



# 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

March 2, 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 Hashimoto at 9:00 AM with round table introductions.

### II. Approve minutes for **February 2, 2022** and the current meeting's agenda.

Rich Bailey motioned to approve minutes for February 2, 2022 and the current meeting's agenda, Tracy Kashian second the motion to approve the minutes and agenda.

### III. Updates.

#### A. Legislative Updates.

Elected Official Representative and Tricia

- Ian Coolbear presented on Bill AB 1671, which would prohibit state funded public and private institutions of higher education from reducing scholarship financial aid to students who are current or former foster youth. He provided a fact sheet and instructions on how to submit a letter to the state for those interested.
- Judge Mary Dolas shared the Court Improvement Coalition held their first meeting to discuss pressing issues and ways to improve the court process.

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

Tricia

- Tricia Gonzalez explained March is SW appreciation month and the Board of Supervisors did a proclamation sponsored by supervisor Pacheco at the last meeting.
- Tricia shared a 2021 update in numbers: Child Welfare has 329 allocated social work positions, the department supported the work of 11, soon to be 13, neighborhood resource centers, and answered approximately 18,000 calls at the hotline. The department investigated approximately 9,000 allegations of abuse or neglect, approved 275 homes through the resource family approval process, case managed approximately 2700 court related cases and about 400 voluntary cases, and found permanency for about 1,000 children.
- From a staffing standpoint, there are social work practitioner interviews scheduled for the week of 3/14/2022 and there was a recruitment on 3/1/2022 for social workers and social worker aides. There are 82 vacancies currently.
- Tricia reported on the kids in the office. In Mod C there were 8 kids; 3 stayed for 3 days, 2 for 1 day, and 1 for over a week who was moved back to L St due to her own safety. There was 1 supervised at Valley Children's Hospital for 24 hours since February 25 due to medical necessity. There were 66 children who came through L Street.
- Next month is Child Abuse Prevention month so there will be another report out on prevention and the neighborhood resource centers.
- Wilma requested a one sheet of the data Tricia reported on.

#### C. DSS Update from Interim Director

Maria

- Maria Aguirre reported the department is working closely with the state to address the placement issues Fresno County is having.
- Maria acknowledged the staff is working diligently to ensure the children's needs are being met.
- Cathi Huerta reinforced the work the department is doing together has been positive. She explained the meeting Judge Dolas called about the courts is another positive step forward.
- Jill Stepke expressed gratitude towards the social workers for all of their hard work.
- Rocky Vang asked about the permanency of the one individual who has been staying at L St. and if there is a timeline for her being placed. Tricia and Maria explained the child had been at L St for 1 day, it is not a long term stay, but she was moved from Mod C to L St for her safety and the staff is working diligently on solutions for placement and advocating for her and her mental health needs.
- Rich asked what is being done with respect to the county being represented during the court hearings for the children. Maria explained there have been meetings with county counsel, the CAO, Judge Dolas, and Cathi Huerta. Beginning March 7, counsel will appear at all Detention hearings. The process will take time, but the department is taking the issue seriously and making changes where they can, when they can.
- Social Worker Lorraine Ramirez asked how many children are in the office, how long they have been in the office, and

where the children are sleeping. She expressed concern about the department reverting back to where the issues began. Tricia explained the department is doing their best to utilize all locations efficiently, including the L St location when it appears the child/ren will be placed fairly quickly.

