

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



CSFC SSA04 121405

Prepared by: Randy Parker
Social Work Supervisor

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

DATE: December 14, 2005

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: Implementation Update of SJSU CWS Study

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Accept this Update on Social Service Agency (SSA) and Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) activities addressing the recommendations of the San Jose State University study: An Evaluation of Factors Related to the Disproportionate Representation of Children of Color in the Santa Clara County Child Welfare System (Evaluation).

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no fiscal impact or General Fund cost associated with the recommended action.

CONTRACT HISTORY

Not applicable.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Children, Seniors and Families Committee requested this update on the activities of the Department of Family and Children's Services to address the findings of the three-phase Evaluation conducted by the Child Welfare Research Team of San Jose State University's (SJSU) College of Social Work.

Attached please find a matrix listing the recommendations made by SJSU and the corresponding actions taken by SSA and DFCS.

BACKGROUND

The Board of Supervisors authorized funding for "An Evaluation of Factors Related to the Disproportionate Representation of Children of Color in the Santa Clara County Child Welfare System," a three-phase study conducted by the Child Welfare Research Team of San Jose State University's (SJSU) College of Social Work.

The Phase 1 report was exploratory and drew from three sources: research literature at the national, state and county levels; DFCS' management information system (CWS/CMS); and, focus groups with parents, caregivers and youth receiving Child Welfare Services (CWS) and professional providing those services. The Phase 1 Evaluation report was issued in May 2001.

The Phase 2 Evaluation focused on the actual experiences of children in the CWS system and the individual and family characteristics that were related to the children's experiences. Results were based on extensive, in-dept review of closed child welfare and interviews with DFCS managers and supervisors. The Phase 2 Evaluation report was issued in August 2002.

The Phase 3 study aimed at assessing key CWS practices for children and families of color to generate strategies to reduce the overrepresentation of children of color in the system. Inquiries included in-depth interviews with DFCS managers and supervisors, focus groups

with social workers and parents involved in CWS, and a statewide survey of promising practices for servicing children and families of color. Phase 3 also involved a qualitative and quantitative comparison of practices and outcomes between the DFCS South County and Main Offices in San Jose; a reanalysis of cases from Phase 2 with successful outcomes and an analysis of factors that contributed to positive outcomes; and, a review of supplemental data related to court ordered changes to social worker recommendations at jurisdictional/dispositional hearings. The Phase 3 Evaluation report was issued in September 2003 (revised in November 2003).

Reducing the overrepresentation of the children and families of color in the CWS system remains a top priority and major concern for SSA and DFCS. One of goals of the System Improvement Plan for DFCS is to reduce the number of children of color entering foster care for the first time. Many of the enhancements to services resulting from the DFCS Service Delivery Redesign directly impact and support best practices that offer the potential to reduce the overrepresentation of children and families of color in the CWS system.

SSA and DFCS also promotes through collaboratives and contract administration activities culturally and linguistically competent services in the community to prevent child abuse and neglect, divert families from the CS system, and assist families in the CWS system to successfully maintain or reunify their families.

The Santa Clara County Child Abuse Council administers funds for many community-based organizations devoted to the prevention of child abuse. The Council's Children of Color Task Force and SSA/DFCS have formed a unified workgroup to further study and address the complex issues surrounding the disproportionality of children of color, beginning with examination of a proposed DFCS risk/safety assessment tool and Expanded Differential Response Path 1 (intended to divert families at-risk of entering the CSW system).

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

Negative action would result in the Children, Seniors and Families Committee would not accept the Implementation Update on the SJSU CWS Study

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

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

ATTACHMENTS

- Implementation Update of SJSU Study

Implementation Update of San Jose State University Study: *An Evaluation of Factors Related to the Disproportionate Representation of Children of Color in the Santa Clara County Child Welfare System*

