

**California  
Child and Family Services Review  
2008 County Self-Assessment**



**San Bernardino County**

**November 7, 2008**

## A. California's Child and Family Services Review County Self-Assessment

<b>County:</b>	San Bernardino County
<b>Responsible County Child Welfare Agency</b>	Department of Children's Services
<b>Period of Assessment:</b>	March 2008 to March 2011
<b>Period of Outcomes Data:</b>	Q4 2007
<b>Date Submitted:</b>	November 7, 2008

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### In Collaboration with:

Children's Network	Juvenile Court
Department of Behavioral Health	Legislation and Research Unit
Department of Public Health	Program Development Division
First 5	San Bernardino County Schools

Please refer to Page 4 for a complete listing.

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## **B. County Self-Assessment Team Composition**

The San Bernardino County 2008 Child and Family Services Self-Assessment was guided by a Steering Committee composed of representatives of the Department of Children's Services, Probation Department, Program Development Division and Legislation and Research Unit of the San Bernardino County Human Services System. A County Self-Assessment Team was formed and included a wide variety of agency and community representatives from the broad child welfare services arena. In addition, a number of topic area workgroups which corresponded with the seven systemic factors in the assessment met throughout the assessment process. Each workgroup met and discussed one or more of the seven systemic factors in terms of strengths, barriers, and suggestions for change and then reported back to the County Self-Assessment Team with a summary of their respective findings.

The Self-Assessment Team was chaired by a Department of Children's Services Child Welfare Services Manager and had as its roles and responsibilities the following:

- Assist in examining child welfare /probation policies
- Examine agency performance on federal and state outcomes
- Guide in identifying strengths, barriers, and gaps in service delivery
- Review and provide information on systemic factors that affect performance
- Identify programs/networks/partnerships to improve outcomes
- Share the Self-Assessment with other agency staff and community members

In its September 9, 2008 meeting, the Self-Assessment Team discussed the findings and recommendations of the workgroups and met again in late September to review the draft of this report. It is expected that members of the Self-Assessment Team will continue to be involved in the development of the System Improvement Plan (SIP).

Providing information and recommendations to the Self-Assessment Team were separate workgroups on: the case review system, foster/adoptive parent licensing recruitment and retention, management information systems, quality assurance, staff/provider training, services array and countywide prevention activities, and agency collaborations. Each of the workgroups met at least once, most met more than once, and one group, the Quality Assurance Workgroup met twice a month for a total of seven meetings.

The Quality Assurance Workgroup, which was chaired by the Statistical Analyst from the Legislation and Research Unit of the San Bernardino County Human Services System, asked its members to act as subject matter experts in order to

help identify and provide information on discussion points for safety, permanency, and well-being of probation and child welfare youth. Each of the Quality Assurance Workgroup Meetings included a discussion of several of the outcomes and accountability measures in child welfare (such as “S1.1 – No Recurrence of Maltreatment”) followed by a discussion pertaining to how the County was doing on that measure in comparison to baseline figures and then a further discussion on what factors might be adversely affecting outcomes. Many of the members provided additional information for the committee clarifying agency practice and/or information on other factors that might be affecting the outcome measures under discussion.

Some of the workgroups arranged for a number of additional focus groups or individual interviews with agency and/or community members in order to gather information that would be useful to the self-assessment process. For instance, the Case Review Workgroup held two focus groups with DCS/Court Staff, four focus groups with DCS Supervisors and Management, and interviews with 13 social workers. As a part of this Case Review Workgroup, the Probation Department also facilitated a focus group between the Juvenile Court staff, Probation staff, and attorneys handling juvenile probation cases.

The Self-Assessment Steering Committee met in late September to review and comment on a draft of this report and then it was forwarded by the DCS Director, Chief Probation Officer and the Children’s Policy Council (see discussion of that group below under Agency Collaboration) for final review and comments before being submitted to the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors for approval.

### **Required Self-Assessment Team Composition**

The County of San Bernardino Departments of Children’s Services and Probation would like to thank the following individuals and agencies for their participation and valuable input in the Self-Assessment Process.

- Charles Adams, Deputy Director County of San Bernardino Community Action Partnership
- Hilda Alexander-Ragin, Children and Families Commission San Bernardino County
- Paul Alvarado, Case Manager, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe
- Jon Anderson, County of San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department
- Rick Arden, Deputy Chief Probation Officer, County of San Bernardino
- DeAnna Avey-Motikeit, Director, County of San Bernardino Department of Children’s Services
- Karen Bell, Chief Deputy District Attorney, County of San Bernardino
- Holly Benton, Probation Division Director II, County of San Bernardino Probation Department
- Ryan Berryman, Social Service Practitioner, County of San Bernardino Department of Children’s Services

- Andre Bossieux, Program Manager II, County of San Bernardino Department of Behavioral Health Transitional Age Youth Center
- Stacey Burdue, Social Service Consultant, California Department of Social Services
- Chris Gardner, Supervising Probation Officer, County of San Bernardino Probation Department
- Jennifer Cannady, Supervising Deputy Public Defender, County of San Bernardino
- Amy Cousineau, Network Officer. Children's Network County of San Bernardino
- Kelly Cross, Statistical Analyst, Legislation and Research Unit, County of San Bernardino
- Emily Danner, Program Specialist I, Program Development Division County of San Bernardino
- Tammy DeHesa, Foster Parent, Making a Difference Foundation
- Pierre Duong, Supervising Social Service Practitioner, Adoptions, County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services
- Nina Dyba, Social Service Consultant, California Department of Social Services
- Meaghan Ellis, Division Chief, County of San Bernardino Department of Public Health
- Roxie Findsen, Peer and Family Advocate, County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services
- Ashley Franklin, Social Service Consultant, California Department of Social Services
- Rosa Gomez, Deputy Director, County of San Bernardino Department of Behavioral Health
- Beverly Green, Supervising Social Service Practitioner, County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services
- Gwen Gregg, District Manager, County of San Bernardino Transitional Assistance Department
- Josh Harmon, Parent
- Natalie Harts, County of San Bernardino Public Employees Association
- Margaret Hill, Assistant Superintendent, County of San Bernardino Superintendent of Schools
- Quentin Holiday, County of San Bernardino Sheriff's Department
- Charles James, IEIDA Program Coordinator I, Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County
- Lisa Jasso, San Bernardino County Superior Court
- Joyce Jones, Child Welfare Services Manager, County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services
- Dr. Ray Liles, Consultant, California State University San Bernardino
- Connie Lykke, Supervising Program Specialist, Program Development Division County of San Bernardino
- Gary Madden, 211 Director, Inland Empire United Way

- Maury Manliguis, Public Health Administration, San Bernardino Department of Public Health
- Michael Markel, Supervising Deputy County Counsel, County of San Bernardino
- Carole Mason, Deputy Director, San Bernardino Preschool Services
- Pattie McGinty-Hagedorn, Contract Analyst, San Bernardino Children and Families Commission First 5
- Dawn McElwain, Indian Child Welfare Act Director, Chemehuevi Indian Tribe
- Stephen Morales, Peer and Family Advocate, Department of Behavioral Health, Transitional Age Youth
- Vanessa Moreno, Social Service Practitioner, County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services
- Tony Muga, Staff Analyst II, County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services
- Phyllis Munoz, Family Development Specialist, San Bernardino Community Action Partnership
- Amy Nelson, Supervising Social Service Practitioner, County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services
- Rod O'Handley, Program Specialist I, Program Development Division County of San Bernardino
- Monique Perez, Program Specialist II, Program Development Division County of San Bernardino
- Bernadette Pinchback, Manager, Foster Youth Services, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
- Deborah Ragsdale, Secretary I, County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services
- Cathy Roland, Supervising Probation Officer, County of San Bernardino Probation Department
- Theresa Sanchez, Social Service Consultant, California Department of Social Services
- Karen E. Scott, Consultant, San Bernardino Children and Families Commission First 5
- Cathy Sellers, Supervising Social Service Practitioner, County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services
- Marty Sellers, Communications and Events Coordinator, San Bernardino Children's Fund
- Clare Sheridan-Matney, M. D., Loma Linda University Medical Center
- Robin Sherman-Young, Director, Family and Children's Services, San Bernardino County Superior Court
- Lisha Smith, Field Representative, County of San Bernardino Board of Supervisors
- Honorable Marsha Slough, Presiding Judge of Juvenile Court County of San Bernardino

- Rebecca Stafford, Executive Director, County of San Bernardino Children's Fund
- Mary Anne Stoeber, Supervising Social Service Practitioner, County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services
- Stephanie Soto, PIC Aide, San Bernardino Workforce Investment Board
- Kendra Sweeney, Social Worker II, County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services
- Cindi Tamez, Deputy Director, County of San Bernardino Transitional Assistance Department
- Susan Taylor, Assistant Network Officer, County of San Bernardino Children's Network
- Trisha Tenorio, Court Appointed Special Advocate, County of San Bernardino
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- Kathy Watkins, Program Manager, Legislation and Research Unit, County of San Bernardino
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- Victoria Vahovick, Probation Officer II, County of San Bernardino Probation Department
- Sandra Wakcher, Statistical Analyst, Legislation and Research Unit, County of San Bernardino
- Beth Zendejas, San Bernardino County Public Employees Association

In addition to those members of the County Self-Assessment Team listed above there were numerous other participants in the workgroups and focus groups who made important contributions to the assessment in terms of knowledge of child welfare, cogent analysis of the outcomes and systemic factors discussed in this document, and thoughtful suggestions for improvement. The contributions of these individuals are greatly appreciated.

## **C. Demographic Profile**

### **1. Demographics of the General Population**

At 20,105 square miles, San Bernardino County is the largest county in the contiguous United States and is larger in area than nine states. The county runs from Eastern Orange, Los Angeles and Kern Counties to the Nevada and Arizona borders (about 215 miles) and from Northern Riverside County to Inyo County (about 150 miles).

San Bernardino County is home to about 2,007,800 people (2007 Census Bureau) which represents a growth rate of about 17.5% from the 2000 Census. According to the Census Bureau's 2006 estimates, 46.0% of the County's population was of Hispanic or Latino origin, 37.2% was White (non-Hispanic),

9.4% was Black, 5.9% was Asian, 1.4% was American Indian and Alaska Native, with Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders making up .04%. A small percentage (2.4%) of people surveyed reported two or more races in this data set. There are 16 Native American Tribes with spheres of influence in San Bernardino County.

The County has 24 incorporated communities with at least 57 unincorporated ones. It is the home of California State University, San Bernardino which is one of the system's fastest growing campuses, Loma Linda University, Redlands University, and five community colleges. Additionally, a number of private universities have extension campuses located within the County. The University of California, Riverside is located within easy driving distance of most of the major population areas of San Bernardino County.

There are abundant outdoor recreation areas in the County which include six national protected areas (including the San Bernardino National Forest) numerous lakes and reservoirs, eight county parks, and many miles of Colorado River frontage.

The County of San Bernardino also has social problems that potentially contribute to child maltreatment that are comparable with other areas of the State of California. A brief look at those issues includes the following data:

At this time about 11% (10.8%) of San Bernardino County families have incomes below the Federal poverty level and the Employment Development Department reported in July 2008 that 8.5% of San Bernardino County residents were unemployed as compared to 6.2% only a year ago

According to the Legislation and Research Unit of the County of San Bernardino, 4.0% of families in the County are receiving Public Assistance via the Cal Works program. Another source, ChildrenNow.org, indicates that 10% of families residing in the County of San Bernardino have no health insurance which can be compared with a statewide figure of about 7% of families with no health insurance.

As is true for many counties in California, drug and alcohol abuse is a serious problem. In 2006 there were 11,088 (CA Department of Justice) arrests for felony drug offenses in the County and according to San Bernardino County Department of Alcohol and Drug Services, 10,715 San Bernardino County residents received substance abuse treatment in calendar year 2007.

According to the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, in 2006, there were 4,167 live births to County resident teenage mothers (ages 15-19 years). This represented 12.0% of all live births among County residents, and compares to a teenage mother birth rate of about 9.4% in the state as a whole.

Also according to the Public Health Department, there were 2,380 low birth weight births among San Bernardino County residents in 2006. This represented 6.8% of all live births among County residents. This compares to a rate of 6.9% of all live births in the State. A low birth weight live birth is defined as a live birth in which the child weighs less than 2,500 grams (5.5 pounds).

Of the County's 2,007,800 residents approximately 606,114 are children (0-17) which represent about 30% of the population.

According to the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (KidsNCare Office) there were 15,992 children on the Centralized Eligibility List on September 11, 2008 waiting for subsidized child care in the County.

## **2. CWS Participation Rates**

Data on child welfare cases in San Bernardino County obtained from the Center for Social Sciences Research ([http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare/](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/)) at UC Berkeley indicates that in 2007 there were 36,378 children with referrals to child protective services. A total of 5,196 of those children were in the pool of substantiated cases of child abuse and/or neglect which represents about 14.3% of all children who were referred. A total of 1,648 children from the County first entered care as the result of substantiated child abuse and/or neglect during that year.

According to Legislation and Research Unit, on September 10, 2008 a CWS/CMS database query indicated there were 5,507 youth with an *open Department of Children's Services case* in San Bernardino County which represents about 7.6% of all children in the County. Those youth were fairly evenly divided between males (2,798) and females (2,709).

Of the *5,507 youth with open cases* in the Department of Children's Services, 2,193 were Hispanic, 1,736 were White, 1,439 were Black, 70 were Asian/Pacific Islander, 58 were American /Native American and 11 of them were listed as "unknown" for ethnicity. In terms of "case type" for the *5,507 youth with open cases* 2,892 were permanent placement, 1,624 were family reunification, 807 were family maintenance, and 184 were emergency response cases.

The data on the *4,125 youth in foster care placement* in San Bernardino County on the queried date of September 10, 2008 is, of course, very similar to the data on youth with open cases. Males were 50.6% of the total and females were 49.4%. Of that group 1,574 were Hispanic, 1,305 were White, 1,153 were Black, 46 were Asian/Pacific Islander, 44 were American Indian/Native American and 3 were listed as "unknown" ethnicity.

Of the 4,125 youth in foster care placement 2,640 (60.0%) were in permanent placement, 1,363 (33.0%) were in family reunification, 9.4 (2.3%) were in emergency response and 28 (0.7%) were in family maintenance.

### **Probation Participation Rates**

According to San Bernardino County Probation Department data, 5,002 youth were booked into the Central Juvenile Detention and Assessment Center (CJDAC) in 2007. During that same year, the total number of youth on probation was 3,624 and the number placed by Probation was 306. As of August 2008, the number of youth in Probation placements was 202.

### **3. Education System Profile**

Approximately 427,583 children attended school in the County in the year 2006-2007 according to the California Department of Education. There are 35 School Districts within the County and approximately 2,579 (1.6%) of the children enrolled in those school districts attended special education classes in 2006-2007. According to the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Office in school year 2006-2007, 44.72% of the students in the County qualified for free meals and 12.15% qualified for reduced priced meals.

According to the Education Data Partnership (Ed-Data - <http://www.ed-data>), within the County's 33 school districts there are 324 elementary schools, 76 middle schools, 2 junior high schools, 62 high schools, and 8 K-12 schools. 11 alternative schools, 5 special education schools, 24 continuation schools, 18 community day schools, 2 juvenile court schools, 1 county community school, and 1 California Division of Juvenile Justice School. The average class size in the county is 26.8 students with a low of 10.8 in community day schools and a high of 29.2 in grade six. There are also 17 Charter Schools with a combined enrollment of 8,096 students in the County.

According to the State Department of Education, the California High School Exit Exam was given to San Bernardino County students 35,505 times (note: students can take it more than once) in school year academic year 2007-08. Of that number, 73% passed the math section (compared to 78% statewide) and 76% passed the ELA (English Language Arts) section compared to 79% statewide. Only 66% of the County's 16,099 socio-economically disadvantaged students passed the math section (compared to 69%) statewide and only 68% passed the ELA section (compared to 69% statewide).

The San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Office has a **Foster Youth Services** Program (AB 490 – Ensuring Educational Rights and Stability to Foster Youth) which assists foster youth in improving academic achievement, reducing incidences of student discipline problems particularly in regards to student expulsions, and increasing school attendance.

## **D. County Wide Prevention Activities and Strategies**

The County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services and Probation Department, in conjunction with their community partners, provide a wide range of child abuse prevention programs. These programs are integrated into a broad spectrum of services that cover the full continuum of child welfare from prior involvement in the system to permanent and stable placement or reunification. In every phase of service, the aim is always to prevent abuse or further abuse, to stabilize families and placements, and provide programs that promote the long-term health and well being of the child. The County collaborates with a vast array of non-profit, community based, and faith based organizations that, in turn, offer a wide variety of services geared toward the needs of county residents.

The **Children's Policy Council** is San Bernardino County's official Child Abuse Prevention Council. The Policy Council consists of department heads from those County agencies that provide services to children, including the Departments of Children's Services and Probation, and other agencies concerned with children's issues. The council meets monthly and provides direction for the County's child abuse prevention efforts. Representatives from Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and the public are also invited to participate in planning discussions.

The following review of countywide child abuse prevention activities will include, first, a delineation of the services provided and then address specific issues which should also serve to accentuate the holistic, evidence-based and family centered strategic approaches employed by the County to promote child well being.

### **Prevention Activities**

The **Department of Children's Services** provides family-centered programs and services designed to ensure safe, permanent, nurturing families for San Bernardino County's children, while strengthening and attempting to preserve the family unit. **The Mission of the Department of Children's Services** is to protect endangered children, preserve and strengthen their families, and develop alternative family settings. To that end, DCS uses a number of programs to prevent child abuse and neglect.

**Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT)** programs were established by Assembly Bill 1733 (Welfare and Institution Code Sections 18960-18964) to fund agencies addressing needs of children at high risk of abuse or neglect and their families. DCS has contracted with a variety of agencies to provide CAPIT services, including faith-based organizations (Christian Counseling Services, Lutheran Social Services), community-based organizations (Center for Healing, Morongo Basin Mental Health, Rim Family Services, Family Service Agency of San Bernardino) and other non-profit organizations (Desert Mountain/SELPA, Pacific Clinics).

These agencies provide a wide variety of services, including: Individual, family and group counseling; child enrichment and development; basic life skills; crisis intervention; substance abuse services; nurse home visits; parenting classes; anger management classes; and sexual abuse treatment. These services are, in some cases, provided in-home and the latest procurement of services contracts (effective 7/1/08) emphasized the use of evidence-based models (e.g., Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Parent Child Interactive Therapy, The Incredible Years). These service providers also participate in DCS Team Decision Making meetings.

The **Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF)** Program, under Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, provides grants to help vulnerable families stay together, build healthy marriages, and improve parenting skills to prevent child abuse. Funded services also promote timely family reunification when children must be separated from their parents for their own safety. The PSSF program works to remove barriers that stand in the way of adoption when children cannot be safely reunited with their families.

To insure that funds are distributed throughout the continuum of care, 20% of the PSSF allocation must be distributed into each of four Service Categories: Family Preservation, Family Support, Adoption Promotion and Support and Time Limited Reunification. The remaining 20% may be distributed as the County chooses. As a consequence, services to prevent child abuse and recurring child abuse are integrated into the array of services that target and support other phases of child welfare.

DCS contracts with a variety of agencies to deliver PSSF funded services. These agencies include faith based organizations (Catholic Charities), community based organizations (Family Service Association of Redlands, Morongo Basin Unity Home, Bilingual Family Counseling Services) and other non-profit agencies (Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County). Funds are also set aside for Adoption Promotion and support through DCS for the Kinship centers.

Services provided by these agencies include: Professional Clinical Services/ Individual /Family Counseling; Children's Groups; Parent Education; Adult Anger Management, Teen/Parent Anger Management; Family Support Services – Referrals; Child Enrichment/Childcare; Substance Abuse Counseling, Education and Support Groups; Basic Life Skills/Independent Living; Computer/Employment Class; Home Visits/Supervised visitation; Abuse Presentations; Housing Advocate; and Direct Services/Hard Goods/Transportation Support. Though not required for funding, this year's procurement process sought evidence-based therapeutic models such as Trauma Focused - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Parent Child Interactive Therapy. Service providers reported providing over 67,000 hours in service for FY 2006/07 attributed to PSSF.

## **Outreach Activities, Special Needs Populations and Minorities**

Detailed information about the PSSF/CAPIT programs regarding State and Federal child welfare services outcome measures is available because these programs were used as a model for tracking other services. The County is fully integrating its PSSF/CAPIT evaluations with its AB 636 Outcomes and Accountability System and holds all service providers accountable for their participation in a county-community partnership to improve outcomes for child safety, permanency, and family and child well being. To that end a multi-layered, comprehensive data collection and evaluation system has been implemented to track engagement, short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. That system is now in the process of being upgraded to an automated system. The County of San Bernardino has contracted with *Social Solutions* to implement an *Efforts-To-Outcomes* system that will more thoroughly, comprehensively and expeditiously capture information and produce usable reports. The Contractors have attended initial training on the program and will initiate use within the new Fiscal Year.

On June 24, 2008 the County of San Bernardino awarded the CAPIT/PSSF contracts. Priority for services is given to children and families who are, or have been, involved with the Child Welfare Services system or are seeking help to avoid problems that would bring them into the system. CAPIT prevention programs use nonprofit agencies that identify and provide services to isolated families, particularly those with children under five years old.

Procurement was specifically targeted for agencies that are, or affiliate with, Family Resource Centers, or their equivalent. However, none of the proposals submitted indicated the contractor had a Family Resource Center.

Several of our CAPIT and PSSF contractors offer in-home visiting programs and services for children and families who may have special needs and require intensive one-on-one counseling, parenting and life skills services. In-home services help address the needs of families in rural or other outlying areas and families that may benefit most from services provided outside of a traditional office setting due to special needs.

Population and geographic data were used to procure services in areas of higher need and ensure fair and equitable access to services throughout the county. This information also led the County to procure in-home services in addition to traditional in-office services.

Minority populations were served at or better than their proportion of the general population. Efforts are made during procurement to insure that high need areas are served when obtaining providers. This would include areas of minority concentration. During monitoring, the ability to provide bilingual services is reviewed and used to determine contract compliance. Every effort is made by the County to ensure that Limited English Proficient individuals are adequately served.

