



CWS

Stakeholders Group

Summary of CWS Stakeholders Conceptual Framework

Year Two Report

February 2003



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Gray Davis, Governor

Health and Human Services Agency
Grantland Johnson, Secretary

Department of Social Services
Rita Saenz, Director

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



Dear Californians:

In 2000 Governor Davis asked me, as Director of the California Department of Social Services, to appoint a culturally diverse group of key child welfare stakeholders to examine the current child welfare system and make recommendations on how to improve it.

The Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group has grown from its original membership of sixty individuals, representing a rich array of interests, to hundreds of other individuals also representing the spectrum of child welfare stakeholders throughout the State. The following document represents the collective knowledge, experience, and commitment of all these stakeholders. Their recommendations advance a spectrum of approaches including collaboration across formal and informal support systems, prevention and early intervention services, non-adversarial engagement of families, fairness and equity infused into all decision points, assessment as the foundation for service plans, and accountability for outcomes.

I will seriously consider these recommendations as a basis for the work ahead with the counties and federal government. I will move with a sense of urgency and will continue to actively engage, as is suggested in the recommendations, with our community partners including foundations. And, I will strive to ensure that individual California citizens who want to serve children will also be engaged and acknowledged.

It is with great pride and appreciation that I accept these Recommendations for a CWS Redesign and urge all child welfare stakeholders to help in these efforts to improve the lives of abused and neglected children. Working together to implement these recommendations will ensure that children in the CWS system can now have the same chance at the American Dream as our own children because – they are our children!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rita Saenz".

RITA SAENZ
Director



CWS
Stakeholders Group

*Summary of
CWS Stakeholders
Conceptual Framework*

Year Two Report

February 2003

February 15, 2003

Rita Saenz, Director
California Department of Social Services
744 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Director Saenz:

It is with great pleasure that the CWS Stakeholders Group presents for your consideration the 30 recommendations to be utilized in the redesign of child welfare. These recommendations represent the second year report of the CWS Stakeholders Group work and synthesize the detailed and expansive analysis completed in the **CWS Redesign: Conceptual Framework** report in May 2002. This report summarizes these recommendations that present an integrated approach to the practice elements and systems within the child welfare continuum.

The CWS Stakeholders laid the foundational work in the development of assumptions, a vision, a mission and guiding values in Year One. In Year Two the work moved to creating the conceptual framework with detailed strategies, and in the Third, and final Year, the CWS Stakeholders Group has moved from strategies and recommendations to implementation plans. The plans will be based upon the foundational assumptions and the Year Two conceptual work. They provide the flexibility required in a state as geographically immense and diverse as California.

Our sincere thanks to you and Governor Davis for the awesome opportunity we have had to participate in this historic work to create a better life for California's children and families.

CWS STAKEHOLDERS GROUP
(members listed on inside front cover)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a new vision for the Child Welfare Services program in California, a vision of every child living in a safe, stable, permanent home, nurtured by healthy families and strong communities. California's current Child Welfare Services program has evolved over the years, benefiting most of the abused and neglected children and their families who are served. These positive outcomes are a tribute to the dedicated Social Workers and county administrators who are informed by:



- What we know about human development and capacity to change behaviors;
- Findings from California's renowned child welfare research institutions;
- Leadership in establishing cutting edge reforms in social services;
- Legislative reforms to deal with systemic problems, one at a time; and
- Significant funding increases under the Governor Davis Administration.

These factors alone will not result in fully realizing California's vision for Child Welfare Services so that everyone benefits. For the children and families served, for the professionals involved with Child Welfare Services and for this Administration, one child left in the home of parents who are not able to nurture is one child too many. One child who languishes in foster care without a permanent home is one child too many.

Formation of the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group

For this reason, Governor Gray Davis initiated the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group in July 2000 and charged them with creating and sustaining a flexible system, comprised of public and private partnerships, that provides a comprehensive system of support for families and communities to ensure the well-being of every child. Due to the complexity of the task ahead, the Stakeholders Group was given three years to complete its work. It consists of 60 individuals representing all aspects of the child welfare community and has sparked unprecedented interest and support across multiple sectors. Through a proactive examination of the Child Welfare Services program within its community context, the Child Welfare Services Redesign proposed by the Stakeholders Group seeks to affect that change throughout California with fairness, equity and accountability for outcomes.

Progress of the Stakeholders Group to date and third year activities

During the first two years, the Stakeholders Group members worked diligently, undertaking intensive research and consulting with lay and professional experts to explore the underlying assumptions of the current child welfare services system and establish a new set of principles as the foundation for the future of the program. They identified current practices that should be incorporated into the new way of doing business and established a system for testing promising practices to ensure that they are effective in achieving desired outcomes for children and families. The group's preliminary proposals are published in a 230-page report entitled

Child Welfare Services Redesign: Conceptual Framework (May 2002). This document summarizes and integrates the information from that report and includes 30 recommendations for moving toward a new direction for California's Child Welfare Services program in the twenty-first century.

In its third and final year of work the Stakeholders Group is preparing a detailed plan to implement the conceptual framework that will be presented to the Director of the California Department of Social Services, Rita Saenz, in June 2003. Consistent with the model of practice proposed in this framework, the Stakeholders Group has expanded participation in the crafting of the implementation plan by joining with many more child welfare stakeholders in counties throughout the state in regional working sessions. The county child welfare administrators were partners in this effort and were instrumental in gaining participation from the many diverse players who are committed to achieving successful reform.

Key issues in Child Welfare Services

California is at a critical juncture to demonstrate success in providing Child Welfare Services. The state's foster care caseload represents about 20 percent of the nation's total. For years consistently high numbers of child abuse reports have been challenging the capacity of the system to respond effectively. The social, emotional and developmental cost to the children served is profound. Many cases involve children under five years of age, with African-American children substantially over-represented. For many of the children who are in the child welfare system their parents are burdened with substance abuse, domestic violence or mental health problems, creating an environment of chronic neglect for their children. California is not alone—nearly every state is facing similar trends – and is joining states such as Illinois and New York to restructure the Child Welfare Services Program.

What has already been done to improve Child Welfare Services

Best practices: California's child welfare agencies, other service providers and researchers have invested countless hours of attention, study and innovation to meet the challenges before them. Many counties have developed and implemented models of practice that have resulted in successful outcomes for children and families, and these models will be retained in the recommended Redesign. Some examples are:

- Family-to-Family – foster parents are recruited from the children's own neighborhood so that they can stay in the same school, keep their friends and visit their birth parents as appropriate to a plan for reunification.
- Wraparound – children with severe mental health problems are able to remain in the home of their birth or foster parents, supported by an intensive array of services, rather than being placed in residential treatment.
- Integration with CalWORKs –families who are recipients of both CalWORKs and Child Welfare Services receive coordinated services to leverage maximum effectiveness from each program.

- Family Resource Centers – families who need help understanding the developmental needs of their children receive guidance and support in a community setting.
- Public Health Nurse Visitation – parents who need instruction on how to care for their young children receive help in their homes from public health nurses.

Legislative reform: During the 1999–2000 and the 2001–2002 legislative sessions over 100 bills addressing child welfare issues were passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor. Some highlights of these improvements include:

- Emphasizing that siblings should be placed together.
- Ensuring the rights of foster children to safe, secure and stable living arrangements.
- Giving opportunities to youth who emancipate from foster care to have emotional and financial security.
- Improving the capacity of the child welfare workforce to serve children and families.
- Shifting to accountability for outcomes rather than adherence to regulatory processes.

These legislative reforms built on the following reforms of the 1997–1998 legislative session:

- Bringing California into compliance with the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.
- Instituting “concurrent planning” for children entering foster care so that if the goal of reunification with their birth parents is not achieved, their foster parents will be able to adopt them.
- Assisting relatives to become guardians of foster children by providing financial aid and support services.
- Establishing a transitional housing program for youth who emancipate from foster care.
- Creating the Office of the Ombudsman for Foster Care.
- Increased funding: In recognition of the fact that the Child Welfare Services program has historically been under-funded, Governor Davis increased the total funding by \$429.5 million, a 28 percent increase over the past four years. This includes funding to keep pace with caseload and cost increases, but also includes a substantial amount of funds to reduce caseloads and improve services. However, caseloads continue to remain demandingly high and complex in nature.

In addition to the advances described above, this Administration formed the Stakeholders Group to provide for a unified, systematic, statewide effort to transform the entire program toward achieving more efficient and effective results.

A Shift in Thinking

The Stakeholders Group identified major shifts in assumptions from the old system to the new that underpin the Redesign philosophy. These shifts in thinking include:

THE CURRENT SYSTEM...	THE REDESIGNED SYSTEM...
...Is based on intervention, which is generally punitive and blames parents; this approach may hold unintended negative consequences for child and family well being.	...Balances parental accountability, individualized assessment of need and engagement of families to maximize safety, permanence and well-being of children and families.
...Experiences capacity limitations of the current service delivery system, resulting in a 92% closure rate at intake followed by repeat referrals of the same families.	...Expands capacity to provide a comprehensive system of services and supports to adequately address unique needs of children and families the first time they are referred to Child Welfare Services.
...Makes child protection the sole responsibility of Child Welfare Services.	...Relies on partnerships between the community and Child Welfare Services to ensure child protection and successful outcomes.
...Is restricted by funding mechanisms which are tied to specific strategies, such as placement of a child in foster care, rather than supporting the most effective service response for each child and family served.	...Allows flexible funding to serve children and families based on what works best for them to reach positive outcomes.
...Has limited means to evaluate what works best in order to launch and sustain effective practices and promising research findings on a statewide scale.	...Implements a systematic means to evaluate, launch and sustain effective practices and research findings on a statewide scale.

With these assumptions in mind, the Stakeholders Group set out to create the new vision for child welfare in California. They began with the needs of children and families, and then challenged themselves to design creative, flexible strategies that meet those needs, regardless of how different that model was from the way things have always been done. In addition, they believe that no single organization can design and deliver services in isolation from the communities in which clients reside. Reaching out to and involving communities and forming partnerships with individuals and organizations that can help deliver effective services and support families long-term is the key to sustainable results.

The Stakeholders Group believes that responsibility to children and families requires interventions that are evidence based and sufficiently tested to demonstrate efficacy. Evidence-based means interventions are supported by research and child welfare professionals are sufficiently trained to competently put the interventions into practice. Once an innovative program

is operational, willingness to track results and invite scrutiny to share learning and make needed improvements is essential. Likewise, any efforts to bring successful innovations to scale statewide cannot be mired in bureaucracy. More important than uniformity of method and means, is a willingness to share knowledge, maintain a leading edge, reward innovation and continually learn from each other to achieve the best outcomes possible for children and families.

