business Objects, SafeMeasures and reports from contracted community-based organizations and/or other public agencies. Tehama was the first California county to have its TDM data migrated to the new, web-based ETO software. Reports on caseload statistics are run regularly and include: the number of cases by service component, the number of children in out-of-home placement and their foster and school placement, and geographic distribution of referrals/cases. Other reports are run as needed.
- Challenges for Self Evaluation work include recognition by staff about the importance of clean and complete data, and the time, by staff at all levels, to develop a comprehensive data elevation process. The County has been working with UC Davis to develop a comprehensive data evaluation plan to integrate and coordinate available data across Department of Social Services divisions and programs.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

- Awareness has increased around the importance of permanency and the efforts needed to support the best permanency outcomes for youth. Staff have attended the Family Finding training and the County has a Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT) in place.
- Foster youth are welcome to participate on workgroups and committees, but participation levels have been low. Efforts continue to increase youth participation on the Permanency and Youth Workgroup. This is currently no formal Foster Youth Advisory Board. Foster youth do assist with PRIDE trainings.
- Through new partnerships with local service clubs, support for transition aged youth has expanded. Support efforts include: donation of basic photo packages for graduating seniors; donation of gas cards, meal cards, household items and “care baskets;” and participation by the community in the “Prom Project” to support all youths’ (expanded from foster youth only to all youth in need) participation in formal events.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- One full time birth parent and one full-time and one part-time AmeriCorp member serve as Parent Partners. The partners have been invaluable in engaging birth parents, particularly around substance abuse issues.
- Efforts continue to increase participation of Parent Partners on committees and in planning activities.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- The Healthy, Happy Homes (H3) program, a partnership between child welfare and a local domestic violence agency, is designed specifically to meet the needs of children and families in the child welfare system. H3 supports families involved in Differential Response and F2F.

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- A Dependency Drug Court model began in 2007.
- Through Tehama County Drug/Alcohol, parents are able to access classes, designed specifically for mothers (Passages) and fathers (Dad’s). Adolescents are provided with services through the Adolescent Intensive Methamphetamine (AIM) program. Pregnant women or infant mothers who are abusing substances are able to access services through the Perinatal Substance Abuse Program (PSAP), which is supported by child welfare, public health and drug/alcohol.
- The Tehama County Department of Social Services and Drug/Alcohol are also participating in a multi-county Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) grant program. Through the program, a Drug/Alcohol counselor will be housed at child welfare.

- In December, a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) from Mental Health began coming over to the child welfare office a couple of afternoons each week to provide Medi-Cal eligibility assessments for child welfare youth. This partnership is designed to facilitate more comprehensive assessments for the youth by offering an opportunity for consultation with social workers and consideration of any relevant case information.

EDUCATION

- Through strong partnership with the Department of Education's Foster Youth Services (FYS) Coordinator, access to educational opportunities, importance of educational outcomes, and awareness of educational needs among staff has increased. The coordinator has supported the development of some key activities and practices, including: securing grant funding to start a tutoring program for youth preparing to complete high school and take the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) Exam, developing a form to identify foster or homeless youth upon enrollment in school, and developing a form to notify schools when a child/youth enters or exits care.

Trinity

Year Funded Began: 2004

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF RESOURCE FAMILIES

- An Administrative Coordinator was hired to support Recruitment, Development and Support of Resource Families (RDS) activities, but after the coordinator left the department the position has not been refilled due to budget constraints.
- In conjunction with the Trinity County Arts Council and the Family Violence Council, the department hosted a month long invitational art show at the Arts Council gallery to celebrate Child Abuse Prevention month. The theme for the art show was "Celebrating Children and Families" and artists were invited to submit art that portrayed positive messages about children and families. The art show included a performance by the local "Mommy and Me" dance class on opening night. Information on becoming licensed as a foster home was distributed for the entire month.
- During Foster Care Month, a number of activities were held to show appreciation for resource families, including: booths at the annual Mother's Day Weekend Children's Festival; weekly newspaper front page ads with information on Foster Care Month, a banner on Main Street; a dinner for foster parents that included an inspirational presentation by a birth parent; a breakfast "meeting" with the community to discuss the possibility of a Parent Partner program; presentation to foster parents of a certificate from state Assembly Representative Patty Berg; distribution of a photo printer and album to foster families; a signed proclamation by the Board of Supervisors in appreciation of foster and resource families; and a booth about foster parent recruitment at the annual county employee picnic.
- In August, a pool party was hosted for foster, relative and non-relative extended family member (NREFM) children and families as well as child welfare staff and their families. The event was held to improve communication between child welfare staff and families.
- Foster parents continue to have access to monthly training modules that can be completed at home and returned for training hours. In conjunction with Shasta College and Northern Valley Catholic Social Services through the Foster/Kinship Care Program, a one day Love and Logic class was held for all interested persons in the County with special invitations to foster parents, relatives and birth families.
- While other recruitment efforts will continue, the use of word-of-mouth recruitment continues to be highly effective due to the small size of the county.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Work in 2007 has focused on the continued engagement of the faith-based community. Child welfare staff attended several Ministerial Association meetings to form partnerships with faith-based organizations with the intent of better utilizing resources, sharing ideas and skills, and identifying specific families/children who could be served by members of their own community. Since the initial meetings, an advisory committee was developed.
- Over thirty participants, representing parents, foster parents, child welfare, the Human Response Network (HRN), the courts, probation and behavioral health staff, attended the F2F Northern convening.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

