California Outcomes and Accountability System

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLAN

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA
2009-2012

Kathy Gallagher, Director, Department of Social Services

Patricia Stewart, Chief Probation Officer

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Present: 5 - Supervisor Carbajal, Supervisor Wolf, Supervisor Farr, Supervisor Gray, and Supervisor Lavagnino

SOCIAL SERVICES File Reference No. 11-00633

RE: Approve the 2009-2012 Santa Barbara County System Improvement Plan (SIP) and the 2010 Update developed in accordance with Assembly Bill 636, Chapter 678, Statutes of 2001, and the California Child and Family Services Review for submission to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

A motion was made by Supervisor Carbajal, seconded by Supervisor Lavagnino, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote.

Ayes: 5 - Supervisor Carbajal, Supervisor Wolf, Supervisor Farr, Supervisor Gray, and Supervisor Lavagnino

California's Child and Family Services Review
System Improvement Plan

County:	**Santa Barbara County**
Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:	Department of Social Services
Period of Plan:	**October 2009 – September 2012**
Period of Outcomes Data:	**Quarter ending: Quarter 4 2008**
Date Submitted:	**August 1, 2011**
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Board of Supervisors (BOS) Approval	
BOS Approval Date:	8/9/11
Name:	JONI GRAY
Signature:	Joni Gray

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Introduction

Assembly Bill 636 (Steinberg) established a new Child Welfare Outcome and Accountability System replacing the former CWS Oversight System which had focused exclusively on regulatory compliance. Pursuant to AB 636, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) developed the California – Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR). The C-CFSR brings California into alignment with the Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) by establishing a new review system designed to promote improved Child Welfare Services (CWS) outcomes for children and families in each county in California. The vision created by the C-CFSR is that every child in California would live in a safe, stable, permanent home nurtured by healthy families and strong communities. Thus, "the purpose of the C-CFSR system is to significantly strengthen the accountability system used in California to monitor and assess the quality of services provided on behalf of maltreated children."[1]

The basis of the C-CFSR improvement and accountability system lies in a philosophy of continuous quality improvement, interagency partnerships, and community involvement with an overall focus on improving outcomes for children and families. The Outcomes and Accountability System is a four part system of continuous quality improvement incorporating a Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR), County Self-Assessment (CSA), System Improvement Plan (SIP), and Quarterly Data Reports reflecting the County performance on Federal and State Measures. The CDSS in conjunction with the University of California at Berkeley (UCB) developed State Outcome Measures to indicate performance of each county Child Welfare system in California. The Quarterly Data Reports are used to inform all other components of the quality improvement system, which operates on a three year review cycle beginning with the PQCR. Santa Barbara County conducted its second PQCR in September 2008 in partnership with San Luis Obispo and Ventura Counties, as well as a few of our community partners. The focus area for the CWS/Probation PQCR was Placement Stability and the information was used to inform the self-assessment and this improvement plan. The CSA is a macro analysis of how local programs, systems and factors impact performance on the Federal and State Outcome Measures in three major areas: Safety, Permanency, and Well-being. The information and analysis included in the CSA form the basis for developing a System Improvement Plan (SIP).

Santa Barbara County CWS conducted its third Self-Assessment from January - May 2009. The reports provided by CDSS combined with Safe Measures reports and internal data analysis sources provided sufficient data to inform the Self-Assessment process. As in the previous Self-Assessments, Santa Barbara County focused on obtaining extensive input from our many public and private partners, believing that their knowledge of and experience with CWS and Probation were critical in identifying the strengths, needs, and gaps in our service delivery system.

[1] All County Information Notice 1-50-06

The process focused on completing a gaps analysis with several existing groups who are integrally involved in promoting the safety and well-being of children and families such as KIDS Network, the Child Abuse Prevention Council; CWS Team meeting targeting all CWS supervisors/managers, and the Juvenile Court "Brown Bag" obtaining input from key stakeholders in the legal process. In addition, focus groups were arranged to solicit input from all CWS/Probation line staff and all service providers, including an invitation to the Foster Parent Association and several foster parents. CWS also extended an opportunity to our foster youth to provide feedback regarding the CWS/Probation service delivery system. In total, more than 150 people representing the public, private, and consumer sectors participated in the gaps analysis process used to inform the Self-Assessment. Many Self-Assessment participants/organizations were invited to join the System Improvement Plan Workshop.

The System Improvement Plan (SIP) is the operational agreement between the State and the County defining actions the County will implement to improve outcomes for children and families based on the findings in the CSA. While there were several priority areas addressed in the CSA, the SIP will concentrate efforts to improve performance on three primary Outcome Measures (Reunification within 12 months, Re-Entry Following Reunification, No Recurrence of Maltreatment) along with the Systemic Factor of maximizing staff resource to allow them to spend more time with clients. The Department of Social Services and County Probation Department will reconvene a SIP review committee annually to assess progress and make adjustments to the plan for inclusion in the requisite annual updates.

The C-CFSR designates the County Probation Department as an equal partner with CWS and our County Probation partners were participants in the self-assessment and system improvement process, as well as actively involved in many of the collaboratives that support improved outcomes for children in Santa Barbara County. Outcome Measure data is improving for Probation, but does not yet fully align with the existing Federal and State Measures. Relevant outcome measure data for Probation has been included in the SIP when available. The area of greatest relevance in this SIP to both agencies is improving outcomes for youth reunifying with their families from the foster care system and preventing re-entry into care.

The Department of Social Services and the County Probation Department would like to extend our deep appreciation to every person who participated in the System Improvement Plan (SIP) Workshop for their invaluable contributions and to their organizations for supporting and encouraging their participation.

I. System Improvement Plan (SIP) Participants

Santa Barbara County Child Welfare Services and Probation held a full day SIP Workshop to engage our community partners in the development of this System Improvement Plan. Many of our partners provided both representation from their respective agency, but also participate as members of the prevention and intervention community through either the KIDS Network or the Child Abuse Prevention Council.

KIDS Network

KIDS Network serves as an advisory group to the Board of Supervisors and is a countywide interagency collaborative dedicated to promoting a coordinated system for children's services in Santa Barbara County. KIDS Network is sponsored by the County Board of Supervisors and County DSS/CWS. General membership includes, but is not limited to community-based organizations, parents, community members, faith-based groups, educators, County and other public agencies. In addition, two members of the Board of Supervisors serve as Chair and Vice-Chair of the KIDS Network. This network serves as a forum for public and private agencies to discuss issues relevant to comprehensive, collaborative and integrated services for children, youth and families. Every year, the Network identifies key projects for completion that aligned with its current strategic plan. Another key project of the Network, in partnership with the University of California at Santa Barbara and other agencies, is publication of an annual Santa Barbara County Children's Scorecard.

Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC)

The Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) is a multidisciplinary community council with the primary purpose of coordinating Santa Barbara County's efforts to prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect. Membership of CAPC includes representatives from the prevention and treatment communities, the criminal justice system, County Child Welfare Services, other public agencies, education providers, community-based organizations, faith-based groups, parents, and the community. CAPC members meet monthly. Current CAPC projects include community outreach and education with a special focus on the Early Care and Education Community and parent groups. The CAPC also serves as an advisory body for funding sources related to prevention and intervention.

SIP workshop participants were from the following key systems of support for children in Santa Barbara County, while additional stakeholders provided information for consideration by this group during the CSA process:

SIP Workshop Participants 2009

Alcohol Drug & Mental Health Services:	*Sandra Fahey* *Linda Tuttle*		
Community Action Commission:	*Carolyn Contreras*		
Child Abuse Listening & Mediation:	*Deborah Holmes*		
Court Appointed Special Advocates:	*Kim Davis*		
Department of Social Services:	*Barbara Bock* *Cindy Carr* *Julie DeFranco* *Devin Drake* *Lisa Garrison* *Susan Gordon*	*Laurie Haro* *Deborah Hartman* *Melissa Hoesterey* *Amy Krueger* *Dawn Manalo* *Delfino Neira*	*Cindy Nott* *Yolanda Perez* *Veronica Romero* *Freya Schultz* *Marlene Velazquez*
Foster Youth Services Santa Barbara County Education Office:	*Bonnie Beedles*		
Human Services Commission:	*Tara Brown* *Nancy Madsen* *Brian Passaro*		
Isla Vista Youth Project:	*LuAnn Miller*		
KIDS Network:	*Katharina Zulliger*		
North County Rape Crisis & Child Protection Center:	*Ann McCarty*		
Probation:	*James Friedrich* *Brian Swanson*		
St. Vincent's and CAPC:	*Barbara Finch, CAPC President*		

II. County Self Assessment (CSA) Summary

The following summary information has been extracted from the CSA that was approved by the Board of Supervisors on July 7, 2009 to provide contextual relevance to the Improvement Goals and Strategies included in the SIP. (Minor editing was done to minimize confusion regarding references to the previous CSA and SIP.)

A. Demographics and Participation Rates

As noted in the Self-Assessment, CA Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit figures show that population growth in Santa Barbara County is primarily due to live births with most of the population increase in the North County, especially Santa Maria. Relatively little of recent job growth has been in higher-skilled, more highly-paid employment. Most of recent job growth has been in low-skilled, low-paid, intermittent jobs which do not provide stable family income. In recent years there has been rapid growth in the number of low-wage agricultural jobs. The agricultural sector has experienced growth rates of up to 30% a year in market value in some of the past few years, with a market-yield value exceeding $1.2 billion a year. In spite of the growth in crop value and the total labor force, aggregate wages to field workers have declined in the last decade. No more than half the jobs in agriculture provide year-round work; the rest are seasonal, and reflect the pattern of crops like strawberries, which are not only highly seasonal but also have short, critical pick-times for harvesting, after which the fields are plowed under and lie fallow until planting again.

By contrast, our southern region, the "South Coast" (Santa Barbara, Goleta, and Carpinteria) has much more highly paid work and better educated adults, with low unemployment but a very high cost of housing and living. In this area, many of the low-paying jobs are in the Leisure and Hospitality Services and Retail Trade sectors, where employment is not as intermittent as in agriculture, but wages are still very, very low and make it difficult to support a family with children.[2] The South Coast also has a thriving cut flower and potted plant nursery business, which employs agricultural workers at relatively low wages, but not as many as in the north. Rapid demographic changes and conditions present current and future challenges to CWS and Probation and must be taken into consideration as we develop services for children and families especially in northern Santa Barbara County.

[2] http://www.countyofsb.org/cao/pdf/budget/0607/Sectionb.pdf

Participation Rates for referrals and foster care have changed since the 2006 CSA reporting period, as shown in the following tables:

Participation Rates –Children		
	Children Under 18	
CSA Period	Santa Barbara	California
2006	100,852	9,620,511
2009	105,091	10,007,591
Net Change	4,239	387,080
Pct Change	4%	4%

Children With Referrals			
	CSA Period	Santa Barbara	California
Children	2006	4,031	482,462
	2009	4,666	492,571
	Net Change	635	10,109
		16%	2%
Rates per thousand children	2006	40.0	50.1
	2009	44.4	49.2
	Pct Change	11%	-2%

Children with Substantiated Referrals			
	CSA Period	Santa Barbara	California
Children	2006	865	108,562
	2009	1,143	107,464
	Net Change	278	(1,098)
		32%	-1%
Rates per thousand children	2006	8.6	11.3
	2009	10.9	10.7
	Pct Change	27%	-5%

Number and Rate of First Entries to Care			
	CSA Period	Santa Barbara	California
Children	2006	238	28,999
	2009	286	36,113
	Net Change	48	7,114
		20%	25%
Rates per thousand children	2006	2.4	3.0
	2009	2.7	3.6
	Pct Change	15%	20%

Number and Rate of Children IN Care			
	CSA Period	Santa Barbara	California
Children	2006	588	78,960
	2009	570	65,396
	Net Change	(18)	(13,564)
		-3%	-17%
Rates per thousand children	2006	5.8	8.2
	2009	5.4	6.5
	Pct Change	-7%	-20%

Although CWS is serving more children, recurrence of maltreatment continues to be slightly higher than the State average, suggesting a need for service enhancement to “at risk” children. With the implementation of Structured Decision Making as a safety/risk assessment tool and the addition of three staff to provide Voluntary Family Maintenance Services countywide, we anticipate that CWS will be able to identify children at high risk of additional maltreatment and provide time-limited services to those families to reduce the re-substantiation rate.