- Rich asked how other counties handle children experiencing mental health episodes and Jill asked Lorraine if she had any suggestions of how to handle the situations since she has the most experience working with the children. Lorraine recommended reaching out to mental health clinicians or other mental health professionals to help with socializing the children so they are not confined to an office with florescent lighting on them all day long and expressed the need for a facility where the children can be comfortable while they wait, not in an office building or conference room.
- Rich explained the committee could be helpful with doing research on how other counties handle these situations, reviewing the current procedures, and assessing the problems to find a solution. Cathi and Maria agreed to report on the procedures in the future.
- Rosemary Alanis asked if the department has already reached out to outside agencies who can take in the children with high needs or mental health needs. Tricia shared the department is working with outside agencies/partners statewide for resources, support, and to find placement for the children.
- James asked if the upper management meets regularly with the frontline workers to ascertain the needs and required resources for the children. Tricia explained there are mechanisms in place and regular communication on a weekly basis but the department could use more.
- Patricia Miller expressed concern over placing high needs children in family homes because there are some children who will not thrive in a family home or will take advantage of the resource family. She shared the resource families do not want to take in those children who will be overly disruptive or violent. She asked for clarification why the facilities required to take care of those children were disbanded. Maria explained the department and partners have been contacting the state and advocating for solutions to this issue.
- Social Worker Rebekah Ramirez shared the names of organizations who can be utilized as resources for children with mental health needs.
- Elizabeth Thomas asked if the county has considered placing a 24-hour crisis unit who could deal with mental health issues or a place where these children could be housed with a clinician on site. Maria explained a mental health unit would be something the mental health department would have to implement.
- David Rodriguez shared the county has the Family Urgent Response System (FURS) where someone can call, 24/7, if a foster youth or former foster youth is having a mental health crisis. They are trained to handle those situations and if they cannot resolve it, they can contact the local response team, in this case Exodus, to handle the situation at the physical location.
- Kim Hazelton shared she is an ambassador for the California Alliance of Caregivers and they have found other counties are having the same issues. One notable issue is after placing the child with a resource family, the placement fails because the family was not appropriately equipped to provide for the child. She asked if the new facility would have the necessary areas to meet the needs of these children, such as the temporary housing. She also asked how much training the workers and resource families are receiving to be able to care for the high needs children. Kim shared the timing of the Governor requiring out of state children to be returned to their home states was unfortunate.

#### **D. Board Retreat**

- Wilma proposed having a board retreat due to members having left and new members joining to discuss the initial role of the committee.
- Wilma explained she would like to invite founding members of the committee such as Susan Anderson, Nancy Richardson, and Judge Mary Dolas so the current members can learn the history of the committee, the “roadmap” to take, and how to move forward with the tasks at hand.
- Wilma requested a poll be sent out to establish a date and time which will work for everyone to attend.

#### **IV. Review of Action Items.**

**Wilma**

##### **A. Vote on April 6<sup>th</sup> hybrid meeting with zoom and in-person option**

- Rich motioned to hold the meeting via Zoom in April, Ari second the motion.

#### **V. Subcommittee Updates.**

##### **A. Children’s Mental Health**

**Wilma**

- Wilma shared the December minutes for Children’s Mental Health will be sent out, but for now, no updates.

#### **VI. Education.**

**Pam**

- The next meeting is on Monday, March 7, 2022 at 2:00PM via Zoom. Phone number: 559-265-4003 was provided to contact for

the Zoom link. Topic is to provide partner input regarding 2022-23 LCAP goals.

**VII. Round Table Discussion by members.**

**All**

- No update.

**VIII. Public Comments.**

- Rich recommended the department consider implementing a process where a member of the committee is contacted if issues, such as the children staying in the office, arises again so they can begin taking immediate action and informing their appointed Supervisor.
- Lorraine Ramirez explained she would continue advocating for the children and her coworkers who are not formally trained to deal with mental health issues. She also asked if the children who are at L St are going to be moved out of there to a more appropriate setting. Maria explained the situation would be reviewed and taken care of immediately.
- Elizabeth Thomas shared the next Foster Parent Association meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 2, 2022 at 7:00PM via Zoom. Phone number: 559-579-2255 and e-mail: [fosterparentassociation.fresno@gmail.com](mailto:fosterparentassociation.fresno@gmail.com) provided to contact for the Zoom link. Jenn Rexroad, the executive director of the California Alliance of Caregivers, is the guest speaker.

**IX. Adjourn.**

**Wilma**

Next meeting will be on April 6, 2022 via Zoom. Meeting adjourned by Wilma at 10:42 AM.

**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 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
<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, Lorena Gutierrez, Cheri Archuleta, Rocky Vang, Anthony Norwood, Catherine Huerta, Dalvin Baker, Ian Coolbear, Rebekah Rodriguez, Jason Williams, Jose Vargas, Judge Mary Dolas, Justin Johnson, Karel Gonzalez, Laura Lopez, Maria Aguirre, Marilyn Bamford, Nichole Bletz, Shirley Long, Sonia De La Rosa, Sonja Dosti, Bernia Walker, David Rodriguez, Miriam Flores, Jessica Carrillo, Rita Bohannon, Kim Hazelton, Ryan Townsend, Shawn Payvandi, Chad Valarosi, Cheryl Whittle, Danielle M NSFC, Inocencio Salazar, KYJO Trainer, Lorraine Ramirez, Marc Salazar, Maya Daugherty, Renee Ramirez.