

CALIFORNIA FAMILY TO FAMILY HIGHLIGHTS REPORT: 2007

Southern Cluster

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





2007 Highlights from the F2F Counties

California Family to Family Initiative

Southern Counties: Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego

Los Angeles

Year Funded Began: 1996

Designated Anchor Sites for Los Angeles County include the Lakewood, Metro North, Torrance, Pomona, Santa Clarita and SPA1 (Lancaster/Palmdale) offices.

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT

- Based on the individual needs of the anchor office communities, major Recruitment, Development and Support (RDS) activities for 2007 included: monthly RDS meetings with community partners focused on support and trainings for resource families/kinship caregivers; support venues through regular luncheons; “meet and greet” events (i.e., “Family Fun Day”); a Resource Family Support Network for caregivers; trainings; mentor programs; and caregiver surveys to identify training needs.
- Faith-based organizations participated as leaders in RDS work by co-chairing monthly meetings, engaging new community partners, and sharing their resources. Local schools, community colleges, and universities displayed and distributed recruitment brochures. Students helped develop and plan RDS events (i.e. “Celebrating and Encouraging Sibling Connections”), and assisted with the development and distribution of a Resource Family Exit Survey. Discussions have been held in regards to how to best utilize former foster youth in work to address RDS issues.
- Databases have been “cleaned and purified” to ensure accuracy in the tracking of active resource families. Families were surveyed to help “clean up” the data. In addition, some offices created an emergency placement database.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- In 2007, there was an increase in targeted community partnerships for specific communities. Examples of these efforts included: collaboration of education, agency and community partners to educate communities about the needs of children and families; addition of new community partners; physical improvements to space used by families (i.e., Family Visitation Room); conferences and community resource fairs; developing websites for information sharing; assessing community needs through dialogues, surveys and data; and focusing on engaging “grassroots” partners.
- An ongoing barrier for most anchor offices is the issue of how to best utilize the time of community partners who are involved in several community workgroups. One viable solution might be to combine meetings and similar agendas whenever possible.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

- Full implementation of Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings for detention removals is operational in the anchor offices. Replacement and reunification TDMs are being scheduled in some offices, despite that fact that they are not mandated. TDM workgroups meet monthly to address logistics and technical issues. Monthly roundtable meetings are held to address program and policy updates for TDMs.

- In 2007, a TDM “Tune-Up” training session was held to help support model fidelity throughout the anchor offices. The session was attended by every TDM Facilitator.
- Birth parents have had high participation rates in TDMs. Some anchor offices report the need for more involvement in TDMs by community partners and representatives, while other anchor offices indicate high participation by community partners. The Torrance office has designated one office as a Community Partner Room to allow community agencies to access resource information for families and Department of Children and Families (DCFS) staff.

SELF EVALUATION

- Each of the anchor offices has a Self Evaluation workgroup, but participation is low. Currently, the workgroups are only being utilized for data gathering while work is done to define clear and focused objectives, roles and responsibilities, as well as identify appropriate members (staff and/or community partners) for the workgroups. The workgroups continue to remain valuable to the anchor offices, as they assist in determining which data is needed to assist the other strategies.
- The Pomona office has been able to use its data to review foster care placement of local children, as well as focus attention on the disproportionate number of African American children in high-level group home care.
- Children's Services Administrators (CSA1s) from all offices participated in a one day “Data Camp” training on the regular use of outcome data to inform and improve practice. LA outcome data regularly produced by internal DCFS staff were presented, and participants learned important tools in understanding the data and using the information to develop plans to change practice. The training was well-received.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

- The Pomona and Santa Clarita offices have been selected to participate in the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) beginning in 2008.
- The Metro North office produced data demonstrating the cost effectiveness of its permanency work, and received two Productivity and Quality Awards for their Permanency Unit. A total of 220 youth have been selected to be included in the CPYP initiative in Metro North.
- A Youth Permanency Implementation group has been created to build on the successes and learning experiences of Metro North’s work to help to broaden permanency efforts in Pomona and Santa Clarita, and to eventually spread countywide. In addition, 40 permanency assistances have been hired to provide support to improve permanency efforts countywide.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- In 2007, the Parents in Partnership (PIP) program met several key goals, including: holding monthly orientation sessions, in Spanish and English, for birth parents; attending the Child Abuse 101 and Substance Abuse trainings; developing a written, comprehensive handbook about DCFS for distribution and use by birth parents; presenting at workshops and trainings; and developing a community-based website to support PIP parents and encourage staff interaction. Partners who are involved in the PIP program are former DCFS birth parents.
- A major challenge for the PIP program has been the issue of financial compensation to PIP participants. As a result of this obstacle, the growth of PIP has slowed, but continues to thrive. PIP participants have shown eagerness and commitment to the success of the PIP program, and it continues to be an exciting partnership for DCFS.

