

Planning for Success

An Analysis of California Counties' Child Welfare System Improvement Plans

First Full Year Implementation of County System Improvement Plans under AB 636



Prepared by the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) on behalf of the California Department of Social Services, Children and Family Services Division

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Prepared under contract by the Child and Family Policy Institute of California.
www.cfpic.org

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
I. HISTORY AND CONTEXT	3
Establishing Outcomes and Accountability	3
Three Key Elements of the County Review Process	5
II. METHODOLOGY.....	9
III. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	10
Content Analysis.....	10
<i>What Counties Are Doing to Improve Outcomes</i>	
Performance Measures.....	10
Performance Measures Selected by Counties	11
Systemic Factors	12
Systemic Factors Selected by Counties	12
Programmatic Strategies Selected by Counties.....	13
Administrative Strategies	13
Case Strategies	14
Collaborative Strategies.....	16
Quantitative Findings	18
<i>First Full Year SIP Implementation Data</i>	
Median Change in Targeted Performance Measures.....	18
Process Evaluation	24
<i>Feedback from Counties and Local Partners</i>	
SURVEY RESULTS	24
County Survey.....	24
Community Partner Survey	25
REGIONAL FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS	26
COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS	30
Maintain the Momentum	30
Continue to Monitor and Improve Quality of Data	30
Reinforce Collaboration with Other Agencies.....	30
Increase Resources.....	31
Improve Statewide Leadership.....	31
AB 636 Structure	32
Support with Media	32
IV. OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT RESOURCES ANALYSIS	34
Child Welfare Services Outcomes Improvement Project.....	34
Other AB 636 Augmentations.....	35
Pilot County Improvement Funding	36
V. CONCLUSION	37
APPENDIX A COUNTY SPECIFIC DATA CORRELATED WITH STRATEGIES	38

Introduction

California adopted a new approach to managing Child Welfare Reform with the passage of AB 636 in 2001. This legislation set the stage for developing an Outcomes and Accountability System that would ensure the continual improvement of the Child Welfare Services in the state. This report will examine a specific element of that approach — the System Improvement Plan (SIP) process — in the context of the performance measures that are driving counties' self-assessments and strategic planning. The report will also discuss how county staff and community partners are responding to this challenge and will detail recommendations for building on and improving this process.

Prior to the development of the Outcomes and Accountability System, California's counties did not have a consistent roadmap for evaluating their improvement needs or charting their approaches to modifying the ways in which they were doing their work. Individual counties might periodically undertake strategic planning that would incorporate elements of this type of approach but even in these circumstances there was an immense variation in processes from county to county. In analyzing the counties' System Improvement Plans, we will highlight the commonalities among counties as a way of demonstrating how AB 636 provides California an organized, rational approach to positive statewide change. The structure of AB 636 provides a standardized methodology for identifying and addressing improvement needs; interestingly, the improvement strategies developed by counties are can be grouped into a limited number of discreet categories, indicating that counties are sharing information about successful strategies and replicating these in their own contexts.

California's Outcomes and Accountability System is unprecedented in many respects. The consistent use of data to evaluate performance constitutes a new approach to analyzing the child welfare system — an approach that began with the federal Child and Family Services Review process and has been greatly refined and improved in the creation of California's own system. The Peer Quality Case Review process brings experts together from neighboring counties to assist in the structured review of cases and a focused analysis on case work practice. The Self-Assessment process offers counties an opportunity to analyze and understand both their strengths and challenges as they examine the ways in which they can approach improving results for children and families.

The individual county-defined System Improvement Plans (SIPs), however, are the most significant aspect of the new processes in that they offer a structured, targeted approach to the improvement of services that impact the lives of children and families. These plans incorporate the data that counties are collecting through their data reviews, case reviews, and self-assessments and translate their understanding of this information into strategic planning for program improvement. As these plans must be developed in partnership with the community and other county agencies, another significant impact of this new process is the forging of relationships with the larger community and the development of greater community understanding about what goes on inside the child welfare agency in its efforts to improve outcomes for children and families. Further engagement of the community in planning for the adoption of specific improvement strategies reinforces the importance to the child welfare agency of the input and perspective of other stakeholders in the child welfare system.

This report analyzes the initial System Improvement Plans submitted to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) in September 2004 by all 58 counties. The report also reviews changes in performance measures targeted by counties during their first full year of implementation. We hope that this will be the first of a number of annual reports highlighting the work that is being done by counties and the State to ensure that this organized approach to continuous quality improvement is realizing the goals and objectives set forth by the Legislature in approving this landmark legislation in 2001.

I. History and Context

In 2000, the federal government completed the adoption of final rules pursuant to the Adoptions and Safe Family Act of 1997 authorizing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to establish “a new results-oriented child and family services review process that will serve as the Federal government’s key tool for finding out how State child welfare programs are doing at ensuring children’s safety, permanency and well-being.” With California’s state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system, it was evident that in order to accomplish the federal goals, statewide improvements in California would require a structured approach at the county level. In response, Assemblymember Darrel Steinberg introduced into the California Legislature AB 636, which proposed a context for each county to address its own performance in a manner that mirrored, and many ways improved upon, the federal system.

On October 10, 2001, the Governor of California signed AB 636, which stated that “in order to provide greater accountability for child and family outcomes in California’s child welfare system and to encourage the state leadership that is necessary to identify and replicate best practices to assure that the unique and critical needs of these children and their families are met, the Legislature enacts the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001.” This Act directed the convening of a broad group of participants who were charged with creating a child and family services review process to begin in early 2003.

In 2002, the California Health and Social Services Agency convened a broad-based workgroup with the following vision:

“The true measurement of success will be when California’s communities see and treat foster children as if they were their own. The day that we prevail in our mission will be the day that we monitor the health, education, well-being and overall success of foster children the same way that we do for our own children.”

The resulting Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability Workgroup included members representing the following organizations: the California Department of Social Services, California Youth Connection, Youth Law Center, Judicial Council, Department of Health Services, Department of Mental Health, Department of Education, Department of Child Support Services, State Department of Justice, County Welfare Directors Association, California State Association of Counties, Chief Probation Officers of California, labor, and representatives of California Tribes, interested child advocacy organizations, researchers, and foster parent organizations.

Establishing Outcomes and Accountability

The Workgroup developed a plan for establishing a new Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System that is described as “an unprecedented and historic effort to reform California’s child welfare system.”

Outcome Goals. The new accountability system is based on achieving specific and measurable statewide goals related to improving child safety, permanency and well-being, as defined below.

SAFETY GOALS

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are maintained safely in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

PERMANENCY GOALS

- Continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children, as appropriate.
- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry to foster care.

WELL-BEING GOALS

- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.
- Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.

Framework for Accountability. To provide a framework for accountability, the Workgroup designed the new system to include the following components:

- Quarterly Management Reports: CDSS will generate quarterly reports to include statewide County performance on all outcome measures. Reports are intended to provide a management tool for the State and Counties. The reports will be most useful to Counties but will also be available to the public via a State-sponsored web portal.
- Performance Standards: Based on distributions of County performance in the quarterly reports, the State will develop performance standards to measure statewide and individual County performance.
- Improvement Goals: State and County improvement goals will be determined based on statewide and individual County performance, progress, and improvement.
- State Annual Progress Report: CDSS will publicly release an on-line Progress Report, providing information on statewide and individual County performance and improvement goals. This will be the same data as in the Quarterly Management Reports but will be in a more readable summary format for the public.
- County System Improvement Plan: All Counties will outline their strategy to improve performance in their System Improvement Plan. Plans must be approved by the County Board of Supervisors. The State will analyze and assess Plans.
- Technical Assistance/Training: High priority Counties will receive focused technical assistance. To ensure a consistent approach to technical assistance and training statewide, CDSS will develop training materials and curricula that reinforce the broader objectives of the State's accountability framework, the County System Improvement Plan, and the federal CFSR.
- Formal State Compliance Action: If a County demonstrates a lack of good faith effort to actively participate in this process or any portion thereof, and/or consistently fails to follow State regulations, and/or make the improvements outlined in the County SIP, CDSS, in accordance with current law, has authority under Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10605 to compel County compliance through a series of measured formal actions up to State Administration of the County Program.

Three Key Elements of the County Review Process

The Workgroup developed three specific elements for implementation by California's 58 counties in order to "provide for improved accountability for child and family outcomes that result from the interventions and services provided by California's Child Welfare System (CWS) and to assure that the unique needs of children and families are met through the promotion of best practices in CWS." These three elements (described in more detail below) are:

1. County Self-Assessment (includes Quarterly Data Reports)
2. Targeted Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR)
3. County System Improvement Plan (SIP)

Each of these elements is a component of a process of a complete county review that each county undertakes every three years. All 58 counties submitted their first System Improvement Plans to the state in September 2004.

COUNTY SELF-ASSESSMENT

The County Self-Assessment is a County's opportunity to explore how local program operations and other systemic factors affect measured outcomes. As a document that relates service delivery to outcomes, the Self-Assessment consists of the following components:

- **Demographic Profile and Outcomes Data.** This section describes the County's children, youth, and families, both at the population and CWS-FC levels. In addition, the profile includes the outcome data and process measures included in both the federal and State reviews.
- **Public Agency Characteristics.** This section includes a description of the local system of care, with an emphasis on system capacity, resource base, organizational structure, and political context.
- **Systemic Factors.** This section includes a discussion of the federal review "systemic factors" and any additional factors the County chooses to discuss. For appropriate factors, especially service array and case review system, the County should obtain input from its customers using surveys.
- **Summary Assessment.** Discussion of the system strengths, areas needing improvement, and identification of service gaps and needs.

County Self-Assessments are reviewed by a multidisciplinary team at the state level. The State Team for Review of County Assessments includes the following representatives:

- Department of Social Services
 - Children's Services Operations Bureau
 - Office of Child Abuse Prevention
 - Child and Youth Permanency Branch
 - Indian Child Welfare Act unit
 - Resources Development and Training Bureau
- Department of Health Services
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs)
- Department of Education

Who's on County Self-Assessment Teams?