A recent survey of DCS contracted providers shows that most providers claim they are sufficiently staffed to serve a culturally diverse population (63.16%) and the disabled (84.21%). Contracts contain language requiring contractors to meet Federal and State standards under the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The survey also showed that most contractors do not believe the disabled are a significant portion of the population they serve. It is interesting that even though providers have served approximately 900 disabled individuals (10% of their clients) in each of the last 2 years, the providers did not see them as a significant part of their client population.

### **Reunification Services and Permanency**

Under Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF), at least 20% of the allocation to the County is devoted to Time Limited Reunification (TLR) Services. At least 16,800 service hours of the 67,000 reported by PSSF providers were for TLR (25.12%). CAPIT providers also assist in reunification efforts.

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) outcomes of safety and permanency have been adapted for the PSSF/CAPIT families and clients who accessed services. However, due to the time delays in receiving data from the PSSF/CAPIT vendors, and the processing time for data entry, it would take about two years before all of the data for the fiscal year is complete. In order to improve and reduce this data entry lag, the County has purchased an on-line database with data entry by the vendors to record all families and clients who access services through the PSSF/CAPIT funding. The on-line database will allow the County to better understand the needs of the population by comparing how many clients were referred, how many clients received services, how many clients accessed multiple vendors and which families were successful in reunification and permanency by types of services. See Table (1) for the impact evaluations by fiscal year.

**Table (1)**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b># of Evaluations Received (Family Count)*</b>
FY 05/06	2,937
FY 06/07	3,680
Tentative FY 07/08	5,187

\*Data as of September 10, 2008

Achieving permanency has been adapted for PSSF/CAPIT as: any family who received services in the fiscal year and the child is in foster care, and exits foster care to reunification, adoption or guardianship. See Table (2) for the results.

**Table (2)**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>% of Children Achieving Permanency Whose Families Received PSSF/CAPIT Services</b>	<b>Average Time to Achieve Permanency</b>
FY 05/06	69.0%	20.7 months*
FY 06/07	75.3%	18.9 months

\*FY05/06 youth had more time to achieve permanency, from Jul 2005 to Sep 2007, while FY06/07 youth had a shorter time frame, from Jul 2006 to Sep 2007.

**Prevention and Intervention Services and Programs**

San Bernardino County’s efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect are highlighted each year when the County has a **Child Abuse Prevention Campaign**. The goal of the April of 2008 campaign was to raise public awareness regarding the issue of child abuse and neglect, and to promote positive parenting skills countywide. Child Abuse Prevention campaign activities included:

- A Board of Supervisors Resolution declaring April 2008 Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- The Child Abuse Prevention Councils representing the April Campaign distributed more than 250,000 positive parenting and educational materials county-wide and more than 150,000 other informational and awareness pieces.
- The "*Fun in the Sun Safe Summer Campaign*" which focuses on drowning prevention and not leaving children unattended in vehicles begins in May and ends on Labor Day each year in the County.
- In conjunction with the Children's Network of San Bernardino County, The Children's Fund recognizes those individuals that go an extra mile to assist at-risk children and raise awareness of child abuse in San Bernardino County at the *Shine A Light on Child Abuse Awards Breakfast*.

Children often become “at risk children” because their prenatal development was adversely affected by maternal use of tobacco, alcohol and other substances during pregnancy. The **Screening, Assessment, Referral and Treatment (SART)** program, in conjunction with First 5, the Department of Behavioral Health and other partners, screens, assesses, and provides treatment services for children ages 0-5 who are at high risk for emotional/behavioral problems as the result of prenatal exposure to tobacco, alcohol, and other substance. From August 2004 through September 2006 there were 22,178 perinatal SART screenings performed to detect tobacco, alcohol, and other substance abuse by pregnant women in San Bernardino County (*Source: Department of Public Health*). The program has recently been reauthorized with a new provider.

The **Loma Linda University Children’s Hospital (LLUMC)** has a “Keep Me Safe Prevention Program” which educates parents about Shaken Baby Syndrome and attempts to gain a commitment from those who participate in the program not to shake their babies. The LLUMC plans to expand this program to other area hospitals within the County.

The **First 5 Parenting Education (PE) and Outreach Programs** in San Bernardino County strive for the “Implementation of quality, evidence based, accessible parent education and enhancement; which includes topics of child development, parenting skills, and bonding/attachment.” First 5 partners in a number of community agencies use a variety of evidence based approaches such as: 1234 Parenting; Active Parenting Program; Community Parent Education (COPE); Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPO); Los Niños Bien Educado; Love and Logic; Narrative Parenting; Nurturing Parent; Parents As Teachers (PAT); Positive Discipline Model; Strengthening Families Program; Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) – Early Childhood; Triple P – Positive Parenting Program.

Results of the First 5 programs with regards to child abuse prevention are encouraging. The PE programs continue to provide a wide variety of services throughout the County. Agencies and programs are also able to reach a diverse population of clients. Demographic data collected from these programs show that 60.6% of clients identified as African American and 37.4% identified as Latino. Parents who said they send their child to their room as punishment (considered by many to be a positive form of discipline) increased in this program year (+3.4%) The percent of parents who reported spanking their child for discipline decreased from 9.0% to 3.1%. This rate was lower than that of the 2006 Family Survey responses, in which over 8% of the general population of parents sampled reported the use of spanking or hitting as a form of discipline.

The **Children’s Fund Daily Referral Program** helps meet the needs of at-risk children by purchasing items such as food, car seats, clothing, shelter, transportation, beds, cribs, education, dental and medical as well as other items that could not be obtained in other ways.

The Department of Children’s Services (DCS) operates the **Children’s Assessment Center (CAC)** as a collaborative with other county departments and entities, such as Loma Linda University Children’s Hospital, Law Enforcement, Children’s Fund, and Public Health. The mission of CAC is to reduce the trauma victims of child abuse experience during the investigative phase, which may include a forensic interview and medical examination. The CAC provides a one-stop location for coordinated, streamlined diagnostic services and assessment of child victims of sexual or physical abuse. The CAC staff includes a DCS supervisor, forensic interview specialists (Social Service Practitioners), a Victim Service Advocate from the District Attorney’s office, and

Forensic Pediatricians and Nurse Practitioners. A multi-disciplinary team meets monthly to staff cases and coordinate interventions and services.

Children who come under the supervision of the Department of Children's Service as the result of abuse or neglect are often placed with members of their extended families rather than placed with unrelated foster parents or in group homes. The **Kinship Support Services Program (KSSP)** helps strengthen families of individuals who are raising the children of their extended families by providing them with information, community resources, education, and other services related to their needs. The Department of Children's Services (DCS) contracts with Mental Health Systems, Inc., and Westside Christian Center to provide Kinship services. Those services include: Kinship and Adoption Support Groups; Respite; Parenting Classes; Education Workshops; Counseling and Mentoring services; and Tutoring Services.

Children who are in the care of DCS also need to have their mental health needs assessed in order for them to be put into appropriate placements and in many cases they need mental health treatment while in care. The **Healthy Homes (HH)** program is a collaborative with the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) that provides a Mental Health screening for all Medi-Cal eligible children under the supervision of DCS. The goal of the program is to identify and address unmet Mental Health needs. The HH program has completed its implementation phase and is moving to a second round of assessments. Preliminary data indicates that children screened through the Healthy Homes program are more likely to have their mental health issues diagnosed and addressed and are more likely to receive medication as needed, than those clients who are not screened. DBH expects to fully staff the program in the coming year and tie these screenings in with expanded Team Decision Making meetings under Prevention and Early Intervention funds through the Mental Health Services Act.

The needs of children in care are often quite complex and meeting them involves interaction between multiple agencies. The **Wraparound** process, as it is used in San Bernardino County, provides individualized, comprehensive, community-based services and supports to children and adolescents with serious emotional and/or behavioral disturbances that are currently placed or at risk of being placed in an RCL 10-14 group home. It is a team-based planning process intended to provide individualized and coordinated family-driven care and is designed to meet the complex needs of children who are involved with several child and family-serving systems (e.g. mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, special education, etc.); who are at risk of placement in institutional settings; and who experience emotional, behavioral, or mental health difficulties. The contracted Wraparound providers for DCS are Victor Community Support Services, South Coast Children's Society, Morongo Basin Mental Health, Lutheran Social Services and EMQ Children and Family Services. A new procurement has just been completed and contracts are in place until 2011.

Social problems such as substance abuse and gangs often contribute to the maltreatment of children and youth. One County response to these issues is the **Drug Endangered Children's Task Force**, in conjunction with the Sheriff's Office, the Departments of Children's Services, and Public Health, which insures a coordinated response for children found at methamphetamine drug manufacturing sites. Another is the **Gangs and Drugs Task Force** which coordinates activities countywide which are focusing on early intervention strategies with youth at high risk for gang affiliation.

Collaboration between the Department of Children's Services (DCS) and the Department of Behavioral Health supported the implementation of the Mental Health Services Act **Prevention and Early Intervention Program (PEI)**. The community-based initiatives' goal is to build and strengthen the capacity of communities to provide prevention and early intervention opportunities and community empowerment activities.

### **Probation Department Prevention Activities and Strategies**

The Probation Department administers and participates in a wide variety of prevention, early intervention and diversion programs meant to reduce the incidence of youth crime and crimes against youth. According to a National Institute of Justice study, abused and neglected children were 11 times more likely to be arrested for criminal behavior as juveniles, 2.7 times more likely to be arrested for violent and criminal behavior as adults, and 3.1 times more likely to be arrested for one of many forms of violent crime (as juveniles or adults). The Probation Department, therefore, recognizes the need for early and comprehensive intervention in order to break the cycle of violence. Some of the services and collaborations sponsored by the Probation Department are as follows:

**School Probation Officers (SPOs)** in San Bernardino County provide crime prevention and intervention services at the school setting. They are trained in a variety of programs including Juvenile Anger Management, Cognitive Life Skills, Substance Abuse and the Parent Project. They also participate in educational events such as the Gang Reduction and Education and Training (GREAT) Conference on Gang Intervention and the Western Regional Truancy Prevention Conference.

**INFO (Integrating New Family Opportunities)** – collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH); juvenile offenders with mental health needs (including an Axis I diagnosis) are identified and placed in the out-patient supervised program. These offenders and their families receive Functional Family Therapy (FFT) with the goal of changing family dynamics which may have contributed to low functioning in school, substance abuse, and other behaviors. Youth are supervised closely by Probation Officers in the community, and monitored in the home, in school and the community. The program currently has a 0% recidivism rate; none of the 26 graduates to date have re-offended.

**GREAT (Gang Resistance, Education and Training)** – seeks to implement a consistent gang prevention and education program countywide and to improve school communities by working collaboratively with grades 5-8 in schools. The program uses a saturation model, where the entire grade-level class receives instruction and then the class moves on together to the next grade with the GREAT philosophy. In addition, GREAT officers attend school open houses, parent-teacher conferences, assemblies and assist with ‘safe passage ‘(working with parents and schools to prevent kids from being bullied). Summer programs include sports, field trips, classroom instruction on bullying, and safety programs. GREAT is evidence-based and is collaborative with schools and school districts.

**Reintegration Program** - transitions youth leaving the Juvenile Detention and Assessment centers back into the community. Officers identify areas of concern for youth and their families while the youth are detained and connect them with the appropriate resources to increase their productivity in the community and reduce recidivism. Individual case planning, home visits, and referrals to services (academic, vocational, counseling, substance abuse, health, etc) are offered.

**Youth Accountability Boards (YAB)** are collaboratives in the County between local law enforcement and citizens and aim to divert first-time offenders from the Juvenile Justice System. YAB staff develop contracts with offenders and their parents that usually include participation in community service, behavioral instruction, and completing educational goals in return for avoiding prosecution.

**Community Service Team (CST)** Probation Officers provide initial evaluation of all out-of-custody juvenile arrests and provide services to divert juvenile offenders from the Juvenile Justice System through program referrals and informal supervision.

**Day Reporting Centers** are community day schools in the County with Probation supervision that provide specialized classes for at-risk youth, including: Anger Management/Victim Awareness, Drug and Alcohol, Parenting, Gang Involvement, Shoplifting, Truancy and the Girls Circle. Special emphasis is placed on using evidence-based programs and interventions. Counseling services are offered by ‘enrichment’ providers for those without insurance or Medi-Cal. A new Center is on-line to open up December 1, 2008.

#### **Other Agencies and Collaboratives Related to Prevention**

**School Attendance Review Boards (SARBs)** became operative in the County in 1977 and act to coordinate school, community, and home efforts to deal with attendance and behavior problems of students. SARBs maximize the use of all available resources and services to resolve attendance and behavior problems, and divert students with school-related problems from the juvenile justice system. Local SARBs are composed of parents and representatives from the school district and the community-at-large, including law enforcement, welfare agencies, probation, various youth service agencies, mental health, and the District

Attorney's Office. They collaboratively work to diagnose and recommend procedures for alleviating circumstances that are contributing to specific truancy, attendance, or behavior problems.

**The Law Enforcement Education Partnership (LEEP)** is a County coalition of School Superintendents, Law Enforcement Chiefs, the Probation Department, the Judiciary, and the District Attorney which seeks to explore areas of interagency partnerships in support of youth and the promotion of school and community safety.

**Para Los Niños (PLN)** is county-funded community program which integrates a full range of family assistance services that include child development activities and parenting education, a charter school, child abuse prevention and intervention, case management, after-school enrichment, youth diversion, and delinquency prevention programs. In PLN parenting classes, participants learn age-appropriate methods on how to discipline their children, how to make their home a safe environment, and how to be more engaged in the development of their children.

The **Let's End Truancy (LET)** Program actively monitors the school attendance of truancy-prone students in conjunction with the District Attorney's Office and the School Districts of the County. Students and parents are referred to available community based organizations for assistance in resolving any problems affecting school attendance.

### **E. Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR)**

The chosen focus area for the San Bernardino County 2008 Peer Quality Case Review was **Engaging Transition Age Youth in Case Planning for the Future**. The goal was to capture vitally important input relative to involving youth in planning for their transition to self-sufficient adulthood.

The PQCR consisted of a review of summaries of fifty selected cases; one-hour interviews with selected social workers and probation officers; and focus groups for care providers, supervisors, group homes, youth, service providers, and Independent Living Program (ILP) coordinator/recruiters and instructors. A team of Probation Officers and Social Workers from six counties shared their practice wisdom and participated as interviewers (Fresno, Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and Tuolumne). The PQCR provided an opportunity for all participants to share their perspectives regarding best practices (what works); barriers and challenges; and recommendations for change.

### **Summary of Practice Strengths found in the PQCR (These are strength-based practices of Social Workers and Probation Officers interviewed during the PQCR)**

- Believing that the longer the youth has the same Social Worker or Probation Officer the greater the chances for a successful consistent relationship and successful outcomes for the youth.
- Understanding the importance of contact with the youth more frequently than just a monthly basis.
- Remaining knowledgeable of current Independent Living Program (ILP) services.
- Helping youth develop realistic plans for their future.
- Helping youth to identify at least one adult with whom the youth can establish a positive lifelong connection.
- Recognizing the support and benefit youth and families receive from Wraparound services.
- Getting creative in finding resources and volunteering to get involved in youth activities.
- Considering socio-economic and cultural issues when working with youth and families.
- Empowering youth to make decisions by giving them choices.
- Turning barriers and challenges into strengths.
- Probation Officers find the evidence-based assessment tool called COMPAS to be particularly useful.

### **Summary of Recommendations found in the PQCR for Improving Practices**

- Reduce the number of Probation Placement cases and increase Wraparound services offered to youth, thereby reducing the number of re-offenders.
- Train group home staff how to motivate youth and families to participate in preparing for the youth's future.
- Improve communication between Court and Probation, and between counties.
- Find and develop more counseling services, housing, transportation, employment and mentoring resources.
- Reduce the size of caseloads.
- Recruit specialized caseworkers to work with transitioning youth.
- Provide more transitional living for pregnant teens.
- Provide parenting training to teens.
- Address the youth's emotional progress towards independence.

- Begin transition preparation services at an earlier age and make youth participation in Independent Living Program services mandatory.
- Develop and implement a youth employment program to help youth find and keep a job.
- Offer training to Social Workers and Probation Officers in special needs of foster youth, such as self-esteem, run away behavior, drug/alcohol abuse, and mental health issues.
- Conduct a community resource fair for transitioning youth, social workers, and care providers.
- Develop an apprenticeship and volunteer program for youth that would give them practical experience, allow them to develop a sense of empathy for others, and give them a sense of pride that they are contributing to their communities.
- Keep supervisors aware of resources available to transitioning youth.
- Expect supervisors to be continually involved in cases involving transitioning youth.
- Place further emphasis on encouraging and supporting youth to stay in school and earn enough credits to graduate on time.

**PQCR interviewees and focus group participants identified the following areas in which State assistance is needed:**

- To develop specialized teen units and smaller caseloads;
- To fund ILP at an earlier age;
- To fund the development of a regional resource database;
- To use Medi-Cal to pay for braces and other medical/dental needs;
- To fund the requirement of on-going training for foster parents on how to help youth prepare for adulthood.

**F. Outcomes**

The discussion below on **Safety** and **Permanency** are derived from data that was extracted from the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). **Well-being** process data and outcomes are also discussed however specific measures on well being have yet to be developed.

Department of Children’s Services (DCS) staff enters data into CWS/CMS as part of their case management duties and that data is used for the outcome measures below and can be compared to federal and state standards by using the Child Welfare Dynamic Report System which can be accessed at <http://cssr.berkeley.edu>. San Bernardino County Department of Children’s Services (DCS) continuously monitors these measures through its Quality Assurance (QA) Workgroup (discussed below) and is very interested in how the

outcome measures relate to changes in child welfare practice. The outcome measures immediately below were discussed intensively by the QA Workgroup that was an integral part of this Self-Assessment. Comparisons in data are made between the County's baseline and current performance.

**1. Safety 1. – Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect**

**a) S1.1 No Recurrence of Maltreatment.**

This safety measure reflects the percentage of children who were victims of a substantiated or inconclusive child maltreatment allegation within the first 6 months of a specified time period for whom there were no additional substantiated maltreatment allegation during the subsequent 6 months. In Quarter 4 (Q4) of 2007 90.9% of children were not re-abused within 6 months compared to a baseline of 90%. The County is moving in the right direction on this measure.

**b) S2.1 No Maltreatment in Foster Care**

This safety measure reflects the percentage of children who were not victims of a substantiated maltreatment report by a foster parent or facility staff while in out-of-home care. In Q4 of 2007 99.32% of children did not have a substantiated allegation of abuse or neglect while in foster care. Although no children should have a substantiated allegation of abuse or neglect while in foster care, the current baseline does not accurately reflect out-of-home abuse information. Until 2005, CWS/CMS was not programmed to record all placement types for out of home abuse and as a result, an undercount existed across the State. Following a CWS/CMS code drop, new instructions were issued to line staff in order to document more accurately the out-of-home abuse reports. By 2006, DCS started having good data that reflected our true baseline.

**2. Safety 2 – Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate (PSSF).**

**a) Process Measures**

**(1) 2B Percent of Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals with a Timely Response**

This measure computes the percentage of referrals in which face-to-face contact with a child occurs, or is attempted, within the regulatory timeframes. The baseline for the measure on immediate response referrals reflected that 91.1% of all referrals received an in-person response within 24 hours. In Q4 of 2007, the County's rate indicated that 96.2% of immediate response referrals received an in-person response. This exceeded both the baseline of 91.1% and the State standard of 90%. The baseline for in-person investigation within 10 days was 92.6% and in Q4 of 2007 the County, maintaining that safety is our top priority, was 92.6%, and again, above the State standard of 90%.

## **(2) 2C – Timely Social Worker Visits with Child**

This measure computes the percentage of children who received a monthly visit, out of all those children for whom a visit was required. San Bernardino County has improved dramatically on this measure. Between the baseline period of June '03 and Sept '07 this measure changed from 69.8% to 93.5% and exceeded the State Standard of 90%.

These improvements are thought to be chiefly due to the implementation of Safe Measures in June 2006 and the implementation of data entry standards for monthly social worker contact into CWS/CMS. Other programs and policies that DCS has implemented since the last CSA include the use of the Comprehensive Assessment Tool (CAT) which began in July 2007 and new policy for data entry instructions provided regarding N/A Secondary referrals.

### **Safety (1) and (2) Discussion**

As safety is the primary mission of the Department of Children's Services (DCS), there are a number of factors that could affect the outcomes on safety. Safety figures can be affected by the how the County uses its Child Abuse Hotline. Not all calls to the hotline are opened as investigations however, that does not mean that many of those callers do not receive services. In fact, hotline callers are often referred to a number of community agencies such as the Department of Behavioral Health Crisis Response Team for cases in which a child seems to be experiencing a mental health emergency. Calls regarding children left unsupervised are referred to law enforcement and sometimes investigating officers call the Hotline back indicating the allegations were unfounded.

Safety may be enhanced in the County through staffing by zip code (Geo-Staffing), which produces a number of benefits that include saving social worker travel time, and increasing relationships social workers and supervisors have with schools, SARB boards, and other community agencies. These increased relationships may result in better, more effective use of social worker time which may enhance safety.

The County is using the Comprehensive Assessment Tool (CAT) (as of July 2007) and it seems to be having a positive impact. However, issues were raised about how time-consuming and complicated the tool seems to some social workers and that it is not applicable to risk assessment for adoptions, foster care/placement (placement change), nor is it very helpful for completing reports to the Court. Social workers would like a version with a summary which could be imported into CWS/CMS. Social workers may need more training on using the instrument to guide their decision-making process than simply using it by rote. A new version of the CAT will soon be in use in the County, which is more social worker friendly. Training of supervisors and staff will be conducted regarding the new version of the Comprehensive Assessment Tool.

In an effort to insure referrals are responded to in a timely manner, supervisors review all referrals prior to assigning to social work staff. If a referral is downgraded from an immediate response (IR), the downgrade is agreed upon by the supervisor and manager and the supervisor documents the decision making process and rationale into the CWS/CMS. Supervisors may upgrade referrals to a priority response after reviewing the referral, client history, and other information available.