ELIMINATING RACIAL DISPARITY AND DISPROPORTIONALITY

- Anchor offices continue to raise awareness and gain DCFS and community support around the issues of disparity and disproportionality. In a collaborative effort, DCFS and its community partners are in the process of developing a plan to effectively address this issue.

Orange

Year Funded Began: 2001

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT OF RESOURCE FAMILIES

- There has been an upward trend in the number of resource families who have become licensed. One of the main activities for 2007 was outreach to faith-based communities to recruit, support and maintain resource families. Faith-based organization participation in meetings increased from 28 attendees in 2006 to 55 attendees in 2007. In addition, significant outreach was conducted within the Vietnamese community.
- There has been an increase in the number of inquires to the OC4Kids website (<http://www.oc4kids.com/>), which includes approximately 1,000 “hits” per month. This has been supported by an effort to redesign the website to make it more user-friendly.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of families who attend resource family orientations and trainings. On average, approximately 14 families attended introductory orientations and 25 families attended pre-service training sessions in 2007.
- Eligibility Workers are now co-located in other parts of the Child and Family Services (CFS) to assist with financial assistance applications and Medi-cal insurance. A brochure and DVD explaining how to care for hair and skin of children of color was developed. These items, along with hair and skin products, were given to caregivers.
- Saddleback Community College continues to support training of resource families, in both English and Spanish. The college is also collaborating with child welfare to provide advanced training to resource families. Training topics will include how to care for teens, large sibling sets, medical and mental health issues, and children and youth with gender identity conflicts.
- To increase community awareness, the County participated in a Heart Gallery, which included professional photographs of children awaiting adoption displayed at public venues and on the Heart Gallery website. Tactical web advertising utilizing Orange County’s number one media site, ocregister.com, created considerable inquiries to both the resource family hotline and OC4Kids website throughout the year. Additional ads ran in specialized print publications and on their websites. Other parallel ads ran on a popular county radio station and their website, generating further interest.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- The Building Community Partnerships (BCP) strategy group focused its efforts in 2007 on the City of Santa Ana, the largest service region. Workers and community members from the region were invited to participate on one of the three workgroups: 1) CFS Policies and Procedures, 2) Space Mobility and Technology, and 3) a regional resource fair. The CFS Policy and Procedure Workgroup developed recommendations to Social Services Agency/CFS leadership regarding the assignment and transfer of case files. The Space Mobility and Technology Workgroup interviewed relevant county experts and provided recommendations for selecting new office space and the effective use of technology to extend workers’ productivity time in the field. The Regional Resource Fair Workgroup organized a “Santa Ana Meet and Greet,” held in October in Santa Ana. The “meet and greet” included a variety of community

organizations/resources displaying materials and discussing their programs and services with social workers. The event focused on serving families in the Santa Ana region.

- The BCP Workgroup presented a set of recommendations on how to further the BCP strategy to the F2F Steering Committee for review and consideration. The following month, the CFS Director attended the BCP Workgroup meeting to discuss the recommendations. Based on the discussion, staff will be moved to more community friendly buildings.
- In August 2007, a community forum titled “Keeping Kids Safe: Infant and Toddler Safety and Prevention” was held in Santa Ana at a community church. The location was consistent with the focus on the Santa Ana region and was the first forum to be held at a faith-based organization. Forum topics included pool safety/drowning, sleep issues, choking/foreign body ingestion, car seat safety and shaken baby syndrome. Over 100 individuals attended the forum. As a result of the forum, a Safety Subcommittee was formed to develop training and materials (i.e., simple checklist of safety issues) for in-home providers from Family Resource Centers (FRCs), social workers, and resource families.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

- Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings are held to support imminent risk of removal, emergency placement, placement preservation and exit from placement discussions that occur during regular business hours. TDMs are held at the CFS site and in families’ communities through partnership with FRCs, faith-based organizations and hospitals.
- To help keep children from entering foster care without prior social work intervention, a second shift of Emergency Response workers are now on staff. TDMs are held the next business day for families who are served by the second shift Emergency Response workers.
- A rapid police response has been developed, which is improving social worker response to law enforcement investigation in the field. A special hotline for law enforcement agencies has been activated for this purpose.

