

**County of Santa Clara**  
**Social Services Agency**  
Department of Family and Children's Services



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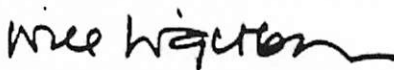
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Prepared by: Mary D. Patterson  
Special Assistant for  
Children's Services  
Doug Southard  
Director, Children's  
Shelter

Submitted by: Norma Doctor Sparks  
Director, Department of  
Family and Children's  
Services

DATE: August 18, 2004

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

FROM:   
Will Lightbourne  
Agency Director, Social Services Agency

SUBJECT: DFCS Pilot Program Implementation Plan

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Accept this report on the implementation plan for a pilot program to improve the well-being of children and families involved in the child welfare system or at risk of involvement.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

Not Applicable

### **CONTRACT HISTORY**

None

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

At the May 19, 2004 meeting of the Children, Seniors and Families Committee, the Social Services Agency presented information on two potential alternative uses of the Children's Shelter facility. This report presents an implementation plan for the alternative uses.

### **BACKGROUND**

As directed by the Children, Seniors and Families Committee in June 2003, a task force of community stakeholders and staff from County agencies was formed to recommend potential alternative uses of the County Children's Shelter facility. The Shelter Use Committee met from September 2003 through January 2004 and its recommendations were presented to the Children, Seniors and Families Committee in February. Additional information on potential alternative uses was presented to the Committee in May and June 2004.

The Board of Supervisors, during its Fiscal Year 2005 budget hearings conducted in June, approved the implementation of two program ideas recommended by the Shelter Use Committee. The Board allocated \$240,000 in County General Fund dollars in FY 2005 to support this effort.

The Shelter Use Committee identified two major needs of children and families involved in the child welfare system or at risk of involvement: family and caregiver strengthening resources and educational supports for children. In this regard, Committee members were aligned with leadership at the State level and in Santa Clara County, who have been working over the past several years to design meaningful reforms that better address these needs. Both

the County's redesign of the Department of Family and Children's Services, and the State's Program Improvement Plan reflect a stronger emphasis on strengthening families and promoting educational success of foster youth. The federal and state governments are holding counties accountable for outcome measures in the three areas of Safety, Permanency and Well-Being; the well-being measures specifically address children's mental health and educational success.

The Shelter Use Committee's idea for an educational support program included assessment, tutoring, assistance to families in navigating school systems and linkages to services. To strengthen family mental health, the Committee recommended including assessment, therapy with in-home support, and linkages to other services. Services need to be family-centered and strengths-based and mental health services should promote reunification and prevent re-entry into the system.

The Committee made special mention of the need to make available a continuum of services to children and their families that reaches into the neighborhoods where they live. Services offered at a County facility such as the Children's Shelter can only go so far in meeting the needs of some families. To be most effective, services supporting children, families and caregivers need to be available in the communities where they live, work, play, learn and grow.

The implementation plan attached proposes a phased-in approach, and one pilot program to better assess and meet the mental health, behavioral, developmental and educational needs of children and their families. Establishing the pilot as one program will streamline coordination and make better use of limited resources.

The program will phase in by age group, beginning with younger children, ages six to ten. A narrowed target population will allow more methodical planning in the limited timeframe, and more focused evaluation of the pilot. Program planning for children ages zero to five years will begin once the county's FIRST 5 Commission releases its findings and recommendations from the research it is currently undertaking regarding best practices in this field, expected in February 2005. During Phase Two, both the FIRST 5 findings and the Phase One pilot program evaluation results will be used to plan expansion for children of all ages in the later phases of implementation.

**CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION**

Failure to accept the report could result in inaction on the proposed alternative uses of the Children's Shelter facility.

**STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL**

The Clerk of the Board will follow the usual procedures for a report of this type.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Pilot Program Plan (Miscellaneous)

# **Improving Children's Well-Being**

## **Plan for Proposed Pilot Program**

### **Rationale**

- The federal Adoption and Safe Families Act requires child welfare systems to measure selected outcomes for children and families. Mandated outcome measures in the area of well-being are to meet the mental health and education needs of children
- A goal of the Social Services Agency's Department of Family and Children's Services is to place children in family settings as early as possible, thereby reducing reliance on the Children's Shelter
- The Board of Supervisors has directed the Social Services Agency to plan alternative programming in the vacant shelter facility space, which takes into consideration the ideas and needs identified by community stakeholders and the Shelter Use Committee convened in Fiscal Year 2003-2004.

### **Pilot Program Description**

Provide assessment and appropriate services for children and their families who are involved in the child welfare system to support their mental health and educational needs.

