


California – Child and Family Services Review Signature Sheet

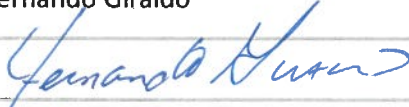
For submittal of: CSA SIP Progress Report

County	Santa Cruz
CSA Period Dates	February 3, 2020 – February 3, 2025
Outcome Data Period	December 2015 (Q4 2015) to December 2018 (Q4 2018)


County Child Welfare Agency Director

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Mailing Address	P.O. Box 1320 Santa Cruz, CA 95061

County Chief Probation Officer

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Phone Number	(831) 454-3207
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Public Agency Designated to Administer CAPIT and CBCAP

Name	Keith D. Bostick
Signature*	
Phone Number	(831) 454-4062
Mailing Address	P.O. Box 1320, Santa Cruz, CA 95061

Board of Supervisors (BOS) Signature

BOS Approval Date	
Name	
Signature*	



Santa Cruz County
CA

Agenda Item
DOC-2020-84

Approve the Human Services Department (HSD) 2020 County of Santa Cruz Child Welfare Services County Self-Assessment and authorize HSD to submit the assessment to the California Department of Social Services, as recommended by the Director of Human Services

Information

Department:	Human Services Department: Family and Children's Services Division	Sponsors:	Director Ellen M. Timberlake
Category:	HSD - Board Memo - All Div		

Attachments

[Board Memo
2020-2025 Santa Cruz County Self-Assessment
2020-2025 Santa Cruz County Self-Assessment - Oversize Cover page](#)

Board Letter

Recommended Actions

Approve the 2020 County of Santa Cruz Child Welfare Services County Self-Assessment and authorize the Human Services Department to submit the assessment to the California Department of Social Services.

Executive Summary

The Family and Children's Services (FCS) Division of the Human Services Department (HSD), together with Juvenile Probation, is required by state law to complete a child welfare services County Self-Assessment (CSA) and a System Improvement Plan (SIP) every five years. HSD seeks the Board's authorization to submit the 2020 Santa Cruz County Child Welfare/Juvenile Probation Self-Assessment to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

Background

In 2001, Assembly Bill (AB) 636, also known as the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act, established California Child and Family Services Reviews (C-CFSR). In order to meet federal requirements, the state requires each county to produce two documents every five years: A County Self-Assessment (CSA) and a System Improvement Plan (SIP). Santa Cruz County's first self-assessment and SIP were completed in 2004 and the last one was completed in 2015. Each time a highly robust process was completed with

stakeholder and community engagement to inform the CSA and SIP. The SIP Steering Committee, which has been active since 2007, provides oversight for this effort. Currently chaired by Supervisor Bruce McPherson, the Steering Committee has twenty-plus members with invaluable expertise in child welfare and Juvenile Probation and has guided the process and provided feedback each step of the way.

Since February 2019, a smaller, internal C-CFSR planning committee composed of HSD and Juvenile Probation staff, Hay Consulting (under contract to HSD) and CDSS liaisons have met for planning and logistics. Both the C-CFSR planning and SIP Steering Committees reviewed quantitative and qualitative data in order to assess and understand the current state of child welfare and Juvenile Probation services in Santa Cruz County. A primary focus of the self-assessment was the analysis and review of permanency outcomes for children and youth served by both HSD and Juvenile Probation. HSD decided to focus on C-CFSR measure P1 - permanency in 12 months for children entering care. Similarly, Juvenile Probation focused on measure P2 - permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 12-23 months. This process included a robust community engagement component as twenty focus groups were conducted with the following key stakeholder groups: caregivers (approved resource families including relatives), public service providers, nonprofit service providers, child welfare and Juvenile Probation staff and supervisors, dependency and delinquency court partners, child welfare and probation youth, parents involved in the child welfare and juvenile probation systems, education professionals and liaisons from the foster education program, and providers of early childhood education and child care services.

An additional required component of the CSA process is the peer review, in which child welfare and probation staff from other counties interview County of Santa Cruz social workers and probation officers about individual cases in order to assess and provide input regarding casework practice in Santa Cruz County. Our peer review was conducted in August 2019, with peers from seven different counties interviewing County of Santa Cruz staff and providing feedback on our local system.

Data gathered from the outcomes analysis, stakeholder input, and peer review, as well as other information on current processes and procedures in child welfare and Juvenile Probation can be found in the report, 2020 Santa Cruz County Child Welfare/Juvenile Probation Self-Assessment. Key findings of the assessment are summarized below.

Analysis

CDSS requires HSD and Juvenile Probation to select one outcome measure to address within the System Improvement Plan and the selected measure was chosen for the greatest potential impact.

Small changes in the “child/youth in care” population cause large fluctuations in the outcome due to the overall small numbers in both the child welfare and Juvenile Probation populations. The outcome measure for S1: maltreatment in foster care, can be attributed to this population-based variance.

Santa Cruz County meets or exceeds national standards on all other outcome indicators except P1: permanency in 12 months for children in foster care less than 12 months, which is the focus of the 2020 CSA for HSD.

Child Welfare Performance on Key Outcome Measures

Outcome Measures Performance – Q4 2018			
Outcome Measure	National Standard	Santa Cruz	California
S1: Maltreatment in Foster Care	≤8.50 victimizations per 100,000 days in care	8.7	7.53
S2: Recurrence of Maltreatment	≤9.1%	8.8%	9.1%
P1: Permanency in 12 Months (Children in foster care less than 12 months)	≥40.5%	31.9%	34.4%
P2: Permanency in 12 Months (Children in foster care 12 to 23 Months)	≥43.6%	48.6%	44.8%
P3: Permanency in 12 Months (Children in foster care 24 Months or More)	≥30.3%	40.5%	31.8%
P4: Re-Entry to Foster Care	≤8.3%	7.7%	10.3%
P5: Placement Stability	≤4.12 moves per 1,000 foster care days	3.5	3.82

Juvenile Probation Performance on Key Outcome Measures

Outcome Measures Performance – Q4 2018			
Outcome Measure	National Standard	Santa Cruz	California
S1: Maltreatment in Foster Care	≤8.50 victimizations per 100,000 days in care	0.0% 1,324 total days	5.35%
S2: Recurrence of Maltreatment	≤9.1%	N/A	N/A
P1: Permanency in 12 Months (Children in foster care less than 12 months)	≥40.5%	35.7%	32.7%
P2: Permanency in 12 Months (Children in foster care 12 to 23 Months)	≥43.6%	0.0% 1 youth - still in care	27.6%
P3: Permanency in 12 Months (Children in foster care 24 Months or More)	≥30.3%	50.0%	15.9%
P4: Re-Entry to Foster Care	≤8.3%	0.0%	20.3%
P5: Placement Stability	≤4.12 moves per 1,000 foster care days	0.0%	1.64%

Santa Cruz County meets or exceeds national standards on all outcome indicators except P1 and P2. The focus for Juvenile Probation is P2 as part of the 2020 CSA .

The following input was received from stakeholder focus groups and the peer review:

County Strengths:

- Committed, compassionate, caring workforce
- Strong coordinated effort among HSD and community partners to preserve families and prevent removals through early intervention and safety planning
- HSD and Juvenile Probation have cultivated good relationships with community-based services and child and family serving partners
- A wide array of bilingual (English/Spanish) services, placements, and social workers support cultural responsiveness
- Concerted efforts in placing children and youth with relatives or non-relative extended family members to decrease the impact of trauma from removal and to help keep the children connected to their extended family and culture
- Increased family engagement, teaming, youth & family centered case planning, inquiry and accountability
- Increased child, youth, and family voice in decision-making

Areas Needing Improvement

- Creating organizational stabilization
- Continuing to identify and address racial/ethnic disparities
- Limited local placements
- Need for services for families with complex histories and traumas
- Full implementation and support of “Child and Family Team” practice
- Engagement of family and youth in case planning decisions
- Improved service delivery coordination
- Increased communication and concrete supports and training for families

Service Array Gaps and Needs

- Access to services on evenings and weekends
- Increased use of “wraparound” approach
- Enhanced care coordination
- Expanded crisis response
- Primary and secondary prevention of child maltreatment
- Need for services locally (Juvenile Probation involved youth)
- Mentors for Juvenile Probation youth
- Respite homes
- Therapeutic Foster Homes for both HSD and Juvenile Probation children and youth

Development of the 2020 SIP

HSD and Juvenile Probation have shared CSA findings with stakeholders to engage them in identifying strategies for the 2020 System Improvement Plan that will be finalized this spring. The County plans to leverage existing efforts as part of this planning process and include strategies that will help identify and articulate the path forward. This includes further community engagement and feedback, coupled with continued implementation of current state legislation such as the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) and pending federal legislation such as the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) to form a cohesive

approach to outcome improvements.

Body

Strategic Plan Element(s)

1.D (Comprehensive Health & Safety: Behavioral Health) - The CSA assists HSD with understanding the community impact of child abuse and neglect and with identifying strategies for its prevention, intervention and education.

2.D (Attainable Housing: Homelessness) - The CSA process provided data and input about the impact of homelessness for system involved children, youth, and families and incorporated the goal of addressing it in the SIP.

Discussion

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Board of Supervisors (BOS) Signature	
BOS Approval Date	
Name	
Signature*	

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California - Child and Family Services Review

2020 Santa Cruz County Child Welfare/Juvenile Probation Self-Assessment

FEBRUARY 3, 2020 – FEBRUARY 3, 2025



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Introduction

The purpose of the County Self-Assessment (CSA) is for each County, in collaboration with their community partners, to perform an in-depth assessment of Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation programs. This analysis includes both qualitative and quantitative data and guides the County in planning for program enhancements and continuous quality improvement.

The County Self-Assessment is one the three major components required by the California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR). The C-CFSR emerged as a result of California's Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (AB 636). As required by AB 636, Santa Cruz Family and Children's Services and Santa Cruz Juvenile Probation must analyze, in collaboration with key community stakeholders, its performance on critical child welfare and probation outcomes. These outcomes are measured using data from the statewide child welfare database. In addition to the outcome indicators, the Self-Assessment must review systemic and community factors that correspond to the federal review. The areas needing improvement will be addressed in the System Improvement Plan (SIP), which must also be developed in partnership with community partners. The SIP must be approved by the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and submitted to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS).

In the past, counties have developed a separate plan for expenditure of federal and state funds for the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF), Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT) and Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP). In June 2008, the CDSS, in collaboration with the California Welfare Directors' Association, announced integration of the CAPIT, CBCAP, and PSSF plan into the C-CFSR. In an effort to minimize duplicative processes, maximize resources, and increase partnerships and communication between organizations, the CAPIT, CBCAP, and PSSF Plan has been integrated into the CSA and SIP process.

Santa Cruz County's most recent Self-Assessment was completed in February of 2015 and the SIP in July of 2015. Recent changes to the C-CFSR process have resulted in a change to the evaluation and reporting periods and the three-year cycle has been increased to five years to allow counties additional time to plan, implement, and achieve their desired outcomes and objectives.

As required, Santa Cruz County's Human Services Department, Family & Children's Services Division, and Juvenile Probation led the County Self-Assessment in partnership with the CDSS. The county was additionally supported in completion of this process by Hay Consulting.

C-CFSR Planning Team & Core Representatives

C-CFSR Team

Keith D. Bostick, Director of Family and Children’s Services

Rob Doty, Juvenile Division Director, Probation

Melissa Delgadillo, Program Manager, Family and Children’s Services

Stephanie Vikati, Program Manager, Family and Children’s Services

Kelli Kopeck, Program Manager, Family and Children’s Services

Najeeb Kamil, Senior Analyst, Family and Children’s Services (CAPIT/CBCAP/PSSF Liaison)

Marlo Preis, Senior Analyst, Family and Children’s Services

Deborah Bresnick, QI Manager, Performance & Evaluation

Leslie Ann Hay, Hay Consulting

Victoria Bueno, CDSS Office of Outcomes and Accountability

Kiran Johl, CDSS Office of Child Abuse Prevention

Core Representatives

The Human Services Department thanks the numerous individuals and organizations that participated in this assessment of our local Child Welfare System (CWS). First, we acknowledge the leadership of the Chair of the System Improvement Committee, Supervisor Bruce McPherson. His commitment to the welfare of children in Santa Cruz County is marked by his ongoing oversight of this process.

Human Services extends a sincere thanks to the community members of the SIP Steering Committee who have brought a wealth of experience and dedication to this effort. These members have invested generously of their time and knowledge to improving outcomes for children and families in our community. Their active role in shaping the system and their thoughtful feedback are highly valuable to the child welfare and probation departments. These members are:

Bruce McPherson, Board of Supervisors	Rebecca Connolly, County of Santa Cruz Court Judge (former), Juvenile Division
Valerie Thompson, Probation	Rob Doty, Juvenile Probation
David Brody, First 5 of Santa Cruz County	Meg Yarnell, Health Services Agency, Children’s Behavioral Health
Lynne Petrovic, CASA of Santa Cruz County	Michael Paynter, County Office of Education

Jimmy Cook, CASA of Santa Cruz	Kim Corneille, County Office of Education, FosterEd
Susan Paradise, Public Health	Faris Sabah, County Office of Education
Meg Clark, Encompass Community Services Transition Age Youth programs	Dana McRae, County Counsel
Kalyne Foster, Monarch Services	Monica Martinez, Encompass Community Services
Ashley Cartee, Parents Center	

Core representatives who comprised the SIP Steering Committee participated in the ongoing self-assessment process during quarterly meetings and in focus groups. Core representatives received regular updates on Santa Cruz County’s performance on outcomes data measures, as well as progress on System Improvement Plan strategies. Members of the public also attended and participated in some of the quarterly SIP Steering Committee meetings.

TRIBES

There are no Bureau of Indian Affairs recognized tribes in Santa Cruz County. However, a tribal representative from the Esselen Tribe provided feedback during the Stakeholder Kickoff meeting.

SERVICE RECIPIENTS

1. Foster youth (current and former) provided feedback during focus groups.
2. Parents/consumers provided feedback during focus groups.
3. Resource families and other caregivers provided feedback during focus groups.

The C-CFSR Planning Process

The Santa Cruz County SIP Steering Committee has met quarterly since the last SIP was developed and is the oversight body for decisions made regarding the process used to develop the CSA and SIP.

A smaller, internal C-CFSR team began the CSA planning process in February of 2019. This included agency staff from both child welfare and probation to make day to day decisions and to provide all logistical support. As the process unfolded additional input was received regarding the need for additional focus groups and surveys that would provide a more robust assessment of the entire continuum of care in Santa Cruz County.

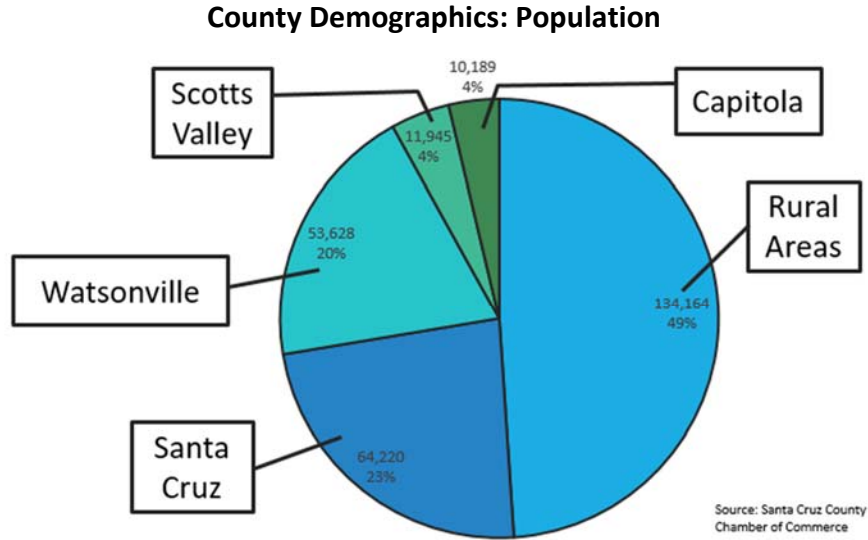
The internal C-CFSR team met bi-weekly (in-person and phone) to plan for the Peer Review. As the date of the Peer Review approached, the team met weekly to determine which cases were to be randomly selected, what information would be provided for each case to be reviewed, and the specific logistics for the Peer Review week. The Peer Review was conducted August 12-15, 2019.

Demographic Profile

General County Demographics

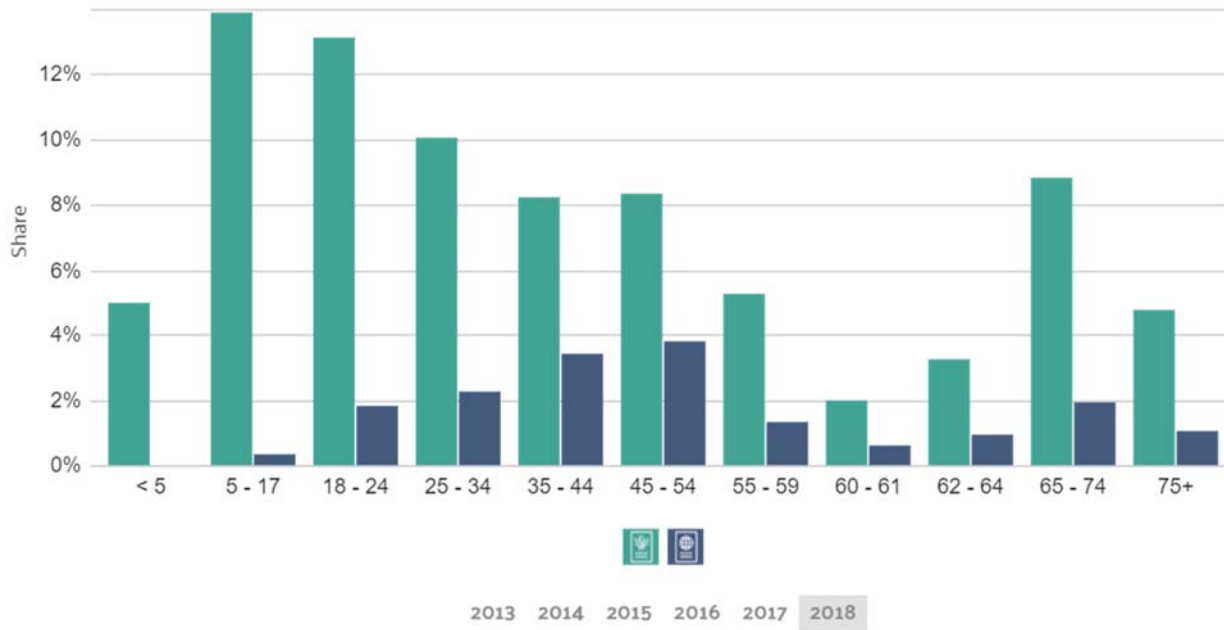
POPULATION

Santa Cruz County is located on the California coast, situated at the north end of the Monterey Bay. The major cities within Santa Cruz County are Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Scotts Valley, Capitola, Aptos, and Davenport.



As of 2015, total population of Santa Cruz County is 274,146. About half (134,164) of the population lives in unincorporated Santa Cruz County (outside of Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Scotts Valley, and Capitola).

Age by Nativity



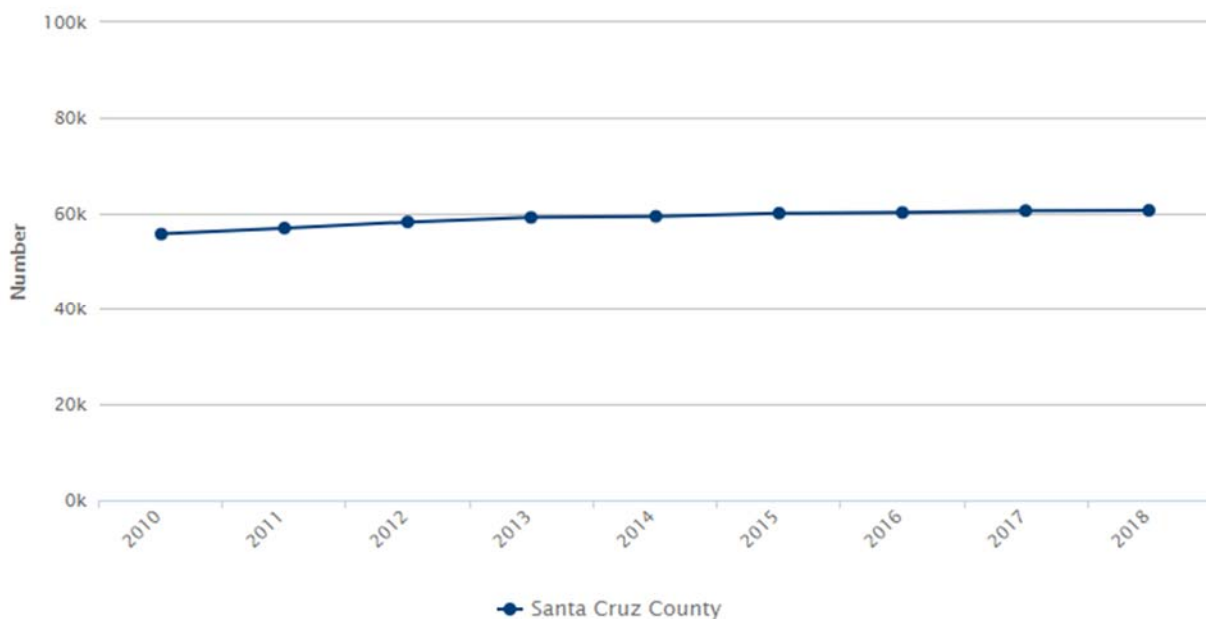
Source: Datausa

Green = Percentage of native-born citizens in Santa Cruz County

Grey = Percentage of foreign-born citizens in Santa Cruz County

In 2018, the median age of all people in Santa Cruz County, CA was 37.9. Native-born citizens, with a median age of 34, were generally younger than than foreign-born citizens, with a median age of 47. But people in Santa Cruz County, CA are getting getting older. In 2017, the average age of all Santa Cruz County, CA residents was 38.

