



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

September 6, 2023

9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.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 9:06 AM with roll call by DSS Staff Support, Julia Perez.

II. Approve Minutes for *August 2, 2023* and *September 6, 2023* Agenda.

- Rosemary Alanis (District 4) motioned; Karina Perez (District 3) seconded to approve the August 2023 Minutes and September 2023 Agenda.

III. Updates.

A. Receive Report from Department of Social Services Addressing Critical Areas.

Kimberli Smith/Sanja Bugay

- Child Welfare Services (CWS) Deputy Director, Kimberli Smith, told Committee members that per request, copies of the Adoptions Assistance Program (AAP) and the Resource Family Approval (RFA) Audits were provided.
- DSS CWS Data document was provided to Committee members. The document had information on job class detail, case load and case count, FURS stats, Placement metrics, Mod C, Dependency Court statistics.
- Kimberli told Committee members that she would like to have some time set aside to be able to explain the State of California's state and federal outcome measures and how the CWS data plays into those outcome measures. Due to meeting time constraints, she offered to go into detail on anything specific regarding the CWS data the Committee would like to know more about.
- Wilma believes the Committee would like more information on the "highs and lows" of CWS.
- One of the lows Kimberli brought up was the vacancy rates for Social Worker positions in all 58 Counties. Ongoing planning on what can be done to increase retention is taking place.
- Specialization work group assisted with redirecting the case load among Social Workers by taking staff who were in specialized task areas and placing them in areas where they can provide direct support and case management. A positive outcome for this was increased engagement among the foster youth and Social Workers.
- Other successes include higher reunification rates and a decrease in the number of children entering care.
- The *Fresno County Department of Social Services (DSS) – Child Welfare Services (CWS) Update - August 2023* document was discussed in detail. The document had updates on Systems Successes, Child Welfare System Improvements, Children's Crisis Continuum Pilot, State/Nationwide Challenges, Mod C Overview & Improvements and CWS Enhancement Project.
- CWS has had 15% fewer youth in out-of-home placement compared to a year ago. This is the first reduction in foster care cases in 10 years. District 2 Committee member, Kevin Lisitsin, asked if this [data] is because of summer break and the teachers were not reporting during that time. Director of DSS, Sanja Bugay, responded that it is accounting to being a lot more intentional about family maintenance, addressing upfront needs and taking fewer kids into care. She added that mandated reporting is decreased during Summer, but that did not affect the data.
- Kimberli continued to read through the System Successes. Sanja added that their goal is to not have overdue investigations. Upfront staffing is also prioritized.
- Wilma asked if there is a decrease in the amount of youth being placed out of the County of Fresno and what could be done so youth could stay in Fresno County. Kimberli referred to the DSS CWS Data sheet and responded by saying that sometimes a youth's family member may not always live in Fresno County, so sometimes it is required for youth to move out of the county or state. There are a lot of other variables as to why a youth is moved out of the County of Fresno, however, most of the foster youth are placed in Fresno County. Sanja said the County needs placements for the teenage youth. There is no struggle finding placements for children under 12 years old, but most of the youth who are aged 12 and up do have issues being placed. Teens have different needs and challenges than younger kids. There needs to be more intentional recruitment for the teenage group, which is part of the Children's Well Being Continuum (CWBC), also referred to as the Children's Crisis Continuum Pilot.

- DSS CWS goals for 23-24 are to reduce entries into care by increasing prevention services and support to families, increase relative placement and decrease the amount of youth placed in congregate care setting and increase reunification rates.
- Pam asked why the Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is not being used. CWS Deputy Director, Catherine Huerta, said she will double check the data because she knows Mod-C did use FURS a couple of times during the summer. Kimberli ensured efforts have been made to distribute information on FURS. Sanja agreed FURS is not used as often and believes conflicts are being left to escalate into crisis. The importance for contacting FURS is to not let situations escalate into emergencies.
- Discussions were held on ways to improve the advertisement of FURS.
- District 2 Committee member, Maisie Young, mentioned it is sometimes difficult to know when to contact FURS and Kimberli agreed.