SJSU Recommendation	Implementation Status
Overall Area: Record-Keeping	
<p>1. In order to better assess whether safety, permanency, and family and child well-being are maintained and enhanced, case records should contain more complete and measurable information that is collected in a reliable and valid manner.</p>	<p>The primary record keeping database for the Child Welfare Services system in California is the Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS). As a first step, DFCS will discuss at the regional level the feasibility of adding data fields to this system for demographic, system-related, and psychosocial characteristic data that would report differences at different decision points in the system and support research. Changes in this system must be made at the state level.</p> <p>Through the Connected by 25 Foster Youth Initiative, a more comprehensive data system is being designed with the assistance of UC Berkeley and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation.</p>
<p>2. The creation of a case summary check-out form used at case closure would be one way to track child outcomes.</p>	<p>The primary record keeping database for the Child Welfare Services system in California is the Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS). A quality assurance monitoring system, SafeMeasures, is also now available for supervisors and managers to track case activities and child outcomes.</p>
<p>3. Implementing better record keeping and data collection over time on key characteristics, based on agreed-upon operational definitions would better address the question of effectiveness and performance.</p>	<p>The primary record keeping database for the Child Welfare Services system in California is the Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS). A quality assurance monitoring system, SafeMeasures, is also now available for supervisors and managers to track case activities and child outcomes.</p>
Overall Area: Improving Current Practices	
<p>4. Continuation of some practices that are already in place is recommended, including culturally specific ER response units and the</p>	<p>DFCS continues to have three culturally specific Emergency Response Units investigating allegations of abuse and neglect and serving families with the following cultures/ languages: Asian/Pacific Islander, Spanish/Latino and African American.</p>

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use of family resource centers.	DFCS continues to operate four culturally focused Family Resource Centers (FRC): Nuestra Casa FRC, Ujirani FRC, Asian-Pacific FRC and Gilroy Family Resource Center. These FRCs provide voluntary family maintenance services to families without court involvement. In addition, community liaisons are available.
<p>5. Continuation of some practices that are in the process of being implemented, including efforts to reduce caseloads, team decision-making, and participation in the Family-to-Family Initiative</p>	<p>The DFCS Service Delivery System Redesign has resulted in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseloads reduction in the continuing Services Bureaus to meet the goal of an average ratio of one social worker to not more than 19 children • Assignment of one social worker to provide ongoing case management services to the entire family, including all siblings, beginning prior to court disposition and continuing until the case closes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to court disposition, the family's continuing services social worker teams with the Dependent Intake social worker • If adoption becomes the plan for the child, an adoption finalization social worker teams with the family's continuing Service Bureau social worker • Assignment of social worker with cultural and language skills (particularly Latino/Spanish) throughout all continuing services units. • Continuing service units specializing in Asian-Pacific cultures and languages, domestic violence, adolescents, sexual abuse and community care facility placements. <p>Since 2003, DFCS has mandated Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings for all children admitted to the Shelter, and since March 2005, for all children in active cases who experience an emergency placement failure or who are at risk of experiencing a placement failure. TDM meetings bring parents, children, relatives, DFCS placement resource staff, mental health staff, other service providers, the assigned social worker and supervisor, together with a meeting facilitator to address placement planning, as well as safety planning to keep children with or to return children to their homes. There have been approximately 1400 TDM meetings since the service began in July 2003. As a result of TDM meetings, approximately 55% of the children who were taken into temporary custody had placement plans that diverted the children back home with court-ordered or voluntary services.</p> <p>DFCS continues to provide Family Conferences where families develop plans to recommend in</p>