Membership of County Self-Assessment Teams was prescribed by the Workgroup as follows:

Core Representatives:

- California Youth Connection, if available
- County Health Department
- County Mental Health Department
- CWS Administrators, Managers, and Social Workers
- Parents
- Local Education Agency
- Local Tribe(s) for applicable Counties
- Probation Administrators, Supervisors, and Officers

Groups that must be consulted or represented:

- Court Appointed Special Advocates
- County Alcohol and Drug Department
- Labor
- Law Enforcement
- Local representatives of children and parents
- Local Juvenile Court Bench Officer
- Regional Training Academy

Other examples of groups that may be consulted or represented:

- County Children and Families Commission (Prop. 10 Commission)
- County Welfare Department
- Department of Developmental Services Regional Center
- Domestic Violence Prevention Provider
- Economic Development Agency
- Local Child Abuse Prevention Council
- Local Workforce Investment Board
- Local Public Housing Authority
- Other Service Providers
- Special Education Local Planning Area(s)

TARGETED PEER QUALITY CASE REVIEW

The purpose of the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) is to learn, through intensive examination of County child welfare practice, how to improve child welfare services and practices in California, both in the participating County and in other jurisdictions as well. The PQCR team analyzes a variety of data sources, starting with the information gathered during the County's Self-Assessment, to better understand services delivered to children and their families. In addition to information from the Self-Assessment, reviews will involve collection of other data deemed

necessary by the review team, such as stakeholder focus groups, interviews, and surveys. All reviews also involve structured case reviews with case carrying social workers. As necessary, the review team may examine systemic factors, including those identified as part of the Self-Assessment.

The Workgroup proposed the following Peer Review Team membership, including participation from both county Child Welfare Services and Probation:

- Department of Social Services Manager Co-Chair
- County Manager Co-Chair
- Neighboring County Manager
- Neighboring County Supervisors, Analysts, Program Specialists, or Line Workers experienced in casework
- Neighboring County Probation, in collaboration with CPOC
- Regional Training Academy representative
- Other representatives, depending on targeted program area

COUNTY SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP)

The County System Improvement Plan is the third component of the county review process. Updated on an annual basis, the County SIP is the operational agreement between the County and the State outlining how the County will improve its system of care for children and youth. For those outcome indicators for which the County performance is determined to be below the statewide standard, the County SIP must include milestones, timeframes, and proposed improvement goals the County must achieve.

The Workgroup prescribed the following elements of the SIP:

- Identification of local planning body
- Emphasis on prevention strategies
- Description of performance, standards, goals, and strategies, along with corresponding milestones and timeframes
- Identification of how the plan builds on progress and improves areas of weakness
- Description of how the systemic changes needed, and how these activities will help achieve the goals.
- Description of education/training needs and any identified needs for technical assistance, and how these activities will help achieve the goals.
- Identification of roles of other partners in achieving improvement goals (for example, attach Memoranda of Understanding with Probation and CWS agencies)
- Description of the interface with federal outcome measures
- Analysis and reporting on the findings of data collection conducted as part of the Self-Assessment and, if available, a Peer Quality Case Review.
- Identification of any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support accomplishment of identified goals.

Who's on the County System Improvement Plan (SIP) Team?

Membership on the County SIP Team was also proposed by the Workgroup:

Core Representatives:

- CWS Administrators, Managers, and Social Workers
- Probation Administrators, Supervisors, and Officers
- California Youth Connection, if available
- Foster Parents

Groups that must be consulted or represented:

- Court Appointed Special Advocates
- County Health Department
- County Mental Health Department
- County Alcohol and Drug Department
- Labor
- Law Enforcement
- Local representatives of children and parents
- Local Juvenile Court Bench Officer
- Local Education Agency (or representatives from its Foster Youth Services Program or School Attendance Board)
- Local Tribe(s) for applicable Counties
- Regional Training Academy

Other examples of groups that may be consulted or represented:

- County Children and Families Commission (Prop. 10 Commission)
- County Welfare Department
- DDS Regional Center (depending on client population)
- Domestic Violence Prevention Provider
- Economic Development Agency
- Local Child Abuse Prevention Council
- Local Workforce Investment Board
- Local Public Housing Authority
- Juvenile Justice Commission
- Special Education Local Planning Area(s)
- PTAs, or representatives from the PTA Community Concerns Group
- Faith-based organizations
- Fire departments, businesses, hospitals, or various medical associations
- Parent Leadership Groups
- Other Service Providers

II. Methodology

This study was conducted to analyze county System Improvement Plans (SIPs) from development through implementation. In addition, this study compared baseline data regarding county outcomes with planned county activities.

The purpose of this project was to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the process and the potential for successful improvements to the child welfare system. To that end, the project focused on identifying commonalities among SIPs across counties, determining successful approaches and program improvements. In addition, the project sought to uncover programs or approaches not considered or attempted due to lack of resources or other barriers. Finally, the project's ultimate goal was to identify opportunities for support and technical assistance to improve implementation of plans and the development of recommendations to improve the SIP process and child welfare outcomes. These objectives were achieved through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The quantitative analysis consisted of two components: 1) a content review of all 58 counties' System Improvement Plans, and 2) the compilation and analysis of a dataset correlating changes in county-targeted outcome measures and county change strategies. The content review and analysis included cataloguing improvement activities by type and county, and identifying common strategies in each outcome area. Data was acquired from the University of California at Berkeley, Center for Social Services Research, Performance Indicator Project.

A qualitative analysis was conducted to evaluate the county process of developing their System Improvement Plans. Two methods were used. First, a survey instrument was developed and distributed to the Children's Services Director in all 58 counties. The survey consisted of 12 concise questions regarding the development and implementation of the SIP, and the resources needed to achieve their goals. The survey was completed by 53 counties. A separate survey instrument was also developed and disseminated to key community partners through out the state. The survey was sent to 100 partners in 5 regions and was completed by 56. The survey consisted of questions pertaining to the level of involvement and engagement experienced by community partners in the development and implementation of the SIPS in their counties.

In addition to the surveys, focus groups were convened with county staff in five regions: Southern, Northern, Central, Mountain Valley and Bay Area. Representatives from individual counties in each region met and engaged in a facilitated group discussion in which additional information was gathered on the impact of the process of developing the SIP's and the successes and challenges encountered in its implementation. The focus groups also addressed the resources needed to fully implement the SIPS as well as making recommendations to ensure optimal outcomes.

Finally, resources for improving child welfare outcomes in 2005 were analyzed to determine resource gaps that may have been present at the time counties developed their plans.

III. Findings and Analysis

Content Analysis

What Counties Are Doing to Improve Outcomes

In developing their System Improvement Plans, counties were instructed to select 3 to 5 performance measures or systemic factors associated with improvement areas identified in their Self-Assessments. Performance measures indicate progress toward achieving statewide goals for improving outcomes for children and families who come into contact with the child welfare system. Systemic factors refer to internal agency operations that can affect outcomes in multiple areas.

Performance Measures

SAFETY GOAL: *Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.*

Performance Measures:

- Recurrence of Maltreatment
- Rate of Child Abuse and/or Neglect In Foster Care
- Rate of Abuse and/or Neglect Following Permanency

SAFETY GOAL: *Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.*

Performance Measures:

- Rate of Recurrence of Abuse/Neglect in Homes Where Children Were Not Removed
- Percent of Child Abuse/Neglect Referrals with a Timely Response
- Timely Social Worker Visits With Child

PERMANENCY GOAL: *Continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children, as appropriate.*

Performance Measures:

- Siblings Placed Together in Foster Care
- Foster Care Placement in Least Restrictive Settings
- Rate of ICWA Placement Preferences

PERMANENCY GOAL: *Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing reentry to foster care.*

Performance Measures:

- Length of Time to Exit Foster Care to Reunification
- Length of Time to Exit Foster Care to Adoption
- Stability of Foster Care Placement
- Rate of Foster Care Re-Entry

WELL-BEING GOAL: *Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.*

Performance Measure:

- Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood

Performance Measures Selected by Counties

The vast majority of counties chose performance measures related to safety. A total of 38 counties chose to focus on reducing the recurrence of maltreatment and 10 focused in on reducing the rate of child abuse and or neglect in foster care.

The key strategies (discussed in more detail below) that were targeted to achieve improvements in the recurrence of maltreatment were: Safety Assessment, Service Array and Early Referral. For those counties choosing to reduce the rate of Child Abuse and/or Neglect In Foster Care the key strategies they targeted were Caregiver Recruitment, Training and Support, Internal Communication and Family and Youth Engagement.

Many counties chose to work to reduce the Rate of Recurrence of Abuse/Neglect in Homes Where Children Were Not Removed. The 27 counties that chose this outcome targeted Safety Assessment, Service Array and Internal Communication as key strategies for achieving their goals.

For the 22 counties that chose to increase the percent of Child Abuse/Neglect Referrals with a timely response, key strategies emerged related to internal staff processes and organizational structures as well as data entry in order to improve their outcomes.

The second highest performance measure targeted was increasing Timely Social Worker Visits With a Child. In reviewing the strategies of the 33 counties that chose this outcome, Data Entry and Social Worker Oversight and review emerged, as the key strategies counties would employ to meet this goal.

Outcomes related to permanency were a strong focus for many of the counties with 17 choosing to increase the stability of foster care placements, 9 choosing to reduce the Length of Time to Exit Foster Care to Reunification and 8 focusing on reducing the Length of Time to Exit Foster Care to Adoption. The strategies that were targeted to increase permanency were primarily Caregiver Recruitment, Training and Support, Family and Youth Engagement and Service Array.

Sustaining family relations and preserving and supporting connections also emerged as a strong focus for the counties with 14 choosing to increase the number of Foster Care Placements in Least Restrictive Settings. For those counties strategies included Caregiver Recruitment, Training and Support, Internal Communication and Family and Youth Engagement.

Ensuring that children were placed with their siblings or with their tribes were each chosen by one county and Internal Communication as well as Case Planning and Review and Service Array were identified as key strategies.

A good number of counties chose increasing the number of Children Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood as a targeted outcome broadening the trend of permanency for youth in care. Of the 15 counties who chose to focus on this outcome the majority would be utilizing Family and Youth Engagement strategies to improve their outcomes.

Systemic Factors

SYSTEMIC FACTOR A

Relevant Management Information Systems

SYSTEMIC FACTOR B

Case Review System: Includes 1) Court structure; 2) Process for timely notification of hearings; 3) Process for parent-child-youth participation in case planning; and 4) General case planning and review

SYSTEMIC FACTOR C

Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention: Includes 1) general licensing, recruitment and retention; and 2) placement resources

SYSTEMIC FACTOR D

Quality Assurance System: Includes 1) Existing quality assurance system

SYSTEMIC FACTOR E

Service Array: Includes 1) Availability of services; 2) Assessment of needs and provision of services to children, parents and foster parents; and 3) Services to Indian Children

SYSTEMIC FACTOR F

Staff Provider Training

SYSTEMIC FACTOR G

Agency Collaborations: Includes 1) Collaboration with public and private agencies; 2) Interaction with local tribes

SYSTEMIC FACTOR H

Local Systemic Factors

Systemic Factors Selected by Counties

On the whole, fewer counties chose to focus on Systemic Factors (see box below). However, there was still strong representation in these categories. For the 15 counties that chose to work on Relevant Management Information Systems, the key strategies targeted were Record Keeping, Internal Communication and Quality Assurance.