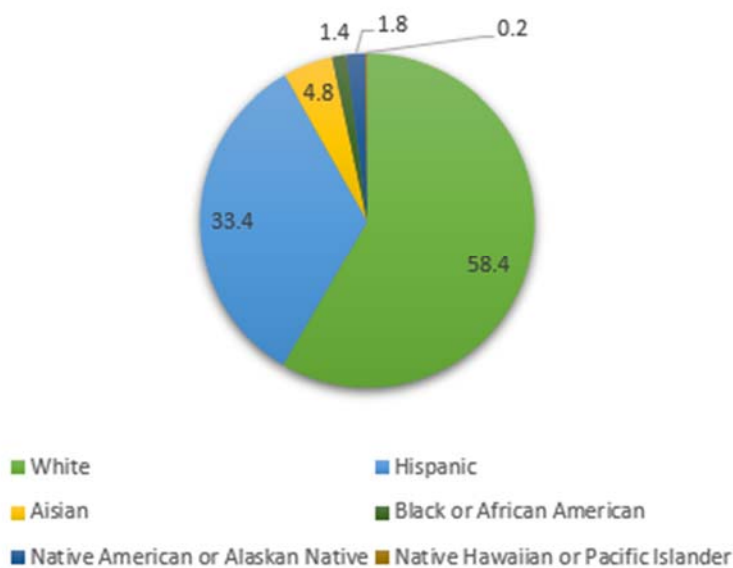
Child Population



Definition: Estimated population ages 0-17 (e.g., an estimated 9,261,018 children lived in California in 2018).

Source: Kidsdata.org

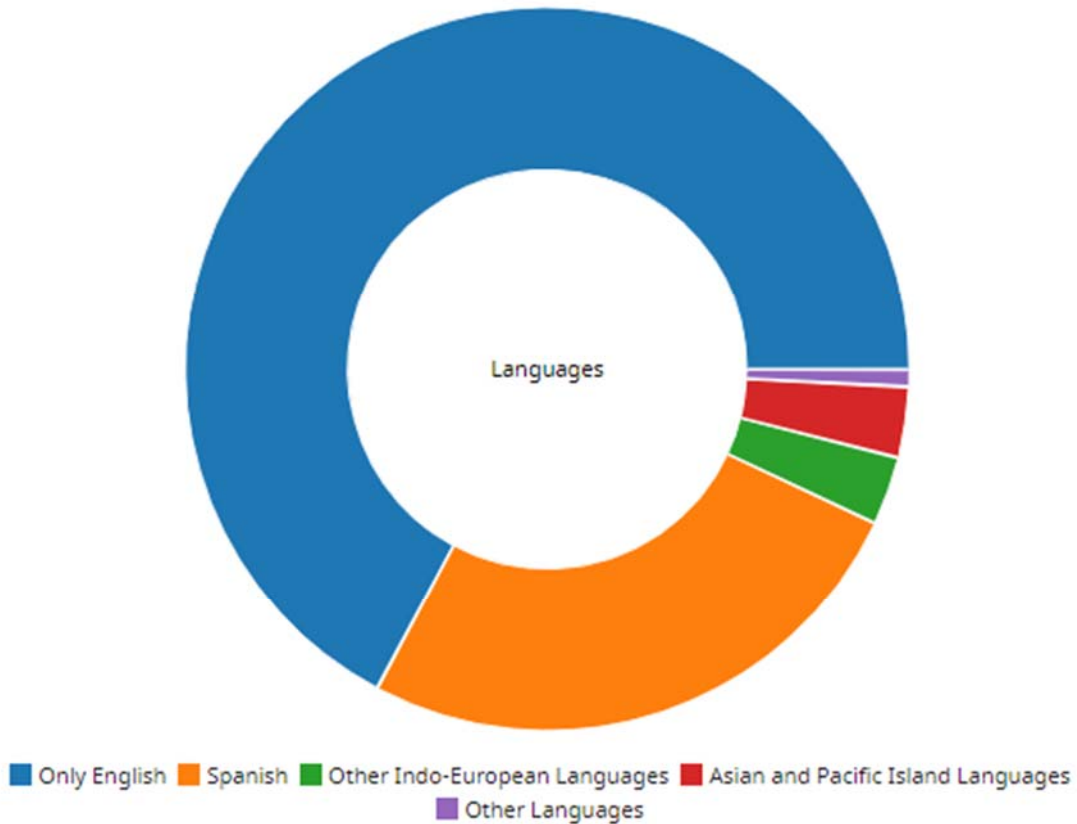
County Demographics: Ethnicity



Source: Santa Cruz County Chamber of Commerce

Santa Cruz has a higher population of white citizens than the CA average with 58.7% compared to the state average of 39.2%. The percent of Latino residents (Hispanic) in Santa Cruz is lower than the state, however, with Santa Cruz having 32.7% Latino residents, and the state having 38.2%. This statistic is current as of 2014.

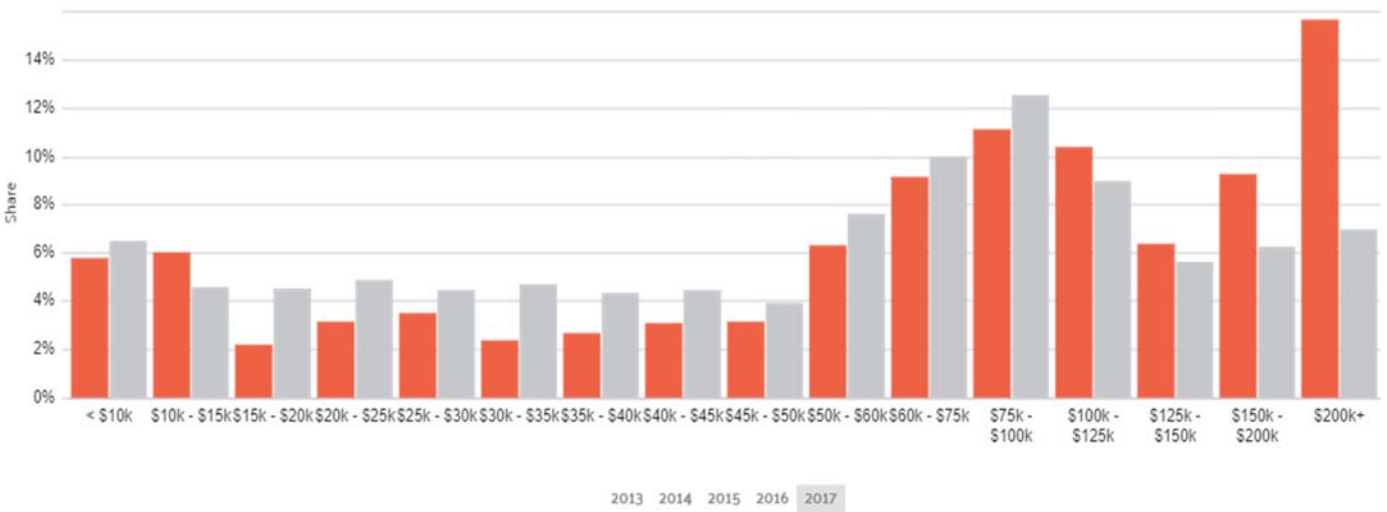
Santa Cruz County Languages Spoken



Source: World Population Review, 2019

The breakdown of languages spoken in Santa Cruz County is 68.1% English, 25.9% Spanish, 2.8% Other Indo-European, 2.8% Asian and Pacific Island, and 0.4% Other. In comparison, California’s breakdown is 56% English, 28.7% Spanish, 9.9% Asian and Pacific Island, 4.4% Other Indo-European, and 1% Other.

Median Household Income Distribution - 2017



Source: Datausa

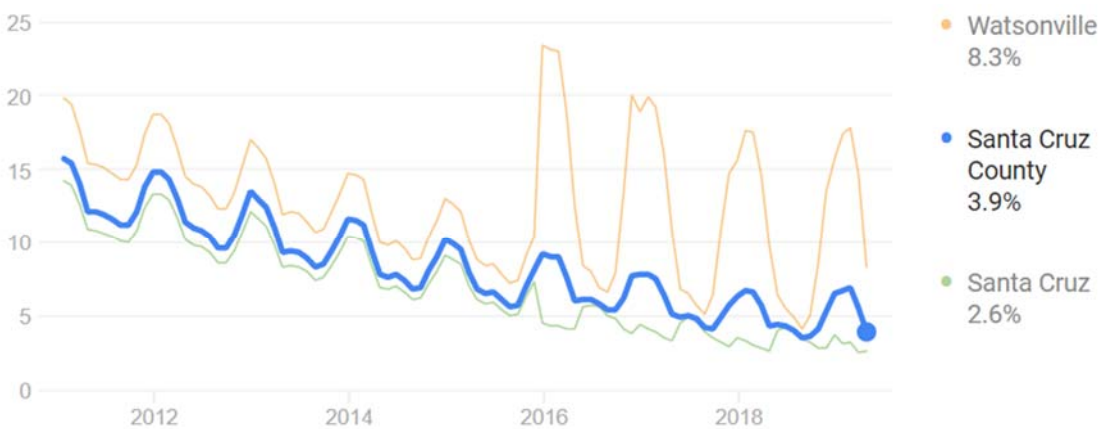
Orange = Percentage of households in Santa Cruz County in that income bracket

Grey = Percentage of households in the nation (average) in that income bracket

The median income of households in Santa Cruz County, California was \$79,705. Eleven percent of households had income below \$15,000 a year and 24 percent had income over \$150,000 or more.

Santa Cruz County / Unemployment rate

3.9% (May 2019)



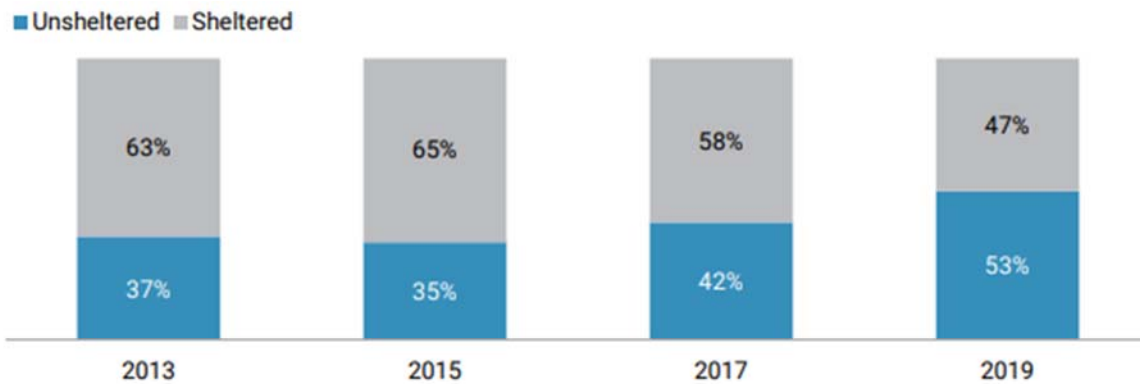
Average housing costs

- ❖ Median home value in Santa Cruz County is \$829,000
- ❖ Santa Cruz County home values have gone up 0.2% over the past year and Zillow predicts they will rise 0.2% within the next year
- ❖ Median price of homes currently listed in Santa Cruz County is \$898,500 while the median price of homes that sold is \$762,100
- ❖ Median rent price in Santa Cruz County is \$3,150

Homelessness

The percentage of families experiencing homelessness who were living on the streets has been on the rise since 2015, reaching 53% in 2019. This represents a large increase from 35% in 2015.

Individuals in Families by Shelter Status



	2013	2015	2017	2019	17-19% CHANGE
Sheltered	234	313	234	196	-16%
Unsheltered	201	168	169	223	32%
Total	544	481	403	419	4%

Source: Applied Survey Research, Santa Cruz County Homeless Census & Survey.

Analysis

Santa Cruz County is located on the California coast, situated at the north end of the Monterey Bay. There are four incorporated cities within Santa Cruz County: Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Scotts Valley, and Capitola. The county seat is Santa Cruz. Watsonville is the second largest city. Total county population as of 2015 was 274,146. Growth has slowed down significantly in recent years. Of the total population, approximately 17% was children under 15 years of age and 36% of the total population was under 25 years old. The principal industries are

agriculture, tourism, high technology, and education (University of California, Santa Cruz). UC Santa Cruz is the largest single employer in Santa Cruz County.

One third of the Santa Cruz County population (33.4%) is Latino (coded as Hispanic), primarily Mexican and by 2020, the Hispanic population is projected to increase to 42% of the total county population. The majority of the Latino population lives in South County. About 32% speak a language other than English at home; 26% speak Spanish at home. Median income for families in Santa Cruz County is \$79,705 which exceeds the statewide median household income (\$71,805). Approximately 12% of all families earned less than \$15,000 annually and 25% of all families had annual incomes of \$ 150,000 or more. However, families that earned less than \$35,000 were considered in poverty (based on the California Poverty Measure), which makes up more than 25% of households in Santa Cruz County. Due to the large population of children and families in South County, there is a need to expand family strengthening services there.

As of May 2019, the unemployment rate for Santa Cruz County is 3.9%, which is roughly equivalent to the nationwide rate. However, North County has an even lower rate of 2.6% while South County has a rate of 8.3%. Therefore, in South County, there are more individuals seeking work than the region’s businesses can provide. Agriculture is the prevalent industry in South County. North County tends to have more residents who have higher education and commute to the Silicon Valley for technology related work. Housing costs are significantly higher than the state average. There has been a decrease in veteran homelessness and chronic homelessness in the past three years. However, there continues to be an increase in youth and family homelessness.

Child Maltreatment Indicators

NUMBER OF LOW-BIRTH WEIGHT NEWBORNS

	Santa Cruz Number / Percent of low birthweight infants	California Percent of low birthweight infants
Average 2015-2017	168.3 / 6.1%	6.9%

Source: State of California Department of Public Health

NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN TO TEEN PARENTS

	Santa Cruz Number / Percent of children born to teen parents	California Percent of children born to teen parents
Average 2015-2017	120.7 / 10.1%	15.7%

Source: State of California Department of Public Health

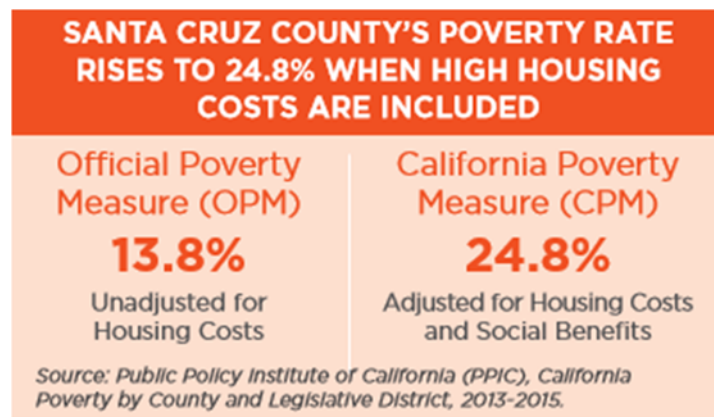
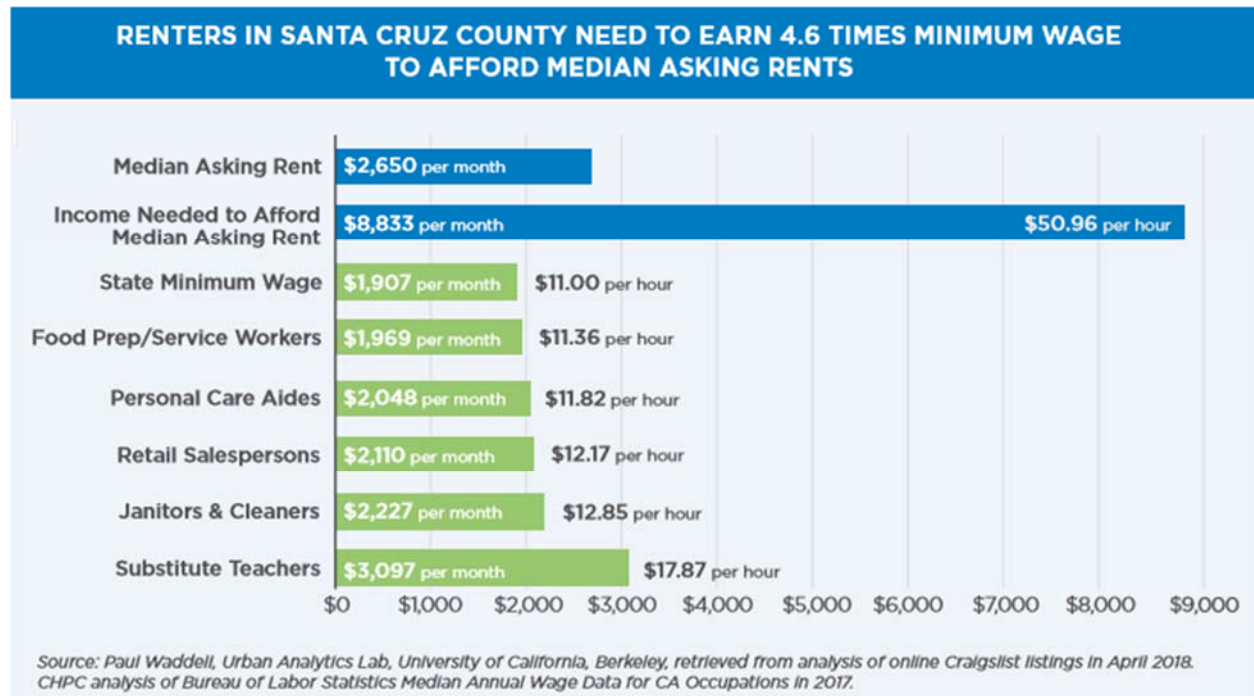
FAMILY STRUCTURE

According to the US Census Bureau 2018 American Community Survey, Santa Cruz County had 95,940 households. The average household size was 2.74 people. Families made up 64 percent of the households in the county. This figure includes both married-couple families (78 percent) and other families (21 percent). 14 percent are female householder families with no spouse and have children under 18 years of age and 7 percent are male householder families with no spouse and have children under 18 years of age.

Nonfamily households made up 35 percent of all households in Santa Cruz County, though this does not mean that they were necessarily living alone. In addition, 28 percent of all households have one or more people under the age of 18; 44 percent of all households have one or more people 65 years and over.

HOUSING COST & AVAILABILITY

According to the California Housing Partnership Corporation (CHPC), between 2007 and 2017, the amount of state funding Santa Cruz County received annually declined by more than \$16 million, while homelessness increased by 15% in recent years. Santa Cruz County needs 11,873 more affordable rental homes to meet current demand.



2-1-1 CALLS

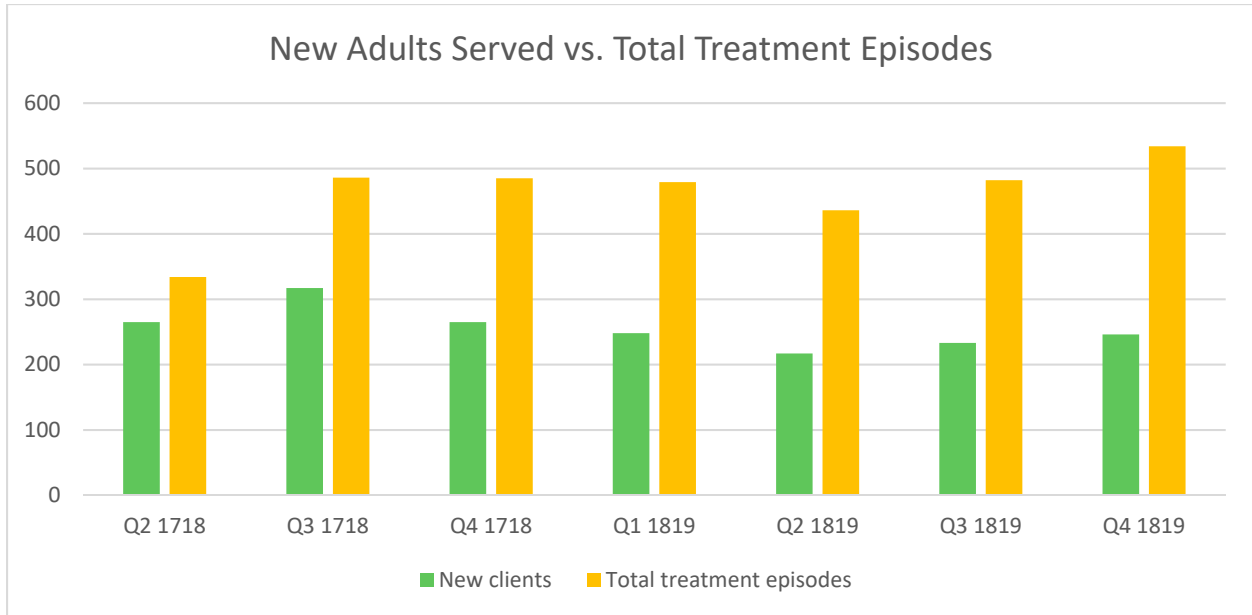
Call from citizens to 2-1-1 for assistance demonstrates that requests for help are most prevalent around issues of basic needs such as housing, food/meals, and income support/assistance.

