

**Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Capped Allocation Project
Progress/Activity Report
July 1, 2007 through December 31, 2007**

Project Overview and Status

To be effective, the child welfare system must be able to meet the multiple needs of children and families through the responsible use of the full spectrum of government services and community supports. The Title IV-E Child Welfare Demonstration Capped Allocation Project (CAP) provides Los Angeles County the financial flexibility to make strategic investments in structural and programmatic reforms that are needed to better serve children and families in a cost neutral manner. These reform efforts build on the significant systems improvement efforts already underway among County Departments and their community partners in Los Angeles County.

The County has identified universal and specific service needs and requirements for dependent and delinquent youth. Efforts made to improve outcomes have targeted specific foster care populations identified in the following sections. Since the implementation of the CAP on July 1, 2007, the out-of-home caseload for DCFS has decreased by 4.8% (from 23,561 to 22,422) and the total AFDC-FC caseload has decreased by 5.9% (from 18,304 to 17,230) through November 30, 2007. The following table details AFDC-FC caseloads numbers by federal and non-federal and placement type:

	Children in FFH			Children in FFA			Children in Group Home			Total		
	Non-Fed	Fed	Total	Non-Fed	Fed	Total	Non-Fed	Fed	Total	Non-Fed	Fed	Total
Jun-07	2,821	7,603	10,424	1,325	4,097	5,422	1,018	1,440	2,458	5,164	13,140	18,304
May-08	2,704	7,168	9,872	1,366	3,917	5,283	836	1,182	2,018	4,906	12,267	17,173
% of Change	-4.1%	-5.7%	-5.3%	3.1%	-4.4%	-2.6%	-17.9%	-17.9%	-17.9%	-5.0%	-6.6%	-6.2%

*Actual data for June 2008 will not be available until the end of July 2008

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

After considering the target populations, ease and speed of implementation efforts, and breadth of impact on the desired CAP outcomes, DCFS identified three first sequence priorities:

1. Expansion of Family Team Decision-Making (FTDM) Conferences;
2. Focused Family Finding and Engagement through Pilot Specialized Permanency Units at 3 Regional Offices; and,
3. Up-front Assessments on High-Risk Cases for Domestic Violence, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues.

Expansion of Family Team Decision-Making (FTDM) Conferences

DCFS will increase the number of FTDM facilitators available to hold biannual multidisciplinary team conferences for children placed in group homes and

children in foster care for two years or longer with no identified permanency resource. Holding mandatory Permanency Planning Conferences (PPCs) every six months for these priority target populations will ensure that the multi-disciplinary team of professionals, family members and caregivers meets regularly to focus on the urgent need of the child for permanency.

FTDM facilitators have been selected for nine of the fourteen specialized positions, and five are in place. Five DCFS offices have not yet selected their facilitators due to a shortage of qualified candidates in their area or the need for Spanish-speaking facilitators. Comprehensive training is provided to the new facilitators through California State University, Long Beach. As additional facilitators come on board, projected to be completed by March, they will receive this training as well. Priority will be given to PPCs with youth in lower level group home placements in an effort to carefully assess their needs and move them out of congregate care to the most appropriate, least restrictive setting.

Focused Family Finding and Engagement through Pilot Specialized Permanency Units at 3 Regional Offices

Specialized Permanency Units will target the most challenging youth in each office, categorized as high-need, who have no permanency resources and may have the following characteristics: no or limited family connections, multiple recent replacements, heavy substance abuse, recent psychiatric hospitalization and repeat runaways. Workers in these units will have reduced caseloads and extensive training and will utilize family finding and engagement strategies, to best serve the permanency needs of these high-need youth.

Two of the three regional offices, Metro North and Pomona, have identified and assigned staff for their Permanency Units, and plans are underway for a third office. Expert consultants are providing training for staff in these identified offices to provide a framework of tools on reconciling loss, rebuilding relationships, and supporting belonging, and all staff in the two offices are being trained on permanency for older youth. Expert case consultation and high level support have also begun to be provided to the Permanency Units as well. The Youth Permanency Implementation Workgroup, delegated to move this effort forward, meets regularly to discuss case criteria, policy and protocols for the Permanency Units.

