

## **System Improvement Plan Orange County Children and Family Services Orange County Probation Department**

The Orange County Self Assessment Report and the System Improvement Plan (SIP) have both been prepared with oversight from the Orange County Child Welfare Redesign Planning Council. This is a subgroup of the Children's Services Coordination Committee, a Board of Supervisors appointed group of children's services professionals who provide guidance and executive-level decision making for children's services in Orange County. Please see Attachment II for a list of Planning Council members.

To complete the Orange County Self Assessment process and report, and to develop the SIP, input was collected from a comprehensive array of stakeholders, using multiple collection methods. These stakeholders included representatives from the education community, the judicial system, community-based services providers, other county agencies such as public and mental health, foster care providers, emancipated youth, birth parents, and many others. Please see the Orange County Self Assessment Report for further information regarding stakeholder input to the process. Please see Attachment I for a summary of the Report and Attachment III for a list of stakeholders contacted as part of the Self Assessment Process.

Analysis and interpretation of outcome data was completed by the Orange County Self Evaluation Team and data evaluation teams consisting of CFS staff and managers. Additionally, the Orange County Child Welfare Redesign Planning Council met monthly to discuss outcome data and identify areas needing further attention through the SIP.

Please refer to the Orange County Self Assessment Report Summary (Attachment I) for further information regarding data collection and information received from staff and stakeholders regarding each of the reported outcomes and systemic factors.

As Orange County Children and Family Services' outcome data indicates strong performance on all safety indicators, and in light of a robust emancipation services program, outcomes in the area of permanency were identified for further improvement. Analysis of the Orange County Outcome Data and relevant feedback from stakeholders and the Orange County Child Welfare Redesign Planning Council, indicated **that decreasing time to reunification and increasing the number of children who experienced only 1-2 placements in the first 12 months of care** were areas of highest priority for the SIP. Decreasing time to

adoption will be further analyzed through the Orange County Peer Quality Case Review, when scheduled. Additionally, the **Orange County Probation Department will focus on increasing services to emancipating probation youth** as an area for improvement.

On July 20, 2004, a community forum was hosted by the Orange County Child Welfare Services Redesign Planning Council, Orange County Children and Family Services, and the Orange County Probation Department to solicit further stakeholder input for the SIP planning process. Invitations to the forum were sent via U.S. mail and e-mail to community stakeholders throughout Orange County.

A PowerPoint presentation summarizing Orange County's outcome data and the self assessment process was presented. A panel of community leaders representing education, the judicial system, community service providers, parent representatives, and others spoke regarding their participation in and reaction to the self assessment process. Feedback from the panel regarding the self assessment process was favorable, with multiple stakeholders indicating that they appreciated the opportunity to express their views regarding child welfare services in Orange County.

Breakout groups were held to gather input regarding the three outcome areas identified for the SIP. New strategies and areas of needed community involvement, training and education and legislative change were identified for each of the SIP components. This feedback has been integrated into the information presented for each of the SIP components.

**Outcome/Systemic Factor:  
Reunification within 12 months**

**County's Current Performance:**

Orange County Children and Family Services' (CFS) rate of reunification is somewhat slower than the rest of California, with 57.2% of children reunified within 12 months, compared to a national standard of 76.2% and a California average of 65.3%. Although this reunification rate is slower than desired, it is at least somewhat mitigated by Orange County's rate of successful reunifications. In measurements of re-entry to foster care following reunification, Orange County data demonstrates a return rate of 5.0%, which compares favorably with the national standard of 8.6%, and a California statewide average of 10.8%.

Analysis of Orange County practice and other systemic factors indicates that a wide range of issues contribute to the rate of reunification. Stakeholder feedback has indicated that all parties involved in reunification services need to be aware of federally mandated time frames, looking towards permanency for the child from the first date of detention. Despite a comprehensive array of services available to support families, issues such as Juvenile Court continuances and contested hearings that delay parents' commitment to engaging in services, social work practice that thinks in terms of court timelines rather than the readiness of families to reunify, and a lack of affordable housing for families in need all contribute to a slower rate of reunification.

To increase the number of families reunifying within 12 months, select strategies designed to increase early engagement of families in services, enhance services available to families, and facilitate timely management of family reunification cases will be implemented as follows:

<b>Improvement Goal 1.0</b>			
<b>Increase substance abuse resources for parents receiving Family Reunification services</b>			
<b>Strategy 1. 1</b> Explore possibilities of increased substance abuse resources through multiple venues.		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> A significant percentage of families in the child welfare system struggle with substance abuse issues. Sufficient resources to support resolution of these issues is necessary to achieve reunification.	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>1.1.1</b> Work with Orange County Juvenile Court to explore implementation of a Dependency Drug Court for parents.	<b>Timeframe</b>	December 31, 2004
	<b>1.1.2</b> Partner with a local non-profit technical assistance organization to implement grant-funded enhancement of substance abuse treatment resources.		June 30, 2005
	<b>1.1.3.</b> Inform the Orange County service providers' community of the need for increased residential substance abuse treatment facilities that allow mothers in recovery to reside with their children while in treatment. Engage service providers in a discussion regarding development of resources to meet these needs.		June 30, 2005
	<b>1.1.4.</b> Discuss with Orange County alcohol and drug service treatment providers the possibility of prioritizing these services for CFS clients.		December 31, 2005
		<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Continuing Family Services
			Deputy Director, Continuing Family Services
			Orange County Child Welfare Redesign Planning Council
			Orange County Child Welfare Redesign Planning Council

<b>Improvement Goal 2.0</b>					
<b>Increase early and on-going assessment of readiness for reunification</b>					
<b>Strategy 2.1</b> Implement Team Decision Making (TDM) 9-months post-detention.			TDM meetings at 9 months following detention will aid in planning reunification prior to the 12-month federal time frame, potentially decreasing time to reunification.		
	<b>2.1.1.</b> TDMs completed for 90% of Family Reunification cases 9-months post-detention.		June 30, 2006		Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services
	<b>2.1.2.</b> TDMs completed for 90% of CFS-involved removals that are currently completed after hours by “on call” social work staff.		December 31, 2005		Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>2.1.3.</b> TDMs completed for 75% of removals initiated by law enforcement.	<b>Timeframe</b>	June 30, 2006	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services

<b>Improvement Goal 3.0</b>					
<b>Increase early engagement of parents in services</b>					
<b>Strategy 3.1</b> Implement Team Decision Making (TDM) for 90% of initial CFS-involved removals.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> TDM at initial removal is a strategy for early, strength-based engagement of parents.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>3.1.1.</b> TDMs completed for 90% of CFS-involved removals.	<b>Timeframe</b>	June 30, 2005	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services
<b>Strategy 3.2</b> Implement Ice Breaker meetings			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Initial meetings between the assigned social worker, birth parents, and caregivers will promote timely and successfully reunification by forming a working team with the common goal of providing care for the children, and returning the children home as soon as possible. Parents will receive mentoring and support from caregivers as a result of this team-building process.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>3.2.1.</b> Implement Ice Breaker Meetings for 90% of initial group home placements.	<b>Timeframe</b>	June 30, 2005	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Continuing Family Services
	<b>3.2.2.</b> Implement Ice Breaker Meetings for 75% of initial foster home and relative/Non-Related Extended Family Member (NREFM) placements.		December 30, 2005		Deputy Director, Family Assessment and Shelter Services

