

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF TULARE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

IN THE MATTER OF:)
Presentation of the Child Welfare) RESOLUTION NO. 2007-0542
Services – System Improvement)
Plan Update.)

UPON MOTION OF SUPERVISOR COX, SECONDED BY SUPERVISOR WORTHLEY, THE FOLLOWING WAS ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, AT AN OFFICIAL MEETING HELD AUGUST 14, 2007, BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: SUPERVISORS ISHIDA, CONWAY, COX, WORTHLEY AND ENNIS
NOES: NONE
ABSTAIN: NONE
ABSENT: NONE



ATTEST: KRISTIN BENNETT
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
CLERK, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

BY: *[Signature]*
Deputy Clerk

1. Received a presentation regarding an overview of the Tulare County System Improvement Plan (SIP).
2. Approved the Tulare County System Improvement Plan (SIP), which is part of Assembly Bill 636, known as California's Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act of 2001 to improve outcomes for children.
3. Authorized the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) And Tulare County Probation Department to sign the System Improvement Plan (SIP) and submit the proposed SIP to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

HHSA
Probation
Mental Health
Co. Counsel



Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency

John Davis, Agency Director

Human Services Department ■ Judy Rutan, Deputy Director ■ Child Welfare Services - Administrator

September 11, 2007

Ms. Mary Ellen Borba, Consultant
California Department of Social Services
Children's Services Operations Bureau
744 "P" Street, MS 3-90
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Borba:

In a recent conversation with our office, you requested a copy of the signed Board of Supervisors resolution approving Tulare County's System Improvement Plan. Attached please find a copy of the document you requested.

Let us know if we can be of any further assistance. If you need to contact us, please call Mr. Javier Robles at (559) 737-4660 X2224 or he can also be reached by email at jrobles@tularehhsa.org

Sincerely,


Judy Rutan,
CWS Deputy Director

cc: Javier Robles

ATTACHMENT

California's Child and Family Services Review

System Improvement Plan Update

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| County: | Tulare |
| Responsible County Child Welfare Agency: | Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency |
| Period of Plan: | July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2008 |
| Period of Outcomes Data: | Quarter ending December 31, 2006 |
| Date Submitted: | August 14, 2007 |

County Contact Person for County System Improvement Plan

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|--------------------|--|
| Name: | Judy Rutan |
| Title: | CWS Division Deputy Director |
| Address: | 5957 South Mooney Blvd., Visalia, CA 93277 |
| Phone/Email | (559) 737-4660, Extension 2101 |

Submitted by each agency for the children under its care

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| Submitted by: | County Child Welfare Agency Director (Lead Agency) |
| Name: | John M. Davis, Agency Director |
| Signature: | |
| | |
| Submitted by: | County Chief Probation Officer |
| Name: | Janet Honadle, Chief Probation Officer |
| Signature: | |

I SIP Narrative

Introduction

This System Improvement Plan (SIP) update follows the County Self-Reassessment submitted to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) in July 2006. This SIP document is an agreement between Tulare County and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). The document describes the programs and initiatives to improve service delivery and performance measures in Tulare County as it relates to the delivery of services to children and families in Tulare County. This updated SIP is part of a system for reporting and reviewing progress towards outcomes and indicators as reported by the State and provided to counties in the County's Quarterly Outcomes Reports.

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors will review Tulare County's updated SIP and provide approval if in agreement in order that this report can be submitted to the CDSS for final approval.

1. Identify Local Planning Body:

The membership list for the County System Improvement Plan (SIP) Planning Committee is an attachment to this document.

2. Share Findings that Support Qualitative Change:

Qualitative input has been gathered, presented and discussed since the implementation of the Outcomes Improvement process. The System Improvement Plan (SIP) Planning Committee was represented by partners including CWS staff, Tulare County Juvenile Court, the Tulare County Probation Department, Tulare County Mental Health, Tulare County Office of Education, Tulare County First 5, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), community based organizations, foster parents, and the faith-based community. Members of the SIP Planning Committee were not limited to the participation of community partners but also include CWS line staff. The valuable suggestions of CWS line staff have been incorporated into our Self-Re-Assessment and this SIP update.

In addition, Tulare County CWS pursued input from staff in meetings designed to discuss child welfare strengths and challenges at various platforms to include management meetings, monthly CWS Team Leaders manager and supervisors meetings and administration planning meeting. This information was presented at the SIP Committee meetings.

The SIP matrices, attached as exhibits to this report, were largely developed in subcommittees that were formed to address specific outcomes and systemic factors outlined in this report. Each subcommittee was tasked with developing ideas for program improvements, to evaluate the effectiveness of the options, and to rank the options by their ability to positively impact child services. Each

subcommittee met separately and brought their recommendations to the SIP Planning Committee to arrive at consensus with the identified strategies, milestones and outcome indicators.

II SIP Plan Components

Exhibit 1 – SIP Template, Outcome Factor: Rate of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care (1C)

Exhibit 2 – SIP Template, Outcome Factor: Child Abuse and Neglect by Time to Investigation (2B)

Exhibit 3 – SIP Template, Outcome Factor: Permanency and Stability (Federal) Multiple Foster Care Placements (3B)

Exhibit 4 – – SIP Template, Outcome Factor: Permanency and Stability (Federal) Rate of Foster Care Re-Entry (3F)

Exhibit 5 – SIP Template: Systemic Factor: Improve Management Information Case Management System for Probation

Exhibit 6 – - County Self Assessment Update 2006, Executive Summary

Attachment 1- Identified Local Planning Body

III TULARE COUNTY SELF-REASSESSMENT - SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

Demographic Profile

Population: Tulare County is the 21st largest county in the state with a population of 395,493 people of which 32 percent (32%), or 129,897, are children who are under the age of 18.

Poverty: No significant changes are noted upon analysis of this data when compared to 2004 data as poverty continues to remain a factor for Tulare County families.

Education System: Tulare County has 47 public school districts. The County's education system serves over 103,000 students in these school districts.

Child Welfare Participation Rates: For the 129,897 children under the age of 18 in Tulare County, the age distribution for referrals received is as follow:

- 10,351 of these children were referred to CWS.
- 1,926 (18.6%) of these children had substantiated referrals.

- 215 of these children were under 1 year of age.
- 245 of these children were between the ages of 1 and 2.
- 340 of these children were between the ages of 3 and 5.
- 500 of these children were between the ages of 6 and 10.
- 480 of these children were 11-15 years of age, and,
- 146 of these children were between the ages of 16 and 18.

A review of the Ethnicity of these referrals yielded the following:

- 601 children were “White”.
- 1,182 of the children were “Hispanic”.
- 62 of the children were “African-American”.
- 35 of these children were “Asian/Other”.
- 18 of these children were “Native American”. And,
- For 28 children, the nationality was missing.

County Outcome Data

The County Data Report provided by the University of California at Berkeley's Center for Social Service Research was utilized for the self-assessment and continues to provide data to support the County's performance.

Rate of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care (1-C): (Refer to Exhibit 1) For all children in child welfare supervised foster care during the twelve month period review, what percent had a substantiated allegation by a foster parent during that time. The State's average rate for this measure for April 2007 (data through 09/30/06) was 0.21%. The State has established a threshold score of less than 0.53% for this measure. Tulare County's rate has consistently been at 0%, which suggests that this is a area of concern.

Improvement Goal 1.0 is to improve the accuracy and consistency of reporting, data entry and the investigation of child abuse/neglect allegations in foster care. To accomplish this goal, a review will occur of the regulatory requirements for CWS to investigate abuse/neglect in foster care and how this differs from Licensing's role when a complaint comes in to Licensing regarding an alleged violation of rights. It is critical that CWS staff be aware of the need to have an allegation of abuse/neglect in foster care put into CWS/CMS as a referral and for an investigation to take place that conforms to existing regulatory expectations. To achieve this, a standardized procedure will be developed by both CWS and Licensing staff to guide a coordinated assessment/investigation of alleged abuse/neglect in foster care. Once a standardized procedure has been developed, CWS and Licensing staff will be trained on the process.

Improvement Goal 2.0 is to evaluate the county's performance on this measure. This will be accomplished by monitoring quarterly data available in reports from Safe Measures and Business Objects. How data is inputted on allegations of abuse/neglect in foster care will be done to ensure complete entries in the various fields that would identify a referral as being of

abuse/neglect in foster care. This effort will involve the CWS Division's Policies and Procedures Committee, the CWS Training Team and Quality Improvement staff.

EXHIBIT 1

Outcome/Systemic Factor:

Safety Outcome 1C: Rate of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care

For all children in child welfare supervised foster care during the twelve-month period review, what percent had a substantiated allegation by a foster parent during that time?

County's Current Performance:

This outcome requires the ability to identify those substantiated abuse or neglect reports where the perpetrator is a substitute care provider (foster parent, relative or non-relative care provider) or facility staff member. Two primary areas of need were identified. One area is in the County Self-Assessment (CSA) and related to accurate and consistent data entry for the documentation of abuse and/or neglect in foster homes within the statewide automated system (CWS/CMS). The second area involves case carrying staff's awareness of procedures that allegations of abuse by caregivers need to be made into referrals on CWS/CMS..

Tulare County's data for this outcome measure is at 0%, which signifies the need by County staff to review regulatory notices, County policies and procedures, training curriculum, and to establish CWS/CMS data entry procedures.

Improvement Goal 1.0

Improve the accuracy and consistency of reporting, data entry and the investigation of child abuse/neglect allegations in foster care.

Strategy 1.1 - Review current CWS and State Licensing regulatory requirements for investigating abuse/neglect in foster care. Assess current CWS policies and procedures for reporting and investigating child abuse and/or neglect allegations in foster care.

Strategy Rationale - An examination of regulatory requirements will help the county identify and review current policies and procedures on reporting and investigating child abuse and/or neglect in out-of-home care settings. This will include a review of current practice and data inputting procedures and a review of state requirements for the management and investigation of abuse in foster care allegations.

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| Milestone | 1.1.1 Review current state and federal regulations on the requirements for reporting and investigating abuse allegations. | Timeframe | Target date September 2007 | Assigned to | Policies & Procedures Committee Foster Care Licensing CSUF-CCTA |
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| | 1.1. 2. Review current policies for reporting and investigating abuse allegations. | | Target date September 2007 | | Policies & Procedures Committee Foster Care Licensing CSUF-CCTA |
| | 1.1.3 Identify and complete any necessary updates to current policies. | | Target date September 2007 | | Policies & Procedures Committee Foster Care Licensing CSUF-CCTA |
| Strategy 1.2 - Standardize the agency process for reporting incidents of alleged abuse or neglect in out of home care settings. | | | Strategy Rationale - Establish clarity regarding the difference between licensing concerns and child abuse/neglect referrals. | | |
| Milestone | 1.2.1 Develop a standardized procedure for coordinating assessment/investigation of alleged abuse/neglect in foster/relative care by Licensing and CWS staff. | Timeframe | Target date September 2007 | Assigned to | Policies & Procedures Committee Foster Care Licensing CSUF-CCTA |
| | 1.2.2 Develop a Foster Care Abuse Desk Guide. | | Target date April 2008 | | CWS Training Unit Foster Care Licensing CSUF-CCTA |
| | 1.2.3 Conduct training for social workers, Team Leaders, and licensing to improve ability to recognize abuse and neglect in out-of-home care settings. | | Target date April 2008 | | Policies & Procedures Committee CWS Training Unit CSUF-CCTA |

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| | <p>1.2.4 Align county data collection and data entry with statewide standards in CWS/CMS for recording referrals, allegations, and conclusions for alleged child abuse and/or neglect in out-of-home care settings.</p> | | <p>Target date April 2008</p> | <p>Policies & Procedures Committee CWS Training Unit Foster Care Licensing CSUF-CCTA</p> |
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Improvement Goal 2.0
Evaluate County performance on this measure.

