

County of Santa Clara
Clerk of the Board
Boards & Commissions
Social Services Advisory Commission




SSAC-CSFC-111506

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Board Clerk I

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Supervising Board Clerk, Boards
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DATE: November 15, 2006

TO: Supervisor James T. Beall, Jr., Chairperson
Supervisor Don Gage, Vice-Chairperson
Children, Seniors & Families Committee

FROM: 
Phyllis Perez
Clerk of the Board

SUBJECT: Statement of Concern on Disproportionate Representation of Children of Color in
Santa Clara County Child Welfare System

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Accept Statement of Concern on Disproportionate Representation of Children of Color in
Santa Clara County Child Welfare System from the Social Services Advisory Commission
(SSAC).

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Acceptance of the Statement of Concern has no fiscal impact to the General Fund.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The report notifies the Board of Supervisors of the significance of the problem of over-representation of children of color in the Child Welfare System.

BACKGROUND

Over the past several years, the Commission received information regarding the disproportionate representation of children of color in the County Child Welfare System. The Commission met with the Child Abuse Council's (CAC) Children of Color Task Force and formed a Unified Children of Color Task Force (UCCTF), which includes representatives from the Social Services Agency (SSA), the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS), the Offices of the Board of Supervisors, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Juvenile Welfare Office of the Ombuds, San Jose State University (SJSU), community-based service organizations, and concerned citizens. UCCTF focuses on efforts to determine how best to address this disparity with the goal of reducing the over-representation of children of color in the Child Welfare System.

At its February 24, 2006 annual Retreat, the Commission identified that recommending policy and practice changes that will ultimately reduce the over-representation of children of color in the Child Welfare System is a priority, and included the priority in their Work Plan. Since then, the Commission has reviewed and discussed reports and data provided by DFCS, requested and received information from SSA at a Direct Services Committee meetings and SSAC meetings, and discussed various strategies to better understand the issues.

Subsequently, the Commission reviewed the report prepared by SJSU entitled "An Evaluation of Factors Related to the Disproportionate Representation of Children of Color in Santa Clara County's Child Welfare System: Child Welfare Practices and Ethnic/Racial Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System"; the Santa Clara County System Improvement Plan Narrative 9-22-03 v3 developed by DFCS; and a report from the UCCTF, dated January 2006.

Information that was reviewed indicates that African Americans represent 2.8 percent of the general child population and 10.9 percent of all first entries into care for five days or more during the baseline period (2002–2003). Over the past three years, the proportion of first entries for these children has typically been in the 10 percent range. The County's most current performance (2005) was 9.7 percent.

Additionally, Hispanic/Latino children represent 35.5 percent of the general child population and 59.8 percent of first entries into care for five days or more during the baseline period. Over the past three years, the proportion of first entries for these children has been most typically in the 57 percent range. The County's most current performance (2005) was 56.7 percent.

The "Unified Children of Color Task Force January 2006 Data" report suggests that poverty alone does not account for the disproportionate representation of children of color in out-of-home placement.

At its September 27, 2006 meeting, the Commission voted unanimously, with three members absent, to forward a Policy Statement and data relating to the over-representation of children of color in the Child Welfare System to the Board of Supervisors.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

The Board of Supervisors will not have the opportunity to review the Commission's concerns regarding the issue of over-representation of Children of Color in the CWS.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

- a. The Deputy Clerk, SSAC, will notify the SSAC of the action taken by the CSFC.
- b. If approved by CSFC, the Deputy Clerk will forward the recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

ATTACHMENTS

- Commission's Statement of Concern

**Social Services Advisory Commission
Statement of Concern**

Whereas, the Social Services Advisory Commission of Santa Clara County, with the continuous input from professionals, stake-holders, providers and residents of Santa Clara County, has extensively interviewed, inquired and studied, during the last several years, the extreme overrepresentation of children of color within the Social Service system; African Americans represent 2.8 percent of the general child population and 10.9 percent of all first entries into care for 5 days or more during the baseline period (2002-2003); Over the past three years, the proportion of first entries for these children has typically been in the 10 percent range; The County's most current performance (2005) was 9.7 percent; Hispanic/Latino children represent 35.5 percent of the general child population and 59.8 percent of first entries into care for 5 days or more during the baseline period; Over the past three years, the proportion of first entries for these children has been most typically in the 57 percent average; The County's most current performance (2005) was 56.7 percent; and **Whereas**, during this time in spite of the knowledge and seeming concern of the professionals and providers, the current state has been consistent overrepresentation; and **Whereas**, the current state of overrepresentation of children of color is grave; and **Whereas**, the institution of the Social Service system of Santa Clara County appears to not be able to ameliorate the problem in any significant way; It is hereby resolved: that the Social Services Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors of Santa Clara County comprehensively and with due diligence take new and significant actions to seek clear improvement for the status of children of color.