



# Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee

The mission of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee is to provide oversight for and promote communication between the Board of Supervisors, the Department of Social Services and its related agencies, and the community, with emphasis on providing information and recommendations that make the system more effective and efficient.

## MINUTES

October 4, 2023

9:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Meeting held in-person for Committee Members and public.  
Virtual option via Microsoft Teams for public only.

### I. Call to order and introductions.

**Wilma Hashimoto**

- Meeting called to order by Wilma Hashimoto (Chair, District 5) at 9:10 AM with roll call by DSS Staff Support, Julia Perez.

### II. Approve Minutes for **September 6, 2023** and **October 4, 2023** Agenda.

- Ed Avila (District 5) motioned; Rosemary Alanis (District 4) seconded to approve the September 2023 Minutes and October 2023 Agenda.

### III. New Business

#### A. Presentation: Origins of FCSOC and the Committee's Role

**Wilma**

- Wilma went over former Committee Member's, Nancy Richardson, 2001 letter to the Board of Supervisors (BOS). Nancy's letter drew concern for children living in motels. A comparison was drawn to the current concern for children staying at Mod C.
- Wilma asked what could be done so in the future the same issues are not as prevalent.
- Child Welfare Services (CWS) Deputy Director, Cathi Huerta, recalled 2001 difficulties finding homes for teenagers and children with complex needs, which is still the issue today.
  - Motels were used so that the youth would at least have a bed to sleep in. This was not a perfect solution but it was the best one at the time.
  - After the Fresno Bee publicized the events in 2001, the community came together and offered help. Agencies that had previously declined assistance due to lack of space offered to take in youth.
- Wilma discussed Ms. Richardson's Letter to providing BOS Chairman Bob Waterson with recommendations that would benefit foster youth.

#### B. Presentation from DSS Staff Development on Child Welfare

**Cheryl O'Conner**

- Social Work Supervisor, Cheryl O'Conner, gave a presentation on Child Welfare Services. PowerPoint slides were provided to Committee members.
  - CWS is comprised of: Emergency Response, Family Reunification, Family Maintenance, Permanency Planning, and Service Supports.
  - Emergency Response (ER) is a 24/7 program.
    - Structured Decision Making (SDM) is a tool used to assist in decision making during Emergency Response. Looks at client history with the Department.
  - Family Reunification (FR) provides services to caregivers and children who have been removed from the home to safely reunify the family. The Juvenile Dependency Court orders services to be provided based on the case plan developed from the Social Worker and the family.
  - Family Maintenance (FM) also involves court ordered services to prevent abuse or neglect while children are in the home.
  - Permanency Planning: when FR services are being terminated, Juvenile Dependency Court sets a Selection and Implementation hearing with 120 days of termination; permanent plans of adoption or legal guardianship are assessed.
    - Extended Foster Care is for youth aged 18-21 years who receive assistance with housing and other services. This helps with the transition into adulthood.
  - Service Supports include:
    - Family Finding – reconnects youth with people who have expressed concern/care in the past and engages known and newly found family toward permanency for the child.
    - Resource Family Approval (RFA) – works with County-approved foster homes.
    - Resource Family Support (RFS) – provides crisis and planned placement seeking services for youth

- who have been removed from caregivers or need new placement.
  - Cultural Broker Program – designed to address concerns related to disproportionality and disparities by providing culturally sensitive services to at-risk children and families.
  - Parent Partner Program – parents who have successfully completed court-ordered services and come back to help parents that are going through the system now.
  - Public Health Nurses (PHN) – assist in advocating and coordinating health care needs of children in out-of-home care.
  - Independent Living Program (ILP) – Provides youth and non-minor dependents (NMD) with placement at foster homes, transitional living programs. ILP provides program services, activities, and referrals to resources needed to be successful in adulthood. Program is available to youth until 21 years of age.
  - Court Writers – review case narratives and documentation; select pertinent information to complete court reports that are presented to the Juvenile Dependency Court.
  - Court Officers – staff who sit in the courtroom and monitor cases as they are heard before the Judge. Court Officers can provide direct feedback to the Social Workers, Supervisors, or Program Managers if there is a question that presents itself in the courtroom; provide information to the court upon the court's request.
- The Juvenile Dependency Flow Chart was shared with Committee. The flowchart represents the process for the court system.