Santa Cruz County April 2019-June 2019 Calls	
Total Calls	1080
Total Needs Addressed	1515
Caller Needs (by Category)	
Arts, Culture, and Recreation	4
Clothing/Personal/Household Needs	30
Disaster Services	3
Education	6
Employment	26
Food/Meals	201
Health Care	81
Housing	437
Income Support/Assistance	215
Individual, Family, and Community Support	81
Information Services	22
Legal, Consumer, and Public Safety Services	121
Mental Health/Addictions	115
Other Government/Economic Services	12
Transportation	35
Utility Assistance	104
Volunteers/Donations	22

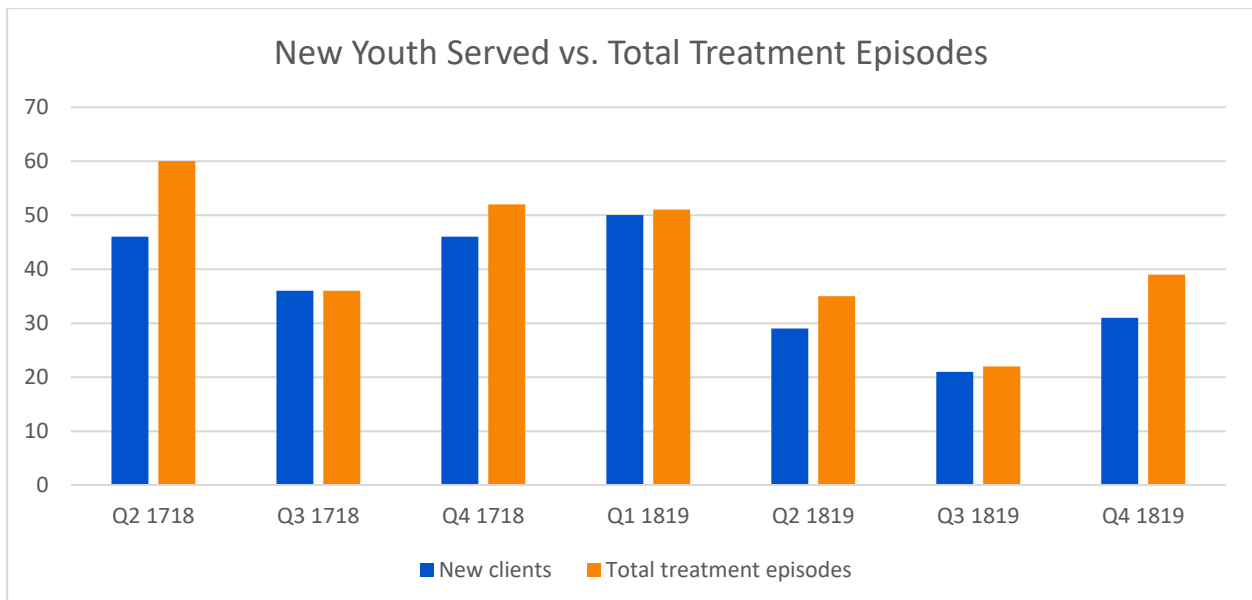
Source: United Way of Santa Cruz County

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Santa Cruz County’s Health Services Agency collects data for their Substance Use Disorder Services (SUDS). The following data comes from an evaluation of the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS):



Overall, 52.6 % of treatment enrollments were linked to new adults served.



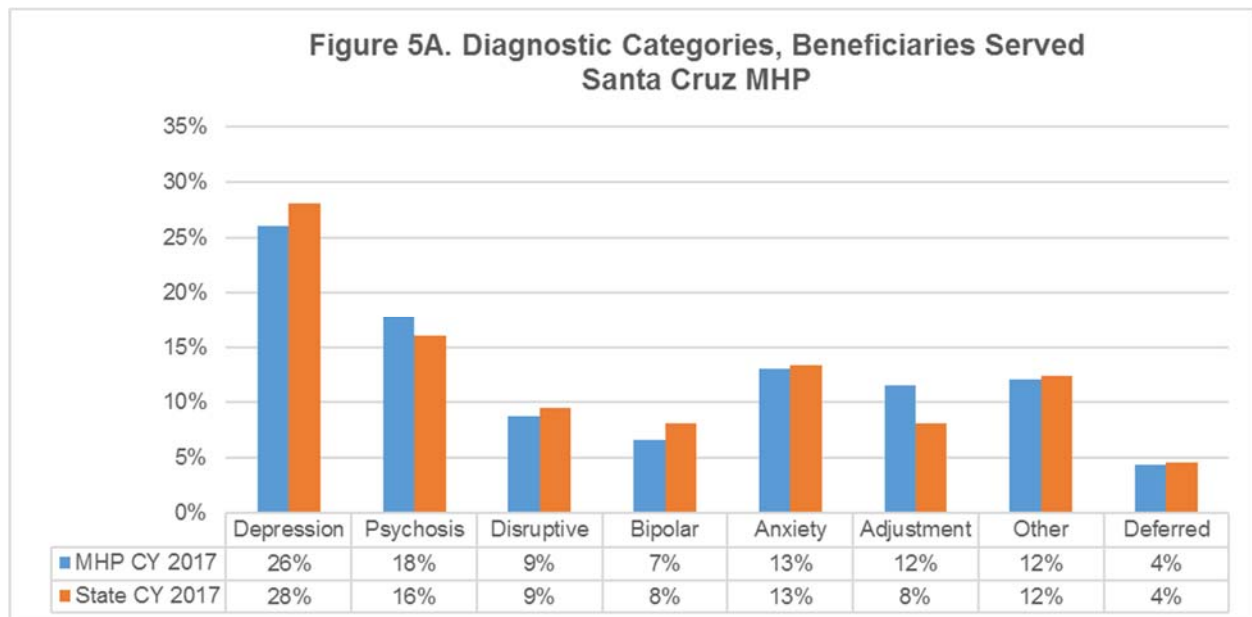
Overall, 90.6 % of treatment enrollments were linked to new youth served.

MENTAL HEALTH

Santa Cruz County’s Health Services Agency collects data for their Mental Health Plan (MHP) usage.

Table 1. Medi-Cal Enrollees and Beneficiaries Served in CY 2017 by Race/Ethnicity Santa Cruz MHP				
Race/Ethnicity	Average Monthly Unduplicated Medi-Cal Enrollees	% Enrollees	Unduplicated Annual Count Beneficiaries Served	% Served
White	22,634	28.4%	1,116	32.6%
Latino/Hispanic	43,361	54.5%	1,370	40.0%
African-American	792	1.0%	64	1.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,751	2.2%	50	1.5%
Native American	318	0.4%	13	0.4%
Other	10,739	13.5%	814	23.8%
Total	79,593	100%	3,427	100%

The total for Average Monthly Unduplicated Medi-Cal Enrollees is not a direct sum of the averages above it. The averages are calculated independently.



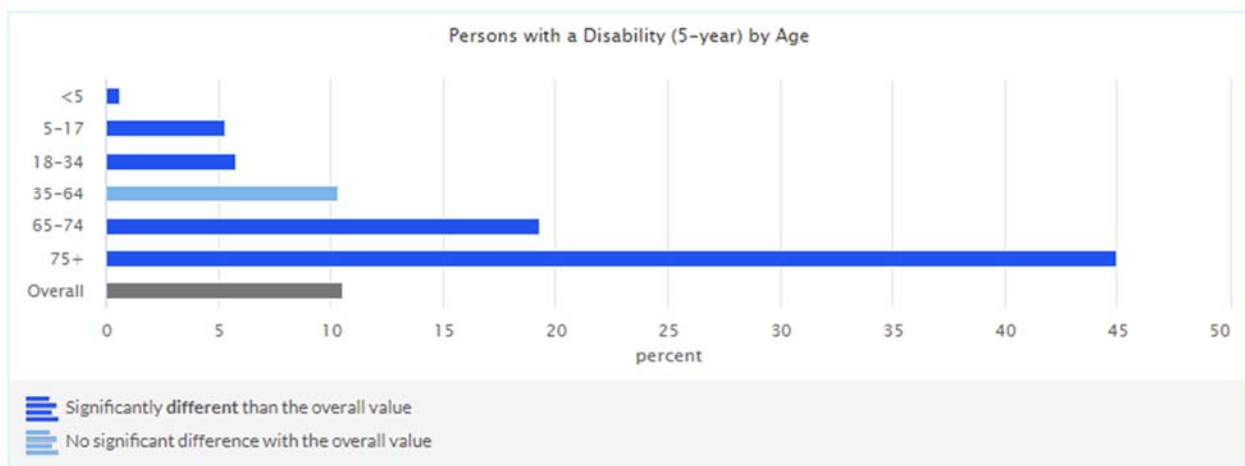
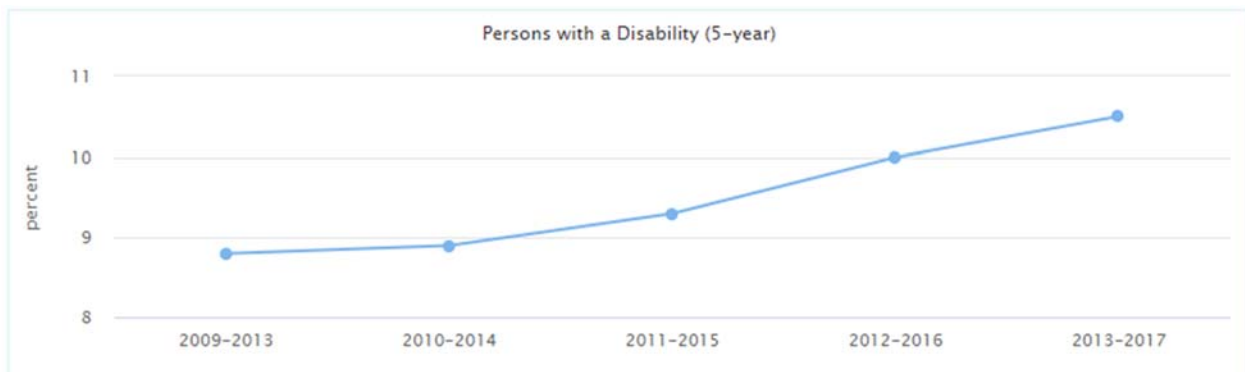
The MHP’s self-reported percent of beneficiaries served with co-occurring (i.e., substance abuse and mental health) diagnoses: 23 percent.

CHILD FATALITIES

Santa Cruz County	Number							
	Age Group	Birth Defects	Cancer	Diseases of the Heart	Homicide	Influenza and Pneumonia	Suicide	Unintentional Injuries
Ages 1-4	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	0
Ages 5-14	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Ages 15-19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Ages 20-24	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	5

Source: Kidsdata.org (2016 data)

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



Source: DataShare Santa Cruz County

LAW ENFORCEMENT CALL FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

2018	
Total Calls	909
No Weapon Involved	709
Weapon Involved	200
Firearm	4
Knife or Cutting Instrument	36
Other Dangerous Weapon	48
Personal Weapon	112
Not Reported	0
Total Strangulation and Suffocation	51
Cases with Strangulation	40
Cases with Suffocation	11

Source: Open Justice (openjustice.doj.ca.gov)

ANALYSIS

From 2015-2017, there continues to be a similar rate of low birth weight infants as previous years. During this same time frame, the percentage of children born to teen parents was 10.1%, which is lower than the state which is 15.7%. The total number of children born to teens has decreased significantly since 2010 where there were 257 children born to teen parents. However, the percentage has increased from 2010 when it was 8.5%. One thing to note is that this percentage fluctuates significantly from year to year due to the small sample sizes in Santa Cruz County. The highest annual rate of live births is among Latino mothers.

Family structure has stayed consistent over the last five years. In 2018, families made up 64% of households in the county. In 2012 there were 93,000 households in the county and the average household size was 2.7 people. Families made up 62 percent of the households in Santa Cruz County in 2012. In addition, non-family households have many people living in those homes. Forty-four percent of all households have one or more people 65 years old and over. Housing cost and availability continues to be a major challenge for county residents. Santa Cruz County needs almost 12,000 more affordable rental homes to meet current demand. When the poverty rate for the county is adjusted to include the high housing costs, the rate jumps to 24.8%. Housing and income support are the leading reasons for calls to 2-1-1 as recorded by United Way.

Substance use and mental health are critical issues impacting the county, including child welfare involved families. Due to the implementation of Drug Medi-Cal, a significant increase in substance abuse treatment occurred with 52.6% of adult treatment enrollments being linked to new clients. An increase in new youth clients also occurred with 90.6% of treatment enrollees being new clients. For mental health treatment, there is a similar trend with an increase in citizens accessing mental health services across all ethnicities. Depression is most common diagnosis treated. Co-occurrence of substance use and mental health make up 23% of clients seen for mental health treatment.

According to Kidsdata, older youth fatalities made up the bulk of child/youth fatalities in 2016 with homicide and suicide being major causes. Santa Cruz County’s rates of children 0-17 with disabilities as well as adults 65 years old and over has remained consistent over the last 5 years, which are in line with the overall state’s rates.

Regarding domestic violence related calls for assistance, the number of such calls has increased recently from 783 in 2012 to 909 in 2018, with 22% of calls being reported with weapons.

Child Welfare Population

Child Population (0-17), Number in Care, and Prevalence Rates for July 2019

Age Group	Total Child Population	In Care	Prevalence per 1,000 Children
Under 1	2,780	17	6.1
'1-2	5,471	33	6
'3-5	9,963	17	1.7
'6-10	17,693	22	1.2
'11-15	16,350	43	2.6
16-17	6,439	27	4.2
Total	58,696	159	2.7

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract.

Child Population (0-17), Number in Care, and Prevalence Rates for July 2019

Ethnic Group	Total Child Population	In Care	Prevalence per 1,000 Children
Black	349	2	5.7
White	21,917	60	2.7
Latino	31,844	93	2.9
Asian/P.I.	1,541	1	0.6
Nat Amer	102	2	19.6
Multi-Race	2,943	0	0
Missing	0	1	.
Total	58,696	159	2.7

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract.

California Child Population (0-17) and Children with Child Maltreatment Allegations, Substantiations, and Entries for Jul 1, 2018 to Jun 30, 2019

Age Group	Children with Allegations	Children with Substantiations	% of Substantiated Allegations
Under 1	155	35	22.6
'1-2	218	26	11.9
'3-5	382	33	8.6
'6-10	821	51	6.2
'11-15	749	48	6.4
16-17	245	19	7.8
Total	2,570	212	8.2

Rates are based on unduplicated counts of children--at state and county level--with allegations, substantiations, and entering care during the time period.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract.

California Child Population (0-17) and Children with Child Maltreatment Allegations, Substantiations, and Entries for Jul 1, 2018 to Jun 30, 2019

Ethnic Group	Children with Allegations	Children with Substantiations	% of Substantiated Allegations
Black	32	2	6.3
White	806	83	10.3
Latino	1,467	110	7.5
Asian/P.I.	18	0	0
Nat Amer	7	1	14.3
Multi-Race	0	0	.
Missing	240	16	6.7
Total	2,570	212	8.2

Rates are based on unduplicated counts of children--at state and county level--with allegations, substantiations, and entering care during the time period.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract.

Children with one or more Allegations for Jul 1, 2018 to Jun 30, 2019

Allegation Type	Disposition Type					Total
	Substantiated	Inconclusive	Unfounded	Assessment Only/Evaluated Out	Not Yet Determined	
	n	n	n	n	n	
Sexual Abuse	14	59	57	73	5	208
Physical Abuse	12	232	169	142	9	564
Severe Neglect	23	45	9	7	1	85
General Neglect	126	448	277	473	15	1,339
Exploitation	1	3	1	1	.	6
Emotional Abuse	13	110	7	71	5	206
Caretaker Absence/Incapacity	.	.	.	.	.	.
At Risk, Sibling Abused	2	1	2	.	.	5
Substantial Risk	.	.	.	.	.	.
Missing	.	.	.	.	.	.
Total	191	898	522	767	35	2,413

A child is counted only once, in category of highest severity.

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract.

Entries to Foster Care Jul 1, 2018 to Jun 30, 2019

Age Group	Ethnic Group						Total
	Black	White	Latino	Asian/P.I.	Nat Amer	Missing	
	n	n	n	n	n	n	
<1 mo	.	7	8	.	.	1	16
1-11 mo	.	2	3	.	.	.	5
'1-2 yr	.	7	5	.	.	.	12
'3-5 yr	.	5	3	.	1	.	9
'6-10 yr	.	5	3	.	.	.	8
'11-15 yr	.	3	8	.	.	.	11
16-17 yr	.	1	5	.	.	.	6
18-20 yr
Total	.	30	35	.	1	1	67

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract.

Reentry Following Reunification (Exit Cohort)
July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018

COUNT	Age Group						Total
	Under 1	'1-2	'3-5	'6-10	'11-15	16-17	
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
Reentered in less than 12 months	.	2	1	.	2	1	6
No reentry within 12 months	1	6	6	16	12	7	48
Total	1	8	7	16	14	8	54

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract

Children in Foster Care
July 1, 2019

Age Group	Ethnic Group						Total
	Black	White	Latino	Asian/P.I.	Nat Amer	Missing	
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
Under 1	.	7	9	.	.	1	17
'1-2	.	16	17	.	.	.	33
'3-5	1	8	7	.	1	.	17
'6-10	1	6	15	.	.	.	22
'11-15	.	12	30	1	.	.	43
16-17	.	11	15	.	1	.	27
18-21	1	15	22	.	.	.	38
Missing	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Total	3	75	115	1	2	1	197

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract.

Caseload by Service Component Type
July 1, 2019

Service Component Type	Age Group							Total
	Under 1	'1-2	'3-5	'6-10	'11-15	16-17	18-21	
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
Emergency Response	6	2	2	1	9	3	.	23
No Placement FM	5	8	9	8	11	4	.	45
Post-Placement FM	.	2	4	8	6	1	.	21
Family Reunification	7	9	6	11	11	5	.	49
Permanent Placement	5	22	10	9	25	19	7	97
Supportive Transition	.	.	.	.	.	.	34	34
Total	23	43	31	37	62	32	41	269

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract.

4E(1) - Placement status for children with ICWA eligibility
July 1, 2019

Placement Status	Time in Care	Total
	< 12 months	
	n	n
Relatives	.	.
Non Relatives, Indian SCPs	.	.
Non Relatives, Non Indian SCPs	1	1
Non Relatives, SCP Ethnic Missing	.	.
Group Homes	.	.
SILP	.	.
Other	.	.
Total	1	1

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract.

Juvenile Probation Population

Entries to Foster Care
Jul 1, 2018 to Jun 30, 2019

Age Group	Ethnic Group						Total
	Black	White	Latino	Asian/P.I.	Nat Amer	Missing	
	n	n	n	n	n	n	
<1 mo
1-11 mo
'1-2 yr
'3-5 yr
'6-10 yr
'11-15 yr	.	1	2	.	.	.	3
16-17 yr	.	1	1	.	.	.	2
18-20 yr
Total	.	2	3	.	.	.	5

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract.

Children in Foster Care
July 1, 2019

Age Group	Ethnic Group						Total
	Black	White	Latino	Asian/P.I.	Nat Amer	Missing	
	n	n	n	n	n	n	
Under 1
'1-2
'3-5
'6-10
'11-15	.	.	2	.	.	.	2
16-17	.	3	1	.	.	.	4
18-21	.	.	2	.	.	.	2
Missing
Total	.	3	5	.	.	.	8

Data Source: CWS/CMS 2019 Quarter 2 Extract.

Analysis

Regarding the child welfare and probation population (CWS/CMS Q4 2018), Santa Cruz County had 58,696 children and youth under 18 during that quarter. Of that total, approximately 18,000 were under 5 years old or under and a total of 52,000 were 15 years old or under. Of

the total child and youth population, 54.3% were Latino, 37.3% were White and only 0.6% were Black. For FY 18/19, 2,570 children had allegations of abuse or neglect and of these, 212 allegations were substantiated. In the last CSA in 2015 there were 2,638 children who had allegations of abuse or neglect and of these, 380 allegations were substantiated. The incidence per 1,000 children has decreased from 6.6 to 3.6. Of the total children and youth who entered foster care during 2018/19 (67), the greatest number (42) of substantiated allegations of abuse or neglect involved children 0-5 years of age. The next highest incidence of substantiations was for children under 11-15 who accounted for 11 entries into child welfare. Regarding the ethnicity, 35 of the 67 entries into child welfare (52.2%) were Latino children. Allegations of abuse and neglect of Latino children accounted for 57.1% of the total allegations. Most substantiated allegations were for general neglect (126/191), followed by 23 substantiated allegations for severe neglect and 14 substantiated allegations for sexual abuse. Most of the children with first entries were children aged 0-5 years (42/67), followed by children 11-15 (11/67). The majority of children with first entries were Latino (35/67). For children or youth who re-entered child welfare during FY 17/18 (6), the majority were White (4/6), three were 0-5 years of age, two were 11-15, and one was between 16 and 17 years of age.

During FY 18/19, there were five children/youth with first entries into Juvenile Probation; all were between 11-17 years of age.

Child Welfare supervised 197 children in foster care (point in time) on July 1, 2019, which was below the average of the prior 4 years (242). The range was between 271 (2015) and 211 (2018) children under child welfare supervision in foster care. The largest ethnic group among these children (58.7%) was Latino, following the overall data on substantiated allegations of abuse and neglect. Probation supervised 8 youth (point in time) on July 1, 2019. One half of these youth were 16-17 years of age. This number was significantly below the average of the previous four-year period (27), which ranged from 11-34 youth under probation supervision each year. Most of the youth under probation supervision on July 1, 2019 were Latino (62.5%), which was consistent with the prior comparison years.

Public Agency Characteristics

A. Political Jurisdictions

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Pursuant to the provisions of the California Constitution, the five-member Board of Supervisors governs the Santa Cruz County unincorporated area and is the executive and legislative governing body of the County of Santa Cruz. The Board directs overall operations of the various County departments and districts by establishing policies and approving the budgets and financing for all of County government and certain special districts.

The Board of Supervisors also serves as the governing body for a number of political entities separate from the County, including County Service Areas, the Santa Cruz County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, and County road maintenance districts. Board members also serve on other local and regional boards such as the Associations of Monterey Bay Area Governments, the Local Agency Formation Commission, and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission. The current Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors is Ryan Coonerty.

The Family and Children’s Services (FCS) Division is a component of the Santa Cruz County Human Services Department (HSD), which is responsible to the County Administrative Officer and the Board of Supervisors. Supervisor Bruce McPherson serves as the Chair of the Child Welfare System Improvement Plan Steering Committee. The FCS Division is responsible for all child welfare, adoption, and foster care licensing services and the FCS Division Director directly reports to the HSD Agency Director. The Santa Cruz County Probation Department provides juvenile probation services. Both departments are responsible to the County Administrative Officer and the Board of Supervisors. The County Administrative Office is responsible for the preparation and supervision of the County’s budget, legislative analysis, contract and grant administration, intergovernmental relations, supervision of non- elected department heads, and oversight of all departmental functions.

FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBES

There are no Bureau of Indian Affairs recognized tribes in Santa Cruz County. However, there are members of the Ohlone tribe in the region. In addition, documented descendants of Missions San Juan Bautista and Santa Cruz have become members of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and can be found in Santa Cruz County, though most live in the Central Valley.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

There are more than 40,000 students in grades K-12 in the 10 school districts within Santa Cruz County. Four of the 10 districts are small, one-school districts with student populations between 106 students and 129 students. The largest school district, Pajaro Valley Unified (PVUSD), provides education instruction for over half (20,362) of the children within Santa Cruz County. PVUSD is comprised of sixteen elementary schools, six middle schools, three high

schools, five charter schools, seventeen children's centers, a continuation high school, an adult education school, and two alternative schools. The Santa Cruz County Office of Education is a public agency whose purpose is to provide educational leadership, resources, and services to schools to ensure quality educational opportunities for all students. Their mission is accomplished through partnerships with teachers, school districts, businesses and other governmental agencies. Direct instructional programs are offered through special education, alternative education, and Regional Occupational Programs. District services are provided in the areas of staff development and fiscal services.