Improving the Case Review System, which addresses the court structure including notification for hearings and participation in case planning, also held interest for counties with 12 choosing to target improvements in this area. Most focused their efforts on strategies such as Internal Communication, Family and Youth Engagement and Quality Assurance.

Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention was identified in many outcomes; however, some counties chose to work to improve this practice and identified strategies such as Internal Communication and Service Array

A couple of counties chose to improve their Quality Assurance System through strategies that included Record Keeping and Internal Communication.

A handful of counties wanted to improve their Service Array that included increasing the availability of services and or adequately assessing the service needs to children, parents and foster parents. Those seven counties included Early Intervention and Needs Assessments and Resource Use as key strategies to achieve their goals in this area.

Another group of counties chose to work on developing their provider network either through Staff Provider Training which was identified by 3 counties or through increased Agency Collaborations which 2 counties included in their plan. The key strategies for these improvements included: Internal Communication and Caregiver Recruitment, Training and Support.

These strategies were the top three reported by the counties – it is not an inclusive list.

Programmatic Strategies Selected by Counties

Based on the findings of its Self-Assessment, each county identified specific areas that it needed to address in order to improve results for children and families. The county developed its System Improvement Plan by selecting programmatic strategies designed to address its area of need. Depending on the numbers of identified needs, each county selected a number of strategies to work on during the period of their SIP. The numerous programmatic strategies embedded in the 58 county SIPS have been sorted into the following 12 categories, grouped by their primary locus of change: Administrative, Case, or Collaborative.

Administrative Strategies

RECORD KEEPING

The Outcomes and Accountability System that was instituted through AB 636 has created for counties an imperative to review and understand the data that is provided to them in quarterly reports from the state. Many counties identified in their SIPS strategies that will enable them to better ensure the integrity of the data that represents their performance. They have characterized their work as the following:

- Clean up data
- Enhance data

ANALYTICAL METHODS

AB 636 has provided counties a context for understanding and evaluating performance in terms of both quantitative and qualitative data. Many counties identified strategies in their SIPS that help them improve the ways that they collect and analyze data about performance; they characterized these in the following ways:

- Self analysis
- Research programs
- Assess data sharing
- Assess practice

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

In addition to identifying specific programmatic strategies in their SIPS many counties recognized in their Self Assessments that they might benefit from improving internal staff processes. These processes enable counties to ensure a more effective relationship between the policies and procedures of the county and the implementation of those strategies by their social workers. Included among these internal staff improvement strategies are the following:

- Case sharing among social workers
- Systematic review of regulations
- Researching best practices
- Supervisory oversight/support
- Improved processes for social worker documentation of their work
- Staff recognition activities by supervisors and managers

SOCIAL WORKER OVERSIGHT

Many counties recognized in their Self-Assessments that improved supervisory and managerial processes would enable them to ensure that individual social workers are working to achieve positive results with the families and children on their caseloads. These counties identified strategies in their SIPS that will strengthen the oversight and review of the efforts of their social workers and help ensure that their workers are improving the outcomes for their clients. Specific strategies included:

- Safe Measures—a computer program that tracks the work of individual social workers and produces reports for managers that show the results achieved by each worker, by each unit, by each management section and for the program as a whole
- Practice Review—a specific strategy that allows supervisors and managers to review the quality of the work performed on individual cases

STAFFING STRUCTURE

In some cases, the way that an agency is organized can impact the way that policies and procedures are translated into action. Many counties chose SIPS strategies that address concerns about how agencies are organized and the way that work is distributed among social workers including:

- Changing staffing ratios in specific social worker functions
- Increasing supportive resources for staff
- Shifting of workload from one function to another

Case Strategies

SAFETY ASSESSMENT

California is undertaking a program for ensuring that a Standardized Safety Assessment process is deployed among all 58 counties. Counties that are seeking to improve their safety outcomes in their SIPS have identified specific safety strategies that support their effective implementation of the Statewide Safety Assessment process including:

- Structured Decision Making

- Development of policies that ensure the implementation of the Statewide Safety Assessment process
- Enhancement of tools that already address safety

NEEDS ASSESSMENTS AND RESOURCE USE

Critical to the achievement of positive results at the case level is the effectiveness of the social worker's skills in assessing each family's need for services and the development of plans to ensure that those services are provided. The skills of individual social workers in each agency can be improved by providing those workers specific tools for conducting service assessments and developing case plans. Counties identified in their SIPS a number of strategies to improve these functions, such as the following:

- Developing Receiving Centers, where children and youth are taken immediately after being removed from their parents' homes in order to provide them a comprehensive physical and mental health screenings and assessments.
- Expanding Voluntary Family Maintenance programs that enable social workers to plan collaboratively with families for their use of services to enhance parental capacity and reduce child safety risk factors
- Developing Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings where professionals from various disciplines such as health, mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence can work with the family to assess their needs and plan for their access to effective services
- Developing structured service referral processes to ensure that when services are identified and included in a family's case plan there is a mechanism for providing those services in a timely fashion

FAMILY AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

In recent years, child welfare agencies have acknowledged that the best way to ensure that services are embraced by the families and youth to whom they are targeted is to engage them in the assessment of their problems and in planning for the resolution of those problems. A number of new strategies have been developed over the past few years to help county staff more effectively engage families and youth with whom they are working. Among these strategies are:

- Improved Independent Living Programs to help youth prepare for adulthood
- Team Decision Making meetings that bring families and professionals together to jointly assess the family's situation and to jointly plan for services that will help families improve their parenting
- California Permanency for Youth Project that provides specific tools to county staff that enable them to help youth achieve life-long connections before they leave the child welfare system
- Family Finding methods that enable social workers to find relatives of children in foster care who might provide a loving home and/or another form of life-long connection
- Parent Training that engages parents in understanding their own challenges in parenting and provides them with the tools to improve their parental functioning

CAREGIVER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND SUPPORT

The permanence and well-being of children in foster care relies heavily on the ability of the child welfare agency to provide high quality foster care to children under their supervision. In order to

improve outcomes for children in foster care, including their ability to successfully reunify with their biological parents or successfully achieve legal guardianship or adoption, counties have identified strategies to help them attract more homes, to more effectively evaluate prospective homes, and to prepare foster families for the challenges of their work. Specific strategies identified by counties in their SIPS were:

- Improved relative selection process
- The Annie E. Casey Family to Family Initiative
- Family visitation programs

Collaborative Strategies

EARLY REFERRAL

In order to decrease the number of children coming to the attention of the child welfare system and for those children who do come to the attention of the system to reduce the recurrence of maltreatment and re-entry to foster care, counties have identified a number of promising strategies to strengthen family functioning. Strategies that reach out to families before their problems become severe enough to result in serious child maltreatment are referred to as “early intervention” and “prevention” strategies. Among the strategies identified in the SIPS were the following:

- Differential Response
- Referrals to Family Resource Centers
- Community Engagement and Training
- Public Awareness Campaign

PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER SERVICE AGENCIES

California has accepted the principle that child welfare agencies cannot effectively and consistently improve results for children and families without developing effective partnerships with other programs and agencies. In their SIPS most counties have identified the need to expand the array of services available in the community through public and private agency partnerships. Specific strategies mentioned in SIPS are:

- Child Welfare/CalWORKS Linkages for families involved in both the child welfare system and the family welfare assistance payments system
- Wrap-around services that provide mental health and other supportive services to families whose children would otherwise have to be in foster care
- Americorps volunteer programs to provide paraprofessional assistance to families in their own communities
- Coordination with Multi-Purpose Family Resource Centers that provide an array of early intervention programs for families in accessible community settings such as schools and community centers.
- Alcohol and Drug Programs that provide services to families with children in the system due to substance abuse problems.
- Peer-to-Peer mentoring for families in the child welfare system
- Expansion of Foster Family Agencies to provide more family based care in the community provided by private agencies

- Law enforcement coordination to ensure that when families come in contact with criminal justice there are services to ensure that a social work approach is offered to assist them in keeping children in their own homes or those of relatives
- Health and Education Passports to ensure effective identification of services that are necessary to improve the health and education of children in foster care

COURT PROCESSES AND RELATIONSHIPS

The strength of the relationship between the child welfare agency and the Juvenile Court is important to the achievement of a number of outcomes for children, including timely permanence and length of time in foster care. In order to address the effectiveness of their work in court, counties identified the following strategies:

- Training of social workers in court processes and research into the most effective methods for achieving identified results in court.
- Streamlining agency processes that might impede the timely and effective reporting to the court and working with the court to ensure that court processes enable timely hearings.

Quantitative Findings

First Full Year SIP Implementation Data

From a statewide perspective, the data from the first full year of SIPs implementation offer an opportunity to take an overall look at the connections that exist between outcomes, programmatic strategies and performance measures across the various counties. [Appendix A](#) (see also the [CDSS website](#)) provides a statistical chart that shows the changes in performance indicators on a county-by-county basis along with the strategies employed by each county to affect change. Counties are grouped by size to assist with quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The county-specific data chart is primarily useful for individual counties as they look at the relationship between their programmatic strategies and their own performance changes. Counties can use this information during their self-assessments to help determine whether the strategies that they have selected are having the impact that they had hoped for and whether other counties of similar size are having better results, either with similar strategies or with alternative strategies. Counties will also find this data useful as they develop peer-to-peer mentoring strategies and learn from one another how best to address performance concerns through the selection of the most effective programmatic strategies. Peer-to-peer learning is embodied in the Peer Quality Case Review process, a component of the Outcomes and Accountability System. Other opportunities for peer-to-peer learning will be developed as the Outcomes and Accountability System matures.

It is too early in the implementation of the Outcomes and Accountability System to use the county-specific data chart as a statewide “report card” on the relative performance of counties, although this may be possible in the future. Improvements in the consistency and reliability of data collection will be required before an accurate and meaningful cross-county comparative analysis can be done. Local community differences and the “counter balancing” of performance measures (improvements in one indicator skewing the data in another) also limit the meaningfulness of cross-county comparisons.