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| Milestone | <p>2.1.1 Monitor quarterly data reports of all reported allegations of child abuse/neglect in out-of-home care settings.</p> | Timeframe | <p>Target date April 2008 and ongoing</p> | Assigned to | <p>Quality Improvement Team</p> |
| | <p>2.1.2 Evaluate the data for compliance with established standards for data entry.</p> | | <p>Target date April 2008 and ongoing</p> | | <p>Quality Improvement Team</p> |
| | <p>2.1.3 Review performance based on outcome data and recommend modifications as identified.</p> | | <p>Target date April 2008 and ongoing</p> | | <p>Quality Improvement Team CWS Training Team Policies and Procedures Committee CSUF-CCTA</p> |

Discuss changes in identified systemic factors needed to further support the improvement goals.
Tulare County will begin to accurately identify and report all allegations of child abuse and/or neglect in out-of-home care settings.

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.
Tulare County will train staff members on procedures for reporting, data entry and investigation of child abuse/neglect allegations in out of home care settings.

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

The CWS Training team will develop curriculum for training CWS staff in concert with the County Licensing Team

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

No regulatory or statutory changes have been identified to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.

Child Abuse and /Neglect Referrals by Time- to- Investigation (2-B): (Refer to Exhibit 2)

Percent of child abuse and neglect referrals that require an investigation in the study quarter that have resulted in an in-person investigation stratified by immediate response and ten-day referrals, for both planned and actual visits. Since the first quarter in 2004, Tulare County has maintained a response rate of 95% for responding to immediate referrals. The county's performance for 10-day response referrals continues below the state's performance standard. Using the April 2007 Quarterly Outcome Report (September 2006 data), Tulare County's score for 10-day referral response timeliness was 82.80%. The State's average score for this measure was 91.20%. The State has established a threshold for this measure is for scores to be greater than 90%.

Improvement Goal 1.0 is to identify ways to enable timely responses from social workers. CWS will review existing practices and procedures to identify where improvements can be made in getting information on referrals to Emergency Response workers in a more timely manner, the use by first-line supervisors of reports from Safe Measures to track response timeliness to referrals and to review data entry procedures by Emergency Response workers to ensure information entered into the proper fields are done correctly.

Improvement Goal 2.0 is to increase community awareness of what constitutes child abuse/neglect by providing ongoing training opportunities. This effort will improve communication between CWS and community partners/mandated reporters about the importance of reporting suspected child abuse and of reporting it timely.

Improvement Goal 3.0 is to implement Structured Decision Making (SDM). The implementation of a standardized tool for doing risk assessments will allow CWS workers to increase their accuracy and consistency of assessments and to target resources to families at greatest risk. Research has shown that counties who use SDM have reduced the rate/severity of subsequent abuse/neglect allegations.

Improvement Goal 4.0 is to implement Differential Response in Tulare County. There is a lack of and/or there are under-utilized services in many rural communities in Tulare County. Implementing Differential Response will allow county and community partners to identify service needs and identify alternative support services for families. We believe that connecting families with the resources in their community to assist them and doing more prevention interventions will decrease the likelihood of circumstances leading to subsequent referrals alleging abuse and/or neglect.

EXHIBIT 2

Systemic Factor/Outcome:

Safety: 2B Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals by Time-to-Investigation

Percent of child abuse and neglect referrals that require an investigation in the study quarter that have resulted in an in-person investigation stratified by immediate response and ten-day referrals, for both planned and actual visits.

County's Current Performance:

Immediate Referrals: Tulare County has shown that it consistently responds in a timely manner to all Immediate Response referrals. The County has maintained a response rate of 95.0% since April 2004 and achieved a 99.0% response rate in the final quarter of 2004. It is expected that County workers will continue to improve and perform better than the expected state compliance rate of 90%.

10-Day Responses: Tulare County has made significant improvement in this area since the first quarter of 2005 for all 10-day response rates. County workers have improved almost 15% (14.7%) from the first quarter of 2005 to the first quarter of 2006 when workers were able to meet expectations 87.7% of the time. While there is still room for improvement, the County expects that its response rate will match or exceed the state compliance level of 90.0% by the third quarter of 2007.

Improvement Goal 1.0

Tulare County will continue to identify ways to enable timely responses from social workers.

Strategy 1.1 - To review existing practices and procedures to ensure that staff continues to improve their response rate to 10-day referrals.

Strategy Rationale - Non-crisis referrals do not need or receive high priority processing. As a result, this has meant that 10-day referrals have a lower priority. Also, there may be significant delays from the time a call is received by a Screener or On-Call CWS Social Worker to the time it is assigned to a unit Social worker. This strategy will review existing practices to ensure the timely distribution of referrals.

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| Milestone | 1.1.1 A review of all Tulare County's current Policies and Procedures regarding 10-day Response Referrals will be conducted with staff. | Timeframe | Target date July 2007 and ongoing | Assigned to | Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers Analyst |
| | 1.1.2 Unit Managers and Team Leaders will regularly use CWS/CMS Safe Measures and review the results with staff to ensure compliance in making timely assessments for all 10-day referrals. | | Target date July 2007 and ongoing | | Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers Field Based Trainers |
| | 1.1.3 Team Leaders will review correct data entry procedures for 10-day referrals into the CWS/CMS data system with their staff, as needed. | | Ongoing | | Team Leaders Social Workers Field Based Trainers |
| Improvement Goal 2.0: To increase community awareness of what constitutes child abuse / neglect by providing ongoing training opportunities. | | | | | |
| Strategy 2.1 - Develop a system for consistently having CWS present information about child abuse/neglect to the community. | | | Strategy Rationale - Educating the public about child abuse/neglect issues will assist the community in identifying child abuse/neglect situations and providing pertinent abuse/neglect information. | | |
| Milestone | 2.1.1 Identify opportunities for community outreach that are in the same geographic areas as each district office. | Timeframe | Target date July 2007 and ongoing | Assigned to | Unit Managers Team Leaders |

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| | <p>2.1.2 Identify materials that are available to present to community members.</p> | | <p>Target date July 2007 and ongoing</p> | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders CWS Training Team</p> | |
| | <p>2.1.3 Identify potential new areas for media outreach to community members.</p> | | <p>Target date April 2008 and ongoing</p> | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders Analyst</p> | |
| <p>Strategy 2. 2 – Develop a key personnel contact list at each CWS Unit and provide the contact list to the various community partners.</p> | | | <p>Strategy Rationale - When community partners are able to identify key personnel in each CWS Unit, it helps them to know whom they can call whenever questions arise about potential child abuse/neglect issues. This has the potential for decreasing the volume of inappropriate referrals to CWS.</p> | | |
| <p>Milestone</p> | <p>2.2.1 Develop a list, by geographic area, that identifies key CWS personnel by name, title, phone number and fax number.</p> | <p>Timeframe</p> | <p>Target date December 2007</p> | <p>Assigned to</p> | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders</p> |
| | <p>2.2.2 Make the list available to members of the community – schools, health care, Head Start, Family Resource Centers.</p> | | <p>Target date December 2007</p> | | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders</p> |
| | <p>2.2.3 Update the listing on a semi-annual basis.</p> | | <p>Target date December 2007 and every 6 months thereafter</p> | | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders</p> |

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| <p>Strategy 2.3 - Develop/implement/evaluate strategies to improve community outreach.</p> | <p>Strategy Rationale - Direct engagement between CWS Unit Managers and Team Leaders with community partners strengthens local relationships and promotes greater opportunities for communication.</p> |
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| Milestone | <p>2.3.1 Personal connections and/or visits are made with community partners.</p> | Timeframe | <p>Target date December 2007</p> | Assigned to | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders CWS Staff</p> |
| | <p>2.3.2 Liaisons identified, lists are created/updated and are provided to local community partners.</p> | | <p>Target date December 2007 and ongoing</p> | | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders</p> |
| | <p>2.3.3 Liaisons will update Community partner information whenever indicated.</p> | | <p>Target date December 2007 and ongoing</p> | | <p>CWS Liaisons</p> |
| | <p>2.3.4 Outreach efforts are evaluated.</p> | | <p>Target date December 2008 and annually thereafter</p> | | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders Analyst</p> |

Improvement Goal 3.0
Structured Decision Making: The implementation of a comprehensive model for making risk assessments will allow Screeners and other Social Workers to increase the consistency and accuracy of CWS assessments and target resources to families at greatest risk.

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| <p>Strategy 3.1 - Develop an Implementation Team to roll out Structured Decision Making within the Tulare County Child Welfare System.</p> | <p>Strategy Rationale - The use of SDM will provide the CWS Division with a standardized comprehensive risk assessment</p> |
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| | | | | <p>tool. SDM will provide social workers with a consistent set of tools when making risk assessments. It is being initially implemented in the Screening Unit, subsequently in Emergency response and then implemented Division-wide. The use of SDM will have an impact on the number of 10-day referrals assigned for investigation.</p> | |
| Milestone | <p>3.1.1 SDM Implementation committee members are identified.</p> | Timeframe | Completed | Assigned to | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders Analysts Social Workers</p> |
| | <p>3.1.2 Committee members will make site visits to other counties who are using SDM as part of their risk assessment process.</p> | | Completed | | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders Analysts Social Workers</p> |
| | <p>3.1.3 Committee members are trained by a representative from CDSS.</p> | | Completed | | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders Analysts Social Workers</p> |
| <p>Strategy 3.2 - Identify staff and deliver training for implementation of Structured Decision Making.</p> | | | | <p>Strategy Rationale - Identifying and training key personnel is essential to a successful start-up of a new project. Management and other unit personnel who are identified as ‘super-users’ will be used as mentors for line staff who may need assistance on an ongoing basis.</p> | |

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| Milestone | 3.2.1 Training for Trainers is completed. | Timeframe | Target date: February 2007 | Assigned to | CWS Training Unit CWS Technical Support Analyst |
| | 3.2.2 Overview of SDM model provided to CWS management. | | Target date April 2007 and ongoing | | CWS Training Unit Identified "Super-Users" Unit Managers Team Leaders QI Team |
| | 3.2.3 Training for line staff social workers is completed. | | Target date September 2007 | | Team Leaders CWS Training Unit Social Workers |
| Strategy 3.3 - Tulare County will implement SDM. | | | | Strategy Rationale - Since SDM provides clear and consistent guidelines for making risk assessments, Screeners will be able to structure key decisions in an objective way from the moment a referral is received. Research has shown that Counties who use SDM have reduced the rate/severity of subsequent abuse/neglect referrals and complaints. | |
| Milestone | 3.3.1 The Tulare County Screening Unit will implement use of SDM model of risk assessment. | Timeframe | Target date June 2007 and ongoing | Assigned to | CWS Training Unit Field Based Trainers Unit Manager Team Leader Screening Unit staff |
| | 3.3.2 SDM will be implemented and used by all CWS unit staff members. | | Target date September 2007 and ongoing | | Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers Field Based Trainers |

Improvement Goal 4.0

Differential Response: Tulare County will develop and implement Differential Response.

Strategy 4.1 - Tulare County will ‘Plan’ for the implementation of Differential Response in the County’s rural areas.