DCS has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Probation Department for the purpose of coordinating investigations of reported maltreatment in out-of-home care. DCS receives reports, cross reports as required by statute, and determines if an in-person response is necessary. If an in-person response is indicated, the referral is assigned to DCS staff to investigate, coordinate with Probation, notify Probation of the findings, complete required documentation in CWS/CMS, and report to the Department of Justice if applicable. Probation is to assist with required transportation and placement moves if required.

The County acts to decrease the incidence of maltreatment in foster care through its screening and assessment practices prior to placement of the child in the home. The County completes background checks utilizing the following: Live Scan, CII through local law enforcement, CACI (child abuse index), FBI (for out-of-state criminal checks), DMV, LIS (the State Licensing Information System), LAARS (Licensing Administrative Actions Record System), the Adam Walsh out-of-state abuse check, Megan's Law Databases, and CWS/CMS. Foster parents meet with licensing workers at least once a year and more often as needed. Each time a licensing worker or licensing investigator visits a foster home they conduct a facility evaluation to make sure the home is in compliance with State regulations. These screening practices exceed State standards for licensing.

Best practices in child welfare are to place children with relative care providers rather than unrelated foster parents. Relative care providers must also be screened to ensure the safety of the children placed in their care. To facilitate this process, DCS has two centralized Relative Approval Units (RAUs) that are available 24/7, that assist regional social workers in the placement of children with potential relatives or non relative extended family members.

Another way to potentially reduce maltreatment in foster care is to provide services to foster parents that reduce their stress levels. The Respite Care program in San Bernardino County allows each qualified foster family seven days and six nights of respite care each year. Care providers used for respite care may be other San Bernardino County foster homes or other approved care providers. There are only two forms to complete and submit for reimbursement following the use of the respite care and payment of the foster care provider. Licensing workers maintain a list of foster parents who wish to provide respite

care for other foster parents. The availability of respite care is believed to be a major factor in foster parent retention.

DCS has reporting and tracking procedures for occurrences of abuse and neglect in relative and group home foster care settings. Recently, the assignment practices for Out of Home Abuse (OOHA) were revised with the purposes of expediting emergency responses, enhancing coordination of the investigation, and complying with state regulations. If an emergency response is received during normal working hours, day duty staff respond and investigate. If there are multiple, alleged victims assigned to different regions, all of the referrals are assigned to the region where the alleged incidents occurred. Revisions in these policies further clarified the roles of child protective services staff investigating alleged maltreatment as opposed to licensing investigators, and encourage joint investigation between the two agencies.

DCS also has placement policies and practices that include a focus on reducing incidents of maltreatment in out-of-home care. For example, the Department has a set of Foster Family Agency (FFA) Homes Screening and Clearance Procedures which are used by its Central Placement Unit. Care providers in FFAs used for placement must have passed Live Scans and the CACI when they were licensed by Community Care Licensing, and the Central Placement Unit conducts its own clearances which include CWS/CMS, the Riverside County and San Bernardino County court systems databases, the LAARS and I-IV as needed. Based on the findings of these background checks, there are procedures for placing temporary "holds" on placements into homes or even permanent holds depending on the results of investigations and the conclusions of DCS FFA Liaisons, Supervision, and Management.

DCS ensures compliance with the necessary frequency of social worker visits with children in care in order to monitor risk through casework practice standards. Department management has the expectation that supervisors should be meeting with all line workers in their units at least once each month to discuss every single child on their caseloads. Managers are encouraged to promote the value of in-depth monthly case conferencing and supervision by allocating more time on the more complex cases which leads to more thoughtful and less reactive social work. The use of the Safe Measures program has been effective in producing timely documentation of social worker visits into the CWS/CMS system which in turn helps supervisors and managers monitor compliance with Department and State standards.

Barriers to conducting more than one face-to-face visit a month include workload issues and travel time. The schedules of many children and families often dictate that social workers need to arrange evening and weekend contacts and interviews in homes and placements and overtime is often necessary to comply with the County policy that every third visit be conducted in the home. Also impacting the social worker's ability to have more than one contact a month is the time it takes to travel to other counties where children are placed with Relatives,

Non-Relative Extended Family Members (NREFMs), Foster Family Agency Homes or Group Homes.

DCS has not implemented alternative or differential response strategies however, it has conducted an informal study on how a new multiple referral policy might impact workload. Alternatives on this issue are still under review.

**3. Permanency 1 – Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry into foster care.**

**a) Process Measures**

**(1) 2C – Timely Probation Officer Visits with Child**

In November of 2007, 148 out of 151 Probation youth were visited by a Probation Officer. There are no “contact exceptions” in Probation that would allow for Probation Officers not visiting a youth monthly.

**(2) 8A – Children Transitioning to Self-sufficient Adulthood**

Information is provided under Permanency Composite 4

**b) Permanency Composite 1**

**(1) Measure 1 (C1.1) - Reunification within 12 months (exit cohort).**

This measure computes the percentage of children discharged to reunification within 12 months of removal. The baseline rate of all children exiting to reunification within 12 months of foster care entry was 59.5% and the Q4 2007 comparison rate was 61.7%, The County is moving in the right direction on this measure.

**(2) Measure 2(C1.2) - Median Time to Reunification (exit cohort).**

This measure computes the median length of stay (in months) for children discharged to reunification. Length of stay is calculated as the date of discharge from foster care minus the latest date of removal from the home. The baseline rate on this measure as 8.4 months and the comparison data in Q4 of 2007 was 8.3 months. The County is also moving in the right direction.

**(3) Measure 3 (C1.3) - Reunification within 12 Months (entry cohort).**

This measure computes the percentage of children reunified within 12 months of removal for a cohort of children first entering foster care. The entry cohort is comprised of children entering foster care for the first time within a 6-month period. The baseline data for all children who entered foster care and exited to reunification within 12 months of entry was 48.1% as compared to 42.9% of children in Q4 of 2007. The County is not moving in the right direction on this measure.

#### **(4) Measure 4 (C1.4) - Reentry Following Reunification (Exit Cohort)**

This measure computes the percentage of children reentering foster care within 12 months of a reunification discharge. Baseline data for reentry to foster care within 12 months following reunification (exit cohort) was 13.2% as compared to 9.3% in Q4 of 2007 and indicates the County is moving in the right direction.

#### **Permanency Composite (1) Discussion**

As discussed elsewhere in this report, there are numerous services available in the County that support reunification. However, the Outcomes Workgroup believes that even though there may be many services available to families, there are not enough available to all areas of the County. Families residing, for example, in the remote desert regions are challenged with transportation and distance issues in accessing services.

The amount of PSSF funds available in 2008-2009 is lower than the amount that was available in the previous year and many contractors were forced to make services cuts as a result. For example, Bilingual Family Counseling will entirely eliminate its PSSF funded Public Health Nurse Visiting Program this year. There is also a need in the County for additional in-home therapeutic services because so many families have several children, low incomes, and severe transportation problems.

Parents could also benefit from "life skills training" similar to classes offered to youth in the Independent Living Program (ILP). Training related to home maintenance, cooking, cleaning, job seeking skills, grocery shopping, time management, financial literacy, renter's rights, reading consumer contracts, negotiation skills, tax preparation, etc. if available in a comprehensive program, might be very effective in improving reunification. Currently there are no Life Skills Objectives for parents in the Reunification Case Plan which seems to be a major shortcoming. Related to that service gap is the lack of an in-home training and support programs in which parent aids could provide hands on teaching in home making and parenting skills, as well as increased levels of supervision for higher risk children such as those under the age of five.

There are a number of county-specific factors affecting reunification in various ways. One of those is the lack of affordable housing in the County. The waiting lists for Section 8 housing vouchers are generally full and clients may have to wait for two years to obtain such housing. The lack of an adequate public transportation system impacts families' abilities to obtain the services they need to stabilize and not return to DCS supervision. One County DCS office has no bus line located near it and many DCS clients do not have personal automobiles. Unemployment, the shorter timeframes of TAD (public assistance) availability, and the lack of affordable and available child care all seem to be affecting reunification efforts. The co-location of multiple client services into "one stop

shops” might make it easier for clients to obtain those services and positively affect reunification rates.

A number of programs and practices seem to be positively affecting reunification in San Bernardino County. The use of the Comprehensive Assessment Tool (CAT) to provide staff with a standard based on the minimum level of risk to safely return a child, acts to improve reunification and reduce re-entry. Additionally, several services have the potential to impact the relationship between the timelines by which children return home, and the rate at which children re-enter foster care are Dependency Drug Court, the Healthy Homes Program, Wraparound services, Family Group Decision Making, and Team Decision Making meetings described elsewhere in this report. Data from the last self-assessment indicated that children who re-entered foster care after reunification tended to have more serious physical, mental and behavioral conditions that made it more difficult for already fragile families to maintain reunification.

Improvements in outcomes related to reunification and re-entry may be due to best practices and programs which the county has enhanced or implemented during this assessment period. For example, the Family 2 Family model, including the use of Team Decision Making meetings, provides for a strength-based, collaborative approach in working with parents. DCS staff indicate that this approach facilitates early provision of services and relative identification, and serves to minimize the often initial distrustful, and sometimes hostile attitude of parents following removal of children. A partnership approach between social workers and parents is developed, in which case planning is done jointly, and support systems are more readily identified.

During this review period, the Juvenile Court Dependency Drug Court program was implemented county wide, following a successful pilot. Parents voluntarily enter the Drug Court program, and receive intensive case management and coordination of services for substance abuse treatment. This program has shown promise for impacting re-entry rates.

### **c) Permanency Composite 2**

#### **(1) Measure 1 (C2.1) - Adoption within 24 Months (exit cohort).**

This measure computes the percentage of children adopted within 24 months of removal. Only placement episodes ending in adoption are included. The baseline rate for this measure was 20.3% and the comparison rate for Q4 of 2007 was 32.2%. The County is clearly moving in the right direction on this measure.

#### **(2) Measure 2 (C2.2) – Median Time to Adoption (exit cohort)**

This measure computes the median length of stay (in months) for children discharged to adoption. Only placement episodes ending in adoption are included. The baseline time for this measure was 38.1 months (3.1 years) and

the comparison data for Q4 2007 was 30.3 months (2.5) years which is again clearly moving in the right direction.

**(3) Measure 3 (C2.3) – Adoption within 12 Months (17 Months in care)**

This measure computes the percentage of children in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer on the first day of the year, who were then adopted within 12 months. The baseline rate for this measure was 16.8% and the comparison measure in Q4 of 2007 was 18.5% and is movement in the right direction.

**(4) Measure 4 (C2.4) – Legally Free within 6 Months (17 months in care).**

This measure computes the percentage of children who were in foster care for 17 continuous months or longer and not legally free for adoption on the first day of the period, who then became legally free for adoption within the next 6 months. The baseline rate for this measure was 5.6% and the comparison data in Q4 of 2007 was 7.6% which indicates the County is moving in the right direction.

**(5) Measure 5 (C2.5) – Adopted within 12 Months (Legally Free)**

This measure computes the percentage of children discharged from foster care to adoption within 12 months of becoming legally free. The baseline rate for this measure was 48.9% and the comparison rate in Q4 of 2007 was 51.7% which indicates the County is moving in the right direction.

**Permanency Composite (2) Discussion**

The Department of Children’s Services (DCS) integrates permanency planning early in case plans and in the training of foster parents (PRIDE Program) to support permanency for children. In fact, adoption planning and/or services begin at intake through Concurrent Planning Reviews (CPRs). In compliance with AB 1544 and provisions of WIC 16501.1(f)(9)], San Bernardino County Department of Children’s Services (DCS) developed a Concurrent Planning Review (CPR) protocol for identifying and implementing a child’s concurrent plan. Policies and procedures for the protocol were published in October of 2000 and are a continuing DCS mandate. DCS supervision and management are conducting a review of CPR processes and procedures.

The CPR is a collaborative concurrent planning meeting between Child Protective Services and Adoptions social workers and supervisors held two weeks following the child’s Detention Hearing and continuing prior to each subsequent hearing, until such time as the child is returned home or parental rights are terminated. CPR meetings are intended to facilitate formulation of permanency planning, focusing on issues that may include, but are not limited to:

- Family composition
- Paternity

- Relative searches and assessments for foster care and/or permanent placement
- Likelihood of voluntary relinquishment
- Child's medical/educational background
- Child's special needs
- Child's response to current placement
- Prognosis for family reunification
- Permanency resource options available to the child
- Prognosis for adoption/guardianship
- Other placement resources
- Pre-adoption issues of attachment/identity
- Identification or modification of a concurrent plan

The role of the adoption social worker at the .26 Hearing (Termination of Parental Rights Hearing) is to report whether or not a child is "adoptable" and if appropriate, to recommend termination of parental rights. In the past, the court has been reluctant to terminate the parent's rights when a family had not been identified for that child and thus making that child a "Legal Orphan." However, due to Federal and State laws, there has been a philosophical shift in thinking that ensures that all children are regarded as adoptable. DCS is actively recruiting adoptive homes in its commitment to providing permanence for children and youth.

If a child cannot reunify with parents, adoption is the first goal, followed by guardianship, particularly with a relative. For those families who adopt, post adoptive services are available in the County through specialized social workers who work with families to access community resources to meet the needs of adopted children. Occasionally an adopted child will re-enter out of home placement to focus on severe behavioral difficulties. Out of home care for these children is supported by the Adoption Assistance Program and the goal of such care is returning the child to the adopted family.

Historically San Bernardino County DCS, like many other county CWS agencies in the state, has not referred older adolescents for adoption, viewing this population as not adoptable or resistant to termination of parental rights and preferring to maintain legal ties to birth families. Due to the Department's emphasis in the current System Improvement Plan (SIP) and PQCR on transitioning foster youth, social workers are adapting practice to help youth develop lifelong connections through programs such as Family Finding, Wraparound services, and Family 2 Family. Workers are exploring with the youth and care providers permanency options, and DCS is beginning to see an increase in adoption referrals for older teens. Social Workers are encouraged also to revisit reunification of older children with parents, who previously had their reunification services terminated.

As part of the current System Improvement Plan (SIP), the Department has been examining its practices aimed at reducing racial and ethnic disproportionality of children who are removed and placed into foster care. One of the populations of concern is Native American children. The Department is engaging in an effort to learn how to provide more culturally sensitive services to the Native American Tribes. Through participation in the CWDA/CDSS ICWA subcommittee, the county's Legislation and Research Unit (LRU) has been involved in a cooperative endeavor to pass legislation, AB1736 – Cook, to recognize tribal customary adoption as one legal option for permanency for dependent Indian children. This bill would create a 5th permanency option at the WIC 366.26 hearing for Indian children for whom the tribe has determined that a suitable tribal family will adopt under tribal customs. This form of adoption does not require termination of parental rights and is recognized by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) as eligible for Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) payments. Upon passage, the Department will work with local tribes to implement this new law to ensure Indian children have access to this additional permanency option. Unfortunately, AB 1736 was not chaptered into law this year however; the LRU will actively seek its enactment in 2009.

Adoptions workers are co-located in Child Protective Services (CPS) offices in this County in an effort to facilitate concurrent planning and increase permanency. DCS regional managers and supervisors have received training in adoption regulations, and in the role of the CPS and Concurrent Planning worker. DCS continues to evaluate its organizational structure in order to achieve a balance between integrating concurrent planning within its regions and maintaining the specialized knowledge and expertise of adoption practices required to effect successful and well matched placements. Certain specialized functions are assigned to a specific supervisor and manager, such as Home Studies, to increase the availability of adoptive homes for children.

**d) Permanency Composite 3**

**(1) Measure 1 (C3.1) – Exits to Permanency (24 Months in Care).**

This measure computes the percentage for children discharged to a permanent home by the last day of the year and prior to turning 18, who had been in foster care for 24 months or longer. Baseline data for this measure indicate that 25.0% of foster youth are exiting to permanency (adoption, reunification, guardianship) who have been in care 24 months or longer. This compares with a rate of 23.1% in Q4 of 2007 and indicates the County is not moving in the right direction although the two figures close enough to indicate almost no change.

**(2) Measure 2 (C3.2) – Exits to Permanency (Legally Free at Exit).**

This measure computes the percentage of legally free children who were discharged to a permanent home prior to turning 18. Baseline data for this measure indicated 98.3% children were legally freed (termination of parental rights hearings) exited to permanency (adoption, guardianship, or reunification)

before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. This compares in Q4 of 2007 with a rate of 98.5% which indicates this measure is stable.

**(3) Measure 3 (C3.3) – In Care 3 Years or Longer (Emancipated/Age 18).**

This measure computes the percentage of children in foster care for 3 years or longer who were then either discharged to emancipation or turned 18 while still in foster care. The baseline rate for this measure was 58.3% and the comparison rate for Q4 of 2007 is 59.8%. The County is not moving in the right direction on this measure.

**Permanency Composite (3) Discussion**

The Department of Children's Services (DCS) administers transitional housing programs to promote attainment of self-sufficiency for foster and probation youth transitioning out of care. The Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) provides for a monitored, semi-independent living arrangement for youth in care, ages 16-18 years. In the last two years, DCS initiated a Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP+) to provide housing, financial assistance and support services to transitioning youth, ages 18 to 24 years. This program currently has 35 youth enrolled.

In March, 2006 the Quality Services Support (QSS) unit of the Human Services Legislation and Research Division completed a structured case read of 268 DCS foster youth over the age of 16 (a statistically valid random sample of that population) to determine the existence of and completion of the Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) and the eligible youth's participation in ILP activities. Only 20% of the cases had a fully completed TILP and TILPs were rarely updated at the 6 month intervals as is required. The complexity and length of the TILP seemed a barrier to its utility. In addition, the case review showed that of all eligible youth, 55% were not participating in any ILP activity. The results of this case read provided data that previously was unknown to the county due to the deficits inherent in the SOC405A annual report, which never tracked the percent of eligible youth's participation. As a result of these findings, the county was motivated to revamp the ILP program to increase participation and engage youth in activities meaningful to them.

The County realized from the case reviews that the TILP was not a youth-friendly document neither valued by the youth nor the social worker. As a result, the County actively joined the CWDA/CDSS workgroup tasked with designing a youth-friendly, streamlined TILP. This two page TILP, implemented in July 2008, supports a youth-directed emancipation case plan, using short term achievable goals based on the youth's identified needs. This TILP is used in case planning with the youth's care provider to ensure the youth are able to practice life skills in the home environment. ILP delivered services are assessed by the social worker and entered into CWS/CMS for tracking progress and accountability to court. The

County anticipates that use of this revised TILP will increase participation in ILP and ensure that individualized services are provided based on youth's needs.

In order to improve TILP services, the County developed several new initiatives to ensure youth are involved in policy and practice decision-making and have a voice heard by the County. These initiatives included: the formation of a Youth Advisory Board composed of current and former foster youth who attend monthly ILP Taskforce meetings with social workers and probation officers; the creation and support of a California Youth Connection Chapter; the hiring of peer partners (former foster youth) as county employees to increase outreach and engagement; and the sponsoring of two countywide Foster Youth Summits. The County is also incorporating the Team Decision Making (TDM) strategies and concepts into the planning process for helping youth emancipate from the system.

Recently, as part of an effort to increase awareness and participation in San Bernardino County's Independent Living Program (ILP), a telephone survey of youth in out-of-home placements (e.g., relative/NFREM, county-licensed foster family home, foster family agency certified home, small family home, or group home) was conducted to identify the following: rate of participation in ILP activities; barriers to participation in ILP activities; employment status; educational settings and needs (e.g., tutoring); interest in learning life skills; preparedness for living on their own; and plans for life after foster care. Two hundred thirteen youth completed the survey from a group of about 550 youth who, at the time, were in an out-of-home placement and were 16 to 19 years of age. The Legislation and Research Unit will be analyzing the data from the survey and reporting results.

In attempting to better understand how well the county was performing in preparing foster youth to transition to adulthood, the County wanted better data on foster youth at the point they age out of care. The current SOC405A annual report tracked outcomes for a subset of all eligible foster youth, only those who participated in ILP services for a portion of the report year. The County participated in a CWDA/CDSS workgroup to design a new statewide reporting system to track the status of aging out foster youth at the point of exit in 5 life domains: education, employment/source of other income, housing, access to health care and permanency connection to a supportive adult. The county piloted a draft report with 5 other counties in the summer of 2006 and joined in the recommendation that CDSS adopt this reporting mechanism in lieu of the flawed SOC405A report. The County continued to collect these data throughout calendar year 2007 while participating in the CWDA/CDSS workgroup to finalize and deploy the report to all counties. It is this annualized data that the county uses to track improvement in preparing transitioning youth for adulthood, in anticipation of its replacement of the flawed 8A data in future quarterly reports. Collection of individual youth outcomes in these 5 domains is a manual process, as CWS/CMS does not support this tracking. The emancipation checklist, used

by the social worker to prepare the WIC391 Termination of Jurisdiction court report, has been updated to include all the data fields for the Exit Outcome report. The county uses the Quality Support Services (QSS) unit to collect and tabulate the data, which is reported to the management team quarterly. While the 2007 results are viewed as baseline information, such tracking has helped the county measure its progress in increasing high school completion.

San Bernardino County is in the process of obtaining the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I) Efforts to Outcome (ETO) database which will allow the county to properly track the number of youth eligible for ILP services and the number of youth actually receiving ILP services. In addition, the county will be able to better track their ILP efforts and classes; and assess the child's emancipation readiness based on the assessment tools available on the new database. The new database will allow the county to better assess the ILP program.

The County assists transitioning foster youth to develop personal , supportive relationships by locating absent family members (Family Finding), facilitating relationships by placing youth with siblings whenever possible, and using mentoring programs such as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and the Adolescent Specialized Unit (ASU) which is described elsewhere.

The **Probation Department** also assists youth transitioning into adulthood. Recently, the Probation Aftercare Unit merged with the Placement Unit with the goal of allowing one Probation Officer to supervise a youth beginning with placement and continuing through the aftercare process thereby increasing stabilization of supervision, family reunification, and appropriate resource referrals. Placement Officers monitor youth ordered to placement by the court and work closely with group homes, county facilities and more structured placement facilities both within and outside the state to insure that youth are receiving needed services to enable a successful transition back into the community.

The average number of youth maintained in court-ordered out-of-home placement was 260 per month this year, down from 289 youth per month for the previous year. Approximately one quarter of those are detained monthly in the Department's three Juvenile Detention and Assessment Centers pending suitable out of home placement.

