



About Family to Family

Family to Family includes principles, strategies, and tools to confront the real problems faced by child welfare systems. These include:

Strengthening the network of families available to care for abused and neglected children in their own communities;

Building partnerships with at-risk neighborhoods toward that end; and

Tracking outcomes for children and families, so that child welfare systems can better learn from their experiences.

Highlights:

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A Letter from the Director

Michael Riley, Ph.D., Director, Children and Family Services Division

Hello everyone,

We are embarking on a journey, that will not only change the way we currently treat at-risk children and their families, but will also bring us together as one community. The tenets of Family to Family clearly delineates the importance of involving birth parents, foster parents, relative caregivers, and community stakeholders in the decision making process. This is done with the intention of improving the quality of care for our children and families. If we are going to be successful, and I know we will be, we must work together and "keep our eyes on the prize," which is the child.

Children and Family Services (CFS) has already begun making internal changes that will subsequently impact our current practices. The changes we have made and will be making are consistent with strength-based practice. Albeit, many of the changes will be difficult, but it is imperative that we press forward. These modifications are made to enhance our ability to better serve children and families as well as increase the likelihood of meeting AB 636 expectations.

Orange County Children and Family Services is well regarded around the State, and that is because of our staff's professionalism and commitment to children.

The process of implementing what would be considered "best practice," such as Wraparound, Family Group Decision Making, and Placement Preservation Meetings, began several months ago. These aforementioned services are commensurate with the principles of Family to Family and AB 636.

I am asking that everyone approach this daunting new challenge with an open mind and a willingness to think outside of the box. If we do, there is no doubt that we will be successful in our new endeavor, and that will be a win-win for everyone.

Thank you,
Michael

Team Decision Making Comes to Orange County

Carol Greenwald, Program Manager II, Family to Family Coordinator

Effective May 1, 2004, Orange County Social Services will implement Team Decision Making (TDM), an innovative Family to Family strategy that engages families and communities in working with the agency to make key decisions involving children. Phase I of this implementation will involve all children who reside in the cities of Anaheim, Santa Ana, Garden Grove and Orange. This will include children that are at risk of

being removed from their homes, or have already been removed from their parent's care. TDM meetings will be held no later than one working day following a child's removal from their parents' care.

The TDM team will also assess families' needs and strengths, develop a specific safety plan for children who are not removed from their birth parents, and design supports for children and their parents or caregivers to

keep them safe and connected to their communities.

More cities may be included in Phase I and later implementation phases will incorporate decisions about changes of placement and returning children to their birth parents.

You will be hearing more about our implementation of this innovative strategy in the months ahead. Stay tuned...



Family to Family - Giving Our Children a Voice

Steven A. Bush, Director of Residential Services, Family Solutions Inc.

In the 16 years I have worked with children from both Probation and Social Service Agencies, I had never heard the concept of Family to Family the way it is being presented now. My initial response was concern. My concern was that this decision would negatively affect how children would be referred to our group homes and Foster Family Agency. I also had a concern that there would be insufficient regard for what each child truly

needs. I felt concern, and some confusion regarding how we would adjust as an agency to deal with our changing system.

Despite these concerns, I was impressed that Orange County Social Services invited care providers to be community partners to help create this system and its protocols. I was pleased that a collaborative process was taking place that includes the professionals who provide

direct services to the children of Orange County.

Throughout our early discussions about Family to Family, I found myself resistant to parts of this concept. It was particularly difficult for me to discuss how to use Team Decision Making before removing a child from a group home.

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Family to Family is....

“Working together”

(Lisa Carmel, Birth Parent)

“About giving a voice”

(Sandra Bolton, Foster Parent)

A Letter from the Editor

Scott Burdick, MFT, Senior Social Services Supervisor

Many people spend years agonizing over what they want to do when they grow up. I was not one of those people. My goal was set at a young age when I decided that I was going to “change the world.” You may be thinking that this goal was quite lofty for a 12-year-old. Well, after completing college and graduate school and entering into my career in Social Services, I was inclined to agree...until recently.

Working in Investigations and Continuing Services

opened my eyes that the task of protecting children was too large for Social Services to complete alone.