Strategy Rationale: There is a lack of and/or there are under utilized services in many rural communities in Tulare County. Differential Response will allow county and community partners to identify service needs, review alternative support services for families, and identify strategies. Helping to make connections between families and community partners will decrease the likelihood of circumstances leading to subsequent referrals alleging abuse and/or neglect.

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| Milestone | <p>4.1.1 Tulare County will work with community partners to develop Differential Response.</p> | Timeframe | <p>Target date June 2007</p> | Assigned to | <p>CWS Administration Unit Managers Team Leaders Community Partners Analyst</p> |
| | <p>4.1.2 Tulare County will provide education regarding Differential Response to staff members.</p> | | <p>Target date September 2007 and ongoing</p> | | <p>CWS Training Unit Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers CSUF-CCTA</p> |
| | <p>4.1.3 Tulare County will review and/or create new policies and procedures for initiating Differential Response for identified 10-day referrals.</p> | | <p>Target date September 2007 and ongoing</p> | | <p>Policy & Procedure Committee CWS Training Committee Unit Managers Team Leaders Analyst</p> |

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| | 4.1.4 Differential Response social workers will be recruited for the Implementation Team. | | Target date September 2007 and ongoing | | Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers |
| Strategy 4.2 - Tulare County will train CWS staff on the philosophy, policies, and practices of Differential Response. | | | Strategy Rationale – The philosophy of Differential Response will encourage all social workers to work more closely with community based providers and ensure that preventative services are provided to clients before the need for CWS intervention. | | |
| Milestone | 4.2.1 An overview of philosophy and process of Differential Response will be provided to CWS Administrative team. | Timeframe | Target date September 2007 and ongoing | Assigned to | CWS Training Unit Unit Managers Team Leaders Analysts QI Team |
| | 4.2.2 An overview of philosophy and process of Differential Response will be provided to CWS Social Workers. | | Target date September 2007 and ongoing | | CWS Training Unit Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers |
| | 4.2.3 UM's /TL's and SW's assigned to Differential Response along with community-based Differential Response provider staff sites will be trained on protocol and implementation. | | Target date September 2007 and ongoing | | CWS Training Unit Field Based Trainers Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers Community Partners |
| Strategy 4.3 - Tulare County will 'Do' Differential Response. | | | Strategy Rationale – Social workers will be assigned to selected community-based provider sites in specific rural areas of Tulare County. They will also provide appropriate prevention or early intervention services to reduce the rate/severity of subsequent abuse/neglect referrals and complaints. | | |

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| Milestone | 4.3.1 Individual staff members will be identified to work with the Differential Response program. | Timeframe | Target date December 2007 and ongoing | Assigned to | Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers |
| | 4.3.2 Differential Response social workers will initiate an in-person response according to set criteria. | | Target date December 2007 and ongoing | | Team Leaders Social Workers |
| Strategy 4.4 - Tulare County will 'Study and Act' upon the results of the Differential Response. | | | | Strategy Rationale - Results will be measured through the number of referrals assigned to Path 1 or Path 2 within the Differential Response program. Exit interviews with Differential Response clients will be conducted. | |
| Milestone | 4.4.1 Measure recurrence of referrals for families that have received Differential Response intervention compared to those that have not over a 6 month to one year time period. | Timeframe | Target date July 2009 and annually thereafter | Assigned to | Unit Managers Team Leaders QI Team Social Workers |
| | 4.4.2 Conduct and use exit surveys for families that have received Differential Response intervention as a means for determining the effectiveness of the program. | | Target date July 2008 and annually thereafter | | Unit Managers Team Leaders QI Team Social Workers |

Discuss changes in identified systemic factors needed to further support the improvement goals.

1. Increase current staff's knowledge of available community and agency resources and provide a systemic practice shift to a more strength-based, community oriented, and family centered practice.
2. Increase staffing levels to help meet the increasing demands for improved social work with children and families, improved best-practice standards, family engagement strategies, and better outcome goals present unique challenges to Tulare County.

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

Educators, other professionals, and family members account for nearly half of all Child Abuse/Neglect referrals to Tulare County since 2003. The community has asked for training in 1) learning how to recognize child abuse/neglect based upon the legal definition that CPS is required to follow, and 2) what information is needed for making a referral. Community Partners, who are participants with the County in the Differential Response project, will need to learn SDM and other risk assessment procedures that are consistent with Path 1 and Path 2 evaluations.

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

1. Regulatory changes regarding confidentiality.
2. Updates to CWS/CMS to accommodate addition of SDM procedures and identifying differential response dispositions.

Multiple Foster Care Placements (3-B): (Refer to Exhibit 3) For all children in child welfare supervised foster care for less than 12 months during the 12-month study period, what percent had no more than two placements? Based on the April 2007 Quarterly Outcome Report (ending September 2006), Tulare County's score for this measure was 78.10%. The State average score was 84.60%. The State has established a threshold score of greater than 81.6% for this measure.

Improvement Goal No. 1 is to increase the number of foster caregivers by 10% and retain the number and type of resource families to include foster parents and relative placements. Having more foster parents means more capacity and the improving the possibility of better matching the needs of a child (s) with foster parents who can meet those needs. However, Tulare County competes with a number of Foster Family Agencies who operate in Tulare County for prospective foster care providers. Tulare County will improve recruitment efforts through multimedia campaigns including radio, newspaper and television. CWS will make presentations to community groups who could potentially meet certain needs of children such as nurses. CWS will also assess what we can do to retain current foster parents such as offering more training, respite care and other support. Initiated in the fall of 2006 were meetings between CWS staff and foster parents to improve communication and the understanding of the needs of each group.

Improvement Goal No. 2 is to increase the stability of child placements by 2%. CWS will review our process for assessing potential relative caretakers to remove barriers that may be preventing placements of children with relatives. CWS will identify ways of supporting relative caretakers, e.g., opening the same training foster parents have to relative caretakers and respite care. Another idea that has been proposed is to consider the possibility of having a receiving home, but this will require further study.

EXHIBIT 3

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| <p>Systemic Factor/Outcome:</p> <p>Permanency and Stability: 3B – Multiple Foster Care Placements For all children in child welfare supervised foster care for less than 12 months during the 12-month study period, what percent had no more than two placements?</p> | | | | | |
| <p>County’s Current Performance: This outcome measure for Tulare County as of September 2006 was at 78.1% on this Federal Measure. The Statewide average for this measure, for the same time period, was 84.6%.</p> | | | | | |
| <p>Improvement Goal 1.0: Tulare County will increase the number of foster caregivers by 10% and retain the number and type of resource families to include foster parents and kin placements.</p> | | | | | |
| <p>Strategy 1.1 - Continue to recruit more foster caregivers.</p> | | | | <p>Strategy Rationale - More foster caregiver’s means more options for the best, stable placements.</p> | |
| Milestone | <p>1.1.1 Sustain and augment the current levels of foster caregivers by 10%.</p> | Timeframe | <p>Target date March 2008</p> | Assigned to | <p>Foster Care Licensing</p> |

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| | <p>1.1.2 Continue presentations to community groups, at events, and support groups.</p> | | Ongoing | | Foster Care Licensing | |
| | <p>1.1.3 Continue multi-media campaigns to include radio, newspaper, and television.</p> | | Ongoing | | HHSA Media Staff Foster Care Licensing Unit Managers | |
| <p>Strategy 1. 2 - Retention of current levels of existing caregivers (foster parents and relatives) can be affected by providing more training opportunities, respite care, and support.</p> | | | | <p>Strategy Rationale - The loss of experienced foster caregivers Tulare County has necessitated the use of temporary care solutions. Retention and support of caregivers will lessen the number of temporary care situations and be more cost effective.</p> | | |
| Milestone | <p>1.2.1 Strengthen the relationship between the CWS Division staff and licensed foster parents, relative caregivers through monthly meetings.</p> | Timeframe | Target date March 2007 and ongoing | | Assigned to | CWS Staff Foster Care Licensing Unit Managers Analyst |

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| <p>1.2.2 Explore the implementation of intervention strategies such as Family Conferencing/Family Unity, Team Decision Making when identifying appropriate relatives for placement.</p> | <p>Target date September 2007</p> | <p>Unit Managers CWS Training Team Analyst</p> |
| <p>1.2.3 Engage caregivers to understand the needs of foster children through the use of focus groups.</p> | <p>Target date September 2007 & semi-annually thereafter</p> | <p>Foster Care Licensing Unit Managers CWS Trainers CWS Staff</p> |
| <p>1.2.4 Survey caregivers for training sessions that will help caregivers meet the needs of children placed with them and identify resources available to foster parents and relatives.</p> | <p>Target date July 2007 & quarterly thereafter</p> | <p>Foster Care Licensing CWS Training Team Analyst</p> |
| <p>1.2.5 Expand training resources for caregivers.</p> | <p>Target date September 2007 & ongoing</p> | <p>Foster Parent Licensing Trainer/Recruiter Community Partners.</p> |

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| <p>Strategy 1.3 Develop respite care system for foster parents/relative care providers to include maximum flexibility and the number of hours necessary to meet the needs.</p> | | <p>Strategy Rational - The current system of respite care for foster parents and relative caregivers offers limited respite care. Regulations and funding are not readily available to offer significant periods of respite to care providers, causing turnover for these individuals. Respite care is one support that can aid in retaining valuable foster care providers.</p> | | | |
| Milestone | <p>1.3.1 Assign staff to explore legal requirements and financial eligibility to expand respite care.</p> | Timeframe | <p>Target date July 2007</p> | Assigned to | <p>Foster Parent Licensing Community Partners Analyst</p> |
| | <p>1.3.2 Assign Licensing staff to explore other models, to include more flexibility, for respite care in operation in other counties of the state and to report their findings.</p> | | <p>Target date July 2007 & ongoing</p> | | <p>Foster Parent Licensing Community Partners Analyst</p> |
| | <p>1.3.3 Explore informal systems for respite care for relatives and foster parents.</p> | | <p>Target date July 2007 & ongoing</p> | | <p>Foster Care Licensing Foster Parent Association CWS Analyst</p> |
| <p>Improvement Goal 2.0 Increase the stability of child placements by 2%.</p> | | | | | |
| <p>Strategy 2.1 - Increase the child's stability through placing with relatives to</p> | | | | <p>Strategy Rationale -</p> | |

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| maintain family ties. | | Relative placements offer stability to children being removed from their home. Remaining close to the communities, neighborhoods and schools they are familiar with reduces the trauma of being removed from their home and placed in a different environment. | | | |
| Milestone | 2.1.1 Review and update the current relative assessment process to streamline operation. | Timeframe | Ongoing | Assigned to | Relative Assessment Team CWS Training Team Unit Managers Analyst |
| | 2.1.2 Review current policies and forms used for relative assessment and achieve uniformity in processing. | | Ongoing | | Relative Assessment Team CWS Training Team Unit Managers Analyst |
| | 2.1.3 Add relatives to the existing system of training and support available to foster parents. | | Target date September 2007 | | Relative Assessment Team Unit Managers Social Workers Analyst |
| Strategy 2. 2 - Staff is trained on the thorough and timely completion of the relative assessment process, to include the emergency placement process. | | | | Strategy Rationale - A uniform process for assessing relatives will help social workers expedite the placement of children and minimize the use of alternate temporary placement options. | |