FCS collaborates with the districts and the County Office of Education in several ways:

- **Placement Meetings:** School staff is invited to attend FCS placement review committee meetings. Placement meetings also include Probation and/or Children's Mental Health staff. When a child is being placed in a Short-Term Residential Treatment Program (STRTP), FCS works with Mental Health and Probation for approval of the placement.
- **Individual Education Plans:** FCS works closely with the schools in regard to individual educational plans (IEPs) and associated educational funding.
- **AB490:** Santa Cruz County's Foster Youth Advisory Board, a collaborative body coordinating foster youth education issues, was instrumental in facilitating a Memorandum of Understanding among the County Office of Education (COE), FCS, Probation, CASA and all local school districts to delineate roles, responsibilities, and procedures for educational services to children in care and ensure compliance with AB490. The Board continues to focus on minimizing disruption of school attendance during placement, increasing the number of children who are able to stay in their home schools, and ensure that children in foster care have the same educational resources as other children.
- **Investigations:** FCS works cooperatively with individual schools when investigating child abuse referrals and interviewing children at school sites.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

- California State Parks, Santa Cruz District
- City of Santa Cruz Police Department
- City of Scotts Valley Police Department
- City of Watsonville Police Department
- City of Capitola Police Department
- Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department
- University of California at Santa Cruz Police Department

The FCS Division has established Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Joint Protocols with Mental Health, Juvenile Probation and the law enforcement agencies listed above. Separate agreements for various aspects of child welfare, including investigations and cross reporting, domestic violence, sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), and juvenile sex offenders, delineate each party to the agreement's role(s) and responsibilities. The MOUs assist

the agencies in working cooperatively in cases with overlap between agencies. Several important areas of collaboration include:

- **Cross Training:** The County has sponsored cross training between child welfare, probation, and law enforcement staff. The cross training has enabled greater understanding among the various agencies of the work of their colleagues, how to strengthen collaboration, avoid duplication of effort, increase consistency of response and continue to address how to better work together.
- **Domestic Violence Reports:** A provision of the MOU between FCS and law enforcement specifies that law enforcement will report all domestic violence incidents where children were present as soon as possible, but no later than three days after the incident, to the FCS Division.
- **Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:** FCS has been able to engage some of the law enforcement jurisdictions and provided training on CSEC and the CSEC Protocol. FCS has provided training on CSEC and the CSEC Protocol in conjunction with training by Monarch Services on domestic violence and sexual assault. At this time, Santa Cruz Police Department and Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office have been trained on the CSEC Protocol and joint response. Watsonville Police Department allowed for several 7-10-minute presentations on the protocol during roll calls and FCS is working to get additional time where a longer training can occur. There are several smaller law enforcement jurisdictions in the county that still need to be engaged. At this time, all jurisdictions seem to be aware that CSEC cannot be arrested as Juvenile Hall will not accept them. However, more needs to be done to educate these jurisdictions on the CSEC Protocol and to contact child welfare or Monarch to initiate the CSEC Protocol in Santa Cruz County.
- **Interagency Child Abuse Council:** The Interagency Child Abuse Council, a collaborative among law enforcement, child welfare, the District Attorney's Office, Probation, Parole, and two community-based providers coordinates ongoing investigations in sexual abuse cases. The Council also promotes cross communication between the Council partners. Included in the cross communication is an agreement to alert Council members when a perpetrator has been paroled.
- **Child removals:** FCS staff work closely with law enforcement when children are removed from their homes. As provided in our MOU, social workers and law enforcement officers conduct child welfare investigations jointly. The law enforcement agencies have legal authority to take children into custody and FCS does not.
- **Conflict Resolution:** FCS generally has strong working relationships with the various law enforcement agencies. When issues arise as they sometimes do in cases with many vested parties, the chain of command is used to resolve the issue. Working collaboratively, FCS and the various law enforcement agencies have resolved confidentiality issues and are able to communicate openly which leads to better relationships and fewer misunderstandings, reduces duplication of effort, and ultimately contributes to better services for children and families.

In addition to the other law enforcement agencies noted above, the FCS Division works closely with the District Attorney on matters of shared responsibility. The District Attorney is very interested in child welfare issues and works closely with FCS. On mutual investigations, FCS may be called upon to provide information to the District Attorney so that the District Attorney can analyze the information and determine his own recommendations.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The Health Care Program for Children in Foster Care (HCPCFC) is a public health program to meet the medical, dental, mental, and developmental health needs of dependent children and youth in court-ordered, out-of-home placement or foster care. The goals and objectives of the HCPCFC are common to the health, welfare, and probation departments and are implemented through close collaboration and cooperation among this multi-disciplinary, interdepartmental team. Through this program, a Public Health Nurse (PHN) provides expertise to the Human Services Department/Family and Children's Services Division and collaborates with social workers, probation officers, and foster parents to ensure that health care resources are provided to children placed in foster homes and group homes.

The HCPCFC PHN is co-located with social workers at the Human Services Department, Family and Children's Services, although the PHN is an employee of the Health Services Agency's Public Health Division - Children's Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP). The Santa Cruz County Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) program is dedicated to the health and well-being of children. As part of the State Children's Medical Services, CHDP provides for the early detection and prevention of health problems among children from low-to-moderate income families. Program staff works collaboratively with health care providers and child advocate agencies to ensure that eligible children receive quality health care and to empower families to be knowledgeable, responsible health care consumers.

The goal of the HCPCFC is to identify, respond to, improve and enhance foster children's physical, mental, dental and developmental well-being. The PHN is a consultant and liaison to social workers, foster parents and probation officers. S/he is responsible for assurance of foster children's health by:

- helping foster parents obtain timely comprehensive health assessments and dental examinations and immunizations;
- expediting referrals to specialty medical care (such as cardiology, gastroenterology, neurology, Stanford Neurodevelopmental Foster Care Program etc.);
- coordinating health services for foster children placed in and out of Santa Cruz County and out-of-state;
- providing medical documentation and proof to the court as needed;
- providing medical education through the interpretation of medical reports and training for foster care team members; and
- assisting social workers in overcoming obstacles by gaining access to coordinated, multidimensional services.

- Monitoring and oversight of court ordered psychotropic medications.

The PHN also participates in the creation and update of the Health and Education Passport, an electronic health record required by law for every foster child.

County Child Welfare and Probation Infrastructure

County Child Welfare Infrastructure

Organization of service components. Since 2012, the FCS Division has significantly restructured the organization of service components. In September 2012, we combined our Emergency Response (ER) and Dependency Investigations (DI) programs into a single Investigations program comprising four social work units. With this reorganization, families are no longer assigned an ER worker to conduct the initial investigation, followed by a separate DI worker to conduct further investigation and write the Jurisdiction/Disposition report. In the new structure, one Investigations worker carries out all of these tasks. In addition, a post-disposition (post-dispo) worker gets assigned to the case at the time of petition filing and they are responsible for case management during the pre-disposition phase. In September 2014, our post-disposition (post-dispo) service components were similarly reconfigured. In the past, the Division had two Family Maintenance/Family Reunification (FM/FR) units, one Permanency Planning (PP) unit, and one Adoptions unit. A child or family moving from one of these service components to another was assigned a new social worker. The restructuring in September 2014 resulted in generalized post-dispo units that carried FM, FR, PP and Adoptions cases. In 2016, after evaluation of this restructuring, PP and Adoptions were separated into their own units, separate from FR/FM units.

The primary purpose of reorganizing the service components was to reduce the number of social worker changes that a child or family experiences during the life of a case. Under the old model, a family might be assigned to as many as five social workers if the case ends in adoption—and this number could even be higher due to staff turnover. Under the new model, a family will be assigned fewer social workers, although the number could be affected by staff turnover. Research indicates that children and families do best with fewer changes of social worker, and we anticipate that our restructuring will provide a better experience for children and families.

Social work position types. As described above, case-carrying positions in FCS are now divided into Investigations (20 FTEs) and Post-Dispo (19.5 FTEs). In addition, we have a number of specialized senior social worker positions including court officer (1 FTE), resource family approval workers (4 FTEs), and Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) workers (2.5 FTEs). Finally, we have five Social Worker I/II's who perform specialized functions including absent parent/relative search, visit supervision, resource family approval social worker, and placement coordinator.

Staff recruitment and selection. Santa Cruz County operates a continuous open recruitment for the senior social worker. New applications are rated to determine whether they meet the minimum qualifications for the position. Once rated, the Personnel Department provides HSD with a list of qualified applicants. FCS offers each of these applicants an opportunity to

interview for the position. Interviews and reference checks are conducted by the FCS leadership team. The leadership team then discusses each candidate’s interview performance and reference checks and decides whether to offer a position to the applicant. In these hiring decisions, the Division attempts to hire applicants who have MSWs (particularly Title IVE students), who have prior child welfare experience, and who are bilingual in English and Spanish, whenever possible.

Methods for assigning cases. Within the Investigations program, cases are assigned by the program supervisors based on a rotation of social workers. For Ongoing and Permanency, cases are assigned based on several factors, including caseload size, language, geographic location, and complexity of case. In some circumstances, supervisors may deviate from a strict rotation based on the number and complexity of cases that are currently open to a particular worker. The supervisors make every effort to ensure that workloads are equitable across social workers.

Average caseload sizes. Caseload sizes are affected by staff turnover and vacancies, as well as by staff leaves of absence. When fully staffed, average caseloads for Investigations are 8 to 9 investigations per month and one Jurisdiction/Disposition report per month. However, when the Division’s vacancies are high, as well as leaves of absence, the average Investigations caseload can be 9 to 11 investigations per month and at least one Juris/Dispo report per month. In our Post-Dispo units, when fully staffed, we anticipate that caseloads (a combination of FM, FR, PP or Adoptions cases) will be in the high teens to 24.

Staff turnover. The following table shows the turnover rate in the FCS Division, by type of position, for calendar year 2018. For purposes of this self-assessment, the turnover rate was defined as the number of workers who left the Division by promoting to a position in another division, retiring, resigning or who were terminated during the 2018 calendar year divided by the total number of positions for each staff category.

STAFF TURNOVER

<i>Type of Position</i>	<i>Number Who Left the Agency during 2018</i>	<i>TOTAL number of positions by category FY 2018-2019</i>	<i>Turnover Rate (percent)</i>
Managers	3	5	60%
Administrative Support (clerical)	0	12	0%
Social Worker I & II (examples include home finding social workers; visit supervisor; foster care licensing social worker)	1	7	14%
Public Health Nurses	1	1	100%
Senior Social Workers	9	54.5	17%
Supervisors	1	10	10%
Staff Analysts (NON-case carrying)	0	2	0%
All Positions/Overall Turnover Rate	15	91.5	16%

The 2018 turnover rate in FCS was 16%, which is undesirably high and is an increase from 2014 (13%). The high management turnover rate of 60% was due to one staff retirement, one staff leaving the area to take another job and one staff leaving for family reasons. There was high turnover among senior social workers, who had a 17% turnover rate for their job classification. The 9 senior social worker departures included several voluntary resignations. The high turnover rate continues to be a concern. There does not seem to be any single reason for it, but rather a number of different reasons—staff reaching retirement age, staff leaving the area for family reasons, and staff choosing to accept social work positions elsewhere in the community (e.g. Hospice, FFAs and group homes) and out of County. Due to the high turnover, the number of vacant senior social worker positions has varied from 2 to 8 at various times during the last year. Filling vacant positions is the highest priority for the management team. We hired 8 new senior social workers in 2018, and our efforts to hire are continuous. Because many Bay Area counties are hiring, there is considerable competition to attract good candidates. We currently have 2 vacancies and are hopeful that we will be able to fill these vacancies within the next few months. Impact to practice and outcome data measures has been minimal as FCS continues to perform consistently across years.

Staff education levels and demographics. Of the 51 current child welfare senior social workers who are responsible for managing child welfare cases, 41 have master’s degrees. Of these, the majority have MSWs and a minority have other related degrees such as a Master’s in Counseling. There are 10 senior social workers who do not have master’s degrees. All social work supervisors and division managers possess master’s degrees in social work or a related field. The division director has a Master’s in social work.

The Department does not track the number of years of child welfare and/or related experience possessed by our social workers. It is safe to say that there is a wide range, from long-time staff with 30-plus years of experience to brand new hires whose only experience is their Title IV-E internships.

In Santa Cruz County, the primary ethnic minority group is Latinos/Hispanics. Although most FCS clients speak English, there is a minority of clients who speak Spanish as their primary language. To ensure appropriate communication and case management, HSD makes every effort to hire social workers who are bilingual in English and Spanish. Currently, 22 or 43% of our total social work staff are bilingual in Spanish. Most of these bilingual workers are ethnically Latino. The Division is strongly committed to providing culturally competent services to our clients, and this is reinforced through periodic trainings as well as staff hiring.

Bargaining Unit Issues. Clerical, social worker and supervisory staff are represented by Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 521. The County and SEIU have historically enjoyed a cooperative working relationship. SEIU contacts the County about overall and individual workload issues if they are contacted by a union member with a concern. However, these issues are generally addressed in a non-adversarial manner and generally to the satisfaction of all invested parties.

FCS staff can participate in the HSD Workload Committee, pursuant to Article 26 of the General Representation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Committee is composed of three general representation members, three management members and one union representative. The Committee’s intent is to ensure fair and equitable workload size across specific job

classifications in the MOU. Staff may also forward individual workload concerns to the Committee for consideration. The Committee has a specific protocol for staff to address workload concerns.

Salaries. For senior social workers, the starting salary (step 1) is \$78,208 per year. The top step (step 7) is \$98,987. In 2017, the County implemented a new salary range for the senior social workers assigned to Protective Services which resulted in a 5% increase in salary. In addition, over the past three years the senior social workers have received a 12% increase in cost of living adjustments bringing them to market with our comparison Counties.

CONTRACTED SERVICES

The following services are contracted to community-based nonprofit agencies or independent consultants:

- After hours hotline services
- Counseling services (individual, group and family counseling)
- Parent education—using the Triple P evidence-based model
- Supervised visitation services
- Independent Living Program services
- Transitional Housing Placement-Plus Program
- Transitional Housing Placement – Plus Foster Care
- Counseling and case management services for AB12 youth
- Educational support services (FosterEd program)
- Differential Response (Families Together) Services
- Resource parent recruitment and community-based support
- Resource Parent Training and Peer Support Services
- Resource parent family assessments
- Kinship resource parent in-home support services
- CSEC prevention and counseling services
- Housing navigation and case management (families and youth)
- Emergency child care navigation and child care provider training

Santa Cruz County Probation Infrastructure

The Probation Department is headed by Chief Probation Officer Fernando Giraldo. Assistant Chief, Valerie Thompson, oversees the Department's operations. Robert Doty is the Juvenile Division Director responsible for all aspects of Juvenile Field Supervision and the Placement Unit. The Assistant Division Director for the Juvenile Division is Lori Feldstein who also manages the Luna Evening Center Program. Sarah Fletcher is the Adult Division Director and is responsible for all aspects of Adult Field Supervision; The Juvenile Hall Superintendent is Sara Ryan and the Assistant Superintendent is Hugo Calderon.

The Juvenile Placement Unit consists of one Supervisor, Peter Grassi and three probation officers. The Supervisor has worked in the Department since July 5, 2006 and has been the

placement supervisor since August 15, 2016. His educational experience includes a double Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Criminal Justice and a master’s degree in Counseling Psychology from Santa Clara University. The three probation officers currently assigned to the placement unit are Karla Wade, Mirella Hernandez and Belle Perez. Karla has been in the Placement Unit since 2017. She has worked for the department as a probation officer for 19 years. Karla’s educational experience consists of a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice. Mirella has been in the Placement Unit for nearly five years and prior to that she worked in two other assignments in the Juvenile Division. Her educational experience consists of a Bachelor of Science in Administration of Justice which she received from San Jose State University in December of 2003. Belle has worked in the Placement Unit since starting with the department in 2016. She has a Bachelor of Science Degree from San Jose State University in Justice Studies.

STAFFING CHARACTERISTICS/ISSUES

TURNOVER RATIO:

The Santa Cruz County Probation Department human resource records indicate that during the 2016/2017 FY, 2017/2018 FY, and 2018/2019 FY staff who resigned, retired, or were terminated resulted in an overall turnover rate of 13.53%. These numbers were down nearly 2% from the same three-year time frame between FY 2010/2011-2012/13.

The turnover breakdown is as follows:

	FY 16/17	FY 17/18	FY 18/19
Executive Management	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Middle Management Unit	16.67%	0.00%	10.00%
General Representation Unit	1.96%	9.43%	11.32%
Deputy Probation Officers	1.82%	3.64%	3.57%
General Representation Extra Help	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Totals	11.67%	14.05%	14.88%

Officers within the Probation Department are assigned caseloads based on vacancies and departmental need. A permanent status Probation Officer may submit a request for a specific position; however, there is no guarantee to any assignment. The Deputy Probation Officer is expected to be able to complete all duties as assigned within any position in the department, which includes both the Juvenile and Adult Divisions. All Deputy Probation Officers hired with the department are required to go through a thorough hiring process. The department prefers the Deputy Probation Officer to have a bachelor’s degree upon employment and prior experience within the criminal justice field is encouraged. Upon applying for a position within the department, a State required written exam must be completed. Applicants will also complete a Personal History Questionnaire (PHQ) prior to being selected for an interview. Once the PHQ is reviewed and it is determined the applicant has passed the PHQ the applicant will be invited to participate in a selection interview panel. Upon successfully passing the selection interview, the applicant must complete a peace officer’s background investigation. Applicants who successfully complete the background investigation are then offered a conditional offer of employment, pending the completion and passing of a medical evaluation, fingerprints and psychological screening. The salary for a Deputy Probation Officer I/II ranges from \$32.57 to

\$35.99 an hour for the beginning step 1. The salary for a Deputy Probation Officer III is \$40.69 for the beginning step 1.

PROBATION PRIVATE CONTRACTORS:

The Department’s main source for service delivery continues to be provided through interagency agreements and collaboration with other county departments and community-based organizations. Included are services to high needs wards of the Court to prevent out-of-home placement. This is accomplished with the FUERTE Wraparound teams which is a collaboration between Probation and Encompass Youth Services. The Probation Department also partners with numerous other Community Based Organizations and local contractors to provide interventions and services for youth at the diversion level as well those on probation. The range of contracted services is as follows:

- Parent-Teen Mediation
- Victim Offender Dialogue Program
- Teen Peer Court
- Substance Abuse Services
- Counseling
- Community Service Programs
- Life Skills Programs (to include employment skills)
- Case Management
- Cultural Enrichment and Activities
- Assessments and Psychological Evaluations
- Re-entry Services
- Broad-based Alternatives Suppression and Treatment Approach (BASTA)
- Mentoring
- Parenting Classes

DEPUTY PROBATION OFFICER CASELOAD SIZE BY SERVICE PROGRAM:

The Juvenile Field Services Division caseload size varies depending on the level of supervision and specialty services needed. A review of caseloads and their sizes are as follows (please note there are four supervisors covering the supervision of the following caseloads):

- a. Juvenile Placement – Three Placement Officers provide supervision and reunification services (when applicable) to wards with court ordered out-of-home placement. One of the Placement officers also assists with the facilitation of Child and Family Team Meetings. The average caseload size is 8 per officer.
- b. Community Accountability Program (CAP) - North County has one CAP Probation Officer that covers the Live Oak and San Lorenzo Valley geographical areas. South County has two CAP Probation Officers who cover the medium and high need youth in the Watsonville and Aptos areas. The average caseload size is 20.
- c. General Supervision – There are four Probation Officers covering North and South County respectively. The caseloads serve low to moderate need youth with the average size caseload of 25.

- d. FUERTE Wraparound Unit – There are two FUERTE Wraparound Probation Officers responsible for the supervision of caseloads in both North and South County. The average caseload is 10-12.

BARGAINING UNIT ISSUES

The Santa Cruz County Probation Officers Association (SCCPOA) represents Supervising Deputy Probation Officer III positions as well as Deputy Probation Officers I and II positions. Juvenile Hall Group Supervisors, Accounting and Clerical staff are represented by Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

The unions maintain an interest based negotiation style with the County to work collectively to resolve and agree on a multitude of issues that can occur within the workplace. The unions affect staff in a positive manner, as their main purpose is to ensure consistency and fair and equitable treatment among all members.

FINANCIAL/MATERIAL RESOURCES

PSSF/CAPIT/CBCAP/CHILDREN’S TRUST FUND

The Children’s Network is a local interagency organization that oversees the distribution and uses to which Santa Cruz County puts our PSSF, CAPIT, CBCAP, and Children’s Trust Fund resources. The largest amount of funds supports the County’s differential response program, Families Together. Other uses of the funds are for supervised visitation, a flexible fund for immediate need payments for CWS families, pre- and post-adoptive counseling, the Child Abuse Prevention Council’s prevention activities, and support for the County’s Children’s Network.

OTHER SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING STREAMS

- Leaps and Bounds: Funded by a four-year grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, the Leaps and Bounds program was developed in 2010 to provide screening, assessment and treatment planning for children ages 0-5 with parents involved in Family Preservation Court (dependency drug court). The federal grant expired on September 30, 2014. The Department has allocated Realignment funds to maintain key aspects of this program.
- First 5 – First 5 of Santa Cruz County provides funding for the Families Together differential response program, which was first implemented in September 2006.
- Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)—MHSA funds are used to support services to dependent children that are provided by Children’s Mental Health, as well as to support mental health services provided by the local Independent Living Program. In addition, MHSA funds have been and continue to be used to support training and service provision for Triple P parent education services.
- Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) funds -- In recent years, HSD has collaborated with Children’s Mental Health to access MediCal EPSDT funds to maximize services in several areas.