A Focus on Results

In addition to a shift in thinking, the Stakeholders Group also articulated results they want to see happen in California that will demonstrate the Redesign's success. These are:

- All children at risk of being harmed by abuse or neglect are protected.
- Children and families at risk of child abuse and neglect receive the services they need when they need them.
- More families able to safely and consistently care for their children as a result of their involvement with Child Welfare Services and its service partners.
- Fewer and less severe reports and incidents of child maltreatment.
- Families with children in similar situations are afforded equal support to attain safety, permanence and well being regardless of demographic characteristics.
- Children who cannot be cared for safely and consistently by their parents gain permanent families through adoption or guardianship in greater numbers and more quickly.
- Communities are more involved in protecting children and strengthening families.
- More youth who have been served by the child welfare system experience successful transitions to adulthood and have a sense of emotional permanence with at least one surrogate parent.

Fairness and Equity at the Core

In recognition of the pivotal role fairness and equity have in any reform of the current system, the Stakeholders Group developed a definition to guide all Redesign recommendations. This principle provides practitioners and decision makers with a framework for the new system that will have fairness and equity at its core. This principle reads:

A fair child welfare system is organized and implemented to provide a supportive institutional response in which each family is offered needed services, taking into account the individual's experience and cultural background, to effectively modify individual behaviors as well as remedy systemic and community problems that negatively affect a child's wellbeing.

The Redesign recommended by the Stakeholders Group requires deeper knowledge of practice, sharper tools for the task, stronger partnerships to impact results and broader resources to ensure the safety, permanence and well-being of every child and family in California. The Redesign infrastructure addresses the full spectrum of involvement by the Child Welfare

Services program in the lives of children and families. The objectives of child welfare services interventions are to:



- **prevent** child abuse and neglect,
- **preserve** and strengthen families,
- **restore** the capacity of families to care for their children,
- **rebuild** alternate families for children and
- **prepare** youth to become self-sufficient adults.

Each of these six objectives is achieved in the context of supportive relationships provided by the human resources that will make the Redesign happen. It is within these domains that the 30 new recommendations listed here and described in detail within this report are being proposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective #1: Partner to PREVENT Child Abuse and Neglect

The Stakeholders Group has concluded that prevention of child abuse and support of families is a cost-effective strategy to protect and nurture children and maximize the quality of life for California's residents. The practice of prevention is woven into all aspects of the Redesign to build a proactive system that seeks to avert tragedy before it occurs. The Redesign report recommends the following prevention strategies:

1. Formalize the role of Child Welfare Services and partner agencies in prevention across the continuum of services and supports at the state, local and neighborhood levels.
2. Establish a collaborative prevention model based on public-private partnerships at the state, local and neighborhood levels with shared investment in outcomes and accountability.
3. Engage community residents, especially parents and other caregivers, in all partnership and prevention activities.
4. Utilize a strength-based, universal approach to prevention that supports all families.
5. Secure support for a collaborative prevention strategy from legislative and executive branches of State and local government and the general public.
6. Develop dedicated, sustained funding that supports a comprehensive range of prevention strategies.

Objective #2: Act Early to PRESERVE and Strengthen Families

The Stakeholders Group has focused on how to build a system of early intervention in California communities. The system requires engagement of families to strengthen and preserve their capacity to protect and nurture their children. While the overriding goal remains child safety, changing the intake and response processes of the Child Welfare Services program includes the following strategies:

7. Make child protection and building strong families a shared community responsibility.
8. Empower child welfare staff to offer safety and change oriented services based on family need and level of risk, rather than waiting for proof that maltreatment has occurred.
9. Establish a statewide safety assessment approach to evaluate and manage child safety. Ensure that the approach is universally and consistently applied to all families brought to the attention of Child Welfare Services.
10. Intervene early with vulnerable populations using a comprehensive system of services and supports in partnership with community resources.

Objective #3: Broaden Efforts to RESTORE Family Capacity

Federal law requires that reasonable efforts be made to restore the capacity of birth parents to resume their parental responsibilities. Unfortunately, some situations still will require removal of children from their birth parents' care on either a temporary or permanent basis. When this occurs, the Stakeholders Group envisions a better way for Child Welfare Services to build parental capacity and strengthening natural, meaningful connections between children and their birth family systems. The Stakeholders Group recommends the following strategies:

11. Expand safety assessment and planning to quickly reunify children with their families.
12. Align case plans and related interventions with assessment results using a standardized approach to assessment.
13. Engage birth parents (using specially designed skills) to support the ongoing care of their children and to guarantee the child's continuity of care by family members.
14. Provide sufficient supports and services before *and* after children are returned home to restore autonomy and family bonds temporarily lost during the child's time in care.

Objective #4: Strengthen Alternatives to REBUILD Permanent Families for Children

The Stakeholders Group envisions a redesigned system where children who cannot be cared for by their parents gain permanent families through adoption or guardianship in greater numbers and more quickly. The preferred result for the children served is to remain or return home safely and permanently. However, for many children and families, circumstances preclude this possibility. The Stakeholders Group calls for a renewed commitment to permanence for every child entering out-of-home care using the following strategies:

15. Develop a comprehensive, integrated model of adoption and guardianship practice.
16. Establish a statewide system of reporting and apply the research that addresses children of color experiencing higher rates of entry and longer lengths of stay in out-of-home care.
17. Establish statewide, standard protocols for assessment of children's safety and parents' capacity to protect their children.
18. Develop a model of kinship care practice that recognizes and supports the unique differences inherent in rebuilding permanent families for children with extended family members.
19. Assure sufficient, competent and supported foster family resources.

Objective #5: Systematically PREPARE Youth for Success in Adulthood

One way to determine the efficacy of the Child Welfare Services system is to ask, “How well have youth who have ‘aged out’ of the system fared without gaining a permanent family?” This focus on preparation for adulthood illustrates how the intervention efforts are brought back full circle to prevention. Youth who exit the system positioned for success in their own lives will be much less likely to repeat the pattern of maltreatment with their own children and more likely to become responsible parents themselves. The strategies recommended by Stakeholders Group for this purpose are:

20. Develop a comprehensive, integrated and developmentally staged model of transition planning and services.
21. Train and support caregivers to prepare youth for adult success.
22. Expand community options for safe, affordable housing for youth exiting foster care to live independently.

Objective #6: AFFECT CHANGE through an Excellence in Workforce

The Stakeholders Group asserts that because supporting relationships clearly are the primary mechanism of change for clients in child welfare, the Child Welfare Services workforce needs to be valued, recognized, supported. This workforce is broadly defined to include personnel of county child welfare agencies, the California Department of Social Services and collaborative partners essential to child welfare operations, such as community-based agencies, law enforcement, foster parents and juvenile court personnel. Strategies to promote workforce development are:

23. Engage Counties in an organizational change process that results in a high-capacity, competent and satisfied Child Welfare Services workforce able to perform the essential functions of a new child welfare system.
24. Prepare the Child Welfare Services workforce for systems changes.
25. Build and maintain the capacity of the Child Welfare Services workforce.
26. Support manageable workloads.
27. Build, maintain and reward skills and competencies demonstrated by the Child Welfare Services workforce.
28. Conduct evaluation and research on the effectiveness of efforts to develop the Child Welfare Services workforce.
29. Optimize working environments to achieve positive client outcomes.
30. Develop an evidence-based cycle and web-based clearinghouse to identify and evaluate promising practices for both CWS/social work practice approaches and interventions.

At the very time when there are fewer resources, greater economic challenges and no shortage of public policy demands across California, it may seem extravagant to be suggesting proactive change to improve the child welfare services system. However, this is the very essence of the challenge ahead. Public and private sectors must unite and boldly depart from the reactive, crisis-oriented posture of the past, toward making a proactive, sustainable investment in the future of California’s children and families.

INTRODUCTION

For the past two years, the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group has dedicated time, energy and passionate commitment to the challenging task placed before them in 2000 by Governor Gray Davis. That charge was to convene a group of individuals from inside and outside the child welfare system to examine the current realities in California and recommend comprehensive, integrated system changes to improve outcomes for children and families. This group has worked diligently. It has undertaken intensive research and consulting with experts in the field, to explore the underlying assumptions of the current system and to determine a new direction for California's child welfare services system in the 21st Century. By the time they complete their task in June 2003, the efforts of the CWS Stakeholders' Group will have spanned three years. The result of the first two years was presented at the CWS Stakeholders Summit in May 2002 and published in a 230-page report entitled, *CWS Redesign: Conceptual Framework*. Key stakeholder groups represented in the process during the last two years, such as the California Welfare Directors Association, California Juvenile Courts, labor unions representing child welfare professionals throughout the State, foster parents, youth, community-based service providers and others have renewed their commitment to continue their involvement in Year 3.

The purpose of this document is to summarize and integrate information in the Conceptual Framework full report. This abbreviated version begins with a summary of the critical concerns facing the current system through a case example and statistical facts, including the value of addressing these challenges now. Next, it presents an integrated picture of how the pieces of the CWS Redesign (referred to as the "Redesign") fit into an integrated whole. Thirty specific recommendations to affect change are described. Finally, returning to the same case example presented in the beginning, it depicts what success might look like for one family, while broader indicators of success are presented that fit the larger population served by CWS. The document concludes with an explanation of the next steps in the process to make the Redesign a reality.

Page numbers are referenced throughout many sections of the document. These refer to corresponding pages within the *Conceptual Framework* report where more detail about the content can be found.

October 2002 marked the start of the remaining year of the Stakeholders' three-year assignment. The focus of Year 3 is to develop a comprehensive, integrated implementation plan to move the Redesign from the conceptual to the actual. Continuing to guide the work ahead is the vision of the CWS Stakeholders, which is to ensure that:

Every child in California will live in a safe, stable, permanent home, nurtured by healthy families and strong communities.

The CWS Stakeholders Group and the California Department of Social Services acknowledge that implementation of this challenging goal will not be easy and will take time. However, the cost of doing nothing is far too high for California's children and our future.



WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The public Child Welfare Services system in California is facing unprecedented challenges. The nature of this current reality is reflected in the story of every child and family who encounters CWS. The numbers tell the tale on a broader scale—one that is uncertain to improve any time soon. Consider the story below that gives voice to one family’s multi-generational involvement with CWS.