Growth in the number (and rate) of first entries to care taxed the County’s already over-burdened foster care resources and created higher demands on social workers to find adequate, supportive placement resources for children. Our joint operations with County Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Services (ADMHS) Children’s System of Care has been disbanded due to funding considerations. It is not clear what the system impacts will be, but we are already experiencing greater difficulty accessing Medi-Cal services for our children and families in CWS. At the same time we have had additional resources added in the form of SB 163, and Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds for additional wraparound programs which CWS and Probation are using to support the placement of children with significant behavioral and emotional issues within Santa Barbara County rather than outside it in group homes. We have substantially reduced the number of children placed in congregate care outside county lines. Since a large body of research shows outcomes for children in foster care are relatively poor, our strategy has been to do as much as we possibly can to strengthen high risk families so that they can keep their children safely at home, and at the same time, expedite adoptions for as many children in foster care as possible in order to provide safe, permanent, nurturing homes with the best prospect for a good developmental child outcome.

The following information provides an overview of the various focus groups conducted both internally and with our community partners during the self-assessment process. The discussion focused on the primary goals of Safety, Permanence and Stability, and Child and Family Well-being. First and foremost, focus groups recognized the increasing complexity of family issues including substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, poverty, gang participation, cultural differences, the presence of more children in our system of care with complex behavioral/emotional needs, and larger family sizes. These issues present challenges to the CWS service delivery system and provide contextual relevance to the outcome measures.

B. Gaps Analysis Discussion

Safety

Santa Barbara CWS and our community partners are committed to protecting children from abuse and neglect through a continuum of services from prevention to intervention. There is clear delineation in the definitions of abuse amongst most service providers, but the identification of what constitutes neglect and the definition of minimum sufficient level of care remains elusive. Over three-quarters of the referrals substantiated in 2008 were for some type of neglect. Issues of neglect often involve chronic behavioral patterns on the part of the caregiver that are not readily amenable to intervention and readily susceptible to relapse. As part of the CSA focus groups, community trends contributing to neglect and caretaker absence were identified. These trends include substance abuse, chronic mental illness, domestic violence, levels of assimilation, and the current challenging economic times. It is within this context that the data regarding the following safety outcome measures should be viewed:

- **No Recurrence of Maltreatment**

SB County CWS has achieved significant improvement in meeting the No Recurrence of Maltreatment measure. The national standard for this measure is 94.6, indicating that roughly 95% of children reported to CWS who have a substantiated instance of maltreatment will not be found to have an additional substantiated instance of maltreatment within six months. Thus, those children who have had two substantiated instances of maltreatment within six months should not exceed 5%. While Santa Barbara County's performance on this measure appears rather volatile, analysis of our performance must be viewed with consideration to economies of scale. Given that Santa Barbara County has relatively small numbers of children served, the small numbers create significant volatility in percentage based measures. When evaluating the raw data for children who have had a second substantiated instance of maltreatment overtime, Santa Barbara has been on a continual path of decline over the last 5 years. The volatility in the data presentation for the federal measures can actually be accounted for by the increased volume of referrals that have had no recurrence of maltreatment.

The past two Quarterly Outcome Reports (October 2008 and January 2009) indicate that SB County CWS is relatively close at 93.9 and 93.3 respectively in reaching the 94.6 national standard. While the data shows significant improvement on this measure since our implementation of Structured Decision Making (SDM) in 2006, we are not yet resting on our laurels, as CWS continues to see this as a medium priority issue. Business decisions and programs implemented such as Structured Decision Making, the dedicated Family Preservation staff, and expansion of Differential Response services appear to have had a positive influence on our performance. It is our hope that with continued diligence in use of SDM and prevention focused resources; SB County CWS will maintain this positive trend.

As part of the CSA process, focus group attendees were asked to respond to a statement regarding safety, as a mechanism for identifying community outcomes that can be used as a benchmark for knowing if we truly are making a difference for children and families. The following responses are reflective of the themes that appeared to emerge from the focus groups to the prompt, "I will know that we have improved the safety of children in my community when…

- Child Welfare does not equal Child Protective Services
- There is a Decrease in the rates of abuse and neglect
- The community takes responsibility for reporting suspected child abuse
- Children and families have ready access to resources including, but not limited to affordable healthcare, child/respite care, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, housing, etc.
- Prevention efforts (time spent with children/caregivers) reduces the need for crisis intervention
- Families can reach out for help and know where to go to get it
- Gang activity is a positive action to benefit the community"

Participants were also asked to vote on what they perceived to be the key areas of strength in achieving the goal of safety for children and families in SB County. There were multiple resources listed involving many of the community based organizations with whom CWS and Probation partner including, but not limited to CAC, CALM, FSA, SMVYFC. In addition, the following services/supports were indicated as being the most helpful:

- Differential Response – The Front Porch Program
- Family Resource Centers
- SAFTY – The 24/7 mobile crisis response to children with complex emotional and behavioral needs
- Sojourn Services' work with the 0-5 population and their families

County CWS, Probation, and our community partners identified the following barriers to safety for children in our communities and provided strategies to overcome these barriers; thereby identifying some of the gaps in service delivery. A cursory summary of the barriers and strategies are presented below. For greater detail regarding the outcomes of the focus groups please see the attached Appendix, Figures 5-12.

Needs Assessment

- ***Resources*** including housing, childcare, substance abuse treatment, in vivo parenting education, bilingual/bicultural services and informal community supports are limited, not readily accessible to families, or are generally unknown to the populations being served. Limited access to adult and children's mental health services was also identified as a major barrier to safety for children.
- ***Knowledge Gaps*** or misinformation regarding available resources; supports and services; child development issues; and general life management skills in the client population were indicated as barriers to safety. Furthermore, responses indicate the need for a better understanding and balance between prevention and intervention.
- ***Systemic Issues*** thought to inhibit child safety tended to focus on the role of prevention vs. intervention, earlier intervention, and a lack of agency awareness of both formal and informal resources. Vacant staff positions were also viewed as a barrier to improving safety for children. When positions go unfilled, the workload has to shift to the remaining staff. Workload is not readily captured in caseload numbers and social workers have multiple demands on their time, which is resulting in a decreased amount of face-to-face time spent with children and families.

Gaps Analysis

- ***Resources Gaps*** were identified by participants as being an integral part of tackling the chronic familial issues that are contributing to child abuse and neglect. Service delivery options that provide intensive in-home services to include counseling, "in vivo" parenting education, Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS), and less traditional services like parent partners/mentors were viewed as highly desirable. Participants indicated that many of the community based organizations that provide services to children and families were a strength of our community response. However, participants also indicated that the lack of capacity in some of these integral services like substance abuse treatment; affordable, quality childcare; affordable housing; bilingual/bicultural services, and "in vivo" parenting education resulted in increased safety concerns for children and families. Easier access to mental health services for children and parents was also indicated, as an area needing attention to ensure children and families are having their complex emotional and behavioral needs addressed. The use of more Promatora Models like those in Public Housing were viewed as a means of improving safety for children and bears some additional investigation.
- ***Education*** centered upon the need to provide youth more Life Skills education in school and to provide parents more "in vivo" parenting education opportunities. Agency staff also expressed interest in receiving additional awareness of formal and informal resources for the children/families served. An improved understanding of the continuum of service delivery between prevention and

intervention is needed between key stakeholders to improve the safety of children. The recent Child Abuse Prevention Summit was the beginning of such efforts to improve stakeholder knowledge. Moreover, additional education regarding the Promatora Models is needed to determine their ability to improve outcomes over time.

- ***Systemic Issues*** focused primarily upon the need for earlier intervention, staff awareness of all available resources, and the timely filling of staff vacancies. It was suggested that there needs to be more flexibility with services, like that we have obtained with SB163. The increased flexibility may need to result in criteria for early intervention changing to facilitate a true "early" intervention. Improving staff awareness of the available resources/supports to families would benefit those being served and reduce the many challenges of dwindling services in a time of significant need. Filling of staff vacancies is seen as a necessity in maintaining the quality of work that has led to improved performance over time. In order to meet federal and state mandates, when positions are left vacant the work is shifted to existing staff. While CWS has earned through the Hold Harmless funding of CWS additional staff positions given the significant rise in caseloads over the past 3 years, our current staffing pattern has remained unchanged during this time. In other words, CWS continues to serve more children and families with the same number of staff or less, if vacancies are unfilled. While the filling of vacancies speaks to the need to reduce caseload numbers/workload for social work staff, at the heart of these discussions was the desire to have frequent contact with children, caregivers, and parents as a means of providing better quality service.

➢ **No Maltreatment in Foster Care**

Based on the Federal Standard and the current statistic for No Maltreatment in Foster Care, Santa Barbara CWS is performing well. However, the current statistic may be somewhat misleading. A previous survey of ILP youth indicated that they may be under-reporting to their social worker/probation officer instances of abuse in care. The survey participants were asked the reasoning for not reporting instances of abuse in care. All the responses indicated that they did not know they should report and how to do so. While youth are provided with their rights, it still appears that there may need to be additional education for youth in care on reporting concerns. Strategies to mitigate the rate of abuse/neglect in care should not be overlooked in light of the potential for underreporting. County CWS, Probation and Licensing have developed a coordinated plan for responding to referrals regarding children in care. There is a current policy decision in place that all referrals on out-of-home careproviders will require immediate response, even if the allegation of maltreatment does not rise to this level of concern. Moreover, additional services have been provided to caregivers through HOPE -in-home support to foster parents and relative/non-related extended family members in managing the behavioral/emotional issues of the children in their care, SAFTY - 24/7 mobile crisis unit, and the SB163 Wraparound program.

Gaps Analysis

While the outcome data currently looks good for Santa Barbara County, the ILP youth responses raises systemic issues regarding the content of contacts with youth, whether the youth are adequately informed of their rights, and whether youth can fully express those rights without concern for consequences such as a change in placement.

- **Timely Response and Visits by Social Worker**

Santa Barbara County has placed an increased emphasis over the last few years on ensuring compliance with these outcome measures commensurate with Division 31 regulations by increased monitoring of performance through Safe Measures. The April 2009 Systems Summary Report indicates that CWS has been performing at 96% or higher for these measures during Quarter 3 2008. Despite our performance, timely contacts and the corresponding data entry remain a high priority for County CWS.

Gaps Analysis

Competing workload demands on social worker time have a significant impact on the timely completion of the visits and corresponding data entry. While data shows that time to contact and time to data entry has been declining, there is still work to be done in the area to ensure integrity of the CWS/CMS data. The volume of work associated with this task is best illustrated by the sheer number of contacts required during the 3 month time span indicated on the CWS Outcomes System Summary for Jan 2009 (Q2 08). During this three month time period, CWS completed an in-person investigation for roughly 950 children, of which 200 required an immediate response. At the same time, ongoing case carrying staff were required to visit in-person on average 775 children per month. In addition, regulations require monthly mandated contacts with caregivers, parents, and service providers depending on the current service component. These mandatory contacts are a crucial element of service delivery for CWS; however, so too is the writing of court reports, the development of case plans, the coordination of services to meet case plan goals, the identification of a suitable placement, the managing of child/family crisis, and the documentation of all of this in the CWS/CMS database., indicating the need to fill staff vacancies in a timely manner.

Permanency

In 2008, the Federal Measures were revised from four measures to four Permanency Composites. Each of the composites incorporates a number of individual measures for a new total of 15 permanency measures. In reviewing outcomes for children and families with regards to the measures, consideration must be given to the contradiction and interaction between some of the measures. The intent is to determine if permanency is occurring for children in the system within reasonable time frames. Both reunification and adoption are considered positive outcomes for a child's permanence; yet, these measures are contradictory as a child who reunifies with their family is not then eligible for adoption. Aside from contradiction between these measures, there are other factors such as availability of resources, new programs/strategies implemented to improve outcomes, and general business decisions to manage workload that impact the outcomes for children on these measures. Thus, consideration must be given to all these factors as a means of understanding the data. The composites are identified below with their requisite individual measures and a brief analysis of SB County's performance as an indication of the scope of practice associated with achieving permanence for youth.