- EPSDT funding is used to enrich the Independent Living Program (ILP) by providing a high level of mental health counseling and supportive services to current and former foster youth. ILP services are designed to assist youth ages 14 ½ - 21.
 - EPSDT services provide therapeutic treatment services to foster children who are in out of home placement. This includes therapeutic supervised visitation, which assists families in overall family functioning and facilitates eventual reunification.
 - EPSDT sources partially fund mental health services to dual diagnosis clients who have been linked to the child welfare system.
 - EPSDT funding also partially supports mental health services to Families Together clients who are referred by the child welfare system.
- FosterEd: The FosterEd program, providing educational support to children in the child welfare system, is currently funded by grants to the National Youth Law Center from the Stuart Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and Annie E. Casey Foundation. The program was also funded by a multi-year federal grant that expired in September 2014. Finally, the County Office of Education draws down Title IVE funds to support this program.
 - Wraparound Services for Probation Wards: Santa Cruz County operates a Wraparound program utilizing foster care funds as authorized by SB 163. The program is a collaborative effort by the Probation Department and HSA's Mental Health and Substance Abuse Division, as well as HSD. The program serves 30 youth and their families at any given point in time; the target population is wards of the Juvenile Court who are on probation. Maintaining high fidelity with Wraparound principles, the goal in each case is to preserve and strengthen the home environment and increase a family's capacity to engage natural helpers in order for children to continue to live in their home environments.
 - Flexible Funds Provided by CASA: Santa Cruz County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), provide flexible funds that can be accessed to address individual unmet needs of children in the child welfare system. Additionally, Probation sets aside Wraparound funds to support needs identified in the case plan.

BLENDING/BRAIDING OF MULTIPLE FUNDING STREAMS

There are several programs that blend multiple funding streams in order to provide a unified service. A description of this is below:

- **Transitional Housing Program Plus (THP Plus)** – THP Plus Realigned funds and EPSDT funds are braided to support this program. EPSDT funds are utilized to enhance THP Plus services through the provision of a full array of mental health rehabilitation and case management services to eligible youth. Services include assessment, individual and /or group counseling, crisis intervention, medication management support and chemical

dependency treatment services with 24-hour on-call availability. A more detailed description of services can be found in the service array section.

- **Short Term Residential Treatment Programs (STRTPs)** – Child Welfare funds and EPSDT funds are braided together to support short-term intensive mental health assessment, treatment and rehabilitative services in two STRTPs locally as well as across the state. Haven of Hope and Tyler House are the two STRTPs in the county. The program provides a stable short-term living environment for adolescents experiencing difficulty in foster placement, or homelessness, and coordination with the case carrying Child Welfare social worker and Mental Health staff.
- **Independent Living Program (ILP)** – EPSDT funds are used to augment Realigned ILP funds in order to support the provision of mental health services to eligible youth in this program, which is described in the service array section. Key mental health services provided in this program and funded by EPSDT include individualized assessment, individual and group counseling, case management, assistance with educational progress, employment skills, daily living skills, social skills, self-esteem, and if needed, medication management skills.
- **Therapeutic mental health services to children in out-of-home placement** – EPSDT funds are braided with Child Welfare funds to provide intensive mental health services for the purpose of reunification for children in foster placement. Staff at the Parents Center, a local non-profit counseling agency, are contracted to provide a full array of mental health rehabilitation and case management services including assessment, counseling, family therapy, therapeutic supervised family visitation and crisis intervention. For a further description of this program, please see the service array section.
- **Families Together** – First 5 of Santa Cruz County provides funds that are blended with PSSF Family Support funds, as well as CAPIT funds and County Children’s Trust Funds to support the Families Together differential response program for Santa Cruz County. This program is described in detail in the service array section.
- **FosterEd**— The FosterEd program was operated with braided funding from the Stuart Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Title IV-E funding, and a federal grant. One of the strategies for the 2015-2020 SIP was for FCS to develop a plan to sustain this highly valuable program in partnership with the County Office of Education (COE). A task force including representatives from FCS, CASA, COE, FosterEd, and Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD) collaborated to educate local school boards about the needs of foster youth and requested specific, dedicated funding through their allocated Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) funds. As a result of this effort and the ongoing COE advocacy, this program is fully funded and sustainable.

Child Welfare/Probation Operated Services

EMERGENCY PLACEMENT

Santa Cruz County does not operate an emergency shelter. Children who enter emergency foster care in Santa Cruz County are placed in either a licensed or RFA-approved foster home, or with an approved relative or non-relative extended family member.

COUNTY RFA APPROVAL

The State Department of Social Services contracts with the County to approve resource family homes. The current MOU between FCS and CDSS has been in place since 2009. Resource family homes must meet State health and safety requirements in order to be approved, and potential resource parents are screened and evaluated for suitability. RFA staff assess the caregivers' home to assure it is a safe physical environment for children. They review various background checks tied to the caregivers and other adults residing in the caregivers' home. They refer caregiver families for psychosocial assessments and review the results. RFA workers offer case management support to RFA families, extending to them training, guidance and services as needed. If concerns emerge about the well-being of a child in an RFA-approved home, an RFA worker will carry out an investigation to assure the child's safety.

COUNTY ADOPTIONS

The Human Services Department, as a licensed adoption agency, accepts relinquishments from parents who wish to make a plan of adoption for their child. The major focus of the program, however, is on behalf of children in foster care. A foster child becomes free to be adopted after the Juvenile Court has terminated parental rights and ordered a permanent plan of Adoption. FCS social workers provide services related to the adoption of dependent children in the child welfare system. Social workers, in consultation with community service providers working with the families, prepare the report for the WIC §366.26 Selection and Implementation hearing to terminate parental rights, and order a plan of adoption. Information is gathered from providers to complete a permanency planning assessment, which outlines the prospective adoptive caregiver's ability to meet the child's identified needs. FCS provides pre-adoption counseling to assist parents with permanency planning for their child or children. To provide for the timely finalization of adoptions, the Division also completes the Adoption Placement Agreement and finalization paperwork and files all necessary materials with the Court for its client families. The adoption is then finalized in Superior Court.

FCS also manages the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP), which provides a financial stipend for families who have adopted children. Through the AAP Program, adopting parents continue to receive referrals and counseling for post-adoption services. All adoption services are governed by state regulations, the Welfare and Institutions Code and the Family Code.

Other County Programs

The FCS Division has established Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Joint Protocols with Mental Health, Juvenile Probation, law enforcement agencies, and CBOs. Separate agreements

for various aspects of child welfare, including investigations and cross reporting, domestic violence, sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and juvenile sex offenders, delineate each party to the agreement's role(s) and responsibilities. The MOUs assist the agencies in working cooperatively in cases with overlap between agencies. Several important areas of collaboration include:

- **Cross Training:** The County has sponsored cross training between child welfare, probation, law enforcement, and CBO staffs. The cross training has enabled greater understanding among the various agencies of the work of their colleagues, how to strengthen collaboration, avoid duplication of effort, increase consistency of response and continue to address how to better work together.
- **Domestic Violence Reports:** A provision of the MOU between FCS and law enforcement specifies that law enforcement will report all domestic violence incidents where children are involved in any way.
- **The Santa Cruz County Probation Department** has worked with Children's Mental Health as a System of Care partner in an effort to provide the most comprehensive response to the treatment needs of the youth served in the probation department. Children's Mental Health also provides mental health services in our Juvenile Hall and frequently participates in Child and Family Team Meetings with Probation. The Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings which are required part of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) took the place of the longstanding Placement Screening Committee which used to meet two times a week to review cases and to formulate a plan to address the needs of the youth and family. The CFT's provide the youth and their family a much bigger opportunity to weigh in on the outcome of their case and court proceedings. The youth and family are invited and encouraged to attend and participate in the full discussion of their child's case offering their input to the recommendation. This plan is submitted to court in the form of a recommendation and is meant to guide continued probation supervision.

CALWORKS

The Family and Children's Services (FCS) Division is a component of the Santa Cruz County Human Services Department (HSD). Employment and Benefit Services is also a division of HSD. In March of 2014, Santa Cruz County implemented a Family Stabilization program to augment Santa Cruz County's CalWORKS program. The Family Stabilization program provides intensive case management and services that may be in addition to those provided by the County's Welfare to Work (WTW) program to CalWORKS clients who are experiencing crisis that is destabilizing the family and interfering with the adult clients' ability to participate in WTW activities and services. Family Stabilization Services are provided to address homelessness, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, health related needs, SSI application support, parent education, and mental health needs for children. The Family Stabilization program has been brought under the umbrella of the Family and Children's Services Division and is managed by the FCS Assistant Division Director in order to leverage the already existing strong relationships that Child Welfare has with Children's Mental Health and the County Office of Education and other community partners who provide services to families. The key to this

program is collaboration and communication between the FCS Family Stabilization social worker and the Employment and Benefits Services Division (EBSD) Employment Training Specialist (ETS). In the case of Child Welfare families who are receiving Family Stabilization services, the services are included in the Child Welfare case plan.

PUBLIC HEALTH

FCS works closely with Public Health Nursing to meet the needs of children. A Public Health Nurse who is an FCS employee provides direct and indirect public health nurse case management to help meet the medical, dental, mental, and developmental health needs of children in foster care. The Public Health Nurses primary job responsibilities include: collecting health information from birth families at the onset of removal, requesting birth/medical records, consulting with clients' pediatrician and/or medical specialists and/or CCS regarding specific services, assisting resource parents with obtaining appointments and locating specialists, providing caregivers with information about health related or developmental concerns, reviewing health and dental contact forms from resource parents after health visits, updating the health and education passport in cws from information on health contact forms and other medical records, making referrals to the Stanford developmental clinic, and monitoring the use of psychotropic medication. The nurse's role is to gather medical histories from parents during an interview at the detention hearing and to gather medical records from providers, to create a medical case management plan. An additional Public Health Nurse manages the medical case plan for certain dependent youth in Family Reunification, Permanency Placement, and all youth in Extended Foster Care. This collaboration is effective and critical to ensuring the well-being of children.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT

FCS and the Health Services Agency (HSA) are co-located in the same building and work together collaboratively. FCS and the HSA's Alcohol and Drug Program (ADP) have continued to dedicate an AOD Specialist to be out-stationed in the FCS office. In addition, FCS purchases substance abuse assessment and treatment services through the HSA ADP program. HSD has recently increased the funding dedicated to this purpose, in an effort to ensure that appropriate treatment is available on demand for FCS parents. FCS dedicates approximately \$450,000 annually for this purpose.

MENTAL HEALTH

FCS and Mental Health are co-located in the same building and have a long-standing collaborative relationship through the County's Interagency System of Care, which began in 1989. As part of this collaboration FCS enjoys a close relationship with Children's Mental Health (CMH) management, supervisors and staff. All children who are removed from care are referred to CMH for assessment and treatment and social workers coordinate closely with CMH therapists on shared cases. In addition, CMH and FCS collaborate to provide Katie A. services to all children who meet the subclass requirements. Child and Family Team meetings are facilitated by mental health therapists, with participation by the FCS social worker, the family, other service providers and informal support people.

Probation Operated Services

Santa Cruz County Juvenile Probation operates a FUERTE Wraparound program utilizing foster care funds as authorized by SB 163. The program is a collaborative effort by the Probation Department and Encompass Youth Services. The program serves up to 20 youth and their families at any given point in time; the target population is wards of the Juvenile Court who are on probation. Maintaining high fidelity with wraparound principles, the goal in each case is to preserve and strengthen the home environment and increase a family's capacity to engage natural supports in order for children to continue to live in their home environments.

The FCS Division has established Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Joint Protocols with Mental Health, Juvenile Probation and the law enforcement agencies listed above. Separate agreements for various aspects of child welfare, including investigations and cross reporting, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and juvenile sex offenders, delineate each party to the agreement's role(s) and responsibilities. The MOU assists the agencies in working cooperatively in cases with overlap between agencies. Several important areas of collaboration include:

- ***Cross Training:*** The County has sponsored cross training between child welfare, probation and law enforcement staffs. The cross training has enabled greater understanding among the various agencies of the work of their colleagues, how to strengthen collaboration, avoid duplication of effort, increase consistency of response and continue to address how to better work together. It also should be noted that whenever possible we invite each other to trainings that each department holds that could benefit all staff.
- ***Domestic Violence Reports:*** A provision of the MOU between FCS and law enforcement specifies that law enforcement will report all domestic violence incidents where children are involved in any way.

The Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall offers a significant number of programming opportunities which include the following:

BARRIOS UNIDOS

Provider: Community Non-profit Organization

Offered: Weekly

Barrios Unidos offers peer-to-peer groups that teach youth pro-social skills with culturally relevant rituals and discussions. Topics vary from educational, spiritual, cultural and political. Youth are encouraged to participate in group discussions and are often asked to address situations and stressors that are currently associated with destructive and violent behavior. Youth are taught to replace aggressive tendencies and make better choices with alternative and pro-social responses to the same situations.

GANG INTERVENTION**Provider: County Office of Education****Offered: Weekly**

Offered to youth both in groups and on an individual basis. Use a curriculum geared to address the needs of the youth and identify risk factors involving gang behavior. Motivational interviewing and cognitive behavior therapy concepts provide a non-confrontational and gentle approach to provoke self-awareness. Primary goals are to provide youth with an understanding of high-risk behaviors, teach coping and conflict resolution skills, and provide continual resource for a safe transition back to community.

POSITIVE PARENTING**Provider: PPP and PAPAS****Offered: As needed**

Positive Parenting offers young fathers and mothers support and education surrounding their role as healthy parental figures. Youth learn parenting skills and techniques and solutions to solve current and future parenting problems with an emphasis on the building of strong families.

RESTORATIVE CIRCLES**Provider: County Office of Education****Offered: Throughout year**

Broad-based Assistance, Suppression, Treatment and Alternatives. Collaboration of schools, law enforcement, probation, the courts to address youth violence. Teaches conflict resolution amongst youth and restorative justice. Education about juvenile justice system and means for civic engagement.

FINANCIAL LITERACY**Provider: National Budget****Offered: Throughout year**

Teach youth a foundation of financial literacy. Educate about budget, good debt, investments and future planning.

AGRESSION REPLACEMENT THERAPY (A.R.T.)**Provider: Santa Cruz Probation****Offered: Throughout year**

A.R.T. is a cognitive behavioral intervention program to help youth improve social skills and moral reasoning, manage anger, and reduce aggressive behavior. The program is specifically designed to help frequently aggressive youth ages 12-17. A.R.T. is divided into three components: social skills training, anger control training, and moral reasoning training. Youth attend a one-hour session in each of these components each week. Incremental learning, reinforcement techniques, and guided group discussions enhance skill acquisition and reinforce the lessons in the curriculum.

CAREER PANELS

Provider: County Office of Education

Offered: As available

Community members from various vocations are invited to speak to the youth about their careers and fields of study. This exposure to a variety of different career possibilities is often held in a classroom setting. The panel members speak for a few minutes and then allow the youth to ask questions for the remainder of the forum.

COLLEGE COURSES

Provider: County Office of Education

Offered: As needed

Youth who have graduated high school can take online college courses. This is facilitated by the teaching staff and the youth complete and submit assignments using the computer lab in the school. Online courses offered by Cabrillo Junior College and Brigham Young University.

Provider: Community Non-profit Organization

Offered: Throughout year

CRP provides youth with employment services, work skills development and community engagement. Specifically, services at-risk youth involved in the justice system. Goal is to improve quality of life and achieve full potential through employment skill-building. Program provides job readiness workshops, resume writing, interview preparation, job placement assistance, vocational training, life skills, asset development, and leadership development. This program is offered to current CRP clients as well as youth pending community re-entry.

Provider: Santa Cruz Public Library

Offered: Bi-Monthly

Santa Cruz Public Library twice a month provides a mobile library and librarian for youth to individually discuss their literary interest and check out books. Literature provides opportunity for self-improvement and stress reliever.

UNCHAINED

Provider: Non-Profit Community Organization

Offered: Throughout year

The canine teaching compassion program, teaches youth how to train homeless dogs in basic skills, manners, and socialization, helping the dogs be adopted into permanent homes. Through the humane education curriculum, the youth develop values of patience, respect, and responsibility for themselves and others, through the trust and relationship building with dogs. Improves the chances of the dogs becoming adopted and teaches the youth impulsivity control, mastery of a skill, and the value of restorative justice. The goal of Unchained is for youth to feel compassion and empathy towards animals in hopes that these values are transferred to human interaction creating healthy, positive, and sustainable relationships. Stress reliever and supports youth with trauma history.

WORK PROGRAMS

Provider: County Office of Education/ Probation

Offered: Daily

Work assignments should be meaningful, constructive, and related to vocational training. These programs are offered to youth serving court ordered commitments. Some assignments are offered in conjunction with educational instruction and students can receive high school credits for these assignments. The following tasks may be considered a work detail: painting, power

MUSICAL INSTRUCTION

Provider: Music in May & Community Members

Offered: As available

Community musicians offer instruction in a group and individual setting. Instruments include drums, guitar, and piano. Guitar and piano are available on site and youth can practice. Rebecca Jackson and Music in May provide chamber music concerts.

SPECIAL HOLIDAY

Provider: Probation

Offered: Throughout year

Holiday programming providing history of holiday and traditional celebrations. All special holiday programs are offered to all youth and participation is optional.

THE BEAT WITHIN

Provider: Non-Profit Community Organization

Offered: Weekly

The Beat Within is a writing class where youth write a variety of material for inclusion in inmate publications. The Beat Within's goal is to provide youth with a consistent opportunity to share their ideas and life experiences. The program encourages literacy, self-expression, critical thinking skills, and healthy, supportive relationships with adults and the community. The weekly publication newsletter features writing and artwork from the youth and adults in detention statewide and provides positive recognition for those selected and published.

THEATER

Provider: Shakespeare To Go

Offered: Throughout year

Connects youth and gives back to the community by providing Shakespeare theater performances to detained youth.

CHURCH SERVICES

Provider: Local Churches/Organizations

Offered: Bi-Weekly

There are numerous local churches and church members from various denominations that provide religious services. The following services are offered: First Congregational Church, Holy Cross, Hope Church & FLOW program, Saint Joseph's Church, and GateWay Bible Church. They provide worship services, bible studies, literature distribution, spiritual mentoring and holiday specific services. Our goal is to meet the religious needs and requests of the youth; any denomination not offered regularly can be obtained on a request basis.

CHAPLAIN SERVICES

Provider: Community Volunteer

Offered: Weekly

Juvenile Hall volunteer Chaplains provide the following services: spiritual mentoring and pastoral care, requests for religious or secular books, death notifications, and art ministries programs.

FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE

Provider: Community Non-profit Organization

Offered: Weekly

Friday Night Live works in partnership with young people to change norms, move policies, and educate their communities about what they can do to reduce underage drinking and

recreational drug use. Through a variety of stimulating activities (youth driven, and youth led) participation in fun and meaningful activities highlight and encourage leadership skills, innovation, goal-oriented, and action-oriented qualities of youth participants. FNL emphasizes education of substance use/abuse appealing to diverse ethnic, racial and social groups.

SEVEN CHALLENGES

Provider: County of Santa Cruz Children’s Mental Health Offered: Throughout year

The Seven Challenges program is designed specifically for youth with drug problems to motivate a decision and commitment to change. The program starts where youth “are at” (usually resistant and reluctant to change), not where adults wish they might be or where young people often pretend to be (ready, willing, and prepared to succeed with abstinence). The challenges provide a framework for helping youth think through their own decisions about their lives and their use of alcohol and other drugs. This program teaches youth to identify and work on the issues most relevant to them. This is an evidence-based program in which studies have shown the effectiveness of the Seven Challenges as a “co-occurring” program that decreases substance use of adolescents and improves overall mental health status. The program has been especially effective with the large number of substance abusing youth with trauma issues.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Provider: Non-Profit Community Organization

Offered: Weekly

Alcoholics Anonymous is a 12-step group for those who have a drinking problem. It is self-described as a nonprofessional, self-supporting, multiracial and apolitical fellowship. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

Provider: Non-Profit Community Organization

Offered: Weekly

Narcotics Anonymous is a 12-step group for those whom drugs have become a major problem. Meetings are conducted by volunteers who share their personal experiences and answer questions. NA literature states that active addiction is marked by increased isolation and destruction of relationships. Successful recovery is often marked by increased NA attendance and improved family relationships.

Probation Assessments:

The Probation Department has fully implemented use of a comprehensive risk assessment tool; The Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS). This tool affords Intake and Probation Officers the ability to assess initial and ongoing risk levels of the youth being served in addition to assessing appropriate and effective supervision strategies to contribute to a reduction in recidivism. This tool identifies strengths and needs which allows for the development of individualized, relevant and effective case plans which guide probation supervision as well as the provision of services and/or interventions.

In the event that a youth has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) indicating a lower IQ or a recent history of exhibiting other behaviors identified by mental health staff, a formal assessment by the San Andreas Regional Center or an evaluation by a licensed psychologist will be requested through the Juvenile Delinquency Court. While these situations occur infrequently, the juvenile detention facility has limited access to a mental health clinician and a psychiatrist through the County Mental Health Department for early detection to avoid prolonged detention stays while pending evaluation for services. The probation placement unit reviews all assessments, individual education plans and social and educational history available for appropriate level of care placement. Additionally, the placement alternative Wraparound program performs an assessment of needs and risks, a mental health assessment and a thorough review of all educational records. Staff works closely with the educational system and parent/guardian(s) to identify the need for an IEP update or other assessment(s)/services as appropriate.

State and Federal Child Welfare/Probation Initiatives

Santa Cruz County Family & Children's Services is participating in several federal and state initiatives. These initiatives are briefly summarized below.

Resource Family Recruitment Social Marketing Campaign: As part of FCS's efforts to implement CCR and recruit more family-based settings for children and youth with high needs, the county entered into a contract with a social marketing firm (MIG, Inc.) to develop, implement, and evaluate an evidence-based social marketing campaign that can be replicated by FCS staff. Research shows that youth predominantly cared for in resource family homes have better outcomes than those who spend long periods in group care. There are three key phases to this campaign:

- Phase 1: Resource Family Support Research
- Phase 2: Implementation Plan Development
- Phase 3: Campaign Implementation and Evaluation

FCS is currently in Phase 3 of this project.

Katie A. and Continuum of Care Reform: Family & Children's Services, in collaboration with Children's Mental Health (CMH), has implemented Katie A services, primarily through the use of Child and Family Teams (CFTs). In addition, like all counties in the State, FCS is in the midst of implementing Continuum of Care Reform (CCR). All child welfare social worker and juvenile probation officers have been trained on CFTs and have started conducting them. A stakeholder group for CFT meets quarterly to evaluate and provide feedback on this process. In addition, RFA is being implemented and regular meetings with Foster Care Eligibility and psychosocial assessment providers are being held to troubleshoot any issues that come up. Staff have been trained on the Level of Care tool and CANS and will be implementing these in the coming months. Lastly, a CCR Steering Committee has been meeting quarterly since the fall of last year to provide oversight to CCR implementation in Santa Cruz County.