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| Milestone | 2.2.1 Develop and deliver training on the relative assessment process and the process for making child placements through the “emergency placement” procedures. | Timeframe | Completed | Assigned to | Relative Assessment Team CWS Training Team Analyst Unit Manager |
| | 2.2.2 Conduct internal evaluation to measure improvement in making relative placements. | | Target date December 2007 & ongoing | | Relative Assessment Team QI Team Analyst Unit Manager |
| <p>Strategy 2.3 - Review the findings from the feasibility study done to develop a receiving home in Tulare County as a strategy to reduce the number of placements children experience.</p> | | | | <p>Strategy Rationale - There is no facility in Tulare County for the proper evaluation of children’s needs when they enter foster care. Currently, initial placements are made that may not be the most suitable which may result in multiple placement changes for children before a more permanent placement can be arranged.</p> | |
| Milestone | 2.3.1 Share the findings on previous work done by receiving home committee. | Timeframe | Target date September 2007 | Assigned To | CWS Deputy Director CWS Unit Managers CWS Analyst |
| | 2.3.2 Upon review of documentation, explore next steps. | | Target date September 2007 | | SIP Subcommittee CWS Unit Managers CWS Analyst |
| <p>Strategy 3.1 - Review current and explore new approaches that speed the proper evaluation of children with existing resources and staff through new initiative models, best practices and service providers.</p> | | | | <p>Strategy Rationale - To develop an improved evaluation system pending the results of the receiving home advisory committee findings/recommendations.</p> | |

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| Milestone | 3.1.1 Review the existing resources for the evaluation of children. | Timeframe | Targeted for June 2007 | Assigned To | CWS Deputy Director CWS Unit Managers CWS Analyst |
| | 3.1.2 Determine links/methods to improve the speed of the assessments. | | Targeted for September 2007 | | CWS Deputy Director CWS Unit Managers CWS Analyst |
| | 3.1.3 Amend/modify existing agreements and/or MOU's to improve the speed and coordination of assessments. | | Targeted for September 2007 | | CWS Deputy Director CWS Unit Managers CWS Analyst |
| | 3.1.4 Explore initiatives that shift practice from compliance-focused to strength-based/solutions focused case management through strategies such Family-to-Family, Wraparound, etc. | | Target date December 2007 | | CWS Deputy Director CWS Unit Managers Analyst |

Discuss changes in identified systemic factors needed to further support the improvement goals.

1. Foster parents and relatives are integral partners in maintaining the child's connection to family. The county's proposed strategies will help develop stronger ties to foster parents and relative caregivers. As well, the county will look to strengthen the ties between foster parents and relatives.
2. A more focused review of the feasibility of developing a receiving home/emergency shelter is a project that community partners have identified as a strategy to help minimize the number of placements dependent children experience. The findings and recommendations will be presented to the SIP Planning Committee.
3. Increase staffing levels to help meet the increasing demands for improved social work with children and families, improved best-practice standards, family engagement strategies, and better outcome goals present unique challenges to Tulare County.

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Relatives and foster parents need training to deal with child behaviors. The county will review what training is available and offer opportunities to both foster parents and relative caregivers that can be delivered in “real time” if available at the time it is needed. Also, to explore other options for the delivery of training in a variety of ways like the use of video library, video conferences, and distance learning (web-based classes), This may require that the community partners help identify potential sources of training material, the development of a web-site to house the material, and the maintenance of such.

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. The local community college and several community based organizations providing services to children and families can improve the availability and frequency of desired training. Secondly, pursue the potential development of a new Receiving Home/Emergency Shelter. Advisory Committee including specific roles for community partners in the endeavor. Finally, share training course registration opportunities for staff of the service providers.

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. Continue to advocate for changes that can best support foster parents and relative caregivers through the use of incentives or increases in the foster care rates paid to them. As well, explore legislative advocacy to develop a system of respite care that is available to foster parents and relatives caregivers that is supported by funding.

Rate of Foster Care Re-Entry (3-F): (Refer to Exhibit 4) For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care during the 12-month study period, what percent were subsequent entries within 12 months of a prior exit? According to the April 2007 Quarterly Outcome Report (ending 09/30/06), Tulare County's score for this measure was 9.10%. The State average score was 10.80% with an established threshold score for this measure of less than 9.40%. The federal standard is 8.60%.

Improvement Goal No. 1 is to reduce the number of children re-entering the foster care system by 1.6% over the next 24 months. The implementation of SDM throughout the continuum of a case will help CWS staff make better and more consistent decisions. For example, SDM will help CWS staff identify areas where parents may need continued support prior to a child's return to the home or after a child has returned to the home. CWS believes that having such support services in place prior to a child returning home or after returning home or continuing even though dependency has been dismissed will reduce the rate/severity of subsequent abuse/neglect referrals and the risk of a child having to be removed and again placed into foster care.

Improvement Goal No.2 is to promote supportive working relationships between caregivers and biological parents. CWS believes that out-of-home caregivers can be an invaluable resource in the transition of a child back to the home of the parents. Because the out-of-home caregivers have come to know the strengths and needs of a child and perhaps saw the child move from one developmental stage to another, they are in a position of transferring their knowledge of the child to the parent, which will assist the parent in their parenting of the child. Out-of-home caregivers can also mentor parents and be a support for them once the child has returned to the home of the parent. CWS will look at strategies to facilitate a supportive working relationship between out-of-home caregivers and biological parents within thirty dates of placement.

EXHIBIT 4

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| Outcome/Systemic Factor: | | | | | |
| Permanency and Stability: 3F (Federal)- Rate of Foster Care Re-Entry For all children who entered child welfare supervised foster care during the 12-month study period, what percent were subsequent entries within 12 months of a prior exit? | | | | | |
| County's Current Performance: The federal outcome measure for Tulare County, as of June 30, 2006, was 11.6%. The Statewide average for this measure, for the same time period, was 10.0% | | | | | |
| Improvement Goal 1.0 Reduce the number of children re-entering the foster care system by 1.6% over the next 24 months. | | | | | |
| Strategy 1. 1 - Adopt Structured Decision Making (SDM) for Child Welfare Services. | | Strategy Rationale - Team Leaders and Social Workers in CWS differ in their decision making process when making critical case decisions, such as reunifying a family. The use of a consistent risk/safety assessment process will help to identify families who could benefit from increased supportive services, increased reunification transitions, or alternative planning, should reunification not be appropriate. | | | |
| Milestone | 1.1.1 CWS selects SDM implementation team members to include Unit Managers, Team Leaders, Social Workers, and Administrative Support Staff. | Timeframe | Completed | Assigned to | Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers Analysts |
| | 1.1.2 Unit Managers, Team Leaders, and Social Workers will be trained in SDM. | | Target date April 2007 | | Unit Managers Team Leaders CWS Training Team |
| | 1.1.3 Pilot SDM screening tools in the Screening Unit. | | Target date May 2007 | | Unit Managers Team Leaders CWS Training Team |

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| | <p>1.1.4 Implement SDM risk and safety assessments in the rest of the division.</p> | | Target date June 2007 | | Unit Managers Team Leaders CWS Training Team |
| | <p>1.1.5 Evaluate the implementation and use of SDM software program and reporting.</p> | | Target date December 2007 | | SDM Implementation Team |
| <p>Strategy 1. 2 - Structured Decision-Making (SDM) will be used to focus on Family Reunification cases.</p> | | <p>Strategy Rationale - Utilization of SDM tools in Family Reunification will allow CWS staff to assess families using standardized decision-making tools. SDM will objectively determine whether children can safely reunify with their parents.</p> | | | |
| Milestone | <p>1.2.1. Social Workers will complete the required SDM tools for all cases.</p> | Timeframe | Target date October 2007 and ongoing | Assigned to | Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers |
| | <p>1.2.2 Team Leaders ensure the use of the SDM assessment tools for Family Reunification cases through on-going reviews and monitor the use of SDM tools in CWS cases.</p> | | Target date October 2007 and ongoing | | Unit Managers Team Leaders |
| | <p>1.2.3 Unit Managers and Team Leaders will evaluate the use of the SDM tools and determine additional training needs.</p> | | Target date October 2007 and ongoing | | Unit Managers Team Leaders CWS Training Team |
| <p>Strategy 1. 3 - Structured Decision-Making (SDM) will be implemented in Family Maintenance cases.</p> | | <p>Strategy Rationale - Utilization of SDM tools in Family Maintenance will allow CWS staff to assess families using standardized decision-making tools. SDM will objectively determine whether children can safely remain with their parents or that termination of FM services is in the best interest of children.</p> | | | |

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| Milestone | 1.3.1 Social Workers will complete the SDM Family Risk and Safety Assessment for all cases. | Timeframe | Target date October 2007 and ongoing | Assigned to | Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers |
| | 1.3.2 Team Leaders ensure the use of the SDM assessment tools for Family Maintenance through on-going reviews and monitor the use of SDM tools in CWS cases. | | Target date October 2007 and ongoing | | Unit Managers Team Leaders |
| | 1.3.3 Unit Managers and Team Leaders will evaluate the use of the SDM tools and determine additional training needs. | | Target date October 2007 and ongoing | | Unit Managers Team Leaders CWS Training Team |

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| Strategy 1.4 - Using SDM assessments as a basis, formalized case staffing will be used to help identify the needs of families and to identify additional supportive services needs. | | Strategy Rationale - Formalized case staffing will engage families, extended family members, and community professionals. Supportive services can help the family maintain stability, decreasing the number of children re-entering the foster care system. | | | |
| Milestone | 1.4.1 Family engagement strategy policy will be developed. | Timeframe | Target date September 2007 | Assigned to | Policy and Procedure Committee |
| | 1.4.2 Staff will be trained in the use of family engagement strategies | | Target date October 2007 | | CWS Training Team CSUF-CCTA |
| | 1.4.3 Staff will implement the use of family engagement strategies. | | Target date November 2007 and ongoing | | Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers |
| | 1.4.4 Review progress and make recommendations for improvements to family engagement practices. | | Target date May 2008 and ongoing | | Quality Improvement Team Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers Biological parents Caregivers |

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| <p>Strategy 1.5 - Improve family connections to community-based services that provide support and build family capacity in efforts to reduce dependency on the CWS system.</p> | | <p>Strategy Rationale - Identifying and teaching families how to access community based services will help families maintain stability in reunification and when CWS is no longer involved.</p> | | | |
| Milestone | <p>1.5.1 Identify families' service needs through the use of SDM, case staffings and family engagement strategies.</p> | Timeframe | <p>Target date December 2007 and ongoing</p> | Assigned to | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers</p> |
| | <p>1.5.2 Identify barriers to accessing community services and identify gaps in community services.</p> | | <p>Target date December 2007 and ongoing</p> | | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers SIP Committee</p> |
| | <p>1.5.3 Identify available community resources and collaborate with community providers to address barriers in accessing services.</p> | | <p>Target date December 2007 and ongoing</p> | | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers</p> |

Improvement Goal 2.0

To promote supportive working relationships between caregivers and biological parents.

Strategy 2.1 - The family engagement strategy will facilitate the introduction of caregivers to biological parents.

Strategy Rationale - Introducing the caregivers to the family from the beginning will nurture the supportive process for the parent and the child. This will continue through reunification and after the family is no longer involved with Child Welfare Services.

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| Milestone | <p>2.1.1 Develop policy /protocol for facilitating the supportive working relationship between caretakers and biological parents within thirty days of placement.</p> | Timeframe | <p>Target date September 2007</p> | Assigned to | <p>Policy and Procedure Committee Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers</p> |
| | <p>2.1.2 Identify training needs for the implementation of supportive working relationships between caretakers and biological parents.</p> | | <p>Target date October 2007</p> | | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders CWS Training Team CSUF-CCTA</p> |
| | <p>2.1.3 Provide training to staff and caregivers on the family engagement strategy.</p> | | <p>Target date November 2007</p> | | <p>Unit Managers Team Leaders CWS Training Team CSUF-CCTA</p> |
| | <p>2.1.4 Review progress and make recommendations for improvements to family engagement practices.</p> | | <p>Target date May 2008 and ongoing</p> | | <p>Quality Improvement Team Unit Managers Team Leaders Social Workers Biological parents Caregivers</p> |

Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal.