Sylvia’s Story: Reflections on the Current System

Angela is sick and tired—literally. She is standing on the street outside her mother’s small house with a few bags and her three children. They haven’t eaten since this morning, when Angela failed to come up with the rent for their apartment and they were evicted. She has been reassessing their options all day. “Stay here,” she says to the boys. They are 10 and 12; her daughter Sylvia is 8. She takes Sylvia by the hand and goes to knock on her mother’s door.

When it opens, her mother’s face is gray. She has spent most of her life scrubbing other people’s homes and her health is fragile. Still, Angela knows she won’t turn her granddaughter away; she never has.

“I promise I’ll be back for her soon,” Angela says.

Her mother calls out warmly to her grandsons waiting on the curb and murmurs to Sylvia, “You know I would take them too if I could.”

The boys wave back, knowing the routine all too well. This isn’t the first time they’ve been homeless.

“You look bad,” Angela says.

“You look worse,” her mother says coolly, and Angela leaves.

That night she and the boys sleep on the gritty floor of a friend’s house. It pains her; this is not what she wants for them. She has struggled to keep her children in school so they can have a better future. She herself dropped out, too young to see more than drudgery in her mother’s life, drawn to the promise of making quick money on the street. Her first child was born when she was 17 and the father abandoned Angela as soon as he learned about her pregnancy. Now she has a family and a drug habit to feed. In the morning, before her sons wake up, Angela slips out of the house. Two days later, when she hasn’t returned, her friend calls CWS.

Julio, the caseworker, has seen Angela’s children several times before when she skated close to the edge and was reported. He knows they are bright and resilient, and it frustrates him that he wasn’t able to help them much earlier, when he could

see this day coming. But his job wasn't prevention or change-oriented support; it was strictly to prove or disprove allegations of neglect or abuse and perhaps provide short-term help. Now he's been informed that Angela's in jail. She will serve a 12-year sentence for dealing. Her sons will go into separate foster homes, and within a year, when Angela's mother dies, the youngest child, Sylvia, will also enter the system. For all three children, who love their mother passionately, it will be the equivalent of moving to a foreign country. As they each move through a series of homes and caseworkers, they will completely lose touch with one another.

Sylvia is devastated by her losses—never knowing her father, losing her grandmother and rarely seeing her mother or brothers. She can tell that her foster family doesn't want to help her connect her with her mom, who scares them, so she immediately starts a pattern of behavior that will last through 10 foster homes, four group homes and 28 caseworkers. She runs away, she skips school, she shoplifts—anything that will bring her emotionally closer to her mother. In the midst of this turmoil, no one teaches her practical life skills. By the time she is 15, Sylvia regards adult rules with deep cynicism, and she believes the only way she can start her life over is to create her own family. She gets pregnant and drops out of high school. At 18, with a trail of broken relationships behind her and no family ties, she's on the street with a dealer boyfriend and an infant daughter.

When she brings the baby in for immunizations at the public health hospital, the R.N. notices that mother and daughter are rail thin. The baby has a severe diaper rash. As Sylvia explains everything away, feeling nervous and defensive, she starts remembering her mother making exactly the same kinds of excuses. The R.N. calls CWS to see if any family support services are available, but the agency doesn't have community partnerships in place. It will be at least 10 days before CWS can respond to an allegation of neglect, and by then Sylvia will have vanished back onto the streets. She's not listening to the R.N. anyway. She feels ill. It's just hit her: she's turning into her mother.

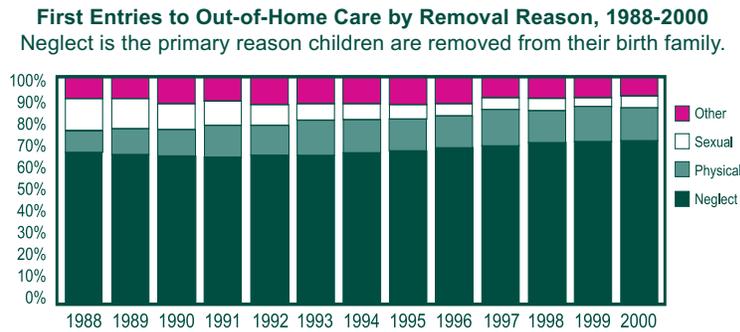
California Statistics

Many of the facts in Sylvia's story are common across a large portion of children and families who encounter California's Child Welfare Services system. Statistics on the growth of neglect as the primary reason for CWS intervention, characteristics of the population in need of services and the ability of the system to respond to those needs are highlighted below.

Neglect is the most common circumstance

Since 1980, the number of reports of alleged child abuse or neglect and the number of children in out-of-home care in California has increased steadily (Department of Finance, 1996; Needell et al., 2000). In fact, the most common reason that children and families become involved with CWS is because of neglect. The underlying causes of

neglect are complex and typically include substance abuse and mental health issues. In 2000, more than half (53%) of all substantiated allegations were due to neglect and the bulk of these cases (46%) consisted of children 5 years of age or younger (California Children Services Archive, 2000). Neglect also is the most common reason for a child to be removed from his or her home and placed in out-of-home care. Between 1988 and 2000, a consistently large proportion (65-70%) of first time entries into care were for reasons of neglect. According to the Center for Social Services Research (2000), 77% of children in foster care were removed from the home for neglect-related reasons. The complexity of factors related to neglect requires resources from multiple systems. Unfortunately, most services available currently through CWS are not designed to specifically address this particular family condition and improve the parent's protective capacity. This means families and children continue this pattern until more dire circumstances are created, indicating the need for intervention.



Characteristics of the population in need of services

African-American and Native American children are much more likely to be brought to the attention of CWS and also are more likely to be placed in out-of-home care. This is most pronounced for African-American children. Black children made up only 7% of California's child population in 2001, but accounted for 34% of those in care on July 1, 2001. By contrast, Hispanic children made up 43% of the State's child population, yet accounted for 34% of those in care during the same period. The increase in the overall number of children in foster care and the

disproportionate number of African-American children in care reflect two of the many challenges facing the child welfare services system today.



Other challenges are marked by parents of children in the child welfare system having high rates of domestic violence (Findlater & Kelly, 1999; Mills, 2000), mental health problems (Kotch et al., 1995) and substance abuse (Chaffin, Kelleher & Hollenberg, 1996). In one study of infants placed in foster care in California (Frame, Berrick & Brodowski, 2000), 84% of mothers had significant substance abuse problems, 68% had recent criminal records, 50% were victims of domestic violence and about 40% had been abused and neglected as children themselves. Often these characteristics co-exist in the same individuals and family systems. Furthermore, almost 66% of the mothers had some identified mental health problem, most often depression, many had educational disabilities, including learning disabilities and more than 33% were either homeless or living in precarious housing circumstances.

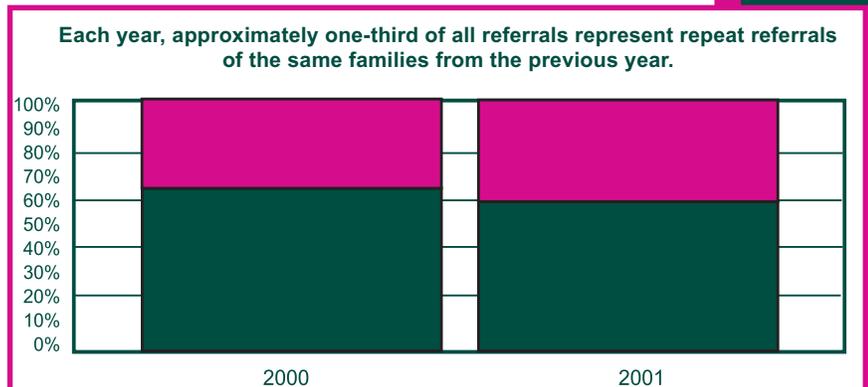
Nexus of substance abuse and child maltreatment

Most CWS personnel estimate that substance abuse is a significant factor in approximately 80% of child maltreatment cases. The Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs reports that 59% of women in prenatal substance abuse treatment have an active child welfare case. Other studies indicate that as much as 66% of child fatalities involve parents or caretakers who abuse alcohol and other drugs.

Ability of the system to respond

The most compelling reason for the Redesign is that the current allegation-based system does not provide or fund early intervention with families to protect children from repeated occurrences of child maltreatment. Each year approximately 33% of all referrals represent re-referrals of the same families from the previous year. Another important finding is that whether maltreatment is substantiated or not, very

few children receive more than crisis response services from child welfare agencies. In recent years, 92% of referrals have not received safety or change-oriented services, such as an in-home safety plan, family counseling, family support or other therapeutic interventions. Many of these children—who have, in fact, experienced abuse or neglect and who could have benefited from services—often do not qualify for assistance because the threshold for public agencies to act is set so high. In addition, significant variability exists across counties regarding the proportion of child abuse reports that are substantiated and the proportion of children receiving services. Differences may be due to a number of factors including county philosophy and policy, system capacity or individual worker discretion.



Collaboration among professionals who serve maltreated children is very difficult to achieve. This is due, in part, to these children often being involved in multiple service systems—each with an independent scope of authority and accountability—resulting in a fragmentation of responsibility.

The human resources of California's child welfare system also hinder its ability to respond. A range of challenges faces the CWS workforce. The supply of candidates is insufficient to fill the demand for child welfare positions. California schools of social work produce about 1,900 graduates annually, falling considerably short of the demand for 3,400 immediate social worker vacancies in the 10 largest county welfare offices in the State. The supply also is affected by stiff competition for the social worker skill set in demand across all human service sectors, a negative public image coloring the child welfare profession and inadequate incentives to attract and keep personnel.

Another major challenge relates to demands on workers' time. Workers report, and rigorous research shows, that high caseloads and shifting workload duties and responsibilities make it very difficult to engage families, build relationships and collaborate effectively with community partner agencies—all critical elements to the Redesign's core means of affecting change through supportive relationships.

These and other conditions result in a high turnover rate in the child welfare profession. Some California counties report turnover rates as high as 40% for social workers having less than two years experience on the job. Among the 15 smallest county child welfare agencies, turnover is as high as 50%. Without a solid plan for recruiting and retaining a competent workforce, the current conditions will continue.

WHY MEET THIS CHALLENGE?

Without a doubt, California's child welfare community has invested countless hours of attention, study and innovation to meet the challenges described above in a myriad of ways. Unfortunately, no systematic effort exists at the statewide level to harness these good ideas in order to transform the entire system toward achieving more productive, efficient and effective results.