SELF EVALUATION

The Self Evaluation Team accomplished a number of goals in 2007, including:

- Provided timely access to process and outcome data to support improvements to child welfare policy and practice—Activities included producing the “At A Glance” report and “CWS Outcomes Trend Report;” tracking trends in data that “flagged” the need for corrective action; supporting the transition from the AB636 Outcomes and Accountability Report to a new report that includes the 17 Children and Family Services Review (CFSR) Federal indicators and composite measures; providing data to the BCP Strategy Group on city of residences and language for regionalization planning; and preparing and presenting reports on a number of key child welfare issues.
- Assessed disproportionality of African American children in the Orange County Child Welfare System—Activities included attending a F2F sponsored convening on Disproportionality and Disparity, recommending the development of the Disproportionality Strategy Group (the first established in a F2F site), and providing reports on disproportionality within Orange County.
- Completed an analysis of re-entry of children to protective custody from Family Maintenance Court status—This included collaboration on a study of re-entry into foster care based on case reviews, the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) and Structured Decision Making (SDM) data.
- Completed an analysis of factors associated with timely family reunification—This included collaboration with the CWS/CMS Reports Team to conduct a case review study of factors associated with timely child reunifications for 112 families

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

- Since implementation of the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) in July 2005, monthly Technical Assistance (TA) has been provided by the CPYP Director and project Technical Assistants (TAs).
- To date, more than 340 foster youth have been served through CPYP. This has included the provision of services through contracted providers, program specialization efforts, and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) family searches being coordinated by Independent Living Program (ILP) staff to identify specialists in family finding and engagement services in each of the CFS programs. Through contracts with the Orangewood Children's Foundation, the Orange County Department of Education, Bridging the Gap, and the Foster Assessment Center and Testing Services, foster and emancipated youth are being supported through a wide variety of programs and services, including independent living coaches, educational tracking and support, vocational assessments, mentoring, and transitional housing.
- Emancipated youth are involved in an advisory capacity in all levels of CFS through their participation on the Children's System of Care committees, F2F workgroups, and as speakers at Human Resources and Career Development Training and Career Development Center (TCD) new employee orientations, program meetings, and community forums.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- Successfully reunified parents assist CFS in providing orientation sessions for parents new to the Juvenile Dependency system. The orientation session includes a video presentation and brief discussion about advocacy services available to parents.
- Five successfully reunified parents are contacted through the Family Support Network to serve as Parent Mentors. Feedback from parents, as well as social workers, about the mentors has been uniformly positive.
- The Parents Taking Action (PTA) group, a group of parents who have successfully reunified with their children, continued to meet on a monthly basis. CFS continued to hold quarterly "Celebrating Families" events to celebrate parents' successful completion of family reunification. Reunified parents also continue to be active participants in CFS's multidisciplinary meetings.

ELIMINATING RACIAL DISPARITY AND DISPROPORTIONALITY

- In 2007, a consultant was contracted to assess the disproportionality of African American children in CFS. The assessment included a series of facilitated discussions with child welfare deputy directors, managers, supervisors and social workers, as well as stakeholders. The results of the assessment will be used to develop training on disproportionality.
- The CFS director, deputy directors, managers and supervisors attended the F2F convening on Disproportionality and Disparity in August 2007.
- A strategy group for disproportionality was formed and developed a strategic plan to address disproportionality, with the intent to raise awareness, and identify challenges and solutions to address the issue. Work has included assessing data in terms of ethnicity, longevity of services, success in permanency and its direct impact on disproportionality.