Fostering Connections / After 18 Program: Santa Cruz County began providing After 18 program services in January of 2012. The goal of extended foster care is to assist foster youth in maintaining a safety net of support while experiencing independence in a secure and supervised living environment. The extended time as a non-minor dependent (NMD) can assist the youth in becoming better prepared for successful transition into adulthood and self-sufficiency through education and employment training. In Santa Cruz County, many foster youth are choosing to remain in foster care to receive extended supportive services as they venture into more independent living situations in their journey to adulthood. As of May 2019, 34 NMDs remained in care. Initiatives such as CSEC and CCR need to be modified for this population as they are adults in the child welfare system that have more autonomy and authority than children under the age of 18. The After 18 program is not the focus of any strategies in the current CSA-SIP cycle, as this program is already fully implemented.

Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) Initiative: Santa Cruz County continues to collaborate with Monterey and San Benito Counties to address CSEC issues in the tri-county region. The tri-county Memorandum of Understanding is currently in effect until 2020 and provides a framework for how the tri-county agencies will work together in serving CSEC. Santa Cruz FCS continues to utilize the Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool (CSE-IT) developed by the West Coast Children’s Clinic in Oakland, California.

In addition, CSEC prevention and counseling services have been implemented within different parts of Santa Cruz County. FCS has partnered with Monarch Services to deliver an evidence-informed prevention curriculum called The Prevention Project (<http://www.prevention-project.org>). This curriculum has been rolled out at a local group home for young women and various high schools throughout Santa Cruz County. In addition, Monarch provides a psycho-education group for survivors of CSEC called Ending the Game, which is a survivor-informed curriculum (<http://endingthegame.com/>). FCS has also partnered with The Diversity Center, the local LGBTQ+ agency in order to provide education and support at various schools in the county. As research shows, LGBTQ+ youth are at a high risk of being commercially sexually exploited.

FCS has partnered with Rising International, our local anti-poverty and anti-human trafficking agency, to provide the Safe and Sound workshop to high-school teenagers in Santa Cruz that looks to educate youth about traffickers and avoid being exploited.

FCS, in partnership with The Coalition to End Human Trafficking in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties, conducted its 2nd annual CSEC awareness conference for the community. Approximately 100 people attended including service providers, community members, and youth. The majority of presenters and speakers at the conference were survivors of CSE/human trafficking.

Housing and Urban Development – Youth Homeless Demonstration Project (YHDP): Santa Cruz County was awarded one of ten YHDP grants throughout the nation in 2017. A local community-based organization is the lead agency and FCS is a major partner in the planning and implementation of this project that aims to eradicate youth and young adult homelessness in Santa Cruz County. Currently, community-based organizations that were awarded funding for projects are in the implementation phase and a robust coordination effort between the projects, Continuum of Care, and Coordinated Entry is occurring. A critical piece of this initiative is evaluation and collecting data on their impact on youth and young adult homelessness in Santa Cruz County.

Bringing Families Home: Santa Cruz County FCS was awarded the Bringing Families Home (BFH) grant in May 2017. The goal of BFH is to reduce the number of families in the child welfare system experiencing homelessness, increase the number of families reunifying, and to reduce foster care placements. FCS has partnered with a local homelessness services agency to implement this 2-year grant. To date, nineteen families have been housed through this program. Governor Newsom approved \$25 million for another 2 years (Fiscal Years 19/20 and 20/21), which will allow FCS to continue BFH and serve additional families. CDSS has informed

counties that they will be providing gap funding for the first 2-3 months of FY 19/20 as they release a request for proposals.

Emergency Child Care Bridge: Santa Cruz County FCS opted into the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program, as established by Senate Bill 89. Effective January 1, 2018, resource families and families that have a child placed with them, including non-minor dependents, are eligible to receive a time-limited monthly payment or voucher for childcare and a child care navigator. A child care navigator assists with finding a child care provider, securing a subsidized child care placement if eligible, completing child care program applications, and developing a plan for long-term child care appropriate to the child's age and needs. The time limit is 6 months but can be approved for up to 12 months if long-term subsidized care is not obtained by the 6-month period. In addition, childcare programs and providers serving children in the Bridge Program shall be provided with trauma-informed care training and coaching. At this time, FCS has served approximately 30 children in FY 18/19.

Countywide Differential Response: Families Together is a comprehensive child abuse early intervention and prevention program serving the entire county. This initiative, using a differential response model, is a collaborative effort between the FCS Division and Encompass Community Services. Funding from First 5 and Santa Cruz County Health Services and Human Services Departments (including CCTF, CAPIT, and PSSF Family Support) are braided together to support this program. It is an evidence-based program that utilizes home-based, individualized services with an emphasis on the parent-child relationship and child development and parent education. Goals of the program include:

- Improved parent-child relationship
- Improved family support
- Improved community engagement
- Improved child safety
- Improved child health and development
- Improved child well-being

Participation in Families Together is voluntary. Outcome measures for this program indicate positive results such as 99% of families that participated in Families Together for FY 17/18 did not have a substantiated allegation of abuse within 6 months of case closure.

CWS Flexible Fund: A flexible fund provides tangible support to families receiving Child Welfare Services, to facilitate reunification and family preservation by providing flexible, family-based, intensive time-limited, and culturally competent intervention and treatment services to families in crisis. This program is a critical support for families in Santa Cruz County where financial resources may be limited for CWS involved families.

Adoption Promotion and Support: This program provides culturally competent, bilingual counseling and support services that promote, support and encourage the adoption process for parents who are considering adoption, going through the adoption process, or have already adopted children from FCS.

Therapeutic Supervised Visitation: Therapeutic supervised visitation promotes and encourages healthy parent-child relationships and assists children and natural parents in the work of family reunification. A trained bilingual visit supervisor who is culturally competent supervises Court-ordered visits for families referred by FCS. The visit supervisor is supervised by a licensed or license-eligible clinician. This program incorporates Triple P, an evidence-based parenting education curriculum.

Case Reviews: The Child Family Services Review (CFSR) Quality Case Reviews is a key component to a CQI Model for child welfare services and understanding the qualitative nature of our performance. To date, Santa Cruz has completed approximately 112 case reviews since we began reviewing in April 2015 and are currently averaging 35 reviews per year. It should also be noted that since early 2017, Santa Cruz has been part of the Federally reviewed cases for the PIP. Each quarter, an average of 1-3 cases have been selected to be included in the Federal sample and as such, an additional level of oversight and feedback has been received.

The case review team is continuously actively engaged with the division to find ways to use the case review information as part of the division's CQI efforts. Some of the more significant projects and efforts have included a deep dive into the case review outcomes related to father engagement, facilitating the development and implementation of a new safety plan template, starting an internal "Quarterly Highlights and Tips" flyer to spotlight good practice as seen through case review, and increasing our collaboration with Staff Development. The case review team is also currently involved in the division's SOP Steering Committee and workgroups, as well as providing support to the current CSA process. The team continues to work hard in finding ways to utilize the information being gathered through case review.

Safety Organized Practice (SOP): In January 2014, Santa Cruz County initiated Safety Organized Practice training for child welfare staff as a continuation of efforts to improve family engagement practice. Use of Safety Organized Practice (SOP), specifically safety mapping and family team meetings, engages families in safety decision making and case planning, thus obtaining their input and opinions. When families are engaged in such processes, they are more likely to follow-through with such decisions and case plan goals (Antle, Christensen, van Zyl, & Barbee, 2012). Additionally, time is spent to ensure families understand the harm and danger of circumstances that compromise child safety. With families further understanding safety and following through with well-thought-out decisions, they are less likely to experience reentry and children are more likely to achieve permanency. Through SOP, social workers have been able to apply a structured strategy designed to help all the key stakeholders involved with a child - the parents, the extended family, the child welfare worker, supervisor, managers, lawyers, judges, and other individuals, maintain their focus on assessing and enhancing child safety at all points in the case process. This practice model integrates the best *Signs of Safety* methodology, i.e., a strengths and solution focused child welfare approach that includes Structured Decision Making.

The FCS SOP workgroup which includes all levels of social work staff continues to meet monthly where it discusses overall implementation of SOP and addresses specific areas where SOP can be used. FCS is in the process of setting up our Plan Do Study Act model of implementing each

piece of SOP practice. SOP coaching has begun for FCS staff on a regular basis in partnership with the Bay Area Academy (Regional Training Academy).

Board of Supervisors (BOS) Designated Commission, Board or Bodies

The BOS-Designated Public Agency

As the public agency designated by the Board of Supervisors to administer Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT), Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP), and Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funds, the Human Services Department provides program oversight and accountability, integration of local services, fiscal compliance, data collection, preparation of amendments to the county plan, preparation of annual reports, and outcomes evaluation.

The Children's Network of Santa Cruz County serves as the Interagency Children's Coordinating Council to oversee the distribution of CCTF, CAPIT, CBCAP, and PSSF funds. It reviews how these funding resources are being utilized and provides input on prevention efforts in the community. The Children's Network is an independent countywide organization made up of members from the community and CBOs who are providing services to or have an interest in children in Santa Cruz County. This includes the Human Services Department, the Probation Department, law enforcement, the office of the District Attorney, and the courts. In addition, the prevention and treatment service communities, including medical and mental health services, community based social services, public and private schools, community representatives such as volunteers, civic organizations, and members of the religious community participate in the broad ranging group. The Children's Network provides a venue for coordination of service delivery to children and families. Several of the members of the Children's Network also participate on the FCS System Improvement Plan Steering Committee, where they provide recommendations for improvements in services to families.

Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC)

The Children's Network was designated to serve as the Child Abuse Prevention Council for Santa Cruz County in 2008. The Children's Network CAPC is comprised of volunteer members of the Children's Network and provided with staff support through a contract with a non-profit service provider. The CAPC provides coordination of the county's prevention and early intervention efforts by providing information about resources to families and to other members of the Children's Network, for distribution to the families that they serve. The CAPC maintains a public website with prevention materials, resources and referral information. During Child Abuse Prevention Month, the CAPC coordinates a public media campaign to promote public awareness of the abuse and neglect of children, and the resources available for intervention and treatment.

County Children's Trust Fund Commission, Board or Council

The Children's Network serves as the required County Children's Trust Fund (CCTF) Interagency Children's Coordinating Council to provide oversight and recommendations for services funded by CCTF. The Human Services department is the fiscal agent for these funds. CCTF funds support the activities of the CAPC, as described above. The CAPC submits an annual report on

their services and activities, which are submitted to a Human Services Department program analyst and included in the CDSS Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) annual report. These activities are also published in the Children’s Network annual report, which is submitted to the Board of Supervisors. The county deposits the full amount of the CBCAP allocation into the CCTF.

PSSF Collaborative

The Children’s Network is the PSSF Collaborative and Interagency Children’s Coordinating Council (ICSSC) that oversees funding from Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF). The Human Services department acts as the fiscal agent.

Systemic Factors

A. Management Information Systems

CHILD WELFARE (FCS DIVISION)

The primary database used in the FCS Division is the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). In addition, the division uses a secondary database, SafeMeasures. SafeMeasures captures data from existing computerized files and links these data elements to key performance standards. Lastly, FCS uses Binti to track and record families in the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process. The use of these systems is described below.

CWS/CMS

Santa Cruz County has fully utilized CWS/CMS since October 2000. This means that FCS uses all five components of the application: Case Management, Client Management, Placement Management, Court Management and Service Management.

CWS/CMS is critical to FCS's ability to carry out its responsibilities. The system enables us to keep electronic records of all casework activities, and to measure client progress. CWS/CMS makes it possible to track the progress of a child or family through the child welfare system, from the initial face-to-face contact to court hearing dates, court reports, and the finalization of adoptions. Data collected from CWS/CMS is utilized to measure FCS's success in achieving outcome goals. Every level of staff within FCS uses CWS/CMS data. Social workers and clerical staff enter data regarding referrals, investigations, case plans, court hearings, delivered services, and client progress. Supervisors review and approve case data in CWS/CMS at key decision points such as the close of the investigation, prior to case transfer, at each six-month review, and when court reports/case plan updates are due.

FCS also uses Business Objects to extract data from CWS/CMS and produce monthly reports that are reviewed by supervisors and managers, and periodically runs Business Objects reports specific to a particular project. Managers also review cumulative data reports to better monitor program performance, activities, service delivery, caseloads, and staffing levels.

FCS has identified several areas of concern related to the CWS/CMS system, and they are centered on the fact that CWS/CMS is a statewide database; therefore, counties have very little control of it at the local level. Legislative and regulatory changes take weeks, months and sometimes years to be incorporated into the database. All new staff are trained on CWS/CMS. There is a delay in getting information into CWS/CMS when new laws or regulations are developed as there is learning curve for staff to start using a section of the database that they did not use previously. FCS looks forward to an updated case management system that is more user-friendly and incorporates the new practices and policies that have been enacted in recent years such as the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR). Lastly, local data needs must be addressed outside the system in locally designed data systems, which can be problematic as these external systems don't connect with CWS/CMS and, therefore, can result in gaps in data. This results in increased demand on local information technology resources.

PROBATION

Probation is responsible for entering information into the CWS/CMS database. Since we have access to the system, Probation not only enters all the safety, child well-being and permanency outcomes for all placement youth, but Probation is also able to elicit child welfare history on all youth entering into the judicial system.

One barrier with CWS/CMS is having the assigned officers enter their contacts in a timely fashion due to their extensive traveling. Due to a shortage of placements within the county, most of the youth placed out of the home are placed outside of Santa Cruz County, and sometimes outside of California. In order to improve efficiency in this area the Department has created a process to have the Placement Clerk gather information from the caseload management system (Caseload Explorer-CE) and enter the notes directly into the CWS/CMS system. This has improved the timeliness of the documentation. This allows the Placement Supervisor to audit the cases in CWS/CMS more efficiently.

SAFEMEASURES

In early 2004, the FCS Division implemented SafeMeasures as a quality assurance tool, not only to track progress locally on the state and federal performance measures, but also as a means to see where we may be having data entry problems or case management issues. FCS has continued to utilize SafeMeasures to identify and remedy issues that, in the past, would have been extremely labor intensive to address.

FCS is using SafeMeasures to monitor compliance with the Division 31 regulations as well as with AB 636 outcome measures, including reviewing reports on Caseload Management, Compliance Summaries, Referrals & Investigations, Emergency Response, Family Maintenance, Family Reunification, Permanent Placement, Child Well-Being, and Federal CFSR-3 Outcomes.

The County Self-Assessment process identified areas of information that were unavailable and necessary to comprehensively assess the child welfare system. These gaps were often due to a lack of information in CWS/CMS or a lack of information collected by key partners.

- There is a lack of systematic data on the incidence and prevalence of substance abuse in child welfare involved families.
- Since the implementation of RFA, it has become more difficult to ascertain the types of home-based placement, specifically determining which placements are relatives/NREFMS and those that are non-relative community members (formerly licensed foster homes).
- There is a lack of a systematic way to collect and analyze data on the presenting safety factor(s) that led to a case, for example substance abuse or domestic violence. This information is in the case plan, but it cannot be easily compiled in a CWS/CMS data report.
- There is a lack of information on how mothers, fathers, and youth were engaged in services.

Binti

In August 2017, Santa Cruz County FCS adopted the use of Binti, an online foster care recruiting and resource family/home approval system and database. Due to the new truncated timeframes for RFA where families needed to be approved within 90 days and the need for more home-based placements for older children/youth, FCS needed a tool to better track families moving through the RFA process. The goal of using Binti is to:

- Recruit more resource families
- Get families through the application process more quickly
- Let caseworkers do more social work and less paperwork
- Give the team real-time information and reports
- Let families take control of their own process
- Promote better outcomes for foster children and families

COUNTY CASE REVIEW SYSTEM – CHILD WELFARE

Case Review continues to be a key area of focus for Santa Cruz County’s Self-Assessment Process. In 2019 Santa Cruz County engaged in a comprehensive effort to gather information and input from community partners, caregivers, CASAs, parents, extended relatives and youth in an effort to ensure comprehensive community inclusion into the Self-Assessment. This effort gave stakeholders the opportunity to participate in focus groups or provide feedback at SIP Steering Committee/Stakeholder meetings.

Described below are the primary elements of the local court structure for Dependency Court. The Dependency Court in Santa Cruz County is convened by the Superior Court. Dependency matters are heard by one primary judge in the Santa Cruz County Courthouse located in Watsonville.

Counsel - All children are appointed an attorney at the outset of the dependency process and these attorneys remain in place until the dependency is dismissed. The local law firm of Patterson and Dews and Allison Cruz are on contract through the Administrative Office of the Courts to provide this service. Though they have large caseloads, the children’s attorneys are active partners in the dependency process on behalf of their clients. With respect to parents, if their financial circumstances prevent them from affording an attorney, they can receive court-appointed representation. The law office of Evguenia Vatchkova represents the first parent to appear on the matter. If there are subsequent parents needing representation, two other attorneys, Warren Forrest and Liliana Diaz, represent them. All of these attorneys have worked within the Santa Cruz County dependency system for a number of years and are well respected as strong advocates on behalf of their clients. The FCS Division is represented by the office of the County Counsel.

Court Officer - FCS has a social worker assigned full-time in the role of Court Officer. The Court Officer appears in court on behalf of case-carrying social workers for the regular Tuesday/Thursday calendar, a practice that allows FCS staff to spend more time in direct service to clients. The Court Officer also files 387 and 388 petitions and tracks Indian Child Welfare Act

(ICWA) and Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) cases. She works with County Counsel's office to ensure that FCS is meeting all legal requirements of ICWA and of ICPC. The Court Officer provides regular feedback to social work supervisors regarding current laws and procedures in these areas and ensures that social work practice is above reproach. By centralizing all ICWA noticing, contact with tribes and ICWA reporting to the court within one FCS position, the department has significantly lowered its exposure to appeals in this area and has established good, ethical practice with respect to children who fall within the purview of this law.

Advocacy and support – Almost all children involved in the Dependency Court process (family reunification and family maintenance) who need additional advocacy and support are paired with a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). FCS works closely with the local CASA agency and the court to ensure that children promptly receive a CASA. The relationship between FCS and CASA has strengthened significantly over the past several years and continues to be an area of focus for supporting permanency and educational outcomes for children and youth. In 2008 an MOU was established between CASA and FCS to ensure consistent practice with respect to communication and collaboration. FCS social workers and CASAs receive information on best communication practices. Both groups are consistently supported to work effectively with each other towards the best interests of the child. Additionally, specific structures were delineated regarding resolving conflicting opinions on cases. As a result, more issues are resolved at the social worker/advocate level. When appropriate, supervisors or managers from both agencies step in. Further, there are regular meetings (monthly) between CASA and FCS managers as a quality assurance measure and to seek resolution of extremely difficult case issues.

Dependency Court Systems Coordinating Meeting (DCS) - DCS is a bi-monthly meeting of representatives from all professional groups who touch the dependency system. It was initiated to support and improve the working relationships among all these parties, and to provide a venue for training on topics of mutual interest. Members include the Dependency Court Judge, Parents' Attorneys, Minors' Attorneys, CASA, FCS staff, Superior Court Clerk and County Counsel. All parties agree that this is a useful forum to share information and increase collaboration.

Court partners continue to agree that collaboration between and among the parties is constant and effective. As stated above, there is already a written MOU that establishes communication practices between FCS and CASA. Additionally, FCS management and the dependency judge maintain contact as needed in an effort to address general department/court practice issues.

HEARINGS

The dependency calendar is held each Tuesday and Thursday. The calendar includes matters set for arraignments, jurisdiction/disposition hearings, 388s, status reviews for family maintenance, family reunification and permanency planning cases, 366.26 hearings, AB12 matters and interim reviews. Detention hearings are held daily as needed. Trials, settlement conferences and mediations are scheduled in the intervening times. The physical structure of the courtroom and the courthouse is family friendly and accessible by public transportation. The courthouse is located on the southernmost end of the county. This places a burden on families who live in the Santa

Cruz Mountains, because they often need to make multiple bus changes in order to get to the courthouse by the 8:30 am calendar.

Frequency of Hearings – Following is a summary of the typical pattern of setting hearings:

Detentions – These hearings are held within 72 hours of protective custody. While it is possible for detentions to be continued for a contested hearing, these continuances are rare in Santa Cruz. The judge and the attorneys typically have enough information from FCS to fully vet the situation and make a determination about detention on the date it is set.

Jurisdiction/Disposition Hearings – The initial hearing for these matters typically begins within the appropriate statutory timeframe of 15 days following the detention hearing, but many times occurs earlier as they must fall on a Tuesday per Dependency Court procedures. This hearing is considered the “Receipt of Report” hearing (ROR) and then the following week the Jurisdiction/Disposition hearing is held. However, many of these matters are set for a settlement conference and/or trial. Given the Court’s availability, there are times when these trials do not resolve within the 60 day statutory timeframe. The attorneys and FCS staff work informally, prior to these hearings, in order to resolve or narrow the trial related issues, so as to expedite the process. When the court determines the disposition of the case is family reunification, the judge alerts the parent, on the record, about the reunification timeframes applicable to the case. If there is a child under the age of 3, the court sets an interim review at 90 days in order to assess the parents’ progress towards reunification, prior to having to make a determination about permanency at the six-month status review. This gives the court an additional opportunity to remind the parents and FCS of the need to determine who the “forever family” will be for the child, due to that child’s young age.

Status Review Hearings – All matters for which the court has taken jurisdiction are set for status review hearings at six month intervals (see the administrative review section below for the exception to the six month interval process). There are times when these status reviews fall just outside of the statutory timeframes, due to court calendar lack of availability, requests from attorneys to move a matter by one week, requests by FCS for an additional week or two to determine the most appropriate recommendation for a child, etc. The permanency needs of the child, as guided by the statutory timeframes that apply to that child, are considered and specifically addressed at each status review. It is uncommon for any child to exceed 12 months of family reunification services, prior to moving the focus specifically to permanency. If there is a substantial probability of return if family reunification services are extended, the Court can order 18 months of family reunification services.

