



# 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

January 5, 2022  
9:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.  
Meeting held via Zoom

### I. Call to order and introductions.

Wilma

Meeting called to order by Wilma at 9:00 AM with round table introductions.

### II. Approve minutes for *December 1, 2021* and the current meeting's agenda.

Tracy Kashian motioned to approve current meeting agenda and minutes for November 3, 2021, Jill Stepke second the motion to approve agenda and minutes. Agenda and minutes approved unanimously.

### III. Updates.

#### A. Consultant to the Board of Supervisors for DSS Update.

Cathi

- Cathi Huerta reported it has been a productive month, working closely with Tricia Gonzalez and interim Director Maria Aguirre. They have been discussing what the current issues are, Mod C, policy and procedures, and coming up with policies for keeping children safe and housed. The number of kids in the building has decreased dramatically. Cathi shared she has talked to a lot of people and has found everyone to be committed to the safety of the children. She has been able to take some of the ideas she has heard back to the department. Cathi emphasized the importance of community and explained she will continue reaching out, but she can also be reached by phone: (559) 351-3491.

#### B. Legislative Updates.

Tricia

- Tricia reported there has not been a meeting but there may be a report out next month.
- Ian Coolbear, Assemblyman Patterson's office, explained they are working with some private parties and looking to get into the issue but for now there are no updates.

#### C. Department of Social Services Addressing Critical Areas.

Tricia

- Tricia reported the department has been spending their time refining efforts, reaching out to people, obtaining technical assistance, and reaching out to partners. A lot of partners have been asking how to assist. At the same time, the department has been working to figure out how to stabilize the children. Tricia shared November 2021 was still unstable as far as placements but December 2021 was much better. As an example, over the past two weeks there was 1 youth who stayed at mod C the full 2 weeks, 4 children went through mod C with less than a 24 hour stay, about 4.5 hours on average, 4 children who stayed in the office less than 4 hours, and 36 children who changed placement without going into the office at all.
- It came up at the last meeting, the importance of separating kids for their own safety. There are a mixture of kids being served at the same time, so the department made the decision to utilize L Street along with Mod C. This is allowing the department to set themselves up for what it will look like after the move to Building 5 at the Clovis Campus at the end of April.
- Beginning this week there is a local strike team, which is basically a multidisciplinary review of the child's case, along with the child's current team.
- The department is continuing the emphasis on relative placements, but working with partners to increase the number of homes available for placements.
- Staffing remains an issue, there is a 17% vacancy rate with social workers and social work practitioners. Met with human resources about continuous recruitment, how to speed up the number of interviews, and how to be more creative about recruitment.
- Staff have expressed the need for more training on dealing with the kids who have more complex needs so the department has enrolled staff in an online de-escalation training. There is also a Mental Health First Aid training available, however, it is in person so there have been some challenges. Reached out to other Child Welfare directors to see what trainings they provide and contacted Behavioral Health for recommendations of what they use to train. Currently looking at the feasibility of the trainings due to being in-person.
- Invited the members of this committee to a tour of the new building next week.
- Tricia shared she will reach out to the members to talk one-on-one about any questions or concerns they may have.
- Pam Hancock asked where the Board of Supervisors are at with regards to increasing salaries. Paul Nerland, CAO, answered

stating the Board made some public statements explaining there has been an agreement which will go before the board on January 18, 2022. Not much can be said about it since the union (SEIU) needs to ratify it, but it does address social worker compensation. Supervisor Quintero added there are a couple of Supervisors interested in keeping informed and wanting to be much more engaged than previously.

- Jill asked why there were 35 children with placement movements, how there are enough placements, and how it is done with the limited staff. Tricia explained there are a number of reasons why children move placements – stepping down from a high level of care to a lower level of care, moving from a foster family to a family member, or reunifying with parents.
- James asked if there are programs working with the colleges so there is a pipeline of applicants from the community colleges. He also asked if there was going to be a salary analysis to compare what the rest of the state pays social workers. Tricia shared the department does work closely with the Title IVE program but it does not seem to be far enough and they are looking at how to reach out to other university departments because of the fact a student does not need to major in social work in order to be a social worker. The compensation study is something to be followed-up on after the January 18, 2022 Board Meeting. Paul Nerland explained there have been salary comparisons and surveys already done. When the salary is approved by the board and the union, it will be re-evaluated and action will be taken immediately.
- In response to Rosemary Alanis's question about Social Worker caseloads, Tricia shared they carry between 20 – 40 cases, depending on the task area, due to turnover, LOAs, etc., which is too high.
- Rich Bailey brought up the issue of appearances by non-attorneys at court hearings for the children and wanted an assurance for a plan to have an attorney at all court proceedings in the future and for an attorney to review all court reports before it is presented. Rich explained these processes could help with turnover because the Social Worker would have the needed support. Tricia explained those procedures are not currently happening, however, she has the opportunity to discuss county counsels capacity.
- Judge Mary Dolas commented the number of cases judges, attorneys, and social workers are carrying are too high and changes do need to be made. She also emphasized the importance of community involvement and providing services before removal happens to try to alleviate caseloads.

