**FRESNO COUNTY**

**FOSTERCARE AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**TO**

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**REPORTING ACTIVITIES FROM**

**JULY 2022 THROUGH JUNE 2023**

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##### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fresno County Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee (FCFCSOC) hereby referred to as ”FCSOC” was created by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors in 2001. According to its bylaws, Article III-Statement Of Purpose, the purpose is “To exercise oversight and review of systems and services which affect children focusing on, but not limited to, the foster care system. The committee shall:

1. Advise and make recommendations for continuous and lasting system improvements;
2. Provide a forum for community input related to the FCSOC purpose.

To meet its primary responsibility the FCSOC is guided by an adopted mission and vision statement.

Mission

The mission of the FCSOC is to provide oversight for and promote communication

between the Board of Supervisors, the Department of Social Services (DSS), its related agencies, and the community, with an emphasis on providing information and recommendations that make the child welfare system more effective and efficient.

 Vision

A community enhanced by a compassionate and responsible child welfare system that provides prevention, early intervention, and nurtures the developmental and therapeutic needs of abused and neglected children and their families.

Key Responsibilities

The FCSOC shall participate in lawfully constituted multi-disciplinary reviews when system issues and improvements are appropriate.

The primary responsibility of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee is to focus on the structures and functions of the local child welfare system and to represent the public interest in the delivery of services. In addition, part of the committee’s mission is to improve communication through outreach and coordination with the work of other community groups. To assist in this coordination, the FCSOC has subcommittees that consists of Education and Mental Health. Other subcommittees may arise has deemed necessary.

Changes Moving Forward from 2022 to 2023

The FCSOC has evolved from its 2001 stated purpose to offering resources at regular subcommittee meetings that were deemed valuable interagency/organization communication forums. In the Fall of 2021, in response to the public spotlighting the challenge of hard to place children and youth in the child welfare system, FCSOC hosted a community forum consisting of elected officials, community partners and interested parties to offer insight and suggestions. In 2022 FCSOC followed up with one strategic planning session. As a result, the committee recalibrated and continued to work closely with DSS to provide support and oversight to the systemic changes identified in the Critical Needs document (Exhibit A) which was based on recent interviews and data collection (Exhibit B) provided by DSS Child Welfare.

The following goals for 2022-2023 were identified with the following results. In addition, FCSOC will continue to participate in the following subcommittees:

Goal 1: Education Subcommittee (Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Foster Youth Executive Advisory Committee: Achieved. Six Meetings held and one culminating year-end event with community leaders, partners, and foster youth students.

Goal 2: Children’s Mental Health Subcommittee: Partially Achieved. Co-chair representative for FCSOC resigned from the subcommittee due to obligations on December 31, 2022. A replacement has not been identified to date despite active recruitment.

Overview of Subcommittees

The focus of the Education Subcommittee is on issues of education for youth in foster care and consists of members from local school districts, Foster Family Agencies, local community agencies and DSS. This subcommittee addresses significant educational issues and presents data and makes recommendations to assist the child welfare system to be more effective and efficient for the educational success of foster youth. The Education Subcommittee is the Fresno County Superintendent of School Foster Youth Education Executive Advisory Committee (FCSS-FYEEAC).

The focus of the Mental Health Subcommittee is on mental health issues that affect all children in Fresno County including foster youth. It consists of members from the community, DSS, the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), FCSOC and local community agencies. This subcommittee ensures the availability of psychiatric and inpatient treatment, school-based services, and access to other mental health services are met to service children in foster care. It is co-chaired by both a member of DBH and FCSOC.

Committee Membership

1. The Board of Supervisors has filled one FCSOC vacancy, however, there were four resignations resulting in four vacancies. The eleven committee members are committed and experienced members who have enhanced representation in the areas of education, children’s mental health and child advocacy. We encourage Board members to work with FCSOC to fill the remaining four vacancies.The current membership list is included in this report.