<b>Improvement Goal 4.0</b>					
<b>Increase supportive services for parents</b>					
<b>Strategy 4.1</b> Implement the Parent Leadership program in collaboration with Parents' Anonymous.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Supportive mentoring for birth parents will enhance timely and successful reunification.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>4.1.1.</b> In collaboration with birth parents and resource families, assess current and potential parent leadership and participation in child welfare.	<b>Timeframe</b>	June 30, 2005	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services
	<b>4.1.2.</b> In collaboration with birth parents and resource families, develop a parent leadership model for Orange County.		December 30, 2005		Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services
	<b>4.1.3.</b> Implement Parent Leadership program.		June 30, 2006		Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services
<b>Strategy 4. 2</b> Implement group orientation for birth parents following detention.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Early engagement of parents during the Family Reunification period will potentially result in more rapid reunification.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>4.2.1.</b> Develop parent orientation curriculum in collaboration with parent leaders.	<b>Timeframe</b>	June 30, 2005	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services
	<b>4.2.2.</b> Implement birth parent group orientations for all birth parents whose children have been detained.		January 1, 2006		Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services

<b>Strategy 4.3</b> Increase use of Wraparound as a support to reunification.		Strategy Rationale Wraparound is a proven strategy for supporting safe and timely reunifications of children in or at risk of group home placement.	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>4.3.1</b> Assess each family following detention for referral to the Wraparound program to facilitate early reunification prior to the dispositional hearing.	<b>Timeframe</b>	June 30, 2005
		<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Family Assessment and Shelter Services

<p><b>Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Examine referral process for Wraparound services.</li> <li>2. Referral to and completion of TDM meetings, as required.</li> <li>3. Implementation of Dependency Drug Court in cooperation with the Orange County judicial system.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Technical assistance will be needed from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to continue implementation of Team Decision Making.</li> <li>2. Assistance from the Casey Foundation and Parents' Anonymous will be needed to develop the Parent Leadership program.</li> <li>3. Assistance from the Orange County judicial system in developing an Orange County Dependency Drug Court.</li> <li>4. Increase staff's awareness of minimal standards of care to facilitate timely reunification.</li> <li>5. Train staff to develop focused case plans based on the allegations sustained in the court petition.</li> <li>6. Train staff regarding Wraparound program, availability, and referral process.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Stuart Foundation, and Parents' Anonymous will continue to partner with Orange County CFS for implementation of Team Decision Making and the Parent Partners Program.</li> <li>2. The Orange County Child Welfare Redesign Planning Council will continue to provide guidance to the on-going Self Assessment and System Improvement Plan process.</li> <li>3. The Orange County Children's Services Coordination Committee will provide oversight for the Wraparound Program.</li> <li>4. Orange County Family Resource Centers, substance abuse treatment providers, and other service providers will all participate in providing services to reunifying families to achieve the above improvement goals.</li> <li>5. The Orange County judicial system will assist in implementing a Dependency Drug Court.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Statutory changes regarding eligibility criteria for Wraparound services may be required.</li> </ol>

**Outcome/Systemic Factor:****1-2 Placements in first 12 months of foster care****County's Current Performance:**

In Orange County, 73.6% of the children in placement experienced 2 or less placements in twelve months. This compares with the national standard of 86.7% and the California statewide average of 83.9%. Often children in Orange County have historically begun their time in out of home care with an admission to Orangewood Children's Home (OCH). Although a safe and nurturing transitional shelter, OCH is no longer seen as an automatic first placement in Orange County. Orange County CFS has changed its practice in several substantial areas in the past few years to prevent initial admissions to OCH, whenever possible. Current efforts include two units of senior social workers, known as Diversion Units, are available 7 days a week, 12 hours a day to complete expedited assessments of relative and non-related extended family members for initial placements of children immediately following detention. Additionally, the First Step Assessment Center has recently opened, providing a safe place where children awaiting placement can have their medical and emotional needs assessed while Diversion and other staff complete a thoughtful assessment of potential placements.

Additional efforts to stabilize placements for children already in care include placement preservation meetings and Team Decision Making meetings. These meetings involve the child, family, extended family, community, and service providers in placement decisions with the goal of preserving existing placements whenever possible. Since implementation of placement preservation meetings 75% of the placements that were subjects of a placement preservation meeting have been preserved.

To increase the number of children experiencing only 1-2 placements in the first 12 months of foster care, select strategies designed to facilitate appropriate placements and placement preservation, support caregivers, and build relationships between resource families and birth parents will be implemented as follows:

<b>Improvement Goal 1.0</b>					
<b>Increase support to caregivers</b>					
<b>Strategy 1. 1</b> Implement the Parent Leadership Program (PLP) in collaboration with Parents' Anonymous			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Develop program for purposes of mutual support for parents and caregivers, resulting in more stable placements. Cross-training and support groups involving both birth parents and caregivers will enhance parenting knowledge and skills in a team-building environment.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>1.1.1</b> In collaboration with birth parents and resource families, assess current and potential parent leadership and participation in child welfare.	<b>Timeframe</b>	June 30, 2005	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services
	<b>1.1.2</b> In collaboration with birth parents and resource families, develop a parent leadership model for Orange County.		December 30, 2005		Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services
	<b>1.1.3</b> Implement parent leadership program.		June 30, 2006		Deputy Director, Permanency and Planning Services
<b>Strategy 1. 2</b> Implement Ice Breaker meetings following all initial placements and placement changes.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Ice Breaker meetings will develop supportive relationships between birth parents and caregivers, as well as provide caregivers with needed information regarding their foster child. Ice Breaker meetings include caregivers as a part of the team from the beginning, strengthening their commitment to provide on-going care.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>1.2.1.</b> Implement Ice Breaker Meetings for 90% of initial group home placements.	<b>Timeframe</b>	June 30, 2005	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Continuing Family Services
	<b>1.2.2</b> Implement Ice Breaker Meetings for 75% of initial foster home and relative/NREFM placements.		December 30, 2005		Deputy Director, Family Assessment and Shelter Services
	<b>1.2.3</b> Implement Ice Breaker Meetings for 75% of changes of placement.		June 30, 2006		Deputy Director, Continuing Family Services

<b>Strategy 1. 3</b> Identify and support Family Resource Center (FRC)-based resources for caregivers.		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Family Resource Centers provide community-based supports that will enhance caregivers' ability to provide appropriate care for foster children.	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>1.3.1</b> As a part of yearly contract negotiations with the FRC's, consider resources available and increased resources needed for caregivers within the scope of the Request For Proposal (RFP).	<b>Timeframe</b>	June 30, 2005
	<b>1.3.3</b> Seek additional funding sources to enable FRC's to provide additional resources for caregivers.		December 31, 2005
<b>Assigned to</b>	Child Welfare Services Redesign Planning Council and Families and Communities Together		Child Welfare Services Redesign Planning Council and Families and Communities Together
<b>Notes:</b>			

<b>Improvement Goal 2.0</b>					
<b>Preserve existing placements</b>					
<b>Strategy 2.1</b> Implement Team Decision Making meetings for 90% of placement changes.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> TDM meetings will identify potential placements immediately following initial removal. Subsequent TDM meetings held prior to potential placement changes will identify needed resources to stabilize at-risk placements.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>2.1.1</b> Implement mandatory TDM meetings following CFS-involved initial removals in 4 key cities in Orange County, excluding on-call removals.	<b>Timeframe</b>	October 31, 2004	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Intervention and Prevention Services
	<b>2.1.2</b> Implement mandatory TDM meetings for 90% of CFS-involved initial removals in all Orange County cities, excluding on-call removals.		December 31, 2004		Deputy Director, Intervention and Prevention Services
	<b>2.1.3</b> Implement mandatory TDM meetings prior to or immediately following emergency change of placements.		December 31, 2004		Deputy Director, Continuing Family Services
<b>Strategy 2.2</b> Implement Ice Breaker meetings for 90% of initial placements and placement changes.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Ice Breaker meetings involving the assigned Social Worker, the birth parents, and the caregiver(s) establishes the parents and caregivers as a team working together to provide care for the children. This will support caregivers in providing appropriate care, and enhance their motivation to provide on-going care.		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>2.2.1.</b> Implement Ice Breaker Meetings for 90% of initial group home placements.	<b>Timeframe</b>	June 30, 2005	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Continuing Family Services
	<b>2.2.2</b> Implement Ice Breaker Meetings for 75% of initial foster home and relative/NREFM placements.		December 30, 2005		Deputy Director, Family Assessment and Shelter Services
	<b>2.2.3</b> Implement Ice Breaker Meetings for 75% of changes of placement.		June 30, 2006		Deputy Director, Continuing Family Services