- Two new Team Decisionmaking (TDM) Facilitators were trained in 2007. Through the addition of a modular office building, a dedicated space for TDMs is now available.
- Results of the TDM participant survey indicate that experience with the TDM process has been uniformly positive.
- Safety/action plans are attached to court hearing reports and workers include the reports in case plans.
- A protocol and age specific guidelines have been developed for social workers for Icebreaker meetings. Though not fully implemented, meetings are scheduled based on the individual case needs.

SELF EVALUATION

- Work on Self Evaluation continues. Currently, Foster Parent surveys and TDM participant surveys are used to gather feedback, but information collected can be unreliable as it is voluntary and survey samples are small. Overall, data for the County is extremely volatile due to a relatively small number of cases within the system, so movement of one family in or out of the system can cause a huge rise or drop in placement rates.
- TDM data is currently entered into the UC Berkeley website.
- In April 2007, staff were trained on SafeMeasures and data from the program has been integrated into day to day caseload management activities. Currently, no staff are trained on Business Objects.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- The County was awarded a federally funded Providing Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) grant to develop a program for birth parents with substance abuse challenges that have affected their ability to care for their children. The grant will fund a three-year program that will provide case management along with supportive services for these clients.
- Due to the severe shortage of housing, especially in the lower price ranges, child welfare continues to contract with Human Response Network (HRN) to provide emergency and transitional housing. This housing program provides an array of housing options ranging from hotel vouchers, short-term temporary housing, and long-term transitional housing. Additional support services include helping families address employment, educational, financial and other needs to help them gain self-sufficiency.

ELIMINATING RACIAL DISPARITY AND DISPROPORTIONALITY

- Due to the demographics of the County, issues of disparity and disproportionality are overwhelmingly based on economic disproportion. The County shares many of the issues that other small rural counties face, including lack of employment and higher educational opportunities, lack of affordable and safe housing, and lack of a public, county wide transportation system.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- There is a well established Family Violence Council, with representatives from law enforcement, the courts, HRN, Alcohol and Other Drug Services (AODS), Behavioral Health and Health and Human Services

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- The issues of domestic violence and AODS are consistently addressed in all work with children and families.
- Mid-Level Management Team bi-weekly meetings are held to review and staff cases that involve drug use, a frequent factor in child welfare cases. The team includes staff from child welfare, AODS, local schools, probation and behavioral health.
- A Methamphetamine Task Force has been convened through the County Board of Supervisors to develop programs and apply for funding to address this issue within the community.

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

- In 2007, Human Response Network (HRN), a local community-based organization, was contracted to provide the Independent Living Program (ILP) and the new Transitional Housing Plus Program (THP+) for transition aged youth (between 18 and 24 years of age). HRN works individually with each youth to help prepare them for successful achievement of their future educational, professional and life goals.

LINKAGES/CALWORKS

- Participation in the Linkages project continued with the intent of coordinating services within the department to assist clients in meeting the various requirements of multiple programs. Coordination is mainly focused on child welfare and California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), but the vision to increase coordinated customer service has expanded participation from child welfare staff—from clerical staff to the management team. To better provide the most comprehensive, efficient and accurate services to clients, communication has been improved between units within child welfare to develop an understanding of the different requirements for each specific program.

IMPLEMENTATION

- In October 2007, F2F staff met with the director of child welfare to discuss linkage between F2F and other child welfare improvement activities being implemented within the County. The visit also included a tour of the child welfare department campus, conversations with social workers and staff, and a tour of the County.

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