Evaluating California's performance solely by comparison to the national standards presents a picture that is both incomplete and inaccurate. California has achieved an impressive array of accomplishments in the field of child welfare services. The California Adoptions Initiative won the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2001 Adoption Excellence Award by achieving a 140% increase in the annual rate of adoption for foster children who could not safely return to their birth parents. To date, the State has captured more than \$17.6 million in federal Adoption Incentive Funds. Furthermore, implementation of the successful Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) program has allowed thousands of children to exit foster care to the homes of relatives. Major system enhancements have been implemented through best practice innovations such as wraparound services, Family-to-Family Initiatives, Permanency Planning Mediation, Structured Applicant Family Evaluation (SAFE) and family group decision making, to highlight just a few. As a result, children today are better supported in their birth families or extended families. Fewer children are in foster care than would have been the case without these innovations and those who do come into care are exited to permanency in higher numbers. Yet, the Stakeholders acknowledge that there is still much more to be done

California is in a unique position to launch an unprecedented transformation of its child welfare services system. This state is home to some of the most renowned child welfare research institutions in the nation and has demonstrated leadership in establishing flagship initiatives focused on children and families (e.g., First 5 California Children and Families Commission, Children's System of Care, etc.). This climate has fostered an incredible legacy of lessons learned that can shape the changes to the entire system in an evidence-based, outcome-driven, reasoned and systematic way.

The key lessons the Stakeholders have discovered that underpin the philosophy of the Redesign are:

- Intervention based simply on parental blame and punishment does not necessarily make children safer—it holds unintended consequences for child and family well being. It takes a well-timed, supporting relationship, fortified by sufficient safety and change-oriented services matched to the assessed strengths and needs of the family to secure lasting protection.
- In general, creating opportunities to improve families' parenting capacity results in better outcomes than encouraging removal of children from their families.

- The threat of losing one's children is not a sufficient motivator for change; building on family strengths, engaging the family's natural support systems, providing needed services and supports and promoting genuine involvement of the family in decisions affecting their child's safety, permanence and wellbeing are more effective.
- Child protection is too big a task for CWS alone; it takes forging partnerships at the state, local and neighborhood levels to ensure success.
- Children do better when natural connections to their birth family can be preserved, regardless of how permanency ultimately is achieved.

It is with these assumptions and others in mind that the Stakeholders set out to create a new vision for child welfare in California.

These lessons were derived from a detailed examination of the assumptions and beliefs held about all aspects of the Child Welfare Services system, society, practitioners, families and children. An important dimension of promoting change is to encourage the discovery, discussion and consensus of the assumptions and beliefs that drive our actions and decisions. These have informed both the Stakeholders' vision of how the system needs to be constructed and how the new system can best be put into practice. (A full list of the Stakeholders' assumptions can be found on p. 219 of the full report.)

WHAT IS THE NEW VISION FOR CWS?

The CWS Stakeholders Group has a new vision for the entire child welfare system in California, that every child in California will live in a safe, stable, permanent home, nurtured by healthy families and strong communities. While the desired outcomes of Child Welfare Services remain essentially unchanged - to ensure the safety of children, to sustain permanency for children and to promote the well-being of children and families - the resources, methods and renewed commitment for reaching those outcomes are the focus of the vision. The picture that emerges includes a new philosophy, common goals, integrated strategies and enhanced relationships with those we serve, with our communities and within child welfare agencies. In short, the Redesign requires deeper knowledge of our craft, sharper tools for the task, stronger partnerships to impact results and broader resources to ensure the safety, permanence and well-being of every child and family in California.



The Redesign infrastructure addresses the full spectrum of involvement CWS can have in the lives of children and families who may be vulnerable to the risks of child abuse and neglect as a result of family circumstance, parental behavior or environmental conditions. The primary intent of the interventions CWS will provide is to:

- **Prevent** child abuse and neglect before it occurs;
- **Preserve** and strengthen families to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect from happening;
- **Restore** the capacity of families to care for their children after removal;
- **Rebuild** alternate families for children who cannot live with their parents; and
- **Prepare** youth to become self-sufficient adults.

Fairness and Equity at the Core

To ensure fairness and equity remain central, the following values and principles are infused throughout the recommendations:

- Continuously examine our policies, regulations and practices to avoid creating barriers for children and families to achieve positive outcomes.
- Seek to remove systemic or institutional factors that interfere with promoting the best interests of children and families.
- Respect the humanity of our clientele, even when we may not respect the behavior.
- Honor children and families with the belief that they have the capacity, moral courage and other qualities that lead to success.
- Infuse hope in individuals.
- Build in benchmarks and celebrate success.
- Encourage inclusion of families in decision-making about their own lives.

Grounded in Mission & Values

An important set of core beliefs has guided the Stakeholders in their development of the Redesign conceptual framework. The Stakeholders operational mission is:

To create and sustain a flexible system, comprising public and private partnerships, that provides a comprehensive system of support for families and communities to ensure the well-being of every child.

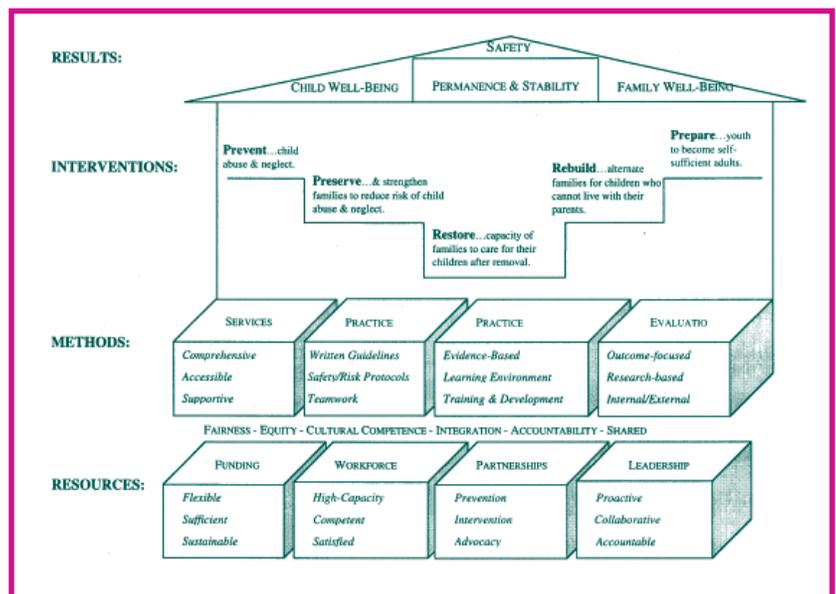
Core values adopted by the Stakeholders are interwoven into each element of California's redesigned—or “recrafted”—system. These values not only define how Stakeholders agreed to relate to one another but also how they envision all participants within the CWS system working together to promote positive outcomes for children and families. The following values are deeply ingrained in all aspects of the Redesign and form the acronym *RECRAFT*:

Responsiveness
Excellence
Caring
Respect
Accountability
Fairness/Equity
Teamwork

Objectives and Recommendations

While the scope of the Redesign is broad, change is aimed at transforming the community context where interventions take place as well as improving what CWS does to ensure positive outcomes for children and families. The following section highlights the key elements of the Redesign by presenting an integrated view of how the system will change. The objectives, rationale, and key recommendations by the Stakeholders for each area of

intervention—prevent, preserve, restore, rebuild and prepare—are explained. Also described are specific resources and methods requiring special attention, such as workforce development and evidence-based practice. Referenced within each of the following segments are the corresponding pages within the full *Conceptual Framework* report where more details can be found.



Objective #1: Partner to PREVENT Child Abuse and Neglect

The CWS Stakeholders Group has concluded that preventing child abuse and supporting families are cost effective strategies to protect and nurture children and maximize the quality of life for California's residents. To this end, the practice of prevention is woven into all aspects of the Redesign to build a proactive system that seeks to avert tragedy before it occurs, rather than intervene with families to prevent further damage after the fact. The Stakeholders' vision is that every community will have a broadly based prevention partnership for families and children encompassing child protection, child development and family support. [pp. 29-35]

WHAT IF...

child abuse prevention were a shared responsibility across all systems and among all citizens who encounter children and families?... And prevention were integrated across the CWS system and the community into all aspects of services and supports?

Rationale for Change



The current role of CWS is narrowly defined to focus primarily on prevention of further recurrence of child abuse and neglect within the population it serves. This approach limits prevention activities to children and families whom CWS has already determined to have suffered maltreatment. While important, such a prevention model is an expensive, reactive attempt to prevent further harm or reduce the severity of the problem

Key Recommendations for Change

The Stakeholders recommend several key strategies to ensure families receive the support, services and opportunities they need to keep their children safe, to prevent maltreatment and to promote child development, responsible parenting and child and family well being.

The Stakeholders vision is a shift away from a service system that is focused on blame, shame and assistance only after major damage has occurred, toward a more responsive, family-engaged, family-supported and community-involved approach

1. Formalize the role of Child Welfare Services and partner agencies in prevention across the continuum of services and supports at the state, local and neighborhood levels. The child welfare system is a large, complex array of programs that involves public and private child-serving agencies, the juvenile courts, law enforcement and community members at large. It is critical for CWS to take a leadership role in prevention along with other systems that have similar objectives for the safety and well being of children and families. Active engagement between CWS and its community partners at all levels of program development, funding, implementation and evaluation is essential. This strategy consists of an integrated network of public and private services, supports and opportunities for families that begins with a strong foundation prenatally and continues for families with children through age 18. The continuum also must include non-traditional and informal supports for families that demonstrate promising results (such as peer-to-peer models and the use of natural helpers). [pp. 29-31]

2. Establish a collaborative prevention model based on public-private partnerships at the state, local and neighborhood levels with shared investments in outcomes and accountability. The decade of the 1990s saw prevention emerge as a funding priority for federal matching dollars to support protection and prevention efforts of child welfare programs. However, the fundamental fiscal structure of the child welfare system, especially at the federal level, still is driven by the number of children in out-of-home care. The more children placed in foster care, the more federal revenue flows into the State. A prevention model would promote joint planning and coordinated budgeting authority, improve fiscal collaboration to increase capacity for smarter spending and increase the ability to leverage federal revenue. [pp. 32-35]

A PARTNERSHIP

model would promote joint planning and coordinated budgeting authority, improved fiscal collaboration to increase capacity for smarter spending and increased ability to leverage federal revenue.