Median Change in Targeted Performance Measures and Strategies Employed to Affect Change

While it is difficult to draw meaningful quantitative conclusions about the overall performance of counties, the median data gathered below is presented to give as much of a statewide picture as is possible in the context of this system. These percentages represent the median change in performance among counties that targeted the measures for improvement, exclusive of very small counties.¹

¹ The median change was calculated by determining the mid-point of percent change values, excluding very small counties and percent change values that could not be calculated (i.e., indeterminate values). Very small counties (defined as fewer than 100 children in care) were not used in the computation of the medians since performance levels for these counties are extremely volatile due to the few number of children represented.

In viewing this data, it is also important to keep in mind that changes in one indicator affect changes in other indicators. For example, improving reunification rates may cause the length of stay in foster care to increase since the population of children remaining in care is likely to have greater needs and be more difficult to place.

STATEWIDE OUTCOME GOAL

Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

More than two-thirds of counties, 41 in total, focused their improvement plans on the state's primary goal of protecting children from abuse and neglect. Counties targeted recurrence of maltreatment more than any other performance measure.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE**Recurrence of maltreatment**

Counties that focused on reducing the recurrence of maltreatment primarily used strategies aimed at identifying families in need of resources and support, and getting them the help they need. At the case level, counties improved the quality and consistency of standardized safety assessments when investigating child abuse reports. Counties also initiated collaborative relationships with other service providers to provide families with a broader array of resource support and sought to provide referrals to resources before serious harm occurred. At the administrative level, counties improved information sharing among social workers and other forms of internal communication.

Counties that chose to monitor the recurrence of maltreatment showed a median improvement of 5% on the state measure and 20% on the federal measure.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE**Rate of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care**

Counties that focused their efforts on reducing the rate of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care employed three basic strategies: improved internal information sharing; recruitment, training and support of caregivers; and involvement of family members and youth in problem solving.

County data collection for this measure was too inconsistent and incomplete to enable a meaningful comparison among counties, prompting CDSS to issue instructions for accurately reporting data on this measure.

STATEWIDE OUTCOME GOAL

Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

The vast majority of counties, 47 in total, chose to focus their efforts on improving the safety of children in their own homes. Within this category, counties selected one or more of the following measures to help gauge the effectiveness of their efforts.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE**Percentage of children who receive a timely response to initial abuse and neglect allegations**

Counties that sought to increase the percentage of children who receive a timely response to initial abuse and neglect allegations primarily employed administrative strategies to address this issue. Key among these was improved information sharing and better recordkeeping, along with increased and/or optimized staffing.

Overall, counties showed improvement in providing timely responses to child abuse reports. Counties improved a median of 21% in cases requiring response within ten days and by a median 2% in cases requiring an immediate response (where counties were already performing at a high level).

PERFORMANCE MEASURE**Recurrence of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed**

Counties developed strategies on multiple levels to address the difficult issue of reducing the recurrence of abuse and neglect where children are not removed from their homes following an investigation. At the case level, more than half of counties focused on conducting more consistent and comprehensive safety assessments. More than a third also worked to engage families in solving the issues that lead to the report. At the collaborative level, many counties sought to develop partnerships with other service agencies as a way of broadening the support available to families. At the administrative level, the majority of counties worked improved information sharing about cases, best practices and regulatory requirements. Some counties also focused on evaluating analytical methods and improving social worker oversight.

While the early statewide data on this measure is inconsistent, overall counties improved by a median 3% in reducing the recurrence of abuse and neglect when children remain at home.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE**Percentage of children who receive timely visits from their social workers**

Counties that sought to increase the percentage of children who receive timely visits from their social workers implemented changes at the administrative level. Key strategies employed were improved record keeping, information sharing and oversight. A third of the counties also optimized or increased staffing to help improve on this measure. Some counties focused on evaluating their methodologies for tracking and analyzing this information.

Every county that selected this measure improved its record of timely visits with a median improvement of 22% from the first month reported (April 2003) through the end of 2005.

STATEWIDE OUTCOME GOAL

Continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children, as appropriate.

A third of the counties, 16 in total, focused on strengthening the continuity of children's relationships with family members and preserving their existing community connections, as appropriate. Nearly all of the counties focused on improving the percentage of children placed in the "least restrictive" foster care setting. One county focused solely on placing sibling together while another focused solely on improving tribal placements.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Percentage of children placed in the least restrictive foster care setting

Counties that sought to increase the percentage of children placed with relatives and foster family homes and other less restrictive settings focused their efforts on recruiting, training and supporting caregivers. They also engaged extended family members and youth in identifying people who might be willing to provide a foster home. At the administrative level, counties focused on information sharing among social workers.

Overall, these counties improved by a median of 27% in reducing the percentage of children initially placed in a group home or shelter. The one county that focused on increasing the percentage of children whose primary placements was in foster homes improved by 4%.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Percentage of children placed with some or all siblings

The one county that focused on increasing sibling placements utilized administrative strategies, including information sharing and staffing adjustments. At the case level, the county focused on improving needs assessments and resource development for children entering the foster care system.

One county chose to target this issue, improving by 7% on the measure that tracks the percentage of children who are placed with all siblings and by 3% on the measure that tracks the percentage of children who are placed with some or all siblings.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Percentage of American Indian children placed with Indian caregivers

The one county that targeted American Indian placements focused on sharing information and developing partnerships with other service providers.

No data is available regarding the performance on this measure.

STATEWIDE OUTCOME GOAL**Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing re-entry to foster care**

More than half of the counties, 38 in total, focused on improving measures related to achieving stable living situations and permanent, lifelong connections for children who enter the foster care system. Most of these counties focused on preventing re-entry into foster care and reducing the need for multiple foster care placements.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE**Percentage of children who experience multiple placements in foster care**

Counties that sought to reduce the percentage of children who experience multiple foster care placements largely focused their efforts on recruiting, training and supporting foster care providers. Several also engaged extended family members and youth in identifying potential caregivers. Some worked to improve assessments as well. A significant number collaborated with other agencies to expand available resources. At the administrative level, counties focused on expanding staff availability and information sharing.

The counties that choose to focus on increased stability in foster care placements showed a median improvement on the 2% state measure and 4% on the federal measure.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE**Length of time to exit foster care and reunify with parents or caretakers**

Counties that focused on reducing the length of time that children are in foster care before reunifying with their parents primarily chose to collaborate with other agencies to get families the services they needed to enable children to return home. Counties also engaged families and youth in problem solving as a way to reduce the length of time in foster care. Some counties worked on improving the quality of initial safety assessments and sharing information to strengthen case management.

The counties that focused on reducing the length of time to reunification, although few in number, accounted for nearly half the foster care population. Overall, these counties improved a median of 16% on the state measure and 11% on the federal measure.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE**Length of time to exit foster care through adoption**

Counties that sought to shorten the time to adoption for foster children that cannot return home primarily targeted information sharing and improved court processes, usually both. Half the counties also engaged family members and youth in problem solving. Some counties focused on recruiting and supporting caregivers as well.

The counties that focused on this measure were also few in number but accounted for a large percentage of children in foster care. These counties showed consistently strong improvement in

shortening the time to adoption. Counties targeting the state measure improved by a median of 58% and those targeting the federal measure improved by a median of 41%.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Percentage of children who re-enter foster care

Counties that worked on reducing the percentage of children who re-enter foster care employed a wide variety of strategies to assist these troubled families. At the case level, most counties sought to engage family members and youth in problem solving. About half also focused on improving the quality and consistency of safety assessments. Some worked on improving needs assessments and accessing resources. Counties also collaborated with other agencies to improve the availability of services and referred families to resources before serious harm occurred. At the administrative level, counties focused on sharing information and knowledge, and evaluated their current practices.

The results were highly mixed on this measure with some counties improving on the state measure but not on the federal, and vice versa. However, counties improved overall by a median of 15% on the state measure and a median of 8% on the federal measure.

STATEWIDE OUTCOME GOAL

Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.

A quarter of the counties focused on the goal of ensuring that youth who turn age 18 while in foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE

Levels of self-sufficiency for youth exiting foster care

Counties that sought to improve self-sufficiency among foster youth transitioning to adulthood focused primarily on developing partnerships with other service providers and engaging youth in problem solving. Indicators of success for this measure have not been defined.

In addition, comparing very large counties to very small counties can be problematic. In the larger counties, changes in performance can more reliably be associated with systemic improvements but in smaller counties changes in the circumstances of one or two children can have a dramatic impact on the percentages of performance change.

Over time, with more reliable data and the investment of time and resources in sustaining specific strategies, we will be able to offer more reliable objective observations of performance across counties.

Please see [Appendix A](#) for county-specific change data correlated with improvement strategies.

Process Evaluation

Feedback from Counties and Local Partners

SURVEY RESULTS

County Survey

A survey instrument was distributed to each of the counties with 53 responding. The survey sought to gain a basic understanding of the development and implementation of each of the counties System Improvement Plans as well as their experience with community engagement activities.

- Almost all (97%) of the respondents agreed that the development of their System Improvement Plans helped their child welfare agency staff better focus on outcomes within their organizations.
- The vast majority (94%) agreed that there was a strong relationship between their System Improvement Plans and their understanding of their counties strengths and challenges.
- Most (88%) agreed that their community partners genuinely understood the relationship between their system improvement strategies and results for children and families.
- The vast majority (94%) of counties reported engaging their community partners in the development of their SIPs
- Counties reported a high level of agreement (94%) that efforts to engage their community have improved their relationships with community partners.
- Counties had a mixed response what process would you use for the next SIP with 78% agreeing they would use the same and 22% disagreeing.
- Counties also had a mixed responses regarding the development of System Improvement Plan helping to identify and leverage existing resources in their organization and their community with 80% agreeing and 20% disagreeing.
- The vast majority (92%) agreed that there was political will and leadership buy-in on this issue.
- The vast majority (92%) also agreed that the SIP process helped them organize their activities and focus their efforts.
- Almost all (98%) agreed that they referred their plan and utilized it to track their activities and efforts.

- The counties had a mixed response in regard to the inclusion of strategies in their SIPs that they now know are not useful. While 64% agreed, 36% disagreed with this concept.
- The majority (66%) disagreed that county and community resources were adequate to implement their plans.

The results of the County Survey revealed strong agreement among the counties in regard to the benefit of the SIP process, both in terms of relationship building with community partners as well as internal organization and focus. Counties also reported using their SIP to track their progress. However, counties disagreed with the concept that there were enough resources to effectively implement their SIPs in order to realize their identified goals.

Community Partner Survey

A survey instrument was distributed to 100 Community Partners in each of the five regions of the state with 46 responding. The survey sought to gain a basic understanding of the experiences of the community partners in the development and implementation of each of the counties System Improvement Plans.