As I learned about Family to Family, the saying “It takes a village to raise a child” became even more meaningful to me. In order for lasting change to occur, the communities must become involved to support the families in need. This is the cornerstone that Family to Family is built on, as well as an essential element of social work.

While Family to Family is

clearly a change for all involved parties, anyone who works in this field to improve the lives of the children and families we work with, cannot help but be excited by the possibilities. It is this vision and excitement that will allow us to identify and team with birth parents, foster parents, and community partners to effect positive changes to the lives of so many. The time is now to make childhood dreams a reality and change the world together, one family at a time.



Why Now?

Veta Stock, MFT, Senior Social Services Supervisor

The principles and values of Family to Family state that every child deserves a family and that families need healthy, nurturing communities. We know that Child Welfare can't do it

alone. We want to do what's best for the children and families in Orange County. It's exciting to have settled on a program that comes complete with a comprehensive set of tools

and strategies with a proven track record that supports us in our efforts to provide strength-based, family-centered services. At the same time, we are

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Family to Family-Giving our Children a Voice (cont. from page 2)

I have had countless meetings about how to help the children I work with. It had never been suggested that the adults important to the child's life sit down *together* and hear the child voice his/her own concerns.

My belief is that the best source of information about the child is the child, so including them as an integral part of the process is not new to me. I recognize that collaboration is vital to further the best interests of the child and these ideas make sense.

I believe that being asked to consider a new approach for dealing with this issue prompted part of my early resistance. As our agency began using Team Decision Making for placement decisions, my resistance subsided. My participation allowed me to experience what I already knew to be true. It is important that we come together to support the child. It is important that the decision making process be focused on the child and what is in his/her best interest.

Family to Family is more

than just the use of Team Decision Making in residential placement decisions. The larger Family to Family concept includes the child's family in the decision making process. Some may say that sitting down with the family, discussing all of the significant issues, identifying community supports, and creating a plan for the child or children to remain in their community seems improbable. In truth, Family to Family is unlikely to succeed if everything else in our current system remains the same. Yet, given the evidence that our current system has not worked consistently for the children in our county, many of us have recognized that it cannot remain the same.

I have experienced first hand the frustration and desperation that children and parents face in our current system. Many of our families and children do not feel they have had any say in what has happened in their lives. Many of us who work with these children and families have understood and experienced some of those

same frustrations on a professional level.

So, we find ourselves with an opportunity to be a part of an exciting new system. Family to Family is not just a fly by night concept that will disappear in a few months. Many counties throughout California have already implemented Family to Family. Many more have made commitments to do so. In supporting this effort, we join Orange County Social Services in putting children and families first.

Orange County is rallying community members and care provider support to help our children and families understand the meaning of community. We have a responsibility as community members, parents, friends, and service providers to get involved in this process. We have an obligation to recognize that Family to Family may assist us in doing a better job of both meeting the needs of our children and their families, and in giving them a voice that is truly heard.



*Family to Family is....
"About keeping children
connected to their homes
and communities"*
(Cheryl Grimsley, Child Welfare
Supervisor)

*"About opening doors and
making a difference"*
(Cherly Poynter, Child Welfare
Supervisor)

Family to Family is...

What does Family to Family mean to you? Send your responses for inclusion in future newsletters to: Scott.Burdick@ssa.ocgov.com



Why Now? (continued from page 2)

*Family to Family is...
“Working toward
children’s best interests.”
(Linda Galvan, Child Welfare
Supervisor)*

experiencing a historic time of cut-backs, freezes and fiscal uncertainty that is daunting, to say the least. If we add to this the bewildering alphabet soup of new federal and state legislation, mandates, reviews and got-to-do’s, then some of us are wondering how we will even understand the expectations, let alone meet the requirements.

So why, in the midst of all the confusion and uncertainty are we picking

NOW to implement a new initiative that has the clearly stated goal of changing the way we practice?

The answer lies in our individual and collective commitment to do our very best for each of the children and families we serve. Family to Family will not solve all the ills of the child welfare system, but it is an exciting opportunity to take our beliefs in the potential of children, families and communities together, and

put them into action. With this opportunity, and the knowledge we have gained about what works best for children and families, comes responsibility.

