

RECOMMENDATIONS

Senate Bill (SB) 160 requires this report to include recommendations for a second phase of study to determine how FFA and non-relative FFH placements are and should be utilized to meet the needs of children and families. The second phase is to include, at a minimum, the identification and comparison of (a) county and FFA standards of practice for certification or licensure and oversight of homes and the services and supports provided to parents, (b) the criteria counties use to determine whether to place children into a FFA or non-relative FFH, (c) how often and why counties place children into FFA homes when the child is assessed as needing a FFH placement, (d) the reasons that foster parents choose to enroll and remain with the county or a FFA, and (e) the outcomes for children placed out of home in these facilities, both during the placement and after they have left placement. Based on an analysis of the data presented in this report, CDSS has developed the following specific recommendations for further exploration and analysis in phase two of this study.

- Data presented throughout this report provides a picture that there are minor differences in the kind of children placed in FFAs/FFHs. Because of the similarities, the question arises whether there is a distinction in the placement types. What are the differences in foster parents, board and care provided, and level of supervision and services between the two placement types?
- There are currently differing types of oversight of FFHs and FFAs. What, if any, difference does the type of oversight make in outcomes for children in these placements?
- The CDSS resumed complaint investigations of FFAs following the passage of SB 933. Based on the complaints and subsequent investigations received, is there a need to change policy, provide additional training to providers, or to change the oversight function related to FFAs?
- Foster family agencies are currently regulated by CDSS, but differ from other licensing categories in many ways. Are they being regulated in the most effective way?
- Survey data contained in Figure 44 elicited that the counties' most often selected reason for choosing a particular placement type was that no appropriate relative placement was available. Now that the Kin-GAP Program has been implemented, have reason(s) for selecting a placement type changed? What is the effect, if any, of the Kin-GAP Program on children placed in a FFA or FFH?

- The data presented in Figure 5 indicates that African-American children represent 36 percent of the foster care population, 34 percent in FFHs, and 29 percent in FFAs, while the statewide population of African-Americans represent only 7 percent. Why are African-American children over-represented in foster care and these placements? Are children of color having different lengths of stay than Caucasian children? Which ethnicity stays longest?
- The representative sample data presented in Figure 38 shows that the number of county-issued FFH licenses fluctuated during the period studied for this report. What is the cause of the increase or decrease in number of county issued FFH licenses? Are the fluctuations simply the normal fluctuations associated with children entering and leaving these placement types? Are the fluctuations associated with some other event, such as policy or reporting changes?
- Survey data contained in Figure 44 indicates probation departments first consider placement with a relative when choosing either a FFA or FFH. The survey data indicates CWS agencies first consider placement with a relative when placing a child to a FFH, but for placements to a FFA consider whether there is an appropriate home available to accept the placement. Are the needs of CWS-supervised children significantly different from probation-supervised children to cause CWS agencies to first consider placement in a FFA or FFH rather than placement with a relative?
- The statewide data for December 1999 contained in Appendix B regarding placement of probation-supervised children out of county or out of state reveals 46 percent of probation-supervised children are placed out of county and 8 percent are placed out of state. Why do counties place a large percent of children out of county or out of state? To what kind of placement type do counties primarily place? What needs to be done to in-state FFAs and FFHs so that children can remain in their home county?
- Because FFAs certify the homes in which they place children, placement data and practices are not as well known for these entities. What additional data can be discovered about these placement types? What process or procedures should be developed and implemented to improve the reporting and collection of data regarding FFAs?
- Data presented in Figures 19 and 20 regarding the number of prior placements a child in a FFA or FFH experiences reveals that many children move often while in these placement types. What are the reason(s) for a child having 6 or more placements; why 21 placements? Do more placements correspond to length of stay and/or age at first placement? Does the smaller number of prior placements for probation-supervised children relate to the length of stay and/or reason for removal? What service(s) can be provided to a child in a FFA or FFH to reduce the number of placements?

- County survey responses regarding a child's immediate prior placement contained in Figure 51 raises the question: does a child's immediate prior placement influence the supervising agency's choice in placing a child in a FFA or FFH? For example, the data indicates for probation-supervised children in a FFA that a child would most likely have a FFA placement because they are coming from an out-of-home placement as opposed to coming from their parents' home.
- Foster family agencies have many certified family homes (CFHs) to which they can place a child. By virtue of their unique operation, FFAs can move a child from CFH to CFH within the same agency. These movements among a FFA's CFHs count as one placement under existing data collection methods as the count is connected to the FFA and not each CFH. As such, there are questions as to the accuracy of the numbers presented in this report regarding prior placements in view of a FFA's ability to move children among its homes. Are the numbers of prior placements for children placed with a FFA an accurate representation of the actual number of placements for a child placed with a FFA?
- The rates paid to FFAs and non-relative FFH providers differ greatly. However, the data contained in this report demonstrates very little difference in the kind of children served or the type of services provided. Does the FFA rate really buy better care and supervision? What exactly are FFAs providing in the way of services that are not provided by FFHs? Do the rate structures have an effect on recruitment and training of foster parents?
- Data presented on pages 38-40 regarding children in ITFCs reveals a small population of children receive services via this placement type. Data regarding outcomes indicate few positive outcomes for these children despite the provision of intensive services. With the expansion of programs over the years which provide intensive services and alternatives to group care (e.g. wraparound), what role, if any, should ITFCs have in the provision of services to foster children in the continuum of care?
- What is known about children who leave FFA and FFH placement types? Where do these children go when leaving their placement in a FFA or FFH? How many emancipate out of foster care from a FFA or FFH? Where do they go? What are the outcomes for children who leave these placements?
- As revealed in the data in Figures 24, 25, 26 and 27 regarding length of stay, over 40 percent of children in these placements have been in their current placement for more than 12 months. What are the reasons for long term placements over 12 months? What factors contribute to the difference in length of stay between FFAs and FFHs? Fifty-seven percent of CWS-supervised children placed in a FFH and 70 percent of CWS-supervised children placed with a FFA had been in their current placement less than 12 months. What factors contribute to shorter lengths of stay for those children?

- Many children enter foster care at an early age and grow up in an out-of-home placement. Initially adjudicated a W&I 300 dependent, a number of foster care children become known to the juvenile justice system following run-away episodes or criminal activity and become "converted" to W&I 601/602 dependency, supervised by a county probation department. What number of children who enter foster care as a W&I 300 dependent convert to a W&I 601/602 dependent? At what average age does this "conversion" occur? What was the child's placement at the time of conversion? What was the case plan and/or treatment goal for these children? What services provided were being provided?
- Data regarding the number of children in adoptive placements was not available for inclusion in the first phase of this study. In order to understand more fully the out of home experience for children in a FFA or FFH, information about adoption and guardianship efforts should be obtained in the second phase of this study. Questions such as: how many of the FFAs and FFHs were permanency-planning homes; what are the barriers to adoption and legal guardianship; what effects, if any, are seen regarding concurrent planning; and where are children more likely to be adopted from, FFA or FFH, and why?
- There is a need to capture data regarding children who are clients of a Regional Center and simultaneously eligible for federal foster care (dual agency). How many children are dual agency children? Where are these children placed? What percentage are placed in FFAs and FFHs?

A P P E N D I X D O C U M E N T S

**FOR A COPY OF THE APPENDIX DOCUMENTS, PLEASE CONTACT THE
FOSTER CARE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT BUREAU AT (916) 324-5809.**