366.26 Hearings – These permanency hearings are consistently set within 120 days. Santa Cruz County has avoided the need for continuances for technical reasons, in large part, due to the fact that the County Counsel’s office effects notice for these hearings in order to ensure notice is proper. Santa Cruz County consistently

performs above the national goal for adoptions. This is in large part due to the effective teaming between FCS and the court that began in 2008 when FCS was awarded a five year federal grant, specifically focused on permanency, that spearheaded systemic change, not only procedurally, but in the perceptions of permanency held by those who are charged with facilitating it. Though both the court and FCS have specifically focused on the need for life-long permanency for all children who have not been able to reunify with their parents, both the court and FCS are reluctant to terminate parental rights for any child who does not have an identified adoptive home. In those cases, the court continues to monitor FCS' efforts to identify a permanent home for the child, during each status review hearing.

Continuances - FCS social workers produce court reports one week in advance of jurisdiction/disposition hearings, two weeks in advance of status review, post-permanency hearings, and 266.26 hearings. This practice greatly reduces the need for continuances by allowing parties significant preparation time.

When continuances are requested, the dependency court judge grants these continuances only after reaching a legal finding of "good cause." The typical reasons for continuances are as follows: pending necessary information has not been received by the social worker, ensuring ICWA noticing compliance, attorneys have not had sufficient time or opportunity to speak with their clients prior to the hearing, parent illness the day of the hearing, or the parent has not read the court report prior to coming to the hearing. Most continuances are for one to two weeks. Santa Cruz County Superior Court does not currently track the percentage of cases that are granted continuances.

Termination of Parental Rights - Federal law has codified the goal of permanency for children by requiring the dependency court to consider termination of parental rights for all cases where children have been in out-of-home care in 15 of the previous 22 months of dependency. The State of California stipulates that status review hearings must occur at six and twelve months after disposition but that a third status review hearing must happen no later than eighteen months after removal. To that end, the Santa Cruz County Dependency Court does consider the permanency needs of children at the six month review for children under the age of three and at the twelve month review for children over the age of three. Additionally, FCS and the Santa Cruz County Dependency Court also consider whether or not W&I Code sec. 361.5 bypass of reunification services criteria apply to any out-of-home pre-disposition case, thereby hastening permanency for children and youth whose family circumstances fit those extreme criteria.

As noted above, FCS has made an extensive effort to address the importance of permanency on every level from written policies and procedures to in depth social worker discussions about child welfare practice, ethics and values. This process was significantly bolstered by the receipt of the five-year federal Adoption Opportunities: Diligent Recruitment grant aimed at increasing real permanency for children and youth. During the grant period from 2008 to 2013, FCS engaged the services of several permanency and permanency-related experts to assist in

deconstructing practices and beliefs about permanency in child welfare in Santa Cruz County. One of these experts described child welfare practice in Santa Cruz County as “reunification at all costs” and that social workers see themselves as failures if reunification is not successful. As a result, significant efforts were made to address a needed culture shift so children and youth can achieve true permanency.

Some of these efforts included the following:; better policies and procedures with respect to concurrent planning and case transfer processes; a more clear policy regarding 361.5 bypass cases; established policies regarding specific steps for assessing readiness for reunification (within the CFT policy and procedure); use of CFT prior to moving to overnight visitation with parents; educating the court on the desirability of adoption as the only true permanent alternative to reunification; establishing court orders for using adoption websites such as AdoptUSkids in the pursuit of permanent homes; establishing practices for youth readiness for adoption; and engaging in general, targeted and specific recruitment efforts for permanent homes for youth and children.

Though these efforts constituted a significant change in the way social workers practice and in the way supervisors supervise their staff with respect to the permanency needs of children, FCS continued to identify barriers to successful permanency for all children. One of these barriers includes placing with a safe relative at the beginning of the dependency does not necessarily constitute the best permanent placement to meet the child’s overall well-being needs for the rest of his or her life. Another barrier is that social workers have the desire to achieve a practice focused on the permanency needs of children, however, Ongoing social workers are often times unable to consistently practice concurrent planning tasks due to the need to focus on the “reasonable services” requirements in family reunification cases

Due to these issues, FCS concluded the following: When permanency is everyone’s secondary work, it’s no one’s work.

Consequently, in September 2014 FCS conducted its second redistribution of social worker tasks in two years. This second one was specifically aimed at improving permanency outcomes for all children. As of September 2014, all families entering the Santa Cruz County child welfare system will experience an Investigations social worker (who conducts the initial and the jurisdictional investigation) and a Post-Disposition worker (who actually is assigned to the case prior to disposition in an effort to engage the family in the case planning process). This one Post-Disposition worker will carry the case from disposition until termination of family reunification services, after which it is transferred to a Permanency worker.

USE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Staff of the Family Court Mediation program provides mediation services on dependency cases. The court will refer cases to mediation if there is a likelihood the parties could resolve their differences and trial could be avoided. If mediation doesn not resolve a conflict, Santa Cruz County uses settlement conferences with the judge in order to narrow the trial issues. If there is indication that a settlement conference will not resolve the conflict, a trial date will be set for the same day.

PROCESS FOR TIMELY NOTIFICATION

As required by law, FCS informs all parties of hearings. Given the different noticing requirements for each hearing, a Policy and Procedure was established in 2006 to assist social workers in proper noticing techniques.

For the **detention hearing**, all parties (parents, children and caregivers) are noticed in person or via telephone. Social workers document their efforts to notice parents in the detention report and document their efforts to notice the caregivers in CWS/CMS case notes. Caregivers are reminded of their right to be present at the detention hearing. Both FCS and children's attorneys ensure that children/youth are aware of their right to be present at detention hearings.

The Santa Cruz County Superior Court provides notices for the **jurisdiction/disposition** hearing to the social worker at the time of the detention hearing. The social worker notices all parties (parents, children and attorneys) present at the detention hearing for the jurisdiction/disposition hearing. If there are parties not present at the detention hearing, the Santa Cruz County Superior Court notices those parties at their last known address via mail. Social workers verbally notice caregivers for the jurisdiction/disposition hearing. Caregivers are reminded of their right to be present at the jurisdiction/disposition hearing.

Four weeks prior to each **status review** hearing, the clerks send a "notification list" and judge's confidential proof" to the case carrying social worker. The social worker edits the list to ensure that all parties and their addresses are accurate.

Two weeks in advance of each **status review**, interim review or administrative review hearing, FCS mails parents, children, siblings, attorneys, tribes, and other "parties to the action" the "Notice of Review Hearing – Juvenile" for a court hearing, or "Administrative Review Panel Notice of Hearing" for an administrative review. FCS court clerks maintain a "court calendar" which tracks upcoming reviews and notification dates. **Caregivers** also receive the "Notice of Review Hearing – Juvenile" for a court hearing, or "Administrative Review Panel Notice of Hearing" for an administrative review. Via these last two documents, resource/foster parents and relative/non-related extended family member caregivers, including pre-adoptive parents, are reminded of their right to be present at these hearings and reviews. FCS includes the "Caretaker Information Form" (JV-290) with the notice of hearings to caregivers. This State of California form solicits input from the resource/foster parents and relative/non-related extended family member caregivers, including pre-adoptive parents, on behalf of the child, for the court to have direct communication from the caregiver. Instructions regarding how to provide this form to the court are included with each notice and lead the caregiver to forward the information directly to the clerk's office. In this way, the caregiver can be assured that the communication goes to the judge without third party interference. The information provided by resource/foster parents and relative/non-related extended family member caregivers, including pre-adoptive parents, is an important component in giving the court a current picture of the specific foster child's needs and well-being. However, few caregivers avail themselves of

the opportunity to provide input in the Caretaker Information Form and its predecessor, the Caretaker Statement to the Court.

The Division adheres to state law and regulation requirements for determining whether children have American Indian heritage to ensure compliance with the ***Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)***. Investigations social workers are trained to ask parents about their ancestry at the time children are removed from their parent or guardian. Once a child is identified as potentially coming within ICWA regulation, the Division has a designated coordinator, the Court Officer, who tracks required notifications and documentation to/from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Division adheres to direction from the Bureau of Indian Affairs or a specific tribe regarding placement of children with an Indian family. There are few ICWA cases in Santa Cruz County. Of those cases, FCS and the court make a concerted effort to ensure tribal participation in hearings. If the applicable individuals are not able to make personal appearances at hearings, their feedback is gathered prior to hearings by FCS and reported to the court. Additionally, the court allows tribal appearances by telephone.

FCS notices all parties to an action, including caretakers as noted above, children, biological parents or guardians, de facto parents, minor’s counsel, parent’s counsel and CASA, in a timely manner.

FCS consistently properly notices parties to an action, and it is rare that improper notice causes hearing delays. However, there are times when the Department requests continuances in order to achieve proper notice for the Indian Child Welfare Act if information from the family is not received by FCS in a timely manner.

PROCESS FOR PARENT/YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CASE PLANNING

The FCS Division focus in case planning is on the welfare of the child. If the needs of the parent, guardian, or other caregiver are affecting the welfare of the child, then those needs will be addressed by designing a case plan unique to the needs of that family. FCS has a philosophy of strength-based, family-centered practice. This includes a tenet of client involvement in case planning and assessment of progress.

In 2006, FCS implemented a case planning policy and procedure designed to provide guidance and instruction to social workers about case planning at all phases of the dependency process. This policy includes instructions to social workers on how to incorporate identified needs into specific case plan goals and activities. Child and family teaming has become a part of the case planning process since the implementation of CCR. FCS policies require Child and Family Team meetings (CFTm’s) for all children in out of home care with follow up CFTm’s either every 6 months, every 3 months (Katie A), and/or whenever there is a change in circumstances. CFTm’s have been ramping up in phases so that all children in out of home care are receiving them. With the recent development of a CFT Unit, all children will be having CFTm’s on a more consistent basis and will start to include Family Maintenance cases as needed.

PARENTS

Santa Cruz County social workers strongly believe in the value of including parents in the case planning process. FCS has developed a Parent’s Bill of Rights, which is provided to parents at the

time that a child is removed, and this document informs the parent of his or her right to participate in the case planning process and of what is at stake should the parent fail to participate in ordered services.

The Post-Disposition social worker is brought into the case prior to disposition, in order for that worker to begin engagement efforts with the family. This process includes helping the family to identify their own strengths and areas of need in order to build an applicable case plan. In this model, the Post-Disposition social worker engages the family, develops suggested case plan language and submits it to the Investigations social worker for review. If both social workers agree, the case plan document is generated using that language. If there is disagreement, FCS has appropriate procedures for resolving the issue. Whenever possible, the family and any natural and/or formal supports are invited to participate in a Child and Family Team meeting to discuss and develop case plan objectives and activities prior to the development of the initial case plan.

FATHER ENGAGEMENT

In most child welfare cases, the mother is the most immediately and easily identified parent, by virtue of having given birth to the children. However, efforts are made to engage fathers in the case plan, either as a single parent or a second parent. If the child is removed from the mother, efforts to locate a father are a primary focus. If a father becomes available for placement, FCS makes that placement whenever it is safe to do so.

Initially, the juvenile dependency judge makes the finding that a father has “presumed” status. The judge can make the finding based on birth certificate, parents’ marriage, other court orders, or if the father has declared the child as his own. Once a father is elevated to “presumed” status, an Investigations worker has a lengthy interview with him about the allegations of child abuse and gathers information on the concerns and strengths of the family. The worker and father then talk about the case plan and he is referred to needed services. He will then meet monthly with a social worker who will review his case plan progress and revise the case plan as necessary. If the father is the child’s caregiver, the department works to assist the father with ameliorating the issues that brought the child or children to the court’s attention. Reasons for fathers’ exclusion from a case plan could include inability to identify or locate a birth father.

FCS launched the Father/Male Engagement Advisory Board in 2017, which consisted of male staff members, to evaluate how to incorporate best practices for father engagement into internal business processes and to collaborate with external partners. The purpose of this Advisory Board is to build a shared understanding of the issue of father/male engagement and review current policies, practices, and procedures in FCS that affect fathers/males in order to become a more father/male friendly agency. FCS also connected with Father's Corps, a program of First 5 Alameda to further support and guide the agency's father engagement efforts. In addition, FCS is conducted data analysis via Case Reviews on how it has been engaging fathers to ascertain where the drop off points are with fathers and address those gaps. Specifically, Items 8, 11, 12, 13, and 15 were analyzed to see how fathers are engaged compared to

mothers. The findings showed that mothers were engaged at higher rates than fathers. This data was then presented to all FCS staff in an effort to educate and motivate them to engage with fathers more.

Currently, the FCS Father/Male Engagement Advisory Board has increased its membership with father engagement champions from various parts of the division and is engaged in implementing a number of recommendations that were made in the initial analysis. Currently, the Advisory Board is developing training objectives and topic areas around the issue of bias/father engagement, making county office spaces more father-friendly, and incorporating father-friendly principles (adapted from Alameda County First 5 Father's Corps) into contracts and Requests for Proposals. In addition, a Father/Male Engagement Advisory Board has been formed in the Welfare to Work program of the Employment and Benefits Services Division (EBSD). Lastly, FCS is coordinating services with other agencies such as PAPÁS to better serve fathers in the child welfare system.

General Case Planning and Review – Child Welfare

CASE PLANS

FCS social work staff generates case plans designed to identify family strengths and needed services that will help parents keep their children safe and secure. State regulations require case plans for all families served by FCS.

FCS maintains a comprehensive case plan policy and procedure that outlines not only suggested content of the case plan but specific procedures and requirements regarding how to generate the document in CWS/CMS and the timeframes for completion.

FCS focuses much of its efforts towards early engagement of parents in needed services. Most often, parents receive information at the detention hearing about services suggested by the social worker. Immediately following the detention hearing, Investigations social workers make referrals for services so that parents do not have to wait until the implementation of their case plan by the court to get started. Many parents take advantage of these early referrals.

Case plans are legally due within 60 days of the beginning of a case but Santa Cruz County court culture expects the case plan to be designed by the jurisdiction/disposition hearing just three weeks after removal of the child. In accordance with state law, case plans are updated at least once every six months thereafter. The Department tracks compliance with this requirement through various means. Supervisors approve the case plans in CWS/CMS and Safe Measures software generates, among other measures, continuously updated data on cases that are approaching a due date (60 days or six months). FCS supervisors routinely review these reports to track compliance. Additionally, the court expects to review an updated case plan at each status review hearing and case plan details are typically discussed at each hearing (visitation frequency and duration, the potential need for further or different services, whether or not a psychological evaluation points to additional services, etc.).

FCS has adopted Structured Decision-Making for use by all social work staff when conducting assessments of risk to children and when engaging in the case planning process. The tools

provide specific guidelines for assessing level of risk in order to minimize the influence of subjective conclusions and social worker bias. The CANS and/or the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment tool guides the case planning process to promote greater consistency and appropriateness of case plan activities designed to help parents overcome issues placing children at risk. Though the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment tool is designed to encourage social workers to prioritize services to refrain from overwhelming families, the court sometimes requires staff to increase the number of services within case plans. Some of these services do not necessarily coincide with prioritized needs identified in the SDM tool and potentially contribute to parental overwhelm.

In 2017 FCS adopted the use of Child and Family Teaming as a method to engage families and their supports in the case planning process. SDM tools, and more recently CANS assessment results are discussed in the team meeting to focus the team on the highest areas of need. Through the use of CFT meetings, families have a significant voice in the development of their case plans.

In order to further promote fairness and equity, social workers and the court also take pains to ensure monolingual Spanish-speaking clients are not expected to participate in any service that is not available in their native language. If for some reason a service is ordered and then it becomes apparent that it is not available in Spanish, social workers will look for an alternative, or seek the service in a surrounding county and provide resources for transportation for that client. There are occasions when families need resources in other languages such as American Sign Language or Mixteco. In these instances where a vast majority of the services will not be available in the person's dominant language, FCS ensures that there are appropriate interpreters who can accompany that family member to each service.

Social workers in Santa Cruz County have well-established relationships with most of the providers who serve FCS families. The service providers to whom FCS refers are well versed in the needs of the child welfare population and, often times are able to provide best practices to serve this population. Some of those best practices include the following: Triple P Parenting Education, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), Trauma Informed services within Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder milieus, Matrix Substance Use Disorder treatment, Family Preservation Drug Court, and comprehensive developmental screening provided by the Stanford Neuro-Developmental Clinic.

All providers of services are aware in advance of the reporting needs of the court. Case plans are written such that both the client and the provider have a clear understanding of how FCS and the court will identify success. In this way, both the client and the provider are aware that merely participating in a service does not constitute successful resolution of the pertinent risk issues. Similarly, if a client does not necessarily participate in every service component, but is able to consistently demonstrate needed behavior change, the case plan is satisfied.

In early 2014, FCS began offering Safety Organized Practice training to social workers, supervisors and managers in an effort to further standardize practice around targeted behaviors and measurable behavior change. FCS has made some progress in implementing SOP language

into case plans and continues to develop our use of SOP tools. FCS and Children's Behavioral Health (CBH) engage in specific strategies to ensure children and youth are provided with excellent and relevant behavioral health services. Social workers and clinicians meet regularly with children and youth to engage those young people in identifying their needs. Child welfare and clinical supervisors meet monthly to ensure all children/youth in the child welfare system are being appropriately referred to CBH, assessed for services and closely followed by the team (including the clinician, the social worker and the family). FCS and Children's Behavioral Health managers meet every other month to refine procedures and address barriers to serving children. In 2018 FCS and Children's Behavioral Health developed a team approach to the use of the CANS assessment. The Behavioral Health clinician completes the CANS and shares the completed assessment with the FCS social worker. The CANS results are discussed in Child and Family Team meetings to address needs and develop case plan goals and objectives.

With respect to the specifics of the case plan document, all case plans detail frequency of visitation between the social worker and the child/youth and between the social worker and the parent. It is the expectation of the Department that children/youth are regularly seen in their home or placement as opposed to in the child welfare office, at visits or at school. However, there are certain circumstances under which one of these alternative contact scenarios may be used to better inform child safety and parent/child interaction. All case plans reflect a suggested visitation order between parent and child/youth for the court to adopt.

Social worker/caregiver contact is also specified within the case plan. Though there are times when the caregiver's needs are specifically addressed within the case plan document, it is not current practice to do this regularly. It is rare for the local court to order a caregiver to participate in services beyond what is needed to provide basic care for the child (maintaining school performance, participating in well child examinations, making the child available for visitation, etc.). In certain cases where a placement is considered to be the best suited for the child/youth, but that caregiver has unique needs, the Department seeks to address those needs outside of the purview of the case plan document. For example, the Department can refer the caregiver to counseling or assist the caregiver in seeking resources for a child's unique abilities or interests. To that end, the Agency maintains flexible funds, such as the Kinship Emergency Fund, to address the resource needs of relative caregivers and resource parents. If, for instance, a relative caregiver needs a larger home to care for a child, the fund may provide one-time moving assistance. It can also pay for specialized equipment needed to care for a child. Other funds are maintained which address the various needs of children, parents and resource parents.

As to whether or not the child is placed in the least restrictive placement, that issue is not addressed in the case plan itself because the Santa Cruz County Court expects that detailed discussion to take place within each detention, jurisdiction/disposition, status review and 366.26 permanency report. There is significant support by the court and all attorneys to assist the Division in obtaining and maintaining kin placements. For that reason, Santa Cruz County consistently has a fairly high rate of kin placements (approximately 40% of all placements). Significant steps are taken by Investigations social workers to obtain information on kin at the point of removal and to make every attempt to have an approved placement for that child, with

someone the child knows, immediately. As stated above, FCS is now endeavoring to take the initial placement process to a higher level by assessing multiple relatives for the best well-being and permanency match for the child, as close to the outset of the dependency as possible.

As with the issue of least restrictive placement, efforts to make or finalize an adoption or other permanent plan are not addressed within the case plan document because those efforts are addressed within each court report. Within the Division, the Post-Disposition supervisory team tracks all relevant information pertaining to specific adoption efforts for children for whom reunification has either failed or has a high likelihood of failing, including the following: the acknowledgement, the child summary, the home study, obtaining medical records, full disclosure interview, consent and joinder and any post-adoption agreement. The status of these elements is discussed within the 366.26 report.

PERMANENCY HEARINGS

For all family reunification cases, permanency hearings must be held within 12 months of the disposition hearing (within 6 months for children under the age of 3). To ensure compliance, the Santa Cruz Dependency Court sets the 6- and 12-month review hearing dates from the date of the dispositional hearing where family reunification services were ordered. In virtually every case, therefore, a permanency hearing is held within the required time frames.

At the permanency hearing, the court must first consider whether the child may be returned to the parent(s). For cases where reunification services have been unsuccessful, however, the court may either (1) continue reunification services for another 6 months if there is a substantial likelihood of return to the parent within the next 6 months or (2) end reunification services and set a hearing date to decide what should be the child's permanent plan (366.26 hearing). If concurrent planning efforts are successful, the child should have already been placed in the home that may become the child's permanent, preferably adoptive, placement.

The Division has facilitated several in-depth assessments of potential practice barriers to permanency and these assessments have indicated that both the Division and the court have had a history of tending to tip the scale too far away from permanency in favor of allowing for a slim chance of potential return to a parent in the future.

These assessments have led to significant restructuring of practice including deployment of staff; training regarding adoptions efforts for all youth not only for social work staff, but for court and community partners as well; a case review process for addressing barriers to permanence for specific children/youth; significant recruitment efforts for families willing to be "forever families"; deployment of community contracts to support placements to become forever families; and use of technology and media to seek appropriate forever families for specific youth.

Santa Cruz social workers have understood that no supportive relationship takes the place of a permanent parental relationship. The Division minimizes the number of recommendations for non-permanence (such as legal guardianship or planned permanent living arrangement).

CONCURRENT CASE PLANNING

Concurrent planning is a process of identification and early placement with a family that can become a permanent living situation for children should reunification with parents fail. Traditionally, FCS had a policy that required social workers to begin the process of concurrent planning from the time the child is removed from the home and continue this active process until a concurrent plan is finalized. However, there were few guidelines as to how specifically social workers should engage in this process. Further, there was little guidance as to the Ongoing social worker's responsibilities and the Adoptions social worker's responsibilities in the concurrent planning process. As a result, FCS had been inconsistently successful with respect to following California law that dictates a concurrent plan needs to be in place by disposition. In fact, social workers have, at times, been unable to implement a formal concurrent plan for some children even during the first six months of services.