This responsibility leads us to the need for action, even in the midst of the uncertainty and hardships of the times. And so, we continue to put one foot in front of the other, keeping our eyes on the prize—improved outcomes for children and families.



Team Decision Making Facilitors Chosen

Children and Family Services recently announced the reassignment of four and a half supervisor positions to facilitate the Family to Family Team Decision Making Meetings. The supervisors include:

- Oscar Aguirre, from the Families and Communities Together (FACT) program.
- Kathy Greene, from Special Programs
- Bea Avcollie, from the Wraparound Program
- Lourdes Chavez, from Integrated Continuing Services (ICS)
- Pat Wiggins, from Group Homes Investigations

All of the TDM supervisors reported to the Family to Family program on February 17, 2004.

Newsletter Name Needed! Creativity a must!

The Family to Family Newsletter is in need of a name! Your creative ideas are welcomed. If you have an idea contact Scott Burdick at Scott.Burdick@ssa.ocgov.com

*Family to Family is...
“A construct that
organizes the efforts of
many toward a single
purpose.”
(Jaime Munoz, Child Welfare
Manager)*

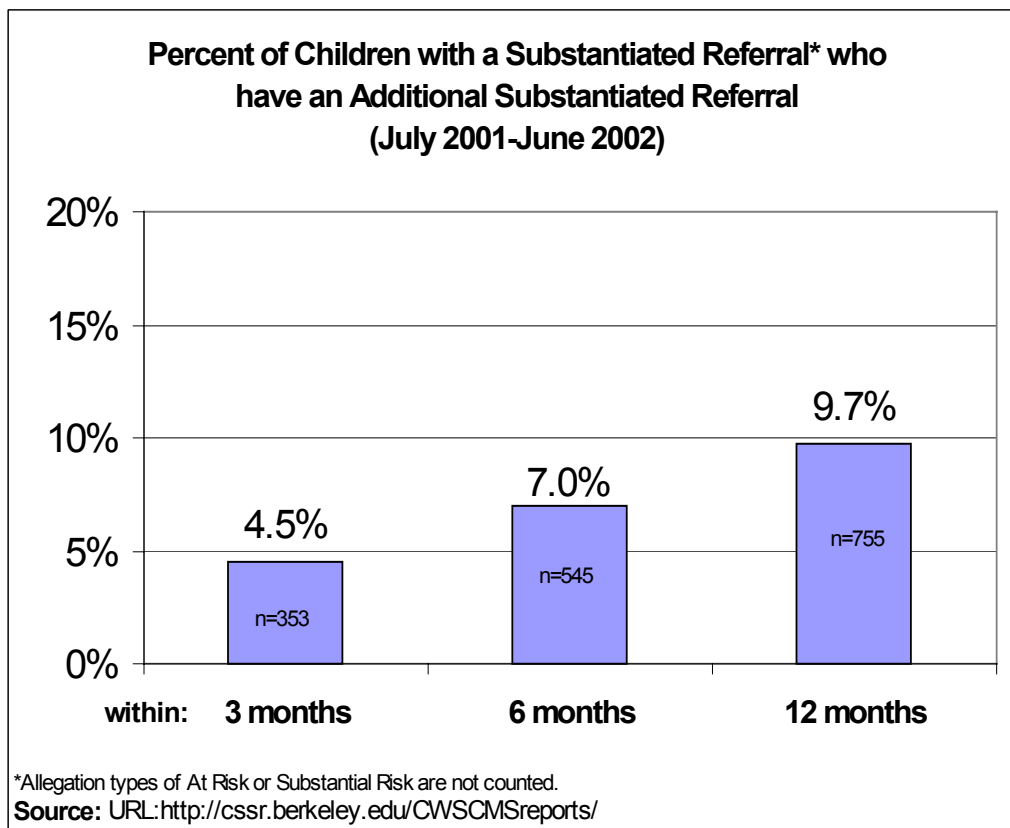


Family to Family Data

One of the basic tenets of Family to Family is that the planning and implementation of practice change must be guided by good outcome data.