Up-Front Assessments on High Risk Cases for Domestic Violence, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues

This priority seeks to prevent unnecessary foster placements through more thorough investigation and assessment of Child Protection Hotline (Hotline) high-risk referrals of alleged child abuse and neglect that require special expertise involving substance abuse, domestic violence and/or mental health issues. These assessments are conducted on the target population of families in the

Compton Office service area with such high-risk Hotline referrals. Experts in substance abuse, domestic violence and/or mental health involvement provide immediate, comprehensive assessments and connect families to treatment and ancillary services in the community, allowing Emergency Response Social Workers to make more informed case decisions, and in many cases, allowing children to remain safely in their homes.

As of October 1, 2007, DCFS has contracted with Shields for Families to provide up-front assessments for our Compton Office. Data regarding the number of up-front assessments completed and the outcomes of those assessments are expected to be available by the end of January 2008. DCFS is finalizing Shields' contract for its up-front assessment work, and remaining budgeted dollars will be used to expand up-front assessments for the Department's Emergency Response Command Post (ERCP) which responds to child abuse and neglect referrals after regular business hours. Since many removals, approximately 35%, occur after hours, 24/7 assessment availability for domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health issues is paramount.

Probation Department (Probation)

In the County's June 2007 Implementation Plan, Probation identified two first sequence implementation priorities:

1. Enhanced Cross-Systems Case Assessment and Case Planning
2. Expansion of Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT)

Two additional efforts identified in Probation's overall five-year plan are also underway:

3. Restructure of Placement Services
4. Utilization of Aftercare Support Services

Enhanced Cross-Systems Case Assessment and Case Planning

Probation is working to enhance its placement case assessment and case planning process. This will aid in connecting Probation youth with the most appropriate setting at the onset of their foster care experience, taking into consideration their mental health, educational, medical and behavioral issues. Cross-systems case assessments, case planning, and appropriate placement recommendations will be provided by Probation in conjunction with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) contracted Education Specialists. This initiative will promote appropriate placement decisions and collaboration; enhance case planning efforts; increase placement stability and decrease delays in critical treatment during the transition from detention to out-of-home care.

Probation has experienced delays implementing enhanced cross-systems due to DMH's need to extend the timeline to hire three DMH staff and contracting issues related to the educational component. Probation and Casey Family Programs are working together to develop an approach that will address the educational component until these issues are resolved.

Expansion of Multi-Systemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy

Probation has adopted MST and FFT as first line treatment approaches to serve youth at risk of removal from home and youth returning from congregative care. These services are delivered in the home rather than in a clinic or residential treatment setting. Probation has leveraged existing MST and FFT resources and is utilizing a blended funding stream strategy (grant funds, IV-E reinvestment dollars, and Medi-Cal) to provide the expansion of MST and FFT services to Probation Placement youth.

Since the implementation of the CAP, Probation has provided MST and FFT services to approximately 97 youth. The project has focused MST and FFT services on Probation Placement youth. Youth identified for program participation were Probation Placement youth previously residing in congregative care who were released to the care and custody of their parents with MST or FFT services. The average length of stay in care for these youth was approximately five months. It has been projected that the average length of stay in congregative care for Probation Placement youth prior to the Waiver was twelve months. It is premature to provide baseline projections as the program is in an early stage.

Restructure of Placement Services

Probation has begun to restructure its Placement Services Operation and has developed a Steering Committee comprised of relevant County Departments and various community stakeholders. The Steering Committee has established three workgroups, corresponding to the CAP first sequence initiatives and efforts: Cross-Systems/Case Assessment Planning; Residential Based Services Treatment; and Transition and Aftercare.

Utilization of Aftercare Support Services

To improve the quality of aftercare supervision provided to Probation youth, provide critical overall support to the youth and families that are enrolled in FFT and MST, and ensure that youth have a seamless transition from the group home to the home and community, the Placement Services Bureau has established the Placement Aftercare Community Transition Services (PACTS) operation. PACTS Deputy Probation Officers (DPO) carry reduced caseloads and work in concert with MST and FFT providers. In addition, a Group Home Liaison position was developed to assure a seamless feedback mechanism with Residential-

Based (Placement) DPOs, treatment service providers, group home providers and DCFS specifically in the areas of transition and transition/discharge planning.