1. The CWS Division will implement SDM to ensure the consistent use of risk assessment tools throughout the life of the case. Using risk and safety assessments at critical junctures of a case allows staff and families to gauge progress towards ameliorating the risk factors that brought the family to the attention of CWS. Likewise, instituting a standardized risk and safety assessment upon exit from the system ensures that families' needs are addressed and supportive services are identified to reduce the possibility of re-entry.
2. The Agency is working towards engaging caregivers as part of the case planning process. Engaging families in identifying service needs helps to develop support systems that will continue through reunification and when Child Welfare Services is no longer involved.
3. Increase staffing levels to help meet the increasing demands for improved social work with children and families, improved best-practice standards, family engagement strategies, and better outcome goals present unique challenges to Tulare County.

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

The Agency will ensure that all social work staff is trained on SDM, Risk Assessment Tools and case conferencing/family engagement strategies. CWS staff needs training on collaboration and working with community providers and families in a supportive way.

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

A collaboration with schools and community partners to identify and help families access local resources to meet their needs, including parenting education, family recreation, job search, transportation, child care, and basic needs. Schools and community partners are also important as providers of additional services ranging from mentoring programs to food pantries.

Implementation of Differential Response and WrapAround services will include several partners in the process. Community partners will educate CWS staff about the services available from their programs so that CWS staff and the family can access them.

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

Exploring WrapAround strategies through an application with the State. This will involve working with community partners to bring services to families in the local communities and avoiding placement in higher levels of care. This action will require Board of Supervisor approval followed by a California Department of Social Services (CDSS) review and approval of the plan. WrapAround strategy will allow the county to use funding in alternative ways to help meet the special needs of children.

Public Agency Characteristics

There are no major changes to the structure of the Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency which encompasses Health, Mental Health, and Human Services Branches. The Child Welfare Services Division includes Emergency Response, Family Maintenance, Family Reunification, Permanency Planning, Voluntary Family Maintenance, Permanency Planning, Relative Assessment, Licensing, Court and the Group Home Unit. To accommodate the CWS Division as it relates to space and to provide efficient and effective service delivery to Tulare County families, the Continuing teams and the Group Home Unit will be centralized in July 2007.

There are no changes to the structure of the Tulare County Probation Department, which consists of an administrative section, fiscal services, adult and juvenile services, and two (2) juvenile institutions. The Department protects the community by conducting Court investigations; enforcing Court orders; assisting victims; and implementing prevention, intervention, supervision and offender accountability programs to include the juveniles and their families in Tulare County.

County Governance Structure:

There are no changes in the County's governance structure.

Number/Composition of Employees -- CWS:

The CWS Division is staffed with 243 employees at the present time. The original self assessment document identified staffing numbers at 218 employees. The CWS Division structure is as follows:

1. **Five CWS Units** are responsible for providing services in the following programs: Emergency Response (ER), Voluntary Family Maintenance; Court-ordered Family Maintenance (FM), Family Reunification (FR) and Permanency Planning (PP). Within these units there is: an Emergency Response Team, which includes court report writers and Emergency Response workers; and, a Continuing Team which consists of Continuing workers who carry Family Maintenance, Family Reunification and Permanency Planning cases. **Both** teams have support staff consisting of Office Assistants, Case Worker Aides, Nurses and a Clinical Social Worker

2. **Specialized Unit: (Consists of the following)**

Screening Unit: This unit consists of a supervisor and five screeners who are responsible for handling the referrals reported through the county's Child Abuse Hotline. One change for this unit is the addition of an Office Assistant to help with filing and data inputting

Court Unit: There is no change to the structure of this Unit. Minor adjustments have been made to the duties of Court Representatives resulting from recommendations made by staff during the PQCR process.

Unit investigators: There are six unit investigators who are now housed with the Court Unit. The functions of these staff have not changed since the original self-assessment.

3. **Group Home Unit:** There is a minor change to the structure of this Unit since the last self-assessment. A team of three new social workers, clinical staff, and a team leader, has case management responsibility for children in Rate Classification Level (RCL) #12-14 group home placements. The clinicians have assumed a direct liaison relationship with the group homes to more closely track the progress of county children in these high-level residential placements.

4. **Adoptions Unit:**

There are changes to the structure of this unit. The Adoptions Unit is comprised of two lead Adoption workers, and seven Adoption social workers. This unit also has six social workers that carry a caseload of Permanency Planning (PP) cases and who are supervised by a Team Leader. The Adoptions Unit also includes: one registered nurse, a Family Preservation Clinician, one Paralegal who helps adoptive families through the paperwork required for adoption, two Caseworker Aides, and four clerical staff. Additionally, two staff, funded through PSSF, provides post-adoptive support to families and children. Their work is consistent with the county's goals to provide services and support to children and families who have, or will exit, the system. PSSF funded staff, a Clinician and a social worker, work closely with the Adoption Social Workers to provide extra support to families where the adoption is threatening to disrupt. The supportive services include; adoptive parent recruitment, parenting skills training and support, preparation of families for the adoptive home study and training.

5. **Administrative Branch:** The staffing pattern for the division's administrative team has changed with the addition of several staff, including one administrative specialist who supervises the staff analysts, three new analysts, the quality improvement unit with an analyst and two social workers, and the CWS/CMS administrator.

6. **Relative Assessment Unit:**

Based on findings and recommendations in the County's last PQCR, a new unit was developed to conduct the relative home assessments. The unit consists of a Team Leader and six social workers who have responsibility for all initial assessments and the annual reassessments of relatives for placement. They are responsible for assessing the suitability of the homes of relatives and the ability of

the relatives to meet the requirements for home approval/certification. The Relative Assessment unit is co-located with the Foster Care Licensing unit.

7. **Foster Care Licensing Unit:** There are no changes to this unit, though resulting from the last PQCR was the joining of the Relative Assessment unit with the Foster Care Licensing unit under the same Unit Manager. The Licensing unit provides the foster care licensing functions for Tulare County and is responsible for the recruitment, training, and retention of county foster parents. This unit is composed of a Lead Worker, five social workers along with clerical support.
8. **Training Unit:** Since PQCR, a new training unit has been implemented that includes two CWS training officers and one Team Leader. As well, the Division houses training mentors who are employed through the Central California Training Academy.
9. **Quality Improvement Unit:** As a result of the PQCR, the CWS Division created a Quality Improvement Unit that is staffed with an Analyst and two social workers. This unit will work closely with the Training unit and the Policies and Procedures workgroup.
10. **Permanency Planning Unit:** In the upcoming realignment of CWS, Permanency Planning workers will be added to the existing PP workers in Adoptions so that all permanency planning cases will go to PP workers. Some current Continuing workers will be diverted to help comprise the expanded PP Unit and to help equalize caseloads. Continuing workers will then carry only FR and FM cases. The Relative Assessment and Foster Care Licensing Units will also be realigned. They will come under the Adoptions Unit Manager. This will help the Division house like functions in central locations and will lead to greater consistency in programs/services. Any training and/or policy that are impacted by this realignment will be reviewed once the realignment has been completed.

Number/composition of employees: Probation

Since the initial SIP in 2004, the Probation Department increased staff personnel by fourteen (14) to make a total of 333 employees for the Department, with 12 assigned to administration, 17 to fiscal services, 139 to field services, and 165 to juvenile institutions.

As a result of the information gathered during the Peer Quality Case Review process, the Department added a supervision Officer position to the Placement Unit, which has decreased the average caseload size and allowed more case management time for the Officers. There are six (6) Deputy Probation Officer positions allocated as supervision officers for minors who have been removed from the custody of their parents and ordered placed into a group homes, foster homes, or the homes of suitable relatives/non-relatives, by the Juvenile Court, which is supervised by a supervisor. These six (6) Officers supervise approximately 150 minors in out-of-home placement.

Placement Unit: This Unit is responsible for arranging an appropriate placement, conducting monthly visits with the minors, parent(s) and care providers, making referrals for services, and case management services. The Officers' caseloads consist of group home placement, RCL 8-14; foster care; and suitable relative/non-relative placements, throughout the State. Officers and the supervisor network with mental health, managed care, CWS, schools, other probation departments and care providers to provide services to minors. In addition, this Unit does not have clerical support assigned to the Unit to assist with placement paperwork or typing six-month reviews. This is the responsibility of the Placement Officer.

One (1) of the six (6) assigned supervision officers, has been assigned the responsibility for assessing and clearing relatives/non-relatives identified as a possible placement option for minors who either have the possibility of being or who are ordered into out-of-home placement. This Officer performs the Suitable Relative/Non-Relative Extended Family Member home assessments. This Officer conducts the home assessment, completes the necessary paperwork, conducts the background checks and seeks exemptions when individuals have criminal convictions on a Live Scan Report, as well as carrying the Suitable Relative/Non-Relative Extended Family Member caseload.

Private Contractors:

The Division has increased the number of private contractors providing services to children and families in Tulare County. The Division will continue to collaborate with outside agencies to provide services to children and families.

Current Systemic Improvement Efforts – Child Welfare Services:

- **Structured Decision Making (SDM):**

Tulare County will begin implementation of the Structured Decision Making (SDM) tool during the summer of 2007. The county intends to roll out SDM in a series of short phases beginning with a Screening Unit pilot project in June 2007, followed shortly by implementation by the Emergency Response and Continuing teams. Staff trainings will begin in early May and roll forward in coordination with the implementation phases. The county will phase in the tool so that there is a process for learning and improvement to ensure that families are receiving the improved level of services that Structured Decision Making brings to implementation counties.

- **Differential Response (DR):**

In February 2007, following a Request for Application (RFA) process, Tulare County began contracting with three Family Resource Centers (FRC) to start up a Differential Response Demonstration Project. Differential Response allows for earlier, more comprehensive, and community based services to families who have had allegations of abuse or neglect. However, before families can begin to be referred by Tulare County to the FRCs a process needed to be created. A group consisting of the three Family Resource Centers, Tulare County CWS, and Strategies (Strengthening the Family Support Field – a State recognized consultation

organization) has been meeting to develop this process. The group has chosen a model serving Path 1 clients (Community Response directed towards families who have had an allegation but do not meet statutory definitions of abuse or neglect for Child Welfare Services). This group is currently working on developing a Multi-Disciplinary Team, a Differential Response referral form, mandated training for Providers, and outcomes/ evaluation measures. It is projected that services will begin by June 2007.

▪ **Wraparound:**

Child Welfare Services, in collaboration with Mental Health and Tulare County Probation, are working on the implementation of SB163 Wraparound Services. These County departments will partner with a community based organization to provide high-risk youth and their families an alternative to group home care. Wraparound is a family-centered, strength-based, needs-driven philosophy that is designed to promote reestablishing at-risk youth and families into community support systems. The goal for Wraparound is to create better outcome for young people and their families by assuring families at the center of the decision-making process.

Relevant Management Information Systems: The significant changes to report for this update are:

- The replacement of 100 CWS/CMS workstations that will be coming off the manufacturer's warranty.
- The procurement of 40 digital cameras and 15 stand-alone printers which will be used to print pictures of our clients.
- The use/renewal of SafeMeasures for tracking staff/unit/division performance.
- The implementation of the Concurrent County LAN Project. This project will enable CWS users to access Tulare County network data on their CWS/CMS workstations.
- The relocation of CWS staff (and associated computer equipment) from the old 100 E. Center building to a new facility located on Mooney Blvd in Visalia.