The causes of child abuse and neglect are many. Because families who are at-risk encounter other professional systems (such as health care and education), and the goals of maltreatment prevention often converge with the goals of other service systems, it simply makes sense to work together to address the issues. Three vertically integrated levels of partnership are essential to achieve an effective prevention model:

- **State-level partnerships:** A statewide group, led by the Governor, is needed to promote a prevention system across all State agencies responsible for the well-being of children. The purpose is to promote program and fiscal coordination, identify common goals and outcomes, increase shared accountability, leverage resources, build capacity and enhance services. [p. 30]
 - **Local-level partnerships:** A flexible, local collaborative is suggested to ensure every county has broadly-based partnerships to promote and support the capacity of families to keep their children safe, create a stable family environment and promote positive outcomes. Emulating the state-level prevention system, local-level partnerships share responsibility for funding and service coordination. In communities where strong collaborations already exist, the prevention system recommended by Stakeholders would encourage the alignment of these partnerships with the goals of the Redesign. [p. 31]
 - **Neighborhood-level partnerships:** A network of broad-based opportunities is advised for residents and CWS consumers to participate in prevention planning, implementation and evaluation. [p. 31]
3. Engage community residents, especially parents and other caregivers, in all partnership and prevention activities. Every Californian citizen has a role and responsibility to protect children, strengthen families and improve the health communities. Effective communities create opportunities for all citizens to participate meaningfully in a prevention system. [p. 34]

4. Utilize a strengths-based, universal approach to prevention that supports all families. Raising children is demanding. Decades of research have shown that parenting can be particularly difficult when parents are faced with job or income instability, personal stress, depression, substance addiction, domestic violence or isolation from friends (Burgess & Conger, 1977; Steinberg, Catalano & Dooley, 1981; Wolfe et al., 1985; Wolock & Horowitz, 1979). These are the families most likely to maltreat their children and come to the attention of CWS. The principles of family support encourage all families to seek out and utilize supports as a normal part of family life. Rather than only concentrating on correcting parental deficits, the emphasis is on building family strengths, engaging the entire family to promote self-determination and sufficiency, and providing opportunities for the family to participate in personal, program and community improvement. Investing in an approach that promotes protective factors and mitigates risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect is a cost-effective means to ensure safety, permanence and well-being for children and families. [pp. 35-36]
5. Secure partnerships for a collaborative prevention strategy from legislative and executive branches of State and local government and the general public. Prevention inherently must involve expanding the public will and community supports for all families in California. At the same time, advocacy efforts with the general public can help build support for the resources that will be needed for state and local prevention efforts. Broad public education campaigns resulted in the development of such universal service systems as public education, social security, water fluoridation, childhood immunization and Head Start—all of which have far more generous and stable public support and funding than child welfare. Key leaders at the public and private levels must step forward and commit to a prevention system for child welfare that is collaborative, broadly accepted and sustainable over time. [pp. 30-31, p. 33]
6. Develop dedicated, sustained flexible funding that supports a comprehensive range of prevention strategies. Historically, child welfare services have been reactive, minimalist and stigmatizing to those served. Much of this results from a lack of broad public support for these services. For prevention strategies to move beyond this limitation, prevention needs to proactively connect to more universal, broadly-based public concerns to secure lasting support for prevention efforts. Such issues as immigration, availability of mental health and substance abuse services for parents, adequate access to quality child care and support for parenting education in high schools are directly related to child maltreatment risk and connect to broader community issues for which larger constituencies are in place. Prevention must have core funding to be an integral part of the community network of integrated services, supports and opportunities. [p. 34, pp. 150-153]

What might have been possible

Through an effective, integrated partnership for prevention at work in Sylvia's community, her whole family would have been much more likely to receive the support they needed through Sylvia's and her brothers' schools, the grandmother's health care system or Angela's encounters with law enforcement and public health. Community partnerships between these agencies and CWS that share responsibility for child protection and family well-being would have offered Sylvia's family the support, education and services necessary to strengthen their family so they could have remained together and protected their children.

Objective #2: Act Early to PRESERVE and Strengthen Families

The CWS Stakeholders Group focused on how the current system can change to build a system of early intervention in California communities and, at the same time, provide less adversarial, individualized responses to referrals of child abuse and neglect. This, in turn, leads to engaging families in partnership with community resources to utilize needed services and supports to strengthen and preserve their capacity to protect and nurture their children. [pp. 53-69]



PARENTING IS

particularly difficult when parents are faced with job or income instability, personal stress, depression, substance addiction, domestic violence or isolation from friends.

Rationale for Change

The current Hotline system that receives all reports of suspected maltreatment is a critical filter for whether and how services are offered to children and families in California. As illustrated by Sylvia's story, and thousands like hers, this filter is often too narrow as evidenced by the large proportion of families who receive no services, but who may be at significant risk of future instances of child abuse or neglect. Many families are currently not eligible for services due to the lack of evidence confirming that an incident of abuse or neglect actually occurred, however

40% of them will be re-reported to CWS within two years. Still others are substantiated, but families normally do not receive services unless the children enter foster care.

The present system limits the intervention options available at intake. First, using substantiation as the basis for service eligibility creates a system where the only way to provide change-oriented services is after a sufficiently severe maltreatment incident has occurred—a costly means by which to prevent subsequent abuse and neglect. Second, current funding formulas create incentives to remove children rather than to preserve and strengthen families with ongoing services to build their parenting capacity. By targeting the front end of the CWS intervention continuum, the Stakeholders' aim is to improve results for children and families earlier in their involvement with CWS and reduce the number and severity of re-referrals. This can only happen through changing the response when families are first brought to the attention of the system.

MANY FAMILIES

are currently not eligible for services due to lack of evidence to confirm that an incident of abuse or neglect actually occurred, however 40% percent of them will be re-reported to CWS within two years.

Key Recommendations for Change

The Stakeholders recommend specific strategies aimed at building a system of early intervention that helps families enhance their ability to protect and nurture their children.

THE NEW SYSTEM

will engage vulnerable families in their own development before problems escalate to more costly and challenging levels.

7. Protecting children and strengthening families becomes a community responsibility. Under the Redesign, faster, targeted responses to reports of abuse and neglect, coordinated with appropriate community partner agencies, will occur. Stakeholders recommend that in-person responses would occur within five days versus the current maximum of 10 days. Teams will work together to engage families, share assessment information, coordinate interventions and track results. Case coordination no longer will be the sole responsibility of CWS; instead it can be delegated to or shared with a trained

community-based agency. A statewide protocol for evaluating safety, permanence and well-being outcomes for children and families referred to CWS will be a shared responsibility for response and service delivery personnel between CWS and the community partners who can best meet family needs. [pp. 60-67]

8. CWS offers services based on family need and level of risk, rather than waiting for “proof” that a maltreatment incident occurred. Too many children reported to CWS currently receive few or no services. In fact, recent data indicate that 92% of referrals to the current system do not receive safety or change-oriented services. In the Redesign, social workers will have more opportunity to engage with families and conduct thorough assessments, as well as plan and deliver more individualized services. Serious cases will still be investigated by Child Protective Services while lower risk cases will be diverted for response by community partners. [pp. 53-55, 58-60, 65-67, 195-204] Three distinct pathways will be available to help families receive needed services:

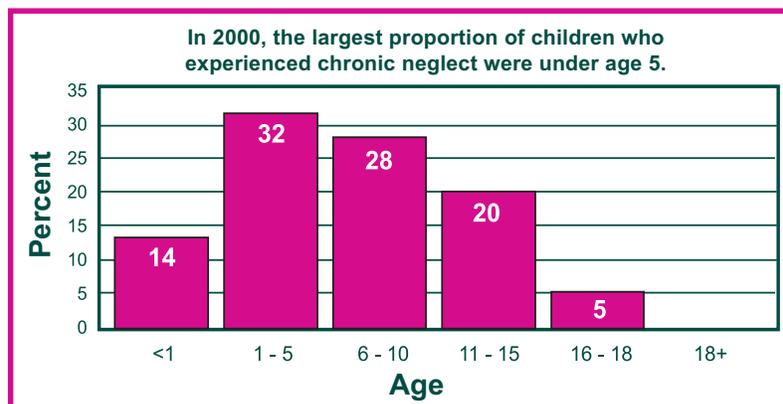
- *Community services:* For families where child maltreatment is not the foremost concern, but it is clear that stressors or problems are present that can lead to child abuse or neglect and could be addressed by community services. No or low risks of harm to the child are observed and the child is deemed safe. [p. 54]
- *Family services/non-court:* For families where child maltreatment is alleged and appears to be a valid concern, the family is willing to engage in an in-home safety plan without court involvement even if the child is considered safe. [p. 54]
- *Family services/court:* For families where children are not safe and child maltreatment is causing immediate or severe harm to the child. Level of risk is high, court involvement is likely and placement of a child in protective custody may be necessary. [p. 55]

9. A statewide safety assessment approach for evaluating and managing child safety is universally and consistently applied to all families brought to the attention of CWS. Current research on child safety intervention indicates that safety outcomes are improved when both protective family conditions and threats to child safety are immediately evaluated upon initial contact with a family. No matter how the family is served or who serves as case coordinator, a common set of assessment information will be gathered on all open cases and safety outcomes will be tracked. Attention to child safety will be re-assessed at key decision points throughout the life of the child and family's involvement with CWS to ensure case decisions lead to successful outcomes. [pp. 77-85]

Currently, safety assessment practice varies from county to county. A statewide safety protocol will ensure fairness and equity in one of the most critical decisions that child welfare services can make—determining whether there is imminent risk of danger to a child and evaluating the family's ability to mitigate those risks and keep the child safe from harm.

10. Intervene early with vulnerable populations using a comprehensive system of services and supports in partnership with community resources. Families at risk of maltreatment face a variety of challenges and they often need coordinated services from health care professionals, substance abuse treatment providers, mental health professionals, child care experts, early intervention specialists and child welfare professionals. Particularly challenging is affecting positive change with the most vulnerable families who often manifest multiple problems. The long-term impact of maltreatment can be reduced by supporting vulnerable children and families as soon as problems are identified and as early in the child's development as possible. Emphasis will be placed on serving families with children younger than age 5, chronically neglected children, homeless families and substance abusing parents. A responsive, available and accessible system of support services will be facilitated through enhanced community partnerships at local, regional and statewide levels. [pp. 62-67]

EMPHASIS WILL BE
placed on serving families with children under age five, chronically neglected children, homeless families and substance abusing parents.