<b>Strategy 2.3</b> Implement therapeutically-oriented group orientation services for children ages 4-17 in out of home care.		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Provision of therapeutically-oriented placement orientation groups to children soon after detention will help alleviate negative feelings such as fear, anxiety, and guilt, resulting in a more positive adjustment to placement.			
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>2.3.1</b> Include in the 05/06 Request For Proposal (RFP) contracting process the development of group orientation for children.	<b>Timeframe</b>	October 31, 2004	<b>Assigned to</b>	Deputy Director, Intervention and Prevention Services
	<b>2.3.2.</b> Assess existing County resources for ability to implement group orientation for children.		December 31, 2004		Deputy Director, Intervention and Prevention Services
	<b>2.3.3</b> Meet with CFS staff and community stakeholders, including current and emancipated foster youth, to establish curriculum for group orientation for children.		March 1, 2005		Deputy Director, Intervention and Prevention Services
	<b>2.3.4</b> Begin providing group orientation for children.		December 1, 2005		Deputy Director, Intervention and Prevention Services

**Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.**

1. Implementation of TDM in Orange County has required a restructuring of Emergency Response and Intake functions to facilitate integration of services to families entering the system, as well as to support staff attendance at the TDM meetings.
2. Emergency response/intake programs, as well as dependency investigations and continuing programs will need to include additional input from family, extended family, and others for removal and placement decisions.
3. Group home and other placement providers will need to incorporate shared outcomes such as stabilization of placement into their programming.

**Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.**

1. Staff, caregivers, and community members are attending Family to Family and TDM readiness training to facilitate implementation of TDM and other Family to Family strategies.
2. Caregivers and staff are receiving on-going training regarding children's developmental needs, and grief and loss issues.
3. Technical assistance will continue to be needed from the Annie E. Casey Foundation for Family to Family implementation.
4. Technical assistance will be needed from Parents' Anonymous to implement the Parents' Leadership Program.
5. Continued input from current and emancipated foster youth is needed to adequately address needs of foster youth.

**Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.**

1. Caregivers committed to providing on-going care to foster youth will continue to partner with the Agency and families to stabilize placements.
2. Each of the 4 strategy teams involved in implementation of Family to Family (Building Community Partnerships, Team Decision Making, Recruitment, Training and Support and Self Evaluation) will continue to actively participate in implementation and evaluation of the strategies described above.
3. The Orange County CWS Redesign Planning Council will continue to provide guidance to the on-going Self Assessment and System Improvement Plan process.
4. The Orange County Family Resource Centers will be needed to act as a liaison between the Agency and the community, providing outreach and culturally appropriate services and resources.
5. Parents' Anonymous will partner with CFS to implement the Parent Leadership Program.
6. Other Orange County agencies such as the Health Care Agency (Public and Mental Health) will continue to partner with CFS to provide services to children, parents, and caregivers.

**Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.**

Orange County is exploring Title IVE waiver options in order to access funding in a more flexible way to facilitate implementation of the strategies described above.

<b>Outcome/Systemic Factor:</b> Enhance emancipation services for high-risk probation placement youth.						
<b>County's Current Performance:</b> The Self Assessment process focused largely on County performance related to outcome measures derived from data supplied by CWS/CMS. Currently no Probation data is included in CWS/CMS. The Chief Probation Officers Association has worked with CDSS to develop monthly outcomes, but this process has yet to be implemented. The Orange County Probation Department is developing a new Placement Management System to provide outcome data and track child welfare requirements for placement youth. Probation placement youth have additional juvenile justice considerations beyond that of strictly dependent youth. While emancipation services exist for the higher functioning minors, many probation placement minors are high risk, with severe emotional and educational needs. In order for the Probation Department to effectively determine what services are needed, and to work with providers to develop those services, it is necessary to first be able to accurately describe this population and their needs through good analysis and tracking of data related to this particular population. The self-assessment results revealed that 233 probation youth received ILP services over a one year time period. Currently, there is no automated system within Probation that enables staff to review aggregate information about these youth, or their ILP needs and what services they receive, and to examine how such information may correlate with both short and long-term outcomes.						
<b>Improvement Goal 1.0</b> Probation staff will make <i>effective</i> use of the new automated Placement Management System (PMS) to accurately describe the probation placement population and to develop baseline information for establishing appropriate emancipation outcomes.						
<b>Strategy 1. 1</b> Implementation of new Probation Placement Management System			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> Initial user testing and data input will allow system to be refined before staff training and full implementation.			
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>1.1.1</b> Carry out initial training session with clerical staff and probation officer staff.	<b>Timeframe</b>	September 30, 2004		<b>Assigned to</b>	Placement Supervising Probation
	<b>1.1.2</b> Monitor use to identify any initial QAS or system issues.		October 30, 2004			Placement Supervising Probation Officer
	<b>1.1.3</b> User feedback and additional modifications to allow full implementation.		December 15, 2004			Placement Supervising Probation Officer and Data Systems Division
<b>Strategy 1. 2</b> Complete a preliminary review of a PMS data extract.			<b>Strategy Rationale</b> This strategy will serve both to identify any outstanding data quality control issues and to help define subsequent analyses.			
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>1.2.1.</b> Extract a file from PMS with three months of data.	<b>Timeframe</b>	January 1, 2005		<b>Assigned to</b>	Probation Research staff
	<b>1.2.2</b> Analyze data for any quality control issues, and prepare information for feedback to program staff.		February 27, 2005			Research staff and Placement supervisor
	<b>1.2.3</b> Conduct preliminary analysis of aggregated case information.		March 30, 2005			Research staff, in coordination with Placement supervisor and Division Director

<b>Strategy 1.3</b> Carry out a thorough review and analysis of PMS data for a nine-month time period.		<b>Strategy Rationale</b> A comprehensive analysis of the automated system data will provide the information for summarizing case profiles and developing baseline outcome results.			
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>1.3.1</b> Extract a file from PMS with nine months of data.	<b>Timeframe</b>	June 30, 2005	<b>Assigned to</b>	Research staff
	<b>1.3.2</b> Analyze data and prepare descriptive profile summary results.		2 Months – August 30, 2005		Research staff and Placement supervisor
	<b>1.3.3</b> Examine data to identify possible short and long-term outcomes.		4 Months – October 31, 2005		Research staff, in coordination with Division Director and Placement supervisor

<p><b>Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.</b> The implementation of the Orange County Department Probation Placement Management System was developed with the draft requirements for Probation Placement data as agreed to by CPOC (Chief Probation Officers Association) and CDSS. The final approval of these data elements and an agreed upon format to submit this information needs to be in place for all Probation Departments.</p>
<p><b>Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.</b> Orange County Probation Data Systems staff and the Supervising Probation Officer of the Placement Unit will ensure adequate training to fully implement the Placement Management System.</p>
<p><b>Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.</b> Finalization of the AB636 data to be provided to CDSS by Probation Departments needs to be approved by CDSS.</p>
<p><b>Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.</b> None</p>

**Orange County Children and Family Services  
Orange County Probation Department  
Self Assessment Report, 2004**

**SUMMARY ASSESSMENT**

As a part of on-going quality development activities, and as a first step in response to the California Child and Family Services Review, Orange County Department of Children and Family Services (CFS) and Orange County Probation Department have completed the 2004 Self Assessment Report, as summarized below.