Relevant Management Information Systems: Probation (Refer to Exhibit 5)

As previously reported in the County Self-Reassessment, the Probation Department currently uses the JALAN System, which allows limited information retrieval and reporting capability. This has resulted in Departmental personnel requesting special report runs through the County MIS Department, or via COGNOS (report writing software). With the current system, it is difficult to create detailed reports or chart trends in tracking outcome measures.

The Placement Unit continues to utilize a stand-alone Microsoft Access database, which is updated weekly, without archival capability. In addition, the Unit tracks other outcome measure data requirements, such as parental, minor, and care provider visits in reunification cases, by

using individual field notes, which are then attached within the case file. This information is then hand tallied on a monthly basis and reported to the supervisor, who compiles the information and reports to the State using the FC23 Report Form. This requires a significant amount of time, which could be spent in the field working with juveniles and their families for the purposes of reunification or concurrent planning, if that was the permanent plan.

The Probation Department's proposal for a new case management system, called Automon, was approved by the Board of Supervisors on July 25, 2006. This is a web-based system that should allow easier statistical data collection and report generation, which will meet the need of the Probation Placement Unit in tracking outcomes, trends, and required statistical reports. Also, the report format will be compatible with state and federal regulations.

Improvement Goal No. 1 is to continue to implement the county approved Tulare County Department case management system. This will provide Probation with an automated case management system that will provide accurate, current and timely data. Having this data will help Probation to make better-informed decisions.

Improvement Goal No.2 is to allow Probation read-only access to specific CWS/CMS screens having information on minors crossing over into the Juvenile Justice System.

Probation:

As the Probation Department goes through the Self Assessment process; the Department understands the importance of collaboration between the minor and/or their family in developing a working case plan to either prevent removal, achieve reunification or permanency planning. The Department has begun to look at this practice and realizes the need for change. Probation plans on revamping the currently used case plan into something that is more individualized, strength based and family focused. In addition, it will be necessary to train staff and more emphasis will be made on working with the minor and family in developing case plans.

EXHIBIT 5

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|-----------------------|--|--------------------|---|
| <p>Systemic Factor:</p> <p>Improve Management Information Case Management System for <u>Probation</u>.</p> | | | | | | | |
| <p>County's Current Performance: Tulare County's Probation Department utilizes a variety of spreadsheets and a database program to provide record keeping, case management and statistical data. This business practice does not provide a method of collecting data easily nor does it allow accurate monitoring of information.</p> | | | | | | | |
| <p>Improvement Goal 1.0</p> <p>To continue to implement the County approved Tulare County Probation Department case management system.</p> | | | | | | | |
| <p>Strategy 1.1 - Continue with the conversion process.</p> | | | <p>Strategy Rationale - This will provide Probation with an automated case management system, which will provide accurate, current and timely data. This data will help Probation with making better-informed decisions.</p> | | | | |
| Milestone | 1.1.1 Reporting needs identified. | | Timeframe | Completed (11/30/04) | | Assigned to | Probation Administration with input from line staff |
| | 1.1.2 Management needs identified. | | | Completed (11/30/04) | | | Probation Administration |
| | 1.1.3 Develop and add to existing spreadsheets the necessary information required to enhance quality assurance and monitor compliance. | | | Target date June 2007 | | | Supervising Probation Officer |
| <p>Strategy 1.2 - Identify and develop training for Probation Staff.</p> | | | <p>Strategy Rationale - Training will provide Probation with the necessary information to navigate through the case management system to accurately input collected data and run reports.</p> | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|------------------|---|--------------------|--|
| Milestone | 1.2.1. Identify training needs. | Timeframe | Target date July 2007 and ongoing | Assigned to | Probation Administration |
| | 1.2.2 Provide training to staff. | | Target date August 2007 and ongoing | | Outside agency (Automon) to train Probation Staff to be trainers |
| <p>Improvement Goal 2.0 Allow Probation access to specific CWS/CMS screens of information pertaining to minors crossing over into the Juvenile Justice System.</p> | | | | | |
| <p>Strategy 2.1 - Determine the required data essential for Probation from CWS/CMS to make informed management decisions.</p> | | | <p>Strategy Rationale - The ability to collect and gather historical information relating to the minors and their families is necessary to case plan management. Further, assisting with the Health and Education Passports required to be provided to all caregivers within 30 days of placement.</p> | | |
| Milestone | 2.1.1 Ask other Probation Placement Units. | Timeframe | Completed (2/04) | Assigned to | Supervising Probation Officer |
| | 2.1.2 Conduct a feasibility study regarding inclusion of Probation into CWS/CMS system. | | Completed | | Probation and CWS collaboration |
| | 2.1.3 Review system developed and results of feasibility study to determine which system meets the identified needs the best. Prepare an APD for submission to State requesting approval and funding. | | Completed (1/31/05) | | Probation and CWS collaboration |
| | 2.1.4 Check on the status of the APD submitted to the State. | | Target date June 2007 and ongoing | | Probation and CWS collaboration |
| | 2.1.5 Training needs identified. | | Target date August 2007 and ongoing | | Supervising Probation Officer and MIS Director |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|------------------|---|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| | 2.1.6 Develop and implement quality assurance and monitoring capabilities. | | Target date September 2007 and ongoing | | Supervising Probation Officer |
| Improvement Goal 3.0 Increase the number of parental visits on a monthly basis to improve reunification efforts. | | | | | |
| Strategy 3.1 - Increase the percentage of parental visits by 5% over the next 6 months. | | | Strategy Rationale – Currently, Probation retains visitation information with parents, within the case field notes, which is then reported monthly, after each Probation Officer goes through their field notes. Developing an interim Access type program, until the case management system is implemented would allow this information to be readily available. This would allow Probation Officers more time to focus on those parents who are not participating in Probation visits to motivate their participation. | | |
| Milestone | 3.1.1 Explore the idea of using alternative office sites to conduct parental visits. | Timeframe | Completed (2/05) | Assigned to | Supervising Probation Officer |
| | 3.1.2 Parent Night | | Target date April 2007 and ongoing | | Supervising Probation Officer |
| | 3.1.3 Explore the idea of conducting parental visits during non-traditional office hours. | | Target date April 2007 and ongoing | | Supervising Probation Officer |
| <p>Discuss changes in identified systemic factors needed to further support the improvement goals. Improvement Goal 1.0 is critical in that Probation requires the capability to collect and report accurate statistical data in a manner to provide summary level Federal and State program measures that would serve as the basis for county self assessment reviews and track State and County performance over time. Probation is working with CDSS to collect meaningful data pursuant to ACL 04-57 using the Probation Foster Care Placement Monthly Caseload Statistical Report (FC23) and participating in a Pilot Program collecting similar data taking into consideration Probation’s population and the various reasons why a child’s placement or placement episode is terminated, which is unique to wards. Continued re-evaluation of the data may be required once the data is compiled and reported out for review.</p> | | | | | |

Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Improvement Goal 2.0 could be more easily accomplished by inclusion of Probation into the CWS/CMS. If this is not possible, the additional monies from Title IV-E need to be allocated to Probation for creation of a stand-alone reporting system. Notwithstanding, which system Probation ultimately uses, the need for increased training remains, which will require additional Title IV-E monies to be allocated for increased training costs.

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. The State needs to continue to work with Probation to develop an accurate method of collecting data on wards in out of home placement, establish baseline levels of performance, so that measuring improvement is possible. Also, there needs to be continued efforts to education CDSS regarding the similarities between dependents and wards, as well as the unique differences, so that there is a good understanding.

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

NA

Court Structure and Relationship:

The County continues to have a Court Unit that functions in a liaison capacity with CWS staff, County Counsel, the Juvenile Court, and court-appointed attorneys. Additionally, the judicial officers of the court continue a monthly Juvenile Dependency meeting in which court appointed attorneys, judicial court representatives, County Counsel and Child Welfare Services meet to discuss court related issues.

Process for Notification of Hearings:

The hearing notification process has not changed since the initial county self-assessment.

Case Planning and Review - CWS:

Tulare County has made minor adjustments to the case planning and review processes, which are addressed in this section of the report. Over the past year, Tulare County has made changes in the case planning process so children and families will participate in the development of their service plans. The Central California Training Academy has been providing training on family engagement to Unit Managers and Team Leaders. Unit Managers, Team Leaders and CWS line staff have been attending trainings on the case conferencing process. This shift, consistent with family-focused and strength-based practice, will allow staff and families to develop service goals and plans, to identify resources, and to mobilize tailored service and supports that will result in meaningful changes to child and family well-being. The aforementioned training, coupled with other practice strategies like Structured Decision-Making and Wraparound (described in another section of the Plan), will result in better outcomes for children and families.

Case Planning and Review – Probation:

As stated previously, the Probation Department is reviewing the way a Probation case plan is developed. A goal over the next year is to develop training for staff and supervisors to develop case plans that are completed in a manner that is based on a team effort, individualized for the minor and family, and strength based.

Foster/Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention:

Recruitment Efforts:

In May and June 2005 the County coordinated a media campaign to include television advertisements, newspaper advertisements and radio commercials to recruit foster parents. As a result, over 127 families expressed an interest in becoming foster parents with approximately 70% of those families attending orientations.

In fiscal year 2005/2006, Tulare County was awarded money from the state of California for recruitment of foster parents. This grant was to be used to recruit foster parents from the rural areas of the county. Contracts were signed with community-based organizations and these continued through fiscal year 2005/2006. The community-based organizations involved in this

project were Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Proteus, John Aguirre & Associates, and Woodlake Family Resource Center.

Retention of Foster Parents/Adoptive Parents:

CWS holds quarterly CWS/Foster Parent meetings, which allows an opportunity to share information and open a dialogue for concerns. Tulare County Licensing assists the Tulare County Foster Parent Association by providing a location and staff input at the monthly meetings. In addition, Tulare County continues to hold an annual Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner. This year's event included dinner, entertainment and childcare. There is also a CWS social worker in the licensing unit who works closely with the foster parent to identify the training needs of foster parent by seeking input from foster parents, as well as sending out a quarterly newsletter.

Placement Resources - CWS:

Due to placement challenges of children who are detained, the county entered into contracts with four foster parents to provide contract bed placements. These beds are utilized on an emergency and temporary basis when no other immediate placement can be found for minors with serious behavioral problems. Support services are provided to the child as needed by local service providers.

Within the past 6 months, ten beds for Intensive Treatment Foster Care (ITFC) placements became available to Tulare County Child Welfare Services through a Memorandum of Understanding with two foster family agencies that operate in the County. The county and providers face early challenges with the initial phase as they relate to training the foster parents and placement matching.

A Multi-Interdisciplinary Team (MIT) meets to review cases for minors whose behaviors are escalating and who may be in need of a higher level of placement. The MIT is composed of representatives from Child Welfare Services, Mental Health, and Tulare County Probation. The case reviews are designed to review child cases where behavioral issues are present and to determine an appropriate level of placement to stabilize the behaviors.

In addition, during fiscal year 2005/2006, the County requested technical support from the state to develop its Wraparound plan. It is anticipated that by the end of fiscal year 2007/2008 Wraparound service will be operating in Tulare County. Wraparound will support children and families in their homes, in the home of a relative or in the least restrictive setting possible.

