



2006 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CENTRAL COUNTIES
CALIFORNIA FAMILY TO FAMILY INITIATIVE

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FAMILY TO FAMILY COUNTIES (5): Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

F2F Funding Began: 1996

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LOS ANGELES CLUSTER (DIVIDED INTO THREE CLUSTERS)¹

- Cluster 1 SPA 1, 2, 3/ Lancaster, Palmdale, Santa Clarita, North, Hollywood, BSP Covina Pasadena, Pomona, Glendora, El Monte
- Cluster 2 SPA 4, 5, 6/BSP Wilshire, Metro North, West LA, Wateridge, Hawthorne, Century, Compton
- Cluster 3 SPA 7, 8, Adoptions/Torrance, Lakewood, Santa Fe Springs, Belvedere

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT (RDS)

The targeted populations for recruitment are medically fragile, sibling groups, teens, specific needs related to culture, religion, and language. There was significant decrease in group home placements in 2006. The DCFS Torrance regional office reported 139 children living in group homes in December 2005. In December 2006, there were 69 children in group home placement. RDS began a sibling awareness campaign for staff and community. There were mini-conferences, meet and greet events, resource fairs, caregiver recognition/appreciation events, kinship support, and workgroups held. There was a focused effort at collaboration with the faith-based communities. Updated reports showing placement locations, child age/ethnic population information, and high referral areas were shared with the community partners to facilitate discussion about policy and program modifications to improve recruitment practice. Respite care was supported by state funds and administered through the Department’s Family Preservation, Wraparound and medically fragile programs. Higher rates were provided for medically fragile and special needs children. Resource families, birth parents and extended family members were included in the TDMS and other community activities. Along with youth, the resource families and birth parents have been included in the development and implementation of trainings and best practice issues.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS (BCP)

New community partnerships were developed with social service and community resource agencies, private businesses such as Toyota, service organizations such as the Archdiocesan Youth Employment Service (AYE) program, California Permanency for Youth Project, the Kwanis Club and local school districts. For example, billboard space next to a car dealership in the city of Glendale was donated for the purpose of resource family recruitment. As a result of the partnership with the faith based community, new resources have become available to foster

¹ LA is one of the largest counties in the United States and represents over 30% of California’s child welfare population. The Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is broken up into eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs) with 17 offices in total. In order to better coordinate F2F implementation, the eight LA County SPAs were divided into three F2F sub-clusters.

youth including substance abuse treatment, mentoring development, outpatient treatment, counseling, anger management and domestic violence services. Birth Parent Advocates attended several local and national conferences on birth parent leadership and advocacy and participated in local birth parent advisory councils/committees. A parents' handbook was drafted by the birth parent advocates to assist parents new to the child welfare system. Greater interest by the faith based community including Azusa Pacific University and interdenominational groups (e.g., DCFS sponsored faith based breakfasts in many communities) have resulted in increased identification of community resources for Los Angeles families.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING (TDM)

TDMs are completed for placement decisions involving removal, replacement and reunification with. TDMs are mandatory for initial Removal decisions. Firewalls that ensure TDMs are done in a timely manner include the review of detention (IDC) reports by managers on a regular basis; review of TDM exception request for any reason; revision of TDM referral form to screen for domestic violence, safety concerns and current/past restraining orders; and input of child safety plan for every TDM. In 2006, "Icebreaker" meetings were utilized in a few offices. The SPA 1 DCFS offices plan to utilize the workgroup of Point of Engagement team members to develop the procedure/protocols for future icebreakers.

SELF EVALUATION (SE)

Data are shared with community members and staff periodically and regularly at other established meetings. This data include Family to Family Quarterly Reports, TDM Database reports, LA Kids, MAPP reports and executive committee reports. Other data provided include reports from CWS/CMS, Structured Decision Making (SDM), Children's Resource Center (CRC), Concurrent Planning: Permanency Planning Liaison/Adoption Assessment reports (CPPL), Safe Measures.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

DCFS has made progress in their goals to increase the number of children reunified, reduction in the median length of stay for children in out-of-home care and to locate permanency for youth in long-term foster care. For example, the Pomona office met the goals of a 20% and exceeded it by attaining a 46% increase. The Torrance office showed a 39% reduction. Community groups such as Impacting Hearts Organization, the Pomona Unified School district, New Transitions for Youth, Wings of Refuge work with local DCFS offices to identify youth, collaborative efforts with their families to secure services. DCFS has partnered with the community to offer resource fairs for youth such as the Gear Up for Success Resource Fair and community based mentor program.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The Department is formulating the "Parents Engaging Partners" (PEP) program, which will hire former birth parents that have successfully reunified with their children and will be trained as advocates for new DCFS birth parents. Some of the DCFS offices (Lakewood, Belvedere, Wateridge and Lancaster/Palmdale) have parent advisory boards that participate in workgroups and task force. Several of the PEP trainees have volunteered to be part of the Parent Focus Group of Peer Quality Case Review process. Some of the PEP birth parents are participating in conferences, members of the F2F strategies workgroups, speak at events and are forming their own parent advocacy groups.