Project Administration/Fiscal Management/Implementation Activities

Planning/Oversight Efforts – Both DCFS and Probation have established Title IV-E Waiver Teams led by Waiver Coordinators. The Teams work in concert with one another and participate in bi-weekly Waiver Management Team meetings to provide project coordination and updates and discuss next steps. Both Departments attend monthly implementation meetings with Casey Family Programs and monthly County Steering Committee meetings with the Chief Executive Office (CEO) and have made numerous presentations to the Board of Supervisors, Board of Supervisors Justice and Children's Deputies, Children's Commission and CEO. On July 27, 2007, the Departments jointly sponsored a community stakeholder meeting providing their staff, other County participants, and community stakeholders and partners with a CAP update. In addition to these joint efforts, DCFS is involved in the following planning/oversight efforts specific to its project priorities:

- **Monthly Waiver Coordinator Check-In Call with CDSS** – The DCFS Waiver Coordinator participates in monthly conference calls with Alameda County's Waiver Coordinator and CDSS Waiver Managers.
- **DCFS Executive Team**, led by the Director, meets on a weekly basis; the Waiver Coordinator provides an update, and upper level administration discusses CAP activities, status and challenges.
- **DCFS Waiver Team** meets on a regular basis to discuss progress of CAP initiatives and day-to-day operations.
- **State/County IV-E Fiscal Workgroup** – periodic conference calls led by CDSS with Los Angeles and Alameda Counties are held to discuss fiscal issues related to Waiver implementation.
- **Family Team Decision Making Roundtable** – The TDM Manager meets on a monthly basis with TDM facilitators countywide to address policy, practice and operational issues and may use the process as a vehicle to address the implementation of permanency planning conferences.
- **Youth Permanency Implementation Workgroup** meets bi-weekly to address policy and practice issues and expedite implementation of the Permanency Units. Two subcommittees, addressing Training and Data Outcomes specific to the Permanency Units, also meet on a regular basis.
- **Up-front Assessment** meetings take place with the Compton Office and Shields for Families to address the implementation of up-front assessments, data collection and outcomes evaluation.
- **Residentially-Based Services (RBS) Workgroup** meets monthly to discuss reform of residential care, including efforts to reduce the length of stay, for DCFS and Probation youth; a subgroup, the RBS Collaborative, meets semi-

monthly to create a redesign proposal for residential care for DCFS and Probation youth. These efforts provide an opportunity to update RBS providers and receive feedback on barriers, successes and opportunities.

- **Other Meetings** are ongoing with the Children's Commissioners, Board Offices, and CEO budget analysts specific to DCFS project components.

Probation has facilitated the following project planning/oversight meetings specific to its project priorities:

- **Weekly Probation Title IV-E Management Meetings** to help guide implementation of the CAP Plan and ensure fidelity to the Plan.
- **Quarterly Group Home Provider Meetings** to facilitate communication of the CAP Plan to Probation's group home providers and provide feedback on barriers, successes and opportunities.
- **Bench Officers Meeting** to inform Delinquency Bench Officers of the CAP Transition Services Unit and solicit their help in transitioning minors from group homes to evidence based programs (EBP), i.e., MST and FFT. EBP providers gave a presentation to the bench officers on the specific components of each program and how the EBP teams will work with Probation youth and families.
- **CAP Stakeholder's Steering Committee (Probation-Specific)**, consisting of representatives from group home providers, Children's Commission, bench officers, school districts, Public Defender's Office, Department of Mental Health and Probation, has been charged with assisting Probation's efforts to align its foster care Placement Operation with the CAP plan and planning and implementation of CAP programs and services.
- **Other Meetings** are ongoing with the Children's and Probation Commissioners, Board Offices, and CEO budget analysts specific to the Probation project components.

Specific Program and Policy Changes – For DCFS, as TDM expansion and the establishment of Permanency Units have not yet been fully implemented, requisite program and policy changes are under development and are being rolled out as required, with full implementation projected for March 2008. Up-front assessments for DCFS Regional offices have not required a program change at this time as they are a continuation of a previous program; however, expansion of up-front assessments to Command Post staff will require program changes which are currently being addressed by the Executive Team, Program Manager and Up-front Assessment Committee.