- **C1: Reunification Composite**

SB County continues to be challenged by achieving timely reunification for children and families, yet has made significant improvements in the measure on Reentry Following Reunification, as indicated by our exceeding the national standard on this measure over the past four CWS Outcomes System Summary reports. The data indicates for exit cohorts County CWS reunifies approximately 44% of children with their families in 12.8 months as the median time to reunification. County Probation reunifies approximately 60% of the minors with their families in a median time of 11.5 months. The following individual measures constitute the Reunification Composite:

- Reunification within 12 months (Exit Cohort)
- Median Time to Reunification (Exit Cohort)
- Reunification within 12 months (Entry Cohort)
- Reentry Following Reunification (Exit Cohort)

Multiple factors and stakeholders contribute to performance on this measure and must be given consideration to provide relevance to the data. As mentioned in the discussion above related to Safety, approximately 78% of substantiated instances of child maltreatment were for caretaker absence or neglect. The complex familial issues such as substance abuse, mental illness, and domestic violence that are often present as the underlying issues in neglect are often chronic behavioral patterns that require extended treatment and are prone to

relapse. The complex familial issues present in reunifications are not readily resolved within the 12 month mandatory timeframes, which in turns impacts the outcome data. For example, it is widely recognized that substance abuse recovery timeframes are often 18 months to 2 years. Should the parent not enter into treatment right away either due to waiting lists or their own choice, these time frames may be even longer thus failing the measure, even if the family eventually reunifies. The outcome for the family was positive in that reunification occurred as permanency for the child/children; yet for this family the measure was failed, as the reunification did not occur within 12 months. Furthermore, implementation of the Family Preservation program also appears to have resulted in longer timeframes for reunification, which makes sense if evaluated in context. Family Preservation cases by definition are those families that are willing to address their familial issues by accepting services offered voluntarily. By default, those cases entering into the Juvenile Court system are more challenging as the parents are often not initially willing to engage in services designed to remediate the concerns that originally required CWS intervention. Probation experiences different challenges in achieving timely reunification that often results from either failed placements or re-offenses. In addition, the juvenile justice system tends to be youth-focused with service goals targeted toward them. One of the concerns addressed from the Probation perspective during the CSA process was that while the minor has made improvements the family continues to experience challenges that are not easily addressed through the juvenile justice system either delaying reunification or resulting in the development of an alternative permanent plan. Parents can voluntarily agree to participate in family-focused programs, but do not have the compulsory requirements often found in dependency cases. While SB County performance is understandable given the aforementioned factors, reunification remains a high priority measure and CWS/Probation remain committed to working with stakeholders to improve timely reunification.

- **C2: Adoptions Composite**

SB County continues to exceed the national standard for the Adoptions composite since the second quarter of 2006. In 2008, 92 children received a family for life through adoption. The CWS and Probation CSA Focus Group participants credit this success to the joint efforts of all staff in developing and working concurrent plans of reunification or adoption for these children. The following individual measures constitute the Adoption Composite:

- Adoption within 24 Months (Exit Cohort)
- Median Time to Adoption (Exit Cohort)
- Adoption within 12 Months (17 Months in Care)
- Legally Free Within 6 Months (17 Months in Care)

- Adoption Within 12 Months (Legally Free)

➢ C3: Long Term Care Composite

The Long Term Care Composite is essentially evaluating performance of achieving timely permanence through reunification, adoption, guardianship for youth under 18 or emancipation for youth 18 and over. SB County's performance on this measure has been rather fluid over time with the majority of the quarterly reports indicating success in exceeding the national standards for the composite. The following individual measures constitute the Long Term Care Composite:

- Exits to Permanency (24 Months in Care)
- Exits To Permanency (Legally Free at Exit)
- In Care 3 Years or Longer (Emancipated/Age 18)

➢ C4: Placement Stability Composite

Placement Stability measures if youth in care have had two or fewer placement at three different time intervals: 8 days to 12 Months in Care, 12 to 24 Months in Care, and At least 24 months in Care. SB County continues to be challenged in meeting the national standard for these measures. While this measure is considering stability, it does not take into consideration that some placement moves may actually improve the overall outcome for children. For example, CWS brings a child into protective custody with severe emotional and behavioral concerns. In order to ensure the safety of the child, they are placed in a high level group home (placement #1). After about a year, the child's mental, emotional and behavioral concerns have stabilized and they are moved into a foster family agency home (placement #2). During this time, the child has been communicating with an aunt who has recently expressed interest in the child coming to live with her and pursuing guardianship. After completion of the relative approval process, the child is eventually moved to the aunt's home (placement #3) and guardianship is established within the year. The outcome is positive for the child in that permanency has been established for the youth. However, the County has failed the placement stability measure for this child.

Probation is equally challenged in achieving placement stability for minors placed in out of home care. While 80% of the minors in care 8 days to 12 months have had two or fewer placements, the longer the minors remain in care that percentage shifts to 80% of minors in care at least 24 months having three or more placement settings. Stability for probation youth is often challenged by many of these youth absconding from a placement shortly after arrival. Similarly, programs will discharge a youth for noncompliance with program rules or

inappropriate behavior necessitating placement in another program. In many cases, a probation youth is detained in a secure setting until another program can be found. It is not unusual for this pattern to be repeated two or three times before a youth remains in a particular program long-term.

In order to fully understand County CWS and Probation performance relative to placement stability, this topic was investigated during the September 2008 Peer Quality Case Review. CWS and Probation partnered with Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties and 3 of our community partners to be interviewers for PQCR. Thirty staff (social workers/probation officers and their respective supervisors) were interviewed during the week. From those interviews, SB County learned that our contracted placement finder services have been highly beneficial to supporting staff in securing placements for youth. Other promising practices in our service delivery system that have been contributing to placement stability include the SB163 Wraparound program and placements with relatives/non-related extended family members. Some of the challenges identified involved business decisions in moving children from shelter care in a timely manner, the lack of information available to social workers/probation officers on caregivers when making placement decisions and the challenge of finding/making placements that may not necessarily be the best match for the child. Similar concerns appear to have arisen during the CSA process, as well. Permanence and stability are crucial factors in "normal" child development and key to providing good outcomes for children.

As part of the CSA process, focus group attendees were asked to respond to a statement regarding permanence, as a mechanism for identifying community outcomes that can be used as a benchmark for knowing if we truly are making a difference for children and families. The following responses are reflective of the themes that appeared to emerge from the focus groups to the prompt, "I will know that children have permanency/stability when…:

- Children live in a safe, consistent, and nurturing home.
- There are enough quality foster placements for every child in need.
- Children have "forever" families through adoption, a permanent home, or reunification.
- There is no need for foster homes.
- There are affordable and accessible community aftercare supports for families when CWS closes the case.
- Children (or former dependents and their children) do not come back to CWS's attention."

Participants were also asked to vote on what they perceived to be the key areas of strength in achieving the goal of permanence and stability for children and families in SB County. The responses indicated available resources and again spoke to the good work provided

by our community based organizations, characteristics of service provision, and systemic issues. Childcare programs that provide a parenting education component such as those offered by CAC, Storyteller, Isla Vista Youth Programs, and Healthy Start were indicated as strengths in this area. The countywide network of Family Resource Centers, functioning as an early intervention service, was also identified as a real strength of community support for families. Intensive in-home services to both parents and caregivers were viewed by participants to be the best method for service delivery in support of these goals. The systemic issues identified as strengths included the following:

- Committed, conscientious social workers
- Relative/Non-Related Extended Family Member placements
- Utilizing Family as a Reunification support system
- Maintaining regular contact with children, families, and service providers

Good case plans that reflect family involvement, are strength based, with realistic goals, and have increased contact between parents/children during reunification were viewed by participants to be the number one strength of our system in providing for permanence and stability for children.

County CWS, Probation and our community partners identified the following barriers to permanence and stability for children in our communities and provided strategies to overcome these barriers; thereby identifying some of the gaps in service delivery. A cursory summary of the barriers and strategies are presented below. For greater detail regarding the outcomes of the focus groups please see the attached Appendix, Figures 5-12.

Needs Assessment

- ***Lack of Resources*** identified included the limited number of foster homes/placements available for teens in general, which is further compounded if the teen is a probation minor. The lack of placement resources for children in general often results in placements that are not necessarily the best match for a child. In addition, there continues to be the need for additional supportive services for caregivers and caregivers who are willing to participate in the reunification process with children in their care including transportation to parental visits. There was a focus on the lack or in some instances absence of informal supports like parent partners, mentors, or family service advocates to assist parents in linking to community resources/supports. This trend continues for birth, adoptive, or Kin-Gap families having limited to no aftercare support. The demand for formal interventions has outpaced the timely availability of services including, but not limited to medical/dental

care, counseling, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence, bilingual/bicultural services, and mental health services for children and families resulting often in waiting lists for services.

- ***Knowledge Gaps*** regarding the availability of community resources was seen as a need for both families and service providers. One of the areas that received significant attention was the present concern over access to children and adult mental health services, indicating both the need for easier access as well as information needed on how to obtain needed services. Concern over parental confusion regarding the Juvenile Court process and the CWS system were also presented as an opportunity to improve communication and understanding between the parties involved.
- ***Systemic Issues*** addressed included timely filling of staff vacancies and the need to reduce social worker/probation caseloads in order to afford staff additional time to spend with the children and families they are serving. Improved parental access to staff and better communication between all parties/providers involved with a family was also flagged as an area in need of some fine tuning. A review of departmental philosophies with staff regarding parent/child visitation; emancipation planning, placement with REL/NREFM, and the degree of parent participation in identifying family strengths/needs and subsequent involvement in case planning was indicated as a need in support of timely permanence and stability for children. Moreover, there was significant discussion in some of the groups regarding the delays in permanence that often result from the legal process, particularly regarding continuances as a potential barrier to timely reunification/adoption.

Gaps Analysis

- ***Resources Gaps*** focused primarily upon the lack of availability of foster homes and intervention services to support children and families in obtaining permanence and stability. The need for more foster homes is undeniable, particularly for teenagers. It was suggested that targeted recruitments could be done for the teen population utilizing current teen caregivers as the presenters to really educate others on the joys and challenges of fostering a teenager. The lack of capacity in existing services was a recurrent theme during the focus groups, with significant concern given to lengthy waiting lists. It was frequently mentioned that the current service providers were doing good work, but that more of those services were needed. There are presently some significant resource gaps in obtaining bilingual/bicultural services, dental care, and mental health services for both children and parents. Participants also indicated a strong need to increase capacity in informal supports such as parent partners, mentors, advocates, and support groups as a means of providing “in vivo” parenting, life skills, and educating families utilizing community supports to meet their needs. Extension of these kinds of services to birth, adoptive, relative caregivers, and foster parents were also suggested. The development of an After Care plan, as a means of linking

children and families to the community was viewed as a significant stabilizing force for achieving and maintaining permanency.

- ***Educating*** families and service providers regarding community services and supports was suggested as a means of improving outcomes in this measure, yet this extended beyond individual agencies suggesting that as a community the service needs of families could be met, but that no one person/agency could achieve this alone. Having a resource specialist who could maintain the collective knowledge of staff regarding formal and informal supports would be one way of improving this knowledge gap. There was concern expressed over the confusion that parents/children experience with the Juvenile court process and CWS system, which is compounded by the language used in written reports and changes in social work staff. An information sheet explaining the processes could be given to parents at intake and again at disposition outlining next steps and providing worker/supervisor contact information.
- ***Systemic Issues*** presented revolved around three themes: More time to spend with children and families. Improved communication between all parties/stakeholders, and the need to revisit departmental philosophies. At the core of the desire to have more time to spend with families lies the challenges that staff face in assuming additional work when caseloads are high or vacancies go unfilled requiring those caseloads to shift to the remaining staff. One of the strengths mentioned above is conscientious, committed staff who are repeatedly challenged with balancing time spent with children and families providing crisis intervention, and the multitude of other tasks required of them including writing court reports, arranging/monitoring services, locating placements for children, etc. in lieu of time spent providing proactive supports to mitigate the need for reactionary intervention. The accessibility of staff would in turn support improved communication between staff and parents, Counsel, service providers, stakeholders, etc. It was suggested that more frequent contact would be the best mechanism for improving communication between the parties, which reinforces the staff desire to spend more time with children/families. Reviewing departmental philosophies with staff and assessing the corresponding action desired was presented as a means of redefining priorities in relation to practice decisions regarding parent/child visitation, emancipation planning, placement with REL/NREFMs, and the degree of parental involvement in case decisions. Such a review is hoped to produce a more common understanding of operating practices that may be influencing permanence and stability outcomes.