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	<p>relation to placement and services. DFCS also provides Family Conferences for foster youth who are emancipating.</p> <p>The Department is also focusing on the Connected by 25 Foster Youth Initiative that will provide services for foster youth ages 14-24 years to support their educational and occupational readiness both before and after they age-out of the foster care system. The Connected by 25 Foster Youth Initiative will also focus on housing for emancipating foster youth. The program involves partnerships with local Workforce Investment Area One-Stop programs, private business and other community partners.</p> <p>The Family-to-Family philosophy and strategies have been incorporated into the organizational structure, practice and culture of DFCS, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Action Teams • Team Decision-Making • Community-based Resource Family Recruitment • Resource Family Support for County licensed foster parents, and in the near future, for relatives and non-relative extended family member caregivers. • System Self-Evaluation through the County's System Improvement Plan
<p>6. Practices that are inclusive, collaborative, culturally appropriate and involve client's communities appear to be best suited to meeting the needs of children and families of color.</p>	<p>DFCS Joint Decision Making programs (Team Decision-Making, Family Conferencing and Joint Response with law enforcement) provide for decision making and planning that is culturally appropriate and involve families' communities.</p>
<p>7. Institutionalizing a group orientation for parents entering the system may help improve parents' understanding of court and system requirements.</p>	<p>Three-session Parent Orientation Meetings are conducted at each of the Family Resource Centers. Since January 1, 2005, parents of children who are under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Dependency Court are ordered by the Court to participate. Parents of children receiving voluntary child welfare services, and relatives and other support people for the parent may also attend. Parent Orientation Meeting participants are provided "A Guide to the Juvenile Dependency Court and Services for Families and Children" booklet (available in Spanish, and in the future, Vietnamese) and interact with presenters from key parts of the Child Welfare Services system.</p>

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	DFCS has also developed an "Important Information for Caregivers" booklet for social workers to individually orient and train relatives and non-relative extended family members caregivers, and an "Important Information for Families" pamphlet for families contacted by Emergency Response social workers.
8. Use of a vertical case management model in the Main County office may help improve outcomes.	<p>The DFCS Service Delivery System Redesign introduced the essential characteristic of the vertical model to North County: The family's continuing Service Bureau social worker is assigned to the case soon after the family enters the court system and prior to initial disposition, and one social worker continues to provide services to the family, including all siblings, regardless of their placement until the case is closed. However, the emergency response and dependency intake work are kept separate due to the short federal and state timelines required in these functions.</p> <p>Recently, the vertical model in South County has been modified to the Service Delivery System Redesign model to separate out the emergency response and dependency intake work. However, the essential characteristics of the vertical model remain. The continuing Service Bureau social worker teams with a Dependent Intake social worker prior to initial disposition by the Court and one social worker continues to provide services to the family, including all siblings regardless of their placement until the case is closed. Due to the short timelines required in the emergency response and dependency intake work, the workloads were overwhelming the recently hired staff, the majority of the social worker staff in South County.</p>
9. Promoting an organizational culture of commitment to maintaining and reunifying families throughout the Main County office.	Throughout its operations, DFCS continues to promote an organizational culture of commitment to divert families from the Child Welfare Services system whenever possible and when intervention is necessary to ensure services to maintain and reunify families, preferably on a voluntary basis. These clearly remain the preferred outcomes for the vast majority of families that come to the attention of DFCS. In all case planning, including for permanency when family reunification is not possible, DFCS promotes maintaining all possible connections between the child and his or her relatives and other significant people.
10. Increasing preventive and early intervention services for vulnerable families of color.	<p>The DFCS has strengthened preventive and early intervention services for vulnerable families through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Joint Response (EJR) by social workers and law enforcement in the assessment of

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	<p>alleged serious child abuse or neglect. The social worker brings unique assessment skills and resources to these situations that can help establish voluntary services, avoid temporary custody, facilitate emergency relative placement or ease the child's transition into temporary custody by transporting the child to the Children's Shelter. EJRS is in operation in San Jose and Santa Clara from where the majority of serious allegations of abuse and neglect are reported. Countywide implementation of EJRS is planned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Intervention (EI) and Weekend Diversion (WD) services for children taken into temporary custody and taken to the Shelter continue to divert children to voluntary services, arrange temporary emergency relative placements and facilitate arrangements that will ease the child's transition into temporary custody (e.g., supervised parent-child visitation). EI and WD service need levels have diminished as EJRS has expanded. • The County continues the Family Strength-Based Services (FSBS) contract with the Gardner Family Care Corporation to provide intensive services to 28 high-risk families at a time, referred for voluntary services by Emergency Response, Dependency Intake and Early Intervention/Weekend Diversion social workers. FSBS provides short-term, wraparound intervention services as an alternative to initiating juvenile court dependency actions and DFCS providing Family Maintenance or Reunification Services. Services are provided by culturally and linguistically qualified staff. During FY05, 277 children in 102 families were served by FSBS. • The Family Advocate Program at Resources for Families and Communities (RFC) also provides culturally and linguistically complete wraparound case management services to families diverted from formal Child Welfare Services. This program also served approximately 200 children in 100 families in FY05. A RFQ involving the current funding source for the Family Advocate program is in process for an Enhanced Differential Response Program to begin in September 2006. <p>Enhanced Differential Response Path 1 services will be provided by a community based service program contractor with experience in working with families with child abuse and neglect issues. The contract agency selected will need to have substantial cultural and language capability. The target population for these services will be families for whom child abuse or neglect reports are received, and who have difficulties that do not rise to the legal definitions of child abuse and neglect, but who appear to have high cumulative risks and vulnerable to entering the Child Welfare Services system in the future. The contract service provider will</p>