- Almost all (96%) of the respondents agreed that they had a prior relationship with the county Child Welfare Services agency.
- Almost all (98%) agreed that the Child Welfare Services agency worked to engage their organization in the County Self Assessment and/or System Improvement Plan process.
- Almost all (98%) agreed that their relationship with the Child Welfare Services agency had improved as a result of their participation in the System Improvement Plan process.
- All most all (98%) agreed that the development of the SIP helped their county focus on outcomes for children and families.
- All (100%) agreed that the SIP process helped them understand the relationship between Child Welfare Services system improvement activities and results for children and families in their community
- The vast majority (96%) agreed that their organizations recommendations were included in the development of their county's System Improvement Plan.
- Almost all (98%) agreed that they were involved in the implementation of their county's SIP.
- Almost all (98%) agreed that they were providing services to families that have been referred to them by the county Child Welfare Agency.
- The majority (85%) agreed that they were serving more children and families in the community.
- The majority (87%) agreed that they had changed the way in which they provided services to vulnerable families in the community.

- The majority (86%) disagreed that there were sufficient resources to adequately serve this population of children and families.

Overall the community partners reported that they were engaged and involved in the development and the implementation of the SIPs in their counties and that their relationships with and understand of Child Welfare Services had improved because of the process. In addition, they reported serving more families and utilizing different approaches. However, many reported they did not have sufficient resources to adequately serve this population.

REGIONAL FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

The focus groups were convened to obtain specific information regarding the development and implementation of the System Improvement Plans in the counties throughout California. The questions and issues addressed at each of the regional focus groups were developed in response to the baseline information gathered through the survey process.

The overall goal was to gain insight into their individual experiences with details of their successes and their continuing needs. In addition focus group participants were asked to identify recommendations that would support future improvements to their planning process and assist them in achieving their long term goals.

The following information is a collective representation of the responses of counties.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

How did process improve relationships?

The focus group participants reported that their relationships with community partners were solidified through the process of developing their SIPs. Specifically they indicated that the activities they engaged in lead to broader dialogues that helped to shift their thinking, changing attitudes and leading to deeper understanding of child welfare. In addition they reported that they emerged from the process with a common purpose and language that wasn't there before. This foundation of shared objectives improved their ability to work together and eventually built a level of trust. In some cases this shift in attitude about Child Welfare led to a shared responsibility for the well being of children and families in the community and a level of involvement and ownership in achieving specific outcomes.

What strategies were most useful?

All regions reported that they built on existing relationships, whether it was from longtime initiatives (such as Family to Family) or planning structures that were already in place in their communities. In addition, some reported using non-traditional settings and resources in the community such as churches, schools and Family Resource Centers. Most reported that they tapped into their partners passions to engage them in the process although they also reported that offering incentives maximized attendance. In some cases, attendance was achieved by mandating key public agencies representatives.

Some counties chose to focus on specific high need communities based on data analysis as their targeted strategy.

Finally, most reported that using consultants was a great resource.

What obstacles did you have to overcome?

Most counties reported that it was challenging to engage new partners—traditional and non-traditional. The issues varied from the impact of geography in large counties to capacity in the small, rural communities. Many counties reported that engaging other public agencies was particularly challenging. In some places, the community itself needed to be organized before the process of engaging them could begin.

All reported that limited funds seriously undermined their ability to truly reach out to their partners and getting “buy in” from leadership in other agencies was influenced by funding expectations. Specifically there were no funds to support the participation of community partners and funding in general was unreliable and could not be counted on in the future. Counties even reported that competition for funding among community partners made the process more complicated.

Some counties reported that the shift in culture that was inherent in the work required additional time and training for their staff. Staff was also noted as an issue with community partners agencies due to high turnover and the need for repetitive trainings.

The issue of community engagement and staffing challenges were even more challenging in the African American community where some reported challenges in engaging the community and the lack of county staff that reflected the community.

Finally, it was noted by many counties that the courts were not engaged and there were challenges in helping them understand the relationship between their activities and the outcomes that were identified in their county plan.

Are those relationships still valid today?

Most counties reported that community partners were working with them in new ways and were interested in the process but not entirely engaged in the outcomes.

DEVELOPMENT OF SIP**How did the process help focus your efforts?**

The counties reported that the process itself was a reality check. They noted that the structure provided by AB636 required them to develop a plan with timeframes that was tied to outcomes and based on data.

This helped them develop clear and realistic goals many of which were built on existing activities. In addition, by bringing in policy makers as part of the process it linked policy to programs and outcomes.

As they brought together public and private staff, they reported that it helped them examine internal staff processes and also helped them understand the perspective of their partners and vice versa.

What did you think were successful activities in the development of your SIP?

Counties reported a number of different approaches to developing their SIP. Some drafted the document entirely on their own, beginning with an internal discussion and developing solutions.

Others drafted the plan internally and then sent out to their partners for review. A few others worked with their partners to develop a plan sharing everything in an effort to attain transparency and create interest in the activities and goals of Child Protective Services.

Almost all thought the use of data was instrumental in developing their plan and for monitoring their process and keeping on track. Some reported that they chose outcomes that they new could be achieved.

One county noted they believed the additional support for the program goals were the result of engaging their local Board of Supervisors and educating them about the process before the SIP began.

Finally, one county reported that conducting their Peer Quality Case Review was an excellent process that provided a significant contribution to the development of their SIP.

What would you do differently next time?

In regard to community partners, counties reported they would work to be both more selective of community partners and to receive more feedback from the community. To do this they would have more community focus groups, involve the faith-based community, and include more biological families and non-traditional partners. Where public partners were concerned, they noted they would work more diligently to coordinate the relationships with probation.

Many noted that they would work to develop information about how data links to policy and practice. In addition, they would provide more educational opportunities to the community about understanding and interpreting data.

All reported the process was more time intensive than they originally thought. As a result, all indicated they would dedicate greater staff resources to the overall process. In addition, they would develop realistic and practical goals building in flexibility and taking their internal resources and staff into consideration when doing so. All reported on the need to create opportunities to leverage funding to support the process and the achievement of their goals.

Finally, all counties reported that they would like more clarity from the State in regard to their individual roles and the development of goals, particularly regarding:

- Timeframes
- Coordination of relationships with Probation
- Community education about using and understanding data
- How data links to policy and practice and the impact on outcomes

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SIP

How are you using your plan?

Most counties refer to their SIP and track their progress on their outcomes. They use this information for staff evaluation and motivation – sharing improvements as they become evident and identifying areas where staff need assistance.

They also use this information as an educational tool by sharing periodic updates with their boards of supervisors, internal staff and community partners and thereby helping to keep them on track and interested in their overall goals. Many reported sharing their progress with media and at community meetings as well as in promotional materials such as newsletters.

They report referring back to their SIPs when making broad, long-range county plans and budget allocations as well as when developing outside contracts. They also use the SIP to ensure that the goals and activities of programs, work groups and committees are complimentary to their overall county plan.

Are the strategies you employed impacting your outcomes as envisioned?

While the counties reported they appreciated the ability to look at their data, all cautioned that at this point it is too early to know if the strategies that they were employing were making a difference in their progress. They noted multiple variables (many of which were out of their control) that come into play with families making it difficult to link improvements to specific strategies.

However, most noted that there were strategies that were showing promise and there was some improvement on some outcomes, especially when focusing on a specific region or neighborhood. All punctuated the need to understand the relationships between measures and outcomes. Many were quick to point out that in small counties relatively small numbers can have a dramatic impact on the data and projected improvements.

How did you identify or leverage resources that assisted in implementing SIP?

The counties identified a variety of strategies for accessing funds in order to implement their plans. Most counties reported adjusting the allocation of staff resources and/or redefining activities according to SIP. Still others linked their programs with other county programs with similar goals and desired outcomes such as family to family, redesign and Linkages.

Many counties secured grants from outside sources such as Private and Community Foundations and their local First Five Commission or utilized volunteers in the community such as Americorps. In addition, the majority of counties reported tapping into federal funds such as Promoting Safe and Stable Families, Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment and Early Prevention S Diagnosis and Treatment. State funded programs also served as a resource such as the Children's Trust Fund and Proposition 63 as well other state funded mental health programs including Children's System of Care.

Finally, they sought to develop new partnerships within the community specifically in education.

Where are the challenges and resource gaps – both in the county and the community?

Every county reported needing additional resources in order to effectively and thoroughly implement their SIPs and take their improvement strategies to scale. Key among their identified gaps was the need for additional staff. This gap was noted across the board. Additional staff was needed for social workers to interface with families, data experts to analyze the data and work with the staff and community to understand the information and research experts to identify new strategies and best practices, administrative and management staff to assist with monitoring and tracking the progress on the SIP. This gap was not limited to county staff; counties across the board reported that there were significant gaps at Community Based Organizations in staffing to serve identified families.

They also reported a gap in dedicated, dependable funds for prevention. This was a particular challenge when it came to long range planning. Without the ability to count on funding in future years counties were limited in what they could project and what they could put in place that would

not be eliminated. To punctuate this, counties referred to the recent reduction in PSSF funds. Gaps in funding were also noted for community based organizations with a special caveat that private foundations and other resources for programs that serve this population of families were extremely scarce in rural central California communities.

COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS

The counties who attended the Focus Groups were asked to provide specific recommendations for the improvement of the process that was used to develop their System Improvement Plans and to offer suggestions that would overall help achieve the objectives of the Outcomes and Accountability System. They offered suggestions that can be grouped into the following categories.

Maintain the Momentum

And, finally, the participants in each of the Focus Groups spoke passionately about the need to ensure that the Outcomes and Accountability System not become a passing fad but that we understand its value as a long-term process. There was genuine consensus that this process needs adequate time, that the stakeholders in the child welfare system have patience with outcomes, and that we allow this to become a process of continuous quality improvement where improvements are made from one year to the next and relationships are developed over time.

Continue to Monitor and Improve Quality of Data

Because of the critical role of data in counties' understanding of their own developmental needs and the effectiveness of the strategies that they have adopted in their SIPS, the Focus Group participants made a number of data-related recommendations. They suggested that a data tracking system be developed and employed to allow for a review of outcomes at the case level in addition to the agency level. They would like to see the development of better data tools that would allow them to develop ad hoc queries for historical data to identify trends. They believe that greater efforts are needed to educate all of the participants in the AB 636 process about the relationship among the various performance measures. Many of the participants believe that this is critical to developing a data system for Probation.