ORANGE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

F2F Funding Began: 2001

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

The PRIDE training, offered in English and Spanish, are well attended. PRIDE Boot Camp is for families that have already gone through PRIDE and are ready for a placement. The first faith based convening took place in 2006 with representatives from over 30 congregations. Twenty-four faith-based organizations expressed interest in recruiting and supporting foster families. The first Faith in Motion Newsletter was distributed in August. Twenty-five professional photographers donated their services to take pictures of children needing permanent families. The Orange County Heart Gallery photos have been displayed in several community organizations, which resulted in over 300 phone calls and nine children being matched with adoptive parents. Increased efforts have been made to recruit through various forms of media. There have been two cable station interviews with the agency's Executive Director.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS (BCP)

The BCP strategy group helped organize a Community Forum at The Southwest Senior Center in Santa Ana. The topic was "New Prevention Strategies for Santa Ana: Working Together to Keep Kids Safe". Stanislaus County's F2F staff provided a presentation on how their county rolled out Differential Response, followed by panel discussions and breakout groups. As a result of the forum, several community partners offered to be part of Differential Response in Orange County. The BCP Strategy group developed and expanded Differential Response after the Forum. A pilot Differential Response unit was regionalized in the west district Cal Works office along with an Emergency Response Unit. Regionalization will be the main focus for the BCP strategy group for 2007, with the focus on the district of Santa Ana.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING (TDM)

TDMs are held on all initial placements decisions that occur during normal working hours and all placement changes. In an effort to keep children from entering foster care without prior social work intervention; Orange County has implemented a second shift of Emergency Response workers that employs regular staff. This expanded Emergency Response Service allows more children coming into care after 6 PM to have a TDM. A rapid police response has been developed which is improving social worker response to law enforcement investigation in the field. A special hotline for law enforcement agencies has been activated for this purpose.

SELF EVALUATION (SE)

The Self-Evaluation Team has created geo-maps by gathering information for targeted high client geographical areas. The SE team recently completed a study called "Reasons for Recurrence of Maltreatment Referrals in Families with Young Infants" to determine factors that lead families to have two consecutive referrals in a relatively short time period. Results show that risk factors included domestic violence and substance abuse.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

Orange County became involved in the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) in July 2005. In 2006, there were monthly Technical Assistance sessions held. Regular e-mails are sent to staff regarding the philosophy of family finding and engagement, permanency, and CPYP successes. Through the Orangewood Children's Foundation, emancipated youth are being supported through a wide variety of programs and services. Programs provided include: peer mentors, independent living coaches; educational support and transitional housing. Emancipated youth are involved with the agency in an advisory capacity through their participation on the Children's System of Care Committee and as speakers at new employee orientations, program meetings, and community forums.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Since Oct 2006, the new Parent Orientation Video is being shown five days a week to parents prior to their first hearing in court. Successfully reunified parents are interviewed in the video. A Parent Mentorship Program through Family Support Network is being developed. Three parents have been hired part-time to provide mentoring and support services to reunifying families. Celebrating Families is a successful quarterly event, which brings staff and reunified parents together to celebrate each parent's successful completion of family reunification. Parents Taking Action (PTA), which is a group of parents who have successfully reunified with their children, meets monthly. Their mission is to help other families achieve reunification in a timely manner by sharing experience, providing support and encouragement, and utilizing community resources.

EDUCATION

The Healthy Tomorrows program provides social workers to five schools and the Therapeutic Art Center in Santa Ana. This program helps school principals to determine the needs of each school. The program provides parenting classes and recruitment of both adult and teen community volunteers. An Educational Outcomes Workgroup helped create new forms called the "Notification of Transfer of Foster Youth" and "School Information Form for Team Decision Making Meetings" to assist with smooth transitions for youth when they have a placement change. An Educational Handbook was created from this workgroup and is being distributed to caregivers and social workers.