EDUCATION

- The Educational Outcomes Project Committee continues to meet regularly to address educational concerns of foster children. Member of the committee include representatives from the school district, the County Department of Education, the Health Care Agency, CASA, and CFS staff. An education consultant, provided through the Annie E. Casey and Stuart Foundations, is providing technical assistance in this area.

- During 2007, the Committee addressed a number of key issues, including: non-public schools; transportation and school of origin; appointment of Educational Attorneys; procedures to get educational information to TDMs (through use of a form); case presentations at F2F meetings to advocate for school services; data sharing and new data system acquired by Foster Youth Services (FYS); the Orangewood Foundation mentor pilot project; development of the CFS Education Expert position; out of county schools issues; AB 490 liaisons; and early childhood education/preschoolers

Riverside

Year Funded Began: 2004

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF RESOURCE FAMILIES

- A primary change in the area of Recruitment, Development and Support of Resource Families (RDS) was the adoption of the philosophy that “Recruitment is Everyone’s Business!” Current recruitment efforts have included: addressing racial disparity and disproportionality through developing/identifying resource homes and services, holding TDMs on military bases, utilizing an existing community collaborative to develop resource homes, and hosting a freshman foster youth orientation.
- Contracts were finalized for two Parent Partner positions. The Parent Partners are assigned to resource families geographically and support families by connecting them to community services/goods, providing advice and/or mentorship, and helping to problem solve challenges that emerge. Resource families are provided with contact information for their assigned Parent Partner. In addition, Parent Partners contact potential resource families to answer questions on the licensure process and welcome them to the agency. Included in the Parent Partner contracts, is the requirement to attend RDS Subcommittee meetings.
- Social service assistants and/or social workers are contacting current and potential resource families to identify questions, needs or concerns.
- F2F is included as a standing agenda item for each county foster home provider’s meetings and youth have been engaged to present about their experience in foster care and the role of the resource parent(s).
- Birth parents and youth participated in the Foster Youth Freshman Orientation. The youth panel was very effective and provided information about the high school experience, offered peer to peer advice, and provided other important information. Birth parents have had limited involvement with training and/or speakers.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- F2F was rolled out to two new sites, in part due to new and continued partnerships. The Moreno Valley Collaborative, representing 65 agencies, businesses and entities, was formed to address the need for local and accessible services for children and families.
- New recruitment efforts implemented over the past year included: “cross recruitment” with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and Inland Empire; open house events in partnership with Family Resource Centers (FRCs); participation in a Bi-National Health Event; collaboration with the Mexican Consulate to recruit bilingual resource homes; and a “Bring a Friend” recruitment event where current resource families brought in 13 individuals to begin the licensure process. The “Bring a Friend” event included a California Youth Connection (CYC) panel with youth sharing their stories and highlighting the important role of caregivers in their lives.
- Community partners actively participate in Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings, including representatives from local churches, education and Native American tribes.
- The Self Evaluation Subcommittee developed an annual “fact sheet” that presents data on the number of referrals, detentions, adjudicated cases, etc. The sheet is shared with community partners and staff.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

- Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings are mandatory for every child at risk of removal within the six target communities. Once a child has had an initial TDM, the case receives a special code in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). TDMs are also conducted for children at risk of changing placement and/or exiting placement, and are mandatory for children who are eligible for protection pursuant to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).
- Community representatives have been active participants in TDMs—they are “seeing the results” and feeling like they are part of the “team.”
- Information is gathered on what is working and what is not working for plans created during TDMs, and plans are reviewed and monitored on a continual basis.
- Icebreaker meetings were implemented and information on the practice is shared with managers, supervisors and line staff.
- In 2007, Riverside County held a total of 703 TDMs. These total included 169 imminent risk TDMs, 195 emergency placement TDMs, 238 placement move TDMs, and 101 exit from placement TDMs.
- The F2F and Contracts Divisions were merged and a needs assessment was conducted to focus on the acquisition and/or expansion of services funded by Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) and Child Abuse Prevention Intervention and Treatment (CAPIIT) funding. The assessment included developing/identifying strategies that assisted families prior to reaching the need for Child Protective Services (CPS) intervention. Further collaboration with FRCs provides families with a place to seek assistance, and place for school personnel to refer and provide assistance to families during TDMs.
- A “TDM table” has been established in every operational region. Use of TDMs continues to support collaboration with families, community members, staff and other appropriate partnerships. One focus of work in 2007 was to strengthen the partnership with education and increase their participation in TDMs. All zip codes within the F2F target area are supported by a mental health clinician dedicated to determining the type and frequency of mental health services needed for children and families.