The Probation Department Placement Unit has become an integral part in making referrals and supervising the Wraparound program, and the individual placement group homes. A major goal for 2008 continues to be utilization of better mental health programs and services for placement youth. The mission of Aftercare is to assist in the successful transition of post placement youth as they return to the community. Once youth are able to establish and maintain a stable pattern of responsible behavior in the community, their cases are referred to the Court for discharge from Probation supervision. The average period for Aftercare

supervision ranges from three to six months. Probation Officer contacts during this period may include the youth's parents, local schools, and community resource providers.

The Aftercare Unit also works with the Independent Living Program which is a valuable resource assisting youth to acquire basic life skills and encourage career exploration and job preparation. The Aftercare Unit managed 362 new referrals of youth last year, who were located throughout the county. Of the 264 youth who were dismissed and discharged from Probation supervision, 204 (77%) were considered successful terminations, whereas 60 (22%) were considered unsuccessful.

**e) Permanency Composite 4**

**(1) Measure 1 (C4.1) – Placement Stability (8 days to 12 months in care)**

This measure computes the percentage of children with two or fewer placements who have been in foster care for 8 days or more, but less than 12 months. The baseline data for this measure indicated that 79.3% of all children in care between 8 days and 12 months had only 1 or 2 foster care placements as compared to Q4 in 2007 when 85.1% of children had only 1 or 2 foster care placements. The County is moving in the right direction on this measure.

**(2) Measure 2 (C4.2) – Placement Stability (12 to 24 months in care)**

This measure computes the percentage of children with two or fewer placements who have been in foster care for at least 12 months, but less than 24 months. Baseline data indicate that 58.6% of all children in care from 12-24 months had only one to two placements as compared with Q4 of 2007 in which 62.1% of children in care had only 1 or 2 placements. The County is moving in the right direction on this measure.

**(3) Measure 3 (C4.3) – Placement Stability (at least 24 months in care)**

This measure computes the percentage of children with two or fewer placements who have been in foster care for 24 months or more. The baseline rate for this measure indicated that 43.6% of youth in care for 24 month or longer had only 1 or 2 foster placements while in Q4 of 2007 only 32.2% of children in care had 1 or 2 foster placements. The county is not moving in the right direction on this measure.

Discussion in the Quality Assurance Workgroup around this measure centered on being a difficult one because it is hard to find some children appropriate placements immediately due to psychological, emotional, and/or behavioral issues often not yet understood or documented in the early stages of placement. Children and youth who have been in foster care 24 months or longer may have more serious psychosocial needs than others. Additionally, multiple placements while these youth are being fully assessed can sometimes be viewed as serious and thoughtful attempts to meet their needs. Another difficulty with the measure

is that once a youth has more than two placements there is no way to improve on this outcome even though the most recent placement (after the initial two) may have been very lengthy and contributed to stability for that youth.

**f) Process Measure**

**(1) 8A – Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood**

During 2007 San Bernardino County volunteered to pilot a new Exit Outcomes Data Collection tool on children transitioning into self sufficient adulthood; and participated in a CWDA/CDSS workgroup to develop and finalize the state report format and instructions. Data is still being collected on this measure even though the pilot has ended, and this unduplicated data provides a more complete picture for children transitioning into self sufficient adulthood than data derived only from those who participated in ILP services. The county regards this data as a baseline which will allow DCS to focus on improving high school completion, employment, stable housing, and permanent connections for foster youth. The County has begun the process of conversion to the official State data collection system on this measure.

In calendar year 2007, 183 youth legally aged out from care in the County. Of the 183 youth who aged out, 30 (16%) could not be located for the outcome information. Of the 153 youth for which data was available, 59% completed high school or equivalency, 44% were employed, 92% exited with health insurance and 61% reported that they had a permanent connection to at least one adult.

Data for the first half of calendar year 2008 indicates that 73 youth legally aged out from care from the period beginning in January and ending in May. Of the 73 youth who aged out, 15 (21%) could not be located for the outcome data. Of the 58 youth for which this data was collected, 41% had completed high school or equivalency, 41% completed high school or equivalency, 34% were employed, 91% reported having some form of medical insurance (41% Medi-Cal and 50% extended Medi-Cal), and 67% reported they had a permanent connection to at least one adult that they could go to for support. More than half of these youth (64%) reported that they planned to live rent free with a relative or other person, 14% reported they planned to rent their own housing or share rent, and only 5% planned to live in supportive transitional housing.

**4. Permanency 2 – The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.**

**a) Process Measures**

**(1) 4A – All Siblings Placed Together in Foster Care**

These reports provide point-in-time counts of sibling groups placed in Child Welfare supervised foster care. Report data are for children placed with all siblings. Baseline data for this measure indicated that 49.9% of foster children in the county are placed with *all* of their siblings compared to Q4 in 2007 when 55.3% of children had been placed with *all* of their siblings. This is, once again, movement in the right direction.

Baseline data for **siblings placed with some of their siblings** indicates that 73.5% of all foster children were placed with some of their siblings while data from Q4 of 2007 indicates that 75.4% of all foster children were placed with some of their siblings which is movement in the right direction.

**(2) 4B – Foster Care Placement in Least Restrictive Setting**

This measure looks at first entries into foster care and asks what percentage of children were placed in the lowest levels of care. Table (3) compares the baseline figures with Q4 of 2007 on this measure.

**Table (3)  
Foster Care Placement in Least Restrictive Setting**

<b>Foster Placement</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Q4 2007</b>
Relative	13.8%	20.4%
Foster Home	37.3%	12.7%
FFA	36.3%	56.2%
Group/Shelter	3.3%	3.3%
Other	9.3%	7.3%

Table (3) indicates the County is moving in the right direction.

A “point-in-time” comparison in terms of the percentage of all foster children who are placed in the lowest level of care yields very similar results as is indicated in Table (4) below.

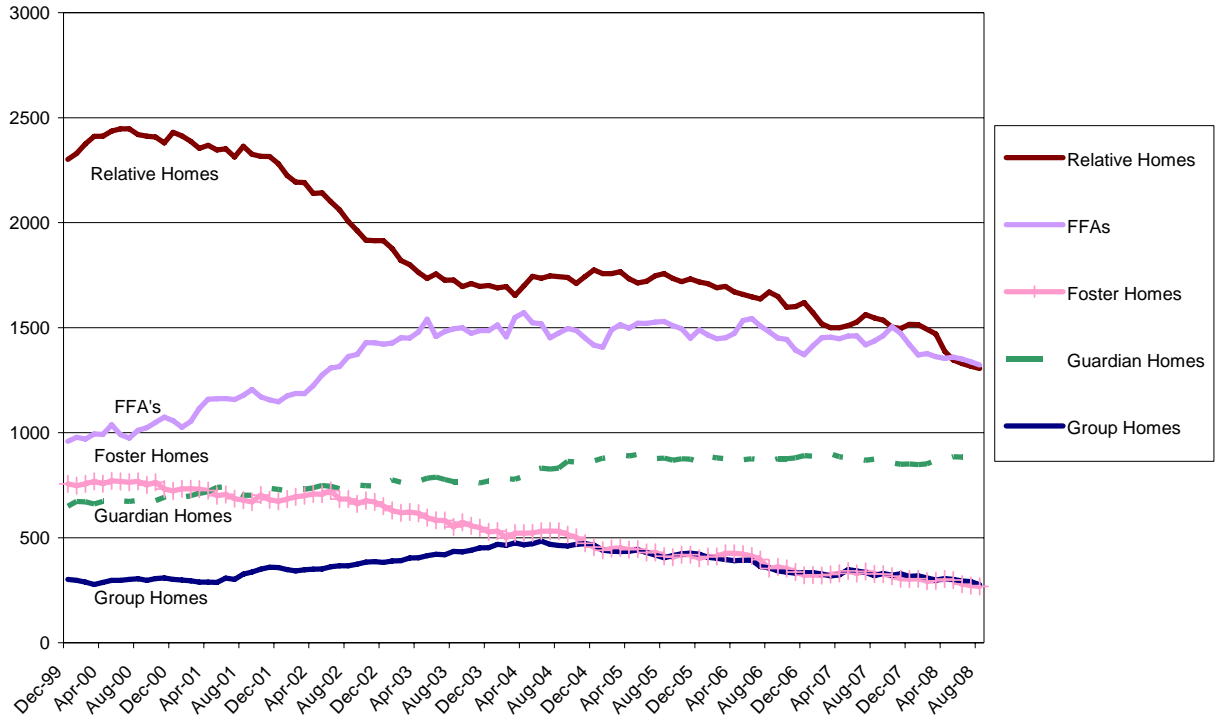
**Table (4)  
Point-in-Time Comparison**

<b>Foster Placement</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Q4 2007</b>
Relative	32.2%	32.5%
Foster Home	10.5%	6.7%
FFA	27.1%	30.0%
Group/Shelter	8.8%	7.3%
Other	21.4%	23.4%

However, as can be seen in Table (5), there has been a dramatic shift in the use of relative placements in the last eight years. The drop in the number of children placed with relatives is directly related to the increased complexity of new Federal and State relative approval requirements. The use of county licensed foster homes has also declined over time and now equals the declining number of children placed in group homes. Additionally, the use of Family Foster Agencies (FFAs) has increased over time, due to the FFA’s willingness to accept sibling groups and their ability to offer more services to higher level or special needs children.

**Table (5)**

**Children's Services: Out of Home Placements by Placement Type from Dec 1999 to Aug 2008**



**(3) 4E – Rate of ICWA Placement Preferences**

A point in time comparison of all ICWA eligible foster children who are placed in ICWA placements can be seen below in Table (6).

**Table (6)  
Rate of ICWA Placement Preferences**

<b>ICWA Eligible Foster Placement</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Q4 2007</b>
Relative	46.3%	55.8%
Non-Relative Indian Foster Home	7.3%	0.0%
Non-Relative Non-Indian Foster Home	39.0%	28.8%
Non-Relative – Missing SCP Ethnicity	0.0%	5.8%
Group Home	4.9%	7.7%
Other	2.4%	1.9%

Native American/Alaskan Native children are a very small percentage of the total child population in San Bernardino County and are an even smaller number of the Department's foster children. However, due to fairness and equity issues, all Native American/Alaskan Native children may be disproportionately represented in foster care. It is important to track this population to ensure that those eligible are identified for ICWA status.

Another measure is related to **Multi-Ethnic Eligible Placements** and examines in terms of point in time the percent of all multi-ethnic Native American foster children placed in a Native American/Alaska Native placement. The figures are presented below in Table (7).

**Table (7)**  
**Multi-Ethnic Foster Placement**

<b>Multi-Ethnic Foster Placement</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Q4 2007</b>
Relative	43.1%	34.3%
Non-Relative Indian Foster Home	3.4%	0.0%
Non-Relative Non-Indian Foster Home	44.0%	48.6%
Non-Relative – Missing SCP Ethnicity	2.6%	7.9%
Group Home	6.0%	5.0%
Other	0.9%	4.3%

### **Permanency (2) Discussion**

DCS and Probation both strive to place children in their own homes and if that is not possible to find placements with relatives, Non-Relative Extended Family Members (NREFM's), or as near to parents as possible, depending on the needs of the children.

The County's initial placement practices consider the special needs of children with complex mental health or behavioral needs in several different ways. Two of those are the Integrated New Family Opportunities (INFO) program and the Healthy Homes program (described elsewhere). The INFO Program was developed by the San Bernardino County Probation Department and Department of Behavioral Health to identify youth with mental health issues. Services are provided for youth and their families/ guardians to enhance their opportunities for success while on probation. Youth and their families are supported by a team of professionals from probation and DBH. The INFO team members that provide FFT (Functional Family Therapy) consist of Probation Officers, Social Workers, Alcohol and Drug Counselors, and a Peer And Family Advocate.

There are many appropriate placements available for the children under the care of DCS and Probation, however special needs children can be difficult to place at times. As mentioned elsewhere, there is a clear need for additional inpatient and residential detoxification and substance abuse treatment facilities for youth. DCS has been using the Team Decision Making (TDM) process for placements moves; however because the Family 2 Family initiative has not yet been implemented evenly across the county, the use of TDMs for placement moves is unevenly distributed.

DCS uses a Central Placement Unit (CPU) to match foster families with children based on the children's needs and provider capacity. The unit is centralized and is part of the Placement Resources Division of DCS. It consists of 2 Clerks, 5

Social Worker IIs and 1 Master's Level Social Services Practitioner. Its main function is to provide placement support for the region social workers and maintain records while keeping track of all placement resources available to the department. Once requests for placement are assigned, CPU workers start a search by reviewing the child's placement history, behavioral history, and reason for change in placement. They then search the CPU Share Files for all vacancy reports posted for County Licensed Homes, Foster Family Agency Homes, and Group Homes in an effort to best meet the workers request by matching the child/children to the best foster care placement option available.

There are some County specific issues affecting the length of stay of children in foster care. DCS data shows that an area of concern is for children who remain in long term foster care 3 years and longer. A major barrier to connecting older youth to permanency is that social worker caseloads of youth in planned permanent living arrangements (long term foster care) tend to be very high. This impacts the ability of the social worker to provide concentrated efforts towards revisiting reunification, and/or exploring adoption or guardianship options. Recognizing that high caseloads are a significant barrier to employing best practices toward achieving permanency for older youth, the county has piloted a reduced caseload project in one region, the Adolescent Services Unit (ASU), with a ratio of 15 cases to one social worker. The goal of the ASU is to stabilize and reduce frequent placement moves of high-risk adolescents, and through building a relationship of trust with a consistent social worker, assist the youth to find and maintain a lifelong connection with a supportive adult. Evaluation of this project has shown that this reduced workload is necessary to promote relationship building with the social worker and to perform the work necessary to achieve goals of placement stability, permanency and life long connections. DCS is in the planning stages of expanding the ASU unit to accommodate foster youth from each region.

There is a relationship between available placement resources and the length of stay of children in foster care. County data show that while approximately 7% of all placements are with group homes, that group home youth are most likely to experience frequent placement moves and episodes of running away from placement. In particular, the County has identified a small group of children who experience serious emotional disabilities and move in between psychiatric hospitals and RCL 14 group homes and for whom we currently do not have treatment interventions and case outcomes that result in stabilization, reconnection with family and community, and permanency for these children. The County applied for and was accepted as an AB1453 Residential Based Services (RBS) pilot county in order to serve this very high-risk population. Partnering with Probation and Department of Behavioral Health, DCS is engaged in program design with a targeted implementation of January 2009.

The use of relative and county licensed foster home placements has been decreasing in the County since 2002 due to legislative changes regarding relative

placements (they must be approved using licensed foster care standards) and the shortage of foster homes in the County. Additionally, the Adam Walsh Act has created Federal exemption standards that will not allow for placement with relatives for convictions that previously were exemptible. Ultimately this will result in increased change of placement (COP) data. There was a 40% decrease of Relative Placements from Jan 2002 (2,224 youth) to Jun 2008 (1,330 youth). There was also a 59% decrease of foster home placements between Jan 2002 (684 youth) and Jun 2008 (278 youth). The use of FFA homes has increased dramatically from 2002 onward with a 14.8% increase in FFA placements from Jan 2002 (1,175 youth) to Jun 2008 (1,350 youth).

Recently there has been a change in focus to use our group homes as temporary systems of care within integrated treatment services. This model will alter the cultural and historical perceptions of placement in group homes as a step-up process, to a step- down/step-out process. This change in how group home usage is conceptualized will, hopefully, have some major fiscal impacts as group homes are increasingly seen as treatment facilities and not as permanent placements. This change will also decrease the need for new group home facilities, a decrease in the overall group home usage, and an increase in group home closures for those organizations that do not change their service models to fit the county's needs.

Continual efforts are made by the county to achieve permanency for children in long term foster care. The incorporation of Concurrent Planning Reviews (CPR) for foster children introduced the necessity to revisit permanency alternatives for children, (especially the older youth) to DCS workers. Prior to the CPR mandate, social workers and supervision were not routinely exploring other permanency alternatives for children in long term foster care. The alternatives to long term foster care are adoption, legal guardianship and return to parent. Previously, these alternatives were not always addressed, connections with important persons were left up to the discretion of the social workers, or the possibility of more stable and permanent living arrangements were not considered or not seen as appropriate. The assumption was that the children who were ordered by the Court as permanently placed required no changes in placement. The alternative to return children to their parents was considered only when the child's behaviors were out of control and challenging and the placement options were scarce. CPRs provide the opportunity to consider and implement more stable permanency options for children on a consistent basis.

Another strategy for helping children achieve permanent relationships is to revisit reunification with their parents years after their original placements. DCS efforts in that area include: the expansion of the Adolescent Specialized Services unit to incorporate Family Finding and youth permanency services; the implementation of youth Team Decision Making meetings any time there is a change in placement; recognizing and training staff to intervene effectively in youth placement disruption (for example, when children reach puberty, guardians may

need more supportive services that might be offered at a TDM if guardian is asking for removal); and ensuring that CPR's have standing discussion items addressing Family Finding and Life Long Connections. One additional strategy has been to revise the court report to include a section on permanent connections that directs a social worker to consider revisiting reunification with parents at least every six months. A Promising Practice, still in the planning stages by DCS with technical assistance from the Stuart Foundation is the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP). This project focuses on permanency for older children and youth so that no youth leaves foster care without a lifelong connection to a caring adult.

#### **5. Well-Being 1 – Families have an enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs (PSSF)**

The following discussion on **Well Being** is largely descriptive and without outcome data comparisons because interested Federal, State, and County Child Welfare professionals have yet to develop a complete set of measures similar to the ones already presented.

Through PSSF/CAPIT the County funds 16 community based providers who offer services such as domestic violence counseling, anger management, parenting classes, general individual, marital, and family counseling, group counseling, kinship support services, hard goods, Parent Child Interactive Therapy (PCIT), etc.

Prospective adoptive/foster parents in San Bernardino County attend Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) classes based on a curriculum developed by the Child Welfare League of America. The adoption/foster parent social worker assesses applicants monthly and there are foster parent mentoring groups offered in the County by the foster parent associations. The County uses Special Care Increments (SCI) to support foster parents in a variety of ways. Foster parents are often invited to participate in Team Decision Making meetings especially regarding placement changes.

When youth are placed in Juvenile Hall, families are routinely invited to be a part of the case planning process and to join in Multi-Disciplinary Meetings regarding youth needs and progress.

#### **6. Well-being 2 – Children receive services appropriate to their educational needs.**

The Department of Children's Services uses 6 in-house Educational Liaisons to help youth 16 years of age and older graduate from high school or receive a GED. The Liaisons obtain and examine educational records and assist youth and school districts in becoming aware of what credits are needed for graduation. They input data into the Health and Education Passports (HEP), as do public health nurses who also work with the dependent youth in this County. One

County region (the “desert” region) hired a clerk who has sole responsibility for inputting data into health and education passports.

The Educational Liaisons also record the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) results on math and English into the CWS/CMS system and provide struggling youth with referrals for tutoring services available within the community. They also work collaboratively with the Foster Youth Services program that is part of the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Office.

The County Superintendent of Schools Foster Youth Services Division and the Department of Children’s Services (DCS) are working jointly on the use of an on-line database called *Foster Focus* which will allow schools across the State to share educational data for foster youth in California. This project is an effort to address AB 490 requirements related to immediate enrollment and transfer of records. DCS will have access to school records for its foster children placed within the State.

The Probation Department has an onsite school for youth who are in Juvenile Hall and they attend school every day. Probation Officers and Juvenile Hall staff refer youth to Individualized Education Program (IEP) evaluation and testing and work with school staff to see that IEP requirements are met.

When youth are out of the home, but not in Juvenile Hall, Probation Officers work cooperatively with parents to enroll their children in school. They work with parents of expelled youth to enroll them in community schools or other non-public schools. Probation Officers also work directly with school staff in an on-going effort to determine appropriate education paths for the youth in their care. Probation partners with County Schools to provide the Galaxy School, co-located at Probation’s Youth Justice Center, for youth who are having difficulty with attendance or behavior in normal classes.

**7. Well Being 3 – Children receive services adequate to their physical, emotional, and mental health needs.**

DCS has Public Health Nurses (PHNs) who monitor the physical and dental assessments and treatments of children in care and enter related data into the Health and Education Passports of the children. Data entry begins with information received at the detention hearing and from interviews with the parents. These nurses receive all DCS medical and dental documentation related to children in the care of the Department.

In addition, the PHNs follow up to insure that youth who have been referred to assessment and/or treatment receive those services in a timely manner. They track recurrent medical and dental visits in an effort to determine when children need to be referred to a specialist. They also follow up on the Special Health Care Foster children, provide home assessments, and hands on training for

foster parents when children and youth are discharged from a hospital. PHNs conduct monthly visits with all children who are taking psychotropic medication, monitor the use of the medication, train care providers how to administer medications, and educate the youth themselves about the medications they are taking.

The PHNs also attend foster care related workshops such as “Independent City,” the Emancipation Picnic, Foster Youth Sports Day, and Health Fairs in an effort to help youth understand how to obtain medical help, enroll in health care plans, and understand their own Health and Education Passports. Other important activities of the PHNs include:

- Searching the Public Health Database for Immunization records
- Participating in Team Decision Making meetings to provide health care information
- Participating in adoptions meetings to address health care concerns
- Attending concurrent planning and Daily Assessment, Review and Evaluation meetings
- Accompanying social workers conducting emergency response investigations
- Accompanying law enforcement on drug lab investigations to assess health risks to youth
- Collaborating with Probation staff on the health concerns of youth
- Providing the Health and Education Passport to care providers and birth parents
- Arranging substance abuse testing for birth parents
- Conducting developmental and bonding assessments of foster children

The Department of Children’s Services (DCS) collaborated with other County agencies and many community partners to plan and conduct the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual **Foster and Kinship Youth Sports Faire**, held in June 2008 on the campus of a public high school. This event was open to youth, ages 11-18, living in foster care or kinship care. The goal of this event was to address the current and future well-being of transitional youth by making them more aware of the importance of exercise, nutrition and a healthy lifestyle.

Youth participated in one sport clinic of their choice, in which they learned the basic fundamentals of a sport. Clinics were offered in basketball, football, dance and cheer, baseball, softball, and soccer. Each clinic also offered mentoring by local college and university athletes and a few professional athletes. The head coaches for these clinics are DCS social workers. Local high school and college coaches were also on hand to help emphasize the importance of staying in school and choosing positive peers.