DISPROPORTIONALITY AND DISPARITY

A Strategy workgroup meets on a regular basis to address the issues of Disproportionality and Disparity. This data has been obtained, reviewed and in depth case reviews have also been completed.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES

F2F Funding Began: 2004

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RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT (RDS)

F2F has significantly changed recruitment efforts. A brochure was designed, *Can You Help*, which presents the results of recruitment-based data and illustrates the need to keep children in their communities whenever possible. The Desert Region has been successful in engaging

businesses such as WalMart, Der Wienerschnitzel, Tarbel Realtors (800 participating agents) and Elmer's Restaurant in distributing recruitment fliers. Riverside County relative placement homes continue to increase. A comparison of licensed foster homes available between September 2005 and September 2006 shows an increase of 15% in F2F targeted cities/communities. Riverside County subcontracts a portion of their recruitment effort with Inland Valley of Riverside and For the Children. There is an annual dance given to the resource families at a community restaurant and agency staff provides childcare. Resource families and parents are included in TDMs and F2F committees. An experienced resource parent works with the agency to share methods of providing consistent support to birth parents. Former foster youth provide presentations at community forums, staff trainings and resource family trainings.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS (BCP)

In 2006, Riverside County doubled the number of their community partners due to extensive outreach by the agency to faith-based organizations, law enforcement, health care providers, social service providers, teachers, tribal leaders and elected officials. Existing partnerships were strengthened with Advisory Committee meetings, SIP update meetings and special events in target communities. For example, staff partnered with the City of Desert Hot Springs and other local organizations to participate an annual event entitled "Day of the Child" which helped to recruit resource families. A Fact Sheet was created and is available upon request at every community forum and meeting.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING (TDM)

TDMs are mandatory for every child at risk of removal in the four-targeted communities. Once a child has had an initial TDM, the case is coded and tagged for TDMs whenever the identified child is at risk of a removal from their family or if in out of home care, at risk of a placement change. TDMs are mandatory for children who are eligible for protection pursuant to the Indian Child Welfare Act. TDMs are currently occurring in four of the county's six service regions. A firewall form is being piloted in the Desert Region of Riverside County. The majority children for whom TDMs is scheduled are under the age of 5 years old. Tribal representatives are included in TDMs for ICWA eligible children. There is an increase in the number of pre-detention TDMs and placement saves. Many of the TDMs are held at a Family Resource Center located within one of the targeted zip codes. There are many TDM community sites within the targeted area since transportation can be a barrier.

SELF EVALUATION (SE)

Riverside County self-evaluation team meets monthly. A special project code in CWS/CMS is also used to designate a referral and/or case as a F2F intervention. TDM meeting "re-caps" are provided weekly. A monthly report to include aggregate data is provided to management to use in conjunction with other operational reports. Quarterly data is produced to monitor outcome and accountability measures and year-to-year comparison on key indicators.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITION AND INVOLVEMENT

Progress has been made with increase use of relative and non-related extended family homes from 2005 to 2006. Data shows an increase from 77% to 82% respectively. The local chapter of the California Youth Connection (CYC) have provided presentations, attended meetings and participated on informational panels.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In 2006, Riverside County initiated a Court Orientation Program to educate birth parents to the Juvenile Court process. This orientation includes a video where a former birth parent describes their experience in the child welfare system. There are currently three consultant Parent Partners. Their role is to provide support and mentoring services for new resource families after the resource families have completed their training.

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

F2F Funding Began: 2004

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RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND SUPPORT (RTS)

Recruitment focused on geographical areas and populations identified in the self-evaluation reports. RTS efforts included enhancements of countywide and regional tracking tools from application to license (orientation, application, PRIDE, home studies, licensing and retention). Resource parents participated in recruitment events, strategy meetings, Kinship Center activities, mock TDM trainings and faith-based outreach. Staff collaborated with Parent Partners in other county departments and contracted vendors. San Bernardino County Youth met regularly with advisors to prepare and organize the pursuit of certification as an official California Youth Connection (CYC) Chapter. Initial icebreaker meetings were conducted in December 2006 within the geographically assigned units.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS (BCP)

The BCP Strategy developed new partnerships with programs in each region, such as the Young Visionaries Youth Leadership (gang prevention and male mentoring), Asian American Resource Center, Building A Generation, Same Team Kids, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians and Mother's Against Predators. Stronger relationships were formed with faith-based organizations and services (immigration, food, clothing job training, addiction and teen programs), including the nationally recognized crime reduction program, Phoenix Operation Program. Geographically assigned staff strengthened relationships by attending collaborative meetings, individually sponsored events and networking events. The Desert Community Partners assisted with F2F presentations and trainings in their community. Strategy Workgroups tracked the number of community partner contacts and began planning methods of tracking and monitoring participation in community activities. Community specific fact sheets with detailed information regarding numbers and percentages of the community's population (ethnic breakdown), referred families, abuse/neglect, TDMs held (location, participants, outcomes and disproportionality) were distributed during each community forums.