Both the California Department of Social Services and Orange County Children & Family Services acknowledges this principle and have begun the process of reviewing data from CWS/CMS to determine where change is needed and where progress has been made.

Below are three examples of data that are guiding our efforts in implementing Family to Family and other practice changes. The first chart provides information about recurrence of maltreatment, the second illustrates how many children have experienced stable placements, and the third tells us how successful we are in placing siblings together. In each of our newsletters we will be sharing data that will inform you about our successes and provide you with a context for the practice changes we need to make to improve outcomes for our children and families.



*“Family to Family is..
 A means to find consensus
 on the best interests of the
 child”
 (Claudia King, CASA)*

This chart shows the percentage of children who had another substantiated child abuse allegation within 3 months, 6 months and 12 months of a prior substantiated allegation. For

almost half of the children who had another occurrence within the 12 month period, the second substantiated allegation was documented within the first 3 months. This may be due to

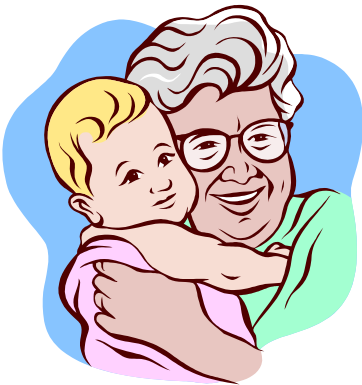
information regarding historical abuse that surfaces during the initial investigative or service period following the first allegations, and may not actually represent new or subsequent abuse.



Family to Family Data

Family to Family is..
 “Respectful of children
 and families and their
 community.”

(Yesenia Chavez-Gonzalez, Child
 Welfare Worker)