SELF EVALUATION

- The Self Evaluation Team meets monthly to work on how to best to evaluate the needs of children and their families. In 2007, the work focused on defining goals and work objectives. Identified goals included: sharing data to support resource family recruitment, reviewing rates of re-entry and assessing how community partners could best support families, and reviewing data on placement in the community of origin.
- Data is collected through the UC Berkeley (UCB) website, SafeMeasures, a TDM database, and CWS/CMS. Additional support for Self Evaluation comes from the Data Unit, which monitors progress and efforts related to improving outcomes for children and families. This includes responding to ad-hoc data needs and providing a quarterly operational report, including information on referrals, case services and out of home placement to management and executive personnel. A monthly report is run to ensure that all youth 17 years old and older have the most appropriate resources to support emancipation.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

- Through the local California Youth Connection (CYC) chapter, youth participate in workshops, share about the significance of social workers on their lives with agency staff, and present to various community partners. Events attended by youth in 2007 included the Legislation Days held in Sacramento, the Foster Youth Freshman Orientation Pilot, and “Bring a Friend” recruitment drives.
- The Transitional Housing Plus Program (THP+) has been implemented to assist emancipated foster youth between the ages of 18 and 24 years in securing and maintaining housing while they pursue employment, education or other sufficiency sustaining tasks.

- Through the continued partnership with the Riverside County Community College District, emancipating youth have a point of contact to support their educational pursuits and connect them with support services.

BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- The Court Orientation Program helps to educate birth parents about the Juvenile Court process. The orientation process includes a video with a birth parent describing their experience with the child welfare system. The goal of the orientation is to provide parents with information to help support reunification and, in conjunction with TDMs, decrease fear and anxiety for birth parents.
- Icebreakers served as a major component in efforts to collaborate with birth parents to help meet the best interest of their children.

IMMIGRATION

- Partnership continued with the Mexican Consulate to address the needs of children and youth in terms of familial support, social services, education, and physical and emotional health. Meetings are held bi-weekly between both agencies, and the social service agency in Mexico when appropriate, to help determine whether a child should remain in the United States or be reunited with extended family in Mexico. In 2007, five transports occurred when it was deemed in the best interest of the child to be returned to relatives who resided in Mexico.
- Riverside County participated in the 2007 Beyond the Bench pre-conference on immigration and related impacts on outcomes for children and families. The presentation of information helped solidify the reality that more discussion needs to occur between, particularly, the Southern California counties regarding immigration issues.

EDUCATION

- A new pilot Freshman Foster Youth Orientation program was implemented. The orientation included information on academic needs of youth (i.e., foster care rights), information on communicating with social workers, educational expectations, information for caregivers on AB490 legislation and the role of the caregiver in supporting educational needs, and a panel of former foster youth sharing their experiences. Backpacks, with school supplies, resource information and community gifts were provided to the participants. Part of the pilot will include tracking the progress of youth who attended the orientation through caregiver and social worker surveys and reviewing youths' transcripts. Based on the comparison, further collaboration may be needed between the school, caregiver and social worker.

San Bernardino

Year Funded Began: 2004

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF RESOURCE FAMILIES

- Regional tracking tools from application to license have helped target recruitment efforts and eliminate bottlenecks. The F2F strategy brochures for Recruitment, Development and Support of Resource Families (RDS), Building Community Partnerships (BCP), and Team Decisionmaking (TDM) have been translated into Spanish.
- Former and current resource parents are actively involved in foster parent recruitment events, strategy committee meetings, roundtable discussions with resource parents and staff, mock TDM trainings, and outreach to the faith-based community.