Well-Being

Well-being is more elusive in terms of measuring outcomes for children and considers such factors as ensuring that youth have their medical, dental, and educational needs met. Other considerations include measures related to placement in the least restrictive setting and children being placed with their siblings. SB CWS has been performing on par with the state of California on these measures. Approximately 70% of all children in foster care have been placed with some or all of their siblings. In some instances, this has been no easy task given the large sibling groups (4 to 6 or more children) entering care. Foster Care Placements in Least Restrictive Setting indicate that County CWS continues to have the majority (38%) of children in care placed with REL/NREFMs. The majority of Probation minors in care are placed in a group home setting. Given the absence of adequate foster homes, necessity has resulted in the need to find additional placement resources for children. In addition under CWSOIP grant funds during FY 05/06, County CWS contracted with local CBOs to locate possible connections/mentors for youth that would either be willing to accept the child for placement or remain/establish a connection with the child for future support. Thankfully, the funds and this service to the children in care have continued since that time, as it a valuable resource to both placement staff and the children they serve.

Foster Care Youth Transitioning to Self-Sufficient Adulthood

During FY 07/08, 166 CWS and Probation foster youth received some level of Independent Living Program (ILP) services. County CWS implemented several changes to enhance the services/supports provided to youth participating in ILP by providing more one to one case management and targeted small group activities to expand knowledge related to the 7 skill areas: Education, Employment, Daily Living Skills, Survival Skills, Choices and Consequences, Interpersonal/Social Skills, and Computer/Internet Skills. County CWS contracts with a community based organization to provide ILP case managers in each of the 3 regions. The ILP case managers provide direct services to youth through additional training opportunities, one-to-one case management and group support, opportunities to develop leadership skills, assistance with planning for college, and the provision of resources/supports for emancipation. Additional partnerships have been developed involving local service organizations and other community resources to provide support to both CWS and Probation foster youth. Furthermore, the linking of Foster Youth Services through the County Education Office has provided much needed support for youth in achieving educational success.

As part of our last System Improvement Plan (SIP), County CWS implemented both the Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP) and Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THP-Plus) program serving both CWS and Probation youth. The THPP offers CWS/Probation youth who are currently ages 16-18 an opportunity to live in a more independent environment, while being provided services/supports for

understanding and preparing for the transition to independence. The goal of the program is to provide a safe living environment so that youth can practice skills necessary to live on their own upon leaving the foster care support system. The THP-Plus Program provides affordable housing and comprehensive supportive services for up to 24 months to help former Santa Barbara County foster care and probation youth ages 18 to 24 make a successful transition from out-of-home placements to independent living. Per our agreement with the CDSS, there are 10 beds countywide, 2 utilizing an apartment setting in Santa Maria and 8 at La Morada in Santa Barbara. County CWS is proud of the accomplishments of the Independent Living Program and the transitional housing programs in preparing youth for a successful transition into self-sufficient adulthood. Yet, there are capacity issues with the THPP and THP-Plus programs as available funding and resources to the County to support those programs are capped by State agreements/allocations.

Based on the limited data available, Santa Barbara CWS, Probation, and the youth are *performing well.* More youth graduated from high school than in previous years and 77% of those were enrolled in college or higher education. In addition, more youth were employed or had other means of support when leaving the foster care system than in previous years. Yet, County CWS, Probation, and the community recognize, as the research indicates, that foster youth emancipating from care do not fare well in health, education, employment, and housing arenas. Therefore, improving the well-being of youth while in care and as they transition into self-sufficiency remains a *high priority* issue.

As part of the CSA process, focus group attendees were asked to respond to a statement regarding well-being, as a mechanism for identifying community outcomes that can be used as a benchmark for knowing if we truly are making a difference for children and families. The following responses are reflective of the themes that appeared to emerge from the focus groups to the prompt, “I will know that we have improved the well-being of children in my community when….

- All children have ready access to the services they need including mental health, medical/dental care, substance abuse treatment, etc. no matter what the family income.
- More children actually graduate from high school, as opposed to receiving a GED.
- The number of children/probation minors entering placement has decreased.
- All agencies providing services to children communicate more effectively.
- Referrals and caseloads decline.

- Children are connected to a positive adult role model.
- When staff have the adequate time to spend with each child on their caseload to be more proactive in helping them achieve their goals and decrease the need for crisis response. "

- Participants were also asked to vote on what they perceived to be the key areas of strength of our service delivery systems in enhancing well-being for youth. One of the primary strengths identified was staff support to do their job including a team approach and networking for resources. In addition, the philosophy of removing risk from children, when feasible, as opposed to children from risk was viewed as the primary strength for improving child well-being. The following resources/programs were also identified as strengths of the service delivery system for improving well-being:
  - SB 163 Wraparound Program
  - Transitional Housing Placement Program (THPP)
  - Transitional Housing Placement-Plus (THP-Plus) including La Morada
  - Family Resource Centers

Needs Assessment

- ***Lack of Resources*** were identified in numerous areas speaking to the need for both capacity and quality of services. Concerns were expressed over the lack of sufficient, stable, nurturing foster homes and transitional housing programs for those in need of these services. There continues to be the need to have more substance abuse treatment centers with specific attention given to facilities that can take mothers and their children, teen programs, and adequate resources in the family's home community. In some instances, there may be no available services in the region where the family resides creating additional obstacles to achieving sobriety. Additionally, there was a strong message from participants about the need for children, families, and emancipating youth to have a sufficient support system through both formal and informal supports that will continue outside of their involvement with CWS/Probation.
- ***Knowledge Gaps*** identified included information needed for children, families, caregivers, and staff. Children, families, and caregivers were identified as needing more information around community supports, and the benefits of meaningful participation in community activities such as sports, volunteer programs, music, after-school activities, etc. Staff spoke of the need for additional

education/training on engaging and motivating parents to participate in the reunification process.

- ***Systemic Issues*** presented were similar to those of the Safety and Permanency section with attention again brought to the timely filling of staff vacancies and philosophical understanding of what is important in our service delivery models. In line with that philosophy was the concept of keeping children connected to family and others who are important to them throughout their involvement in the foster care system as a means of building their network of support during and after their experience in foster care. Concerns were also raised about the limitations within the Probation system of treating the minor who will return home to a family who has not received the resources needed to improve family functioning to support the minor upon return.

The information provided above is reflective of the responses from the focus groups, with the exception of the ILP youth. In order to ensure that the voice of our youth did not get lost in the overall information and to highlight their recommendations, their responses will be identified here. The ILP youth were asked to respond to the following two questions and themes in their responses are included accordingly.

- **What or who has helped me the most during my experience in foster care?** The common theme in all the responses from the youth centered not around a particular service, but around specific people who have been important to them and helped them in coping with their experiences as a foster child. The primary groups of people identified were family, friends, the ILP coordinator/case managers, group home staff, their wraparound team, social workers, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and foster parents who kept them safe and respected them.
- **What recommendations would you make to improve the experience for others?** Three distinct themes emerged in the youth recommendations. The strongest theme in youth responses revolved around the desire for better communication (connection) with their social workers/probation officers. Some of their recommendations for achieving this included:
    - Asking how the youth feel about the decisions that are being made for them
    - Giving them a chance to talk and really be heard
    - Giving more time and attention to the child's needs
    - Having empathy for the youth and what they are experiencing
    - Being open-minded and not make assumptions that they don't want help
    - Show youth something concrete in their lives by not having their case passed from worker to worker

  The second emergent theme focused on giving the youth more to do with respect to activities and programs. The consensus

around this need seemed to stem from the point that if the youth were not engaged in some type of program/activity, they were more likely to be on the streets and/or get into trouble. It appears that the youth view idle time as a challenge to maintaining a positive direction. In addition, it was mentioned that time in between activities allowed youth to disengage from those supports they find helpful. The third theme that emerged focused on giving youth more freedom to be responsible young adults. Some additional recommendations presented by the youth included earlier intervention for abuse/neglect, completing their high school education at a school (not through independent study), additional job training, and building placement rules around a home dynamic as opposed to building the home around rules.

Gaps Analysis

In providing an analysis of the gaps in achieving well-being for youth, it is challenging to go beyond the strong message that was given by our foster youth about what is truly important to them. Thus unlike the previous Gaps analysis section, the discussion for this section will center about the areas of overlap and dissonance between the information obtained in the focus group forum and that from our foster youth.

- ***Resources Gaps*** centered on placement options, aftercare supports, and availability of services. However, there was concern for more than just capacity in most of those resource gaps and qualifiers were placed on those needs. The participants indicated a need for more stable, nurturing foster homes and better, qualified staff in group homes to manage the complex needs of those being placed in care. Not only is more mental health, substance abuse treatment, medical/dental care, and informal supports needed; these services must provide quality treatment, be easily accessible, and sufficient follow through is needed to ensure the children's needs are being met. The issue of quality speaks to the need for use of more evidence-based or supported practices, in order to clearly identify if the services provided are having the intended outcomes for children. While the community stakeholders and staff clearly identified resource needs to be filled, the youth spoke very clearly about the importance of people in their lives. Some of those people were tied to formal resources like group homes, ILP, or the SB 163 Wraparound program. However, many of those people were not.
- ***Educating*** staff, caregivers, families, and service providers regarding the available resources/supports was viewed as a means of not only providing intervention services to improve well-being for youth, but also as a building block in the development of an after care plan. Specific training for staff on engaging and motivating parents/youth to become involved in the process and services available was suggested as a means of working more cooperatively to achieve positive outcomes. The information provided by the youth also lends itself to an educational opportunity with staff, as youth expressed a desire to have more consistency in their

workers and the desire to be heard by those making decisions for them.

- **Systemic Issues** presented were similar in some respects between the focus groups and the youth with particular overlap between the need to keep youth connected to family and people who are important to them. The youth voice was heard very clearly on this issue, as it is their perception that people not necessarily services have helped them most during their foster care experience. We heard a similar message from our staff in the desire to spend more time with children and families. While the youth clearly desired a stronger connection with the social workers, it is important that a broader network of support be developed for them that will continue to support them into emancipation. This is where use of informal resources becomes key in bridging the gap between intervention and after care.

C. Areas for further exploration through Peer Quality Case Review

Given our current performance on the outcome measures, one topic for Peer Quality Case Review consideration is the Reunification Composite. While our current analysis of the data has given some context to our performance on this measure, it bears some additional investigation. Timely reunification is compounded by so many challenging issues including parental motivation, timely availability of services, timely legal process, competing recommendations of key stakeholders, safety concerns vs. returning parents to a parental role, and so on. Moreover, our median time to reunification is double the national standard. Hearing from our staff through the PQCR process the promising practices and challenges they face in reunifying children with their families may provide some significant insight into improving performance on the measures.

D. Conclusion

The cornerstone in understanding CWS outcome measure baselines and service provision is access to consistently reliable information. Santa Barbara County CWS relies on the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) and Safe Measures for such information. County CWS has made some significant strides in improving “Data Diligence” in regards to placement, timely entry of referral investigation responses, monthly case contacts, case plan compliance, and some new supports regarding education; yet, there is still significant work to be done. The increasing high priority demands on social worker time result in the absence of information in CWS/CMS, delayed data entry, and

overall data integrity concerns. Maintaining a quality information system through CWS/CMS is a high priority issue and strategies for improvement continue to be designed and implemented. From our research, it is clear staff are doing the work and required activities for children are occurring as needed. However, the information may be recorded in CWS/CMS within the most recent court report, but was not entered into the correct field for inclusion in outcome measure information. The provision of Safe Measures to line staff has allowed them an opportunity to monitor there own data diligence efforts and provided a context for the practices implemented to improve data integrity. Focusing on full utilization of CWS/CMS through data completion, data integrity, and timely entry will provide better information to all levels of CWS personnel, State CDSS, and community partners.