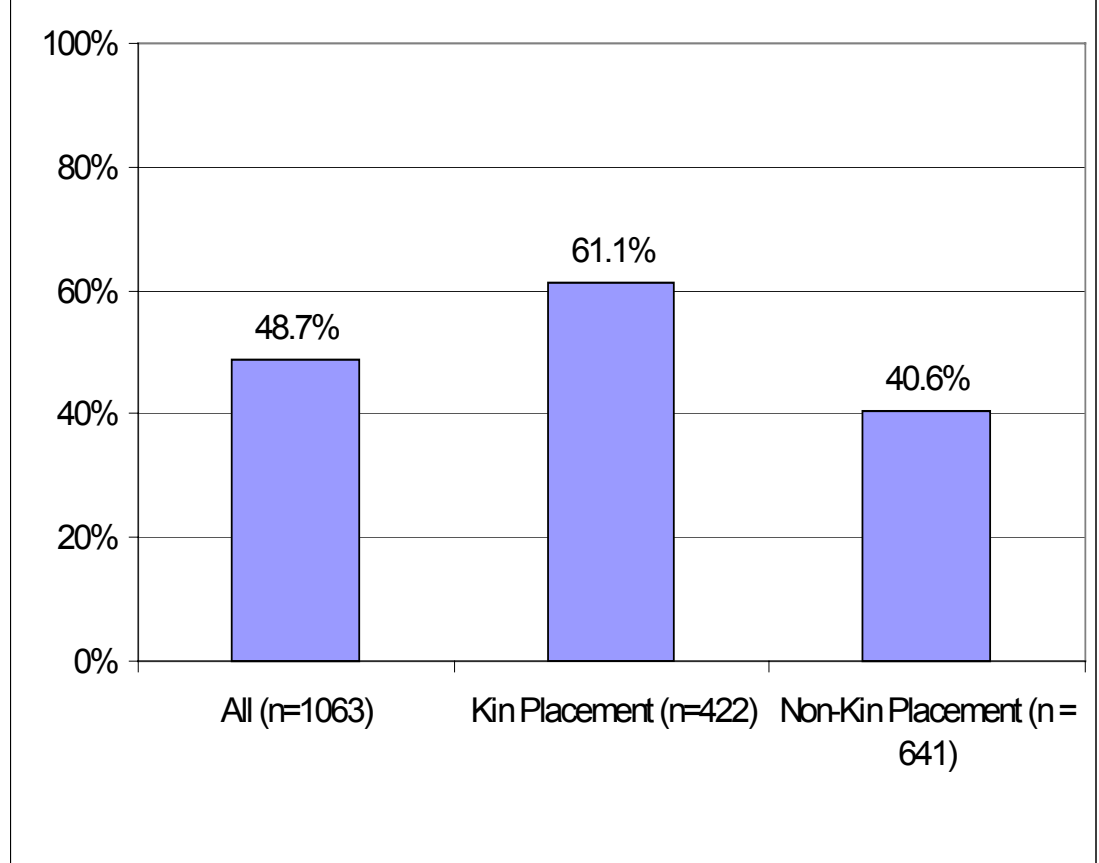


Family to Family is...
 “Hope for our children’s
 Futures.”

(Aileen McNamara, Child
 Welfare Worker)

Percent of Children with 1-2 Placements - if still in care at 12 months

(based on children entering care July 2001-June 2002)



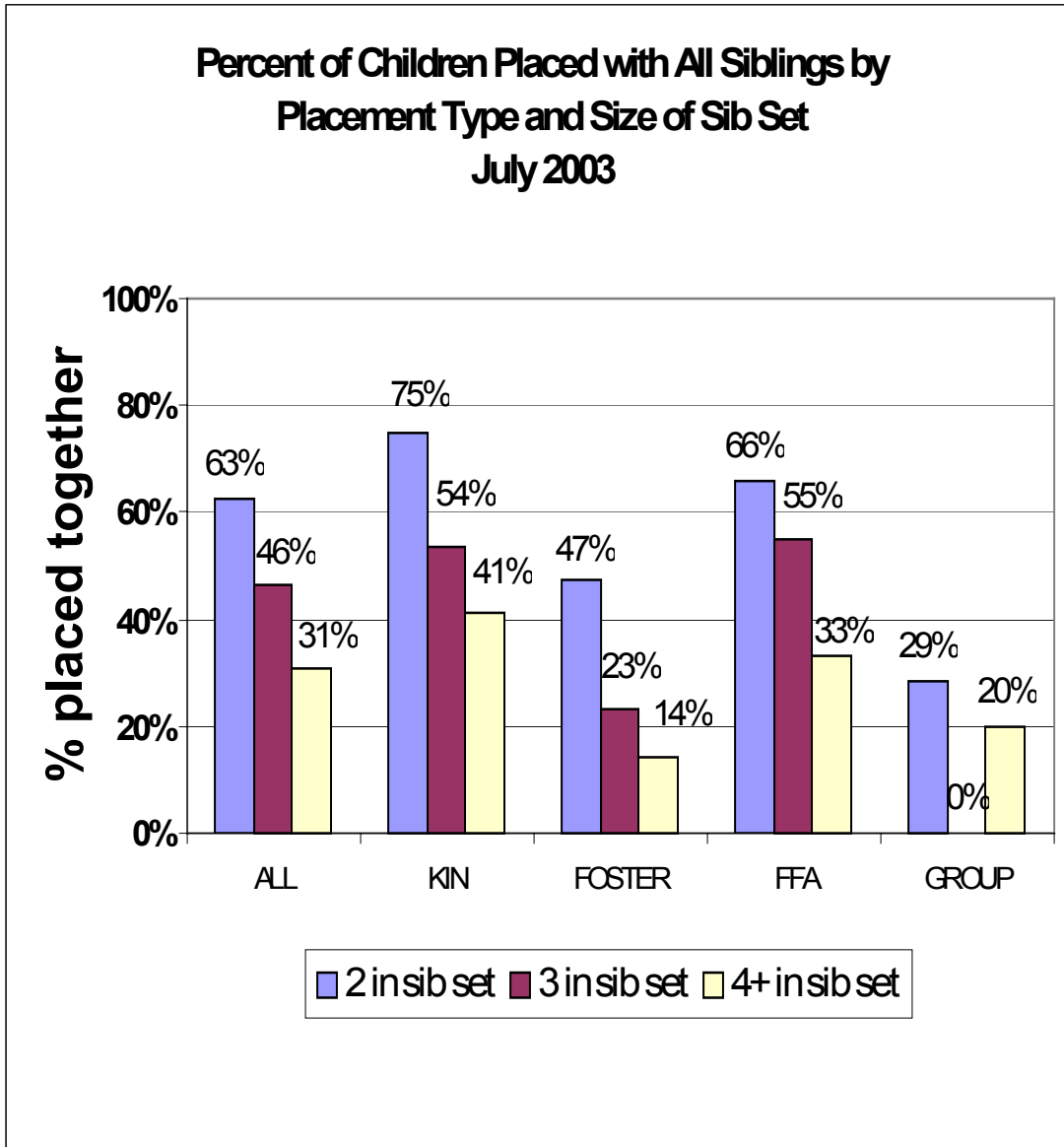
For all children who entered care between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2002, an average of 48.7% of the children had one to two placements within their first year of out of home care. Children placed with kin were much more likely to