- Retention and support activities for resource parents include advisory board and retention meetings (co-chaired by resource parent), and appreciation picnics and breakfasts. Additionally, community partners, resource parents, youth and foster parent association representatives participated in “Taking Care of Business” days (one day/stop orientation, application assistance, live scan and TB testing). Meetings are also held with resource parents, Foster Family Association representative, and staff to increase peer learning and sharing about strengths and needs.
- Icebreaker meetings are conducted on a voluntary basis by staff and resource parents. Initial plans for policy, marketing, advertising strategies and regional expansion for the meetings have been developed.
- The Department of Children’s Services (DCS) Director has met with local Tribal representatives to address the disproportionate number of Native American children referred to child welfare and placed in out-of-home care. These discussions have been productive and may result in developing TDMs specific to the needs of Native American children and youth.
- The annual one day Foster Youth Summit was held to identify strengths, barriers and resources for youth in foster care. Over 75 youth attended the Summit. One of the main purposes of the Summit is to highlight deliverables to the youth and caregivers.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Regional partnerships have expanded with grassroots, urban and resource rich programs, including faith-based organizations and service providers (i.e., immigration, food, clothing, job training, addiction and teen programs).
- Faith-based and community partner teams were trained to present on F2F to staff and other community partners.
- The California Youth Connection (CYC) chapter expanded to a sub-chapter in the North Desert and members traveled to Sacramento in June 2007 to voice youth concerns to the California Legislature.
- The Annual Sports Faire was held for foster and kin-care youth between the ages of 11 to 18 years old. All day respite care was provided to resource parents during this event. Youth had an opportunity to be trained by professional, college, high school and travel club role models in football, basketball, soccer, cheer and dance. The event received media coverage. Food and supplies were contributed by local businesses.
- Staff and community partners attended open houses for the Transitional Housing Program (THP), the Transitional Housing Plus Program (THP+) and Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Centers.
- College and career day events were held through collaboration with the Workforce Enforcement Department and the Independent Living Skills Program.
- Community fact sheets continue to be updated and shared during presentations. Fact sheets include numbers and percentages of the community’s population (broken down by ethnicity), the number of referred families, the number of reports of abuse/neglect, and the number of Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings held, including details on the locations, participants, outcomes and disproportionality.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

- All regions have implemented imminent risk and emergency placement Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings. Most regions are also voluntarily holding change of placement TDMs. Overall, the number of TDMs held for imminent risk, emergency placement and placement moves has increased throughout the County. Once a child and family have received a TDM, TDMs are held at *all* placement decision points throughout the course of case.
- In the interest of fairness and equity and addressing the disproportionate number of African American infants entering care, all regions conduct TDMs for all African American infants aged twelve months and under.

- TDM Facilitators meet quarterly for peer learning breakfast meetings to support each other and foster mentoring opportunities.
- A TDM firewall checklist and tracking protocol has been created. Countywide and regional TDM data (locations, participants, types of TDMs, outcomes, disproportionality numbers, percentages and patterns) are distributed to staff and community partners through countywide and regional F2F strategy workgroups.

SELF EVALUATION

- The Self Evaluation workgroup chair produces reports for the F2F strategy workgroups, is responsible for improving state and federal child welfare outcomes, and assists with the System Improvement Plan (SIP) Team, which combines work for the County System Improvement Plan (SIP) and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF)/Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT) funding. The meeting for both F2F Self Evaluation and the SIP are held simultaneously as several outcome measures overlap and this helps reduce the number of duplicate reports requested by both groups. F2F is one of the larger improvement vehicles for state and federal measures. The Self Evaluation workgroup continues to stress the importance of clean data to support reliable tracking of outcomes and increase accountability. Data outreach and education is targeted to all levels of child welfare staff and the public.
- Data is gathered from UC Berkeley (UCB) longitudinal files, UCB data slice, Business Objects and Safe Measures in addition to AB636 quarterly reports. Current SIP Outcomes include: 1) Re-entry to Foster Care, 2) Timeliness for Adoption, 3) Independent Living Program (ILP) and 4) Fairness and Equity. The Fairness and Equity Committee within child welfare and across systems in San Bernardino County continues to create innovative processes to overcome barriers. One of the greatest challenges for Self Evaluation has been showing the breakdown of sibling placements by region and explaining data reports to community partners. Staff are beginning to recognize the value of data in linking outcomes to best practice.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