Reinforce Collaboration with Other Agencies

The county representatives who attended the focus groups suggested that county leadership might improve the overall process by providing greater clarity regarding the mission and goals of their programs, by building more community awareness of the services that they provide, and by addressing the gaps that might exist between outcomes and the philosophy of the organization.

Focus group participants recommended a number of roles that leaders in their local communities might play in supporting the implementation of the Outcomes and Accountability System. They suggested that the Courts could improve their understanding of the child welfare system and of

their own role in that system. They hoped for greater participation from the Probation Department and Native American tribes in their communities. With each of these partners, in addition to their local community based agencies, they hoped that the new system would enable them to create a context of shared outcomes

Increase Resources

Most of the recommendations from county representatives consisted of suggestions for additional resources to support their work, either for the SIPS development itself or for the strategies that are identified in their SIPS.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT SIPS DEVELOPMENT

- Training and education for Child Welfare Directors about the process is needed in order to ensure consistency across the state
- Development of a Best Practices document for the SIP process would be helpful
- Funds are needed for Administration of the AB 636 process and specific staff should be dedicated to that process or a Contractor/Facilitator to write SIP should be provided
- Regional Training Academies should be used as a resource for this process
- Funding is necessary for non-traditional partners, such as parent partners, youth, and other community partners to participate in the process

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT IMPROVED PERFORMANCE

- Counties need more time and money to build community partnerships and to build capacity for services to children and families in community based organizations
- Funds are needed for social workers in order to reduce workload in order to successfully implement SIPS strategies
- Counties need more opportunities for peer to peer learning at administrative level
- Funding flexibility is required for the implementation of prevention and early intervention services
- There should be a Behavior Health allocation for CWS to purchase Alcohol and Drug and Mental Health services for families in the Child Welfare System

Improve Statewide Leadership

County representatives felt that the role of the California Department of Social Services is critical to the success of the Outcomes and Accountability System and the SIPS development process. They believe that as the process unfolds they need better technical assistance from the state. There are quarterly telephone calls with state liaisons that should be more formalized with more clear directions about purpose and format, and in general they would like more consistent support and information from the state. Having said that, they also would like to ask that the state be less directive and that they honor the choices and plans that counties have developed and that they allow more flexibility for counties to adjust the plans that they have submitted. They hope to

achieve these objectives by having more county input to the ongoing development of the AB 636 process and a clear definition of the state role in this process.

In addition to these observations about the role of CDSS, counties also hoped that CDSS would provide leadership in developing resources for counties (which are similar to those listed in the Resources section below), such as funding flexibility for prevention services, financial support for county infrastructure to sustain the AB 636 activities. They would like to see the state take a strong leadership role in the appropriation of more financial resources for services that support Child Welfare (such as Mental Health and Substance Abuse) as well as for Independent Living Programs and Child Welfare Services aftercare

Because of the critical role of local community partners in the AB 636 process, county representatives recommended leadership roles for statewide organizations that work with those local community partners. In particular they would like to see leadership from other state agencies to require local agency participation in the SIPS development process and leadership from statewide associations that would encourage their local members to participate in this process.

In particular, although the Courts and Probation were mandatory partners in the AB 636 process at the local level, in many counties they were not as active as they might have been. The Focus Group participants believe that there is a strong role that the Judicial Council and the Chief Probation Officers Association might play in ensuring that the local courts and probation departments take a more active role in the continuing development of the local AB 636 process. There are shared outcomes between Child Welfare and Probation that encourage this partnership, so the participants recommended that the Courts develop shared outcomes as well to engage them more fully in the partnership at the local level.

Draw foundations to Central Valley or create list of foundations that are responsive to Central Valley.

Counties also noted that they would have benefited from increased participation of Native America tribes and would appreciate state-level assistance in creating that engagement.

AB 636 Structure

Although there was a great deal of support for the Outcomes and Accountability System there were some specific suggestions for the improvement of the System. County representatives believe that the development of the SIPS is greatly enhanced when the PQCR occurs before the development of the SIPS so that this process informs the county's awareness of the strengths and challenges of its current system.

In general, county representatives believe that the methodology of the AB 636 System should be clearer for county staff that are responsible for its implementation.

Support with Media

In several Focus Groups there arose suggestions regarding creating a media strategy for the AB 636 and SIPS development process. The participants agreed that the County Welfare Directors Association Public Education and Awareness Committee could be very helpful in creating messages that would help county agencies communicate more effectively with their communities

and their local politicians and in training local staff to deliver these messages. It was also suggested that CDSS might play a leadership role in developing a media campaign related to the Outcomes and Accountability System

IV. Outcomes Improvement Resources Analysis

Many counties reported the gaps in funding as a critical obstacle to achieving their goals. Most noted that their plans included strategies that they could only implement for targeted populations. They uniformly reported that gaps in funding would prevent them from taking many of their strategies to scale, therefore limiting the percentage of improvements on their chosen outcomes.

Child Welfare Services Outcomes Improvement Project

To help counties improve their performance on SIP-identified outcome measure, California authorized targeted funding through the Child Welfare Services Outcomes Improvement Project (CWSOIP) in 2005-06. Counties submitted requests totaling \$16.4 million in additional resources for programs and services they identified as crucial to their success.

- Early Referral funds were sought by 30 counties to provide Differential Response programs and to support other child abuse prevention programs.
- All in all, 29 counties noted a need to promote interagency collaboration and expand the availability of services in the community. Many of those counties identified the need for additional funds to strengthen the services provided by Family Resource Centers and Community Based Organizations. Others identified gaps in funds for Alcohol and Drug Programs, transportation, wrap around services and linkages programs.
- Family and youth engagement strategies and programs were identified by 21 counties for additional funding. The majority of these reported the need for resources in order to implement family group decision-making and other programs that sought to identify permanent families for older youth in care.
- The issue of Caregiver Recruitment, Training and Support, Support was chosen by 18 counties most of whom targeted recruitment campaign and other strategies for retaining foster caregivers.
- Many counties chose to focus on Internal Communication and Training. Of the 14 who identified this need, most focused on training of staff for innovative programs and collaborative activities.
- The issue of Staffing and Organizational Structure was identified by 8 counties. The vast majority of these counties noted the great need for hiring additional staff to reduce caseloads and workload.
- Safety Assessment was chosen by 6 counties. All of these counties identified the need for additional funds in order to completely implement Standardized Decision Making in their programs.
- Analytical Methods and Quality Assurance Issues were identified by 6 counties most of whom were seeking to purchase additional computers or new software that would streamline program implementation and social worker practices.
- For five counties Needs Assessments and Resource Use was identified as in need of funding assistance. They proposed support for multi-disciplinary teams as well as funding for receiving centers.

- Both Court Processes/Relationships and Social Worker Oversight were only identified once for additional support for training and implementation of safe measures respectively.

The State was able to provide \$12.7 million to support these targeted efforts, leaving a fiscal gap of \$3.6 million for program improvement strategies that were unfunded that year. The table below shows county requests for CWSOIP funding in 2005-06 by strategy type. Counties most frequently requested support for collaborative efforts that would provide additional resources to children and families — both before serious harm occurred as well as after families had entered the child welfare system. Many counties also requested support for more intensive case management — including engaging families and youth in problem solving, recruiting and supporting caregivers, and strengthening assessments.

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY	Change Locus	County Requests	Amount Funded
Refer families to resources before serious harm occurs	Collaborative	30	\$4.0 million
Develop partnerships with other service agencies	Collaborative	29	\$2.6 million
Engage family and youth in problem solving	Case	21	\$1.5 million
Recruit, train and support caregivers	Case	18	\$2.0 million
Improve internal communication and information sharing	Administrative	14	\$0.5 million
Increase and/or optimize staffing	Administrative	8	\$0.5 million
Improve quality and consistency of safety assessments	Case	6	\$0.5 million
Improve analytical methodologies	Administrative	6	\$0.2 million
Improve needs assessments and access to resources	Case	5	\$0.8 million
Improve court processes and relationships	Collaborative	1	\$0.4 million
Improve oversight of social workers	Administrative	1	\$0.2 million
TOTAL		139	\$12.7 million

Most counties would report that these funds were a critical resource and played a significant role in assisting them with the implementation of their plans. In addition, many would note the need for ongoing support to continue to fill the gaps in programs, services and staff that are necessary to achieve the desired outcomes of their plans.

Other AB 636 Augmentations

During 2005-06, the State also augmented county funding by \$19.0 million through a number of other fiscal strategies to support the development of System Improvement Plans:

Counties' self-assessments and System Improvement Plans	\$11.2 million
Enhancement of local service delivery systems	\$5.9 million
Support of county workers participating in Peer Quality Case Reviews	\$1.9 million

Pilot County Improvement Funding

Although not directly related to implementing AB 636, the State provided \$13.7 million to eleven pilot counties for ongoing testing of innovative approaches to providing child welfare services.

Funding for child welfare services has traditionally been a critical topic in the State, as it is in most states. California state budget negotiations, even in years of revenue shortfall, have spotlighted the importance of child welfare services funding. In recent years and in spite of structural deficits, the Administration and the Legislature have generally sustained funding for child welfare programs. With the changing landscape and focus on improving program performance, it will become increasingly important to recognize the relationship between funding and outcomes.

V. Conclusion

California's groundbreaking Child Welfare Services outcomes and accountability system, while in its infancy, is already providing the structure and guidance necessary to ensure that counties and communities work together to improve outcomes for abused and neglected children and their families.

In reviewing the work that the counties have undertaken to date, it is clear that the foundation for the next phase of the quality improvement cycle is in place. Data associating strategies with outcomes are now available on a county-by-county basis (see the full report),* providing counties with a critically important self-assessment tool as well as offering them opportunities to draw on similarly situated counties for peer learning and support.

The process evaluation reveals a newfound understanding among county child welfare staff and the community about the possibilities of partnering on behalf of California's most vulnerable children. It also indicates that counties clearly desire leadership, technical assistance and support from the State in the interest of achieving measurable improvements.

While it is still early in the process, the new accountability system is resulting in very real changes in the way child welfare agencies "do business" across the state:

- Data outcome measures are focusing discussions toward common goals.
- Child welfare staff and other agencies are sharing information and knowledge to improve outcomes for children.
- Counties are involving communities throughout the state in an open problem-solving process on behalf of children and families.

These achievements are the critical first steps in developing a successful process for ensuring greater safety, permanence and well being for California's children.

