



## Introduction

*"The best way to predict the future is to create it."*

**-Peter Drucker**

This briefing document provides the reader with an overview and outline of the Probation Department's Title IV-E Waiver approach. In cooperation and collaboration with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and other stakeholders, the Probation Department has developed an implementation plan which spells out the strategic and programmatic initiatives for the first year of the demonstration project. This briefing document is a companion to our implementation plan and gives the reader an expanded explanation and grasp of our implementation plan including priority initiatives for outlying years, administrative and operational enhancements. The briefing document is presented in a question and answer format in response to the many inquiries we have received about the Title IV-E Capped Allocation Demonstration Project and to facilitate a better understanding of the Waiver.

## Title IV-E Capped Allocation Demonstration Project

### 1. What is the Title IV-E Waiver?

The Title IV-E Capped Allocation Demonstration Project five-year plan is also known as the Title IV-E Waiver. The Title IV-E Waiver allows the departments to test the effect of flexible funding strategies on Child Welfare Outcomes. The Waiver has specific goals which are structured to attain not just better services, but better outcomes for youth and families.

### 2. How will the Title IV-E Waiver benefit Probation youth?

By participating in the Title IV-E Waiver, Probation has the opportunity to make critical changes in the way Placement services are provided to Probation foster care youth and their families. Further, the Title IV-E Waiver will allow the Department funding flexibility to use Title IV-E dollars for preventive services for those youth that are identified as at "imminent risk," and for Placement aftercare services. Thus the Title IV-E Waiver gives us funds to acquire intensive home-based services which have proven effective in reducing child maltreatment and delinquency and reducing out-of-home placements.

### 3. What are the goals of the Title IV-E Waiver?

The goals of the Title IV-E Waiver are as follows:

- Provide more preventive services;
- Increase the number and array of services to allow more children to remain safely in their home;
- Reduce the reliance on out-of-home care through the provision of intensive, focused, individualized services;
- Reduce the number of children and their length of stay in congregate care while ensuring that individualized case planning and appropriate community alternatives are in place first;
- Reduce the timelines to permanency; and
- Reduce the recurrence of maltreatment through a combination of caseload reduction and evidenced-based case management interventions.

#### **4. How does the Title IV-E Waiver work?**

The Waiver allows Probation, as well as DCFS, to develop and implement services and programs which will improve child welfare outcomes, shorten the timelines to permanency, enhance child safety, and improve family well-being for foster youth (suitable placement). With the Waiver, Title IV-E funds which normally would be used for assistance payments, can now be used to develop services for youth at-risk of maltreatment and for families in crisis. In short, the Waiver defines a new landscape for child welfare and juvenile justice, one which allows for the development of strategies to keep youth out of foster care and one that places emphasis on achieving not only better services for youth and families, but better results.

#### **5. How will Probation achieve its waiver reinvestment?**

Title IV-E Waiver reinvestment will be realized from reducing the timelines to family reunification. Currently, probationers spend approximately twelve months in group home care. Empirical research demonstrates that intensive treatment services have significant outcomes when provided in the natural home environment as opposed to traditional residential treatment services. MST and FFT, two of the most effective evidenced-based juvenile justice programs, are time-limited in duration of treatment (four months on average) in promoting family self-sufficiency and cost effectiveness. Outcomes obtained include significant reduction in out-of-home placements, long term rates of re-arrest, decreased substance abuse and psychiatric symptoms, and improved family functioning and school performance. Therefore, the Placement Services Bureau is working with the group home providers in moving towards a strictly

treatment-driven model with a community aftercare component (MST, FFT, Family Preservation, and Wraparound) that will allow for earlier timelines to permanency, safety, and well-being for the youth and family.

**6. What are the Title IV-E Waiver priority initiatives for Probation?**

Probation's Priority Initiatives are as follows:

- Enhanced Cross-Systems Case Assessment and Case Planning;
- Expansion of Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT);
- Aftercare Transition Support Services;
- Multi-Agency Community Crisis Intervention Teams;
- Expansion of Placement Assessment Centers (PACs);
- Expansion of Family Preservation Services;
- Expansion of Family Finding; and
- Expansion of Special Investigations Unit (SIU)/ Dual Supervision.

**7. Why did Probation select these eight priority initiatives?**

The above initiatives were selected for the following reasons:

- A. These initiatives provide Probation with the services that will: 1) increase the number of children who can remain safely in their homes; 2) reduce reliance on out-of-home care; and 3) reduce the number of children in congregate care.
- B. These eight initiatives will help Probation to improve its overall outcomes for improved timelines to permanency, child and family well-being, array of services, engagement of families, and increased child safety with a more individualized approach to serving children and families.

**8. How will Probation youth and families benefit from these priority initiatives?**

- **Enhanced Cross-Systems Case Assessment and Case Planning:** Youth in foster care often enter the system with mental health, educational, medical,

and behavioral problems. Mental health and behavioral problems tend to create difficulties in a youth's placement often leading to multiple placements. Multiple placements are proven to be detrimental to the youth in achieving safety, well-being, and permanency goals. Probation's enhanced cross-systems case assessment and planning will aid in connecting Probation foster care youth with the most appropriate setting at the onset of their foster care experience, taking into account their mental health, educational, medical and behavioral issues, as well as family needs.