Placement Resources - Probation:

The Department continues to utilize relative/non-relative extended family members, foster family agencies and group home placements based on the minor's needs. A lack of foster homes willing to work with delinquent minors is an on-going challenge. County licensed foster homes prefer to work with CWS and younger children rather than with older minors who have been adjudicated with criminal offenses. During this upcoming reporting period, it is the plan of the

Placement Supervisor to give a presentation to Foster Family agencies as to the role of Probation within the Juvenile Court system and the needs of the population of wards placed in a lower level of care.

Probation has utilized the Multi-Interdisciplinary Team (MIT) to review cases in which a minor's behavior has escalated and who may need additional resources to stabilize the existing placement or possibly need an appropriate level of out-of-home care placement.

Probation was a participating member of the Planning Committee for the county's Wraparound Plan. Wraparound will support the wards and their families to achieve reunification at a quicker rate and also avoid higher-level placements.

Quality Improvement – CWS:

Since the last report, the county has reviewed the recommendations of the Peer Quality Case Review process and used feedback from staff and peers to establish a Quality Improvement (QI) Team within Child Welfare Services. The county has implemented a Quality Improvement Team that will focus on periodic internal reviews of outcome and performance measures over time, evaluate current business processes/practices, identify training needs and participate in the development of policy and procedures.

Quality Improvement - Probation:

Currently, the Probation Department's Placement Unit supervisor conducts internal case reviews, evaluates current practices and determines the training needs. The Placement Unit supervisor obtains the appropriate services to meet those training needs. During the next year, the senior officer will develop the skills necessary to assist the supervisor with this task.

Probation utilizes the Judicial Review and Technical Assistance Team (JRITA) and CDSS for technical assistance, pertaining to state regulations. Also, Probation is audited annually by JRITA for Title IV-E compliance and implements the changes recommended by the Team, pursuant to state and federal regulation.

Newly Implemented Programs:

SB 969 Intensive Treatments Foster Care (ITFC):

Tulare County has added ITFC to the service array. The intent of ITFC is to provide an alternative to placement in a group home or psychiatric hospital, assist children in successfully transitioning to a lower level of care and to provide a therapeutic, yet family environment, for foster children.

ITFC is a short-term therapeutic intervention consisting of intensive counseling, case management, education, and supportive services. The key benefit of the program is the individualized nature of the services. ITFC staff proactively collaborates with county placement

staff to develop and work with specially trained foster families during the child's transition from a group home setting to the community or a lower level of placement.

Agency Collaboration:

Through collaboration with community partners and with the families themselves, it is the intent of CWS to use the strengths of families and communities to serve the needs of children alleged to be abused or neglected and to reduce the necessity for removing these children from their home.

County-Operated Shelter:

County staff and community partners explored the feasibility of developing an emergency shelter/receiving home. Site visits were made to Orangewood in Orange County and to the Valley of the Moon in Santa Rosa. A committee of community partners and County staff met to discuss licensing requirements, funding strategies, and programming for a shelter facility. The information received helped the committee understand the financing for a shelter facility and the licensing requirements. Ongoing discussions about the feasibility for such a project continued over several months. The committee reached several major conclusions that included:

- The program would require financial support. The two operations visited (Orangewood and Valley of the Moon) reported the need for ongoing fund-raising efforts to sustain their operations.
- The county should explore other placement options for high-need children like the Intensive Treatment Foster Care program.
- The county should focus on renewed foster parent recruitment, training, and retention efforts (see previous sections of this report for an expanded discussion of these continuing efforts).
- The county defines the size and the program of services.
- The county defines the population to be served.
- A private/public or other combination of partners is the best approach to developing the physical plant and a shelter program.
- Options to be explored are: a facility to house newly detained children and/or a facility that offers intensive short-term services for "high-needs" children.
- Additional strategies to expand the foster home resources available to staff. These may include: Family to Family, Case Conferencing, SDM, and Wraparound.

CWS' focus is on family engagement, working collaboratively with community-based organizations, building service delivery around prevention and early intervention to keep children at home or in the least restrictive level of care.

Countywide Prevention Activities and Strategies

The County advisory boards have been modified since the county self-assessment:

Integrated Children's Committee:

The integrated Children's Committee was a subcommittee of the HHS Advisory Board prior to the Agency restructuring. The newly created Children's Services Network has replaced this committee.

Children's Services Network (CSN):

The primary purpose of the CSN is to provide a forum for the exchange of information pertaining to issues, events, research, initiatives and programs affecting children and families in Tulare County. The Network's main focus is to assist in the work of planning bodies that review and identify system change, recognize gaps in services and formalize a seamless, integrated service delivery system for Tulare County children and families. Some of the Network's tasks include reviewing county plans, grant applications, pilot projects and assisting with the county three year Child Abuse Prevention Plan process. The Network is also the Board approved body to make funding recommendations for Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funds.

Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC):

The CAPC oversees Child Abuse Prevention grants including the Child Abuse Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT) grants, the County Children's Trust Fund (CTF), and the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grant. Funds from these grants are awarded through an annual Request for Proposal (RFP) process to community-based organizations to provide preventive services. Funds are typically used for parent education, domestic violence services, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Programs (C.A.N.), individual, family and group counseling, and Parent Leadership Programs. The CAPC provides Mandated Reporter training, conducts child abuse and neglect awareness campaigns, and coordinates seminars to educate the public and professional community about issues relating to child abuse and neglect throughout Tulare County

Promoting Safe & Stable Families (PSSF):

PSSF monies: fund preventive services designed to keep children at home; are used to develop alternative placements if children cannot remain safely in their home; and/or, supports services that allow children to return to their homes, if appropriate. The Joint Allocation Committee (a committee with combined membership from the CSN and the CAPC) is responsible for developing the RFP process, reading and reviewing all applications, making recommendations for funding, monitoring contract expenditures and performance of child abuse prevention funds including PSSF. PSSF funds are used for a wide range of prevention activities that augment CWS services and fill unmet needs. Prevention services include: Intensive Family Preservation Services; Respite Care Services for families who have recently been reunified with their children; Intensive Home-Visitation parenting education program, Differential Response family support program, and a post-adoptions program.

Agency Collaboration: Probation

Since the initial SIP in 2004, the Probation Department and HHSa have worked together to develop practices that lead to better communication and the gathering of information in a timely manner. The following are either Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), which are in place or will be in place in the future:

1. The Tulare County CHDP Program, Tulare County Child Welfare Services and Tulare County Probation Department has established a process for the current fiscal year for a Public Health Nurse for the Health Care Program for Children in Foster Care to be assigned to the Placement Unit to assist in gathering information from CWS/CMS, local health records and/or the probation file for the purposes of developing and updating the Health and Education Passport (HEP). Further, the Public Health Nurse provides assistance when care providers are having difficulties getting minors to their initial or annual CHDP exams. This has been a major component in getting HEP's completed on minors in out-of-home placement.
2. The Probation Department and Child Welfare Services (CWS) have developed a procedure to run CWS requests for criminal background history through the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) on potential relative/non-relative extended family member placements. This process has been beneficial for CWS in that they receive the necessary information quicker which decreases the time it takes to complete an assessment of a relative for possible placement.
3. The Probation Department and HHSa are working on an agreement to have an Eligibility Worker (EW) assigned to the Placement Unit. This EW will be housed within the same Probation Office as Placement. This will allow uniformity and team building between the agencies. In addition, it will open up the possibility for training opportunities for Probation regarding eligibility and AFDC application paperwork.
4. HHSa and the Probation Department entered into an agreement (7/1/06) that gives Probation the responsibility of the Criminal Record Exemption process prior to the placement of wards with relatives/non-related extended family members.

Programs and Strategies for the Future

Tulare County CWS is in the process of implementing new strategies and initiatives to provide an improved service delivery system for children and their families who are at-risk of abuse and neglect. Their new strategies/initiatives are as follows:

1. Structured Decision Making (SDM)

Tulare County will begin implementation of the Structured Decision Making (SDM) tool by the summer of 2007. CWS will roll out SDM in phases beginning with a Screening Unit pilot project in June 2007, followed shortly by implementation with of the Emergency

Response and Continuing teams. Staff trainings will begin in early May and roll out with the different functions noted above.

2. SB 163 Wraparound Services:

Child Welfare Services, in collaboration with Mental Health and Tulare County Probation, is working on the implementation of SB163 Wraparound Services. These county departments will partner with a community-based organization to provide high-risk youth and their families with an alternative to group home care. Wraparound is a family-centered, strength-based, needs-driven philosophy that is designed to promote linking high at-risk youth and families into community support systems.

3. Foster Parent Recruitment/Retention

To strengthen the relationship between CWS and foster parents, monthly meetings began during 2006. The purpose of the meetings is to open lines of communication, discuss issues of mutual concern, problem-solve together and build a working relationship. The initial meetings, as described earlier in this report, resulted in the identification of several areas for continued work between these partners.

Tulare County's foster parents stated the need for additional supports such as training and respite care. Consistent with the desire to involve others in the development of case plans, foster parents will also be invited to participate in the case planning process. Foster parents have a mentoring program where newly licensed foster parents are supported by experienced foster parents. Formalizing the mentoring program is one of the supports foster parents desire and will help with retaining foster parents.

4. Differential Response: Children are safer and families are stronger when communities work together.

Tulare County has contracted with three Family Resource Centers (FRCs) to begin implementation of a Differential Response Demonstration Project in 2006/2007. The County and the FRCs are working together to develop viable DR processes. They are currently working on developing a Multi-Disciplinary Team, a Differential Response referral form, mandated training for Providers, and outcomes/ evaluation measures. Services will begin by June 2007 and continue through the 2007-2008-program year. Currently, a model has been selected that targets Path 1 families (families who have had an allegation, but do not meet statutory definitions of abuse or neglect for Child Welfare Services). The Demonstration project may expand to serving Path 2 families (families who have had an allegation and meet statutory definitions of abuse and neglect, however, an assessment determines a child's risk level as low to moderate) at a later date. The creation of a solid working relationship between the County and its Differential Response partners will provide a community approach to help meet the needs of children and families.

Update of System Improvement Plan (SIP):

Below is a summary of the activities for each of the areas selected for focus in 2004 SIP. The System Improvement Plan Committee met and discussed the County's performance for these outcome indicators and recommended methods for improving performance under each outcome and systemic factor.

Goal: Improve Management Information System (MIS)

- Data input into CWS/CMS by CWS staff is evaluated monthly. Report information is now taken from SafeMeasures. CWS Unit Managers and Team Leaders regularly access SafeMeasures to review individual worker, team and unit performance. A CWS Analyst prepares a quarterly analysis for the Unit Managers to aid in their review of the information.
- A second CWS Trainer has been hired. The county continues to identify training needs. The Tulare County Induction Training curriculum was updated and presented to new social workers in February 2006. At this time, the Induction curriculum is undergoing revision to align it with the statewide standardized core.
- A policy on "Data Input Accuracy and Timeliness" was approved and is in place. Tulare County has utilized the Central California Training Academy to bring additional training to CWS staff.
- The Quality Improvement (QI) Team began operations in August 2006. The team will have responsibility for tracking outcome measures and performance over time.

Goal: Improve Service Array

- The SIP Planning Committee reviewed the matrix of available services by geographic area. Many needs and barriers were identified. The subcommittee agreed that more work is needed at the community level before a feasible tool can be developed.

Goal: Reduce the number of foster care placements (3B Fed and 3C entry cohort) Ongoing

- Tulare County has conducted two major foster parent recruitment campaigns in the last year.
 - The first was one directed by County Licensing staff. This effort used a multi-media approach: newsprint recruitment as well as the use of television and radio spots. Licensing staff conducted outreach activities at several locations to reach potential foster parents. The results of the recruitment efforts resulted in minor gains in the number of licensed foster care homes.