#### IV. Discuss and Finalize FY 22-23 Annual Report to BOS

All

##### A. Discuss results of DSS CWS Social Work Staff Survey

- District 2 Committee member, Kevin Lisitsin, reported that the Ad Hoc Subcommittee formed to create a survey. The results received noted social workers felt the strain of a large workload and caseloads, especially when there is turnover.
- A continuance was requested to allow time for the Ad Hoc Subcommittee to further discuss goals related to the survey results.
- District 1 Committee member, Karina Perez, suggested that one of the goals could be to focus on the staff. If staff is taken care of, then clients are taken care of as well.
- The survey questions asked were:
  - What is working well in CWS? Why is this working well?
  - What are your worries about CWS and why?
  - Are there any other positive or negative items you would like to share with this Committee?
- The survey was sent out to approximately 325 employees and 106 (32.6%) responses were received.
- CWS Deputy Director, Dalvin Baker, acknowledged that there have been common themes in the SW responses.
- DSS Director, Sanja Bugay, informed the Committee of the Department's goal of 15 non-crisis cases per employee. Currently, most SWs have under 25 cases, but there are staff with larger caseloads.
  - The most challenging area is Adoptions. Most Adoptions SWs carry between 40-52 cases.
  - A Master's degree in Social Work is required to be an Adoptions Social Worker. One of the current challenges is that there are just not enough college students applying to that graduate program.
- When asked about the top reasons why Social Workers leave DSS, Dalvin stated that some employees do not view Social Work as a life-long career but rather as a steppingstone for other job positions, or the job is not a good match.
- Sanja stated the CWS currently has an 11% vacancy rate.
- SEIU Internal Organizer, Maya Daugherty, reported that SEIU did an "information request" regarding retention/turnover rates for SW I, II, and III classifications, and that the information they were provided differed from the 11% rate. According to Simone Cranston-Rose, the turnover rates are as follows:
  - Social Worker I - 83.3%
  - Social Worker II – 104.4%
  - Social Worker III - 42.7%
- District 2 Committee Member, Tracy Kashian, asked about the training process for recent graduates who are hired for Social Worker positions. According to Staff Development, there are different levels of training for different positions and task areas. There is Induction, which is an overview of CWS, and Social Work Core, which consists of new hires shadowing other SWs in their unit. Training takes about 6 months. Staff Development plays a significant role in the onboarding process for new staff, especially new Social Workers.

- Sanja discussed the partnership DSS has with California State University, Fresno (CSUF) Academy for Training. Most college interns at DSS come from CSUF, as they are the local.

**B. Approve and Authorize FY 23-24 FCSOC Goals for Next Year’s Report**

**All**

- Ongoing communication regarding goal-setting took place. Members used the “Goals on Post-Its FCSOC 23-24 Goals” handout as a guide.
- Tracy suggested continued discussion, after goals were set, on how to achieve these goals and how to best show/track progress.
- Potential Goals discussion based on the priorities submitted by each member in the prior meeting with the following issues to address and to be prioritized for the 23/24 year and utilizing these issues to address as a roadmap for the future:
  - Board of Supervisors to assist in a comprehensive campaign for additional resource homes and social workers
  - Increase DSS recruitment and retention of social workers
  - Youth-related goal includes education and placement stability in the County of Fresno.
  - Campaigning goal to spread awareness of resources available to foster youth.
- FY 23-24 goals include: education and placement stability, medical needs of foster youth, and providing support for resource families
- Clarification was provided regarding the difference between the fiscal year’s goals included in the Annual Reports and recommendations made to the BOS by the Committee.

**C. Approve and Authorize Annual Report to go to BOS**

- Tracy motioned to approve the recommendations and goals discussed and to authorize Wilma to develop the language of the report on behalf of the Committee, allowing the Members to modify, if needed; Kevin seconded the motion.

**V. Public Comments**

- SEIU 521 Political Organizer, Simone Cranston-Rose, invited attendees to SEIU-hosted Crisis and Care Community Town Hall, taking place on October 12<sup>th</sup> at the Tower Theater, to discuss solutions to issues Social Workers are facing.

**VI. Adjourn**

**Wilma**

- Next meeting will be held on November 1, 2023, in-person for Committee members and the public, and virtually via Microsoft Teams, for members of the public only. *Please note: FCSOC meetings require in-person attendance in order to participate. Virtual option is view-only.* Meeting adjourned by Wilma at 1:06 PM.

**Committee Attendance**

District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5
		<input type="checkbox"/> Sal Quintero <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ari Martinez (Proxy)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Karina Perez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kevin Lisitsin	<input type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Thomas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rosemary Alanis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pamela Hancock
<b>Vacant</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maisie Young	<b>Vacant</b>	<b>Vacant</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ed Avila
<b>Vacant</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy Kashian	<b>Vacant</b>	<b>Vacant</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wilma Hashimoto

\* Marked Boxes Indicate Committee Member Attended

**Attending Staff and Guests**

**In Person:** Sanja Bugay, Dalvin Baker, Kimberli Smith, Cathi Huerta, Julia Perez, Taylor Chavez, Tyiquanette Dilldine, Rebekah Eropkin, Brian Van Anne, Amina Flores-Becker, Joanna Litchenberg, Maya Daugherty, Simone Cranston-Rhodes, Dr. Williams (Bridge)  
**Microsoft Teams:** Rebekah Rodriquez, Lorraine Ramirez, Marilyn Sliney, Christie Lee, Joshua Lawson, Chad Valorosi, Cheryl Whittle