- **Expansion of Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT):** Family dysfunction, crisis, and/or weakness are major risk factors for Probation foster care youth who enter out-of-home residential care. Yet, up until now, the priority and case management strategies have concentrated on "fixing" the probationer in isolation, away from their family, by removing them from their natural home environment. MST and FFT promotes behavior change in the youth's home environment, using the strengths of each system (e.g., family, peers, school, neighborhood, indigenous support network) to facilitate change. These outreach services have demonstrated significant outcomes in the areas of safety, well-being, and permanency and reducing the risk factors which contribute to child maltreatment and delinquency.
- **Aftercare Transition Support Services (ATSS):** Aftercare support services are fundamental for the achievement of safety, well-being, and permanency, yet; currently, there are no aftercare services in place for Probation foster care youth leaving group home placements. The transition phase when the youth exits a residential facility and returns home is a critical time for the family and the youth. Preparing and supporting the youth and the family for post-placement life will increase the likelihood for long-term success. Having a post-placement plan in place that is supported and developed by all family members will reduce the risks that are associated with re-entry into both the juvenile justice and foster care systems and increase the likelihood for long-term family success.
- **Establish Multi-Disciplinary Community Crisis Intervention Teams:** A significant number of probationers returning home from a residential setting such as a camp or group home continue to have difficulty adjusting, placing stress on these overburdened families. Family stressors often lead to increased parent-youth conflict, resulting in the parents "giving up" or the youth leaving the home. Both of these options are unacceptable and lead to poor outcomes. In many of these cases, short-term crisis intervention, targeting risk factors and behaviors which generate family conflict, domestic violence, and child maltreatment can remedy the family crisis while at the same time help build protective factors which decrease negativity and blaming. The multi-agency crisis community intervention teams consist of the

following disciplines; Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Group Home Providers, and Deputy Probation Officers. The arrays of crises intervention services that will be employed include Family Preservation, Wraparound, MST, and FFT services.

- **Expansion of Placement Assessment Centers (PACs):** Proper assessment of Placement foster care youth is critical to matching the services and treatment interventions with their risk and needs. A number of youth entering placement suffer from substance abuse and mental health disorders as well as behavioral problems. This is compounded by their educational deficiencies, which are often caused by learning disabilities. These minors require a much more thorough and comprehensive multidisciplinary assessment. The PACs will offer the possibilities of Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT) providing comprehensive assessments, formulating case plans and services, and making decisions (with the family's involvement) of where the minor will be placed. Youth will be referred to the PAC through a team decision-making process involving Probation and DMH.
- **Dual Supervision/Special Investigation Unit:** Preventing dependency youth from crossing over into the delinquency system requires responding to early warning signs of delinquency and employing a multi-disciplinary assessment approach and intervention. With a more comprehensive assessment process and availability of services to address risk factors which drive and foster delinquency, fewer dependency youth should crossover to the delinquency system.

In short, these six priority initiatives will address critical gaps in services for placement foster care youth, provide Probation with the resources and services to reduce the rate of recidivism for the abused and neglected, increase the number of probationers who can remain safely in their homes, reduce reliance on out-of-home care, and reduce the number of Probation foster care youth in congregate care.

**9. What are the Priority Title IV-E Waiver Initiatives which are common to both Probation and DCFS?**

The Priority Title IV-E Waiver Initiatives which are common to both Probation and DCFS are as follows:

- Expansion of Family Preservation Services;
- Expansion of Family Finding activities to locate and engage missing family members from the point of removal of a child from his parent's home; and

- Utilization of aftercare support services.

**10. Why did Probation and DCFS select these three priority initiatives?**

Like the priority initiatives above, these three priority initiatives will better enable both Probation and DCFS to meet the Title IV-E Waiver goals and achieve improved outcomes for youth and families.

**11. How will Probation roll out its priority program initiatives?**

In the first year, Probation will roll out two program initiatives: 1) Enhanced Cross-Systems Case Assessment and Case Planning, and 2) Expansion of Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT). Probation will evaluate the effectiveness of these programs (outcomes, and cost-effectiveness). If these program initiatives achieve reinvestment, we will then give consideration to increasing these programs and/or implementing the other six priority program initiatives -- Aftercare Transition Support Services, Multi-Agency Community Crisis Intervention Teams, Expansions of Special Investigations Unit (SIU)/ Dual Supervision, Placement Assessment Centers (PACs), Family Preservation, Wraparound, and Family Finding. Probation will also give consideration to implementing other program initiatives if reinvestment is achieved.

**12. Will other priority initiatives be considered over the course of the Title IV-E Waiver ?**

The priority initiatives are not etched in stone. These initiatives are fluid and dynamic. The program initiatives will be evaluated annually and will be continued based on the effectiveness of each initiative. If, for example, we are achieving good outcomes with MST and FFT, we will consider increasing and expanding MST and FFT as opposed to implementing another program initiative.