The County Self-Assessment (CSA) process provides Santa Barbara County CWS and Probation an opportunity to engage existing partners, the community, youth, staff, and substitute caregivers in a process of open, honest communication regarding the challenges of providing good outcomes for the children and families served. The current CSA is Santa Barbara's third completed assessment. It is intriguing to review previous assessments and note the similarities and differences between them. Similar themes that have emerged in all the assessments include capacity issues in identified resources and the need for a more integrated service delivery system, County CWS and Probation have made significant strides in implementing new strategies to enhance child and family safety, permanence, and well-being and our performance on the outcome measures are indicative of those changes. Yet as the gaps analysis indicates, there is still much work to be done in order to achieve the outcomes in our community that would let all the stakeholders know we are truly providing for the safety, permanence, and well-being of children and families in our community.

III. Prevention Strategies

County Child Welfare in collaboration with the KIDS Network, Child Abuse Prevention Council, First 5, and the Children's Trust Fund Commission (Human Services Commission) have worked together over the past few years to enhance and expand prevention and early intervention strategies in Santa Barbara County. Most recently, key partners engaged in an extensive planning process led by the Child Abuse Prevention Council in preparation for formulating the County's three-year plan for abuse and neglect prevention in coordination with the SIP process. The planning team identified unmet needs for specific services, geographical areas, and specific populations. Services targeted toward neglect prevention and services addressing the underlying often co-occurring substance abuse and mental health issues were recognized as an unmet need of high priority in the county. Geographically, high poverty areas with a particular focus on North County were identified as a priority relevant to child abuse and neglect prevention through the needs assessment. Children under one year of age, as well as families exposed to substance abuse (including prenatal) and those with mental health issues were identified as priority target populations. The following are some of the key existing and planned prevention strategies in our community to address these needs:

Differential Response

KIDS Network in conjunction with County CWS provides funding and oversight to the Differential Response program entitled Front Porch. Providing Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funding administered through KIDS Network support two community based agencies in providing early intervention services to children and families that have been referred to CWS, but do not currently meet the legal criteria of abuse and/or neglect. Based on the assessment of our hotline or investigations social workers, referrals are made to the Front Porch program. This program has proven to be effective as indicated by the outcome data for fiscal October 2010 - September 2011007/2008 in which 227 families were referred to services with 68% of those families not being re-referred within 12 months. Overall, the Front Porch program had a 90% success rate with keeping families from requiring more extensive CWS intervention during that fiscal year. Recognizing the importance of early intervention, CWS augments current program contracts with Child Welfare Services Outcome Improvement Program (CWSOIP) funds. In addition, CWS and First 5 have been working collaboratively to expand services under this program to serve more families through additional case management support by the Families Resource Centers funded by First 5.

Family Resource Centers

Family Resource Centers have been established in several regions of Santa Barbara County. The centers are funded through a variety of sources including PSSF Family Support dollars, First Five, Children and Families Commission, the Human Services Commission, as well as others to provide case management, parenting classes, counseling services, and support for daily living to families in need.

CAPIT, CBCAP, and Children's Trust Fund Grants

Services funded by **Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT), Community-based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF)-Family Support** funds to address the aforementioned unmet needs were identified as follows:

- Comprehensive substance abuse services designed to maintain families free of substance abuse and their children free of abuse and neglect
- Comprehensive services for mental health issues, including counseling to address mental health issues of parents placing children at-risk of abuse and neglect
- Family case management, including resources and referrals and access to basic services to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect
- Comprehensive early care and education services that integrate the "Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education" protective factors which have been demonstrated to be effective in research to prevent child abuse and neglect

PSSF Adoption Promotion and Support Services

To meet the need for improved permanency identified in the CSA, services in the category of Adoption Promotion and Support will continue to be provided through a training program for prospective adoptive families in collaboration with local community colleges. The training program follows a national curriculum, *PRIDE*, and utilizes an assessor to work intensively with prospective foster/adoptive parents and their families. In addition, these funds will also be utilized for summer camper ships

open to children in the fost/adopt system meeting their need for personal connections with peers in a similar situation, as well as bonding studies for adoptive families to ensure that permanency is achieved.

PSSF Time-Limited Family Reunification Services

Family reunification funds are utilized by Santa Barbara County Child Welfare Services to cover cost for services that aid the reunification process within the required 15-month period. Such services include individual, group, and family counseling; inpatient, residential, or outpatient substance abuse treatment services; mental health services; assistance to address domestic violence; services designed to provide temporary child care and therapeutic services for families, including crisis nurseries; and transportation to or from any of the services and activities described in this subparagraph. All time-limited reunification services suggested by the social worker are individually reviewed by the designated Child Welfare Division Chief before being approved as appropriate for a family and allowable services under the PSSF time-limited reunification category.

PSSF Family Preservation Funds

Santa Barbara County's Differential Response program, **Front Porch**, which has proven to be very successful to date in preventing repeated referrals to child welfare services, will continue to be funded through Family Preservation Funds, targeting children at high-risk of abuse and neglect that have come to the attention of Child Welfare Services. Child Welfare Services, in collaboration with Santa Barbara County First 5, has recently expanded the County's DR model to include the option of providing additional case management and basic services to families through First 5 funded Family Resource Centers, significantly increasing the reach of the program, as well as the number of families served.

Family Preservation Program

The Board of Supervisors approved three new social work positions beginning in fiscal October 2010 - September 2011006/2007 for Child Welfare Services to initiate a Family Preservation Program. The program focuses on providing intervention services to children and their families who are assessed utilizing Structured Decision Making (SDM) to be at high or very high risk of abuse and neglect. Providing services to families at this juncture is key to preserving the family unit and preventing children from entering the overburdened foster care system. During Fiscal Year 07/08 and up through February 2009, The Family Preservation program has served 248 families of which 73% remained intact, not requiring foster care.

IV. Data Collection Analysis

CWS primarily utilized the County Outcome & Accountability Report in conjunction with the University at California, Berkeley data system to inform the Self-Assessment process. Data regarding Outcome Measures was provided to participants of the self-assessment focus groups, which included raw numbers in order to educate participants regarding the economy of scales. Santa Barbara County overall has relatively small numbers of children involved in the CWS system, which can have a significant impact on percentage based measures. In order to further illustrate the concept of economy of scales, County CWS had previously been meeting the measure for Exits to Reunification During the Year: Reentry within 12 months; however, in between the annual data ending June 2007 and the annual data ending September 2007, County CWS dropped below the national standard for this measure. A closer analysis of the numbers indicated that CWS missed succeeding on this measure by 4 children. In effect, this could have been one family. Yet, the change in the percentage was significant enough to move from previous success on this measure to failure. It is with this understanding that evaluation of progress regarding success or failure of the Outcome Measures must be considered.

Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR)

Santa Barbara County conducted the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) in collaboration with San Luis Obispo and Ventura County as well as a few of our community partners in September 2008 selecting the topic of Placement Stability. Santa Barbara County Child Welfare Services and Probation had identified Placement Stability as an area of focus in our last SIP initiated in March of 2007. An excerpt from the PQCR conclusion submitted to the State in December 2008 has been included below for additional details regarding the findings of the process:

> As CWS and Probation embarked in the planning process for PQCR related to our focus area of placement stability, we independently had theories about what information we might glean throughout this process. While much of the promising practices and barriers/ challenges to ensuring placement stability aligned with our expectations, there were some instances when practices were reported as being both promising and a barrier to achieving positive outcomes for the children in care.
>
> CWS heard overwhelmingly from staff that the resources in place through the Home Connection Finders and the Placement Search Assistant have been very helpful in identifying potential relatives and placement options for children in care. The sample data indicates

that CWS is placing many children with relatives and it appears that those in relative care experience both higher rates of placement stability and better outcomes to include transitioning from placement to home. The theme of transitions was reflected throughout the various tools and an area where the staff felt there is much work to be done. Assisting children in transitioning to and from placements is both time consuming and requires significant coordination with the caregivers, which staff felt was limited by their lack of time to spend with the children given their other responsibilities. The importance of adequately preparing children to move to and from placement was echoed in the youth focus group and bears continued efforts to ensure children are supported during the challenging times around transitions.

Expectedly, CWS also heard concerns from line staff around the challenges of moving children from shelter care within the 14 day policy. While this policy was instituted to ensure vacancies in the shelter for emergency placements, the unintended consequence at times has been the need to move children to any placement as opposed to the right placement for the child. Recommendations surrounding the availability of greater detail about our out of home care providers would assist staff in making better informed decisions when placing children , even under short deadlines, and will be pursued in our continued commitment to ensuring better outcomes for children under our care. While this policy seemed to present a challenge for staff, the data at the time of PQCR, to the credit of our staff, does not reflect that this policy change has overwhelmingly resulted in greater placement turnover. In addition, we recognize that placement changes particularly if moving from foster home to relative/non-related extended family member care is a positive outcome for the child – even when not in compliance with the measure.

Through PQCR, CWS has been able to affirm that many of our practices related to placement have been successful in achieving intended outcomes, even though they may not always be seen as favorable by line staff. Yet, there is always room for improvement and fine-tuning is still needed to provide better support to our staff and the children whom they serve.

Probation finds strong support for our Placement Review Committee and use of SB 163. These provide opportunities to minimize the use of out of home placement when possible and to determine what services, resources, and options are available prior to placing a youth. SB 163 provides valuable wrap services to families to prevent the need for placement, or reduce the number of or time a youth spends in out of home placements. Additionally, it provides a high level of support for youth who are transitioning to or returning from a placement. Probation further understands a desire for increased training for staff in reference to placement protocols and Division 31 policies and procedures. Increasing the level of training will allow for an increased service delivery to placement youth and can assist staff in

understanding their responsibilities when placement transitions occur. Additionally, greater centralization of information and personnel would assist in keeping staff informed and ensure greater consistency of information and changes in practice. Probation recognizes the need to maintain, or increase, the training and responsibilities of support staff that provide invaluable assistance with placement cases. Another identified need is to engage our partners in education so that they have a greater understanding of the educational responsibilities associated with placements and to ease the transitions that occur when placement changes are necessary. Overall, the process was informative as it highlighted gaps in information and processes. It was also positive in that it underscored the importance of our strong and collaborative relationship with DSS.

County Self Assessment and System Improvement Plan Process

County CWS and Probation believe that the input and ideas from the people, including foster parents, and the organizations serving the children and families in our county were of the greatest importance in conducting our Self-Assessment. Data was presented to participants to set the basis for why we need improvement in the focus areas of Safety, Permanence, and Well-being. Participants were then asked to identify the gaps in our current service delivery system and then strategize how to improve these outcomes. Lastly, participants prioritized the strategies.

In order to ensure the voice of our transitioning youth was included in the Self-Assessment, youth were asked to respond to a few questions and their responses were used to inform this System Improvement Plan. Greater detail around their responses has previously been provided in the CSA Summary section of this report. There were four notable themes in the youth responses which included:

- Connections with people, not programs have helped them most
- Desire for better communication with their social worker/probation officer
- Getting them involved in more activities
- Giving them the freedom to be responsible adults

Picking up on these themes the strategies included in this SIP focus on engaging youth and their families in the reunification/aftercare planning process, linking youth with natural supports, and providing staff opportunities to spend more time with clients.

The prioritized strategies were provided to the SIP Workshop Participants for expansion of ideas, development of the improvement goals, and identification of concrete strategies to achieve those goals. The process resulted in considerable consensus regarding areas of focus that also aligned well with the work of our prevention partners and included incredibly rich information and strategies to improve outcomes for children and families.