#### **Pilot Phase I [July 1, 2004 – December 31, 2005]**

Conduct planning, implementation and evaluation of the program, targeted to children six to ten years of age. Work with FIRST 5 Commission to review findings of best practice research on assessment and services for children ages zero to five, due for release in February 2005.

#### **Pilot Phase II [January 1 – June 30, 2006]**

Review evaluation results. Plan program expansion and modifications suggested by evaluation findings and FIRST 5 Commission research.

#### **Pilot Phase III [July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007]**

Implement and evaluate expanded program.

#### **Final Pilot Phase IV [July 1 – December 31, 2007]**

Complete evaluation and pilot phase.

### **Program Step 1: Referral**

Referrals will be made by social workers, parents, foster parents, relative caregivers, counselors and System of Care providers, child care, school and medical personnel, Child Advocates and other individuals who are involved with the child and have information about their behavioral, developmental and educational status.

### **Program Step 2: Assessment**

An age-appropriate, life-domain assessment will be administered to the child at the shelter facility to determine areas in need of support. Parents and caregivers may also be assessed. Assessments will be conducted by trained staff, using a reliable and proven, strengths-based assessment tool.

### Program Step 3: Phase I Services

Assessment findings of mental health and educational and developmental needs will trigger development of a care plan and follow-up by staff. Services provided on-site will include the following:

- Therapy for the children and caregiver/parents, followed with in-home support
- Individualized educational support, including tutoring, education of parents and caregivers about educational support, and liaison and follow-up with school personnel
- Refer out for further assessment and services

### Program Step 4: Reassessment

Reassessment will occur within three to six months to determine progress and re-evaluate care plan.

### **Pilot Program Funding**

County General Fund contribution of \$120,000 will support the program in its first 6 months of operation (January 1 - June 30, 2005). Fifty thousand dollars of this will be used to draw down an additional \$120,000 in State funding for the Supportive and Therapeutic Option Program (STOP). The STOP funding supports services to families with children returning home from out-of-home placement or at risk of placement and those exiting foster care. Additional funding from MediCal and the Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) program is anticipated for eligible children and families.

Besides the sources mentioned, other government and private funding sources are being explored to sustain the program into the future, for example: federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and Department of Education grants, other State government sources, private foundations, and local donors.

### **Partnerships - Phase One**

The county's Mental Health Department, Department of Alcohol and Drug Services, County Office of Education, California Department of Social Services, Child Advocates, Silicon Valley Children's Fund, community-based organizations with experience and expertise serving this age group, and others will be invited to join the Department of Family and Children's Services to participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Pilot Program.

### **Licensing**

The Children's Shelter facility is licensed as a group home by the California Department of Social Services' Community Care Licensing Division and is subject to operational restrictions based on that license. A meeting with state Licensing officials was held in July to discuss this Pilot Program plan. The Licensing Division officials offered ideas for facilitating the co-existence of the Pilot Program with the residential care currently provided at the shelter facility and expressed willingness to work with the Department to maintain the license and support the implementation of the Pilot Program. Once more operational details are available, the Licensing Division pledged to work quickly to approve a Santa Clara County request to amend its license of the shelter facility.

### Implementation Timeline

July – August 2004	Develop implementation plan and timetable
September – October 2004	Convene Implementation Team of DFCS and partners to determine operational plan for Phase I, including staffing, budget, assessment tool, service components, service provider criteria and selection, case flow, and policies and procedures.
November 2004	Continue operational planning for Phase I; Release RFP(s) for service provision and evaluation
December 2004	Finalize Phase I operations planning; Select service provider(s) and evaluator
January 2005	Educate community about referral opportunity to the Improving Children's Well-being Pilot Program; Review evaluation plan; Initiate first cases
February – December 2005	Provide assessment and services and evaluate program; Develop funding plan
January 2006	Begin Phase II: Produce first evaluation report and identify program changes recommended in evaluation findings. Review FIRST 5 report on best practices for children aged zero to five.
February – June 2006	Develop implementation plan and timetable for Phase III; Convene Phase III Implementation Team of DFCS and partners to determine operational plan
July 2006 – June 2007	Begin Phase III: Implement Pilot Program expansion; Provide assessment and services and evaluate program
July - September 2007	Begin Final Phase: Complete final evaluation
October – December 2007	Review evaluation findings; Determine future program status

### Preliminary Budget – Phase One, January to June 2005

\$ 80,000	Salaries for full-time Program Coordinator and part-time clerical assistance
\$ 25,000	Educational support services (contract)
\$ 12,000	Evaluation services (contract)
\$ 3,000	Supplies
\$120,000	Assessment and therapeutic and support services (contract(s))