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	engage these families to build upon their strengths to stabilize their circumstances. A similar Enhanced Differential Response Path 4 will be developed for families who have reunified or established a permanency plan (such as adoption or guardianship) have a closed case, and require services to prevent the family from having to enter the Child Welfare Services system again.
11. The use of home visitation services.	DFCS continues to provide Home Supervision services primarily to families just entering the Child Welfare Services system.
12. Increasing the use of non-traditional, culturally sensitive services.	DFCS continues to promote the development of new culturally sensitive approaches to prevent abuse and neglect, such as the development of Enhanced Differential Response. The Child Abuse Counsel administers funds to various community service providers that provide a wide range of approaches to reduce child abuse and neglect. DFCS and community stakeholders on the Continuum of Care Committee, including representatives from service providers and placement resources, plan together to maximize the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate services and placement options for child.
13. More services targeted to fathers and programs that are formulated and delivered within a family-based framework would be of benefit to families and children of color.	<p>As a result of the DFCS Service Delivery System Redesign, one Service Bureau social worker is assigned to plan with and support the family and child throughout the period of their involvement with Child Welfare services.</p> <p>DFCS continues to provide Wraparound and Intensive Treatment Foster Family Services to keep children with special emotional and behavioral needs in family home settings with parents, relatives or foster parents, and supported by mental health and other services specifically tailored to the needs of the child. These children would otherwise be in group home care. Wraparound services are also available to adoptive families as a post-adoption service.</p> <p>Other family-based approaches include: The Gardner Family Care Corporation's Family Strength-Based Services, the Resources for Families and Communities' Family Advocate Program and planning underway for Enhanced Differential Response Path 1 and 4 services.</p>

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SJSU Recommendation	Implementation Status
Overall Area: Collaboration and Coordination with Other Systems	
14. Developing interagency formal agreements and connections with liaisons in other agencies would be beneficial as it can facilitate collaboration and minimize the potential for agencies to give conflicting messages and mandates to clients.	The Continuum of Care Committee and the Child Abuse Prevention Community Collaborative (CAPCC) are examples of community involvement in planning preventative and child welfare services. DFCS and community stakeholders on the Continuum of Care Committee, including representatives from service providers and placement resources, plan together to maximize the availability and quality of culturally and linguistically appropriate services and placement options for child. The CAPCC is a planning body with nearly 100 members representing the Board of Supervisors, Child Abuse Council, numerous community service agencies, philanthropic organizations, parent customers, educational institutions and county departments, including DFCS. The Collaborative is primarily charged with providing input concerning the development of the Enhanced Differential Response program.
15. The Greenbook project, an initiative to better coordinate domestic violence and child welfare services, could serve as a model for interdisciplinary problem solving and policy development.	The Greenbook project has continued to be an excellent model for interdisciplinary problem solving and policy development and continues to provide an effective array of services for families experiencing domestic violence.
16. Other collaborative efforts, such as outstationed social workers, co-locations of services and Family Drug Court could serve as models for best practices for children and families of color.	<p>RFC Family Advocates are out-stationed at the Family Resource Centers to engage families in voluntary services.</p> <p>Enhanced Joint Response between DFCS social workers and law enforcement agencies is another example of collaboration efforts that make it possible for DFCS to provide the most appropriate and least restrictive intervention possible.</p> <p>Drug Court in the Juvenile Dependency Court is a model for interdisciplinary problem solving and policy development and continues to provide an effective array of services for families experiencing substance abuse problems.</p>