TEAM DECISION MAKING (TDM)

Imminent Risk, Emergency Placement and Placement Move TDMS were mandatory in all implementation areas. Once a child and family received a TDM, the TDMs were held at all placement decision points throughout the course of the case. In the Spring of 2007, the West End Region will fully implement the above TDMs in all cities. In the interest of Fairness and Equity and decreasing the disproportionality of the number of black infants entering care, the West End and Desert Regions conducted TDMs on all Black infants 12 months and under and their family members. There has been firewall success with the establishment of TDM criteria

for centralized placement and relative approval units. Comparison reports of petitions filed vs. total TDMs held were monitored on an ongoing basis. Regional managers also reviewed exemption requests. The TDM handbook chapter for policy and procedure was finalized. TDM request forms were revised to include community partner specifics and DV screening information. A supplemental TDM/DV handbook chapter is in draft form with participation from county DV shelters. Countywide and regional TDM data were distributed to staff and community partners.

SELF EVALUATION (SE)

The SE team responds to data requests from the other strategy workgroup. SET produced and updated fact sheets that were shared with staff and community partners. A share drive was created with all fact sheets and disproportionality reports for staff and partner review. Fact Sheets were produced for 18 cities out of 31 cities located in San Bernardino County (58% of the cities in the County), which meant that every city that implemented F2F TDMs had a fact sheet. All county staff attended mandatory training on Fairness and Equity and the Culture of Poverty. A Fairness and Equity committee was established within DCS and across systems in San Bernardino County.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

F2F Funding Began: 2004

Contact: Becki Debont, F2F Coordinator, becki.debont@sdcounty.ca.gov

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

There has been increase in the number of active foster homes, 1611 in 2005 compared to 1581 in 2006. A “Taking Care of Business Day” was held for potential foster parents who could attend an orientation, fingerprint, CPR/First Aid – all in one day. There was a newspaper story about a foster parent in the local paper, a one-hour TV program featuring staff from Foster Home Licensing and Adoptions and ads promoting sibling placement. A survey is given to every potential foster parent who contacts the agency to learn which advertising venue is most effective. Over the course of two separate events, the partnership between San Diego County Foster Home Licensing and San Diego Futures Foundation gave away 500 refurbished computers to foster families. There has been an expansion of the Foster Parent Mentor Program. KIDSline is a toll-free “hotline” for foster parents to call for information or resources. The Options for Recovery Foster Home Licensing program recruits, trains, and supports foster parents, relative caretakers, and non-related extended family members (NREFM) who specialize in caring for children ages 0 to 60 months who are drug and/or alcohol exposed and/or HIV positive. Upon completion of training, caregiver may receive 48 hours of paid respite per month until the child ages out at 60 months or is no longer a court dependent. A relative substitute care provider may qualify for the Kinship Support Respite Services when there is at least one dependent child living in the home. Relative caregivers that provide informal care for a kin child may also qualify for respite under this program. San Diego identifies foster homes that are trained to take medically fragile children, and these foster parents have their own support group. San Diego County also has staffs that carries specialized caseloads of deaf clients (parents or children) and are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL).

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS (BCP)

Community partners are involved with recruitment efforts, respite events, foster parent appreciation events, holiday toy drives, and other support activities. Respite nights are held throughout the County in each of the six target regions. Community Representatives are included in TDMs. The East Region was able to bring the Incredible Years (an evidenced based parenting program) to families by partnering with community collaborative. The program includes a visitation/meal time between parents and their children prior to their class. After dinner, parents and children attend separate groups. Caregivers receive respite while children are engaged in supervised productive time with their siblings and parents. Community collaboratives are responsible for providing the funding for the meal, and the clinically trained staff who teach the curriculum. CWS ensures client participation with transportation and supervision during the visitation portion and this program boasts a 95% attendance rate. Neighborhoods for Kids – East County is an innovative child welfare program in San Diego that aims to safely keep kids in familiar environments when they have been abused or neglected. Child Welfare Service staff in East County partnered with the schools and other community groups to align child welfare service delivery with the school boundaries. Child welfare staff work in 5 distinct geographical regions and have created relationships with school personnel, law enforcement, faith organizations, foster parents, and service organizations. In addition to aligning with existing school boundaries, Neighborhoods for Kids utilizes 14 “Way Station” beds – which are beds in East County foster homes that are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These foster parents take kids into their home at the point of removal from their homes, and they keep the kids for 10 – 30 days, until a relative or familiar family can be located – thus minimizing disruption in the child’s life. San Diego County’s South Region implemented Parent-Peer Support Groups in January 2006. The pilot was evaluated in July 2006 by San Diego State University School of Social Work.