What might have been possible

If Sylvia's mother had received the needed services the first time she encountered the CWS system, she could have avoided many of the situations that later plagued her and her family. A differential response system and increased preventive services by both CWS and the community would have eliminated the "revolving door" effect and addressed the needs of Sylvia and her family at the outset, not after they returned with more severe problems requiring the removal of her and her siblings from their mother's care. A multidisciplinary community team would have provided a comprehensive plan of services and support that could have helped Sylvia's mother address her substance abuse problem, living situation and employment and ultimately turn her life around. This could have been accomplished through a caring, consistent supportive relationship that would have engaged her in decisions about the safety and well-being of her family. The need to help protect her children would have been the only requirement to receiving support services for her family, rather than a substantiated allegation of child abuse.

Objective #3: Broaden Efforts to RESTORE Family Capacity

A primary goal of Child Welfare Services is to ensure that children have safe, permanent homes in which to grow up. When safety concerns or other circumstances compromise the ability of parents to care for their own children, federal law requires that reasonable efforts be made within prescribed time limits to restore the capacity of birth parents to resume their parental responsibilities. While the Redesign focus on prevention and early intervention is likely to reduce the demand for and length of stay in placement, situations that require removal of children from their birth parents on either a temporary or permanent basis will still exist. When this occurs, the Stakeholders envision a better way for CWS to recognize the importance of building parental capacity and maintaining natural, meaningful connections between children and their birth families. [pp. 81-95]

Rationale for Change

The current system has tended to operate under a narrow interpretation of family restoration, limiting most remediation efforts to those that keep children and families intact to avoid entry into placement. The assumption in these instances is that many negative effects on the child result from separation and loss of the birth family, the likelihood of multiple placements and permanent loss of the birth family subsequent to entry into care. In reality, various degrees of family restoration are needed across the continuum of settings and circumstances in which children and families served by CWS find themselves.

Key Recommendations for Change

The Stakeholders recommend several strategies aimed at restoring the capacity of families to protect and nurture their children while promoting appropriate, enduring relationships between children and their families.

11. Expand safety assessment and planning to quickly reunify children with their families. Continued monitoring and evaluation of safety coupled with comprehensive safety services made available to the family is essential for the expedient, safe return home of children. CWS workers will be trained to conduct thorough in-home safety planning involving comprehensive safety assessment protocols, development of in-home safety plans and access to a continuum of safety services and supports. [pp. 77-83, 112]
12. Align case plans and related interventions with assessment results using a standardized approach to assessment. Similar to the initial encounter with CWS, a common set of assessment information will be gathered at periodic intervals throughout all phases of intervention and safety outcomes will be tracked. Attention to child safety will be re-assessed at key decision points throughout the child and family's involvement with CWS to ensure case decisions lead to successful outcomes. [pp. 208-210]



BETTER OUTCOMES

are achieved for children when safety is balanced with restoring family capacity and maintaining family ties.

13. Engage birth parents using specially designed skills to support the ongoing care of their children. Research indicates visitation is highly influential in achieving reunification (Pine, Warsh & Malluccio, 1993; Berrick, 1998). The Redesign will expand opportunities for parent-child interaction within safety considerations. For example, involve kin, near-kin and foster parents to support the parent-child relationship; support and maintain family connections by placing siblings together; utilize placement resources located in the child's home community and when safety considerations allow; or ensure reasonable access between the child and his or her birth parents, including incarcerated parents. [pp. 113-114]

14. Provide sufficient supports and services *before* and *after* children are returned home. Reunification represents a time of considerable stress on family members and requires specific preparations and supports. Family reunification services should be offered both to prepare for and to maintain the reconnection of a child with his or her family. The intensity of the services should match the needs of the family over time. For a few families, this means some level of service may be necessary until the child is ready for independent living. [pp. 110-111]

What might have been possible

In Sylvia's case, if several factors had been in place, the chance of her and her siblings returning home would have been greatly improved. A stronger safety assessment and planning approach would have identified, more quickly and comprehensively, what kind of assistance Sylvia's mother required. Had Angela then been able to access sufficient services and supports, her needs could have been addressed, and this would have improved her capacity and ability to parent her children. Finally, consistent interaction between Angela and her children while they were in care would have smoothed the transition for their return home. In addition, non-adversarial family court programs, assertive case reunification plans and support for Sylvia's grandmother would have dramatically improved her family's outcome.



Objective #4: Strengthen Alternatives to REBUILD Permanent Families for Children

The CWS Stakeholders envision a redesigned child welfare services system where children who cannot be cared for by their parents gain permanent families through adoption or guardianship in greater numbers and more quickly. [pp. 119-129]

Rationale for Change

The preferred result for children who encounter CWS is to remain or return home safely and permanently. Unfortunately, for many children and families, circumstances preclude this possibility. At this point, CWS and the courts typically work toward establishing a legal, alternate, permanent family for the child, either through adoption or guardianship. These two options generally are considered to be the most stable and permanent arrangements in which a child can establish a lifelong, supportive and legal relationship with a new family. Principles of fairness and equity require permanent placement decisions to recognize the value for the child of home, friends, community and school.

Key Recommendations for Change

The Stakeholders recommend several strategies aimed toward improving permanency outcomes for children and youth.

15. A comprehensive, integrated model of adoption and guardianship practice. Successfully rebuilding alternate families to provide sufficient emotional, legal and physical permanence for children who have been compromised by the affects of maltreatment requires quality practice, consistent policies, skilled practitioners, sufficient post-permanency support services and continual evaluation. Equally important to the model is clear desired outcomes of fairness and equity, principles, and research-based considerations for practice. [pp. 120-123]
16. A statewide system of reporting and research to address children of color experiencing higher rates of entry and longer lengths of stay in out-of-home care. African-American children made up 7% of California's child population in 2001, yet accounted for 34% of those in care on July 1, 2001. National studies have demonstrated that African-American children are brought to the attention of child welfare services and are placed in out-of-home care at higher rates than other ethnicities. However, National Incidence Studies find no differences in the actual incidence of maltreatment in African-American families. This is a disturbing and complex issue that requires time, energy and resources to understand and take appropriate corrective action. Taking informed actions to correct the disproportional composition of the CWS caseload is essential to equally assure the safety, permanence and well-being of all children. [p. 126, pp. 163-167]

CHILDREN

who cannot be cared for by their parents gain permanent families through adoption or guardianship in greater numbers and more quickly.

17. Statewide, standard protocols for safety assessment and other assessment activities that influence case decisions. Safety is often an interactive phenomenon that can manifest itself in any family setting. Issues such as situational stress on the family or difficult behaviors exhibited by the child or others require sufficient assessment protocols to be available and utilized by staff to equally assure the child's safety, regardless of the family setting in which he or she is placed. [pp. 78-85, pp. 126-127]

Developing assessment protocols and tools that are reliable, culturally relevant, practical and affordable are critical. This includes integrating child assessment tools with family assessment strategies to ensure that each family's strengths, skills and environment are well matched to meet the needs of each child placed in their care.

18. A model of kinship care intervention that recognizes and supports the unique differences inherent in rebuilding permanent families for children with extended family members. Currently, more than 40% of children in out-of-home care in California are being cared for by a relative. The familiarity, stability and family connection that results from being raised by an aunt, uncle or grandparent has proven to have many benefits for children. While casework practice is mandated to follow the same standards with kinship care as with non-relative care, a new

model is needed that recognizes kin caregivers as an integral component of the family system. Policies, services and workforce proficiency need to reflect the degree of teaming, cultural competence, engagement, support and communication that optimize the benefits of kinship care to promote safety, permanence and well-being for children. [pp. 125-126]

19. Assure sufficient, competent and supported foster family resources. The role of foster parents has become more complex over time. Far more is being expected of families who offer their homes and hearts to rebuild a sense of family for children exposed to abuse or neglect. Children in care manifest developmental delays due to prenatal drug exposure, medically fragile conditions, emotional problems and other special needs. Engaging birth families in the lives of children in care is a recent practice that affects the foster family role. It requires foster parents to serve as resources to birth parents while navigating the conflicted feelings children in care may express while reconnecting with their parents. [pp. 123-125]

Stakeholders recommend that these realities make it critical for foster parents to have a defined role on the service planning team. The role requires that qualifications match the needs of children in care and contain expectations consistent with the requirements of the CWS system as a whole. Sufficient and consistent training, respite, liability support and other resources must be provided in exchange for foster parents fulfilling these role expectations.

A NEW MODEL

is needed that recognizes kin caregivers as an integral component of the family system.

What might have been possible

The single change of ensuring placement of Sylvia and her siblings together could have helped these children maintain important ties to each other even though they were separated from their own family. Sufficiently trained and supported foster parents could also have demonstrated the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to better engage Sylvia's family system and understand how to achieve the best results for these children. Alternatively, a more comprehensive model of kinship care could have provided Sylvia's grandmother with sufficient support, services, communication and engagement in case planning decisions to promote safety, permanence and well-being for her grandchildren.



Objective #5: Systematically PREPARE Youth for Success in Adulthood

One way to determine the efficacy of the Child Welfare Services system is to ask, “How well have youth who have ‘aged out’ of the system fared?” This focus on preparation for adulthood illustrates how the proposed intervention efforts of CWS are brought back full circle to prevention. Youth who exit the system positioned for success in their own lives will be much less likely to repeat the pattern of maltreatment from their own

history. Self-sufficiency preparation is an integral part of foster family care. Foster parents play a critical role in supporting youth to develop essential skills for living interdependently.

Rationale for Change

Youth in foster care often do not get the help they need with high school completion, employment, accessing health care, continued educational opportunities, housing and transitional living arrangements (Eisenbud, 2001; Fragnoni, 1999; Courtney & Piliavin, 1998). Yet youth need support to learn how to manage the activities of daily living and maintain connections to siblings, other caring adults and peers. While federal efforts such as the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 have improved the availability of services after age 18, more is needed.

Studies of youth who have left foster care have shown they are more likely than those in the general population to drop out of high school, be unemployed and be dependent on public assistance. Many find themselves in prison, homeless or parents at an early age (National Center for Resource Family Support, Casey Family Programs, 2001).

Key Recommendations for Change

The Stakeholders recommend several strategies to better prepare youth for successful outcomes as they transition to independent living.