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SJSU Recommendation	Implementation Status
Overall Area: Child Welfare Policies	
<p>17. Regular assessment of ways in which shortened timelines, early termination of parental rights, bypass criteria, as well as changes in adoption regulations and incentives have had an impact on children and families of color would be beneficial.</p>	<p>DFCS periodically provides the Board of Supervisors' Children, Seniors and Families Committee with reports regarding children and families for whom the Juvenile Dependency Court did not order Family Reunification Service ("bypass cases"). Over the past 4 years, there continues to be a disproportionate number of children of color whose parents did not receive Family Reunification Services. However, following implementation of a new DFCS bypass case policy in August 2004 in which the DFCS Director reviews all potential recommendations for the bypass of Family Reunification services, the overall number of children in bypass cases decreased; many parents with circumstances meeting the legal requirement for bypass of services received Family Reunification Services; the proportion of bypass cases where only one parent did not receive services increased; and, the time between initial child removal and initial Court disposition and the provision of services decreased.</p> <p>There have been no changes in the legal time limits allowed to accomplish family reunification or the legal grounds upon which the Juvenile Dependency Court can order bypass of Family Reunification Services since the researchers completed their study. There have been no substantial changes in adoption regulations since the researchers completed their study.</p>
<p>18. A close monitoring of the effect of new policies, implementation of new programs or changes in the agency's organizational structure on outcomes for families and children of color would contribute to a better understanding of the differential impact these innovations might have on different racial/ethnic groups.</p>	<p>Consideration of the impact of old and new programs and changes in the Department's organizational structure (e.g., the DFCS Service Delivery System Redesign) on outcomes for families and children of color is a constant focus of attention for DFCS at several decision points in relation to such programs and key functions as: Preventative services contractors, Emergency Response, Enhance Joint Response, Family Strength-Based Services, Family Advocates, Team Decision Making, Family Conferencing, Children's Shelter operations, out-of-home placement resources, and Family Maintenance, Family Reunification and Permanency Planning Services.</p> <p>The Department's System Improvement Plan also monitors certain outcomes.</p>

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SJSU Recommendation	Implementation Status
Overall Area: Future Research	
19. In order to more fully assess differences in outcomes (particularly racial/ethnic differences in outcomes) between the South County and Main County offices, future research should include a larger sample from the South County office and include methods to understand the reasons behind these location differences.	There has been no additional formal research concerning DFCS services in South County.
20. Further examination of the ways in which the culture of commitment to maintaining and reunifying families is created, communicated, and continued merits attention.	There has been no additional formal research concerning the ways in which the culture of commitment to maintaining and reunifying families is created and communicated. However, the Department in its Service Delivery System Redesign made clear the expectation that families, including relatives, are preferred to community care. A relative unit was created and a contract with a community-based organization to find relatives was established. Joint decision making through Team Decision Making, Family Conferencing, and Enhanced Joint Response with law enforcement also is required.
21. Further investigation of ways in which relationships between court personnel and child welfare workers have an impact on the experiences of children and families of color in the child welfare system is warranted, including the assessment of factors such as courtroom environment, stakeholder characteristics, and other judicial issues.	There has been no additional formal research concerning the ways in which relationships between court personnel and child welfare workers have an impact on the experiences of children and families of color in the Child Welfare Services system.
22. Additional research to determine the mechanisms through which child welfare practices impact racial/ethnic	There has been no additional formal research concerning the mechanisms through which child welfare practices impact racial/ethnic disproportionality in the Child Welfare Services system is needed