TEAM DECISION MAKING (TDM)

San Diego County rolled out TDMs in three of their six regions in January 2006 (Central–Mills, North Inland and North Coastal). All regions have implemented TDM meetings, along with two centrally managed programs: Residential Services and Adoptions. Implementation has begun with Placement Move TDMs and has expanded to include Emergency Placement and Imminent Risk TDMs. Both Emergency Placement and Placement Move TDMs are mandatory in all locations. In Adoptions, staff are required to hold a case consultation if they are considering moving/removing a child. When they are scheduling a case consult, staff is required to indicate when the TDM is scheduled or if it has already been held. In order to enter a child into Polinsky Children’s Center, staff must obtain authorization from the Assistant Deputy Director on duty. San Diego County refers to Icebreakers as Family Team Meetings (FTMs). FTMs were implemented in 2003. TDMs are held in 7 locations around the County, and occasionally on-site at a school or community building if that best meets the need of the family.

SELF EVALUATION (SE)

The Quality Assurance Data Unit is charged with data collection and assessment on a wide range of areas for CWS, and supports the F2F self-evaluation. The Quality Assurance Data Unit produces several reports including: semi-annual Family to Family reports, monthly change of placement reports, monthly internal audits of relative home assessments, monthly performance reports, monthly Safe Measures compliance reports, quarterly CWS Trends reports, and quarterly

AB636 summary reports. The spreadsheet breaks information into Regional sections, but does not identify specific staff or families.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE, EDUCATION, YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

San Pasqual Academy is a placement option for dependents that are high school age (14 to 18 years old and siblings 12-13 years old) and provide adolescent foster youth with a placement, education and preparation for independent living. New Alternatives, Inc. is the residential services contractor, providing care and supervision of the Academy youth. New Alternatives, Inc. is also the Independent Living Skills (ILS) provider. The San Pasqual Academy Neighbors (SPAN) intergenerational mentoring program recruits older adults to serve as surrogate grandparents to the Academy youth. The grandparent live on- and off-campus, and assist youth in developing social skills, making life choices, developing career interests and modeling adult/adolescent interactions. Alumni housing and support services are available on campus to the graduated/emancipated alumni who may wish to remain in residence at the Academy while pursuing education- or career-oriented goals. There is a joint venture between the Adoptions Program and Residential Services (RS) Program. The target population includes every child active to the RS program whose behavior is stable enough to attempt to locate a permanent family environment for that child. The annual Leap of Faith Adoptions Calendar features striking photographs of foster children awaiting placement as well as information about adoption. The recruitment staff includes a faith-based specialist who works with the church leadership to promote and support adoption awareness and recruit foster and adoptive families in the church. A new three-year pilot project in 2006 called the San Diego County Workforce Academy for Youth was designed to help young people who are emancipating from the foster care system. Every six months, ten youth are placed into jobs within the County, paid via a special fund that has been set up in the Department of Human Resources. There is no cost to the departments that participate in this program. Ten youth are working in county departments doing entry-level work. Each has a Job Coach at the work site, in most cases, the supervisor. Each youth is also assigned a senior Life Coach who provides positive reinforcement, life skills coaching, and other support as needed. The San Diego Foster Youth Initiative operates the Opportunity Passport. The Opportunity Passport™ is the program component that focuses on three primary ideas; financial literacy, employment preparation, and opportunities in the community. There is a collaborative effort between Casey Family Programs, Access Inc., and the San Diego Workforce Partnership focused on providing transition services.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

San Diego County's South Region implemented Parent-Peer Support Groups in January 2006. The San Diego State University School of Social Work evaluated the pilot in July 2006.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

San Diego has a specialty unit that focuses on domestic violence. The Family Violence Unit is an interagency collaborative unit between the County of San Diego Probation Department and Health and Human Services Agency Child Welfare Services. In October 2004, the County of San Diego was one of 33 sites nation-wide to receive a two-year planning grant through the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Public Health and Science. Under the leadership of San Diego County's Office of Violence Prevention, this grant is developing a model that addresses the needs of children exposed to domestic violence. San Diego County was selected as one of fifteen sites nation-wide to develop and implement service delivery systems

aimed at improving access to, delivery of, and quality of services for young children at high risk of exposure to domestic violence or who have already been exposed to domestic violence. Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, this is a four-year collaborative, multi-system pilot project.