For Probation, program changes include the targeting of Placement youth for FFT and MST services and the development of the Placement aftercare operation, PACTS. It should be noted that Probation is working with consultants contracted with Casey Family Programs who have assisted in developing the attached logic model (Attachment A). The consultants will also be providing

alternative supervision models that can be considered as a component of the restructure of the Department's Placement Services Bureau.

To date, there have been no formal written policy changes for either DCFS or Probation, though DCFS is working on written policy to address the implementation of Permanency Units, expansion of up-front assessments to the Command Post, and utilization and requirements of PPCs.

Challenges and/or Technical Assistance Needs

DCFS has experienced the following challenges in implementing the CAP:

- Difficulty in the timely hiring and reporting of allocated staff for Team Decision Making and Permanency Units due to County budgeting and hiring requirements.
- Shortage of staff required to monitor and oversee all aspects of up-front assessment implementation.
- Lack of automated system to track expenditures; therefore, DCFS must create separate spreadsheets to accurately identify and manually track data and different funding sources.
- Revenue tracking difficulties as the State does not have a system designed to capture both CAP and Non-CAP program costs, it becomes labor intensive to capture both revenue manually.

Probation has experienced the following challenges in implementing the CAP:

- Inability to timely reconcile Probation records and CWS/CMS data due to Probation's inability to access CWS/CMS and electronically access Delinquency Court minute orders.
- Inability to warehouse and access foster care data for the mandatory State evaluation. Probation cannot readily access foster care data with its current technology.
- Lack of an automated system to track Probation Placement expenditures. Probation must create separate spreadsheets to accurately identify and manually track data for each Placement case and all case activity to identify projected assistance payment costs and/or reductions as well as numerous trend data.

New Initiatives and/or State Waiver Related Program Activities

DCFS

Prevention Initiative/HST - DCFS' \$5 million Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project is currently integrated into the CEO's larger Healthier Communities, Stronger Families and Thriving Children (HST) project, as a 12-month program.

Under the current proposed timeline, contracts for community-based agencies (CBO) will be put into effect in each Service Planning Area (SPA) in April 2008.

Intensive Treatment Foster Care (ITFC)/Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) – Working closely with CDSS over the summer, DCFS received approval for Los Angeles to begin to develop ITFC beds for 72 children, and MTFC beds for 60 children. Contracts with five providers were signed by January 2008.

Residentially-Based Services (RBS) Reform – DCFS and Probation are working on RBS demonstration project designs authorized by the enactment of AB 1453, to pilot alternative program designs and funding models. DCFS plans to submit a letter of intent proposal to CDSS in accordance with the draft ACL distributed on December 3, 2007.

Based on outcome evaluation of the first sequence priorities, DCFS will determine if first sequence priorities appear to be successful and should be continued and/or expanded, and if one of the other previously identified initiatives should be implemented. It should be noted that a wide majority of staff and stakeholder participants at the July 27th convening recommended that up-front assessments be expanded countywide in the next sequence of priorities.

Probation will develop training models in Functional Family Probation (FFP), a program that will provide Placement DPOs with tools that support FFT's efforts to best prepare youth, their families and care providers to transition youth from group homes back to the community, maximizing long-term success. This training will not be funded under the CAP but is focused on serving the project. The Probation Steering Committee, Probation managers and various stakeholder groups are reviewing other identified initiatives and possible supervision models in an effort to determine which initiatives and supervision modifications will be implemented next. It has been agreed that implementation will occur as resources are available to support system improvements and administrative infrastructure needs and in a manner that will build on supporting current programs while providing enhanced services.

Direct Services Activities

DCFS has not yet provided direct services to children and families under the expansion of TDM and Permanency Units. However, as stated, extensive planning and efforts have taken place and these initiatives should be underway shortly serving the target populations of children in group homes, children in foster care for two years or longer with no identified permanency resource, and high-need youth with no identified permanency resource. Data on the number and outcomes of up-front assessments completed in the Compton Office since CAP implementation should be available shortly. As stated, up-front assessments are expected to be expanded to the Command Post, targeting

families for whom allegations of child abuse or neglect involving substance abuse, domestic violence and/or mental health issues are investigated countywide outside of regular business hours.