IV. New Business

A. Presentation on Families First Prevention Services Comprehensive Prevention Plan Kimberli/Sanja

- The Comprehensive Prevention Plan was a collaboration with Fresno County Probation and Behavioral Health.
- The plan included identifying candidacy populations. The plan is the State of California wanting Fresno to explain how children (ages 0-5) will be prevented from entering the Foster Care System.
- Stakeholder meetings identified what was needed in their community for prevention.
- Fresno County data also helped inform how the Department was able to come up with a plan that will meet primary, secondary and tertiary level prevention needs.
- Primary level – general prevention to the community. Anyone in the community who needs preventative help. The plan discusses community outreach services at the primary level.
- Secondary level – when a youth is at risk of removal. Different services are implemented to prevent children coming into foster care.
- Tertiary level – abuse has occurred. Support is offered to reunify the child with family.
- The selected candidacy populations in the plan include children aged:
 - 0-5 - 78% of the allegations were due to neglect,
 - 11-15 – overrepresented in Probation referrals and the Permanent Placement caseload for child welfare.
- Additional populations in the plan include Black and American Indian children, who enter care at a disproportionately high rate, and Latino children, who enter foster care at the highest number.
- Prevention services plans for primary level needs are public awareness and campaigns regarding services that are available. Secondary level needs include motivational interviewing, mentorship programs, expansion of parent partners and Tribal parent partners and expansion of Differential Response to Tribal. Tertiary level needs include motivational interviewing at Voluntary Family Maintenance, Parents as Teachers, and Family Functional Therapy.
- Karina stated she works at Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC). They have over 36 programs, one of them being Head Start. Head Start serves 2,590 kids, ages 0-5. Kimberli mentioned DSS will reach out to Head Start for collaboration.
- Kimberli also mentioned how educational departments would be great to assist with the prevention plan since they often interact with children and their families.
- This Comprehensive Prevention Plan is still in the process of being implemented.

B. Discussion on 22-23 Annual Report feedback from Committee

1. 23-24 FCSOC Goals

- Committee Members wrote down 23-24 FCSOC goals on post it notes. The Committee also encouraged the public to write down goals.
- Important to provide feedback as soon as possible. Deadline for 23-24 goals is Wednesday, September 13th, 2023.
- Community Member, Patti Scovill, expressed that it would be nice to have more places like Valley Teen Ranch, a Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP), in Fresno County for the hard-to-place teenagers. Sanja agreed, and added that while STRTPs are good, youth should not spend more than 6 months at a STRTP. It is important for a youth to grow up with a family.

- Karina recalled the County being behind on approving homes and inquired about the status of the issue to know if recruitment should begin. Kimberli responded that approval has not been reached due to staff changes, reorganizations, and training. Sanja also mentioned that more relatives are going through the Resource Family Approval process, which also contributes to the back log in this area.

V. Subcommittee Updates

Pam

A. Education Subcommittee

- Very busy with Foster Literacy NIC as it continues.
- 2 Districts will be added (Coalinga-Huron and Sanger).
- Foster Notification Process has been implemented with Fresno Unified School District.
- A lot of collaborations with Head Start and Early Head Start. Social Workers have been trained to refer youth to Head Start.
- Fresno County Superintendent of Schools has a collaborative with Head Start and Early Head Start. There has been cross training on education referrals.
- Pam has been working with DSS and will be collecting data on the number of referrals and actual enrollments to the programs.
- Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Annual Liaison Meeting is offering a 1-day training. Meeting will be held on Monday, September 11, 2023. There will be an overview of the processes that have been implemented.
- Education Subcommittee will no longer be falling under the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Advisory Committee. Meetings will be held every 4th Wednesday of the month from 2:30 – 4:00 PM at DSS.

B. Children's Mental Health Subcommittee

- Kevin attended the Children's Mental Health Subcommittee for the first time and talked about his positive experience. He appreciates the various resources available for Children's Mental Health.

VI. Announcements

- October 4th will serve as the Annual Planning Session from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM.
- A recent law that has been passed is that foster youth can now attend 4-year California colleges at no cost. A recent meeting with Dr. Saul Jiménez-Sandoval at California State University, Fresno revealed his idea to start early with foster youth regarding college enrollment. *Bulldog Bound* is a Fresno State program that reaches out to high school freshman students to discuss college.
- On September 21st, 2023, the City Center will host a preview night from 6:00 – 8:00 PM. The press conference will be held the next day on September 22nd, 2023 at 10:00 AM.

VII. Adjourn

Wilma

- The Annual Planning Session will be held on October 6, 2023, in-person for Committee members and the public, and viewable virtually via Microsoft Teams for members of the public. Meeting adjourned by Wilma at 11:04 AM.

Committee Attendance

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

* Marked Boxes Indicate Committee Member Attended

Attending Staff and Guests

In Person: Kimberli Smith, Cathi Huerta, Sanja Bugay, Julia Perez, Hillary Bolger, Taylor Chavez, Rebekah Eropkin, Brian Van Anne, Rocky Vang, Amina Flores-Becker, Patti Scovill, Chad Valorosi, Gavin Harrison, Patti Scovill, Gleyra Castro | **Microsoft Teams:** Rebekah Rodriguez, Denise (Guest), Joshua Lawson, Maya Daugherty, Paul Nerland