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SJSU Recommendation	Implementation Status
disproportionality in the child welfare system is needed.	
23. Future research efforts should also be directed toward examining neighborhood, community, and other macro-level factors particular to Santa Clara County and ways in which these factors interact with individual, family, and system-related characteristics to propel children of color into and maintain them in the child welfare system.	There has been no additional formal research examining neighborhood, community, and other macro-level factors particular to Santa Clara County and ways in which these factors interact with individual, family, and system-related characteristics to propel children of color into and maintain them in the Child Welfare Services system.
Focus Group Recommendations	
Members of focus groups also provided some additional recommendations. A total of 13 focus groups containing 67 social workers were conducted. Focus groups were divided among various units, including diversion, ER/DI, case assignment, mandated services time limits, and the South County office. Recommendations from the focus groups to improve practices for children and families of color included:	
24. In-home services	DFCS continues to provide Home Supervision services primarily to families just entering the Child Welfare Services system.
25. Family conferencing	DFCS continues to provide Family Conferences where families develop plans to recommend in relation to placement and services. DFCS also provides Family Conferences for foster youth who are emancipating.

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26. Team-decision making	<p>Since 2003, DFCS has mandated Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings for all children admitted to the Shelter, and since March 2005, for all children in active cases who experience an emergency placement failure or who are at risk of experiencing a placement failure. TDM meetings bring parents, children, relatives, DFCS placement resource staff, mental health staff, other service providers, the assigned social worker and supervisor, together with a meeting facilitator to address placement planning, as well as safety planning to keep children with or to return children to their homes. There have been approximately 1400 TDM meetings since the service began in July 2003. As a result of TDM meetings, approximately 55% taken into temporary custody had case plans that they would be diverted back home with court-ordered or voluntary services.</p>
27. Formal and informal collaborative relationships with other service delivery systems, such as domestic violence and substance abuse treatment systems	<p>SSA/DFCS continue to enter into formal and informal collaborative arrangements with numerous service providers and delivery systems.</p> <p>Key partners in planning child abuse prevention and child welfare services include: The Board of Supervisors, Districts 1 through 5; the Child Abuse Council of Santa Clara County, the Child Abuse Prevention Community Collaborative, the Status Offender Services Council, Project Cornerstone and FIRST 5 Santa Clara County.</p> <p>Other key public and private partners include, but are not limited to the following: San Andreas Regional Center; Children's Health Council; Child Advocates of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties; Gardner Family Care, Resources for Families and Communities, Catholic Charities; Catholic Charities Immigration Programs; DFCS Foster Youth Advisory Board; Foster and Adoptive Parents Association; Foster and Adoptive Parents Association Resource Center; California Youth Connection; Daybreak; Evelyn Cox Foster Family Agency; Families First; Future Families; JT Residential; STAR House; Unity Care Group; Villa Rosanne; Casa SAY; Rebekah Children's Services; Quetzal House; Silicon Valley Children's Fund; Indian Health Center; MACSA; Asian Americans for Community Involvement; Billy de Frank Center; EMQ Child and Family Services; Alum Rock Counseling Center; Corporation for Supportive Housing; San Jose State University; California State University Consortium; Mission Community College; San Jose City/Evergreen Valley College; West Valley College; EHC Lifebuilders; California School-age Consortium; NOVA SVWIN; Project READ; Family and Children Services; Vision Literacy; Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley; Next Door Solutions; Support Network for Battered Women; Community Solutions; Family</p>