- A Youth Advisory Board (YAB) was established in June 2005 and a California Youth Advisory Board was established in 2006. Both boards meet monthly and promote foster youth development, and legislative and local change to improve foster youth services. In addition, a CYC sub-workgroup has been established in the Desert Region.
- Twelve former foster youth have been hired as Peer Advocates (six hired by child welfare and six hired by the Department of Behavioral Health). Peer Advocates work part-time to provide feedback on changes in resource parent recruitment/training and transitional age youth issues.
- Telephone surveys were conducted with foster care youth between the ages of 16 and 18 years. The surveys assessed Independent Living Program (ILP) participation and the survey results may be used in the upcoming California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) self assessment.
- The County recently committed to implementing CPYP and the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I).
- Planning committees are being developed for the Peer Quality Care Reviews (PQCRs). The County focus is on “Engaging Transition Age Youth in Case Planning for the Future.”
- Staff collaborate with Parent Partners in other county departments, contracted vendors, the Transitional Housing Program (THP), the Transitional Housing Plus Program (THP+) and the Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Centers.

San Diego

Year Funded Began: 2004

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT OF RESOURCE FAMILIES

- All six regions within the County and centralized programs, such as Licensing and Adoptions, are actively involved in Recruitment, Development and Support of Resource Families (RDS) activities.
- RDS efforts to date have included: recruitment booths at community events and presentations at community organizations; cultivation of foster homes within military housing; advertising in newspapers and on television, such as the weekly television spot titled “Adopt 8” designed to introduce children awaiting adoption; partnering with neighborhood schools to provide foster home licensing information on-site and strengthen relationships with regional child welfare offices; development of the annual “Leap of Faith” calendar to highlight children awaiting adoptive placement; a traveling Heart Gallery photo exhibit highlighting children who have been adopted; hosting “Taking Care of Business” days throughout the County that allow for orientation, fingerprinting, and CPR/First Aid class all in one day; Spring and Fall matching events for adoptive placements; specialized training for medically fragile children (Options for Recovery); Attachment Parenting trainings; a Kinship Summit; a Youth Empowerment Summit; and a speakers panel that includes former foster youth.
- Way-station homes (foster homes open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) have been established within each region. These homes accept children at the point of removal, and care for them for 10 to 30 days until a relative or familiar family can be located to help minimize disruption in the child’s life.
- Resource families continue to be supported through a number of activities and resources, including: monthly meetings between the foster parent associations and child welfare management; a foster parent mentor program; the Comprehensive Assessment and Stabilization Service (CASS) program which provides intensive, short term, in-home services for resource families through a service contract; parenting courses for resource families through Project KEEP (Keeping Foster and Kin Parents Supported and Trained); a foster parent “hotline”; a variety of regional respite events; foster parent picnics and banquet; on-going foster parent support groups; and a teen appreciation banquet for youth and resource families.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Each county region/program has developed relationships with local community partners/agencies, including school personnel, law enforcement, faith-based organizations, foster parents and service organizations. These partners support overall recruitment efforts, respite events, foster parent appreciation events, holiday toy drives and other related activities. Respite nights, co-sponsored by community partners, are held within each of the County’s six regions. Contracts are developed with local community agencies to meet the specific needs of each county region/program.
- Community partners participate in Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings as appropriate and related to the case. During 2007, relationships with education and foster youth liaisons were strengthened and a countywide system is in place to have a foster youth liaison attend TDMs as appropriate. An additional area of focus has been working on engaging domestic violence advocates to attend TDMs.

TEAM DECISIONMAKING

- All six regions and the four centrally managed programs, Residential Services, San Pasqual Academy, the 23-hour Assessment Center, and Adoptions, have implemented Team Decisionmaking (TDM) meetings. In 2007, San Diego County held 1,594 TDMs. This total included 333 imminent risk TDMs, 174 emergency placement TDMs, 970 placement move TDMs, and 117 permanency/exit from placement TDMs.
- During 2007, TDMs expanded to include placement moves, imminent risk, emergency placement, and permanency TDMs (training and full roll-out is underway).
- Firewalls vary from region to region and continue to play a key role in ensuring TDMs are held. Regions/programs that hold a high number of TDMs reflect the shift in culture and an embracing of the core values of F2F, rather than a mandate to hold the meetings.
- Efforts to encourage and enliven TDM practice continues. Example efforts include posting flyers entitled “Remembering why we hold TDMs and Family Unity Meetings” in bathrooms and throughout offices, and distributing buttons that say “got tdm?”
- A monthly TDM facilitators’ supervision group is held to support model integrity, provide support to facilitators, check in on strengths and areas of concern for each site, and share what is working and what is not. Based on the regionalized design of the County, these regular meetings have been helpful to maintain TDM momentum and retain facilitators.

