

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



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DATE: May 19, 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: Alternative Uses of the Children's Shelter and Assessment Center

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Consider recommendation from the Social Services Agency to authorize and direct the Agency to proceed with planning for implementation of a six-month pilot program at the

Children's Shelter and Assessment Center. Planning includes seeking approval from the State Community Care Licensing Division and identifying funding sources to reimburse pilot program costs. Forward final recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Once approval is obtained from the State Community Care Licensing Division, funding resources will be identified, consistent with current Board budget policies.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

At the February 18, 2004 meeting of the Children, Seniors and Families Committee, the Social Services Agency presented a report on the recommendations of the Shelter Use Committee for potential alternative uses of the Children's Shelter and Assessment Center facility. This report presents additional information and details components of two of the recommended uses. Once the Board of Supervisors approves an alternative use, a specific plan of implementation will be reviewed in the Children, Seniors and Families Committee between August and December 2004.

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 and Assessment Center. The Shelter Use Committee met for the first time in September 2003 and continued to meet in full and in subcommittees through January 2004 to review focus group findings, research reports, federal and state outcome measures, and local need and capacity. The Committee, operating under a set of assumptions and with a defined charge, narrowed down recommendations to three ideas. All three ideas reflect repeated themes supported by community residents and research in the field:

- Educational Support for Foster Youth of All Ages
- Family Mental Health Services
- Family Visitation

Once the recommendations were presented, the Shelter Use Committee completed its charge, and the Social Services Agency has pursued more detailed information in order to inform the Board of Supervisors as it seeks to provide direction for potential alternative uses of the facility. That information is provided below.

CHILDREN'S SHELTER & ASSESSMENT CENTER PRIMARY FUNCTION

The Shelter will continue to operate principally as a short-term, emergency care facility for children for whom appropriate placements are not immediately available, and as the major intake/assessment center for the child welfare system. Based on placement resources and experiences over the past year, the Agency anticipates that the average daily population for this usage will be approximately 25, with periodic surges up to 40. The necessary capacity is preserved to accommodate the higher number when needed. The Shelter will also continue to house an Assessment Center that has served about 1400 children a year.

The reduced population at the Children's Shelter has been due to the Department's tremendous success and speed at identifying children's relatives and qualified, experienced foster family homes as placement options. While fewer children are staying at the Children's Shelter, and for shorter periods of time, the County investment in the facility continues to support the important care and treatment of the children who reside there. (See Attachment)

An option that was not recommended by the task force and is not recommended by the Agency is to utilize the non-emergency beds as longer-term residential placement. The Agency believes this is not needed and such a use is contrary to the principle of limiting institutional care to small facilities. In addition, properly staffing the remaining beds as a treatment facility would be prohibitively costly.

LICENSING AND REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

The Community Care Licensing Division (CCL) of the California State Department of Social Services has been contacted regarding regulations and restrictions on the use of the Shelter facility for the proposed alternative uses. The pre-eminent consideration of CCL is to assure the safety and confidentiality of Shelter residents. Regular visitors to any part of the facility, who are not involved with the care and supervision of the Shelter resident population, would need to be strictly checked, approved and supervised at all times.

The possibility of physical modifications to the facility to separate residents from visitors may be considered. However, other well-established priorities were stated frequently by community members:

Priority: Maintain the open, attractive, welcoming physical environment of the facility.

Priority: Keep costs of any new programming minimal.

Priority: Utilize the space more fully to meet the needs of children & families in the system.

The following procedures, if implemented in any program, may help assure that the priorities are balanced, and that licensing regulations are met. However, any program proposal must be submitted and approved by CCL in detail:

1. Restrict number of participants plus staff for a program to 40 or less
2. Obtain background clearance of all program staff from CCL
3. Assure vigilant Check-In/Check-Out procedures for program participants
4. Maintain constant supervision of program participants, and always maintain participants within sight of an approved staff person
5. Contain program participants to one cottage and tightly schedule their movement on campus. Movement on the campus would be supervised at all times.

A. EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR FOSTER YOUTH: PILOT PROGRAM

Proposed Services:

- a. Identification and assessment of children and youth experiencing barriers to educational success such as no access to high-quality preschool, frequent school moves, difficulty maintaining study skills and engagement in school, mental and physical health limitations
- b. Pre-school
- c. Tutoring
- d. Assistance to parents and caregivers in navigating school and human services systems
- e. Linkages to Independent Living Program, enrichment activities and other services

Proposed Target Population: Child Welfare supervised children who need additional educational and learning support. Of the approximately 2200 children in the Department of Family and Children's Services census, the pilot program would target 20 to 25 per month.

Estimated Cost of Six-Month Pilot: \$120,000

Program Coordinator and Assistant (contracted or employed)	\$80,000
Additional Human Resources: Assessment tool developer,	\$37,500

teachers, tutors (contracted or employed)	
Office Supplies	\$2,500
Facilities and Equipment (use pre-existing)	\$0

B. FAMILY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: PILOT PROGRAM

Proposed Services:

- a. Identification and assessment of children, their parents and caregivers and their specific needs to achieve reunification and prevent re-entry into the system
- b. Therapeutic parenting classes and parent support groups
- c. Individual and family counseling, including transitional and crisis services, offered in-home and at the facility
- d. Linkages to other mental health services

Proposed Target Population: Child Welfare supervised children, their parents and caregivers, based on assessment. Of the approximately 2200 children in the Department of Family and Children's Services census, the pilot program would target 10 to 15 of those families and caregivers per month.

Estimated Cost of Six-Month Pilot: \$120,000

Program Coordinator/Family Care Manager and Assistant (contracted or employed)	\$80,000
Additional Human Resources: Therapists, counselors and care managers (contracted or employed)	\$62,500
Office Supplies	\$2,500
Facilities and Equipment (use pre-existing)	\$0

C. FAMILY VISITATION

The need for appropriate facilities to accommodate productive and nurturing family visitation sessions was identified by the Shelter Use Committee as a serious gap in Santa Clara County and a critical component to supporting the successful reunification of families. The Social

Services Agency will work with Family Court and Juvenile Court to identify appropriate facilities in the County. The Children's Shelter and Assessment Center currently offers limited visitation capability for Shelter residents and their families. The Social Services Agency does not recommend expanding that service at this time beyond its current limited scope, due to the challenges of obtaining required background clearances on a constantly changing stream of individuals.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

As State funding streams evolve through the current budget process, proposed legislative changes unfold, and a Title IV-E waiver request is pending from California, there may be opportunities to pursue governmental funding sources for proposed alternative uses. Other private and public funding sources can also be pursued.

Additionally, a common theme reflected in the Shelter Use Committee's recommendations is the need for thorough and ongoing assessment of children, not simply related to the need for protective custody, but in order to best meet the overall developmental, educational, mental health and physical health needs of the child and his or her family and caregivers. Assessment functions already take place at the facility, were part of the original vision, and expansion of those functions is well aligned with the current direction of the Department of Family and Children's Services, the stated priorities of the Shelter Use Committee, and are a fundamental building block of improved outcomes for children, as required by the federal government. The educational and family mental health services proposed for pilot status include assessment activities that may be reimbursable. Funding for such expanded assessment may also be available through the federal Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) program and other sources.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

Failure to approve the recommended action will result in inaction on the proposed alternative uses of the Children's Shelter and Assessment Center facility developed by the Shelter Use Committee.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

Upon direction of the Children, Seniors and Families Committee, place this item on the Board of Supervisors' agenda for direction and approval.

ATTACHMENTS

- Shelter Investment (Miscellaneous)

Children's Shelter Investment
May 2004

Fiscal Year	Budget	Authorized Positions	Average monthly population
1996	\$5,398,160	82	N/A
1997	\$6,345,962	91	N/A
1998	\$7,549,354	101	N/A
1999	\$10,431,882	140	124
2000	\$10,017,332	143	133
2001	\$11,494,772	162	123
2002	\$12,535,633	167	91
2003	\$13,920,697	173.5	59
2004	\$14,035,310	151.5	29
2005*	\$10,824,795	110.5	N/A

*As proposed in the County Executive's Recommended Budget