Probation has identified two evidenced-based practices (EBT), FFT and MST, as a program priority and has already expanded their population to include Placement youth. To date, these programs have been working with 97 Placement youth and their families. PACTS has been implemented and is serving these same youth and families to further support reunification efforts. It is anticipated that Placement supervision DPOs will be trained in the promising practice of FFP within this fiscal year to support the transition from congregate care to the home and community.

Evaluation Activities

The primary purpose of the CAP evaluation designed by Charlie Ferguson, PhD is to determine whether the changes in the funding structure for foster care will result in changes in the functioning of County child welfare systems that lead to improved outcomes for dependent and delinquent children and their families. In Dr. Ferguson's evaluation, there are three CAP evaluation components: Process, Fiscal, and Outcome.

Process - The primary purpose of the process study is to determine whether services differed before and after the implementation of the CAP. The secondary purpose is to describe how the CAP was planned and implemented. During the week of July 9, 2007, Dr. Ferguson conducted separate Los Angeles County focus groups and key informant interviews for DCFS and Probation in an effort to identify pre-CAP supervision efforts and overall CAP project understanding. To ensure an accurate representation of DCFS CAP planning and implementation processes, CSW and SCSW focus groups were held with representatives from each Service Planning Areas (SPA) office and a Managers Group consisting of managers from different programs, SPA offices, and levels. Dr. Ferguson also conducted a focus group for Probation staff of various levels.

Data sources and data collection were also used to evaluate the baseline for implementation of the CAP. The County provided Dr. Ferguson with the following documents: agendas and minutes from CAP meetings, departmental organizational charts, and CAP memos and letters.

On October 23, 2007, DCFS submitted its response to Dr. Ferguson's CAP Evaluation Baseline Survey Questionnaire and Table (Attachment B and C). The Survey determined the baseline services DCFS provides to children and families or contracts with other agencies to provide. Probation is in the process of providing Dr. Ferguson with its response to the Survey Questionnaire and Table.

Fiscal - The purpose of the fiscal study is to determine the relationship between the CAP and changes in child welfare and probation expenditures over the five-year span of the CAP. In June 2007, DCFS provided Dr. Ferguson with the FY 05-06 Final Expenditure Summary e-CAPS report as requested.

Outcome - The purpose of the outcome study is to determine the relationship between the CAP and changes in outcomes for children in child welfare and probation over the five-year span of the project.

While Dr. Ferguson is evaluating the CAP on a countywide basis, DCFS and Probation have begun discussing with Casey Family Programs more local evaluation opportunities of first sequence CAP initiatives, and has involved the Los Angeles Inter-University Consortium Children and Families Research Consortium (CFRC).

DCFS has begun to track baseline data for the new indicators for Child Welfare Services (CWS) Outcomes System (previously called AB 636). The CWS Outcome System data is tied to the federal Child and Family Service Review process and the federal outcomes and indicators. DCFS is also developing a Data Dashboard, which will allow for real time tracking of CAP data. The Dashboard is being developed by prioritizing and aligning the Dashboard with the CAP indicators.

DCFS has also begun to analyze foster care caseload movement and expenditures, monitoring caseloads and average cost per case for each placement type. This will allow DCFS to better track the reduction in placement expenditures and the effectiveness of the CAP initiatives in meeting CAP goals such as reduced caseloads and length of stay in congregate care.

Probation is working with its internal IT experts and Casey Family Programs to identify and/or develop technological systems to address project needs. As a result of Probation's inability to access CWS/CMS and because juvenile justice systems have not historically warehoused needed project evaluation data, technological system enhancements are necessary and will promote the ability to draw down baseline and outcome data. Additionally, Probation is working toward enhancing communication tools to maximize information sharing and expedite programmatic enhancements that will ultimately support outreach efforts and data collection.

Expenditure Narrative Based on Claiming Submissions

Los Angeles County has only submitted a claim for the first quarter of 2007-2008, and no new services to children and families were included in that claim.