



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

May 3, 2023

9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

Meeting held in-person with virtual option via Microsoft Teams

I. Call to order and introductions.

Pam

Meeting called to order by Pam Hancock at 9:16 AM with roll call by DSS Staff Support, Julia Perez.

II. Approve minutes for April 5, 2023.

- Rosemary Alanis (District 4) motioned; Ed Avila (District 5) seconded to approve April 5, 2023 meeting minutes and May meeting agenda.

III. Updates.

A. Legislative Updates.

Elected Official Representative and DSS

- Department of Social Services Director, Sanja Bugay reported on Legislative Bill SB 408. DSS did issue a letter of support for this bill. The bill would allow for an annual allocation to the County for various needs if it is successful.

B. Department of Social Services Addressing Critical Areas.

Dalvin Baker/Kimberli Smith

- DSS Deputy Director, Dalvin Baker recognized May as National Foster Care Appreciation month and stated that DSS CWS has a Proclamation going to the Board of Supervisors on May 9th, in recognition.
- Dalvin provided monthly DSS CWS data points. A handout was provided to the in-person attendees as well as attached to the Microsoft Teams invite for virtual attendees.
 - Currently there are 285 Social Worker positions with 48 vacancies. Recent recruitment has resulted in 24 new hires.
 - The number of open Family Reunification cases have decreased from February to March going from 1,116 cases to 1,101 cases. The number of open Family Maintenance cases have increased from February to March going from 164 cases to 177 cases. These numbers reflect more families are on the reunification track and are now at home with their families while still receiving services from the Department.
 - The term “Emergency Response caseload” was explained as being a case that has passed the referral (investigation) stage and has progressed into an open case that is being actively worked to find solutions.
 - FURS summary report reflected that there were no calls in the month of March 2023. January 2023 had 3 calls and February 2023 had 2 calls. FURS magnets and pamphlets discussed during April’s FCSOC meeting have been ordered; DSS CWS is awaiting their delivery.
 - Placement Metric table provides data on what type of placement youth entered into between April 2022 and March 2023, both in Fresno County and statewide. DSS acknowledges there is still work to be done, and expressed they are currently focusing on relative placement as a first step/option when possible.
 - Data for Out of State Placements in March 2023 showed there were 23 court-specified home placements (out of state family placements involving the courts) and 4 Supervised Independent Living Plan placements (SILP). Additional data states that 22 youth were placed with a relative within 30 days of entry.
 - DSS was asked to share more information regarding the reason for court continuances.
 - DSS response: Some possible reasons for court continuances could be due to the courts or the parents’ attorney requesting additional information or more time to review information provided. The average number of court continuances for dependency cases has decreased from the previous year, from double digits to single digits.
 - March 2023, Mod-C had 19 entries, 4 of which were re-entries.
- DSS Deputy Director, Kimberli Smith shared a status update on CWS Service Enhancement project:
 - Specialization Review Workgroup update: Completed comprehensive evaluation matrix of all specialized assignments in CWS which included allocated positions and staffing, key processing and responsibilities, funding, impact to children, families, staff, and community. A Specialization Transition Plan template was developed to be used by Program Managers for each area being transitioned. The template included but is not limited to timelines, tasks, communication (internal and external), training for staff transitioning and staff receiving new tasks, and

- o policies and procedures. The most effective time for transition is still being determined for some areas.
- o Complex Needs Youth Workgroup 1.0 update: Completed self-evaluation (which informed a bid for the Children’s Crisis Continuum Pilot), provided feedback on strategies for the CCCP, developed 14-day notice placement strategy action plans, reviewed and provided feedback on a STRTP list review, and more.
- o Standby Workgroup update: This workgroup is close to completion., Some accomplishments include: addressing the immediate need for staffing for Standby by developing a strategy for additional volunteers, which resulted in 29 additional staff being identified. A long-term strategy has been developed for Standby that includes new structure, roles and responsibilities, and hours which ensure staffing at times. PPGs have been updated and were distributed the week of 4/30 for review. Initial meetings with Union for Standby approval have been completed, the next step is a follow up meeting to confer with Union for PPG review.
- o Court Improvement Process Workgroup update: In collaboration with County Counsel, the workgroup has revised and updated numerous templates and tools to improve the quality of written reports and support the timely submission of the reports. Electronic filing process and technology developed and consistency through all court reports achieved by creating a checklist for each area, (ie. Family Reunification, Adoptions and PPLA). Next steps include County Counsel’s review of the final tools and templates.
- o RFA Refinement Workgroup update: Previously there were multiple divisions that have now been combined into one as recommend by a CDSS audit. This is referred to as a One Worker Model and has proven effective in situations where a family has only one informed social worker appointed to oversee the entirety of their case. i In addition, DSS IT has been brought in to create a tracking tool for the home assessment process, a collaboration with CDSS for RFA Cares training is in the works and outside partners have been contracted to assist with backlog.
 - At the mention of CDSS audit, Committee Member Rosemary Alanis requested copies of DSS CWS audits be provided to the Committee, including the Department’s responses to any findings. DSS will confirm the requested information can be shared and then distribute. CDSS audits are a regular occurrence and provide good insight to DSS and have led to many improvements since 2022.
- o Training and Coaching Workgroup update: Developed a standardized process for requesting and recording trainings, developing a comprehensive long range SW induction assessment for newly hired SW, developed a CWS training catalog of, and have conducted initial post training survey and analysis. Next steps include: finalizing the survey questions for the 6-month and 12-month post-induction SW assessment, analysis of the training catalog and begin training plans, including identifying missing trainings or needed training enhancements.
 - Kimberli extended an invitation to the FCSOC for the upcoming Safety Organized Practice trainings taking place at 380 W. Ashlan Ave, Clovis, CA 93612 Building 5 in the Hope Plaza room. The dates for this training are May 8-9 and May 15-16 from 9am-4pm. For more information please email: Brenda Estrada-Diaz bdiaz@fresnocountyca.gov or Michael Kifer mkifer@fresnocountyca.gov.
- o A Resource Parent Guide written by CDSS was provided to in-person attendees. This packet will become part of the placement folders provided to foster parents and resource parents. The link to the Resource Guide is: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/foster-care/foster-care-and-adoptive-resource/frequently-asked-questions>
 - Elizabeth Thomas suggested that the packet receive several updates to make it “user friendly”, pointing out that the language used may not be understood by people who do not work within the foster system. DSS agreed that there are areas that can be updated within the pamphlet. Feedback from resource parents’ perspective and the community is appreciated and can be passed along to CDSS.