This self-assessment report was developed with input solicited from CFS staff, the Orange County Probation Department and other stakeholders throughout Orange County. Over 45 individual and group stakeholders provided information in response to requests for feedback regarding child welfare services in Orange County. Staff and stakeholder input is included in the summary below, and is also interwoven throughout the body of the report. Data outcome information provided through the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the University of California, Berkeley, has been analyzed in terms of Orange County's performance in each of the outcome factors. Systemic factors affecting these outcomes have been described and analyzed. *Information specifically pertaining to the Orange County Probation Department is indicated in italicized type.*

**DATA OUTCOME INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS**

*Probation statistical data is not included in the County outcome measures. The California Chief Probation Officers Association (CPOC) is working with CDSS to develop probation-specific outcome measures and data collection methods as Probation does not have access to CWS/CMS.*

**Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.**

Child safety has always been the number one priority for Orange County CFS. This priority is reflected in strong outcome data in the area of safety.

**Recurrence of maltreatment**

In the area of recurrence of maltreatment, Orange County data demonstrates that 5.8% of the children receiving a substantiated allegation of abuse have another substantiated allegation of abuse within the specified period. This rate is lower than the national standard of 6.1%, and significantly lower than the California statewide average of 11.2%. Rates of recurrence of abuse or neglect of children who remain in their own homes and receive child welfare services are 8.0% for Orange County, compared with a California statewide average of 9.5%.

Orange County CFS policy does not require a substantiated allegation to provide voluntary Family Maintenance services. This policy results in the provision of intensive preventive/early intervention services to families, reducing recurrence of abuse and strengthening families before areas of concern escalate and require court intervention.

Additionally, families receiving court-ordered family maintenance services have access to an intensive array of CFS-contracted and community-based services that support child safety and the amelioration of child welfare concerns.

Issues that may negatively impact recurrence of abuse include the refusal of voluntary services by families that are not court mandated. Also, when families do receive services, providers working with the family may report abuse that would have gone otherwise unobserved, and actually increase the reported rates of recurrence even though the family may be actively engaged in a recovery process.

### **Abuse in foster care**

Rates of abuse or neglect of Orange County children while in foster care are also favorable. Orange County data shows an abuse in foster care rate of .2%, or 2 out of every one thousand children placed in foster homes. This is less than half the national standard of .57%, and only one quarter of the California average of .81%. Although recent changes have been put in place to correct the situation, data collection restraints have limited this outcome information to children placed in foster or Foster Family Agency (FFA) homes (and does not include children in group homes and homes of relatives and non-related extended family members).

Orange County contracts with the State to license its own foster homes. Once licensed, foster parents have access to a wide variety of supportive services, including training, information sharing, basic needs resources, and limited amounts of child care and respite care. In addition to support from licensing workers and continuing social workers who have children placed in foster homes, CFS has three dedicated social workers and a foster care liaison to provide on-going support. CFS foster home monitors provide on-going support to caregivers, and also immediately investigate allegations of abuse or neglect in foster homes.

Children in group homes are seen at least monthly by their assigned social worker, and group home monitors provide support to staff, and investigate any allegations of abuse, neglect, or quality of care issues in group homes. To assure safety for children placed in the homes of relatives and non-related extended family members (NREFM), CFS has recently implemented a comprehensive assessment and annual reassessment process that applies the same health and safety standards as those used to assess licensed homes.

### **Timeliness of social worker contacts and response to reports of suspected child abuse or neglect**

Prompt investigation of child abuse reports, and making face to face contact with children and their caregivers on a regular basis once child welfare services have begun, are vital to ensuring child safety. Orange County's compliance with state-mandated timeframes for responding to reports of suspected abuse or neglect is excellent, with a 94% compliance rate on reports designated to have a response within 10 days, and an outstanding 99% compliance rate for responding within 24 hours to reports indicating that a child may be in imminent danger.

Orange County's compliance with monthly contacts with children receiving CFS services averaged 94.2% over the second quarter of 2003. This percentage is higher than the California statewide average of 85.2%, and is in compliance with state requirements that contact compliance be above 90%. However, due to the importance of regular contact between social worker and child as the foundation for ensuring child safety and adequate provision of services, Orange County began implementation of several strategies to maintain consistent compliance in this area over a year ago. These strategies have included:

- Case carrying social workers complete monthly statistical reports indicating completed and attempted contacts for each child in their caseload.
- Monthly Business Objects reports are run that determine contact compliance within each program, drilling down to a level of detail that enables managers and supervisors to work proactively with staff to increase completion of timely contacts.
- Contact reports are reviewed monthly at managers' meetings.
- Supervisors conduct monthly conferences with staff and complete quarterly reviews on selected cases to verify compliance with contact requirements.

**Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry to foster care.**

Outcomes in this area measure the percent of children reunified with their parents within 12 months of removal from their home and what percentage of reunified children return to foster care. For those who do not return to their parents but must go on to another permanent home, the percentage of children adopted within 24 months of removal from their home is measured. Additionally, the number of out of home placements children experience while in care is measured.

**Rate of reunification and re-entry to foster care**

Orange County CFS' rate of reunification is somewhat slower than the rest of California, with 57.2% of children reunified within 12 months, compared to a national standard of 76.2% and a California state average of 65.3%. Although this reunification rate is slower than desired, it is at least somewhat mitigated by Orange County's rate of successful reunifications. In measurements of re-entry to foster care following reunification, Orange County data demonstrates a return rate of 5.0%, which compares favorably with the national standard of 8.6%, and a California statewide average of 10.8%.

Analysis of Orange County practice and other systemic factors indicates that a wide range of issues contribute to the rate of reunification. Stakeholder feedback has indicated that all parties involved in reunification services need to be aware of federally mandated time frames, looking towards permanency for the child from the first date of detention. Despite a comprehensive array of services available to support families, issues such as Juvenile Court continuances and contested hearings that delay parents' commitment to engaging in services, social work practice that is based on court timelines rather than the readiness of families to reunify, and a lack of affordable housing for families in need all contribute to a slower rate of reunification.

Stakeholder feedback indicates that it is more desirable to reunify a little more slowly than it is to risk bringing children back into custody after a failed reunification. However decreasing time for successful reunification continues to be a priority for Orange County CFS. Recent implementation of the Family to Family initiative, including the progressive implementation of Team Decision Making meetings for all key decision making points in the life of a case, is anticipated to decrease time to reunification through the early and on-going engagement of parents, family and community in the reunification process. Other best-practice programs such as Wraparound, multi disciplinary case reviews, expedited mental health services for seriously emotionally disturbed children and coordinated case planning for parents receiving both CalWORKs and CFS services will continue to support families in their reunification process.

**Decreasing time to reunification will be a focus item for the Orange County System Improvement Plan.**

**Time to adoption**

According to the most recent data outcomes, October 2002 through September 2003, 24.1% of the children receiving child welfare services in Orange County were adopted within 24 months of removal from their parent's home. This is in keeping with a California statewide average of 23.6%, and is lower than the national standard of 32.0%. This compliance rate is a significant improvement over averages from the past 5 years, and reflects CFS' commitment to expedited permanency to meet the needs of children and families.

Rate to adoption represents a complex set of circumstances that includes assessed prognosis for reunification, the likelihood that a child will be adopted, parents' progress with their court ordered case plan, and willingness and ability of relatives and other caregivers to provide a permanent home for the child. Judicial issues such as continuances and contested hearings also affect the rate to adoption. Additionally, social work practice that does not quickly re-assess failing reunification efforts and provide timely referrals to the adoption program may delay the adoptive process.