Public Health Nurses and Health Educators offered information on nutrition and healthy eating. Community Partners informed youth how to connect to and access resources now and when they become adults. Volunteers and Sponsors offered healthy snacks, sports drinks, water, information on the importance of proper hydration, and a delicious lunch. Other sponsors provided shoes, balls, sports bags and other sports gear for the youth so that they could continue to practice what they had learned.

The youth freely expressed their appreciation for the approximately 50 DCS employees and over 100 volunteers who donated their time and shared their talents on the Saturday of the sports faire. Local newspapers and radio stations showcased this outstanding event.

On March 15, 2008 The County of San Bernardino Children's Policy Council, in collaboration with foster youth, care providers, juvenile courts, County Departments, Education and Community Partners participated in the second **Foster Care Summit** titled, "Connecting Foster Youth, Step by Step." The Summit was a presentation on the progress of improvement efforts being made and to make further recommendations. Discussion groups were held on topics such as children's transitions between pre-kindergarten and graduation, the involvement of youth in decision making processes, and building lifelong connections with follow-up assistance. The Summit was part of an on-going effort to improve the foster care system and will continue to be held as progress is made.

DCS assesses and provides for the mental health needs of the youth in its care through a number of policies, practices, and programs. There is an active perinatal drug treatment program in the County. DCS has been a prime collaborative member of the SART (Screening, Assessment, Referral, and Treatment Program) which assesses the physical, educational, and mental health needs of children 0-5 and provides evidence based, age appropriate treatment and specialized referrals. All children in out-of-home placement receive a Healthy Homes screening by Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) therapists and are referred to appropriate community agencies as needed. Social workers conduct early psychosocial assessments of children and refer them and/or their families for therapy. The Legislation and Research Unit facilitated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Behavioral Health for sharing data regarding Healthy Homes assessments, to monitor and track which children receive mental health services based on the assessment.

Social workers address the mental health needs of the children in their care every six months in their court reports. Children who are on psychotropic medications have the need for and appropriateness of those medications reviewed every six months. Wraparound services are provided for those children who need them and children who do not qualify for Medi-Cal are referred to the

“Success First” or “Early Wraparound” program. The DBH Children’s Crisis Response Team (CCRT) is available 24 hours a day and often accompanies law enforcement on “5150” or emergency psychiatric evaluations. The CCRT is also available to foster parents in the County to help them with psychiatric emergencies with foster children. The DBH Transitional Assistance for Youth (TAY) program offers a variety of educational, counseling, employment, and supportive services for youth ages 16-25.

**The Probation Department** utilizes COMPAS, a comprehensive risk and needs assessment tool that provides information regarding the level of supervision needed for the youth in the community, based on a youths’ risk to the community and needs which have a direct relationship to continued delinquency. This tool evaluates risk of recidivism. The youth also self report on their attitudes, behavior, living situations, sexual behavior, and a variety of other issues.

When youth are in Juvenile Hall, they can be referred to the FAST program which is a joint effort of Probation and Department of Behavioral Health, and provides for mental health assessment and treatment. When youth are returned home, a transitional case plan including physical health and mental health services is established and followed up on by Probation Officers. The Probation Department also makes use of the INFO program, which is grant funded, and provides mental health and educational services to youth in their homes.

## **G. Public Agency Characteristics**

### **1. Size and structure of agencies**

The **San Bernardino County Department of Children’s Services** consists of 1 Director (DeAnna Avey-Motikeit), 6 Deputy Directors, 13 Child Welfare Services Managers (CWSMs), 73 Supervising Social Service Practitioners (SSSPs), 323 Social Services Practitioners (SSPs-masters level or comparable), and 94 Social Worker IIs (BA or BSW level Social Workers).

The **San Bernardino County Probation Department** is charged with supervising and providing services to youth under the age of 18 who have been adjudicated Wards of the Juvenile Court, pursuant to WIC 602. The Chief Probation Officer of San Bernardino County is Jerry Harper. The Juvenile Placement Unit consists of 1 Director II, 1 Director I, 3 Supervisors, 3 Probation Officer III’s and 25 Probation Officers.

#### **a) County operated shelter**

San Bernardino County does not operate an emergency placement shelter. The County works with a system of County-licensed foster homes, called “Shelter Care Homes,” that have contracted with the County to provide specialized care for children on a 24-hour emergency basis. Shelter care homes are designed to provide shelter for youth on a short-term basis. The goal is to move children out

of shelter care within thirty (30) days. Shelter care parents are highly competent and enable the stabilization and evaluation of children in their care so that a proper, permanent concurrent planning placement is possible after the child leaves shelter care. However, with an increased focus on best practices, such as relative approval, including Emergency Response Relative Assessment Social Workers, Team Decision Making, and use of a centralized placement unit, shelter care is infrequently utilized.

The San Bernardino County Probation Department operates three Juvenile Detention and Assessment Centers. Central Juvenile Detention and Assessment Center (CVJDAC), is located in San Bernardino with a bed capacity of 288, while the West Valley Juvenile Detention and Assessment Center (WVJDAC), located in Rancho Cucamonga, currently has a capacity for 182 youth. The High Desert Juvenile Detention and Assessment Center (HDJDAC), located in Apple Valley, has a 182 bed capacity (currently operating at a budgeted level of 140). At the present time, the CVJDAC is scheduled to undergo renovation and new construction. This project is scheduled to begin January 2009 and to be completed within 30 months. The facility capacity will drop to 148 while construction is underway and the High Desert facility population will increase to 182. Each facility is subject to numerous statutory regulations for operations and programs.

The Probation Department is required to house juveniles in a secure, safe and humane environment. Juveniles are detained for court hearings or under court orders in order to effect a return home; for suitable placement; for commitment to the Division of Juvenile Justice formerly known as California Youth Authority; for trial disposition in adult/juvenile court; and for commitment to state prison via delivery to the Division of Juvenile Justice. In the last five years, the housed juvenile population has become almost entirely felons with violent booking offenses and/or violent backgrounds. Off-site medical needs of youth are met at the Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton. Detention serves as an opportunity to closely assess juveniles, which can lead to a better evaluation of the juvenile and development of an appropriate plan of action. While in detention, each youth is actively involved in educational and exercise programs. From this population, selected medium-risk and well-behaved youth are offered additional experience in on-grounds vocational programs directed towards developing horticultural, landscaping and basic general maintenance skills.

The Gateway Program serves as a county alternative to youth who were previously committed to the DJJ/CYA state facilities. These youth have been committed to the Gateway Program as 707(a) offenders, require a higher level of care and supervision, and have failed in all other placement facilities.

## **b) County licensing**

The County of San Bernardino has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Community Care Licensing (a division of the California Department of Social Services) to license foster homes in this county. Foster Home Services (FHS) is a unit within the Placement Resources Division of the Department of Children's Services. The FHS staff is responsible for the following mandatory tasks:

- Process applications for licensure
- Conduct periodic evaluations including annual on-site visits
- Conduct complaint and abuse investigations
- Maintain a complaint log which is available for review by regional offices
- Conduct a case assessment and initiate appropriate course of action when
  - a complaint is substantiated
  - the foster home chronically fails to meet licensing requirements, or
  - when the licensee is found non-compliant
- Perform legal and administrative remedies
- Report data required for State and local data systems

## **c) County adoptions**

San Bernardino County Adoptions Service (CAS) is licensed under the State Community Care Licensing Division, in accordance with regulations set forth under Title 22, Division 6 Chapter 9. Currently, the CAS provides "agency" adoption services including birth parent counseling and relinquishment services and services to families wishing to adopt court dependent children whose parents' parental rights have been legally terminated. The CAS works closely with the county's Child Protective Services division in identifying a permanent plan for court dependent children prior to termination of a parent's parental rights and assumes full case responsibility for the child after termination of parental rights.

Pursuant to requirements under Title 22, Division 2 Chapter 3, the CAS provides the following agency adoption services:

- Relinquishment and consent procedures
- Adoptability assessments prior to termination of parental rights
- Recruitment of adoptive applicants
- Information dissemination and implementation of Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) benefits
- Step-parent Adoptions
- Group support and educational classes
- Photo-listing of children who have been legally freed for adoption

- Adoptive applicant advisements, assessments and home studies
- Adoptive placement and placement assessment
- Facilitation of needed services to the child prior to adoption finalization
- Adoption finalization assistance
- Provision of all agency required court reports and documentation
- Post-adoptive support services

## **2. County Government Structure**

The Department of Children’s Services in San Bernardino County is one the seven Departments that make up Human Services. The other six are Aging and Adult Services, Child Support Services, Children’s Network, Preschool Services, Transitional Assistance, and Veterans Affairs. The Children’s Services Director reports to the Assistant County Administrator for Human Services who reports to the County Administrative Officer.

The Probation Department is part of the Law and Justice Group in the County which includes the District Attorney, Public Defender and Sheriff – Coroner.

### **a) Community Driven- Multidisciplinary Body**

**The Children’s Policy Council**, established in 1986 by the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, is San Bernardino County’s official Child Abuse Prevention Council and is an integral part of the Children’s Network. The Council meets monthly and provides direction for the County’s child abuse prevention efforts and the PSSF/CAPIT planning process. Program planning for CAPIT (Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment) and PSSF (Promoting Safe and Stable Families) has proceeded in a joint and coordinated manner since approximately January 2005 in anticipation of the Office of Child Abuse Prevention’s (OCAP) move in that direction.

The Policy Council consists of department heads from those County agencies that provide services to children and other agencies concerned with children’s issues. Representative agencies and individuals include, but are not limited to, the Department of Children’s Services, Department of Behavioral Health, Department of Public Health, First 5 San Bernardino, Probation Department, District Attorney, Preschool Services Department, Sheriff’s Department, Superintendent of County Schools, Children’s Fund, and a member of the Board of Supervisors. Representatives from Community Based Organizations and the general public are also invited and frequently participate in planning discussions. The Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court is a member of and chairs the monthly meetings of the Children’s Network Policy Council.

### **3. County Operational Areas**

As described above in the demographics section, San Bernardino County is the largest county in area in the contiguous 48 states, and has a number of child welfare services delivery issues based on its sheer size.

#### **a) Staffing characteristics/issues**

##### **(1) Turnover**

The DCS staff retention has decreased from FY06/07 with a turnover rate of 9.4% to the current FY07/08 rate of 13.4%. DCS is able to replace some of these social workers each year with Title IV-E graduates from nearby universities. In addition, Supervising Staff retention has also decreased with a turnover rate of 3% in FY06/07 to the current FY07/08 rate of 6.3%. The Supervising Staff turnover may partially be due to retirements and promotions.

In calendar year 2006, the Probation Department experienced a high turnover rate in both line officer classifications – 14.9% for Probation Corrections Officers (PCO) and 11.5% for Probation Officers (PO). When adjusted for internal promotions, transfers and retirements, the turnover rate was 9.5% for PCO and 6.9% for PO. A number of Probation staff are lost each year to other local, federal, state and county agencies.

##### **(2) Private Contractors**

DCS uses 5 private contractors in its PSSF programs and 8 in CAPIT related programs. Adoption and Kinship support services also receive PSSF/CAPIT funding. Issues related to those contractors are discussed in Section D., Countywide Prevention Activities and Strategies. When the PSSF/CAPIT contracts are added to the other DCS contracts, the total number of contracts and MOUs DCS has are 131.

##### **(3) Social Worker Caseload by size of service program**

In San Bernardino County DCS **Intake Social Workers** investigate child abuse/neglect referrals, provide early preventative services to families, provide on-going services to families per voluntary case plan agreements with the parents; remove children as needed, and file petitions in Juvenile Court, and provide case management post removal through the Detention and Jurisdictional/Dispositional (JurisDispo) Hearings.

**Carrier Social Workers** provide on-going case management services to families who are either on voluntary case plans, or through formal Juvenile court intervention. These Social Workers oversee the care and welfare of foster children, provide reunification services to families, or family maintenance services to families whose children remain at home, but are in need of agency supervision and services.

Carrier Social Workers generally manage cases from JurisDispo through permanency planning. In addition, DCS has Social Workers assigned to adoptions functions who provide concurrent planning in conjunction with CPS Social Workers, and are formally assigned adoption cases after the 366.26 Termination of Parental Rights hearing.

DCS maintains “blended units”, which means that each CPS unit consists of Intake and Carrier Social Workers, who both work towards the goal of improved services for children and parents. Supervisors in these units are familiar with families from the beginning and Social Workers within the unit can discuss and support families more effectively throughout the process of agency and court involvement.

A point-in-time look at the average number of referrals indicated that the Intake Social Service Practitioners (SSPs) and Social Worker IIs (SWIIs) receive 25.8 referrals per month. Intake Social Worker IIs generally investigate general neglect, thus have more referrals than an Intake SSPs. Carrier SSP and SWIIs have an average total of 31 cases per month. However, workload is often impacted by social workers on medical leave, turnover and retention issues, increased documentation requirements, and additional front end work, such as Team Decision Making meetings.

There are a number of specialized caseloads within the Probation Department and caseload size varies by type of caseload and assigned unit.

### **b) Bargaining Unit Issues**

Although both DCS and Probation have bargaining units that represent employees neither department reports major issues with those bargaining units at this time.

### **c) Financial/material resources** **(1) Competitive Bid Process**

The County of San Bernardino Human Services Department of Children's Services, in conjunction with the Children's Policy Council, and with the approval of the County Board of Supervisors, releases the CAPIT and PSSF Requests-for-Proposals to procure CAPIT and PSSF services. This process is a competitive procurement. Prospective contractors are invited to a proposers' conference where the RFP is explained and questions and concerns can be addressed prior to the submission of their proposals. The submitted proposals are then evaluated by a team of qualified staff who have expertise in developing, providing and administering child abuse prevention programs and/or contracts, and are aware of the needs of families in our county. Evaluators rate the proposals based on information contained in a uniform rating tool.

The resulting ranked proposals are compared to our needs assessment data and other child abuse incidence data to ensure the needs of families across our

county are met. Information on performance of current contractors is also used in comparative evaluation. Funding recommendations are prepared by the Program Development Division and reviewed by DCS management. Final funding recommendations for contract awards are then submitted to the Children’s Policy Council for initial approval and the Board of Supervisors for final approval and ratification. Any contractor who did not receive an award has the right to protest within a reasonable time frame.

**(2) County’s overall processes and systems for fiscal accountability**

All County transactions are individually coded with an ID and cross-referenced by Date, Fund, Department, Code, General Review Code (if applicable), amount, and a general description. All the control codes are part of the contract. Transactions are reviewed, monitored and approved by the Regional Budget Clerks in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and the applicable State and Federal regulations. CAPIT, PSSF and Children’s Trust Fund (CTF) expenditures are logged under the applicable codes. CAPIT and PSSF contracts are cost reimbursement contracts. Each contractor submits a monthly invoice that is reviewed by a fiscal analyst and program specialist prior to approval. For PSSF, a program statistics report is also submitted and shows the number of service hours applied to each of the four PSSF Service Categories: Family Preservation, Family Support, Adoption Promotion and Support and Time-Limited Reunification. The Service Category percentages are used to break down the billing for the total invoice. For example:

**Table (8)**

<b>Service Category</b>	<b>Service Hours</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>This Month Allocation</b>
Pres/PSF515BZ	57	2.60%	\$1,490.96
Support/PSF516BZ	1012	46.08%	\$26,471.05
TLR/PSF676F1	1115	50.77%	\$29,165.24
Adopt/PSF675F1	12	0.55%	\$313.89
<b>Totals</b>	<b>22196</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$57,441.13</b>

CAPIT and PSSF programs are monitored on a regular basis and program related expenditures are part of that review.

**d) Outline CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF, Children’s Trust Fund and other funding sources**

San Bernardino County has allocated \$615,600 CAPIT and \$1,992,050 PSSF for FY 08-09. This amount will be supplemented by \$464,400 from County Birth Certificate funds. Pursuant to the required RFP and review/approval of both the San Bernardino County Children’s Policy Council and Board of Supervisors, the County’s total distribution will be \$3,197,050 for both programs: \$1,992,050 for PSSF and \$1,205,000 for CAPIT. Kinship centers will be supplemented with

\$100,000 in PSSF funds and \$125,000 in CAPIT funds. Department of Children’s Services Placement Resources will retain \$216,000 for Adoption Promotion and Support. The remainder (\$2,756,050) was contracted out.

Child abuse prevention programs funded under AB 2994 (Children's Trust Fund) by a surcharge on certified copies of birth certificates include: 1) training to childcare organizations/schools on child abuse recognition; 2) training of teenage parents encouraging proper care of infants and children; 3) group treatment for victims of abuse; and 4) group counseling for child abusers.

During SFY 2006/2007, the CTF consisted of the following revenue sources and amounts.

**Table (9)**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Interest	\$ 46,166
Birth Certificates	\$548, 284
Grants	\$ 0
Gifts	\$ 0
Bequests	\$ 0
Kidsplate	\$ 89,162
Total	\$ 678,212
Total CCTF Expended this year	\$ 373,039

**e) Political jurisdictions  
School districts/Local education agencies**

There are 33 school districts in the County of San Bernardino and an elected San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. The office of the County Superintendent of Schools provides educational support services to the various local school districts located in the County.

The office also provides direct service to those children residing in areas located outside of the boundaries of the local school districts. Key staff members from the County Superintendent of Schools contributed to the development of this County Self-Assessment.

**Law enforcement agencies**

Law enforcement services are provided by **local municipal police departments** for most of the County’s 24 incorporated cities. The **County Sheriff** provides law enforcement services for the remainder of these municipalities and for the unincorporated areas of the County. In addition, the Sheriff provides supplemental policing services to municipalities whose populations have grown faster than their local police force.

**Tribal police** patrol their reservations and areas immediately outside of Tribal gaming facilities. This patrolling of non-Tribal area, adjacent to the reservations is

done in cooperation with the local police departments and the County Sheriff. The Tribes make significant efforts to mitigate traffic congestion and crime in neighborhoods bordering Tribal gaming facilities.

Some of the local Tribes and the County are exploring the possibility of entering into a memorandum of understanding to establish protocol and define roles when the Sheriff or Children's Services enters the reservation on official business.

Military police provide law enforcement for military institutions. State law enforcement officers provide services to the State institutions in the County.

The County Sheriff, Children's Services, Probation and Children's Network meet regularly with County Public Health, Behavioral Health and various other County departments to coordinate response efforts to protect children exposed to dangerous illegal drug contamination. This collaboration is called the Drug Endangered Children's Task Force. This task force provides Sheriff Narcotics team members to train local law enforcement, County Social Workers and Probation Officers about how to recognize drug manufacturing items and the effects of contamination on children.

## **Tribes**

There are 16 Native American Tribes with spheres of influence San Bernardino County. Some tribes are located in surrounding counties, but have families and influence in San Bernardino County. The County is also home to a few federally unrecognized tribes. The Department of Children's Services has assigned ICWA liaisons (social workers) to each of its four geographical regions.

The Director of the County Department of Children's Services meets periodically with members of ten tribes and the Indian Child and Family Services agency, a tribal social service agency operated by Native Americans to service the social welfare needs of tribal children and families.

Department of Children's Services staff has participated in Tribal conducted comprehensive workshops covering legal process, upcoming legislation, cultural awareness, and relationship building. Similar trainings are conducted for County staff by Tribal Star, Native American focused educational program out of San Diego State University.

In addition, the annual UC Riverside Law and Justice Institute offers an ICWA module so that staff from Court, County Probation and County Children's Services can remain current on the recent changes and application of ICWA.

The County's annual Children's Network Conference offers ICWA related workshops to the hundreds of attendees.

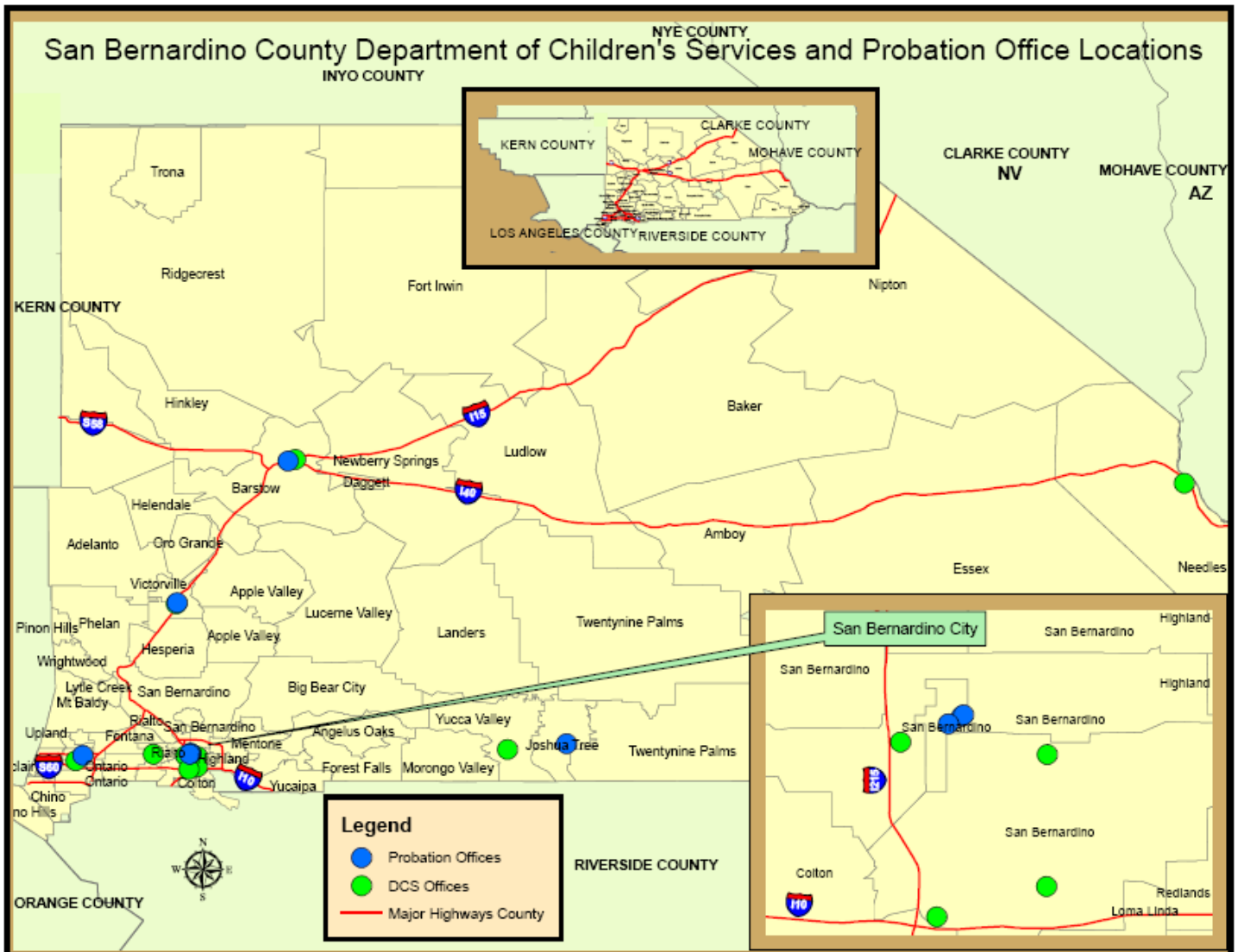
**Cities**

**Table (10)**

**Communities, Towns and Incorporated Cities of San Bernardino County**

Adelanto	Highland	Running Springs
Apple Valley	Joshua Tree	San Bernardino
Barstow	Lake Arrowhead	Twentynine Palms
Big Bear Lake	Loma Linda	Upland
Chino	Lucerne Valley	Victorville
Chino Hills	Montclair	Wrightwood
Colton	Needles	Yermo
Crestline	Ontario	Yucaipa
Fontana	Rancho Cucamonga	Yucca Valley
Grand Terrace	Redlands	
Hesperia	Rialto	

**Department of Children’s Services and Probation Office Locations**



## **H. Systemic factors**

Seven Systemic Factors affecting child and family services in San Bernardino County are reviewed in this report. These are the same ones used in the Federal Child and Family Services Review and are defined in federal law. The Systemic Factors are Relevant Management Information Systems, Case Review System, Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention, Quality Assurance System, Service Array, Staff/Provider Training, and Agency Collaborations. During the Self-Assessment process, workgroups were formed to examine these factors and how they relate to practice. Focus groups were also held for most of the Systemic Factors and the findings of those focus groups are included.

