



# 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

November 1, 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 October 4, 2023 and November 1, 2023 Agenda.

- Sal Quintero (Supervisor of the Board, District 3) motioned; Maisie Young (District 2) seconded to approve the October 2023 Minutes and November 2023 Agenda.

### III. Updates

#### A. Receive Report From Department of Social Services Addressing Critical Areas

**Dalvin**

- Child Welfare Services (CWS) Deputy Director (DD), Dalvin Baker recognized the month of November as Native American Heritage month and National Adoption month.
- A celebration for Native American Heritage month will take place on Friday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> at Hope Plaza from 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM. CWS worked in partnership with local tribes to develop a celebration to recognize the collaboration between Child Welfare agencies and our Native American population.
- A celebration for National Adoption month will take place on Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup> at Hope Plaza. About 50 Adoptions are on target for finalization.
- CWS October 2023 Data was provided to Committee. Dalvin wanted to bring attention to the revised "Caseload By Task Area" data section since there were some discrepancies in last month's data that was provided. Revisions were applied to the data presented for the November 2023 meeting.
- FCSOC Vice-Chair, Pam Hancock, asked if presenting quarterly data instead of monthly data would be something CW DDs would be interested in to be able to see any trends. Dalvin agreed.
- While reviewing the Staffing Information, Wilma noticed that last month's data showed a 15-20% vacancy rate and now the vacancy rate is less than 10%. She asked if mass hiring took place and Dalvin said recruitment is ongoing. Dalvin mentioned the department is currently working with Main HR regarding recruitment.
- District 2 Committee member, Kevin Lisitsin asked what are some things that are being done differently for recruitment. Dalvin said they are focusing on individuals' Exit Interviews to determine the true reason why they are leaving and asking the employees what they would change about Child Welfare.
- Kevin asked if the Union assists with Social Worker recruitment. Dalvin responded that he believes recruitment may be everyone's responsibility. It depends on the message that is given to friends or family.
- Mandated Social Work positions that require a master's degree in social work (MSW) are:
  - Emergency Response (ER) – front line social workers
  - Adoptions – complete critical assessments to assess adoptability for children.
  - Family Maintenance – involvement with Courts
- The state mandates this requirement because of the sensitive nature of the assessments required for youth and families.
- Pam asked if there is a possibility for DSS to have a program where Social Workers can get their hours for licensing. Dalvin said the Department is in the process of evaluating that. There has been communication with Fresno State, Department of Behavioral Health, and other counties to see how employees can get their clinical hours.
- Wilma hopes the State could eventually view experience as equivalent to education.
- CWS Deputy Director, Cathi Huerta, clarified when the Department does not have enough MSWs, you apply for State Waiver that acknowledges there are not enough MSW level resources of Social Workers to meet the requirement. The Department is not out of compliance because there has been State acknowledgement of current issues.
- Dalvin added that this waiver is required to be applied for annually.

### **Public Comments:**

- DSS Social Worker and SEIU representative, Lorraine Ramirez – ER does have Social Work Practitioners that have an MSW, but it is not required to work in ER. Majority of the workers are SW I, II and IIIs. It was reiterated that Adoption workers do want to stay at their job as long as they can, but Social Workers are overwhelmed with the high caseload per Social Worker and the lack of support. The Social Workers have ideas on the best way support could be provided.
- Brian Van Anne (Transitions Children's Services) offered to redevelop the partnership with the County to provide support with the high Adoptions caseload.

### **B. FCSOC Subcommittee on DSS Employee Survey**

**Karina/Kevin/Tracy**

- Kevin mentioned the idea about hosting an event for the employees to thank them for their participation on the survey. He would also like more direction on the next steps regarding the survey results.
- District 1 Committee member, Karina Perez, suggested having the survey on an annual basis to see what gradual changes could be applied for improvement.
- District 2 Committee member, Tracy Kashian, suggested if this survey were to go out on an annual basis, it should be at the beginning of the year so recommendations could be provided to the Board of Supervisors.
- District 4 Committee member, Rosemary Alanis, believes all Committee members should receive the DSS Employee Survey results. She believes FCSOC members should not overstep their responsibility as a Committee. Helping and suggesting is appropriate, but trying to regulate staff members is not part of the responsibility of a Committee member.
- Supervisor Quintero provided insight on how to share information with the Board of Supervisors (BOS). Supervisor Quintero said designated members can advise with each Supervisor to go over recommendations. Another method would be to go over the recommendations with the Department Director and then a presentation could be made to the BOS during a regular meeting and from that meeting, a separate meeting could be held with the Department Director.
- Supervisor Quintero would like to have MSW graduate students from Fresno Pacific and Fresno State University work part-time at DSS to earn class credit, however labor issues are involved.

### **Public Comments:**

- Lorraine said Social Workers are encouraged to take any survey that is available for them. She mentioned DSS Social Workers were hesitant about completing the DSS Employee Survey because they were concerned about retaliation from the Department and that no significant change would occur at DSS.