V. System Improvement Plan (SIP)

Outcome/Systemic Factor: C1.1 Reunification within 12 months (Exit Cohort)

This measure answers the question: Of all children who had been in foster care for at least 8 days or longer that exited the foster care system to reunification, what percent were reunified in less than 12 months from the latest date of removal from home?

County's Current Performance:

CWS

In 2008, 116 children were reunified with their parent or primary caretaker. Of those 116 children, 55 reunified in less than 12 months from their date of removal.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Most recent State performance	National Standard
01/01/08	12/31/08	55	116	47.4%	61.9%	75.2%

From the baseline year of July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003, the percentage of children reunified within 12 months has decreased from 74.3% to 47.4%. The decline in performance is actually attributed to a positive outcome, which is the increased total number of children exiting foster care to reunification (74 at baseline compared to 116). There have been almost twice as many children reunifying annually in the last 3 years than in previous years. During both the baseline and recent performance year the number of children reunified in less than 12 months was the same at 55. However given the higher number of children reunifying, the current performance fell below the Federal Standard (75.2%) as well as the statewide performance (61.9%), which is why this measure was identified as an improvement focus area.

Probation

In 2008, Probation reunified 18 youth with their parent or primary caretaker. Of those 18 youth, 10 or 55.6% were reunified in less than 12 months exceeding the State performance of 50.9%.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Most recent State performance	National Standard
01/01/08	**12/31/08**	**10**	**18**	**55.6%**	**50.9%**	**75.2%**

Improvement Goal 1.0 Actively engage the family and community supports in early reunification services to decrease the time to reunification.

Strategy 1. 1	**Strategy Rationale**[3]
Fully utilize available tools, strategies, and resources to partner with the family and community by establishing and working towards common goals.	Partnering with the family in the early identification of common goals increases chances for success and supports earlier engagement with community resources towards timely completion of case plan goals.

Milestone	Timeframe	Assigned to
1.1.1 Fully utilize Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools and protocols as the standardized assessment procedure for identifying family needs and risk factors in support of developing goals. Utilization will be monitored through supervisory review of tools during case conferences, case transfers, and case closures.	October 2009 - September 2010	CWS - Social Workers (SW), Supervisors, Managers
1.1.2 Assure parent has access to and contact information for the following to minimize delays in information and service delivery: ▪ Current Social Worker/Probation Officer ▪ Social Worker/Probation Officer Supervisor	October 2009 - September 2010	CWS Probation Juvenile Court Assigned legal counsel

[3] Describe how the strategy will build on progress and improve this program/outcome area.

	▪ Attorney ▪ Services and community supports				
	1.1.3 Hold Family Meetings such as Team Decision Making (TDM) before Disposition to actively engage the family and their natural supports in the reunification process and hold follow-up Family Meetings minimally every 3 months thereafter.		October 2009 - September 2010		CWS
	1.1.4 Engage the parent as a partner in developing the case plan goals and objectives.		October 2009 - September 2010		CWS Probation
	1.1.5 Fully implement the Linkages Project to ensure coordinated case plans and services with the family and CalWorks partners for all eligible families.		October 2009 - September 2010		CWS CalWorks
	1.1.6 Foster parents will learn about the tenants of reunification during the assessment and training process and will actively support reunification efforts through transportation, visitation, and ongoing feedback to the Social Worker/Probation Officer.		October 2009 - September 2010		Foster Parent Recruiter Pride Trainers Licensing/Relative Approval Unit Resource Families
	1.1.7 Assure existing contracts and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) provide timely, responsive services.		October 2009 - September 2010		CWS Probation Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
Strategy 1. 2 Access the Family Drug Treatment Court model for eligible families to provide a comprehensive array of services and close supervision/oversight as a means of early engagement when substance abuse is the primary contributing factor.			**Strategy Rationale** Utilize an evidence based drug court model to engage families early in drug treatment services.		
Milestone	**1.2.** Complete the pilot phase of the Family Drug Treatment Court (FDTC) model in North County and based on positive outcomes of the pilot, fully implement and build the FDTC program. (move from pilot to program operation)	**Timeframe**	October 2009 - September 2010	**Assigned to**	CWS Juvenile Court Treatment Providers
	1.2.2 Develop a reporting system to track and monitor results of those served in the FDTC to		October 2010 - September 2011		CWS FDTC Stakeholders

	support efficacy of the program.				
	1.2.3 Seek new funding strategies and resources to fully augment existing program and support potential future year expansions.		October 2009 - September 2012		CWS Juvenile Court Stakeholders Treatment Providers Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) FDTC stakeholders
	1.2.4 Develop a tracking system for use of the current program and the volume of cases that could benefit from future program expansions to support decision-making around program expansions.		October 2010 - September 2011		CWS Juvenile Court
	1.2.5 Expand FDTC model to serve more families.		October 2011 - September 2012		CWS Juvenile Court Stakeholders Treatment Providers Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) FDTC stakeholders
Strategy 1.3 Develop foster care options that will decrease the timeframe leading to or improve the likelihood of successful reunification.			**Strategy Rationale** Foster care options that target specific population needs, provide an abbreviated local alternative to group care, or transition a youth back home should improve reunification outcomes.		
Milestone	**1.3.1** Identify and utilize local foster care options designed to meet specific treatment needs and which limit the foster care episode to six months or less.	**Timeframe**	October 2009 - September 2010	**Assigned to**	CWS - Social Work staff Probation - Deputy Probation Officer (DPO)
	1.3.2 Diligently monitor group care program treatment models and plans to insure lengthy ones serve some legitimate need or can be modified to decrease their duration by case conferencing with the treatment provider during placement visits. Case conferences will include a review of the treatment plan to ensure relevancy and the status of goals achieved.		October 2009 - September 2012		Probation
	1.3.3 Fully utilize SB 163 as a step-down option from group care to return a youth to their family in a timely manner.		October 2009 - September 2011		Probation

Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals.

- A review of departmental philosophies with all staff to ensure consistency in understanding regarding parent/child visitations, Relative/Non-Related Extended Family Member placements, and the degree of parent participation in case planning.
- Review the reasoning and frequency of court continuances to minimize their use to decrease delays in reunification
- Timely access to adult and children's mental health services
- Availability and access for parents to community supports such as parent partners, mentors, or family service advocates
- Availability of foster placements for teenagers within the community to facilitate parental connection during the reunification process

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.

- Review court timelines with all staff, given the changes in the date the child was considered to have entered care, to ensure 6 and 12 month reviews are occurring timely
- Educate involved parents regarding the Juvenile Court process
- Educate caregivers regarding their role in the reunification process

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.

- Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Services (ADMHS) support is needed to ensure the availability of treatment providers on the network promoting timely receipt of counseling/assessment services for families including bilingual/bicultural services

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

- More flexibility with funding sources and services, such as that which is available through SB163 Wraparound.
- Contradiction between State regulations extending reunification time for families with particular issues and the Adoption and Safe Family Act (ASFA) national standards for which counties are accountable to in the Outcomes and Accountability System

Outcome/Systemic Factor: C1.4 Re-entry Following Reunification

This outcome measure answers the question: Of all children who exited the foster care system to reunification, how many re-entered foster care within 12 months?

County's Current Performance:

CWS

During 2007, 146 children exited foster care to reunification. Within 12 months of reunifying, 24 children (16.4%) re-entered foster care.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Most recent State performance	National Standard
01/01/07	12/31/07	24	146	16.4%	11.6%	9.9%

From the baseline year of July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002, the percentage of children re-entering foster care within 12 months of reunification has declined from 19.1% to the current 16.4%. CWS has made progress on this measure moving closer to the State performance of 11.6% and the Federal standard of 9.9%.

Probation

During 2007, there were 15 youth who reunified with their family/caretakers. None of these youth re-entered foster care within 12 months.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Most recent State performance	National Standard
01/01/07	12/31/07	0	15	0%	10.9%	9.9%

Improvement Goal 2.0 Support reunified families to prevent re-entry into the foster care system.

Strategy 2.1 Intensify services planning with the family during the reunification process up through case closure to create a realistic, robust aftercare plan.	**Strategy Rationale** Advanced planning with the family to support aftercare needs and linking to community supports will augment services provided and support the family in getting their ongoing needs met when formal services cease at case closure.

Milestone	Timeframe	Assigned to
2.1.1 Conduct a Family Meeting (TDM for CWS) with the family and their natural supports at least 2 months prior to reunification to identify and support the family needs upon the children returning home.	October 2009 - September 2010	CWS Probation
2.1.2 Refer all children involved with the Juvenile Court to Home Connection Finders program to assist in locating relative/non-related extended family members for placement options and/or to serve as an adult mentor who will be available to support the child during the reunification process and beyond.	October 2009 - September 2010	CWS Probation
2.1.3 Actively engage the family in decision-making and development of the Family Maintenance Case Plan.	October 2009 - September 2010	CWS
2.1.4 Actively monitor service delivery during Family Maintenance to begin titrating formal services and linking the family to more community/informal supports prior to case closure.	October 2009 - September 2010	CWS
2.1.5 Conduct a discharge planning Family Meeting (TDM) prior to case closure to identify and link families to available informal and formal supports. Ensure the parents are linked and participating in these supports at case closure to	October 2009 - September 2010	CWS Probation

	provide ongoing services as needed when CWS and Probation close the case (or move to community supervision for Probation) and remove all formal supports.				

Strategy 2. 2 Utilize the service broker model of our existing Differential Response program, which reinforces the development of familial connections with natural supports and affordable community resources, to sustain the achievements that occurred during formal services after the termination of Juvenile Court dependency/wardship.	**Strategy Rationale** Building upon the concepts we know to work for prevention, provide a similar support structure targeting the aftercare needs of families with children who have been placed in foster care.

Milestone	Timeframe	Assigned to
2.2.1 Convene staff and stakeholder group to identify the elements needed for an aftercare program considering current community and agency resources.	October 2009 - September 2010	CWS Probation CBOs
2.2.2 Formulate a staged aftercare program model and implementation strategy within existing resources to support the linking of families to natural supports prior to case closure.	October 2010 - September 2011	CWS Probation CBOs
2.2.3 Define funding sources to support an after care case management model for families in need of additional support once CWS and Probation are no longer involved.	October 2010 - September 2011	CWS Probation
2.2.4 Establish contracts and MOUs for the aftercare case management model.	October 2011 - September 2012	CWS Probation

Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals.

- Availability and access for parents to informal and community supports such as parent partners, mentors, or family service advocates
- Stronger link for families to access community services and resources for ongoing treatment, counseling, etc. once formal supports have ended
- Review of departmental philosophies regarding social work/probation officer responsibility to families during intervention in preparation for case closure or transfer to community supervision (Probation)

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.

Educating families on where to find resources in their community independent of public agency involvement

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.

- Community Based Organizations and services will be key to providing families with the resources needed once formal supports are removed
- ADMHS support is needed to ensure the availability of services and resources to parents and children with complex behavioral and emotional needs requiring ongoing mental health services

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

- More flexibility with funding sources and services, such as that which is available through SB163 Wraparound

Outcome/Systemic Factor: S1.1 No Recurrence of Maltreatment

This measure answers the question: Of all children who were victims of a substantiated maltreatment allegation during the 6-month period, what percent were not victims of another substantiated maltreatment allegation within the next 6 months?

County's Current Performance:

During the first half of 2008, there were 445 substantiated allegations of child maltreatment of which 92.4% of those children were not a victim of another substantiated allegation of maltreatment within the next 6 months.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Most recent State performance	National Standard
01/01/08	06/30/08	411	445	92.4%	93.0%	94.6%

Santa Barbara County CWS continues to demonstrate progress on this measure since the baseline period of July 1, 2002 to December 31, 2002 at 86.9%. In addition, the recent performance (92.4%) is close to the State performance of 93%.