A practice issue that positively impacts children but negatively affects rate to adoption statistics is recent increased efforts to find adoptive homes for difficult to place children. When a child who may have been previously thought of as unadoptable, due to the child's age, behaviors or intensive needs, is placed in an adoptive home, the extended length of time needed to finalize these difficult adoptions reflects negatively in the overall rate. This means that increased diligence and success in finding adoptive homes for children never before considered for adoption will actually have a negative impact on this outcome.

Although Orange County's rate to adoption is slower than desired, implementation of concurrent planning policy and practices that assess prognosis for reunification, and then place children in foster homes that are potential adoptive homes (concurrent planning homes) have proven to be very successful. A recent study indicated that all but two children placed in concurrent planning homes were adopted within the federally

mandated timeline of 24 months from detention. One of the two children not adopted within 24 months was reunified with his or her parents. The other child was not placed in a concurrent planning home until six months after detention. Adoption took 26 months for this child.

**Time to adoption will be a focus area for the Orange County Peer Quality Case Review.**

**Number of placements within 12 months**

In Orange County, 73.6% of the children in placement experienced 2 or less placements in twelve months. This compares with the national standard of 86.7% and the California statewide average of 83.9%. Children in Orange County have historically begun their time in out of home care with an admission to Orangewood Children's Home (OCH). Although a safe and nurturing transitional shelter, OCH is no longer seen as an automatic first placement in Orange County. Orange County CFS has changed its practice in several substantial areas in the past few years to prevent initial admissions to OCH whenever possible. Current efforts include two units of senior social workers, known as Diversion Units, who are available 7 days a week, 12 hours a day to complete expedited assessments of relative and non-related extended family members for initial placements of children immediately following detention. Additionally, the First Step Assessment Center has recently opened, providing a safe place where children waiting placement can have their medical and emotional needs assessed while Diversion and other staff complete a thoughtful assessment of potential placements.

Additional efforts to stabilize placements for children already in care include Placement Preservation Meetings and Team Decision Making meetings. These meetings involve the child, family, extended family, community and service providers in placement decisions, with the goal of preserving existing placements whenever possible. Since implementation of Placement Preservation Meetings (PPM), 75% of the placements that were subjects of a PPM have been preserved.

**As the well-being of children in care is strongly influenced by the quantity and quality of placements they experience, reducing the number of placements for children will be a focus of the Orange County System Improvement Plan.**

**The family relationships and connections of the children served by Orange County Children and Family Services will be preserved, as appropriate.**

Children's family relationships and community and other vital connections can be preserved even when children must come into out of home care. Orange County CFS is committed to preserving these connections, as demonstrated by some of the practices described below.

**Siblings placed together in foster care**

The most recent point in time data indicates that there were 3,410 children in child welfare supervised foster care in Orange County. Sixty one percent of these children had

at least one sibling in out of home care. These children were placed with all their siblings 49.9% of the time, compared with a California statewide average of 42.%. Additionally, 69.1% were placed with some of their siblings, compared with a California statewide average of 66.4%. Orange County has been able to achieve this rate despite a shortage of foster homes that will accept large sibling groups. As of January 1, 2004, sibling sets of 3 or more comprised a total of 1,191 children in foster care—57% of the total number of children in care with siblings. The high cost of housing in Orange County, coupled with current approval requirements for relative caregivers, are issues in recruitment and retention of foster and relative caregivers.

When placement with siblings is analyzed by placement type, children placed with relatives are placed with all or some of their siblings 79.3% of the time. This is in contrast to a 58.0% rate when placed in a foster home, a 79.9% rate when in a FFA home, and a low 36.5% when placed in a group home. Orange County's commitment to identifying and assessing all available and willing relative placement possibilities results in a higher than usual percentage of children placed with all or some of their children.

The Orange County CFS Self Evaluation Team has analyzed placement type and placement with siblings by ethnicity. Results preliminarily indicate that black children and Native American children are less likely to be placed with all or some of their siblings than are children of other ethnicities. A sub-committee has been established to explore this issue.

Social Work practice issues that affect placement of siblings together include the need to select placements that will meet children's special needs (e.g. group homes that provide intensive services). Another practice issue affecting this outcome is the priority of placing children with relatives, sometimes resulting in half-siblings being placed with different sides of the family (e.g. one mother, 2 or more fathers).

#### **Foster care in least restrictive setting**

Orange County outcome data indicates that relative placements comprise the largest percentage of any placement type, followed by FFA and foster placements. However, the rate of initial placements in group homes (OCH, Orange County's transitional shelter) was 77.0%, compared to a statewide average of 20.6%. Additionally, Orange County children were more likely to have a group home as their primary placement (30.2%) than the California statewide average of 9.1%.

As summarized above in the Placement Stability section, it has been Orange County's historical practice to admit children to Orangewood Children's Home (OCH) following detention to provide a safe environment for children while other placement possibilities were assessed. Implementation of expedited assessments of relative/non-related extended family member placement possibilities, as well as the opening of the First Step Assessment Center in October, 2003, has resulted in fewer admissions to OCH. For the first six-month period of operation there were 753 children admitted to the Assessment Center. Suitable placements were located for 303 of the children (40%), with the remaining 60% admitted to OCH. Of the 303 children, 166 (55%) were placed with

parents, relatives or non-related extended family members. Fifty-three children (17%) were placed in foster homes, 56 (18%) in emergency shelter foster homes and 24 (8%) in group homes. One child was released to the Probation Department and three of the children were from other counties/jurisdictions.

Recent implementation of Family to Family in Orange County is anticipated to alleviate the need for some group home placements. The key Family to Family strategy of using Team Decision Making to involve the child, family and community in placement decisions, along with Building Community Partnerships, and Recruitment, Training and Support of community-based resource families will all contribute to the identification and retention of family oriented placement resources. Other best practices such as Wraparound, Placement Preservation Meetings and the Multidisciplinary Treatment Team will also support least-restrictive placements.

### **Rate of Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) placement preferences**

Orange County outcome data indicated that 50% of ICWA identified children are placed with relatives, 10% with non-relative Indian families, 10% with non-relative non-Indian families, and 30% with non-relative families where ethnicity is not identified.

Although there are no Indian reservations or ICWA recognized Indian tribes in Orange County, effort are made to determine Indian heritage for children coming in to care, and to make appropriate placements for children meeting ICWA criteria.

Due to some historical difficulties in identifying and providing appropriate notices for ICWA children, an ICWA unit was established almost a year ago. This specialized unit is dedicated to identifying children with Indian heritage, and then following through to make sure that appropriate notices and services are provided. Staff from the ICWA unit are involved in increasing knowledge of and interaction with Indian tribes from contiguous counties. Stakeholder feedback, including feedback from the judicial system, indicates that efforts of this specialized unit have been successful in meeting ICWA criteria for noticing.

### **Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.**

Orange County provides extensive emancipation services to eligible youth. Orange County's Independent Living Program (ILP) has developed a data base that tracks individual youth participation in ILP workshops, vocational assessments, employment training, academic enrichment programs, and transitional housing for both foster and emancipated youth.

## **SYSTEMIC ISSUES**

Issues systemic to provision of services to children and families, and their relative strengths and weaknesses are summarized below.

## **Management Information Systems**

The primary method of managing information in Orange County CFS is through full utilization of the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). Social work, clerical and public health nursing staff all have responsibility for entering data into CWS/CMS, with the assigned social worker responsible to ensure that all mandated data entry is entered.

To assure data integrity, the Orange County Self Evaluation Team (SET) has recently identified areas of CWS/CMS where data clean up was needed. A power point presentation illustrating the importance of data entry as a case management and data collection tool was presented by training staff to all programs. Additionally, individual programs and units have concentrated efforts on improving the quality of data entered into the system.