### **C. Annual Report Recommendations**

**All**

- Committee members were provided with a copy of the Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors and Goals for FCSOC. Wilma read through each recommendation.
- Recommendations include: a county-wide campaign to strengthen the CWS infrastructure, recruitment and retention of Social Workers, recruitment of resource families and promotion of kinship care, support for the local Child Welfare System, and appoint members to the FCSOC to fill vacancies.
- Pam asked if there is a way to get a pay increase for DSS Social Workers and resource families. Supervisor Quintero responded that more information would be provided later.
- District 3 Committee member, Elizabeth Thomas, shared her thoughts on BOS Recommendation 1B. She somewhat agrees to that recommendation but is concerned if there is mass recruitment, there may be an over-response and processing for that will require a lot of time and resources. She added that this occurred in the past.
- One of the FCSOC goals was revised to state: "Priority access to medical and mental health services."
- Cathi asked Supervisor Quintero if members are interested in joining the Committee, but their District is full, is there a way for them to be appointed to a different District. Supervisor Quintero responded that would be labeled an "At-large Appointment." This means you can appoint throughout Fresno County, even though they are not part of your district.
- Recruitment for Resource families include the public at-large and families. Pam added that school staff would be helpful on trying to recruit a Resource Family for youth.
- Kevin and Tracy provided the following revision on the 2023-24 Goals for FCSOC:
  - Placement - Provide a system to support potential resource parents to ensure homes are prepared to receive youth in foster care, including working with FFAs and high-risk youth.

### **Public Comment:**

- Brian responded to Elizabeth to inform that previous backlog was resolved. Community partners could assist the Department with the approval of families in a timely manner.

- Brian said there are already a lot of Resource Families available now and he is actively trying to find a homes for hard-to-place youth.

**D. Annual Report Education Subcommittee Update**

**Pam**

- Pam went over the Education Subcommittee Annual Report Information. She mentioned the challenge with Education Subcommittee is that they are always behind on the data that goes public.

**IV. Action Items**

**A. Approval of 2023 FCSOC Annual Report to BOS**

**All**

- Rosemary motioned; Kevin Seconded to Approve the 2022-2023 FCSOC Annual Report to the BOS. All in favor, none opposed.

**B. Discussion and Action Item: Proposal to Change December Meeting venue to City Center**

**All**

- Action not recommended to due to the ongoing construction and safety hazards at the City Center.

**V. New Business**

**Wilma/Pam**

**A. Selection of Ad hoc committee for new FCSOC chair and vice-chair beginning January 2024**

- Ed Avila (District 5) and Rosemary agreed to be part of the Ad hoc committee to nominate a new FCSOC chair and vice-chair.

**VI. Subcommittee Update**

**Kevin**

**A. Childrens Mental Health**

- Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) is facing challenges with hiring as well. There is a 25% vacancy rate. Kevin requested information on what challenges DBH faces with the vacancy rate.
- Kevin also requested an Intake Chart that specifies the path on how the County receives a youth for the DBH program(s), the next steps, and how youth exit the program.

**VII. Public Comments**

- Patti Scovill shared her thoughts on the creation of a “CASA Grandparents Program.” This program could be instituted to help fill a gap in CASA Advocates. CASA Grandparents would not have the responsibilities of current CASA Advocates, but will be a supportive and caring individual for the youth. CASA Grandparent could be involved with visits and outdoor activities. Patti added that she would be willing to become a CASA Grandparent herself.
- Maya Daugherty pointed out that the October 2023 CWS Data for current workers that are on Leave of Absence (LOA) is incorrect. There are several workers in a LOA that are not included in the data. She mentioned the vacancy and caseload data have discrepancies as well.
- Lorraine thanked the FCSOC for sending out the DSS Employee Survey. She believes all workers should know the results of the survey.

**VIII. Announcements**

- Rocky Vang shared that District 3 will be hosting its annual Coat Drive and will occur on November 15, 2023 until December 15, 2023. Rocky recommended individuals donate gently worn or new coats for children and adults. DSS, Fresno Center, Marjaree Mason Center and Hall of Records will have a designated site where coats, gloves, scarves, and hats could be donated. Staff are willing to do coat pick-ups as well. The contact number for the Coat drive is (559) 600-3000. Coats will go to Lighthouse, Marjaree Mason and Senior Citizen Village.
- Education Subcommittee November 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting has been cancelled due to Thanksgiving Holiday. Next Education meeting will be held on January 24, 2024.

**IX. Adjourn**

- Next meeting will be held on December 6, 2023, in-person for Committee members and the public. Virtual option 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 10:45 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 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
<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:** Dalvin Baker, Cathi Huerta, Julia Perez, Taylor Chavez, Tyiquanette Dilldine, Hillary Bolger, Rebekah Eropkin, Ciarán Jones, Brian Van Anne, Amina Flores-Becker, Chad Valorosi, Robb Christopherson, Patti Scovill, Lorraine Ramirez, Maya Daugherty |  
**Microsoft Teams:** Cheryl O'Conner, Joshua Willard Lawson