##### DISTRICT APPOINTEES

**DISTRICT 1 APPOINTEES**

**Jill Stepke-Resigned**

**Karina Perez**

**Wendy Yribarren-Resigned**

##### DISTRICT 2 APPOINTEES

**Tracy Kashian** – Lance-Kashian & Co., vice chair

**Maisie Young,** Supervisor of Student Support Services, District Foster Liaison

Kevin Listinsin-Farmers Insurance Business Owner

##### DISTRICT 3 APPOINTEES

**Elizabeth Thomas –** Intensive Services Foster Parent,

Foster Parent Association President

**Patricia Miller –** Intensive Services Foster Parent

**James Martinez –** Fresno County Board of Education Trustee

##### DISTRICT 4 APPOINTEES

**Richard Bailey** – Child Welfare Attorney-Resigned

**Rose Mary Alanas**

**Connie N. Waldrop-**Resigned

##### DISTRICT 5 APPOINTEES

**Pamela Hancock** – Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, co-chair

**Wilma Tom Hashimoto**– CASA of Fresno and Madera Counties, co-chair

**Edward Avila –** Juvenile Justiceand EOC Commissioner

#####  BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**Supervisor Sal Quintero** – Supervisor Chair

**Ari Martinez**  - Proxy

**Rocky Vang** – Proxy

1. Priority Issues (Wilma sent email to Dalvin, Cathi, 7-11)
2. Continue to work with DSS to improve dissemination of information to reach stakeholders in the foster care system, including foster children, foster families, biological families, County Social Workers, Foster Family Agencies, legal counsel for children and families and judges. No such mechanisms exist at present. Explore current DSS website location resources and having a directory of resources available for stakeholders. Issue not resolved. This issue will remain a priority issue to meet the needs of children and youth in foster care, resource parents, and supporters of children in foster care. The DSS website [https://dsspass.fresnocountyca.gov/Home/Resources](https://url.avanan.click/v2/___https%3A//dsspass.fresnocountyca.gov/Home/Resources___.YXAzOmNhc2E6YTpvOmExOWQyMzI2NDVlYWIyN2EwYTk1NWNiNTViNTc1NjIwOjY6YWI4MzpjYmE2ZmRkZTZlNWZjZDIxMDBjYTNiZTVlMmYxZThmZDVmNWRkNmVhMWNmMGUzNmNkNDEzOGM0NzU3NjIwYzRlOnA6VA)
3. Work closely with DSS to provide support and oversight to the systemic changes identified in the Critical Needs document (Exhibit A) which was based on recent interviews and data collection (Exhibit B) provided by DSS Child Welfare.

Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors

1. Continue to prioritize support for youth under the care of the County, through its local child welfare system, to achieve positive outcomes and prepare them for successful adulthood. Positive outcomes for children and youth and provide significant dividends, as more effective citizens are added to our communities.
2. Continue the increased support in 2022-23 by supporting the systemic changes identified in the DSS Critical Needs document (Exhibit A).
3. Support the expansion of mental health services and mentorship to support the unique needs of children and youth in foster care and those youth who have crossed over to the juvenile justice system.
4. Support the expansion of services and support for youth who are preparing for adulthood, including high school graduation, housing and budget assistance, life skills training, and a linkage to a responsive and supportive adult/mentor.

FCSOC is pleased to present the 2022-2023 annual Report to the Fresno County Board of Supervisors

Appendix

##### EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE (to be updated with 2022-23 data)

Background/Purpose

The purpose of the Education Subcommittee is to:

1. Enable the FCSOC oversight and communication between DSS and the Board of Supervisors;
2. Provide a network of communication about significant education issues affecting foster youth; and,
3. Present recommendations that will assist the child welfare system to be more effective and efficient for the educational success of foster youth.

The Education Subcommittee is a deliberative committee that meets monthly to identify, inform and encourage resolution of issues and concerns that will improve the educational outcomes of foster youth. A report of the identified educational issues and recommendations are communicated at the monthly FCSOC Board meeting and presented for discussion with the DSS administrative team, FCSOC Board Members, and members of the community (detailed information is available in the Subcommittee and FCSOC monthly meeting minutes).

Focus of Subcommittee Activity

Although many educational issues were addressed, the primary focus of the monthly meetings was to provide the basis for information sharing.. Policy recommendations that were presented to the FCSOC Board and DSS Administration are discussed below. The Subcommittee serves as a sounding board to support education-focused work as well as providing community input. Standing agenda items are addressed at each meeting followed by a discussion of any emerging issue.

 School Stability

“School stability” supports the value of maintaining youth in their school of origin, unless it is in their “best interest” to make a change. It includes reviewing current legislation, advocacy efforts, and training and coordinating with the overall DSS workforce. Research indicates that academic success improves when a child or youth has at least one caring responsible adult in their life and maintaining school stability. The “Potential School Change Form (PSCP) is a process that supports school stability.