IV. New Business

A. Year-End Report Planning (Review of 22-23 goals and goalsetting for 23-24)

- Rosemary Alanis (District 4) motioned; Elizabeth Thomas (District 3) seconded to postpone this item until the June, 2023 meeting.

V. Review of Action Items

A. Propose Dates for Board Retreat

- Rosemary Alanis (District 4) motioned; Elizabeth Thomas (District 3) seconded to postpone this item until the June 2023 meeting.

VI. Subcommittee Updates

A. Education

- Kevin Lisitsin (District 2) motioned; Maisie Young (District 2) seconded to postpone this item until the June, 2023 meeting.

Pam

B. Children’s Mental Health

Pam

- Kevin Lisitsin (District 2) motioned; Maisie Young (District 2) seconded to postpone this item until the June, 2023 meeting.

VII. Round Table Discussion by members

All

- Elizabeth Thomas requested a contact list of “Important Phone Numbers” in Child Welfare be made available for Resource Parents/public. The link is as follows: <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/social-services/child-welfare>
 - DSS agreed to follow up with the Committee with a more in-depth list of contacts.
- Kevin Lisitsin suggested an orientation for Committee members to better understand the purpose of the Committee as well as the language used by DSS CWS when providing updates. DSS Director Sanja Bugay asked the Committee for feedback about what information would be helpful to have entering the role of FCSOC. Some feedback included wanting general knowledge of the Child Welfare System; the purpose, role, and guidelines for the Committee; and what can be requested of DSS by the committee?
- Kevin Lisitsin if a SW can be a member of the Committee. Response: Applications are submitted to the Board of Supervisors and members are then appointed. There is no known restriction as to who can apply.
- FCSOC vacancies: There are now 4 vacancies on the Committee, two in District 1, and two in District 4.
- Senior Deputy County Counsel, Rebekah Eropkin, was introduced to the Committee and will be returning in June to present on the Brown Act. Rebekah has been with the County for over 7 years, has a background serving in child welfare, as well as having been a minor’s attorney for Fresno Child Advocates. She will serve as the Committee’s contact at County Counsel.
- Karina Perez suggested that a recommendation be submitted to the BOS or DSS that employees not be required to use PTO to attend FCSOC meetings. Ari provided a response saying the FCSOC meeting is an open meeting and workers are welcome to attend.
- Resource Parent Association meeting to be held May 3, 2023, at 7pm. Zoom Link provided: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3260080503>

VIII. Public Comments.

- Araceli Ceballos, a resource parent from Sanger, stated she had previously received funds in prior years specifically for summer activities for foster youth, and wanted to know if DSS would be doing this again. DSS is not familiar with the program in question but agreed to research it and see how best to proceed. Typically, the SW assigned to a case would be the point of contact for this information.
 - Araceli also inquired about a summer school crossover possibility between FUSD and SUSD. Pam Hancock provided Araceli her contact information and said this is question for the school district District Liaison.
- Lorraine Ramirez, DSS Employee, expressed that she feels that her reported concerns from April’s meeting have not been addressed.

IX. Adjourn

Pam

Next meeting will be on June 7, 2023, in-person and virtually via Microsoft Teams (camera access required for Committee members). Meeting adjourned by Pam at 10:47 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Karina Perez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kevin Lisitsin	<input type="checkbox"/> James Martinez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rosemary Alanis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pamela Hancock
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maisie Young	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Thomas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ed Avila
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tracy Kashian	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patricia Miller	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Wilma Hashimoto

Attending Staff and Guests

In Person: Dalvin Baker, Kimberli Smith, Cathi Huerta, Sanja Bugay, Elizabeth Bell, Julia Perez, Hillary Bolger, Dustin Ragsdale, Taylor Chavez, Rebekah Eropkin, Rocky Vang, Amina Flores, Araceli Ceballos, Consuelo Quiroz, Kasey Jackson, Bianca Pineda, Joanna Litchenberg, Bernia Walker, Marco Rodriguez, Patti Scovill, Debra Young, Lorraine Ramirez, Esther Franco, | Microsoft Teams: Rebekah Rodriguez, Ronald Alexander, Christie Lee, Joshua Lawson, Denise (Guest), Diane Warne, Holly Meyer, Mya Daughtery, Paul Nerland.