#### **IV. New Business.**

##### **A. Kinship Priority Rubric**

**Tricia**

- Tricia proposed having one of the program managers report out on topics, as it relates to their task area, as questions arise in the future.
- Tricia shared a PowerPoint presentation with data on the number of court cases over time, relative placements, Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC), and Wraparound Services.

##### **B. FFA Update**

**Brian**

- Brian Van Anne shared an outline of the process for accepting placement of children into a Foster Family Home, for becoming a resource family or resource family approval, and what support from a FFA looks like.
- Pam asked why there is a discrepancy with the timeframe for Resource Family approval. Some have said a year and others are reporting 4 months. Brian explained it could be a number of things such as changes in the family unit or employment. Tricia added the department focuses on relative and mentor placement and, due to the issue with staff retention, approving a resource family could be a longer process so the department tries to refer possible resource families to the FFAs for approval.
- Patricia Miller asked if ISFC and respite are available through the FFAs. Brian explained respite is available through Transitions Children's Services, however, they do not allow it during holidays as it is not appropriate to put the children in a respite home during a major holiday.
- Rebekah Rodriguez shared EA Family Services provides on-call 24/7 support, weekend support based on the resource parents' needs, ISFC and respite as needed, and THP for youth transitioning from foster care and in need of ongoing support towards self-sufficiency.
- Tracy asked if there is a difference between approving a family member as opposed to a resource family. Brian explained it is the same process under the continuum of care reform, regardless of the type of caregiver, everyone has to go through the same process. The main difference is if you are a relative provider, you can have your relative in placement with you while you are going through the process. If you are going through an agency, you cannot have a child with you until you complete the process.
- Whitney Bunker asked if Sacramento would be an appropriate county to consult with to gain help with the RFA backlog. Pam clarified with Tricia, she is already reaching out to other counties.

##### **C. Vote for Zoom option in February 2022.**

- Rich motioned to approve Zoom for February, James Martinez second the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

**V. Review of Action Items.**

**A. Collapse and Dissolution of the Education Subcommittee.**

**Pam**

- Pam reported the Education subcommittee voted to suspend, not dissolve, the subcommittee until reports are received and there is guidance on how they can support the committee. Sonia De La Rosa stated she will review with county counsel on whether there needs to be specific verbiage or if they need to do anything and will report back at the February meeting.
- Supervisor Quintero suggested using James Martinez, district 3, as a liaison. James offered his support to Pam for the meetings.

**VI. Subcommittee Updates.**

**A. Education/Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS)**

**Pam**

- No update.

**B. Children’s Mental Health**

**Wilma**

- Wilma reported CASA presented.

**VII. Round Table Discussion.**

**All**

**A. Elections**

- Ad Hoc subcommittee created
  1. Rich Bailey, Jill Stepke, and Ed Avila volunteered to identify nominees for Chair and Co-Chair.

**VIII. Public Comments.**

None.

**IX. Adjourn.**

**Wilma**

Meeting adjourned by Wilma at 10:38 AM.

**Committee Attendance**

District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sal Quintero <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ari Martinez (Proxy)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James Martinez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rosemary Alanis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pamela Hancock
<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Thomas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richard Bailey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ed Avila (via Zoom)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jill Stepke	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy Kashian	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patricia Miller	<input type="checkbox"/> Connie Waldrop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wilma Hashimoto

**Attending Staff and Guests**

Tricia Gonzalez, Erica Lozano, Susana Morales, Anthony Norwood, Brian Van Anne, Catherine Huerta, Dalvin Baker, Danielle M NSFC, Denise Espinoza, Ian Coolbear, Rebekah Rodriguez, Jason Williams, Joanna Litchenberg, Jose Vargas, Judge Mary Dolas, Justin Johnson, Karel Gonzalez, Laura Lopez, Lisa Casarez, Maria Aguirre, Marilyn Bamford, Nichole Bletz, Paul Nerland, Rocky Vang, Shirley Long, Sonia De La Rosa, Sonja Dosti, Whitney Bunker