20. A comprehensive, integrated, developmentally staged model of transition planning and services. Better outcomes are achieved when youth, foster care providers and agency staff take responsibility early in the placement process to develop a self-sufficiency plan connecting youth to available transition services that build their ability for successful independent living (Mech & Rycraft, 1996). In 2001, nearly 45% of

California’s youth in foster care were age 11 or older (U.C. Berkeley, 2001) This strategy is to engage this large segment of the CWS population in systematic planning to build their skills so they are better prepared for eventually living on their own. The model requires access to transition services through educational and positive, hands-on experiences beginning at age 12. Other elements include court oversight to assure that developmentally appropriate planning occurs and that youth receive a range of “guaranteed services;” provide youth with a written notice of the agency’s intent to

THE NEW SYSTEM

aims to proactively and consistently prepare youth for a successful transition to adulthood.

emancipate six months in advance; and maintain foster care placements until an approved transitional living arrangement is secured. [p. 117]

21. Caregivers prepare youth for adult success and reinforce training provided elsewhere. Preparing children for independence is a key parental role and central aspect of family life when children enter their teenage years. Training and supporting foster parents and birth parents to strengthen these independent living skills throughout adolescence is essential. [pp. 118-119]

22. Expand community options for safe, affordable housing for youth exiting foster care to live independently. Advocacy with local jurisdictions is required by all levels to address the housing needs of youth exiting foster care in community plans. Plans should emphasize availability and access to flexible housing options to meet the needs of foster care youth including degree of supervision, proximity to other youth (group units or individual units within a youth housing community) and a range of reasonable cost. [p. 119]

FOSTER PARENTS

need a defined role on the service planning team.



What might have been possible

Fully trained and supported foster parents could have helped Sylvia and her brothers build the life skills necessary to more successfully transition to adulthood. Also, through partnerships in the community, Sylvia and her brothers could have been connected to options for accessing safe, affordable housing; obtaining health care; securing employment opportunities; and cultivating positive relationships that could have helped them make their own way in life.

Objective #6: AFFECT CHANGE Through an Excellence in Workforce

People Make Change Happen—The Human Element

It is a fundamental tenet of social work practice that **people make change happen**. It will be the CWS workforce that makes the Redesign happen. The Stakeholders have taken a broad view of “workforce” It is now defined to reflect anticipated changes in how the traditional CWS workforce will partner with the community to conduct its work, as follows:

- **County CWS Workforce** – Personnel employed by county child welfare agencies who perform the core functions of administering child welfare services in each county in California.
- **State CWS Workforce** – Personnel employed by the California Department of Social Services who perform the core functions of supervising child welfare services through providing support, technical assistance, program evaluation and resources to county-level direct service operations throughout the state.
- **Community-Based Child Welfare Partners** – Individuals or organizations with which County and State child welfare agencies collaborate to perform case-related child welfare activities including service prevention and legal system involvement. Examples include contracted service providers, community-based agencies, law enforcement, foster parents, health and mental health professionals, probation and juvenile court personnel and educational professionals.



The Stakeholders assert that it is these individuals—the CWS workforce—who need to be valued, recognized, supported and invested in. [pp. 131-145]

Rationale for Change

There is a growing population requiring child welfare services, increasingly complex issues facing families and lack of a shared vision of the essential role played by child welfare services. At the same time, the human resource system in child welfare is strained. These stressors include decreasing numbers of people interested in the child welfare profession, working conditions and demographic realities resulting in high turnover, lack of organizational support for quality supervision, unmanageable workloads, inadequate incentives to attract and keep workers, and difficulty securing adequate service resources for clients.

The very definition of child welfare services will shift—from the bottom line of safety to comprehensive assessments focused equally on anticipation and mitigation of potential risk. The CWS function will necessarily expand to include outreach, early intervention and prevention activities. CWS workforce personnel may not play many of these roles; they may be played by expanded partnerships with community agencies. Traditional roles within the workforce may change altogether, while brand new roles may emerge. Training will need to deliver a new knowledge base and also maximize positive client outcomes consistently and over time.

Key Recommendation Strategies for Change

The Stakeholders propose the following strategies to create an integrated model of workforce realignment supported at the statewide level to ensure the supply, development and retention of a sufficient, competent, qualified CWS workforce.

TRAINING WILL

need not only to deliver a new knowledge base, but also to maximize positive client outcomes consistently and over time.

23. Engage in a long-term organizational change process resulting in a high-capacity, competent, satisfied CWS workforce for the new system.^o The state State needs to champion a process for counties to be prepared, supported, and challenged and to build ownership in the outcome of a post-Redesign CWS workforce. This includes providing a framework, guidelines, tools and technical assistance for counties to develop organizational change plans that meet the unique needs of each local environment.

24. Prepare the existing workforce for CWS system changes and build external support for workforce realignment. The success of the Redesign depends, in large part, on how well the current workforce embraces changes in the context, role, function and performance expectations of their jobs. This strategy is intended to ensure staff are prepared, supported and trained on the essential elements of the Redesign. A primary reason for staff turnover is lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities—this aspect becomes especially critical in a climate of change. Any strides CWS makes in realigning its workforce to meet the challenge of the Redesigned environment can only be accomplished with the support of the broader community. It is essential to build the will, financial resources and public sentiment to view CWS in a new light.

25. Build and maintain the capacity of the CWS workforce. The transformation of CWS stimulates the supply of qualified, interested candidates to join the “new” CWS workforce. Counties will benefit from the State taking a leadership role in a statewide, coordinated recruitment strategy to build the capacity of the workforce. Children and families benefit from a workforce that is well matched for the job work its members they are required to perform. Staff retention is also increased when better-informed hiring decisions are made between the potential employee and employer agency.

26. Support manageable workloads. Many studies, including the SB 2030 Workload Study, have stated how much time and energy is required when helping relationships are the core component of effective practice. This recommended strategy supports manageable workload size into every Redesign change.^o Regular re-evaluation of workload standards in light of new staffing configurations stimulated by the Redesign are also part of this strategy.

27. Build, maintain and reward skills and competencies. According to Blome (1996), there are large deficiencies in social worker preparation and training. New social workers

only spend an average of only eleven 11 hours per month in training—insufficient time for workers to be prepared to meet the needs of a complex job. The new knowledge, skills and attitudes that will be required to implement the Redesign further expandexpand the demand for a highly competent workforce.

28. Conduct evaluation and research on the effectiveness of workforce development efforts. This strategy highlights multiple means for tracking information to plan, administer and evaluate workforce development activities. Such data is are needed to improve workforce development efforts and adjust priorities as the needs of the CWS workforce change over time.
29. Optimize working environments to achieve positive client outcomes. It is only when the competencies of the workforce are coupled with satisfying working environments that effective, outcome-oriented practice with clients is possible. Elements central to the working environment include effective supervisory support, continual opportunities for staff learning, cooperative relationships among staff, role clarity and personal attention. This strategy is aimed at retention, since satisfied workers employees stay on the job, thus reducing recruitment and training costs.
30. Develop an Evidence Based Cycle and Web-based Clearinghouse to identify and evaluate promising practices for the purpose of establishing an evidence base for both CWS/Social Work practice approaches and interventions. CWS/Social Work practice approaches and interventions subject to evaluation would likely be those most closely tied to safety and change outcomes based on ASFA requirements and current best practice. The Research Center provides for the identification of promising practices, establishes the means and requirements for research and demonstration, monitors a process of continuous review and improvement and is responsible for the dissemination of information related to evidence-based practice to counties across California. Generation of knowledge from the Research Center may lead to the identification of the elements of a model approach for CWS/Social Work practice that could be consistently applied across the state.

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Preliminary Key Indicators of Success

The Stakeholders have begun to identify a preliminary set of success indicators to mark the progress being made on achieving desired results across the Redesign. These indicators are preliminary. More work is needed in Year 3 in collaboration with the state, counties and communities to develop final indicators and tie them to performance measures within a formal accountability structure. Along with a common set of indicators, the Stakeholders also have developed a flexible, practical approach to outcome measurement. This approach promotes an understanding of the complex factors that converge when child welfare services intervene to affect change in the lives of children and families. [pp. 175-180] The selection and use of performance indicators will consider the following elements:

- Rather than setting a single standard with an arbitrary threshold, recognize that a **range of performance** can meet expectations. For example, looking at the first, third and fourth quartiles to better understand the overall picture of length of stay, not just looking at which counties are above and below the state median for length of time children remain in care.
- **Sort and cross match outcome data** by factors that influence performance, such as type of maltreatment, ages of children at the time they enter care, ethnic/racial composition of the population and other factors.
- Use a **mix of data** collection methods—CWS administrative data, surveys, archival data and others—to capture the complexity of performance.
- Evaluate performance through analyses of **patterns of performance** across multiple indicators measured over time. Avoid conclusions, decisions and classifications based on single indicators measured at one or two points in time.
- Performance indicators are **easy to understand**. They are the tangible signs of success to show anyone who cares to know that, “Every child in California is living in a safe, stable, permanent home, nurtured by healthy families and strong communities.”

The following preliminary indicators are the Stakeholders’ initial list of results against which progress can be measured. It will be clear that the Redesign vision is being realized when the following indicators of change are happening consistently throughout California:

- All children at great risk of being harmed by abuse or neglect are protected.
- Children at risk receive the services they need when they need them without the threat of removal.
- More families are able to safely and consistently care for their children as a result of their involvement with Child Welfare Services and its service partners.
- Fewer and less severe reports and incidents of child maltreatment. .

- Families with children in similar situations experience equal assurance of safety, permanence and well being.
- Children who cannot be cared for safely and consistently by their parents gain permanent families through adoption or guardianship in greater numbers and more quickly.
- Communities are more involved in protecting children and strengthening of families.
- More youth served by the child welfare system are experiencing successful transitions to adulthood.
- Parents are treated with dignity and empowered to help resolve challenges.
- Foster parents are trained and actively involved in the achievement of positive outcomes for children in their care.

The final form these indicators take, the measures to be developed to gauge progress toward these ends and the process by which performance expectations will be established is work to be accomplished in Year 3. It is essential that the state and counties work together to create a practical, measurable, achievable, results-oriented and time-limited set of indicators that is meaningful to all stakeholders and can be implemented across the State.



A NEW OUTCOME FOR SYLVIA'S STORY

Fast forward, if you will, five years from now and imagine that Sylvia, age 23, again comes into contact with the child welfare system. However, she did not arrive by the adversarial means that she once did, but with the vision of the Redesign at work in the community. Consider what is now possible for Sylvia when she encounters a “new” child welfare services system—fortified with a new service philosophy, a new model of engagement and, most importantly, new hope for the next generation.

