

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

LA DCFS Update, Progress Underway on Child Welfare Outcomes!

First, A Little Review

Over the past five years, DCFS has focused on three key goals: improving safety, speeding up timelines to permanency and reducing reliance on out of home care. We have done this by keeping children home with their families safely, reunifying those removed from home more quickly or finding another permanent home for those who cannot return to their parents. Since children do best when they grow up in strong and stable families, our model of reform has emphasized partnering with families and communities to build on their strengths to meet their children's needs. The Waiver is a vehicle to free up flexible funding to help us broaden and deepen our innovative practices, building on our five core strategies: Point of Engagement (POE), Structured Decision Making (SDM), Team Decision Making (TDM), Concurrent Planning and the Permanency Partners Program (P3). Since the Waiver began, we have expanded Family Team Decision Making (FTDM), Family Finding and Engagement through Specialized Permanency Units, and Upfront Assessments for High Risk Referrals involving Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence and Mental Health Issues. Each of these first sequence initiatives is currently underway: 14 additional FTDM facilitators have been selected to conduct permanency planning conferences for children in long term foster care without permanency resources; specialized Permanency Units have been established in the Metro North and Pomona Offices; and upfront assessments are being conducted by Shields for Families in the Compton Office with future roll-out plans to include additional regional offices as well as the Emergency Response Command Post (ERCP).

How Are We Doing So Far?

We're on the right track. We got good news in January 2008, when data was released comparing our progress between 2002 and 2007, which is the period before the Waiver began. When we look at trends since 2002, we see marked improvement in the following indicators: no recurrence of maltreatment, reunification within 12 months, median time to reunification, adoption within 24 months, and median time to adoption. However, the Federal Government has set national goals or standards for us to meet, and there's room for improvement when comparing them to some of our 2007 baseline indicators.

Performance Measure/Indicator	2002 Data	Baseline 2007	% Change	National Goal
No recurrence of maltreatment	90.8%	93.4%	2.9% 😊	94.6%
No maltreatment in foster care	99.99%	99.82%	-0.17% 😊	99.68%
Reunification within 12 months	44.6%	60.8%	36.3% 😊	75.2%
Median time to reunification	13.5 months	8.2 months	-39.3% 😊	5.2 months
Adoption within 24 months	9.5%	24.6%	158.9% 😊	36.6%
Median time to adoption	50.2 months	33.6 months	-33.1% 😊	27.3 months
Reentry following reunification	4.8%	10.2%	112.5% 😞	9.9%

What Does This Mean?

On the key indicators above, we've made progress on all but maltreatment in foster care, where we slipped backward but are still above the national standard, and reentry following reunification. However recurrence of maltreatment is decreasing and we are carefully examining indicators of concern, including reasons for reentry. In order to determine the success of our practice improvements, we will compare "baseline," or starting point, outcome data before the Waiver began July 1, 2007 with how we are doing for the following five years, through 2012. With our core strategies in place, we can invest in community-based practice innovations which build on family and neighborhood strengths, like our twelve-month Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project, (for more information see "We're in the Waiver Now," Vol. II, Fall 2007), approved by the Board of Supervisors on February 26, 2008. We can't do this alone; community partnering is the key to supporting healthy communities, strong families and thriving children. Recognizing progress so far, we are on the path to success!

For more info, contact L. A. County's Waiver Demonstration Project Coordinators:
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