NIC Foster Literacy

Education Training for Social Workers

Foster Care & School Communication Process Implemented

Potential School Change Form (PSCF)

DSS Program Manager and Social Work Supervisor provided oversight data to enable discussions about reasons for school changes, and to study the effectiveness of the “*Potential School Change Form*” (PSCF) to communicate and improve stability. The on-line PSCF was fully implemented at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year is being fully utilized by social workers. Information obtained from the “reasons for school change” provided a means for discussion on improving advocacy for school stability, however, due to the pandemic, this data was not collected for the 2019-20 or 2020-21 school years. Below are the last reported outcomes for 2017-18 school year. School move data will be requested for the 2021-22 school year.

Goal for 2017-2018 School Year: Track and provide PSCF data for grades Transitional Kindergarten (TK) to 6; grades 7-8, and grades 9-12. PSCF information will be analyzed and identify the impact on high school students. The goal is to minimize school changes gradesTK-11 and eliminate any school changes in grade 12.

2017-18 Results**:**

TK- 6: 62 school changes for foster children (62% at break)

Grades 7-8: total of 25 (76% at break)

Grades 9-11: 31 (48% at break)

Grade 12: no changes during regular session (2 during break).

Summary; Analyzing the grade levels by groups improved the ability to study the reasons for changes and provide interventions. As a result, 2018 was the first year that all foster youth were able to remain stable throughout their entire senior year. Please note the 7.5% increase in the graduation rate below.

Graduation Rate

 Fresno County graduation rate for foster youth for 2019-20 was 55.9%, an increase of 7.5% from

 2018-19 rate of 48.4%.

2021-2022: 53.6% Foster Youth Graduation Rate vs. 84% All Student Graduation Rate, 30.4% foster students graduated,

Independent Living Program (ILP) Graduation

Education Liaisons provided updates on senior planning, culminating with a virtual ILP Graduation Event. The 2020 ILP Graduation Event was held as a drive through event due COVID-19.  The event was held July 7 and 8, 2020. The youth were celebrated with gifts, certificates, and pictures.

2021 ILP Graduation Event was again held as a drive through event due to COVID-19.  The event was held May 21, 2021.  ILP received donation of gift baskets to celebrate the youth. Youth received gifts, gift baskets, certificates, letters from the Courts, and pictures.  Both years although unconventional Foster and Probation youth were rewarded for their hard work and celebrated for their accomplishment.

Access to Higher Education

The annual event was again cancelled due to the restrictions of social gatherings.

Early Education

The significance of early intervention was reviewed monthly and barriers identified. The information below is the most current data and will be used to compare to next year 2021-22 data. In 2017-18, Head Start referrals increased to 57, with 27 for schools. A total of 209 Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) were recorded and caregivers, who were able to complete the ASQ in a timely manner, were recognized.

District and Community Liaison Report

The School District Educational Liaisons and the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Education Specialists provided invaluable networking to FCSOC Subcommittee members and DSS concerning status and issues related to education of foster youth.

Fresno Unified School District**:** The FUSD *Foster Youth Round Table*s were held virtually and were attended by Subcommittee members. Feedback of the needs of foster youth was disseminated as was the success of foster youth students. Based on Community and Subcommittee input, FUSD has staffed and funded 12 Clinical School Social Workers and two Academic Counselors dedicated to Foster and Homeless Youth. Clinical School Social Workers provide ongoing social/emotional services to students in grades 6-12 and Academic Counselors provide targeted academic interventions to youth grades 8-12.  Fresno Unified School District has a total of 62 foster/homeless students graduating this year 2020-2021.  Fifty -two (52) FUSD students have shared their plans after graduation. 1-UC, 7-CSU, 41-CCC and 7-Workforce.

Central Unified School District**:** Provided input regarding supporting youth during the pandemic and virtual learning and making contact with students during virtual class time and speaking to students privately in break out rooms. Schools will return to in person learning next year and Central Unified will take one week prior to school starting to reach out to each student who is in foster care and provide supports that are needed.

Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, FCSS:FCSS is the chair for the Education Subcommittee. FCSS provided input on efforts and needs of foster youth in addition to services provided to students. This included applying for college, transportation, communication between districts and child welfare, and overall issues county-wide. FCSS assisted 120 seniors with financial aid applications (100% % completion rate), including college and dorm applications and was the statewide midsize winner for the FAFSA Challenge for the sixth consecutive year. In 2022-23, 668 foster youth were served. The county-wide education Foster Focus data base which is a county-wide data base that includes data from the state education CALPADS database, districts, and child welfare. The data has improved in quality with the addition of districts submitting data. This information is available to social workers to access student school history. FCSS trained 62 social workers on education rights of foster youth, students with special needs, ways to support academic success, and provided information on the services provided by FCSS. This training will be provided to all social workers in 2023-24 under the education training project collaborative of Child Welfare and FCSS.

##### CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE

Background/Purpose

The focus of the Children’s Mental Health Subcommittee is on issues of mental health that affect all children in Fresno County including foster youth. It consists of members from the community, DSS, the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), and local community agencies. This subcommittee ensures the availability of psychiatric and inpatient treatment, school-based services and other access to mental health services are met to service children in foster care.

This is a joint committee with the Behavioral Health Mental Health Board, which allows us the opportunity to explore services provided to all children with behavioral health needs. The committee meets bimonthly. The committee receives updates from the Department about the services that it provides to children. The Committee functions with co-chairs representing one from DBH and FCOSC. The following report focuses on the Foster Care system. This dedicated group of volunteers and those employed, strive to advocate for children in the Foster Care sys

tem. While the committee does not make policy, it is informed on matters related to children's mental health, receives county statistics and partners with them to better meet the needs of children in our community.

**CHILDREN’S COMMITTEE REPORT 2022**

**FRESNO COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH BOARD**

Co-Chairs: Mary Lou Brauti-Minkler and Wilma Tom Hashimoto

The Children’s Committee of the Behavioral Health Board is a joint committee of the.

Behavioral Health Board and the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Mental Health Committee. It meets bimonthly and in 2022 the meetings were held on **Web Ex** on the fourth Thursday of the month at 9:00 am to 10:30. The co-chairs alternate facilitating the meeting.

Each meeting includes introductions by each attendee and an update by the Department of Behavioral Health, Children’s Services Department Division Manager Lesby Flores.

The meeting format also includes a speaker from a children’s services agency in Fresno County.

The meeting months were **February**, **April**, **June**, **August**, **October**, and **December**.

**February 24, 2022**: This meeting was facilitated by Mary Lou Brauti-Minkler and included a speaker fromCity Without Orphans. Support Specialist, Kyra Zimmerman, shared information about the work done by the organization with foster youth and families. There are many challenges faced by foster youth as they enter adulthood: criminal justice involvement, mental illness and/ or substance use disorders,

homelessness, human trafficking and poverty. These youth often have challenges from multiple

traumas, lack of consistent education and many disruptions in their care.

**April 28, 2022**: This meeting was facilitated by Wilma Tom Hashimoto and included a speaker from the Fresno County Network of CARE—Adverse Childhood Experiences--ACES. Dr. Amy Parks thoroughly explained the concept of ACES and the benefits of being ACES aware. She also shared the plan of building, through community-based organizations and community health workers, increased capacity to provide trauma-informed care through a curriculum of resilience, education and training in the use of screening tools to assess for ACES. Treatment will be incorporated for individuals and families.

**June 23, 2022**: Mary Lou Brauti-Minkler facilitated the meeting and included a speaker from Fresno New Connections Adolescent Program. Rob Martin explained that the program is for youth ages 12-17 with an average age of 16.

**August 25, 2022**: This meeting was facilitated by co-chair Wilma Tom Hashimoto and included a speaker from Prodigy Healthcare Inc., Adolescent Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Services.

**October 27,2022**: This meeting was facilitated by Wilma Tom Hashimoto and included a speaker from the Fresno Resiliency Center Executive Director, Rodney Lowery. The Center has two programs: 1) The Rise Program is contracted with 25 schools in the Fresno Unified School District. A curriculum on resiliency skills is taught to 2000-2500 first grade students weekly on self-esteem and emotional regulation. 2) Early Intervention Services is for youth 18 and younger who have committed crimes within the city of Fresno and have experienced trauma and need to receive treatment.

**December 15, 2022**: Wilma Tom Hashimoto facilitated the meeting. CEO, Robert Dutile presented an overview of the River Vista Behavioral Health complex that is being built next to Children’s Hospital in Madera. This project of Universal Health Systems (UHS) is scheduled to open between April and June 2023 and will provide services for children, adolescents, adults and older adults on an inpatient, partial and outpatient basis. It will provide treatment for mental illnesses, substance use disorders, eating disorders, autism-spectrum disorders, trauma including PTSD, and neuropsychiatry.

Compiled by Mary Lou Brauti-Minkler, Chair

5/26/23

**LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023/2024**

Consistent with our mission, our goal is to support the Child Welfare System to be more efficient and effective through providing adequate resources, better communication with agency partners and making recommendations for continuous and lasting system improvements for the betterment of the foster children and youth served in Fresno County.