Appendix A: County-Specific Data Correlated with Improvement Strategies

CHART OF CHANGES IN TARGETED PERFORMANCE MEASURES
ORGANIZED BY COUNTY SIZE

	A	F	G	H	I	J	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
1	County (Grouped by Foster Care Population Size)*	Intended Direction of Change (+ / -)	% Change in STATE Performance Measures**	Change Occurred in Intended Direction	% Change in FEDERAL / OTHER Related Measures**	Change Occurred in Desired Direction	ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL: Improve record keeping	ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL: Improve analytical methods	ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL: Improve internal communication and information sharing	ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL: Improve oversight of social workers	ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL: Increase and/or optimize staffing	CASE LEVEL: Improve consistency and quality of safety assessments	CASE LEVEL: Improve needs assessment and access to resources	CASE LEVEL: Engage family and youth in problem solving	CASE LEVEL: Recruit, train and support caregivers	COLLABORATIVE LEVEL: Refer families to resources before serious harm occurs	COLLABORATIVE LEVEL: Develop partnerships with other service agencies	COLLABORATIVE LEVEL: Improve court processes and relationships	Target Populations
2	STATE SAFETY GOAL: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect.																		
3	PERFORMANCE MEASURE																		
3	1B/BA/A: Recurrence of	1B^a		1A^a															
4	Very Large Foster Care Population (Los Angeles Only) 27,281																		
5	Los Angeles (Pilot County)	-	-5.3%	✓	-16.1%	✓						1		1		1	1		
6	Large Foster Care Population (1,500 to 6,000)																		
7	Kern	-	-12.6%	✓	-11.9%	✓			1	1		1				1	1		
8	Sacramento (Pilot County)	-	5.7%		-29.3%	✓					1	1				1			
9	San Bernardino	-	N/A		7.3%		1		1	1		1		1		1			
10	San Joaquin	-	14.8%					1	1			1					1		
11	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																		
12	Butte	-	0.8%		-35.2%	✓				1						1	1		
13	Merced	-	-21.3%	✓	6.9%									1			1		
14	Monterey (Pilot County)	-	N/A		-41.7%	✓			1	1		1				1			
15	San Mateo (Pilot County)	-	3.0%		18.7%											1	1		
16	Santa Barbara	-	N/A		-3.8%	✓			1			1	1			1	1		
17	Shasta	-	-63.8%	✓	-46.0%	✓						1		1		1	1		
18	Sonoma	-	-39.9%	✓					1	1						1	1		Native American
19	Stanislaus (Pilot County)	-	-4.3%	✓	-20.4%	✓	1					1		1		1			

	A	F	G	H	I	J	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
20	Yolo	-	-18.4%	✓				1	1			1				1			
21	Small Foster Care Population (100 to 399)																		
22	Del Norte	-	-47.4%	✓	-23.1%	✓					1	1				1	1		
23	Kings	-	9.8%		22.9%		1		1			1					1		
24	Madera	-	-0.6%	✓	-24.6%	✓	1	1				1		1					
25	Mendocino	-	-12.0%	✓	-31.5%	✓	1	1	1	1		1						1	
26	Napa	-	15.6%		27.3%							1		1		1	1		
27	Placer (Pilot County)	-	-15.5%	✓	0.7%					1		1				1			
28	San Luis Obispo	-	-28.8%	✓	-57.6%	✓			1							1	1		
29	Santa Cruz	-	21.8%					1					1					1	
30	Siskiyou	-	-14.9%	✓				1	1										
31	Sutter	-	5.0%		-86.0%	✓	1			1								1	
32	Tuolumne	-	-49.1%	✓					1					1				1	
33	Yuba	-	29.5%						1			1				1	1		
34	Very Small Foster Care Population (99 or less)																		
35	Alpine	-	0.0%-->50.0%		0/0-->0/7	✓						1					1		
36	Amador	-	3.2%		-100.0%	✓						1							
37	Colusa	-	60.8%		-60.7%	✓			1							1	1		
38	Glenn (Pilot County)	-	-8.4%	✓	21.4%				1					1			1		
39	Lassen	-	13.1%		-44.7%	✓			1			1				1			
40	Marin	-	2.3%									1				1	1	1	
41	Mariposa	-	6.6%		-68.1%	✓		1	1		1	1							
42	Modoc	-	-20.8%	✓	-100.0%	✓							1						
43	Nevada	-	-17.6%	✓	109.2%				1	1						1	1		
44	Plumas	-	15.2%		33.3%				1			1		1			1		
45	San Benito	-	-6.9%	✓						1		1							

	A	F	G	H	I	J	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	
70	Sacramento (Pilot County)	+	-0.9%		0.8%	✓			1		1	1								
71	Santa Clara	+	3.6%	✓	29.3%	✓	1	1	1											
72	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																			
73	Merced	+	2.1%	✓	5.6%	✓	1		1		1									
74	Monterey (Pilot County)	+	10.3%	✓	10.9%	✓	1	1	1		1									
75	Shasta	+	-1.8%		10.5%	✓		1	1		1									
76	Solano	+	-1.2%		30.4%	✓					1									
77	Small Foster Care Population (100 to 399)																			
78	El Dorado	+	-1.9%		-7.7%		1		1											
79	Imperial	+	14.8%	✓	15.6%	✓	1	1	1											
80	San Luis Obispo	+	2.3%	✓	25.0%	✓				1		1								
81	Siskiyou	+	12.1%	✓	47.5%	✓	1	1			1							1		
82	Tehama (Pilot County)	+	15.4%	✓	34.5%	✓	1		1											
83	Very Small Foster Care Population (99 or less)																			
84	Amador	+	8.7%	✓	-9.2%		1	1	1											
85	Colusa	+	-9.5%		75.0%	✓			1		1									
86	Lassen	+	13.0%	✓	293.6%	✓			1		1	1								
87	Modoc	+	0.0%		4.0%	✓							1							
88	Mono	+	25.0%	✓	12.5%	✓	1	1	1	1	1									
89	Nevada	+	-8.6%		-6.9%				1						1	1	1			
90	San Benito	+	6.0%	✓	12.1%	✓	1		1	1										
91	Sierra	+	0.0%-->0.0%		0.0%-->0.0%		1	1	1											
92	Trinity (Pilot County)	+	0.0%-->75.0%	✓	-16.9%				1							1	1			
93	SUB TOTAL 2B: Percentage of children who receive a timely response to initial a							11	9	17	4	11	3	1	0	1	2	2	1	
94	PERFORMANCE MEASURE 2A: Recurrence of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed																			
	2A																			

	A	F	G	H	I	J	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
146	Humboldt (Pilot County)	+	5.5%	✓			1	1	1	1									
147	Imperial	+	36.0%	✓			1	1	1										
148	Lake	+	25.6%	✓					1	1									
149	Mendocino	+	23.4%	✓					1	1	1								Children placed out of county
150	Santa Cruz	+	24.0%	✓			1		1						1				
151	Siskiyou	+	73.8%	✓			1			1	1								
152	Sutter	+	8.0%	✓			1	1	1	1									
153	Tehama (Pilot County)	+	12.0%	✓			1		1	1			1						
154	Yuba	+	29.3%	✓				1	1	1	1								
155	Very Small Foster Care Population (99 or less)																		
156	Amador	+	14.7%	✓						1	1								
157	Colusa	+	12.2%	✓					1		1								
158	Lassen	+	9.8%	✓			1		1		1								
159	Modoc	+	18.8%	✓									1						
160	Mono	+	0.0%-->100.0%	✓			1	1	1	1	1								
161	Nevada	+	6.4%	✓					1						1	1	1		
162	San Benito	+	31.6%	✓			1		1	1									
163	Sierra	+	0.0%-->41.7%	✓			1	1		1									
164	SUBTOTAL 2C: Percentage of children who receive timely visits from their social							25	9	24	20	11	0	2	1	2	2	1	0
165	STATE PERMANENCY GOAL: Family relationships and connections of children served by the CWS will be preserved, as appropriate.																		
166	PERFORMANCE MEASURE 4B: Percentage of children placed in the least restrictive foster care setting (relative care placement, foster family home)																		
			4B ^d				4B ^d												
167	Large Foster Care Population (1,500 to 6,000)																		
168	Alameda	-	-38.0%	✓					1						1				
169	Fresno	-	-29.7%	✓						1					1		1		Native American
170	Sacramento (Pilot County)	-	-1.9%	✓				1	1				1	1			1		Older youth

	A	F	G	H	I	J	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
171	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																		
172	Merced	-	-39.5%	✓					1						1				
173	San Mateo (Pilot County)	-	10.9%					1						1	1				
174	Yolo	-	28.3%										1	1					Probation youth
175	Small Foster Care Population (100 to 399)																		
176	Humboldt (Pilot County)	-	-27.2%	✓					1			1			1				
177	Imperial	+	N/A		3.6%	✓			1		1		1	1	1			1	1
178	Mendocino	-	0.0%-->2.4%						1						1				
179	Tehama (Pilot County)	-	0.0%-->0.0%	✓					1					1	1				
180	Very Small Foster Care Population (99 or less)																		
181	Alpine	-	0/0-->0/3	✓					1									1	Native American
182	Colusa	-	0.0%-->0.0%	✓										1	1				
183	Glenn (Pilot County)	-	0.0%-->0.0%	✓								1			1			1	
184	Trinity (Pilot County)	-	0.0%-->0.0%	✓										1	1				
185	SUB TOTAL 4B: Percentage of children placed in the least restrictive foster care							0	3	7	1	1	2	3	7	11	0	5	1
186	PERFORMANCE MEASURE 4A: Percentage of children placed with all or some of siblings		4A ^e		4A ^e														
187	Large Foster Care Population (1,500 to 6,000)																		
188	San Diego	+	6.7%	✓	3.3%	✓		1	1		1		1						
189	SUB TOTAL 4A: Percentage of children placed with some or all of their siblings							0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
190	PERFORMANCE MEASURE 4E: Percentage of American Indian children placed with Indian caregivers																		
191	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																		
192	Butte	+							1									1	ILP eligible youth
193	SUB TOTAL 4E: Percentage of American Indian children placed with Indian care							0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
194	STATE PERMANENCY GOAL: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing re-entry to foster care.																		