### **H. 1. Relevant Management Information Systems (MIS) and**

### **H. 4. Quality Assurance System**

The San Bernardino County Department of Children's Services has an active Quality Assurance System in place to evaluate the adequacy and quality of child welfare services. The Department has an on-going data workgroup which meets monthly and reviews AB636 quarterly reports, Family 2 Family requests and management data requests, and provides numerous reports to agency administrators on the quality of services provided and needs for improvement. DCS has a Quality Assurance unit that reads cases for compliance and monitoring and conducts telephone surveys as requested. CAPIT and PSSF program quality assurance will be discussed in this section and several examples are given in the Countywide Prevention Activities and Strategies Section (D).

The on-going DCS data workgroup that regularly meets on a monthly basis to systematically examine the quality of DCS services to clients was expanded for the Self-Assessment process. This Quality Assurance Workgroup met seven times to further examine and discuss the PQCR results and the County's outcomes on the Federal and State measures. The discussions revolved around the general areas of safety, permanence, and well being and the workgroups were attended by a number of different DCS staff who had expertise in the programmatic areas that could potentially impact the outcomes measures. Their attendance contributed to the effort to make sensible links between the outcomes data and programs and practices within the agency. Each of the outcomes measures in the "**Outcomes**" section above was discussed by this group and much of their discussion on safety, permanence, and well being is included in that section of this document.

After intensive review of outcomes, policies and practices, the QA workgroup recommended that the County Self-Assessment consider increasing efforts to improve outcomes on at least four of the outcome measures. They are: reunification within 12 months (measure C1.3); placement stability (measure C4.3); and long term care outcomes (measure C3.1) and (measure C3.3).

CWS/CMS continues to be the primary system used by DCS. It has been in use since September 1997 and there have been numerous refinements made to the application to improve its ease of use for social workers. San Bernardino County is an active participant in the on-going workgroups to develop improved functionality. This consists of participating in the development of requirements and approval of the design changes, weekly conference calls, and in county testing of changes or refinements. San Bernardino County also represents the CWDA Southern Region on the Oversight Committee and on the Policy Impact Analysis Committee for CWS/CMS.

In an on-going effort to improve accessibility to CWS/CMS, the state has recently rolled out a Server Based Computing (SBC) service offered to counties which allows social workers to log on to CWS/CMS through a secure Internet site. San Bernardino County is in the process of implementing SBC to enable social workers to enter data from the field.

San Bernardino County DCS has a shadow database copy of CWS/CMS from which to run monthly program management reports based on a monthly download from the State. In addition, the State has provided the county with 9 licenses for Business Objects, a report writing application, which the state is currently in the process of updating with a new version which is web-based and will be accessible by more supervisory and management staff. San Bernardino County DCS currently makes use of our report writing capability to create and run numerous reports for program management, case tracking, and outcome measures. Ad hoc reports are also helpful in identifying areas that may need improved instructions in data entry for improved outcomes.

The state has recognized the limitations of the current system and has received approval to move forward with going out for bid to build a new web-based system that will replace CWS/CMS. San Bernardino County is actively participating with the state and other counties in working on the RFP requirements for the new system.

## **a) In-house Technology**

### **(1) Additional Hardware**

San Bernardino County DCS will be receiving new replacement computer workstations in November 2008 following the implementation of Release 6.2 of CWS/CMS. The new workstations will use the Windows XP operating system and will have faster processing than the current equipment. San Bernardino County still maintains limited use of Quickpads by social workers. These devices were purchased several years ago to allow social workers to create narrative documents in the field that could be uploaded into CWS/CMS. However, as this equipment has aged, it has been slowly discontinued.

## **(2) Additional Software**

The county utilizes a wide range of additional software including:

- Two statistical software packages (SAS and SPSS)
- Business Objects to access child welfare information from CWS/CMS,
- Safe Measures, a management and supervision tool
- A court data system (JNET) and a 2-way interface between CWS/CMS and JNET. JNET is our county-developed juvenile court system that is used by the court, the Juvenile District Attorney, Public Defender, Probation and DCS
- Claritis (population data projected by census track and zip codes),
- Survey software (SelectSurvey for on-line surveys of staff and vendors)
- Efforts-to-Outcome Team Decision Making database (an on-line database to capture TDM meeting and participant information) became available in August of 2008 and will be upgraded to the Efforts-to-Outcome Recruitment Development and Support (on-line database to collect information on our foster care parents or adoptive parents recruitment – information which is not available on CWS/CMS)
- ArcGIS, a geographical mapping software used for program evaluation and analysis
- C-IV is a Welfare Payment database that allows data matching between welfare clients and child welfare children
- Comprehensive Assessment Tool (CAT) – a safety and risk assessment tool

## **(3) Other factors**

DCS also has available numerous stand alone databases or excel sheets to track information that cannot be easily queried or captured at all in CWS/CMS, for example:

- Linkages program
- Wraparound
- California Permanency for Youth Project (scheduled to begin in Oct 2008)
- Court reports (Late or Missing Reports, Continuances, Pretrial Settlement Conferences, Adoption or Guardianship hearings)
- Emancipating Youth outcome report (tracking the outcomes of youth who emancipate (educational, housing, medical, permanent connection, etc)

Other reports used to assist with quality assurance are:

- Quarterly media reports from CWS/CMS for Deputies and Managers to have data readily available to them for informational requests

- *The Health of the Agency* that covers DCS activities and outcomes from referral, caseload information, staffing patterns, fiscal impacts, special projects, court information, adoption, educational information, to exits to permanency and emancipating youth outcomes
- Family 2 Family reports on TDM utilization rates, referral and entry rates by city
- Geo staffing referral data analysis by city
- Quarterly reviews of the state and federal outcome data

**b) (1) Other MIS or Technology for CAPIT/PSSF**

The county has recently purchased and implemented Efforts-to-Outcomes PSSF/CAPIT database for FY08-09. The 16 county vendors will be entering referral, intake, activities and outcome data for each of their programs which will enable the capturing and reporting of data to assess compliance with Federal PSSF spending requirements for Family Preservation Services, Family Support Services, Adoption Promotion and Support Services, and Time-Limited Family Reunification Services.

The county established an AB636 Data and Family 2 Family Self Evaluation workgroup in 2005. The workgroup has been instrumental in improving the data quality and implementing new programs. The workgroup has issued written instructions to staff, suggested additional trainings as needed, improved policies and procedures, and has created a number of management and Family 2 Family reports.

The data workgroup meets monthly and reviews AB636 quarterly reports, Family 2 Family requests and management data requests. In addition, DCS has two staff people dedicated to data assurance and technology, two staff people from an external unit who support DCS data quality and program evaluation and an entire Quality Assurance unit that does cases reads for compliance and monitoring and telephone surveys as requested.

The Department of Children's Services has become data and outcome driven, making more and more management decisions based on research. In addition, programs (e.g. Wraparound, Linkages, Dependency Drug court, Healthy Homes, SART, etc) are evaluated using the state and federal outcome measures (e.g. safety, permanency and well-being). The Department is moving towards geo-staffing their units based on the number of referrals investigated. Also, the use of Safe Measures allows supervisor and management staff to easily monitor social worker contacts, case closures and approved case plans. All of these changes have resulted in better data entry and improved accuracy of our state and federal outcomes. San Bernardino County is confident that the county data reports accurately reflect uniform, current, accurate and reliable data due to the three year improvements and monitoring made by the data workgroup and management.

However, there are still data issues yet to be solved. For instance, tracking foster parent recruitment has to be completed on a separate stand-alone system. Until recently there was very little information available about a youth's activity in Independent Living Program; the educational section of CWS/CMS is awkward; there is not a reasonable means to identify youth passing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE); information about youth emancipating from foster care and attending aftercare has to be recorded in a stand-alone system; and documentation of a child having a permanent connection on CWS/CMS is impossible to query (i.e., exists on word documents and text fields), which makes it difficult to accurately count the number of youth with a permanent connection at foster care exit.

### **Software for Wraparound**

Different software programs are used to store, extract, and analyze data for the evaluation and case management of the Wraparound program. These programs include CWS/CMS, Business Objects, MS Excel, MS Access, and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

The County's Information Technology and Support Division (ITSD) is in the process of developing a web-based database to replace the Excel workbook and Access database that are currently being used to track data not found in CWS/CMS.

### **Software/Information Systems used for Linkages**

Programs and data systems used to store, extract, and analyze data for the Linkages program include CWS/CMS, C-IV, MS Excel, and MS Access. Data from CWS/CMS and C-IV are used to identify potential Linkages clients and to evaluate the program based on AB636-related outcomes. An Access database is currently being developed to replace the Excel worksheet and will be stored on the Linkages server.

### **Additional Software and Data Sources**

Often, software and data sources other than CWS/CMS and Business Objects are needed to provide significant information. For this reason, new survey and mapping programs are being used by the County to collect and display data. The County of San Bernardino uses the SelectSurvey program to create surveys that can be administered via the Internet or the County's intranet. This software also allows users to create e-mail lists for survey distribution, track responses and non-responses, send survey reminders, and create reports of survey results. It has been used in 2007/2008 to administer several different surveys including the PSSF/CAPIT Needs Assessment and a Cultural Competency Survey.

In an effort to link information (such as areas within our county that have the highest rate of child welfare referrals) to specific locations the County uses

ArcGIS to create maps with data from a variety of sources including, GIMS of San Bernardino County, the U.S. Census Bureau, ESRI, and CWS/CMS.

## **PROBATION MIS**

### **Existing Hardware**

The Probation Department utilizes a variety of technologies to allow staff the ability to connect to resources. Blackberries are assigned to a variety of staff. Wireless laptops with secure VPN connections are used by field officers to conduct field contacts, generate documents, and run statistical reports as needed. Standard desktops are used by office staff, as well as the use of limited USB flash drives (confidentiality and usage issues are being addressed internally). Staff also use network drives to store data. Routine back-up procedures are in place through the Automated Systems Unit. GPS units are used for certain populations (sex offender, gang), while Kiosks are used for tracking low risk Adult offenders, using hand geometry biometrics and unique pin numbers. Kiosks also provide offenders the ability to communicate with officers and visa versa by sending messages to each other that post to the Caseload Explorer (CE) system. Although this technology is not currently in use for the Juvenile population, there may be some applications for its use in the future. Probation Officers also use standard radios (hand held and vehicle) and cellular phones.

### **Technology**

Probation has video conferencing equipment in each branch office. As part of the CVJDAC Replacement project, video conferencing will be augmented in order to allow the parents of juveniles to have visitation with the youth if a parent cannot travel to the juvenile. This is due to the logistical moves being performed on the CV population while construction takes place. Probation offers tele-psychiatry for youth in the institutions – a youth and clinician videoconference with a psychiatrist. This is offered in all three juvenile institutions.

**Caseload Explorer (CE):** Currently running on SQL 2000 (upgrading to SQL 2005 in early 09) The Microsoft .NET Framework is used for Case Management System for adult, juvenile and institutional facilities (e.g. juvenile halls). CE is used by all three Probation bureaus: Community Corrections, Detention Corrections, and Administrative Services. Administrative Services includes fiscal and grant writing staff as well. This application went LIVE in December 2003 with the Adult module. The Juvenile and Institutions modules went LIVE in September 2006. Previously, Juvenile probation used the Juvenile Network (JNET) as their case management system, and Juvenile Housing Information Tracking System (JHITS) for Institutions bookings etc. (now replaced by CE) but relied on hard files for all fieldwork.

CE contains information on offenders pertaining to safety/delinquency, tracking court appointments, minute orders, case information and has the ability to create,

edit, import, and scan documents and images (mug shots). It also tracks family, co-participants, victim and organizational information (schools, gangs, placements, programs etc.)

- Uses a real time interface with JNET (Juvenile Court MIS)
- Uses a batch interface with JIMS – Jail Information Management System used by the Sheriff Department to alert officers of offenders who have been arrested in order to effect timely violations or officer court appearances.

Planned upgrades:

- Overall upgrade to SQL 2005 in early 2009 using a Virtual Server Environment (VM Ware)
- To improve the speed and ability of staff to access various portions of the application that has been heavily used in the earlier versions.
- Interface with OTIS and the Court databases (Based upon State MIS rollout)
- Enhance the interface with JIMS for bench warrants, recalls and releases.
- Improve statistical base for report writing
- Interface with Identix fingerprinting and/or biometrics identification during booking of juveniles to reduce duplicate record creation.

### **Caseload Explorer: Quality Assurance**

- Probation has one full-time staff member who is responsible for auditing CE and the efficacy of staff data input in the system.
- County Administrative Office (CAO) Reports are generated from the CE on a quarterly basis, but can be run at any time to track trends as they occur.
- One report writer, who has written and maintains 80-100 reports
- This same position maintains court reports that are completed by officers and clerks using templates that allow auto-population of data input into CE by the probation officer.
- CE was built with numerous canned reports, and one of the requirements of the system was that the vendor create all federal and state required reports and that they be customized/updated when the reporting requirements change.
- CE has wizards that help the probation officer complete data input in one area that when saved, flows back to all appropriate areas of the application.

The probation budgeted staff relating to MIS includes 2 Research Analysts and 1 Applications Specialist who serves as report writer and oversees system template design and maintenance and 1 Crime Analyst.

### **Software/Programs utilized by probation:**

- COMPAS (Correctional Officers Management and Profile Sanctions) – safety, risk assessment tool
- ProbTrain – a Probation database used for the Probation Training Unit. This system provides the ability to schedule staff for required training. It sends emails to supervisors and staff on training activities and can issue parking permits for staff to attend the training. This system also provides staff the ability to update their preferences as to work assignments and upload documents/certificates for outside training opportunities.
- JJCPA (AB1913) MS Access databases – tracking state and federal outcomes for the SUCCESS, Day Reporting Center, House Arrest, School Probation Office and LET programs.
- JCPSS – Juvenile Court Probation Statistical System. This system was originally run by ISD via JNET. When Caseload Explorer went LIVE in 9/06, Probation assumed responsibility for monthly reporting requirements to the DOJ. JCPSS reports on all dispositions, and the status of juveniles on a monthly basis.
- PbS- Performance based Standards, developed by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA), a national organization to help Probation Institutions benchmark themselves against other agencies and institutions (that offer similar services). This also allows on-going assessment of internal performance improvement opportunities. Improvements in CE will allow these data elements to be captured and thus provide a sound statistical basis for future policy decisions. This program is used to: improve staff documentation, timeliness of data entry, completion of staff and client surveys (e.g., customer satisfaction surveys) which has already led to improvements in safety for institutions for both staff and clients.
- Nutritional Management Program – used by institutional nutritional staff to improve youth’s dietary needs and support cultural diversity when planning menus in the juvenile institutions.
- InTime - scheduling software deployed in 2007. This is for the Scheduling of Institutions staff at the Institutions.
- Pilot of Guard1 Tour Systems “PIPE” - in the intake unit at CVJDAC. This is a system for officers to have room checks be documented in a timely basis.
- Project ADAPT - Automated Dispensing of Accurate Prescription Therapy. This multi-agency system was the brainchild of probation in trying to reduce the cost of medication waste. This has developed into a system that encompasses the County Medical Center (ARMC), the Sheriff and Probation. As offenders enter the system either through the SO JIMS system or Probation’s Caseload Explorer CMS, data is sent to the ARMC pharmacy as medication orders are entered to be reviewed by a pharmacist and approved. A “dispensing” machine then produces various

“runs” to take all the medication orders, package them into individual packets for medical staff to then administer to the offender at Juvenile Halls or Jail. The Sheriff went live at WVDC a few months ago and is expanding to the CDC and Glen Helen. Probation is in the final testing phase at CVJDAC and then the system will roll out to the two other Institutions. Automated Medication Administration Records (MAR’s) are being produced as well as the elimination of the significant waste produced by the old manual system as only the medications to be dispensed are released from the machine.

- In-House developed Offender Mapping Tool. Mapping of clients based on various attributes is now in place for officers in offices and in the field via laptops. This includes boundaries (2000 ft radius) for Sex Offenders and ability to flag various types, Gang, Warrant etc.

### **Future improvements for Probation MIS:**

- Have caseload explorer interface with Los Angeles County’s probation kiosks to send information directly to Caseload Explorer.
- Collaborate with Redlands PD, export CE dataset to Redlands PD for crime mapping of probationers in Redlands.
- COPLINK – an interagency collaboration with law enforcement, and the county to be able to search all the databases for key factors.
- VISIPHOR – This is a system the Sheriff has been developing that Law and Justice agencies can participate in. Use of this system enables organizations to easily view and integrate data from multiple agencies and processes spread across multiple locations, platforms and formats.
- Interface to CUBS (Collections) and CE
- On-going Network Evaluations for growing bandwidth needs to meet staff and customer service needs through availability to resources. Includes needs to upgrade routers/switches etc.
- Wireless access capability to Civic Center Probation offices (working with ISD)

## **H. 2. Case Review System**

The Department of Children’s Services (DCS) provides training, written handbook instructions on policies, procedures and practices, clerical support, supervisory and management oversight to the County’s child welfare case review system. In addition, with the implementation of best practice initiatives such as Family 2 Family and Team Decision Making, Social Workers utilize a strength-based, collaborative approach in working with parents on the case planning process.

The Team Decision Making (TDM) process facilitates a partnership between social workers and parents. This process allows for developing a safety plan,

provide for early identification of relatives, provide for support systems for parents, and assists in initiating services in an expedient manner. The involvement of community partners and extended family in the process is viewed positively by staff. It should be noted that TDM's and working with parents collaboratively from the start has enhanced the case planning process, served to dispel myths about the agency's role, and tends to minimize parental distrust and hostility often seen in the early stages of DCS intervention.

The policy of DCS and the Court, as well as the legal requirement is that children ages 10 and older be asked if they want to participate in their court hearings. Social workers are required to address the child's response in their court reports and to ensure children and youth are brought to court when they indicate a desire to attend their hearing. Children ages four and older are brought to the Detention Hearings to meet and speak with their attorneys. The children's attorneys employ their own social workers, who meet with the children as well.

DCS maintains written instructions to social workers on court processes, case planning, placement, concurrent planning, noticing, and a variety of other court related and practice issues. The social worker staff receives initial training in a four to six month training unit during which time their case work is done jointly with an experienced social worker mentor, and reviewed by a supervisor. On-going trainings at court on a variety of issues occur throughout the year. In addition, County counsel and DCS court staff goes out to all DCS regions and provides new and review training to staff on court processes and legal issues.

The Department engages in on-going concurrent planning, in which a Child Protective Services (CPS) social worker, an Adoption social worker and their supervisors meet regularly for concurrent planning review meetings, during which the prognosis for reunification is addressed, as well as the alternative permanent plan.

The Juvenile Court Judges, County Counsel and the court attorneys ensure that hearings are scheduled per legal requirements for all hearings, from Detention through permanency. DCS supervisors and social workers are provided with a calendar of upcoming hearings per unit monthly to provide for timely submission of court reports to meet legal requirements. In addition, supervisors and managers receive monthly monitoring reports which reflect late or missing petitions and reports, statistics on continuances including the reasons they occur, and month to month summaries over time. These reports provide information at the unit and social worker level, so that supervisors can address timeliness in their reviews with social workers.

It is the policy of the Department of Children's Services that supervisors will meet monthly in conference with their social workers to review all cases, provide for assessment and discussion of the case plan. Supervisors are required to review

all petitions, court reports and case plans, attend concurrent planning review meetings, and provide on-going support and consultation to their social workers.

The Juvenile Dependency Court includes one Presiding Judge, three full-time Judges, twenty six attorneys, and two Court Mediators. DCS maintains a staff of one Child Welfare Services Manager, one Clerical Manager, two court supervisors, seven court officers, two court clerical supervisors and sixteen clerical staff to support the social workers and the court process. Other support staff includes a child care provider, a case assistant, a social service aid, and a volunteer.