Improvement Goal 3.0 Enhance and expand existing prevention/early intervention strategies that are working to prevent recurrence of maltreatment.					
Strategy 3.1 Expand the Differential Response – Front Porch Program to include service delivery by the Family Resource Centers.			**Strategy Rationale**[4] The Differential Response system in place through the Front Porch program has proven to successfully support referred families over the past few years and is achieving the intended outcome of mitigating additional referrals to CWS. Accessible, preventative services will mitigate the needs of families and ultimately decrease the incidences of child abuse and neglect.		
Milestone	**Timeframe**		**Assigned to**		
	3.1.1 Continue stakeholder group to redefine and implement newly identified strategies for the expansion of the Differential Response – Front Porch program.	October 2009 - September 2010		CWS First 5 Contracted CBOs Family Resource Centers	
	3.1.2 Establish a communication and feedback loop between CWS, Contracted CBOs, and the FRCs to monitor consistency in program implementation.	October 2009 - September 2010		CWS First 5 Contracted CBOs Family Resource Centers	
	3.1.3 Fine tune system of data collection to monitor family outcomes and determine efficacy of service delivery model.	October 2010 - September 2011		CWS First 5 Contracted CBOs Family Resource Centers	
	3.1.4 Continue to seek resources and tools for program expansions and refinement to support serving more families effectively.	October 2010 - September 2011		CWS First 5 Contracted CBOs Family Resource Centers Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC)	
	3.1.5 Provide reports to the prevention community on the effectiveness of the Differential Response – Front Porch Program through existing reporting mediums such as the Children's Scorecard or the CAPC newsletter.	October 2010 - September 2011		CWS First 5 CAPC Contracted CBOs	

[4] Describe how the strategy will build on progress and improve this program/outcome area.

Strategy 3. 2 Define and enhance/expand the use of existing already proven techniques to reduce child abuse and neglect.			**Strategy Rationale** Expand use of current practices and services that are currently working within our community to reduce child abuse and neglect.		
Milestone	**3.2.1** Identify those techniques and/or service delivery models that have some efficacy in preventing recurrence of maltreatment based on local practices/data collection.	**Timeframe**	October 2010 - September 2011	**Assigned to**	CWS Community Partners
	3.2.2 Assess current usage of effective techniques and service delivery models.		October 2010 - September 2011		CWS Community Partners
	3.2.3 Provide resource information to social work staff for use as a client referral source for those services that have proven to be effective.		October 2010 - September 2011		CWS
	3.2.4 Encourage and support the expansion of community services proven to be effective in reducing child maltreatment through referrals to services, sharing of information/cross training between agencies, and MOUs identifying the roles/responsibilities of participating partners.		October 2010 - September 2011		CWS Community Partners
	3.2.5 Monitor continued use and efficacy of services through expansion efforts.		October 2011 - September 2012		CWS Community Partners
Improvement Goal 4.0 Introduce more evidence based Home Visitation service delivery models into prevention and intervention service delivery systems.					
Strategy 4.1 Implement the SafeCare© Home Visitation Model for "in-vivo" parenting education, coaching, and mentoring.			**Strategy Rationale** Applied for and received in July 2009 a one year Training and Technical Assistance Grant through the California Evidenced Based Clearing House to implement the SafeCare© Home Visitation Program. The program is a series of parenting modules designed to reduce parenting issues that contribute to neglect in children aged 0-7. The SafeCare© model is specifically designed to remediate parenting deficits that contribute to neglect, which constitutes roughly 78% of all		

			referrals to CWS.		
Milestone	**4.2.5** Participate in planning activities and develop the infrastructure to support implementation of the SafeCare model	Timeframe	October 2009 - September 2010	Assigned to	CWS CBO project partners CDC Funded SafeCare Project staff Ventura County Project counterparts
	4.2.6 Develop learning collaborative with project participants and technical support to ensure fidelity to the program model.		October 2009 - September 2010		CWS CBO project partners CDC Funded SafeCare Project staff Ventura County Project counterparts
	4.2.7 Work with CBO project partners to creatively fund 6 countywide SafeCare© case managers.		October 2009 - September 2010		CWS CBO Project Partners
	4.2.8 Establish contracts and MOUs with Project Partners in preparation for implementation		October 2009 - September 2010		CWS CBO project partners
	4.2.9 Participate in training with the National SafeCare Training and Resource Center		October 2009 - September 2010		CWS CBO project partners CDC Funded SafeCare Project staff Ventura County Project counterparts
	4.2.10 Identify and enroll families in the SafeCare© project		October 2009 - September 2010		CWS Probation ADMHS CBO Project Partners
	4.1.7 Monitor program implementation and fidelity		October 2009 - September 2010		CWS CBO project partners CDC Funded SafeCare Project staff
	4.2.11 Receiving training and support to become a certified SafeCare© Trainer by training Cohort 2		October 2010 - September 2011		
	4.1.9 Cascade the model into other community prevention and intervention service delivery systems		October 2010 - September 2012		

Strategy 4.2 Define evidenced-based home visitation models that have proven effective in mitigating child abuse/neglect and expand the use of such models as a tool for prevention and a resource for intervention services.	**Strategy Rationale** Home visitation has solid research base and has been proven to be effective for child abuse prevention efforts. It is a flexible strategy that can be stand-alone or incorporated into various service delivery models including child care centers, Family Resource Centers, Community Based Organizations, and Differential Response. Home visitation service delivery models were identified multiple times throughout the County Self Assessment as a means of reaching families in their natural environment, allowing for an individualized response to clients' needs, and providing "in-vivo" coaching/mentoring/parent education. There are currently several in-home service delivery models being implemented countywide with positive, measurable outcomes.

Milestone	Timeframe	Assigned to
4.2.1 Research into models of home visitation that have proven to be effective in mitigating child abuse and neglect	October 2010 - September 2011	CAPC Child Abuse Listening and Mediation (CALM) Prevention partners
4.2.12 Assess local use of home visitation models and the corresponding outcomes for clients participating in those programs	October 2010 - September 2011	CAPC Community Prevention Partners CWS
4.2.13 Support implementation and expansion of community and evidence-based home visitation models through the prevention planning process and corresponding funding development opportunities	October 2010 - September 2011	CAPC Human Services Commission CWS
4.2.14 Coordinate community-based partners with CWS to provide high-quality, home visitation programs as part of the spectrum of services from prevention to intervention	October 2010 - September 2011	Community Partners utilizing evidenced-informed/based Home Visitation models CWS
4.2.15 Track outcomes related to effectiveness of coordinated home-visitation approach	October 2010 - September 2012	Community Partners utilizing evidenced-informed/based Home Visitation models CWS

Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals.

- The general lack of awareness of formal and informal resources available to families within the community
- Limited access to adult and children's mental health services

- Lack of capacity in integral services such as affordable, quality child care, affordable housing, bilingual

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.

- SafeCare© training through the National SafeCare Training and Resource Center (NSTRC) as a means of providing parents with "in vivo" parenting education when child neglect is of concern
- Educate partners and staff on availability of SafeCare© as a resource.

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.

- Community partners are a vital resource and safety net for Santa Barbara County children
- ADMHS support is needed to ensure the availability of services and resources to parents and children with complex behavioral and emotional needs requiring ongoing mental health services

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

- More flexibility with funding sources and services are needed to provide adequate prevention and early intervention services to the community.

Outcome/Systemic Factor: Maximize staff resources to allow staff the opportunity to spend more time with their clients.

County's Current Performance:

A recurrent theme during both the Peer Quality Case Review and the County Self Assessment from both CWS and Probation staff was the desire to provide more proactive case management supports to their clients. Concerns raised during the CSA focused on the timely filling of staff vacancies as critical to maintaining the quality of work that has led to improved performance over time. Work from vacant positions is shifted to existing staff inhibiting more frequent contacts with children, caregivers, and parents (beyond those statutorily required) that could assist in stabilizing children/families and limit the need for crisis intervention and placement changes. In addition, youth responses during the CSA indicated a desire for better communication with their social worker/probation officer and that people have helped them the most, not programs.

Improvement Goal 5.0 Provide a more intensive case management model that engages children, families, and caregivers as partners in providing stability and permanency through regular client contact and proactive case management techniques.

Strategy 5.1	Strategy Rationale
Maintain social worker and probation officer staff levels through maximizing staff resources and defining appropriate staffing needs by unit and/or function.	A strong theme from both the PQCR and CSA process focused on the desire to have more frequent client contacts when indicated by family needs to provide a more proactive, intensive case management service delivery model. The intensive case management model would provide

			quality supportive services to children/families, address staff burnout and turnover, improve worker morale, and increase cooperation between units and regions.		
Milestone	**5.1.1** Identify current, real world tasks, duties and expectations for workers by unit/function.	Timeframe	October 2009 - September 2010	Assigned to	CWS Probation
	5.1.2 Time study to identified tasks and duties by units and regions.		October 2009 - September 2010		Line staff as monitored by Department Business Specialists
	5.1.3 Meet with management, supervisory staff, and line staff to discuss outcomes of time study and problem solve options for maximizing staff resources to achieve the improvement goal		October 2009 - September 2010		CWS/Probation management, supervisors, line staff and union.
Milestone	**5.1.4** Implement strategies within existing funding limitations identified during the meet and confer	Timeframe	October 2010 - September 2011	Assigned to	CWS Probation unions/line staff
	5.1.5 Evaluate implementation's impact on client outcomes and staff		October 2010 - September 2012		CWS Probation

Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals.

- Review of departmental philosophies, use of support staff, and additional resources that could assist social workers/probation officers in completing their case management responsibilities

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.

- Not Applicable

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.

- Not Applicable

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

- Revision of the archaic CWS state caseload funding structure that was determined in 2000 by the SB 2030 Workload Study to no longer be commensurate with the time needed to provide adequate case management services to children and families. Since the original workload study was conducted, there has been an additional decade's worth of new state and federal regulations compounding case management and data entry demands on social work staff.

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Glossary and Acronyms for Santa Barbara County Programs

A

ADMHS - Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Services is a county agency and collaboration partner with CWS.

AFDC-FC – Aid to Families of Dependent Children – Foster Care is a federal program that provides for monthly payments to foster parents caring for foster youth.

AIU - Assessments and Investigation Unit is the Santa Barbara County CWS unit that investigates child abuse and neglect referrals and, if necessary places children in protective custody and initiates Juvenile Court action.

B

Beyond the Bench - is a Statewide Superior/Juvenile court forum for judges and attorneys involved with Juvenile court matters for child Welfare Services and Probation.

Blue Binder - Local Probation term used to refer to a minor's Health and Education Passport; we use blue binders for easy tracking of documents

C

CAC - Community Action Commission is a local CBO (community based organization) that administers a variety of human services programs.

CADA - Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse is a CBO which serves the South County region provides substance abuse services such as Adult Treatment Program, Perinatal Treatment Program, Detox, and Adolescent Treatment program.

CALM - Child Abuse Listening and Mediation is a local CBO that provides therapeutic services to children and families.

Camp - Los Prietos Boys Camp/Los Prietos Boys Academy; a secure detention facility providing residential programming for court ordered commitments.

CAPC – Child Abuse Prevention Council.

CASA - Court Appointed Special Advocates who are appointed by the court to support foster children in the CWS system.

Casa Pacifica - is a public/private partnership residential treatment center offering a wide range of assessment, crisis care, medical and educational services for abused and neglected children. They are also the contract provider for SB 163. *(See below)*

CBO – Community Based Organization.

CDSS – California Department of Social Services (State).

CEC - Counseling and Education Center; Probation school day program, on-site at Probation, in both Santa Maria and Santa Barbara.

Children in the Gap – committee formed by members of Board of Supervisors to identify needs and issues of youth in the Santa Maria region.

Children's System of Care (CSOC)/Enhanced Care - (formerly MISC) is a collaboration of CWS, ADMHS, Probation, and Public Health. The collaboration provides services to high-risk youth and

CSS - Children's Services Screener is a mental health screener who assesses children and their families who are entering the Juvenile Dependency system as well as children and families who are being served through CWS Voluntary Family Maintenance services. *(See below)*

CIU - Central Intake Unit is the Santa Barbara County CWS unit that receives child abuse and neglect referrals, evaluates them in terms of statutory definitions for CWS involvement and for immediate safety considerations, as well as to the choice of response time and for the path of response, such as Differential Response. *(See below)*

CMS - Case management System, is the statewide database that CWS staff use to do referral and case management.