	A	F	G	H	I	J	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
219	Very Large Foster Care Population (Los Angeles Only) 27,281																		
220	Los Angeles (Pilot County)	+	38.1%	✓	29.3%	✓						1	1	1		1	1		
221	Large Foster Care Population (1,500 to 6,000)																		
222	Orange	+	-0.7%		11.1%	✓								1			1		Substance abuse families
223	San Diego	+	-6.5%		4.9%	✓		1	1	1				1			1	1	
224	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																		
225	Solano	+	7.9%	✓	-13.2%			1			1			1	1		1	1	
226	Sonoma	+	139.3%	✓	39.8%	✓			1						1				
227	Stanislaus (Pilot County)	+	16.1%	✓	5.5%	✓			1			1		1	1				
228	Small Foster Care Population (100 to 399)																		
229	Del Norte	+	75.5%	✓	16.5%	✓			1			1	1				1		
230	Very Small Foster Care Population (99 or less)																		
231	Alpine	+	0/0-->0/0		0/0-->0/0							1					1		
232	Lassen	+	-35.3%		-21.3%									1			1		
233	SUB TOTAL 3A/3E: Length of time to exit foster care and reunify with parents or						0	2	4	1	1	4	2	6	3	1	7	2	
234	PERFORMANCE MEASURE 3A/D: Length of time to achieve adoption	3A^h			3D^h														
235	Very Large Foster Care Population (Los Angeles Only) 27,281																		
236	Los Angeles (Pilot County)	+	92.5%	✓	76.0%	✓			1		1			1	1				
237	Large Foster Care Population (1,500 to 6,000)																		
238	Alameda	+	68.1%	✓					1	1				1			1	1	African American
239	Contra Costa (Pilot County)	+	57.6%	✓										1	1		1	1	
240	San Bernardino	+	N/A		40.6%	✓	1		1					1				1	
241	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																		
242	Solano	+	34.4%	✓					1		1							1	
243	Yolo	+	117.8%	✓					1	1								1	
244	Small Foster Care Population (100 to 399)																		

	A	F	G	H	I	J	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	
245	Siskiyou	+	32.1%	✓					1						1			1		
246	Tuolumne	+	-51.0%		25.0%	✓			1						1					
247	SUB TOTAL 3A, 3A/3D, 3D: Length of time to achieve adoption							1	0	7	2	2	0	0	4	4	0	2	6	
248	PERFORMANCE MEASURE 3G/GF/F: Percentage of children who re-enter foster care		3Gⁱ		3Fⁱ															
249	Large Foster Care Population (1,500 to 6,000)																			
250	Kern	-	-50.2%	✓	-5.3%	✓							1	1				1		
251	Riverside	-	N/A		-10.4%	✓						1		1	1					
252	Sacramento (Pilot County)	-	-15.3%	✓	-14.5%	✓			1		1			1				1		
253	San Francisco	-	-23.8%	✓	1.6%			1	1		1				1					
254	Santa Clara	-	17.4%		-20.0%	✓		1				1	1	1				1		
255	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																			
256	San Mateo (Pilot County)	-	-31.1%	✓	6.7%				1				1	1						
257	Santa Barbara	-	N/A		-64.8%	✓								1						
258	Shasta	-	25.1%		57.0%			1	1					1		1	1			
259	Solano	-	16.3%		13.8%				1							1	1			
260	Small Foster Care Population (100 to 399)																			
261	Del Norte	-	-16.7%	✓	614.3%				1			1						1		
262	El Dorado	-	10.7%						1				1	1				1		
263	Kings	-	83.0%		-4.0%	✓	1		1			1	1						1	
264	Lake	-	-17.1%	✓	-16.3%	✓								1				1		
265	Placer (Pilot County)	-	-44.9%	✓	-10.3%	✓									1					
266	San Luis Obispo	-	115.8%		-20.4%	✓			1					1	1	1	1			
267	Very Small Foster Care Population (99 or less)																			
268	Amador	-	-100.0%	✓	-100.0%	✓				1		1								
269	Colusa	-	-53.3%	✓	-70.4%	✓								1				1		

	A	F	G	H	I	J	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	
270	Lassen	-	48.5%		-45.4%	✓			1			1		1		1	1			
271	Marin	-	-48.3%	✓						1		1						1		
272	Mariposa	-	80.0%		204.8%				1											
273	Trinity (Pilot County)	-	-70.5%	✓	-69.2%	✓		1	1					1			1			
274	SUB TOTAL 3G, 3G/3F, 3F: Percentage of children who re-enter foster care							1	4	12	2	2	7	5	13	4	4	12	2	
275	STATE WELL-BEING GOAL: Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to adulthood.																			
276	PERFORMANCE MEASURE 8A: Levels of self-sufficiency for youth exiting foster care																			
277	Large Foster Care Population (1,500 to 6,000)																			
278	Orange	+												1			1			
279	San Bernardino	+						1					1	1	1		1			
280	San Francisco	+							1								1		ILP eligible youth	
281	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																			
282	Merced	+					1		1	1							1		ILP eligible youth	
283	Santa Barbara	+						1	1					1						
284	Ventura	+												1		1	1		African American	
285	Small Foster Care Population (100 to 399)																			
286	Imperial	+												1			1		ILP eligible youth	
287	Kings	+												1			1		ILP eligible youth	
288	Napa	+						1	1					1	1			1	ILP eligible youth	
289	San Luis Obispo	+					1		1								1			
290	Very Small Foster Care Population (99 or less)																			
291	Lassen	+							1					1			1		Probation youth	
292	Marin	+							1					1			1		ILP eligible youth	
293	Mariposa	+												1			1		ILP eligible youth	
294	Mono	+						1	1										Probation youth	

	A	F	G	H	I	J	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
295	Sierra	+								1	1			1			1		African American
296	SUB TOTAL 8A: Levels of self-sufficiency for youth exiting foster care						2	4	8	2	1	0	1	11	2	1	12	1	
297	RATE OF FIRST ENTRIES INTO FOSTER CARE FROM FIRST YEAR REPORTED (2002) TO MOST RECENT YEAR REPORTED (2005)																		
298	Large Foster Care Population (1,500 to 6,000)																		
299	Alameda	-	2.2%						1								1		African American
300	Contra Costa (Pilot County)	-	-19.6%	✓				1				1	1	1	1	1	1		Children of color
301	Santa Clara	-	-6.3%	✓				1	1			1	1	1	1		1		
302	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																		
303	Merced	-	25.7%					1						1			1		
304	SUB TOTAL RATE OF FIRST ENTRIES						0	3	2	0	0	2	1	3	1	1	4	0	
305	RATE OF CHILD REFERRALS FROM FIRST YEAR REPORTED (2002) TO MOST RECENT YEAR REPORTED (2005)																		
306	Merced	-	-11.4%	✓												1			
307	SUB TOTAL RATE OF REFERRALS						0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
308	SYSTEM FACTOR A: Relevant Management Information Systems																		
309	Very Large Foster Care Population (Los Angeles Only) 27,281																		
310	Los Angeles (Pilot County)						1	1	1		1						1		
311	Large Foster Care Population (1,500 to 6,000)																		
312	Sacramento (Pilot County)						1	1	1										
313	San Joaquin						1		1										
314	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																		
315	Santa Barbara						1												
316	Sonoma								1										
317	Tulare						1	1	1										Child Welfare & Probation
318	Ventura							1	1						1		1		
319	Small Foster Care Population (100 to 399)																		

	A	F	G	H	I	J	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
345	Trinity (Pilot County)						1	1						1			1		
346	SUB TOTAL B						1	6	9	1	1	1	2	7	0	3	4	2	
347	SYSTEM FACTOR C: Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention																		
348	Large Foster Care Population (1,500 to 6,000)																		
349	Sacramento (Pilot County)														1				
350	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																		
351	Santa Barbara							1						1	1		1		
352	Sonoma														1				
353	Small Foster Care Population (100 to 399)																		
354	Kings						1								1				
355	Napa														1				
356	Very Small Foster Care Population (99 or less)																		
357	Inyo							1							1				
358	San Benito										1				1				
359	SUB TOTAL C						1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	7	0	1	0	
360	SYSTEM FACTOR D: Quality Assurance System																		
361	Large Foster Care Population (1,500 to 6,000)																		
362	San Diego						1	1											
363	Mid-Size Foster Care Population (400 to 1,499)																		
364	Santa Barbara								1										1
365	SUB TOTAL D						1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
366	SYSTEM FACTOR E: Service Array																		
367	Very Large Foster Care Population (Los Angeles Only) 27,281																		
368	Los Angeles (Pilot County)										1		1				1		

	A	F	G	H	I	J	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
396																			
397	* County foster care prevalence rates under age 19, CWS/CMS Q4 2005 extract																		
398	** Percent change for UCB measures calculated as (most recent numerator/most recent denominator)/(baseline numerator/baseline denominator)-1.																		
399	Percent change calculated in this way may differ from percent change calculated using (most recent percent/baseline percent)-1, due to rounding.																		
400	Percent change for CDSS measures calculated as most recent (percent/baseline percent)-1.																		
401	*** The Quarter 4, 2005 CFSR abuse in care reports employ a new method and should not be compared to the previously published abuse in care measure:																		
402	For details, please see the methodology at:																		
403	http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/cfsrdata/standards/method_ACLabuseinCare.html																		
404	Capturing this data involves new data instructions for counties. As a result, the current numbers are likely an undercount.																		
405	An All County Letter (ACL), distributed on December 3, 2003, discusses the method of populating the necessary variables.																		
406	The ACL can be viewed at:																		
407	http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/getinfo/acl03/pdf/03-61.pdf																		
408																			
409	^a 1B/1A = 1B. Percent recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months / 1A. Percent recurrence of maltreatment (federal measure)																		
410	^b 2B/2B = 2B. Percent of child abuse/neglect referrals with a timely response (Immediate Response Compliance) / 2B. Percent of child abuse/neglect referrals with a timely response (10-Day Response Compliance)																		
411	^c 2C = Percent change for measure 2C from first month reported (Apr 2003) to most recent month reported (Dec 2005)																		
412	^d 4B/4B = 4B. Initial Placement: Group/Shelter / 4B. Primary Placement: Foster Home																		
413	^e 4A/4A = 4A. Percent of children in foster care that are placed with ALL siblings / 4A. Percent of children in foster care that are placed with SOME or ALL siblings																		
414	^f 3C/3B = 3C. Percent with 1-2 placements – if still in care at 12 months (entry cohort) / 3B. Percent with 1-2 placements within 12 months (federal measure)																		
415	^g 3A/3E = 3A. Percent reunified within 12 months (entry cohort) / 3E. Percent reunified within 12 months (federal measure)																		
416	^h 3A/3D = 3A. Percent adopted within 24 months (entry cohort) / 3D. Percent adopted within 24 months (federal measure)																		
417	ⁱ 3G/3F = 3G. Reentry within 12 months (entry cohort) / 3F. Reentry to foster care (federal measure)																		
418																			