Sylvia's Story

A New Future with the New Vision in Mind

It has been five years since Sylvia brought her baby to the public health hospital for immunization and started dodging questions. That day, when she realized she had started living her mother's life, she promised herself she would find a way to get her GED. But so far the job of being a mom and the volatility of the drug addict with whom she lives have kept her from doing more than surviving each day. She knows this would make her mother sad, but Angela's not here to watch; she's dead from an overdose.

Nine months ago Sylvia's birth control failed. In some ways this second pregnancy has been easier—when she came into the hospital's emergency room with early complications, the staff connected her to a family resource center so she received prenatal care and drug treatment counseling. Her daughter is safe in a sibling care program for moms in labor, and her son has been born without drugs in his system.

Sylvia is holding her newborn when a family support worker from CWS knocks on the door of her hospital room. Kathy introduces herself and sits by the bed.

“Congratulations,” she says, admiring Sylvia's son. “He's beautiful.” They watch the baby for a moment. “I wanted to let you know about some of the support that's available for you, like having a visiting nurse to help out a little the first week you go home.”

“Excuse me?” Sylvia says. “Where did you say you were from?”

“Child Welfare Services.”

Sylvia gives Kathy a long look. “First you people took me away from my mom and didn't let me visit her. Then you tried to figure out if you should be taking my daughter. So tell me, what exactly are you doing here? Are you taking my kids?”

Kathy meets her eyes. “No, we’re not. We’re offering support, if you want it,” she says. “Things are different these days. CWS can give families some support early on. We have more services and resources than we used to, and we have partners to work with, like public health. So I’m here to ask what you need to keep your family going.”

“Uh huh. And what do you want in return? Permission to invade our privacy? If you get involved, are you gonna be checking up on us all the time to see if we meet your standards?”

“No,” Kathy says. For a moment she looks tired. “You know when I was doing this job 10 years ago it was tough, because I had to look for the worst before I could get help for someone. But things are different now — and so is CWS.”

“Really,” Sylvia says flatly. “You know what I remember? My mom could not get help for us unless she gave us up. And once CWS took me I never saw her again. I don’t want any part of that.”

“I’m sorry,” Kathy says. “It’s taken time to learn how to do things better. I know this won’t change things for you, but we realize now that children are much happier when they can see their birth parents, so visitation is a big priority. Our foster parents are taught to understand that birth parents are a permanent part of a child’s life, and they’re supported to feel comfortable with it. And we’re much better at knowing when kids really need to be removed from their homes, and when it’s safe for them to go back. We have treatment programs now for parents.”

“I know about the treatment programs,” Sylvia says quietly.

Kathy watches the baby dozing in the crook of his mother’s arm. “We just want you and your children to have the chance to be healthy and have decent opportunities,” she says. “It’s what everyone deserves.”

“You know,” Sylvia murmurs, “This sounds very sweet and all. But I can’t see what CWS gets out of this, except the chance to monitor me.”

“That was what we used to do. Now we think we can save everyone a lot of time and trouble and money if we start helping families earlier. It’s just taken a while to figure out that either we can help early, so positive things happen, or wait until things get out of control, kind of like what happened with you and your mom. Back then we didn’t even have anything to help you start your life as an adult. Today we have support for teenagers. We can teach them how to be independent, how to find a place to live and a job, maybe work toward a degree.”

“Mm hm. We are all going to Disneyland,” Sylvia laughs. Then her face goes blank. “Why should I trust you? Why should I believe things are different?”

“Do they feel different?” Kathy asks. “I’m not here with a cop, because somebody reported you. I’m not searching your home for evidence. I just want to know what you need, and you’re free to take it or not. Do you need a bassinet? Diapers? Sometime down the road, when your son’s a little older, do you want to work your way into a good job? CWS is connected with CalWORKs now, so if that’s what you want we can help you get day care, find some support for you until you’re confident in a new position. It’s up to you.”

Sylvia gently smooths the top of her son’s head. For the first time in a long time, she lets herself imagine a big enough apartment, a job, a regular rhythm to her days, something to anticipate in her future. Unexpectedly she feels her throat hurt, but she looks out the window while the feeling passes.

“Would you like some help?” Kathy asks. “I can arrange for a visiting nurse to come by next week to see how you and the baby are doing.”

Sylvia nods.

Making Sylvia’s Story a Reality

What will it take to ensure Sylvia reaches the positive outcome she dreams of and deserves? It will take all of us working together to make it a reality. Now is when the hard work begins—taking the vision and concepts articulated by the Stakeholders and putting them into practice.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NEXT?

The Conceptual Framework received broad support at the CWS Redesign Summit in May 2002 where more than 500 child welfare professionals from across California engaged in discussions, presentations and feedback sessions. The direction is clear, the concepts are sound and this year is focused on developing a plan to make the Redesign happen.

Approach to Implementation Planning

Year 3 is a critical juncture where expansion of the Stakeholders process is essential to refine further the conceptual framework and prepare for implementation. To create cohesive system change across the varied environments throughout the State, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and the county child welfare agencies assume a key leadership role in supporting and guiding implementation planning. Recognizing that all implementation occurs locally, Year 3 invites significant involvement of those most impacted by the Redesign.

Currently CDSS and many counties are supporting several key efforts that are in various stages of implementation that are integral elements of the Redesign as well. These efforts are moving forward successfully within counties and are also integrated into the Year 3 workplans. These already operational programs will help support the future expansion of these efforts as the CWS Redesign is implemented. Key examples include: Family to Family, Wrap-Around and the CWS/Cal-Works Partnership.

The goal of Year 3 is to refine the Redesign strategies and begin the implementation planning needed to integrate these efforts. CWS Stakeholders Group has organized Year 3 around five Implementation Focus Areas that have been assigned various issues, strategies and themes.

Focus Areas	Elements of CWS Redesign
Partners and Systems	Formalized Prevention Role, Prevention Strategies, Community Capacity, Systems Alignment, Partnership Package, Shared Responsibility
Practice	Safety, Assessment, Response, Resolution, Reunification, Quality Practice and Practice Development, Permanency, Transitioning Youth, Workforce Preparation and Training, Management Culture
Leadership Responsibility	State and County Roles, Build Capacity, Transform Organizational Culture, Outcomes and Accountability, Pilots
Legislation and Finance	Legislative and Regulatory Authority, Budget Methodologies, Federal Reform Issues, State/County/Community Funding Strategies
Comprehensive Systems Management	Completely Redesign Work Products, Strategic Plan Development, System Analysis, Marketing Plan

To develop an integrated implementation plan, various individuals from the state, counties and communities will work together to complete the tasks within the five Focus Areas. **Partners and Systems** and **Practice** contain most of the recommendations from the Stakeholders' Conceptual Framework and require significant emphasis on partnering among state, counties and communities to develop a successful plan. To this end, the Stakeholders have established four Statewide Regional Workgroups (SRWs) to lead implementation planning for two of the five focus areas listed above. The workgroups are referred to as "Regional" because they are convened in four California geographic regions, while "Statewide" emphasizes that they maintain a statewide perspective in all their work.

For continuity, each SRW includes members from the Year 1 and 2 Stakeholder Workgroups who developed the content of the Redesign Conceptual Framework document. For a broader perspective, each SRW includes other individuals who bring additional viewpoints to the topic from their role as client, child welfare professional, community partner or advocate at the local level.

Convening the workgroups regionally also creates opportunities to gain further input from community members, foster families, service providers, families and youth along the way. These stakeholders can make important contributions to further refine the Redesign and shape the implementation planning to account for local realities. The primary focus of each SRW is to accomplish the respective charge given to them by the CWS Stakeholders Group.

Elements of Implementation

The Stakeholders have assigned certain tasks to each SRW and asked them to contribute to specific segments of the overall implementation plan. A summary of each group's charge is described below.

- **Partnerships for Practice & Services**—To recommend an implementation plan for creating state, local and neighborhood partnerships to develop an equitable, comprehensive, integrated prevention system based on shared responsibility and mutual accountability for child protection.
- **Permanency and Well-Being**—To recommend an implementation plan for achieving safe, permanent families for youth through consistent use of standard safety protocols, maintaining healthy birth family connections for children, reducing barriers to creating permanent families for youth via adoption or guardianship and preparing youth for successful transition to adulthood.
- **Differential Response & Case Resolution**—To recommend an implementation plan for pilot testing a flexible, responsive, collaborative and non-adversarial child welfare services intake and response process that keeps children safe and engages families to become more protective and nurturing.

- **Workforce Preparation & Support**—To recommend an implementation plan for achieving sufficient capacity, practice content and delivery systems to ensure a CWS workforce able to support children and families to reach positive outcomes.
- **Safety and Practice**- To recommend a statewide approach to safety management to safety management and develop a practice framework for the CWS Redesign,

Implementation areas requiring further development by the Stakeholders or leadership efforts at the statewide level are being addressed through separate mechanisms within the Stakeholders Group. These are described below.

- **Leadership Responsibility**—To expand state, county and community leadership responsibility to build capacity, transform organizational structure, provide support of Redesign elements to early implementing counties, and ensure the integration of outcomes and accountability in the Redesign.
- **Outcomes & Accountability**—Convened by Health and Human Services Agency Secretary Grantland Johnson under the auspices of AB 636 to develop the outcomes monitoring process and accountability structure for CWS and the Redesign.
- **Legislation & Finance**—To develop sufficient legislative authority and state and county budgetary methodologies to implement the Redesign, taking into consideration federal reform issues.
- **Comprehensive Systems Management**—To manage, coordinate and strategically integrate the Redesign implementation planning effort to convey the essence of Redesign to those outside CWS including further refinement of the new system as necessary via the CWS Stakeholders process.

The CWS Stakeholders Group serves as the steering body over these workgroups, holding final review and oversight of draft products and operational plans. The Stakeholders will draw from this material to create the content of their final recommendations. The overall goal is to present an integrated implementation plan for the CWS Redesign to the Director of the California Department of Social Services by June 2003.

Next Steps

As in any change of this magnitude, many details still need to be discussed and planned in the years ahead as we move toward a phased statewide implementation. It is anticipated that thorough planning and design may take additional time with a statewide phased-in testing and implementation effort occurring in 2003-2004. During this same timeframe, depending on county circumstances, many of the elements may be implemented in selected locations through county-level leadership and local change efforts.

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