In an effort to ensure that parents are provided information to understand the court and case planning process, the Department of Children's Services provides a Court Orientation in which parents attending their Detention Hearing can view a PowerPoint presentation which explains these processes and encourages them to work with their social worker on a case plan. The Court Officer also works with parents to complete important documents, such as those identifying relative information, paternity and Native American heritage. In 2007, DCS received a National Association of Counties achievement award for the Court Orientation program.

The DCS court services staff provide for on-going noticing to parents, care providers, children and court dependent siblings. There are court services clerks dedicated to search, ICWA noticing and 366.26 noticing. Social Workers provide personal notice to parents for the Jurisdictional/Dispositional and 366.26 hearings, or request assistance from process servers hired by the Department. Care providers receive notices of review hearings, and are provided with a JV 290 Care provider Information Form should they wish to file their own report directly with the court.

Juvenile Court Judges, attorneys, and DCS staff are sensitive to the problems that court continuances cause in terms of delays in moving cases forward through the court system. While many hearings are continued for noticing, many other miscellaneous reasons impact the court process and create the need for a continuance. DCS has worked diligently to improve the noticing process by assigning court clerical staff to specialized functions, such as ICWA noticing, providing training to staff and written instructions, and securing on-going assistance from County Counsel, particularly on the 366.26 noticing process.

Mediation is highly valued by the Juvenile Court Judges as a means of dispute resolution. The mediators who participated in the Self-Assessment process have been encouraged by the commitment of social workers to the process, and this serves to facilitate resolutions. Other dispute resolution processes include Team Decision Making and Family Group Decision Making.

The Juvenile Dependency Court building is a relatively new structure, which includes a large lobby area for parents, and a pleasant, comfortable child care center for children who are brought to court for hearings and to speak with their attorneys. DCS employs a full-time child care provider, who works with children on various arts and crafts and various games and projects. In addition, numerous donations have afforded snacks, game systems, and DVDs to be available for children while they wait at court.

The current relationship between the Court, the Department of Children's Services and the Probation Department is currently positive, collaborative and supports a joint problem solving atmosphere. A monthly DCS/Court meeting enables the Juvenile Court Judges, DCS Managers, DCS Court supervisors and staff, attorneys, mediators, county counsel and other parties to the court to discuss new legal requirements and laws, problems with noticing or other court processes, provide for exchange of information on practices, and facilitate a collaborative arena. In addition, a DCS Manager chairs a monthly Court Coordination meeting, which includes DCS/CPS supervisors and staff from all regions, DCS Court supervisors and DCS Court services manager and supervisor, and County counsel. This meeting affords an opportunity to discuss with staff new laws, review court processes and legal issues impacting court cases, identify barriers and training issues, and provide for general discussion.

The Department recognizes the importance in planning for youth who remain in the foster care system. On-going concurrent planning reviews, held prior to all hearings, include both CPS and Adoption social workers and supervisors to ensure every effort is made to locate a permanent home for children in foster care. Educational Liaisons were hired by DCS to provide for enhanced educational tracking, support, coordination with schools, and documentation. Also, three former foster youth were hired as Peer and Family Advocates, to provide outreach and support to children in care. The DCS and Probation Independent Living program and transitional housing programs work diligently to provide services to prepare foster youth for emancipation. A joint DCS/Probation ILP Task force meets monthly with service providers, community colleges, and youth to discuss classes, workshops and available support programs. Youth and care providers meet with social workers to jointly discuss and develop goals for a Transitional Independent Living Plan.

The San Bernardino County Juvenile Court, in collaboration with the Department of Children's Services, the Probation Department, the Department of Behavioral Health and attorneys created a WIC 241.1 committee which meets weekly to discuss those youth who appear to need both probation and children's services intervention. In this County, it is not the practice for a youth to concurrently be a Ward and a Dependent. The Departments staff cases at committee meetings to determine which agency best serves the needs of the youth. The 241.1 committee then makes a recommendation to the Juvenile Court. This process has worked well to forge a collaborative, cooperative relationship between the

Department of Children's Services and the Probation Department, and provides for the best interests of the child to be paramount in the recommendation to the court.

San Bernardino County Juvenile Court operates a Dependency Drug Court to provide intensive case management services and court oversight (separate from the Dependency case) for parents who have a substance abuse issue which has impacted their ability to parent and resulted in court and CPS intervention. The program is voluntary for parents and has led to successful outcomes in regards to foster care re-entry.

### **Case Review Focus Groups**

During the self-assessment process, DCS held two meetings with the Presiding Judge and two Juvenile Court Judges, DCS Managers and Deputy Director, DCS court supervisors and staff, attorneys, CASA representatives, court mediators, a youth, a parent, and other parties to the court. In addition, four DCS supervisor focus groups were held in each region, and included a total of 34 supervisors, 5 managers, and one Deputy Director. Individual interviews were held with 13 line level social workers. Case planning and review system issues were also discussed in other work groups.

The Probation Department also conducted a focus group that included the Chief Probation Officer, Probation Deputies and Managers, the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, and a number of attorneys to discuss case review and planning issues.

These meetings were productive and informative for all who participated. Specific recommendations, as well as identified strengths and challenges/barriers, were brought forth in these meetings for discussion and planning for the future. The information gathered during this assessment process follows:

### **Department of Children's Services Focus Groups**

Strengths:

- Family 2 Family and Team Decision Making facilitates a strength-based, collaborative relationship between social workers and parents, and provides for early case planning and service delivery
- Current positive, collaborative relationship between DCS and the Court
- Court Officers, County Counsel, Court Services staff are important resources for social work staff
- Mediation is a valued process and facilitates resolutions
- Collaborative relationships between DCS, Probation, Public Health, Department of Behavioral Health and the Court improves our ability to provide services to children and families

- DCS Educational Liaisons, Peer and Family Advocates, ILP and WRAP serve to enhance services and planning for youth
- Concurrent planning efforts improve permanency prospects for children

#### Challenges:

- Youth are often not aware of their legal rights and may feel intimidated when appearing in court
- Social workers continue to be challenged by workload issues early in the intervention process, as well as increased expectations, and distances they must travel to manage their cases
- Judges and attorneys appear to be resistive to new initiatives and practices, such as Family 2 Family and Team Decision Making
- Parents often do not understand the court process and what is ordered and they often do not have enough time with their attorneys
- Sufficient support for youth emancipating from foster care is lacking
- The notice process is often confusing and burdensome to staff
- Documenting and tracking the educational progress of foster youth, enrolling them in school, and securing educational records can be problematic
- Fiscal and budget issues often adversely impact the availability of services

#### Recommendations:

- Judges and attorneys receive training on new initiatives, such as the Family to Family model and Team Decision Making
- On-going new and review trainings for social workers
- Continue meetings such as DCS/Court Meeting and Court Coordination Task Force
- Ensure youth understand their legal rights and that Judges make efforts to engage youth in courtroom to set them at ease
- Encourage Tribal participation in the court process and in working with social workers on services for Native American children
- Services should be accessible to parents in regards to location and hours of service
- Concurrent planning needs to be continuous throughout case process
- Research community based services for youth and parents to compensate for budget shortfalls
- Focus on educational planning, services, and documentation for foster youth

## **Probation Department Focus Group**

The Probation Department also conducted a focus group that included the Chief Probation Officer and other Probation staff, the presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, and a number of attorneys who practice before the court. Participants in this focus group identified several strengths which included:

- Improved communication between the Courts, Public Defenders, the District Attorney, and Probation staff with better problem solving in regular meetings in which all involved agencies are “at the table”
- A professional climate which allows for “agreeing to disagree” but still moves parties toward consensus on better serving children
- A greater collaboration between agencies which is resulting in better planning and services for youth in delinquency court

Several service barriers and gaps were identified which included:

- Insufficient availability of certain critical services such as inpatient substance abuse detoxification services and other substance abuse treatment services
- Difficulty in obtaining approval for higher levels of placement (e.g., RCL 14) for youth who come from out of county
- Difficulty in obtaining educational history and ensuring that such histories follow youth through the system and are relayed to placements in a timely manner that allows for consistent educational progress
- Overall concerns regarding confidentiality issues in terms of what information can be shared with whom by whom (including between professionals and agencies)
- Probation staff transfers into and out of juvenile probation which may impact the continuity of case planning and services
- The Court perceived a need for additional intervention/prevention/and diversion services that might prevent youth from becoming further involved in the delinquency system

Several areas in which the case review system were perceived as needing improvement included:

- Increasing the timeliness in which court reports arrive at the Public Defender’s Office.
- Including more specifics and detail on efforts toward reunification in court reports so that the Court better understands cases.
- Increased training for Probation staff on Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) noticing procedures.

### **H. 3. Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention**

The County of San Bernardino Department of Children's Services recruits, licenses, trains, and retains resource (foster) families to provide out of home placements for children under the Department's supervision. All adults residing in the prospective foster or relative home must pass the criminal records check which includes local, state and federal criminal records, CWS/CMS record, the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Child Abuse Index (CACI) and, if applicable, the Adam Walsh Act. In San Bernardino County licensed foster families are assessed on a yearly basis, sometimes more often if the need arises. The County also has license revocation procedures in place when needed.

Relative and non-relative extended family member (NREFM) families who are willing to provide homes for children must complete a "relative approval process" in order to be certified to provide placement. This process is completed by social workers assigned to the relative approval unit. Beginning in 2006, the Relative Approval Unit expanded its hours so that social workers can call for an emergency placement assessment 24 hours a day 7 days a week so that children can be placed immediately and safely with relatives or NREFMs. Once a month, prospective foster and adoptive families are invited to participate in the Taking Care of Business Day (TCBD). This one day workshop provides the opportunity for families to attend a foster parent orientation and receive assistance with the licensing application, background check, and TB testing. Referrals are also provided for First Aid and CPR classes. The Department requires that all licensed care providers meet the training requirements per Title 22 Regulations. Although Title 22 requires 12 hours of pre-placement training, San Bernardino County requires the prospective foster parent attend 24 hours of pre-placement training. Additionally, 20 hours of post-licensing training is required annually by San Bernardino County.

The County has an on-going commitment to provide continuing education for foster parents and relative care providers. Training is provided in part through grants to the local community colleges that provide classes. DCS has a foster parent advisory board which consists of foster parents and DCS Management representatives. The board meets monthly to discuss concerns related to licensing issues, parenting concerns, collaboration, and training needs. DCS also sponsors an annual training conference in which foster parents, relative care providers, and DCS staff participate. Foster Family Agencies and group homes have internal training programs which are offered by the agencies themselves.

DCS participates in several recruitment activities to interest community members in becoming resource families and to inform the community in general about the need for resource families. These recruitment activities are consistent with the Family 2 Family Initiative which strives to keep children in placements near their own neighborhoods and schools.

DCS supports the retention of foster parents through an annual foster parent picnic sponsored by the Department. In addition, respite care is a program that ensures foster parents have some time away from the responsibilities of the daily care of foster children. Each qualified foster family is eligible for seven days and six nights yearly.

There have been very recent changes in recruitment, training, and retention efforts. As of September 1, 2008, the County of San Bernardino has contracted with Mental Health Systems, Inc. to conduct all of its Foster Parent recruitment, training and retention activities under AB 2129. The Department of Children's Services has historically been responsible for recruitment, training and retention efforts through its Foster Home Licensing Unit however, staffing considerations have made the administration of these services increasingly problematic. The County hopes to revitalize its recruitment and training efforts.

Relative and Non-Relative Extended Family Members (NREFM) receive training and orientation in the form of the Relative/NREFM Care provider Training Manual. Additional training provided by the local community colleges is also offered. Kinship Centers are available to provide support and training for relatives and NREFMs.

The Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention focus group had a number of recommendations which included:

- Provide more training to relative/NREFM care providers
- Offer more in-depth information on the Kinship Family Support Centers
- Provide follow-up training for Adoptive parents
- Train care providers and social workers together
- Provide more cultural diversity and sensitivity training
- Increase the number of care providers receiving Specialized Care Increments
- Decrease caseloads so that social workers can spend more time with foster parent and child in the home
- Funding is needed to enable Independent Living Program services to start earlier than age 16 years
- Provide written information to foster parents on Team Decision Making
- Increase communication between social workers and foster parents

#### **H. 4. Quality Assurance System**

Refer to H.1, Relevant Management Information Systems (MIS)

## H. 5. Service Array

San Bernardino County continues to provide mandated and traditional services for its children and families as it also strives to implement new and innovative programs that are evidence based and will hopefully lead to improved child welfare outcomes.

In fact, the Department of Children's Services utilizes a number of best practice initiatives to promote strengths-based, collaborative approaches in working with families. The following programs are on-going in the County and provide for partnerships with other agencies and service providers, involvement and empowerment of families, enhanced prevention efforts and services to children, and contribute to positive outcomes. These programs are clearly not an exhaustive list of programs and services available in the County, but rather represent over-arching systemic approaches to the delivery of effective child welfare services.

A relatively recent best practice initiative being used in San Bernardino County is the **Screening, Assessment, Referral, and Treatment Program (SART)** which is an evidence based program designed to improve the social, developmental, cognitive, emotional and behavioral functioning of high-risk and multiple-risk children birth through age 5, and improve their lifelong outcomes. The SART program screens, assesses, and refers children and their families for treatment through a standardized process. Its goal is the identification of children who are at risk of developmental and mental health problems early enough in their lives so that interventions can make significant impacts on their lives.

Another best practice initiative used increasingly in San Bernardino County is **Family 2 Family (F2F)** which emphasizes a family-centered approach to child welfare that is responsive to the individualized needs of children and their families; rooted in the child's community; sensitive to cultural differences; and less reliant on group home placements. The goals for F2F practice are similar to the goals and outcomes of the California Outcomes and Accountability System (AB 636) which include a reduction in the number of children entering foster care, a decrease in length of time in out-of-home care, an increase in the number of siblings placed together, a decrease in the number of re-entries into foster care; and a reduction in the number of placement moves. Strategies utilized to achieve F2F practices include **Team Decision Making** meetings (TDMs), recruiting, training and supporting resource families, building community partnerships, and using data to guide policy and practice. DCS is making increasing use of the Family 2 Family philosophy and methods of intervention in the way it delivers its child welfare services. The discussion of Team Decision Making meetings in the Case Review section of this report is a good example of how the county is using F2F.

**Healthy Homes** is a collaborative effort between the Department of Children's Services (DCS) and the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) in which DBH clinicians conduct assessments and initial psychosocial screenings that identify problem areas and treatment needs for children in out-of-home care. **Healthy Homes** and the services resulting from these initial mental health evaluations can lead to improved outcomes in the overall well being of foster children and youth.

**“Wraparound”** is a word applied to intensive services designed to improve outcomes for children with serious and complex emotional, mental health, and behavioral issues. This method of delivering services and “wrapping them around” children and families emphasizes the development and use of formal and informal community resources and supports in the planning process. Wraparound is achieved through intensive case-management functions provided by DCS approved vendors who provide individualized services and support which extend into the community and involve the delivery of services into the families' homes. The Wraparound approach is the ultimate example of the child welfare system offering families what they need in the way of services rather than requiring them to use what services are available whether they can benefit from them or not. Wraparound is being increasingly used in San Bernardino County and has recently been made more accessible to the children and families who need it.

Another child welfare best practice initiative is **Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)** which is a client-centered, strengths-based approach of working with families involved with the child welfare system. FGDM conferences enable clients to be involved in their own case planning, and for their families and friends to assist in helping the families make plans that will keep children safe and well cared for. FGDM conferences should always facilitate a level of family involvement that insures the safety and the well being of the child. The FGDM conference is an expression of the child welfare system in the ability of nuclear families, extended family members, and natural support systems to work together to keep children safe. San Bernardino County uses Family Group Decision Making but much less often than Team Decision Making. In fiscal year 2006-2007 DCS facilitated 19 FGDMs (28 children were referred who did not have a FGDM) and in fiscal year 2007-2008 only 12 FGDMs were held (3 children were referred who did not have an FGDM).

San Bernardino County, like most counties, has an extensive and troubling substance abuse problem which is clearly linked to child abuse and neglect. The **Dependency Drug Court** is an innovative approach and best practice that offers intensive case management and court oversight for substance-abusing parents who are involved with the Juvenile Dependency court. The program is voluntary, and parents can benefit from a coordinated approach to drug and alcohol services under the weekly or bi-weekly supervision of the Dependency Drug Court. Substance Abuse Managers work closely with parents, providing an

expedited initial assessment and access to direct treatment services in addition to on-going case management services. There is an active Drug Court in the San Bernardino Juvenile Court, as well as one in the Victorville Juvenile Court.

The **Linkages Program** promotes collaboration between the Department of Children's Services (DCS) and the Transitional Assistance Department (TAD). A Linkages Team provides coordinated case management services to clients who have open cases with both DCS and TAD/CalWORKS. The purpose of this program is to reduce barriers that prevent CalWORKS clients from participating in activities that lead to self-sufficiency, assist families in achieving economic stability and ensure child safety and well-being, and remove barriers that may jeopardize a client's Welfare-to-Work participation or employment. The Linkages Program has a multi-disciplinary team approach, which includes DCS and TAD/Employment Services (ES) Supervisors, DCS Social Workers and TAD Employment Specialists. Other members may include DBH, Alcohol and Drug Service providers, Probation Officers, and Domestic Violence providers. Family involvement and participation is encouraged and included as part of the Linkages Team.

As was stated in the PQCR Summary section of this document, DCS believes that the adolescent youth need increased attention in the County. The **Adolescent Specialized Unit** within DCS is designed to focus on strength-based services targeted for adolescents. This specialized unit is being piloted in the Rancho Cucamonga DCS Region, which provides intensive case management services to children, ages 11 ½ and older, who are in permanency planning under long term foster care, have histories of multiple placements, and have no consistent, meaningful relationships with adults. Caseload size in this unit is limited in order that the DCS Social Workers can provide enhanced case management services. The expectation is that this unit and units like it coupled with many of the other services available to youth in the County, will lead to enhanced outcomes for youth as they emancipate from the foster care system. Both Federal and State best practice guidelines encourage helping youth establish meaningful attachments with caring adults as they prepare to leave foster care and enter adult life.

### **Service Array Focus Groups**

The methods used by the workgroup for assessing the current status of the array of services available in San Bernardino County and the Countywide Prevention Activities included having two focus groups which were attended by a total of 19 people from 11 agencies.

A multitude of services that ran the gamut from pre-natal care to caring for foster youth after they age out of the system were mentioned and or discussed briefly. Both groups indicated that the county has a sufficient range and variety of services. However, there were some serious concerns about barriers and the groups did have some carefully thought-out recommendations.

Barriers to accessing the array of services available in the county included the following:

- Caseloads for DCS and Probation workers are perceived as being too high and time constraints often affect case workers abilities to help families access the services that exist.
- More funding is needed for PSSF/CAPIT services. Service providers report that not only will they meet their contracted numbers, they may in fact, have to turn away referrals. This suggests there is unmet need in the county. Some service providers are also stating they may not be able to provide certain services because of lowered funding levels.
- Although services are present in the county, they are fragmented because they are located in so many different locations, programs, and agencies. Homeless families and families living in areas of the county removed from major population centers, in particular, have great difficulty in accessing services that are theoretically available, but not readily accessible to them.
- Centralized or co-located services are generally not available. Most services are agency and program based and centered rather than client based and centered.
- Services, although available, are sometimes provided by those who do not understand critical child and youth related issues such as poor school performance, behavioral issues, mental illness, dynamics of poverty, gangs, and culture, etc. There was a specific need stated for more outreach services for youth.
- There is a lack of knowledge of the overall services array not only among clients, but among foster parents, other care providers, attorneys, and even social workers and probation officers.

Recommendations for change in the services array of the County included the following:

- Increase funding to agencies that may not be able to continue providing needed services.
- Support and improve efforts to have a central, accurate, usable, and living data base of services available for at-risk children, youth and their families in San Bernardino County that would also be available to attorneys, probation officers, social workers, mental health workers, foster parents and other care providers, etc. There was a thoughtful discussion about the need to consider building this system on the already existing architecture of the “2-1-1” system in the County. This effort would require the application of funds to not only upgrade the current data base, but to also maintain the data base accurately over time.
- Establish centralized service centers where children and families could obtain a variety of services without having to go from agency to agency

and program to program. This type of “one stop shop” was not a new idea, but one that seemed to have some merit in the present.

- Give increased attention to service providers and consumers of services about what kinds of services are actually needed in the County.
- Keep programs relational because families heal not because of the services themselves but because of the relationships built within those services. Emphasize services that promote stable, healthy, long-term relationships

## **H. 6. Staff/provider training**

### **a) Staff**

#### **DCS Staff**

The basic skills and knowledge training received by DCS social work staff supports the goals of the California Child Welfare System and addresses services provided by State Law on the topics of family preservation and support services, child protective services, foster care, adoption and independent living skills services. Core Curriculum classes, completed by all new social workers include a 21-day training provided by the Southern Region Public Child Welfare Training Academy (PCWTA) and administered over a 10 week period. New DCS social workers also attend 6 days of Orientation and Induction Training (O&I) provided by DCS through the Performance Education and Resource Center (PERC). Additionally, new social workers are assigned to a Training Unit for 4 to 6 months.

Training Units are located in each of the following three regions: San Bernardino, Rancho Cucamonga and Victorville. DCS implemented the Training Units so that new staff may receive a structured, but individualized, orientation and training process. During the first few weeks of participation in the unit, the Training Unit Supervisor assesses the education and experience of each new hire to determine his or her individual training needs.

Effective July 1, 2008, social work and supervisory staff are required to attend 40 hours of additional training over a two-year period. PERC maintains a record of all the trainings completed in order to track staff’s compliance with the mandatory training hours.

DCS also provides training to Master of Social Work (MSW) Interns. The MSW Unit is comprised of Interns who are not employees of the Department, but receive training in social work competencies and case management. Many of these interns ultimately apply and are hired by San Bernardino County.

#### **Probation Staff**

All Probation Officers attend a core 8-week training class (minimum 172 hours) and then have 40 hours of firearms training. As a part of their standard Probation training all sworn staff receive training in dysfunctional families and child abuse.

Staff also receive motivational interviewing (MI) to facilitate better communication with clients. They must also complete 40 hours (minimum) of training each year.