experience only 1-2 placements (61.1%) than children placed with non-kin (40.6%). This finding supports Orange County policy, as well as State and Federal legislation that prioritizes relative

placements over placements with non-related resource families.



Family to Family Data



*Family to Family is..
"Finding the best for our
kids."*

*(Karen Winters, Child Welfare
Manager)*

This chart demonstrates the relationship between placement type and siblings placed together. Children placed in relative homes are more likely to be placed together, while children placed in Group Homes are the least likely to be placed together. Additionally, through

each placement type, larger sibling sets are less likely to stay together, though placement in a relative home continues to increase the opportunities for children to maintain connections with their siblings.



Contact Us

Family to Family
Contacts:

General Questions
Family2family@ssa.ocgov.com

Scott Burdick
Senior Social Services
Supervisor
Family to Family
(714) 704-8743
scott.burdick@ssa.ocgov.com

Carol Greenwald
Program Manager II
Family to Family
Coordinator
(714) 704-8090
carol.greenwald@ssa.ocgov.com

Web Site Coming Soon!

Orange County Children
and Family Services

800 Eckhoff
Orange, CA 92868

Editor: Scott Burdick
Executive Editor: Carol
Greenwald

Placement Preservation Meetings

Nathan Nishimoto, Program Manager II, Group Homes

There has been a lot of talk about Team Decision Making (TDM) both in this newsletter and around the copy machine. Placement Preservation Meetings (PPM's) are a forerunner of the upcoming Team Decision Making meetings that will be introduced in March 2004. PPM's were developed in the Group Home program in May 2003 as an effort towards reducing the number and frequency of children returning to Orangewood Children's Home, and to meet federal child welfare outcomes. It became very clear that we needed to change our placement practices to reduce the number of placement changes that our children experience.

The Placement Preservation

Meeting concept borrowed extensively from the TDM model. The purpose of a PPM is to work with the caregiver and child to preserve the child's placement. The first PPM was held in June 2003. A total of 85 placement preservation meetings were held by the end of December 2003. Of those 85 meetings, 63 meetings or 74% resulted in the child remaining in their placements. Numerous issues have arisen which necessitated PPM's. These issues include children acting out aggressively, running away, being defiant and oppositional towards their caregivers, problems at school and substance abuse. It is estimated that 26% of these children and 47% of their parents participated in their own PPMs.

Five group home program staff and one community-based provider have skillfully facilitated the 85 PPMs. These talented facilitators are Senior Social Services Supervisors Paula Kitchen and Bob Abair and Senior Social Workers Jeff Griffin, Sheri Bocci and Diane Smyth. Steve Bush from Family Solutions also served as a facilitator.

Placement Preservation Meetings have proven to be effective in maintaining placements and have had a great impact on how the group home program interacts with its caregivers and the children's parents. More communication and shared decisions about the children's welfare has emerged as a result of these meetings.

Family to Family Update...

Orange County Social Services is committed to the implementation of Family to Family Strategy Teams. These teams consist of Children and Family Services staff, birth parents, foster parents, youth and community partners. These groups have been assembled and are meeting on a regular basis to address the four key Family to Family strategies: Building Community Partnerships; Team Decision Making; Recruitment Training and Support, and Self Evaluation Team. These strategy teams are working to build the foundation of a redesign that will enhance the way that we serve children and families.