Community Conversations (PSSF) – One time grant money to facilitate CWS and community collaboration and initial phase of CWS Redesign.

Concurrent Planning (CP) - is the process of immediate, simultaneous, and continuous assessment and case plan development providing options to achieve early, family-based permanency for every child removed from his/her family.

Court/241.1 – Refers to the Welfare and Institution Code 241.1 whereby the court can order a study to be done jointly by CWS and Probation to determine whether a child belongs under a CWS or Probation jurisdiction.

Court Unit - is the unit that receives cases from the AIU unit, writes Juvenile Petitions, and manages cases received from the AIU unit until such time as the Disposition Hearing occurs. The county-wide unit is comprised of Court Hearing Officers, who present CWS cases in Juvenile Court.

CRIS/211 - Community Resources Information Services is a local Santa Barbara County guidebook and web based directory to public and private human services and resources assembled by the local CBO Family Service Agency.

CSU – California State University (LB – Long Beach, F – Fresno).

CWS – Child Welfare Services.

CWS/CalWORKS Linkages ("Linkages") – intra-agency partnership to better facilitate service delivery and case planning between CWS and CalWORKS.

CWS/CMS – Child Welfare Services/Case Management System is the statewide database that CWS staff use to do referral and case management.

CWSOIP – Child Welfare System Outcome Improvement Project.

CWS OPS – CWS Operations Group.

D

Differential Response – Is a system of responding differentially to all referrals of child abuse and neglect made to the Hotline/Intake (CIU). Every referral is evaluated in terms of statutory definitions for CWS involvement for immediate safety considerations; for the choice of response time for the initial face to face interview and for the path or response. Children can be referred to a community network of response, with the parents'/caretakers' approval.

DSS – Department of Social Services.

DV Solutions - Domestic Violence Solutions is a local CBO which provides support and services to victims of Domestic Violence.

E

ESL – English as a second language.

ECMH – Early Childhood Mental health is a local initiative to extend mental health and developmental services to children birth to 5 years of age.

F

Family Resource Centers - are community based neighborhood centers providing multiple services at local sites, countywide.

Family Services Unit - is the Santa Barbara County CWS Unit that serves all Voluntary Family Maintenance cases.

Family to Family (FTF) - is an initiative to engage the community to better serve children and families.

Families for the 1st Decade – is a Santa Maria City community based collaboration between human services and the schools to address the needs of educationally limited low-income neighborhoods.

Family Drug Court Initiative – an exploratory group sponsored by the Public Defender.

Family Resource Centers – community based neighborhood centers providing multiple services at local sites countywide.

Family Violence Coalition – Regional groups to address Domestic Violence and how it impacts other agencies including CWS.

FDTC – Family Drug Treatment Court.

FFA – Foster Family Agency.

First Five Commission – the governing body for the administration of Prop. 10 child development funds.

Five (5)P's – Purpose, principles, processes, people, performance.

FM - Family Maintenance is a term used by CWS for services delivered to families and children, while the children are residing in the family home. The services are designed to provide in-home protective services to remedy neglect and abuse. FM can be either voluntarily arranged (VFM), *(see below)* or ordered by the Juvenile Court.

FR - Family Reunification is a term used by CWS for services provided to families and children, while the children are residing in out of home placement. The services are designed to remedy neglect and abuse.

Front Porch - is a program operated by Community Action Commission under contract with Santa Barbara County to serve lower risk families. They provide Differential Response services.

FSNA – Family Strengths and Needs Assessment.

FUP – Family Unification Program – Federal program to provide subsidized housing for CWS families to promote family preservation and reunification.

G

Good Samaritan - is a CBO which serves the North County region which acts as an umbrella for various projects, programs, and services including: emergency shelter, transitional shelter, TC House Project P.R.E.M.I.E, First Steps, Recovery Point, Acute Care, and Acute Care Detox.

H

HCF-Home Connection Finders - is a service provided by a CBO which attempt to identify and locate relatives, extended non-related family members, or individuals important to the child, for possible placements for children as well as for individuals who can be life long connections for a child.

Head Start – is the Federal program to assist low-income children and their families.

Healthy Families – is California's medical insurance program for children.

Healthy Start – school based health services established in seven locations countywide.

HIPAA – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (Federal).

HOPE - Helping Others in Parenting Environments is a program of intensive in-home services available to foster home and extended family home placements. The providers are CALM and Santa Maria Valley Youth and Family Center.

I

IAPC – Inter Agency Policy Council.

IDT – Information and Data Team – SBC-DSS committee formed to turn data into useful information for workers, supervisors and managers.

ILP - Independent Living Program is a program which supports foster youth toward self-sufficiency. It is managed by CWS and contracted out to Community Action Commission.

J

Juvenile Court "Brown Bag"- is a regular meeting convened by the Juvenile Court judges to facilitate better collaboration between judges, attorneys, CWS, and Probation.

K

KIDS Annual Report and Scorecard – contains performance statistics and measures for children in Santa Barbara County for various agencies from DSS, Probation, Public Health, Health Care, census data, and others.

KIDS Network - Kids Interagency Delivery System is a network of children service agencies sponsored by the Board of Supervisors and DSS.

Kin-Gap – Kinship Guardian Assistance Payment.

L

La Morada - is a certified facility used for the THPP-Plus program. *(See below)*

Life Skills Educator/Mentor Services - is a program developed to support and educate parents who are raising children to create a home environment that is safe, healthy, and fosters the child's age appropriate development. CWS families who are at risk of having their children removed or who have had their children removed due to neglect can receive these services.

Linkages - is an intra-agency partnership to better facilitate service delivery and case planning between CWS and Cal WORKS. Common families are identified and documented in a referral.

M

MHAT – Mental Health Assessment Team (SB County) – provides emergent concern and immediate response to assess the mental health status of families in crisis.

MHSA – Mental Health Services Act.

MISC - Multi Agency Integrated System of Care is Santa Barbara County's Children's System of Care, collaboration between Mental Health, DSS, Probation, and Public Health, as well as CBOs that include CAC, CALM, and Santa Maria Valley Youth and Family Center.

MISC Network Providers - ADMHS contracts with medical, mental health and substance abuse treatment providers in the County to provide services to MISC clients.

N

Noah's Anchorage – YMCA Youth Crisis Center.

NREFM- Nonrelated Extended Family Member - a caregiver who has an established familial or mentoring relationship with the child.

O

OP - Short for Office Professional; a member of support staff working with staff in a clerical capacity.

P

PA - Short for Probation Assistant; a member of the support staff working on a case in a paraprofessional capacity.

PARP – Parent's and Reading Partners.

Permanency Unit - is the Santa Barbara County CWS unit that provides services to children in out of home placement with the goal of achieving family based permanency. It includes children who are in adoptive planning.

PO/DPO/DPO Sr. - Short for Probation Officer, Deputy Probation Officer, or Deputy Probation Officer Senior; provide direct case work service.

PP-Permanency Placement Services is the term used by CWS for services that are designed to provide an alternate permanent family for children who cannot safely remain home and who are unlikely to ever return home.

PRC - Placement Review Committee is a multi disciplinary team type of meeting held every week which involves Probation staff, mental health representatives, education representatives, and Child Welfare services focused on discussing Probation cases and whether they are appropriate for consideration of removal from the home for a court recommendation resulting in extra parental placement.

PRIDE - Parents' Resources Information Development Education is a training curriculum provided by Santa Barbara City College and Allan Hancock College to enhance foster parent training for relatives and non-relatives.

PRO-292/Yellow Sheet - Probation department form used to open and/or close a bed for a Probation placement case.

Promotoras –are effective disseminators of information, and act as the bridge between governmental and non-governmental systems and the communities they serve..

Provider Network ACCESS - is the function, provided by ADMHS, whereby social workers request services for CWS cases from an approved Provider Network.

PSA-Placement Search Assistant provides CWS support by locating available and appropriate foster or group home placements for children.

PSSF – Promoting Safe and Stable Families (Federal).

R

RAW-Relative Approval Worker is a specialized CWS worker that performs the approvals for the placement of children in relative and non-related extended family homes.

Regional Training Academy - (or Training Academy) is the regional provider for CWS Training.

Resource Family - is a foster family, (relative or non-relative).

S

SAFTY – The 24/7 mobile crisis response to children with complex emotional and behavioral needs.

SARB – School Attendance Review Board.

SART – Sexual Assault Response Team is a County-CBO collaboration between DSS, Law Enforcement, District Attorney, Health Care Services, and CALM to provide coordinated investigation of sexual assault.

SB163 (DSS) - is a collaboration of CWS, Probation, ADMHS, parent partners, and CBOs whose focus is to reduce the number of children placed in high level group homes in and out of Santa Barbara County by providing creative, flexible services and supports to youth and their families.

SB 163 (PROB) - Intensive, wraparound services utilized to return a minor home from placement or prevent a minor from going to placement; services focus on engaging the entire family in rehabilitation and changes in thinking to maintain stability in the home.

SCI – Special Care Increment.

SDM - Structured Decision Making is a tool utilized by CWS staff to help them in making critical case assessments and decisions in order to minimize the trauma of child maltreatment and to prevent its recurrence.

Shelter Services for Women - is a local CBO providing services to victims of domestic violence.

SMVYFC -Santa Maria Valley Youth and Family Center is a CBO providing services to children and families in North County (Santa Maria, Guadalupe, Casmalia, Cuyama, New Cuyama) including therapy and parenting classes.

SOC - System of Care Unit is the Santa Barbara County CWS unit which provides services to high-risk youth and their families. The unit features pooling of resources and staff, utilizing their input and expertise of the collaborating agencies: CWS, ADMHS, Probation, and Public Health.

Sojourn Services - is a CBO that delivers in home services to lessen the risk of child abuse and neglect. Services include: Early Intervention and Child's Path. Early Intervention services help the families understand and enhance the child's development. A child's Path focuses on parent-child interactions and emotional and social growth.

SPO - Short for Supervising Probation Officer; equivalent to the role of first line supervisor.

STOP – Supportive Therapeutic Options Program.

T

T's & C's - A minor's terms and conditions of probation; a case specific set of rules.

TAPP – Teen Age Parenting Program.

TAY – Transition Age Youth.

TBS - Therapeutic Behavioral Services is a mental health service available to Medi-Cal eligible youth under 21 years of age who have serious emotional problems.

Therapeutic Justice Advisory Council – is an interagency policy level council formed to promote and advance alternate court models such as Mental Health Treatment Court and Teen Drug Court.

TDM - Team Decision Making meetings where CWS concerns, family strengths, and resources supports are identified and discussed between CWS, birth families, service providers, youth, and natural family supports. TDMS are used:

TFC - Therapeutic Foster Care is a CWS, CALM, and SMVYFC collaboration to enhance resource, training and support for resource parents who care for children with serious behavioral and emotional needs.

THPP- Transitional Housing Placement Program is a Community Care licensed placement opportunity for youth ages 16-18 that are currently living in a foster care placement. The goal of the program is to provide participants safe living environments while helping them learn and practice life skills in order to achieve self-sufficiency.

THPP-Plus - is a certified placement opportunity for youth ages 19-24, who have emancipated from the foster care system. The program provides the greatest amount of freedom possible in order to prepare the participants for self-sufficiency.

TPR – Termination of Parental Rights.

Tri-Counties Regional Center - is a contract agency with the State of California that provides supports and services for children and adults with developmental disabilities living in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties.

U

UCB Performance Indicators – are done by UC Berkeley, Center for Social Services Research.

UCSB Evaluations – U. C. Santa Barbara provides research support and analysis for DSS and Probation, and Mental health.

V

VAFB – Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Visitation Specialist - is a contracted service which provides transportation and/or supervision of visitations between children in placement and their families.

VOP/§777 - Violation of Probation pursuant to §777 W&IC filed with the court outlining how a 602 WIC ward of the court has failed to follow the terms and conditions of probation ordered by the court.

W

W& IC - The Welfare and Institutions Code

Ward/§602 - A minor who is on formal Probation pursuant to §602 W&IC.

WEB - Welcome Every Baby is a county wide home visitation program serving all newborn children through age 9 months.

WIB – Workforce Investment Board.