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	<p>Violence Center; Choices for Children; 4 C's; Child Development Program; Mariposa Lodge; ARH Recovery Home, Inc., House on the Hill; Pathways; Perinatal Substance Abuse Program; all Santa Clara County law enforcement agencies; Juvenile Dependency Court; District Attorney; Associate Dependency Attorneys; Dependency Legal Services; Mental Health Department; Department of Alcohol and Drug Service; Health and Hospital System; Public Health, Department of Employment and Benefits Services; Juvenile Probation Department; Santa Clara County Employee Services Agency; Santa Clara Office of the County Counsel; Santa Clara County School Districts; and, County Office of Education.</p> <p>The Greenbook project continues to provide an effective array of services for families experiencing domestic violence.</p> <p>In 2005, SSA/DFCS has entered into an interagency agreement with the Department of Drug and Alcohol Services (DADS) to provide intensive residential substance abuse treatment to women with young children as ARH Recovery Home, Inc., House on the Hill.</p> <p>Also in 2005, SSA/DFCS and local Workforce Investment Area Agencies entered into Memorandum of Understandings to facilitate collaborative efforts on the Connected by 25 Foster Youth Initiative. To begin the DFCS Work Experience Program, to provide job training that will lead to meaningful work for 30 emancipated foster youth, DFCS has also formed partnerships with philanthropic and business organizations.</p>
<p>28. Increasing training and cross-training to enhance the capacity of practitioners in child welfare and other systems to better address the needs of children and families of color</p>	<p>All new social workers receive Induction Training that provides an overview of the Child Welfare Services system and it's operations in Santa Clara County. Most SSA Staff Development trainings include a component on cultural differences and the family strength-based approach.</p> <p>The County continues to provide social workers with many training opportunities in addition to the offerings of SSA Staff Development, including the training available through the CountyWise program, Tuition Reimbursement, Professional Development Fund, Forensic Human Services Program, the Bay Area Academy and the MSW Work Study Program. In addition, social workers are encouraged to attend culture and language-specific conferences for Latino, African Ancestry, and Asian clients.</p>

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	Cross-training occurs in the Greenbook Project and at conferences and workshops, such as the Emerging Needs Training, the Latino Social Workers Network Conference, the annual local and statewide Beyond the Bench Conferences, the local annual Domestic Violence Conference, Linkages Conference, and the California Welfare Directors Conference.
29. Increasing culturally and linguistically competent services	DFCS recognizes the critical need to increase cultural and linguistic competent services both within DFCS and to encourage increased cultural and linguistic competent services within other County Departments and community-based service provider organizations. An in-house Spanish language course for intermediate level Spanish will be starting in January 2006 to increase the number of certified Spanish-speaking social workers in DFCS. DFCS workers are presently being tested for eligibility for the course.
30. Improving collaboration between the child welfare system and the court system	Representatives of the Court, DFCS, attorney representing children and parents/guardians, and the Child Advocates of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties meet regularly to address court system issues and operations.
31. A strength-based approach	The family strength-based approach permeates new social worker Induction Training and most SSA Staff Development training sessions.
32. The use of relative placements	<p>Between June and November, 44-45% of all children in out-of-home placement under the supervision of DFCS were placed with relatives or non-relative extended family members. It is DFCS policy that placement with a relative, or if no relative is available, with a non-relative extended family member, is the first consideration in all placement planning. It is also DFCS policy that siblings are to be placed together whenever possible. DFCS complies with the Multi-ethnic Placement Act of 1994 (amended 1996) and recognizes the importance of maintaining the child's cultural ties.</p> <p>State mandated relative/non-relative extended family member assessment requirements have been in place for over 3 years. The assessment is thorough and equivalent to the assessment required for foster care licensing. Social workers can use procedures designed to place children with relatives and non-relative extended family members on an emergency basis.</p>

Implementation Update of San Jose State University Study: *An Evaluation of Factors Related to the Disproportionate Representation of Children of Color in the Santa Clara County Child Welfare System*

SJSU Recommendation	Implementation Status
33. Increasing preventive services and concrete services	DFCS Enhanced Joint Response, Resources for Families and Communities Family Advocate Program, Gardner Family Care's Family Strength-Based Services, and development of an Enhanced Differential Response Path 1 and 4 program are examples of DFCS commitment to increase preventative services and concrete services.
34. Increasing a culture of commitment to maintaining and reunifying families	Throughout its operations, DFCS continues to promote an organizational culture of commitment to divert families from the Child Welfare Services system whenever possible, and when intervention is necessary, to ensure services to maintain and reunify families, preferably on a voluntary basis. These clearly remain the preferred outcomes for the vast majority of families that come to the attention of DFCS. In all case planning, including for permanency when family reunification is not possible, DFCS promotes maintaining all possible connections between the child and his or her relatives and other significant people.
35. Improve availability and access to services	DFCS is committed to continuous improvement in regards to the availability and accessibility of services within DFCS, and promoting improved availability and access to services provided by other public agencies and community-based service providers.