Special Title IV-E training is also provided to officers in the Juvenile Probation Unit. They are trained to identify the responsibilities and requirements of service provided to Title-IVE youth, understand the Title-IVE eligibility for placement and the Child Welfare responsibilities of juvenile probation officers. This training includes the mandated contact requirements between probation officer, youth, parents/guardians, out-of-home care providers and other professional service providers. It also covers legislation relevant to Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation, the elements of quality documentation, the Indian Child Welfare Act, Division 31 regulations and the Child Welfare Services Accountability and Improvement Act (AB 636).

### **Probation Staff Combined**

In 2007 a Training Consultant in San Bernardino County was hired to provide continuing education training on juvenile law related topics. This training, which is open to attorneys, and other interested personnel in DCS, Probation, DBH, Public Health, and the Courts, is also available to outlying DCS offices through videoconferencing. Topics covered so far in this training have been: youth in between the 300 and 602 jurisdiction; best practices and neurological effect of trauma; psychotropic medications; special education needs; ethics and juvenile law; rules of evidence; bias in the legal system; special immigrant status; post traumatic stress; communication, civility and conflict management; and writs and appeals. These trainings have been very well received by participants.

#### **b) Providers**

As previously mentioned under H. 3, Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention, resource families have training available to them through the local community colleges, DCS, and the various Foster Parent Associations. Group homes and Foster Family Agencies also have internal training programs which are offered by the agencies themselves.

#### **c) PSSF/CAPIT Funded Providers**

Service Providers are instructed by the County on proper procedures for administering their programs and being responsive to County inquiries. The County assists in the completion of forms and outlines what is required for client files, program files and fiscal files. Recently, PSSF and CAPIT providers attended a County arranged training for the Efforts-to-Outcomes data collection system. On-going technical assistance is provided by the Department for any issues and problems that may arise in the administration of the contract.

## **Staff/Provider Training Focus Groups**

The Staff/Provider focus groups had a number of recommendations for improving training. Topics suggested for additional trainings included:

- Cultural diversity and sensitivity with attention paid to specific cultural issues within particular ethnic and cultural groups. This training should be more practical and less theoretical than past trainings.
- Specific training on working with Native American Tribes.
- More comprehensive understanding of the differences between criminal behavior, mental illness, and normal teenage behavior (especially for group home staff).
- Intervention strategies for working with pre-gang and gang involved youth and families, particularly in relationship to DCS and Probation collaborative activities.
- Increased availability of evidenced based trainings.
- Confidentiality and information sharing.
- Legal writing and testifying in Court.
- Time management.

A number of suggestions were also made about possible additions to or changes in the system of training. These suggestions included:

- A PERC trainer for each DCS region.
- Cross training between DCS, Probation, and Department of Behavioral Health Staff so that they better understand each other's roles and services.
- More flexibility in scheduling training which might include more internet or intranet based training, and/or video conferencing.
- Supervisory support for attending training.
- Sending out automated reminders of available trainings.

In a separate attempt to gather information about training needs, an on-line survey on issues of cultural competency was administered from 8/14/08 to 9/9/08 to 493 staff members from the Department of Children's Services (DCS). Some of the most significant results of the survey were for questions related to ICWA and Native American families. Some of the most common responses expressed the need for the following:

- Training on how to identify a child who qualifies for ICWA
- Training and updates on new ICWA guidelines ("refresher courses")
- Training on placements of ICWA children (What factors should be considered when placing the child? How is this type of placement different from a placement for a non-ICWA child?)

- Training on the adoption process of ICWA children
- Training on the Native American culture
- Learning about culturally appropriate community resources and contacts for Native American families
- Developing stronger relationships with the tribes in San Bernardino County

Based on the results of the survey, it is clear that DCS staff members would like more training on issues related to ICWA, the Native American culture, and culturally appropriate resources and support for Native American families.

In San Bernardino County, African-American children enter the child welfare system more frequently and at higher rates, stay for longer periods, and have lower rates of reunification than children from other ethnic groups. For this reason, a strategy to assess our County's child welfare system's overall understanding and sensitivity to racial and ethnic disparities was included in our County's 2007 Self Improvement Plan. As a result, a survey was conducted of staff from the Department of Children's Services, including Child Welfare Services Managers, Deputy Directors, Social Service Aides, Social Service Practitioners, Social Worker IIs, and Supervising Social Service Practitioners. Completed surveys were received from 336 DCS staff members, resulting in a response rate of 68%. Summary of results follow:

- The majority (53%) of staff believes that ethnic/racial biases "sometimes" influence decisions made about foster care referrals or cases.
- The majority (57%) of staff also believes that ethnic/racial biases are "sometimes" embedded in child welfare policies, programs, or practices such that they result in unequal treatment of minority groups.
- The majority (78%) of staff believes that certain ethnic/racial groups are overrepresented in the County's child welfare system.
  - Of the staff that believes certain groups are overrepresented, almost all (91%) believe that African-American children are overrepresented and more than half (57%) believe that Hispanic children are overrepresented.
- Staff was almost evenly split on whether all ethnic/racial groups receive similar treatment and/or services, with 49% reporting that all ethnic/racial groups receive similar services and 51% reporting that they do not believe all groups receive similar services.
  - Of the 51% who believe services and treatment are not similar for different groups, the majority thought that African-American and Hispanic families receive different services and/or are treated differently.
- "Family in poverty" and "Substance abuse of parent" were reported by the majority of staff (68% and 66%, respectively) as reasons for the

overrepresentation of African-American children in our County's child welfare system.

- The majority of social workers reported that the following factors are problems in San Bernardino County:
  - Lack of bilingual translators
  - Lack of bilingual or culturally sensitive counseling services
  - Lack of bilingual or culturally sensitive legal services
  - Lack of culturally and ethnically sensitive parenting classes
  - Lack of culturally and ethnically diverse staff/therapists
  - Lack of accessibility to resources for certain ethnic/racial groups

In summary, it appears that most of the staff is aware of the ethnic and racial disparities and the disproportionate number of African-American children in our child welfare system. Therefore, training that focuses on informing social workers about disparities and disproportionality that exist may not be a priority. Instead, training that educates staff on differences across and within cultures, biases that may exist subconsciously, and how to access and find culturally and linguistically appropriate services for families and children may be of more benefit to social workers. Lack of linguistically, culturally and ethnically appropriate services and diverse staff are believed to be a problem in our County. For this reason, locating and/or contracting with more diverse service providers could benefit families and their children and may be a step in reducing the disparities in our system.

## **H. 7. Agency Collaboration**

San Bernardino County has a long history of collaborative relationships on behalf of abused and/or neglected and at risk children. Chief among those is the **San Bernardino County Children's Network** which came into existence in 1986 with the express purpose of increasing collaboration between and among public and private agencies that serve at risk children in San Bernardino County. The **Children's Policy Council** has been previously discussed. Other components of the Children's Network include: the **Children's Lobby**, an interagency group of legislative analysts who review child related legislation and make recommendations to the Policy Council; the **Child Abuse Prevention Council**, an interagency planning group; and the **Community Assistance Network/Children's Advocate Linkage** (in partnership with the First Five of San Bernardino) which is a mutually on-going partnership between the various components of the Children's Network and children's services providers, advisory boards, local educational agencies, child advocates, community collaborative and community-based organizations, the religious community, and the community at-large. It has four related collaboratives which are the:

- **Big Bear Valley Community Network, Big Bear**
- **Focus West Collaborative, Ontario**
- **East Valley Collaborative, San Bernardino**
- **High Desert Partnership for Kids, Apple Valley**

The non-profit member of the San Bernardino County Children's Network is the **Children's Fund**, which has its purpose to call to action private businesses, non-profit organizations, and concerned citizens to form a public/private partnership on behalf of at risk children in the County.

In September of 2008 the Children's Network held its **22nd Annual Children's Conference** which was attended by over 600 participants who had the opportunity to choose between 60 workshops on a variety of interesting and important issues related to child welfare and children at risk.

### **DCS Agency Collaborations**

The Department of Children's Services collaborates with numerous other agencies, prevention and intervention programs, and other collaboratives. Many of the collaboratives and related programs have been described above in other sections. They exist along the entire continuum of the child welfare system from prevention and very early intervention (**SART**), to multi-agency assessment of child abuse cases (**Children's Assessment Center**), to interagency committees striving to coordinate system and agency responses (**DCS-Court Committee and the 241.1 Committee**) to mental health assessments (**Healthy Homes**) and individualized, strengths based intervention services (**Wraparound**), to **Linkages** between child welfare services and financial assistance, to innovative judicial responses to substance abuse issues (**Dependency Drug Court**), to helping foster youth transition into adulthood (**Independent Living Program Task Force**).

There are other collaborations that exist along this child welfare continuum of care that have not yet been described. These include the **Interagency Placement Committee (IPC)** which has a membership including DBH, DCS, County Schools Foster Youth Services, Probation, Children's Network and functions as an MDT with the purpose of triaging children in or in need of high-level group home placement, providing access to most the most intense levels of treatment programs for those children and youth who really need them, and identifying placement-related resource gaps.

Another innovative collaboration is **Juvenile Court Behavioral Health Services (JCBHS)** which is a DBH program, in collaboration with DCS, Probation, Public Health, and the Juvenile Court. A team of therapists, a DBH Supervisor, child psychiatrists, and psychiatric RN meet to ensure foster and probation youth receiving psychotropic medications are getting proper medications, and appropriate services to meet their behavioral and mental health needs. A weekly case conferencing meeting is held with JCBHS staff, a DCS Court Supervisor and other regional DCS Supervisors, the Public Health Nurse who maintains the DCS Psychotropic Medications Desk, Probation Officers, and the Public Health Nurse for Probation. Social Workers, Probation Officers, Attorneys and Judges can refer to the JCBHS for consultation on youth who are on court ordered psychotropic medications, and in some cases, for a formal assessment and

report by JCBHS. The DCS and Probation partners staff cases weekly with the Team to ensure youth are receiving appropriate services.

The **Inland Regional Center (IRC) Multidisciplinary Team** meets monthly with representatives from DCS and other agencies. There was repeated mention during workgroup and team meetings that efforts should be made to heighten the level of cooperation between IRC and the other social service agencies.

**Operation Phoenix** is a major initiative developed and overseen by the Mayor of San Bernardino, and includes a partnership of numerous agencies and others with the goals of reducing crime and gang violence, improving the quality of life in areas with very high crime rates, enhancing services to families in targeted areas, and protecting at-risk children. Partners include: DCS, Probation, Public Health, DBH, Children's Fund, County Code Enforcement, First Five, Police, Parks and Recreation Dept, City Attorney and City Manager, Fire Department, City Unified School District, State Department of Corrections, County Sheriff, Faith Based Organizations, and others. DCS funds a full-time Social Worker position to provide prevention services to families in need in the Operation Phoenix area.

### **Probation Department Agency Collaborations**

The Probation Department also engages in numerous collaborations many of which have already been discussed or described. They include the following entities:

- **241.1 Committee** (with DCS)
- **Independent Living Skills** (with DCS)
- **Wraparound** (with DCS, DBH)
- **INFO** (Integrating New Family Opportunities)
- **Drug Court**
- **Gang and Drugs Task Force** (local law enforcement, citizens, schools)
- **Children's Policy Council** (DBH, DCS, County Superintendent of Schools, Department of Public Health, etc)
- **LEEP** (Law Enforcement and Education Partnership)
- **Operation Phoenix** (local law enforcement, Probation)
- **Residential-Based Services** pilot (DCS, DBH, Probation)
- **Domestic Violence Consortium**
- **IPC** (Interagency Placement Committee) – DCS, Probation, DBH, others
- **CDRT** (Child Death Review Team) – Public Health, Coroner, Rialto Fire Dept, Sheriff's Crimes Against Children, Probation, DBH, DCS, Loma Linda Children's Hospital, others
- **JCBHS** (Juvenile Court Behavioral Health Systems Committee-explained above)

- **Children’s Lobby** (part of the Children’s Network - with DCS, DBH)
- **TAY Center** (Transitional Assistance for Youth)
- **CITA court** (Center for Individualized Treatment of Adolescents) and advisory board
- **Children’s Strategic Planning Committee**
- **School Probation Officer Program** (Probation and school districts)
- **Graffiti Task Force** (with Ontario PD, Sheriff’s Upland PD, Cal Trans)
- **GREAT** (Gang Reduction and Education program) – probation and local schools
- **SARB** (School Attendance Review Board) –probation, local schools
- **CST** (Community Service Teams; work with local police departments)
- **MDT meetings** (Multi-Disciplinary Teams, in conjunction with schools, detention facilities, Department of Behavioral Health, Inland Regional Center)
- **Reintegration** Provides individual case planning, home visits, and referrals in order to assist youth in transitioning back into the community
- **FAST** (Forensic Adolescent Services Team) in detention facilities, in conjunction with DBH)
- **Juvenile Court/Probation Judge’s Meeting**
- **Spiritual Concerns Committee** (partnership with local faith-based organizations and churches to provide religious services and bible study to youth in detention facilities)

### **DCS and Probation Agency Collaborations Focus Groups**

When the focus groups on agency collaborations were asked about barriers to collaboration that adversely affect the delivery of services to families and children they listed the following:

- Time demands generated by sheer caseload size and workload often inhibited the ability to attend collaborative meetings on behalf of clients.
- Poor communication between agencies.
- Fragmentation of services.
- Territorial attitudes among some workers that seemed to be related to a feeling of “ownership” of certain cases that were, in reality, shared cases.
- Lack of respect for and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of professionals from agencies other than one’s own.
- Concerns with confidentiality that prevented the sharing of needed information.
- Laws, regulations, policies, and practices that prevented the timely sharing of information and acquisition of resources and services for unique groups such as children with special health care needs.

When asked what recommendations they had for change or improvement in collaborative efforts across and between agencies involved in Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation Services in San Bernardino County, the members of this workgroup discussed the need to consider the following:

- Increase the levels of staff in agencies so more effective casework could be practiced
- Develop more specialized units to increase the level of competence and practice skills among workers which would lead to better outcomes
- Cross train line level workers of Probation, DCS, the Department of Behavioral Health, and Law Enforcement so that they better understand each others roles and professional responsibilities. This cross training might even include “ride-alongs”
- Encourage agencies to proactively reach out to each other and engage in discussions of mutual interest
- Update internal agency policy manuals to more accurately reflect how practice is actually being conducted
- Develop interagency policies and procedures that would inform line social workers and supervisors how to handle cases from a systems perspective rather than an individual agency perspective

## **I. Summary Assessment**

### **1. Discussion of Strengths and Areas Needing Improvement**

San Bernardino County’s Self-Assessment of its Child and Family Services demonstrates that the County Departments of Children’s Services and Probation and the myriad of agencies and collaboratives that are part of its overall Child Welfare System are continuing to provide quality services to the children and families in their care and that the services they provide are contributing to positive outcomes.

The County uses its Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment (CAPIT), and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funds for an impressive number of **Countywide Prevention Activities and Strategies** which emphasize evidence based practices.

San Bernardino County is continuing to do well and moving in the right direction on the child welfare **outcome** measures of **safety** and **permanence** and has a number of best practices and other initiatives related to the **well being** of children in the care of the Department of Children’s Services (DCS) and the Probation Department.

In addition, the Departments of Probation and Children’s Services both have impressive and sophisticated **Management Information Systems** that are

constantly being upgraded and refined in order to track cases and ultimately improve services delivered to children and families in the County.

The Juvenile Court and the role it plays in the **Case Review System** is a strength for the County. Both DCS and Probation have regularly scheduled collaborative meetings with the court and related personnel. The focus groups pertaining to this systemic factor reported on a positive, collaborative working relationship between the Juvenile Court and related agencies and personnel. The Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court was mentioned repeatedly as a positive force in creating this collaborative atmosphere.

There are active **Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention** activities in the County. Foster parent licensing background checks in the County exceed State standards and in an effort to place more emphasis on foster parent recruitment, training and retention efforts, DCS has begun contracting out those services to a community-based organization so that they might be better provided in the evenings and on weekends.

The **Quality Assurance System** is a strength for San Bernardino County. The Quality Assurance Team of DCS meets regularly and its members have a sophisticated understanding of data and the inter-relatedness of data measures as they are related to child welfare outcomes in the County, and they are able to link the data to policies and practices within the County. The Quality Assurance Team enlisted the aid of additional DCS and Probation staff members as well as representatives from other agencies to examine child welfare outcomes for the purposes of this self-assessment and used the opportunity for extensive discussions related to ideas on improving service delivery.

The **Service Array** in the County is one of its outstanding strengths. The County has an incredible number and diversity of prevention and intervention services that are so numerous and complex that even experienced social work and probation staff, such as members of the Services Array workgroup, were not aware of the full gamut of services that are potentially available to children and families.

An impressive network of **Staff/Provider Training** resources is available for the training of social workers and probation officers who care for at risk children and youth in the County and other training is made available in a variety of ways to birth parents, foster parents, prospective adoptive parents, kin care providers, and other care providers.

**Agency Collaboration** is clearly a strength in San Bernardino County. The Children's Network, founded in 1986 by the County Board of Supervisors, actively participates in the Children's Policy Council. The Council is composed of the major leaders in the County's child welfare programs, and is the County's official Child Abuse Prevention Council. The current focus for the County is

building and supporting partnerships and collaborations towards the goal of improving services for children and families. One tangible result of this self-assessment process was an increased collaboration between Department of Children's Services Staff and Probation Staff on the Team and in other workgroups, which facilitated a better understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, and created new working relationships between staff across two major agencies that often serve the same children and youth.

## **2. Strategies for the Future**

Even areas evaluated as strengths can often use improvement and members of the focus groups in the Self-Assessment made important recommendations to further facilitate positive change.

One important recommendation arrived at independently by several workgroups was that the County consider adding resources to existing data bases such as the 2-1-1 system so that social workers, probation officers, and others are better able to link consumers with the services they need.

It was further suggested that the County examine the feasibility of additional services for particular groups and in particular areas. Although the County has many programs and services available, the PSSF/CAPIT services providers generally reported no difficulties in meeting their contracted service numbers even though funding levels declined. Some providers indicated that they had to turn clients away or stop accepting referrals. Thus it is very likely there are unmet services needs even in the most populated areas of the County. Even in these areas families often have difficulty getting to services because of transportation problems and other issues. The more remote areas encounter transportation and access issues due to distance and availability of public transportation systems. Increasing the availability and flexibility of services in these areas is an important priority.

One suggestion was that the County consider establishing co-located service centers where families being served by DCS and Probation could obtain a variety of services at the same place. Several Workgroups and focus groups also acknowledged the long standing issue in San Bernardino County which is that the sheer size of the county makes it difficult to provide services that are readily accessible to residents in the regions that are long distances from the major population areas.

Although San Bernardino's County's collaborative efforts are at a highly advanced level, the Agency Collaboration Workgroup recommended that agencies consider proactively reaching out to each other more frequently, that staff from multiple agencies engage in cross training exercises, and that developing interagency policies and procedures be considered in order to improve the quality of services to the County's children and families who are often served by more than one agency at a time.

The Quality Assurance Workgroup echoed suggestions made in other Workgroups that the County develop and provide additional training for staff and care providers related to cultural competency particularly concerning the Native American Tribal population. Additionally, training on the cultures of poverty, substance abuse, and gangs was recommended. The expressed need for additional training in matters related to the Native American Tribal Population was strongly echoed in the survey of social workers cited above.

### **Outcomes Selected for Increased Efforts**

Both the Department of Children's Services (DCS) and the Probation Department are involved in, or directly provide programs and services that exist along a continuum of prevention and interventions that occur: before children are involved with either agency, to children who have fallen into the at-risk category, to children who come into custody or jurisdiction of the agency and court, to youth who are transitioning into adulthood after having been supervised by one or both agencies for a significant period of their lives. Each of these major child welfare agencies has, during this self-assessment process, identified two major areas that need additional focus during the next three years. The first area is services related to prevention and early intervention so that children and youth never enter the system at all or enter the system and then after a short period of intervention return safely to their parents. The second area is services related to helping children who have essentially been raised by the system transition into adulthood and develop into productive, healthy adults with meaningful emotional attachments.

DCS is involved in increased efforts at evidence based prevention with such innovative and best practices as the **SART** program and Probation, an agency long involved in prevention efforts, had a focus group during this self-assessment process involving juvenile court personnel that recommended even further efforts by that Department, if funding could be obtained, in the prevention area.

The *Reunification within 12 months* measure (entry cohort – measure C1.3) was selected for additional attention by DCS in the future because an improvement of the outcomes on this measure should have the effect of reducing the overall numbers of youth in care as the result of maltreatment. DCS has already made clear efforts to increase the rate of reunification within 12 months (entry cohort – C1.3) through its increased use of the Comprehensive Assessment Tool, increased used of the Family 2 Family approach including Team Decision Making Meetings (TDMs), increased evidenced based PSSF/CAPIT services, and other best practice initiatives.

Building on the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) results which suggested that the child welfare system should be *Engaging Transition Age Youth in Case Planning for the Future* and its own examination of the Outcome Measures, the Quality Assurance Workgroup recommendations to the County Self-Assessment

Team were that the County should devote additional time and effort to improving outcomes on *reunification* within 12 months (measure C1.3), *placement stability* (measure C4.3), and *long term care outcomes* (measures C3.1 and 3.3). It can be expected that improvement in these measures will reflect improved outcomes for older youth in care.

DCS has already made concerted efforts to improve the outcome measures on Placement Stability (C4.3) through best practices, such as: Team Decision Making Meetings, Family Group Decision Making, family finding, relative approval units (including emergency response), use of Wraparound, increased use of Specialized Care Increments for care providers, and an Adolescent Specialized Unit. Efforts to improve long term care outcomes include many of the same programs mentioned above such as Team Decision Making meetings, increased Family Finding, Family Group Decision Making, the planned Residential Based Services pilot, Concurrent Planning Reviews, the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP), and revisiting reunification with birth parents as possible permanent placements for youth.

Improving Long Term Care Outcomes (C.1) also involves helping foster youth transition to self-sufficiency and DCS envisions having its Educational Liaisons begin working with youth at younger ages; expanding the Independent Living Program and making additional use of Specialized Care Increments for care providers to assist youth in building life skills; beginning Emancipation Conferencing before age 16 and having such meetings a minimum of every six months; making additional use of the Connected 25 Initiative (CCI Program); and continuing in the development of the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP); and other initiatives in an effort to help transitional age youth achieve lasting emotional relationships with caring adults and lead productive healthy lives.