**13. How will the Title IV-E Waiver impact group homes?**

With the Title IV-E Waiver, Los Angeles County has the opportunity to make critical changes in the way placement services are provided to children and families in L.A. County. Under the Title IV-Waiver, services can be delivered on the front end to reduce the number of youth entering congregate care. Probation anticipates that there could be fewer probationers in group homes. Secondly, under the Title IV-E Waiver, we anticipate shortening the length of time probationers are spending in group homes. Providing foster care youth with the right treatment interventions while shortening the timelines to permanency and reunification, is the overriding goal. Therefore, it is expected that the length of stay for probationers in group homes will be reduced.

**14. What are the advantages of the Title IV-E Waiver for group homes?**

The Title IV-E Waiver provides new opportunities for group homes to provide front end services and aftercare services. Thus, group homes will be presented with prevention, family preservation, and aftercare services opportunities such as intensive home-based services, family finding, and transition services, community crisis intervention services, and aftercare services.

**15. How will you work with the group home providers during the Waiver period?**

Along with involving group homes in the implementation of the Waiver, we will have monthly discussion with group home providers. We want to give them a voice in how our priority initiatives are implemented. We are interested in continuous progress, therefore; we will encourage them to seek better and more creative ways to achieve the goals and outcomes of the Waiver.

**16. What will Probation put in place to meet our outcome measures?**

We are in the process of developing performance indicators that will give us outcome accountability and tell us how well we deliver our priority programs in terms of efficiency and quality and how much progress or change did we make as a result of our delivery of service. In brief, our performance measures will tell us how well our priority programs services are working. We will be data and results driven.

**17. How will Probation manage the Title IV-E Waiver project?**

Probation has dedicated a project manager and two support staff to manage the Title IV-E Waiver. Our Title IV-E Waiver management team will be responsible for monitoring program and fiscal performance measures to ensure that we do not expend beyond our budget. Further, this team will work with DCFS and ensure that we are leveraging program and fiscal resources. Probation will hold monthly manager accountability meetings. At these meetings, managers will be held accountable for achieving performance measures and attaining outcomes.

**18. In addition to Title IV-E Waiver funds, what other resources will Probation use to achieve its goals and outcomes?**

Probation will use MST, FFT Family Preservation and Wraparound programs to support our Title IV-E Waiver efforts. Additionally, we will use resources from the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) to support our preventive and aftercare strategies.

**19. What training will the staff receive for the Waiver Project?**

We now have to ask what are the core capabilities and new skills our staff will need to be successful in achieving the enhanced service and improved outcomes. This means that we will have to develop a core curriculum for the Title IV-E Waiver Project for Placement staff. The core curriculum will include an overview of the Waiver strength-based family case management, family engagement and motivation strategies, cross-systems transition planning and family support network strategies. Our Placement Quality Assurance unit will monitor staff to ensure adherence to training standards case management practices. We will also conduct quarterly booster training to provide additional learning opportunities and to reinforce learning the core training curriculum. Further, we will provide joint training for group home providers. Finally, we will dedicate training for our supervisors that will emphasize their quality assurance and training roles as it relates to the Waiver.

**20. How will Probation involve families and other stakeholders in the Waiver Project?**

We will use a variety of approaches in involving parents and other stakeholders in the Waiver Demonstration Project. We firmly believe that parents should be given a voice and choice in determining the child's program participation. This builds "buy-in" and gives the parents a stake in the outcome of their child's participation. Furthermore, we plan to conduct client and stakeholder surveys. These surveys will furnish us with real time feedback which will be used to make ongoing case management and program modifications. We plan to draw on the expertise of Casey Foundation, the Probation Department, Commission for Children and Families, faith and community-based organizations and service providers.

**21. Are there other benefits to the Title IV-E Waiver outside of the expressed goals?**

The Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project, in brief, is about achieving better outcomes for youth and their families. The Title IV-E Waiver will allow Probation and DCFS to put more resources on the front end of the service continuum, thereby, allowing for more children and youth to remain safely in their homes while addressing the risk factors which generate and foster abuse, neglect, and delinquency. So while reducing the likelihood of youth entering congregate care through preventive programs and strategies, the Title IV-E Waiver funding will allow Probation to shorten the exit timelines out of foster care while providing community-based support services to the family, thus, increasing the chances for greater sustainability of the outcomes achieved in group home care.



**22. What are the next steps for the implementation of the Waiver?**

To support the initial strategies identified for implementation, Probation intends to:

- Collect baseline data to determine performance measures for outlying years,
- Monitor and evaluate Waiver strategies outcomes to ensure expectations are met,
- Work with DCFS and Casey Families to implement our communication strategy,
- Provide core training for Department staff, with a special emphasis on Placement,
- Enhance existing Information Technology Systems and develop new systems to meet the demands of the Title IV-E Waiver Capped Allocation demonstration Program,
- Engage County and community stakeholders in the implementation of Probation strategies, and
- Begin implementation of our restructured Placement Program.