In addition to full utilization of CWS/CMS, Orange County CFS management utilizes monitoring tools in the forms of Business Objects reports to monitor compliance with targeted practice and data entry issues.

Utilization of CWS/CMS has enabled staff to organize client information to enhance case management, and also to provide historical information, and information for data reporting. At the same time, use of CWS/CMS has continued to represent a challenging workload issue for social workers and clerical staff.

## **Case Review System**

**Court Structure--**The relationship between Orange County CFS and the Juvenile Court continues to be challenging for CFS staff. Stakeholder input indicates a need for further training to increase understanding of the roles of all parties involved in the juvenile court system, as well as to increase knowledge of court expectations and legislation, and of clinical issues pertinent to decisions made regarding children and families. Additionally, numerous court continuances, and a judicial system that is possibly encouraged towards conservatism by an active appeals system are not supportive of compliance with state and federally mandated timelines.

*Probation—Court Structure and Relationship: The Probation Department reports that the court is supportive in their handling of Probation Placement cases. As most children in Probation Placements have Juvenile Justice considerations in conjunction with child welfare concerns it is rare that termination of parental rights is a consideration.*

**Timely Notification of Hearings—**Stakeholder feedback indicates that in most cases notices of hearings are received on a timely basis. Exceptions include notices to Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and a historical issue of appropriate ICWA notices. Issues with ICWA notices have been effectively dealt with by the implementation of a specialized ICWA unit.

*Probation—Notifications of Hearings—Parents are notified of the minor’s next review hearing, along with a copy of the minor’s case plan. The Court does not send out a notice for 6-month reviews.*

**Parent and Child Engaged Case Planning**—Individualized case plans are created for each family, based on judicial timelines, or when necessary, on the changing needs of the family. Practices to engage families in case planning include: monthly visits by social worker with discussion of needs and services, Team Decision Making meetings, Family Group Decision Making meetings, Wraparound (development of the Plan of Care), Permanency Placement Mediation to allow caregivers, parents and youth to provide input regarding post-adoption agreements, Emancipation Planning Conferences, development of the Transitional Independent Living Plan, and coordinated case planning for clients receiving services from both CFS and CalWORKs.

Stakeholder feedback indicates that parents are often overwhelmed with multiple case plan requirements. It has been suggested that short-term, staggered case plan activities and goals that are presented to parents with supportive, strength-based interaction from the social worker, will enable parents to be successful in completing their court-ordered activities.

Staff have stated that using CWS/CMS to develop case plans encourages “boiler plate,” generic case plans, rather than individualized plans developed in the field with families. Access to lap top computers would enable social workers to develop case plans with their clients.

*Probation—Parent-Child-Youth Participation in Case Planning. The probation officer completes the case plan with the minor within 30 days of receiving a placement order. Goals, areas of needs and the overall plan needed for the minor to succeed are discussed.*

*Increased efforts have been made to encourage parents to meet with the Probation Officer to discuss the minor’s case plan.*

**Fairness and equity in case planning**—Case plans can be formatted in Spanish, however the content is developed in CWS/CMS in English. This requires Spanish speaking social workers to provide translations to their clients. Additionally, case plans are not available in other languages.

**Permanency Hearings**—Concurrent planning in Orange County begins at detention with the identification of all relatives and non-related extended family members (NREFM) who may be willing to provide a permanent home for children, if needed. Additionally, a reunification prognosis is completed for each child in custody, and each child is assessed for adoptability. If the reunification prognosis is poor, children are placed either with a relative or NREFM, or in a pre-adoptive (concurrent planning) foster home. Analysis of concurrent planning placement efforts has indicated that for children placed soon after detention into concurrent planning homes, there is an almost 100% success rate in finalizing adoption within the 24 month federally-mandated timeline.

### **Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention**

Orange County CFS is contracted with the state to complete its own licensing of county foster homes. Additionally, Orange County CFS has an established policy and procedure regarding the assessment and annual reassessment of relative/NREFM homes, utilizing the same health and safety standards as those utilized for licensed foster homes.

Securing sufficient quantity of foster homes is a challenge in Orange County. Resource homes are especially needed for adolescents, adolescent mothers with their children, children with severe behavioral and mental health issues, sibling sets, and Hispanic and Vietnamese children. Additionally, more in-County placements are needed for all children.

Recent implementation of the key strategies of Family to Family, including Building Community Partnerships, Team Decision Making, and Recruitment, Training and Support of resource families is a positive step towards filling the need for resource homes. Special attention is being given to recruiting homes from the communities where the majority of children in care originate. One example is a recent partnership formed with a Santa Ana elementary school, the local Boys and Girls Club and CFS. A part of this program will be the recruitment of 30 community-based resource families to provide placements for children coming into care from Santa Ana. This recruitment is to be done by staff hired to serve as “promotoras,” a culturally acceptable method of bridging the gap between the neighborhood and the CFS agency.

*Probation—Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention. Probation has developed a formal process for conducting relative and non-related extended family member caregiver assessments, according to the requirements of AB1695.*

*The Probation Department does some limited recruitment of potential foster homes, primarily through the Orange County Fair, however the majority of foster families come forward as the result of wanting to become a foster parent for a specific child, or having been recruited by another Probation Foster Family. The Orange County Probation Department is the only probation department in the State to operate its own Foster Family Agency.*

*The Probation Department currently utilizes 38 programs, three foster families, a short-term placement facility (transitional), and a Transitional Housing Placement Program for higher functioning youth. Needed placement resources include placements for adjudicated fire setters, female sex offenders, severely emotionally disturbed and physically impaired minors. Additionally, transitional housing programs are especially needed for probation minors who are emancipating from the juvenile justice system and have no other positive support system in the community.*

### **Quality Assurance System**

Orange County has a dedicated Quality Development (QD) program. Staff in QD evaluate compliance with selected practice and data entry issues, respond to client concerns, and monitor compliance with contract expectations for CFS service providers.

Additional quality development is done through the implementation and analysis of Business Objects reports, supervisory monitoring of social worker's case management and data entry, as well as other on-going quality assurance activities.

*Probation Department Data Systems is developing a new Placement Management System that will be integrated with the current Probation computer system. This system will allow for the tracking of case plans, ILP's, Health and Educational Passports, and court dates.*

### **Service Array**

The depth and breadth of services available in Orange County, directly through CFS and other County agencies, as well as through contracted and community-based service providers, is a strength for Orange County, and a benefit to children and families.

Families receiving both court-ordered and voluntary family maintenance and family reunification services are eligible for most, if not all available resources, though the resources are allocated in greater quantities to family's working towards reunification. Coordination of CalWORKs and CFS case plans and resources has resulted in a more unified and continuous delivery of services to mutual clients, as well as more effective use of resources.

Stakeholder feedback indicated that strengths in Orange County's service array include:

- Wraparound
- Children's System of Care
- Continuing Care Placement Unit
- Family Resource Centers
- Domestic Abuse Services Unit
- CalWORKs/CFS Mutual Clients Project
- Family Group Decision Making
- Emancipation services, including transitional housing
- Conditional Release Intensive Supervision Program (CRISP)
- TEAM (foster parent support)
- Family to Family

Suggested areas for improvement in Orange County's services include:

- Increased support for caregivers, particularly child care, respite care, and increased services to relative caregivers.
- Increased substance abuse resources, including increased quantity and quality of testing and residential treatment for women that includes their children.
- Implementation of a Family Drug Court in Orange County
- Increased availability of affordable housing and transportation services.

