

WE'RE IN THE **WAIVER** NOW!

The Department of Children and Family Services and Probation Department First Sequence Waiver Initiatives: ALL SYSTEMS GO!

What's happening with the Waiver???

On June 26, 2007, the Board of Supervisors approved the Department's Waiver plan and three first-sequence initiatives:

Expansion of Family Team Decision Making (FTDM) - FTDM will be expanded with the addition of 14 SCSWs to the current team of 62 FTDM facilitators. The goal of this initiative is to provide Permanency Planning Conferences every six months for children with no identified permanency resource who reside in group homes or whose placements have lasted longer than two years to ensure that plans for reunification, adoption or guardianship are expedited.

Expansion of Family Finding and Engagement (FFE) - FFE will be expanded by creating Specialized Permanency Units, beginning with the Metro North and Pomona Offices. CSWs in these units will carry reduced caseloads of our most challenging and disconnected youth.

Upfront Assessments for Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence with expanded Family Preservation Services - Upfront assessments of high-risk referrals with substance abuse, domestic violence and/or mental health involvement will be conducted by Shields for Families in the Compton Office to prevent unnecessary foster placement and divert families to expanded Family Preservation Services.

SUMMER LOG

This summer, 142 DCFS and Probation managers met with 97 Community Partners to convene the second DCFS-Probation Title IV-E Waiver Learning Organization Group (LOG) to recap where we've been (Pre-Waiver), where we are now and how we got here, and where we ought to go next and why (using data to identify priorities). Director Trish Ploehn presented an overview of the DCFS Service Delivery System--how various programs "fit together" and meet our identified outcomes. She reviewed:

- The Key Three (prevention, reunification and permanency),
- Big Three Outcomes (safety, permanency and reduced reliance on out of home care), and
- DCFS Five Core Strategies (Point Of Engagement, Team Decision Making, Concurrent Planing Redesign, Structured Decision Making, and Permanency Planning Partners) that make up the DCFS service delivery system integration.

Deputy Director Angela Carter presented an overview of the joint CEO (Chief Executive Office) and DCFS HST (Healthy Communities, Stronger Families and Thriving Children)/Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP), which will allow qualified community based agencies in each of the 8 Service Planning Areas (SPAs) to partner with DCFS and other county departments to:

- Prevent child abuse before it occurs and provide services to reduce the number of children requiring DCFS supervision (Primary Prevention),
- Provide community connections for those families who choose voluntary services (Secondary Prevention), and
- Provide preventive services and activities to reduce further maltreatment and reduce the impact of abuse (Tertiary Prevention).

The HST/PIDP project is currently pending Board of Supervisor review and approval, with a proposed target start date in January 2008. Once approved, presentations will be made to all regional office staff about HST/PIDP and how families, children and youth will be positively impacted by this project.

Deputy Director Lisa Parrish, the Department's "Waiver Coordinator," discussed the Waiver as a reinvestment opportunity and emphasized that the Waiver provides an opportunity to build upon and expand the great work already being done by our Department.

Chief Deputy Director Susan Kerr presented the Department's plan in response to the Katie A Class Action Lawsuit. The plan calls for a number of systemic improvements to better meet the mental health needs of the "plaintiff class," certain children in foster care or at risk of foster care placement who have mental health needs. This includes the expansion of medical hubs and wraparound slots (please see "Katie A Class Action Lawsuit Review" posted on LA KIDS for more detailed information).

Our Probation partners, including Deputy Director Jitahadi Imara and Placement Services Bureau Chief Carol Sanchez, presented Probation's new placement model, with an emphasis on enhanced cross-systems case management and the expansion of Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT).

What did the data tell us?

DCFS attendees and community partners met in SPA area breakout rooms to review data, Waiver outcomes, current initiatives and future priorities. Each SPA received the following data reports specific to its regional offices:

- The number of children and length of stay in out of home placement, by case plan goal (adoption, legal guardianship, long term foster care, remain home, return home, self-maintenance), by age group and length of stay, and by rate schedule
- The number of Children Removed from Home
- The number of Referred Children: Disposition Type by SDM Safety Level
- FM Over 12 Aging Reports
- FR Over 18 Aging Reports

Each regional office and their community stakeholders reviewed the data and came to consensus to propose future Waiver initiatives they thought would be most useful in meeting their identified outcomes. For example, data from several regional offices indicate a need to reduce initial detentions; these breakout groups recommended that the first priority for the next Waiver sequence focus on expanding up-front assessments beyond the Compton Office throughout the Department. Other regional office data reflect that the top priority should be the reduction of length of time in out of home care with earlier reunification. These offices determined that establishing aftercare support services that allow for more timely and successful reunification would best meet that priority.

OK, what's the difference between an outcome, a performance measure, a priority and an initiative?

Sometimes terminology can be confusing! An outcome is a goal. Our outcomes are tied to the County and State mandates and the federal Children and Family Services Review (CFSR). Our "Big Three Outcomes are safety, permanency, and reduced reliance on out of home care.

How will we know if we are reaching our outcomes? A performance measure is the number that tells us how close we are to our outcome. To quantify how close we are to reaching our safety outcome, we may look at the current number of substantiated referrals of abuse. We will compare this number over time to see if we are getting closer to reaching our outcome.

Example: In FY 2004 -- 2005 there were 15 substantiated referrals of abuse.
In FY 2005 – 2006 there were 10 substantiated referrals of abuse.

Conclusion: Because in FY 2005 – 2006 there were 5 fewer referrals or a reduction of 33% from the previous year, the data indicate that we are moving closer to our goal.

A priority is a main concern. For example, we agree that all children should have "forever families."

An initiative is a program designed to meet a priority, which is evaluated and tested over time. For example, Permanency Planning Partners (P3) is an initiative that has shown that it is effective in providing permanent plans for older children who have been in foster care for more than 24 months.

NOTE: All the data that were reviewed on July 27th are available at the LA KIDS IV-E Waiver website:
<http://lakids/dcfs/TitleIV-E/index.htm>

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Contact L. A. County's Waiver Demonstration Project Coordinators:
waiverinfo@dcfs.lacounty.gov and waiverinfo@probation.lacounty.gov

11/1/07