- A second campaign was undertaken by community partners in a contract to conduct outreach activities in various areas of the county. This “non-traditional” approach has resulted in some positive growth in the number of foster parents licensed through the county.
- Areas recommended for future work under the System Improvement Plan are:
 - The development of more training targeted to the needs of foster parents and relative caregivers. Potential ways to accomplish this may include web-based training, on-line support/chat line, developing and maintaining a resource library for foster parents/relative caretakers.
 - Develop retention strategies for foster parents. Improve the customer service skills of CWS staff, have a closer working relationship with the foster parent association, have regular communication with foster parents via meetings, trainings and information on what is new in CWS.
 - Formalizing and expanding the foster parent mentoring model to include relative caregivers.

Goal: Frequency of Child Contacts (Timely Social Worker Contacts- 2C)

- Unit Managers and Team Leaders use Safe Measures to regularly assess team and individual worker performance for this measure. Unit Managers have assigned Team Leaders the responsibility to review and monitor child contacts. These reviews are monthly and have resulted in improved performance for this measure. Several technical enhancements have been made to the data entry process for more accurate entry of child contacts into CWS/CMS.

Goal: Feasibility Study of a Receiving Home

- County staff and community partners completed a feasibility study as outlined in the SIP for developing an emergency shelter/receiving home.
- Information collected helped the SIP Planning Committee understand the financing of a shelter facility, licensing regulations and programming. The state may not be adding new counties to the list of approved County operated shelter care programs.
- It will take a community-wide effort to establish a receiving home in Tulare County.⁷

Update of System Improvement Plan (SIP): Probation

Below is a summary of activities for each of the areas selected for focus in the 2004 SIP.

Goal: Improve Management Information System (MIS) (a systemic factor):

Ongoing

- Since the 2004 SIP, the Probation Department has identified the need for a new case management system to provide timely and accurate data relating to the outcome measures as they pertain to wards in out-of-home placement.
- The Department went through a selection process of potential vendors to provide a case management system and chose one that will meet the growing needs of the Department.
- The Board of Supervisors approved the proposal of Probation's new case management system on July 25, 2006.
- The Department is identifying the training needs and, in the future, will train staff on how to input data correctly into the new system.

Goal: Develop a better method of obtaining information between Probation and CWS when minors crossover into the Juvenile Justice System:

Ongoing

- Probation asked Probation Placement Units in other counties regarding their access to CWS/CMS.
- Probation and MIS conducted a feasibility study regarding Probation access to CWS/CMS.
- An APD was prepared and submitted to the state requesting approval and funding in January 2005.
- Should the APD be approved, Probation will identify the training needs of their staff and the quality assurance and monitoring capabilities of the new system.

Goal: Monthly Parental visits with Probation:

Ongoing

- During the PQCR, it became apparent how important visits are between the ward and their parents and their inclusion the development of the case plan.
- Probation identified challenges of visits with parents and suggestions to increase compliance were provided.

Plan for Current System Improvement Plan (SIP):

CWS continues to focus on how the delivery of services to children/families can be improved in Tulare County. CWS continues to concentrate and emphasize the importance of the changes currently being made and those that will yet be made in the future. This shift of thinking to be more family-focused, of collaborating with community partners to provide more prevention and early intervention services to children/families at-risk of abuse or neglect will have a positive impact on children and families in Tulare County, of being more inclusive in our business practices with children, their parents, extended family and caregivers, whether foster parents or relative caretakers, of the positive changes a new CWS structure, including additional staff, and new initiatives will bring to our service delivery system.

The System Improvement Plan Committee will meet in the future on a quarterly basis to review and discuss the progress or lack of progress that has been made on these measures and new initiatives.

Exhibit 6

County Self Assessment Update 2006

Executive Summary

Child Welfare Services:

The Tulare County California Child and Family Service Review Self-Reassessment report, dated May 2006, provides information specific to Outcome and Accountability measures as well as local system characteristics required by AB 636.

This reassessment report is structured pursuant to the AB 636 guidelines issued by the state. There are four focus areas as well as a summary. The four focus areas are:

1. Demographic Profile and Outcomes Data: This section includes County Data Report information compiled and provided by the state. It also includes child welfare participation rates, outcome indicators, process measures, and caseload demographics. An analysis on each of these is included in this area. This section also includes a discussion of the demographics of the general population and a profile of the County's education system.

2. Public Agency Characteristics: This section describes recent changes in the County, community, and the child welfare environment. It includes a description of the child welfare services agency, and employees.

3. Systemic Factors: Federally identified systems involved in the delivery of CWS services are discussed in this section. It includes relevant management information systems, Tulare County's Quality Improvement efforts, licensing of foster family/adoptive family homes, recruitment and retention of foster parents, the service array for Tulare County, staff training, and agency collaborations. The current system reform efforts are included in this section for reference.

4. Prevention Activities and Strategies: This section discusses current countywide primary prevention efforts and strategies to improve outcomes for high-risk populations.

Quarterly Outcome and Accountability County data reports show areas of strength as well as areas of weakness for Tulare County. Changes between the baseline year (January 2002) and June 2005 reflect the progress, or lack thereof, in Tulare County. Each of the outcomes has been addressed in this report to assess how the delivery of child welfare services impacts the outcomes on the above indicators. In summary:

- In Safety Outcome 1A and 1B, Tulare County is operating on par or better than the State.
- The lack of Tulare County data for Safety Outcome 1C indicates the county's need to utilize CWS/CMS to document reports of abuse and/or neglect in foster care.

- In Safety Outcome 2A (Recurrence of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed), Tulare County was approximately a 2% higher rate of recurrence than the State.
- In Safety Outcome 2B, Tulare County has a higher compliance rate than the state average for immediate responses. However, the 10-day response rates are well beneath the State's performance, by approximately 15%.
- In Outcome 2C, Timely social worker visits with child, Tulare County is operating at a compliance rate of nearly 4% higher than the State.
- Permanency and Stability Outcome 3E and 3A, Length of time to exit foster care to reunification, shows Tulare County on par with the statewide average.
- In Outcome 3D and 3A, Length of time to exit foster care to adoption, Tulare County continues to perform consistently ahead of the statewide averages.
- Outcome 3B and 3C, Multiple Foster Care Placements, shows Tulare County to have fewer children in stable placements than the State. Tulare County is approximately 4% less on both the Federal and State measures.
- Outcomes 3F and 3G, Percent of re-entries, shows Tulare County performing slightly below the statewide average using the Federal measure, but slightly above the statewide average using the State measure.
- For Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 4A, Tulare County is operating very close to the statewide average for placement with SOME and ALL siblings.
- In Outcome 4B, Foster care placement in least-restrictive setting, Tulare County shows a need for improvement, placing with relatives as an initial placement only 12.7% of the time (compared to 18.4% statewide) and as the primary placement 29.5% of the time (compared to 36.9% statewide).
- Outcome 4E, Rate of ICWA placement preferences, shows Tulare County is operating on par with the state in placing an American Indian child with a relative or with a non-related Indian family.
- Since 2001-2002, Tulare County has shown improvement on all measures of Outcome 8A: the number of children transitioning to self-sufficient adulthood, the increased number of children with a high school diploma, the number enrolled in college/higher education and the number of children who received ILP services.

Many steps are currently underway or being explored to address areas of weakness in Tulare County's Outcome Indicators. Some examples of these efforts are:

- Safety Outcome 2A: structural changes within CWS to provide more front-end services as well implementation of SDM over the next year should help improve our statistics in this area.
- Permanency and Stability Outcome 3C: In 2005/2006, Tulare County used Outcome Improvement funds to contract with community partners to assist in the recruitment of new foster family homes throughout the County. We have reapplied for these funds for the upcoming year. In addition, efforts to improve current foster parent retention are being explored; a survey of current foster parents on how Tulare County is providing/not providing for their needs should be distributed shortly.

- **Child and Family Well-Being Outcome 4B:** Tulare County is in the process of putting together our Wraparound Plan to submit to the State. As a Wraparound county, we will provide a means for placing fewer children in Group Home placements.

Specific measures and our strategies for improvement will be more fully addressed in the subsequent State-required System Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP will become Tulare County’s roadmap for reforming the child welfare services system and is the next step in the evolving process that is envisioned to be a three-year cyclical process leading to continuing improvement on the set of outcome indicators outlined above.

Strategies for the Future – Child Welfare Services

A number of systemic reform efforts continue to move forward in the County as it builds on the development of an integrated and coordinated service delivery system that is responsive to the needs of children and families. Child abuse is a community concern, thus we realize the need to continuously monitor and support change that leads to improved accountability so that we respond to the needs of those we serve. Planned initiatives continue to be explored and implemented as described below:

- **Family-to-Family Initiative:** The County plans to introduce this initiative as a model in working with families in a strength based and family centered way,
- **Structured Decision Making:** The County has had its training with staff and is ready to begin implementation of this risk assessment tool. The model will be in operation beginning in June 2007.
- **Team Decision Making:** With the implementation of Family To Family over the next year, Tulare County will implement team decision-making.
- **Wraparound Services:** The County’s Wraparound plan was submitted and approved by the state, with implementation planned for November 2007.

Strategies for the Future - Probation

During the self-assessment and self re-assessment, it continues to be imperative that the Probation Department has a means to measure outcomes when dealing with minors and families. Therefore, the Probation Department is in the process of implementing a new case management system, which will increase the ability to accurately report data information, provide report information to the State in a timely manner and track compliance driven requirements.

Probation continues to work with CWS in building bridges and cooperation with a population of juveniles who have been in both systems. As understanding between the agencies grows as to the unique function each has and most importantly as to the share function and values each has, youth will be better served, with better quality outcomes, through better application of services

and resources. The level of cooperation and communication between the agencies has expanded dramatically during the preceding 24 months.

The positive relationship will continue to expand with the implementation of Wraparound within the County. The process brings Probation, CWS, and Mental Health together in creation of a Wraparound program. This will also have a positive affect on Probation relationship with the community based organizations, which are also involved in the process.

Probation, in conjunction with UC Davis' program of expanded education for Probation Officers in the area of placement will be participating in an upcoming regional training for Probation Placement Officers. Though limited in extent, the quality of instruction has so far proven to be an excellent resource for Probation, which does not have easy access to the Regional Training Center, nor the resources of CWS's parent agency to put on training.

Probation will continue to develop better procedures for case plan development. It is important to obtain input from the minor and family during this process. Also, it is important to individualize the case plan based on family strengths, as to address the individual needs of the minor and family.

**Tulare County
System Improvement Planning Committee**

Aspira Foster Family Services

Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC)

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

Central California Training Academy (CCTA)

City of Porterville

City of Woodlake

College of the Sequoia's

Central Valley Regional Center (CVRC)

Dinuba Mennonite Church

Family Healthcare Network

Family Services of Tulare County

First 5 – Tulare County

Goshen Family Resource Center

Kaweah Delta District Hospital

Lindsay Family Resource Center

Parenting Network

Porterville Youth Services

Synchrony of Visalia

Tulare County Office of Education

Tulare Youth Services Bureau

TulareWORKS

Tulare Youth Advisory Council

Tule River Tribal Council

Turning Point

Woodlake Family Resource Center

Tulare County Alcohol & Other Drugs

Tulare County Child Welfare Services

Tulare County Counsel

Tulare County Health Department

Tulare County Health & Human Services

Tulare County Juvenile Court

Tulare County Licensed Foster Parents

Tulare County Mental Health

Tulare County Prevention Services

Tulare County Probation