- Increased support for families not in the child welfare system (preventive, early intervention).
- Increased mental health services, especially for individuals needing intensive services due to a severe mental illness.
- Increased pediatric services, especially for children with severe physical, emotional or developmental disorders.

*The Probation Department utilizes Wraparound, Children's System of Care and Youth and Family Resource Centers (YFRC) to help children return safely to their families.*

*The Probation Department provides services to foster parents through bi-monthly, in-person contact, as well as regular phone contact. On-going training regarding licensing issues, discipline, and various communication techniques is provided.*

*Minors' needs are identified as they enter the Placement Unit through an assessment of the Placement Suitability Report, prior Probation Reports and current information obtained from the minor, parents/guardians, Juvenile Hall staff and teachers, and the Court Evaluation and Guidance Unit.*

*Probation strategies for the future include the need to improve housing for emancipating foster youth. The current Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) has been modified to allow for a level of supervision needed for probation youth. The new THPP site would provide 24-hour supervision, and support youth to learn skills necessary to care for themselves. A housing voucher program for youth who were in foster care after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday to use after emancipation is also in the development state.*

***The Orange County Probation Department has selected transitional housing for emancipated youth as a focus item for the Orange County System Improvement Plan.***

### **Staff/Provider Training**

**Staff training**—Orange County CFS provides comprehensive training for social work, supervisory and management staff through the Training and Career Development Department. Additionally, training for staff is accessed through the Public Child Welfare Training Academy and other resources, as needed.

Recent training has emphasized strength-based practice, grief and loss issues, implementation of Family to Family practices and philosophy, as well as data entry. Training for social workers involved with the Juvenile Court has included the PCWTA Court Room Drama Class, Advanced Court Testifying, New Legal Issues (yearly), Legal Aspects of Children's Issues, and Orange County's Court Survival Training and Advanced Court Survival Training.

New Social Work staff attend the Orange County CFS 15-session New Employee Orientation, and the Core Line Worker services through the PCWTA. Supervisors and Managers attend Core series classes.

On-going training includes Culturally Competent Practice, Risk Assessment, Investigative and Interviewing Skills, Strength Based Practice Issues, Sexual Abuse Issues, Substance Abuse, Legal and Ethical Issues, Adolescent Issues, Out of Home Placement Issues, Adoption Issues, and Multi-Disciplinary Practice.

Stakeholder feedback indicates that training strengths include cross-training with community providers and CFS staff, and the variety of on-going trainings for staff.

Training needs include further information regarding utilization of CWS/CMS and court report writing.

*Probation Department training of staff includes a minimum of 40 hours of annual mandatory in-house training, in addition to on-going training for each staff member as needed. Additionally, Placement Probation Officers have attended Basic Probation Officer Core training, and then a minimum of 40 hours of Standards and Training in Corrections each year. In-house training is also provided for issues such as health and education, foster care funding, and independent living services.*

*Probation requirements for foster care providers includes an initial 40 hours of intensive training, as well as on-going training and educational videos for foster parents to enhance their skills and knowledge regarding the needs and care of probation minors. Additionally, referrals to other training in the community is provided.*

*Probation discusses departmental expectations regarding Title 22 regulations, the terms and conditions of probation and other court orders that affect the minor's placement, incident reporting procedures and documenting, as well as establishing a protocol for on-going communication and support when a new group home is initially assessed and approved. Specialized trainings are provided for topics such as gangs, teen violence, and other probation-related issues upon request.*

### **Agency Collaborations**

Orange County participates in a wide variety of collaborative relationships, including partnerships with the Orange County Children and Families Commission (Prop 10), the Orange County Health Care Agency (public and mental health, drug and alcohol services), CalWORKs, Probation, Regional Center, Orange County Department of Education, the Orange County Juvenile Court, law enforcement, Orange County hospitals, cities, parents, youth, caregivers, and many others.

The commitment to collaborative services across Orange County has positively impacted the system of care, resulting in a more coordinated provision of services, with fewer children and families getting lost between programs. However, much progress needs to be made in the areas of shared responsibility, resources and outcomes. The Children's Services Coordination Committee (Board of Supervisors' appointed membership), the Orange County Child Welfare Redesign Planning Council, as well as the four Family to

Family Strategy teams are working to identify and implement opportunities for collaborative efforts that include shared outcomes.

*The Orange County Probation Department has established liaisons with medical, educational, foster care funding, emancipation services and social services programs and agencies. Collaborative activities include involvement with the Children's System of Care, including the Health Care Agency, Social Services, the Orange County Department of Education, and the Regional Center.*

## **COUNTY-WIDE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES**

Orange County Children and Family Services participates in many collaborative prevention activities. These activities include increasing public awareness about child abuse and neglect, partnering with other service organization including the Orange County Social Services Agency Financial Self Sufficiency Program, local law enforcement, hospitals, schools and school districts, Orange County Health Care Agency (public and mental health, alcohol and drug services), Orange County Probation, local Family Resource Centers, the Children and Families Commission of Orange County, the Orange County Children Services Coordination Committee, and others.

Major prevention activities include:

- Voluntary preventive and early intervention services to over a thousand children and their families
- Administering funding for and partnering with Family Resource Centers
- Collaborative case planning and use of resources for CalWORKs and CFS mutual clients
- Out stationing CFS social workers with law enforcement, Family Self Sufficiency and schools

*Probation involvement in county-wide prevention efforts and partnerships include the Truancy Reduction Program, and involvement with the Children's System of Care. Additionally, the YFRC's provide a consolidated site for minors and families to receive comprehensive treatment programs, including school attendance, counseling, parenting classes and in-home supportive services.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND METHODOLOGY**

Preparation of Orange County's Self-Assessment has been a collaborative process involving CFS staff, Probation Department staff and other Orange County stakeholders. CFS would like to acknowledge the following individuals and agencies for their participation in and contributions towards the the preparation of this report:

California Youth Connection, Herbie Vanderhorst  
CalWORKs managers, Patsy Calvert; Phyllis Watanabe, Pam Boozan  
Court Appointed Special Advocate, Lynda Perring  
Children and Family Services Staff  
Children and Family Services Data Assessment Workgroup  
Children and Families Commission of Orange County, Carole Mintzer  
Children and Family Futures, Sid Gardner  
Children's Attorney, Harold La Flamme  
Community stakeholder, private consultant, Dan McQuaid  
Contract Providers' Forum  
Orange County Social Services Agency County Counsel, Rachel Bavis  
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Foster Care Nursing/Public Health Nurses  
Foster Care Nursing, Sally Wurth, Deborah Chitty  
Foster Parents  
FaCT, Mary Ann Soden  
FaCT Family Resource Center Coordinators  
Health Care Agency, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services, Mary Hale and Mary Morris  
Health Care Agency, Behavioral Health, Dr. M. Todd  
Health Care Agency, Perinatal therapists  
Human Options, Cindy Campbell  
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Juvenile Justice Commission, Bruce Malloy, Marcia Adler  
Kinship Center, Sharon Roszia  
Orange County Department of Education Managers, Ellin Chariton  
Orange County Child Welfare Redesign Planning Council  
Orange County Housing Authority  
Orange County Probation Department, Connie Muckenthaler and Christina La Morte  
Orange County Public Defender's Office, James Steinberg and Anthony Mesa  
Orangewood Children's Foundation, Gene Howard  
Parent representatives, Lisa Carmel and Tim Workman  
RAISE Foundation, Terri Paulick  
Regional Center, Mary Kavli  
Regional Training Academy, Linda Walker  
Relative/NREFM caregivers  
Orange County Sheriff's Department, Pete Gannon, Don Barnes, Wade Walsvick  
SELPA, Lowell Joint Unified School District, Superintendent, Joe Gillentine  
Templo Cavario, Reverend Lee deLeon

## **Methodology**

To complete the Orange County Self Assessment, input was sought from over 45 stakeholders, as listed above. CFS staff, including staff from Orange County Social Services Agency Research Department and the Self Evaluation Team (SET) analyzed the outcome data, identifying contributing factors such as the integrity of data entry and other systemic factors impacting performance. Community stakeholders were also involved in data analysis contributing other data resources to the analysis.