SELF EVALUATION

- The Quality Assurance Data unit is charged with data collection and assessment on a wide range of areas for child welfare, which supports F2F self evaluation work. The unit produces several reports including: monthly change of placement reports, monthly internal audits of relative home assessments, monthly performance reports, monthly Safe Measures compliance reports, quarterly child welfare trend reports, and quarterly AB636 summary reports. In addition, each region/program has a Quality Assurance supervisor to assist with program implementation and tracking of a variety of measures.
- Separate from the Data unit, a monthly Excel document is produced for each region to report on all TDM work (with outcomes) by region/program. In addition, responses from a client satisfaction survey are tracked and reviewed every six months.
- Specific to TDM, one evaluation challenge is comparing outcomes in the TDM database with actual implementation as recorded in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). There continues to be a struggle in terms of what exactly should be measured and tracked. The current focus for data tracking is on increasing the total number of meetings as well as the quality of those meetings.

FOSTER YOUTH PERMANENCE AND YOUTH TRANSITIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

- San Pasqual Academy provides a placement option for youth between the ages of 14 to 18 years old (with siblings between the ages of 12 to 13 years old) and provides a place to live, an education and preparation for independent living. New Alternatives, Inc. serves as the residential services contractor as well as the Independent Living Skills (ILS) provider for youth who reside at the Academy. Through the San Pasqual Academy Neighbors (SPAN) intergenerational mentoring program, older adults are recruited to serve as grandparents to the academy youth. The grandparent live on- and off-campus, and assist youth in developing social skills, making life choices, developing career interests and modeling adult/adolescent interactions. Alumni on-campus housing and support services are available to graduated/emancipated alumni who may wish to remain in residence at the Academy while pursuing education- or career-oriented goals. During the wildfires in 2007, the Academy sustained a great deal of loss to both grandparent and alumni houses. The process of rebuilding has begun, and plans for overall expansion continue.

- The Residential/Adoptions Program (RAP) is a joint venture between the Adoptions Program and Residential Services (RS) Program. The program targets every child active to the RS program whose behavior is stable enough to attempt to locate a permanent family environment. Adoption staff retains secondary assignment on RS cases to continue to search for a permanent placement.
- Piloted in 2006, the San Diego County Workforce Academy for Youth was designed to help connect young people who are emancipating from the foster care system with jobs. Every six months, ten youth are placed into entry-level county jobs, which are funded through a special fund that has been set up in the Department of Human Resources. There is no cost to the departments that participate in this program. Each youth is assigned a job coach, usually their supervisor, as well as a senior life coach who provides positive reinforcement, life skills coaching, and other support as needed.
- The San Diego Foster Youth Initiative operates the Opportunity Passport, which is a program focused on providing transition services in three primary areas: 1) financial literacy, 2) employment preparation, and 3) opportunities in the community. The program is a collaborative effort between Casey Family Programs, Access Inc., and the San Diego Workforce Partnership.

FAMILY TO FAMILY COUNTY CONTACTS

For more information on the work of the counties presented above, please contact the following individuals:

Los Angeles

Michael Rauso

Division Chief, Los Angeles County Children and Family Services

rausom@dcfs.lacounty.gov

Nina Powell-McCall

Family to Family Coordinator

POWELN@dcfs.lacounty.gov

Orange

Raquel Amezcua

Family to Family Coordinator

raquel.amezcua@ssa.ocgov.com

Riverside

Pat O'Boyle

Assistant Regional Manager/ Family to Family Coordinator

POBOYLE@riversidedpss.org

San Bernardino

Sandra Williams

Family to Family Coordinator

swilliams@hss.sbcounty.gov

San Diego

Becki Debont

Family to Family Coordinator

becki.debont@sdcounty.ca.gov