Prior to designating tasks and developing a work plan, training and education was initiated to familiarize CFS staff and stakeholders with the California Outcomes and Accountability System. A work plan was developed and responsibilities were disseminated. A review team was designated to oversee coordination of the project. The review team has met twice a week for over six months.

The Orange County Child Welfare Redesign Planning Council (Planning Council) has provided executive oversight of the self assessment process. Members of the Planning Council have a broad range of expertise in services to children and families, and fulfilled most of the core representatives needed for the self-assessment. Over 60 Planning Council members assisted in the analysis of data and pertinent system improvement issues.

Additionally, the Planning Council selected the SIP focus items.

Additional input for the self-assessment was obtained through:

- Individual interviews of the majority of Planning Council members and other core representatives.
- Multiple focus groups with CFS staff, child caregivers, contract service providers and community stakeholders. Please see Attachment I for a list of Self Assessment Participants.
- Surveys were sent by email and postal mail and conducted by telephone with caregivers and clients.

Information regarding CFS policy and practice for each of the systemic factors was provided by CFS managers and other staff. This information was evaluated to determine the impact of practice on outcome data.

As Orange County CFS completes its System Improvement Plan (SIP), and continues with on-going quality development activities, it is anticipated that partnerships forged through this self-assessment process will be strengthened, resulting in improved outcomes for the children and families of Orange County.

Orange County System Improvement Plan  
Attachment II

**Orange County Child Welfare Redesign Planning Council**

<b>MEMBER'S NAME</b>	<b>MEMBER'S ORGANIZATION</b>
Abair, Bob	SSA/CFS
Acosta, Jorge	Nuevo Amanecer Latino
Adler Marcia	Juvenile Justice Commission
Allen, Mary	SSA/CFS
Amsbury, Barbara	SSA/CFS
Andalibian, Rahimeh	SSA/CFS
Atluri, Jyothi	CFS/FACT
Avila, Desiree	SSA/CFS
Beatson, Michelle	SSA/CFS
Burdick, Scott	SSA/CFS
Carmel, Lisa	Birth Parent
Chariton, Ellin	Orange County Department of Education
Chitty, Deborah	SSA/CFS
Diribe, Haig	Orchard Homes
Gardner, Sidney	Children and Family Futures
Garrett, Sherilani	OCEA
Garrison, Adrienne	SSA/CFS
Greenwald, Carol	SSA/CFS
Hale, Mary	Health Care Agency, Adult Drug and Alcohol Services
Hall, Louise	CASA
Harris, Mary	Prop 10 Commission
Horton, Dr. mark	Health Care Agency
Howard Gene	Orangewood Children's foundation
Ireland, Connie	Parents Children's Services Coordination Committee
Kavli, Mary	Regional Center
Lee Tuey	SSA/CFS
Leigh, Lorry	Western Youth Services
Magana, Holly	Health Care Agency/Children and Youth Services/Continuing Care Placement Unit
Martin, Rick	Orange County Department of Education
McQuaid, Daniel	Independent Consultant
Mendoza, Ariel	SSA/CFS/OCH
Middleton, Tamara	SSA/CFS
Mintzer, Carole	Children and Families Commission
Oet, Gerardo	Santa Ana Parks and Recreation
Muckenthaler, Connie	Juvenile Probation
Mulkerin, Deana	Orange County Department of Education
Munoz, Jaime	SSA/CFS
Munoz, Lupe	NAI
O'Brien, Brett	Health Care Agency, Adult Drug and

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	Alcohol Services
Otero, Cathleen	Children and Family Futures
Paulick, Terri	Raise Foundation
Poynter, Cheryl	SSA/CFS
Price, Ted	
Riley, Michael	SSA/CFS
Ronald, Christina	Juvenile Probation
Ryan, Mike	SSA/CFS
Schwenn, Trisha	SSA/CFS
Shearman, Terry	Family Resource Center
Shugarman, Mark	SSA/CFS
Smith, Brian	SSA/CFS
Smith, Jeff	Police Department
Smith, Linda	Parents Children's Services Coordination Committee
Soden, Mary Ann	SSA/CFS
Steinberg, James	Public Defender's Office
Stits, Dana	County Counsel
Stock, Veta	SSA/CFS
Taylor, Gary	SSA/CFS
TBA	District Attorney
Todd, Theri	HCA
Towler, Calvin	Hillview Acres
Vanderhorst, Herbie	Emancipated Youth
White, Deborah	SSA/CFS
Wilson, Eugenia	Living Advantage
Workman, Tim	Birth Parent
Wurth, Sally	Health Care Agency, Public Health

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ATTACHMENT III

**ORANGE COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES  
SELF ASSESSMENT AND SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN  
DATA COLLECTION, 2004**

<b>AGENCY/CONTACT PERSON</b>	<b>DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE</b>
Birth Parents	Survey, mail
California Youth Connection/Herbie Vanderhorst	Focus Group
California Youth Connection/Herbie Vanderhorst	Interview
CalWORKs managers/P. Calvert, P. Watanabe, P. Boozan	Interview
CASA/Lynda Perring	Written Response
CFS Staff	Focus Groups (3)
CFS Staff/Data Workgroup	Meetings (3)
Children and Families Commission of Orange County/Carole Mintzer, Evaluation Manager	Interview
Children and Family Futures/Sid Gardner	Interview
Community Stakeholder, Private Consultant, Dan McQuaid	Interview
Contract Providers Forum	Focus Group
County Counsel/Rachel Bavis	Interview
Diocese of Orange, Marywood Center/Carmela Treanor	Interview
Family Support Network/Linda Smith	Interview
Foster Care Nursing/Public Health Nurses	Interview/Staff survey
Foster Care Nursing/Sally Wurth, Deborah Chitty	Interview/FC Nurse survey
Foster Parents, Spanish Speaking	Focus Group
FaCT/Staff, Mary Ann Soden	Focus Group
FaCT FRC Family Resource Center Coordinators	Focus Group
HCA Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services/M. Hale, M. Morris	Interview
HCA Behavioral Health/Dr. Todd	Interview
HCA Perinatal	Perinatal Therapist Survey
Housing Authority	Interview
Human Options/Cindy Campbell	Interview
Juvenile Court Bench	Interview
Juvenile Justice Commission/Bruce Malloy, Marcia Adler	Interview
Kinship Center/Sharon Roszia	Interview
Orange County Children's Attorney/Harold La Flamme	Interview
Orange County Department of Education Managers/E Chariton	Focus Group
Orange County Department of Ed Nurse Managers/E Chariton	Focus Group
Orangewood Children's Foundation/Gene Howard	Interview
Orange County Child Welfare Redesign Planning Council	Monthly meetings
Parent Representatives/Lisa Carmel and Tim Workman	Interview
Probation/Connie Muckenthaler, Christina La Morte	Interview
Public Defenders Office/James Steinberg	Interview
Raise Foundation/Terri Paulick	Interview

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<b>AGENCY/CONTACT PERSON</b>	<b>DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE</b>
Regional Center/Mary Kavli	Interview
Regional Training Academy/Linda Walker	Interview
Relative/NREFM caregivers	Surveys and telephone
Orange County Sheriff's Department/Pete Ganon	Interview
SELPA, Lowell Joint School District Superintendent/ J Gillentine	Interview
Templo Cavario/Rev. Lee deLeon	Interview