In order to address this challenge, FCS implemented relative placement and concurrent planning policies and procedures in 2007. The Relative Placement Policy and Procedure made a formalized structure for immediate identification of relatives at the time of removal with the goal of placing with a relative as the initial placement. These policies attempted to outline the roles and responsibilities of each social worker (Ongoing, Adoptions or Resource Family Approval) and what the expectations for ongoing communication are. Whether or not initial relative placement was achieved, a Home Finding social worker (through the RFA unit) was to work in conjunction with a family meeting facilitator to bring all known relatives and the parents together for a family meeting within days of removal. The intent of this meeting was for the family to identify the best and most concurrent relative placement for the child, with a strong emphasis on adoption. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, the Department could not maintain all the positions necessary to fully implement these policies as they were written. In an effort to bolster concurrent planning efforts, the policy was re-written in 2010 and provided clear direction for each program. As to placement with relatives, they are identified through discussions with parents and youth, through the CFT process, through letters and phone calls to relatives, and through the use of computer database systems. It should be noted that efforts to locate possible non-offending parents is a primary focus of the case carrying social worker at this time. If this non-offending parent becomes available for placement, FCS makes that placement. If a petition has already been filed with the Dependency Court, the Agency makes efforts to assist the non-offending parent (if it is a father) in establishing paternity prior to dismissing the petition.

With respect to the option of placing with paternal relatives, every effort is made to encourage fathers to appear at the detention hearing in order to be considered for presumed status. If a father's status is raised at that time, FCS may consider his relatives immediately. However, even if he waits until the jurisdictional/disposition hearing to have his status raised, the Division can make a placement with his relative at any time if it is the most appropriate placement for the youth.

Competing interests can pose barriers to concurrent planning. At times, appropriate relatives are located who reside a significant distance from Santa Cruz County, such that placement would make on-going visitation with parents problematic. Although it falls short of the

concurrent planning ideal of early placement, FCS will facilitate contact and visitation between the relative and the child in these cases.

FCS AND PROBATION

FCS and the Santa Cruz County Juvenile Probation Department routinely work effectively to serve the individualized needs of youth.

Formalized structures – FCS and Probation engage in a joint protocol process to determine the appropriate jurisdiction when there is a question of which court should supervise the youth. The social worker and the probation officer work closely to assess the youth’s criminal infractions against the backdrop of his or her family of origin issues. A joint report is produced and a joint recommendation for jurisdiction is made. FCS and Probation also work closely with AB12 youth who remain in care after turning 18. FCS, Probation, Children’s Mental Health and the County Office of Education also work closely to jointly staff all youth being considered for Short Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTP).

Informal relationships – Probation has often been a resource for FCS with respect to providing an alert when a dependent child is processed into Juvenile Hall. They have also provided supervision and support during placement changes that have potential safety implications for staff. Probation placement staff has thorough knowledge of STRTP program available around the state and often provide information to FCS about the successes and challenges of different programs.

CASE REVIEW SYSTEM – PROBATION

The Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) is the forum for which cases are assessed for additional services whether it is for Wraparound, the inclusion of Therapeutic Behavioral Services, private placement including out of home placement or step-down services. The CFT’s role is to include family members in defining and reaching identified goals for the child. The individuals on the team work together to identify each family member’s strengths and needs, based on relevant life domains, to develop a child, youth, and family-centered case plan. The plan articulates specific strategies for achieving the child, youth, and/or family’s goals based on addressing identified needs, public safety, including following related court orders, and building on or developing functional strengths. The CFT typically conducts and coordinates its work through a CFT meeting, which is discussed in detail below. It is important to recognize, however, that the CFT and a CFT meeting are not the same. The CFT is a group of people; a CFTM is a functional structured meeting and process of engaging the family and their service teams in thoughtful and effective planning.

The CFT process reflects a belief that families have capacity to address their problems and achieve success if given the opportunity and supports to do so. Engagement with families is fundamental to the CFT process. Working with children, youth, and families as partners results in plans that are developed collaboratively and in a shared decision-making process. The family members hold a significant power of voice and choice when strategies are defined. The CFT process reflects the culture and preferences of children, youth, and families, building on their unique values and capacities and eliciting the participation of everyone on the team. It is

important to recognize that at times the child, youth, and family have their own unique cultures. In those cases, care must be taken to integrate their cultures into the plan. Team members should help children, youth, and families recognize their strengths, and encourage them and support them to develop solutions that match their preferences. The team must respect and support the power of learning from mistakes when strategies do not work as intended so that the plan can be revised to improve outcomes.

Probation currently has four different case plans: the pre-placement case plan for those youth that are at imminent risk of removal, the IV-E placement and supplemental case plans for youth that are ordered into out of home placement and the JAIS case plans for youth that are not currently in placement or at imminent risk of removal but score moderate or high on the JAIS. The youth, their parent(s) and/or guardian(s) and the Probation Officer all work collectively to come up with goals for their case plans. The case plans are a working document and the Probation Officer should be going over the case plans with the youth they supervise frequently and adjusting as needed. The case plans are reviewed and signed off by a supervisor at least once every six months, or when there is a change in services being needed.

In the event that the youth being assessed in the CFT is in need of more services than what the FUERTE/Wraparound unit can provide, the youth's case may be then be assessed for placement in an STRTP program or an out of state placement through the Multi-Disciplinary Team Meeting. This is a meeting that brings the Assistant Division Directors from Child Welfare and County Mental Health with a manager from the County Office of Education and the Placement Supervisor. All parties have to agree to sign off on a case before it can be recommended to the court for an STRTP or an out of state placement.

For the youth that get ordered into STRTP program, since there are few options in Santa Cruz and surrounding counties, family engagement is increased using Skype. Probation also encourages families to visit with their child in out of home placement and reimburses families for gas, food and lodging on a monthly basis. During the monthly placement visits, the supervising probation officers check in with the youth and formalize their plans for permanency.

Court reviews are scheduled at least twice a year. The Pre-Permanency Review Hearing is held within six months from the date the youth was originally removed from the home. In cases where the judicial process was delayed, some youth will have their Pre-Permanency Review Hearing shortly after entering placement. Six months after the Pre-Permanency Review Hearing, a Permanency Review is held. Six months after that review another Permanency Review hearing is held and then again, every six months until the youth is returned home.

C. Resource Family Home Approval, Recruitment and Retention

GENERAL APPROVAL OF RESOURCE FAMILIES

The State Department of Social Services contracts with the county to approve resource family homes. State RFA regulations outline the basis for assessing a resource parent on their home, provision of supervision and care, and attention to a child's personal rights. The State the County RFA supervisor, and the RFA social worker evaluate compliance with the RFA standards for approving homes. Standards for approving homes are based on first and second-hand information known about a particular resource parent. Feedback from the RFA social worker, Resource Parent Recruiter/Retention Specialist, placing social workers, and service providers is a primary source of information upon which placement is recommended and accomplished. Multiple factors are considered including, but not limited to, the reliability of the home, level of prior cooperation meeting a child's needs, appropriateness to the well-being of the child, cooperation with the child's service plan, ability to meet sibling placement needs, language issues, and household composition.

All potential resource parents and adult household members submit to a criminal background check. On those occasions when the background check is returned indicating a history of criminal activity, the criminal exemption process is put into effect as outlined by the Resource Family Approval Background Assessment Guide. Each exemption, whether simplified or standard, must be approved at the Division Director or Assistant Division Director level.

Although Santa Cruz County was once home to many Native Americans of the Ohlone and Costanoan tribes, currently only 1.8% of Santa Cruz residents report their ethnicity as Native American (US Census Bureau). We are not aware of any BIA recognized tribes in Santa Cruz County; on those occasions when a child coming into care is described as an Indian child, we work with the pertinent tribes by requesting confirmation of the child's Native American status and provide notice of hearing to all required parties (references: Family Code, Section 8630 (g) and (h)). One of our senior social workers serves as a single-point-of-contact for all matters related to the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Cross-jurisdictional efforts to improve timeliness of adoptive and permanent placements include having social workers and supervisors participate in the Bay Area Supervisors of Adoptions (BASA) meetings and the Public Agency Adoption Services (PAAS) meetings, both of which provide opportunities for exchange of information regarding families waiting to adopt and children in need of permanent homes. Additionally, we utilize the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process, as opportunities arise, to facilitate placement with relatives/NREFMs living outside of California, but within the United States.

The Probation Department in the event of needing to approve a relative or foster parent will request the assistance of the Family and Children's Services division.

RECRUITMENT

General Recruitment: County wide efforts to raise awareness of the needs of children in foster care and recruit quality foster and adoptive homes include:

- Monthly foster family orientations held in English throughout the year. Individualized orientations are held in Spanish as needed.
- Full-time contractor position for a bilingual recruiter is in place. The recruiter helps facilitate orientations and gives presentations in places of worship and other community venues.
- The recruiter will work individually with interested parties, guiding through the initial steps of the foster care application process.
- The Department has formed a partnership with Fostering the Bay – a Bay Area Non-profit organization dedicated to working with local churches to recruit foster families from within their congregations.
- The Department maintains a website to promote foster care recruitment online.
- The Department manages a “Santa Cruz County Foster Care and Adoption” page on Facebook.
- Over the last couple of years, the Department worked with a PR firm to fine-tune recruitment efforts. This has resulted an improved focus on the recruitment of caregivers for older youth.
- Recruitment efforts are evaluated by Resource Parent Orientation sign-in sheets and how many Resource Parents complete the RFA process.

Targeted Recruitment: County wide efforts to raise awareness of particular groups of foster youth for whom a limited number of foster homes are currently available are ongoing. For Santa Cruz County this includes teens, LGBTQ-identified youth, sibling groups, and children with special needs. Targeted recruitment efforts include:

- Efforts to raise awareness of geographical locations within the county where there are currently an insufficient number of foster homes and a high number of children removed.
- Creating promotional material focusing on the need for foster homes to serve the specific groups described above.
- Participating in Community events held in areas with high rates of removal to recruit foster homes so children can remain in their schools of origin and close to their neighborhood supports.
- Targeted recruitment is evaluated by the number of Resource Parents who identify their willingness to foster/parent teens, LGBTQ-identified youth, sibling groups, and children with special needs.

Child-Specific Recruitment: Outreach to individuals, such as relatives, extended family members, and others from within the child or youth’s existing support network. These efforts include:

- Outreach mindful of child/youth’s cultural identity and affiliations.

- Involving child/youth in recruitment efforts to find them a forever home
- Photo-listing will continue to be explored as a possible option.

RETENTION OF CAREGIVERS

FCS works to retain foster, adoptive, and relative caregivers by ensuring that RFA processes run smoothly and that effective support is accessible to all caregivers.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

- All resource families are case managed by assigned RFA social workers. The assigned worker is tasked with offering ongoing guidance, monitoring and support to the resource family.
- Kinship Support Services Program (KSSP) – KSSP provides support and linkage to community resources to kinship families (i.e. relative caregivers and close family friends providing care to a foster child). A bilingual social worker case manages families interested in receiving KSSP services. These services might include: In-home parenting support, trauma informed training, support in setting healthy boundaries with birth parents, assistance in identifying support system, and coping with the challenges tied to kinship care. The KSSP social worker facilitates a monthly support group for any kinship family interested in attending.
- A Public Health Nurse works closely with caregivers to provide needed assessments and referrals to meet children’s medical needs.
- Children’s Behavioral Health: if child is being seen by Children’s Behavioral Health, then a Mental Health Specialist in the Health Services Agency may provide therapeutic support to the caregiver and child.
- Therapeutic support is available to resource parents through the Meridian Group – which is made up of three local, licensed therapists.
- The Bridge Program offers funding for full-time childcare to resource parents who have taken emergency placement of children age 5 and under. Resource parents have the option of using their own childcare provider – or accessing the support of a provider trained in trauma-informed care.

PEER SUPPORT

The Mentor Program provides several peer-support strategies for caregivers. These strategies include access to an active group of parent mentors who partner with new resource parents to provide assistance to resource parents and offer support around general foster care issues, adoptive parenting, working with drug-exposed babies and building relationships with parents, relatives and non-relative extended family members.

Group support includes support groups and appreciation events. Spanish-speaking caregivers may access monthly Support Groups. FCS hosts several resource parents events throughout the year. An appreciation event is held each May. There is a summer picnic, a pool party, a Halloween event, a Winter holiday event, movie nights, and other activities. Six times a year,

The Department holds “Parents Night Out” events – where resource parents leave their children to be cared for at a local church, such that they can take a night off for themselves.

RESPIRE CARE

Respite Care is a service the Department administers and provides directly to resource parents on a reimbursement basis. General respite care is available to all caregivers and additional respite care is provided for resource families who are caring for drug-exposed infants and have received certification through the Options for Recovery (OFR) program and to pre-adoptive families through the STAP program.

TRAINING

Training has been conducted by the Foster and Kinship Care Education Program of the Chancellor's Office of the California Community College System since 1984. Currently the Cabrillo College FKCE Program works closely with the Santa Cruz County Human Services Department, particularly the Foster Care Licensing Unit, to determine both the pre-licensing and in-service training needs of resource families in the county and to provide this training and support. These are described below:

- **Foundations** This is required 12-hour pre-approval resource parent training. For “matched” families who have taken an emergency placement (typically relatives or close family friends) Foundations must be completed within 90 days from the day the child being placed in the home. For “unmatched families” (those people typically thought of as traditional foster parents) Foundations must be completed before a child can be placed into their home. Foundations covers a range of topics such as child development, child trauma, cultural competency and working with FCS. Foundations is offered seven times a year in English, and twice a year in Spanish.
- **Understanding Substance Exposure (USE):** The Department offers specialized training to resource parents providing care to children or youth who were prenatally drug exposed. USE classes consist of two classes –each three hours in length. They are offered four times a year in English and twice a year in Spanish.
- **Training and Support to Caregivers of Foster Youth:** Monthly series that functions as both a venue for training and also ongoing support. Training topics focus on the issues and challenges tied to the care of older foster youth. Resource parents are encouraged to select training topics. Time is reserved at each session to address any personal challenges that may have come up for resource parents in attendance. This series is offered in both English and Spanish.
- Ongoing special trainings on a variety of topics.

D. Staff, Caregiver and Service Provider Training

FCS SOCIAL WORKER TRAINING

FCS provides training for social workers and supervisors to assist in the development of awareness, knowledge and skills for delivering services to families. In accordance with the Integrated Core Practice Model (ICPM) training focuses on teaching social workers to engage families in order to provide safety and stability for children while respecting family culture, meeting Division 31 requirements, and achieving the best outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being.

During their first year of employment, social workers receive entry-level induction training, which utilizes a structured curriculum of classroom and on-the-job activities. Social workers participate in 560 hours (12 weeks) of in-house induction training provided by the Department's Staff Development division. This training focuses on county specific policies and procedures related to new practices and policies as related to the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR); child welfare case management through the life cycle of a case; integration of Core Practice Model concepts and best practices; Federal case review; job shadowing and on-the job training (OJT); Simulation activities; and incorporation of required state CORE training topics. Topics covered include: intake; interviewing; investigation; SDM; case planning and case management; child placement; Juvenile Court procedures; court report writing and documentation; concurrent planning; permanency; after hours response; Division 31 Regulations; outcomes and accountability; California Law Enforcement Telecommunication System (CLETS); car seat safety; collaboration and partnership with CalWORKs and EBSD (crossover); customer service and addressing complaints and grievances; differential response; working with resource parents; time management; self-care; collaboration and partnership with client resources, providers, i.e. probation, children's mental health, Court partners, substance abuse treatment and parenting class service providers; personal safety; ethics; poverty; Child and Family Team Meetings (CFT's); evidence based and promising practices in child welfare social work. Induction training also includes technology training on CWS/CMS, SDM, Safe Measures and Outlook. Cultural humility is incorporated into all segments of training. Effectiveness of the training is evaluated through the use of written assignments, presentations, role-play and simulation activities, on-the-job training and ongoing supervisor and Child Welfare Trainer feedback.

In addition to the internally provided induction training, over trainees first and second years of employment, social workers participate in 18 days of CORE 3.0 classroom training, 22 E-Learning Modules, and 21 hours of Field Based Advising (FBA) provided by our regional Bay Area Academy. The purpose FBA is to provide a structure for transfer of learning activities and feedback regarding skill development. It serves as a guide for both field advisors and new social workers, providing an opportunity for trainees to practice new skills in a natural framework. CORE 3.0 training topics include: Orientation to Child Welfare Practice, ICWA Introduction, Teaming, Collaboration, and Transparency, Trauma Informed Practice, Fairness and Equity, Court Procedures, CWS Documentation for use in the Legal System, Intimate Partner Violence,

Behavioral Health, , Critical Thinking and Assessment, Engagement and Interviewing, Concurrent Planning, Case Planning Basics, Purposeful Visitation, Writing Behavioral Objectives, Case Planning In a Team setting, Supporting Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being, Placement, Case Closure and After Care Plans, After 18, Documentation and Report Writing, Skillful Use of Authority, Federal and State Laws, Social Worker Safety, Child & Youth Development, Structured Decision Making, Child Maltreatment Identification, Worker Safety, Supporting Educational Rights & Achievement, Values & Ethics, CWS/CMS, Child Welfare Practice in a Multicultural Environment, , Indian Child Welfare Act, Family Engagement,. State CORE 3.0 training is offered cyclically, generally over a six to eight-month period within the Southern Region (Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz). Supervisors attend a Supervisor CORE training series, Foundations of Supervision, within the first year of promotion or hire. This training meets the State requirement for supervisor training. Supervisors also attend a monthly consultation 'Learning Collaborative' group, contracted through our regional training academy and facilitated by an experienced manager and leader in human services. This group provides ongoing training focused on core supervision issues for new supervisors in the field of Child Welfare.

Social workers and supervisors receive advanced classroom training on specialized topics designed for skills enhancement and career development. An average of 700 hours of ongoing training is offered each year, in order to allow each social worker to meet the State requirement for 40 hours of continuing education every two years. Topics identified through the County's PQCR and internal annual training needs assessment are addressed in advanced classroom training, as well as areas of need identified by FCS management, supervisors, and social work staff. Additionally, training needs are identified by way of practice and legislative changes; as the body of child welfare research grows and systems adapt to address legislation and policy changes at the federal and state level. Training is informed by evidence based and promising practices in child welfare. Cross training and training to multiple partners (i.e. service providers, resource parents etc.) and other stakeholders alongside child welfare staff is purposefully provided with the goals of increasing partnership in serving all youth and collaboratively identifying and treating trauma. Some of the trainings provided in 2015- 2019 were: Overview of Continuum of Care Reform (CCR); Safety Organized Practice (SOP) Advanced and Introductory Topics; Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Engaging Youth about SOGIE & AB 959; Safety Mapping; Innovations for a Trauma Informed Practice; Preventing Homelessness for Youth & Young Adults with Child Welfare; Age-Appropriate, Medically Accurate Sexual Health; Statewide Technical Assistance for STRTP Leaders: Intake, assessment, and referral processing; Sexual and Reproductive Wellness for Youth in Foster Care; Trauma Informed Care for Community Based & Residential Service Providers; Human Trafficking Education Summit 2019; Overview: Using the CANS in the California Integrated CPM; Psychotropic Medication; The Assessment of Young Children In Dependent Care; Working with Dually Involved; Youth; Opiate Use: Behavioral Health Considerations for Recovery & Hope; Permanency Mapping and SOP Safety Networks, Safety Circles; CFT meeting Facilitation for Court, Family Reunification, and Family Maintenance; CFT Overview for Case Carrying Workers and Coordinators; CFT Overview for Case Carrying Workers and Coordinators; CFT Skills & SOP Integration; CFT Skills and SOP Integration: engagement, goal setting; Child Maltreatment International Conference; Ongoing After-Hours Training; Social Work Ethics; SOP Integration - Danger Statement and Safety Goal Practice for Case Closure Court Report Writing: Status Reviews, Selection & Implementation Reports, Jurisdiction-Disposition Reports; Adoption from

a Child's Perspective; Adoptions Trainings for Supervisors & Leadership; Overview of Adoptions Practice in California; Field Based Training in Adoptions , Permanency & Concurrent Planning; SDM for supervisors and social workers, Hotline Assessments, Post-Disposition Tools, Fostering Connections, Beyond the Bench, Bridges out of Poverty, Beyond Domestic Violence; Breaking Intergenerational cycles of Trauma & other Trauma Informed Practice Trainings; Case Plan Development; AAP; Safety Organized Practice; CPR/First Aid; Advanced CWS/CMS Training, Adoptions, Referral and Intake; Dependency Law Changes; Field Safety; Forensic Interviewing; Foster Ed Training; Fostering Connections to Success After 18; Implementation of SOP in TDM and Family Team Meetings; Katie A. (Pathways to Well-being) Trainings; Making Ethical Decisions in Child Welfare; Medical Assessment of Pediatric Injuries & Sexual Trauma; Mental Health Issues for Children in Foster Care; Supporting Father Involvement and Co-parenting;; Professional Writing for Child Welfare; Staying Focused on Safety & Risk; Recognizing Drug Abuse in the Home; Restraining Orders; Team Decision Making; and Court Report Writing. . Training that has been identified as a Family and Children's Services Division need for this fiscal year includes Structured Decision Making (SDM), Behavioral Case Plans, Integrated Core Practice Model, Safety Organized practice (SOP), Understanding Addiction, Child and Family Team Meetings, , and an after-hours response refresher. FCS will pursue these topics and other learning needs during FY 2019-2020.

STAKEHOLDER TRAINING

All CAPIT/CBCAP and PSSF funds are sub-contracted to provide support services or direct services to families. Santa Cruz County FCS routinely provides ongoing training opportunities for contracted service providers and parent consumers, including CAPIT/CBCAP and PSSF-funded contractors, using Title IVE or grant funds. The majority of provider training opportunities were offered through the regional training academy and as identified by Staff Development and Family and Children's Services.

FCS invites contracted providers and court partners to advanced classroom training on specialized topics designed for skill enhancement, practice changes, and legislative awareness. In the last few years, provider staff have been invited to attend FCS 101, Child and Adolescent Needs Assessment training, Sexual Reproduction and Wellness for Youth in Foster Care (SB89), Sexual Orientation Gender Identity Expression training (SOGIE), Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), Mandated Reporter, Child and Family Teaming Meeting Training, Dually Involved Youth (partnership with Juvenile Probation), Structured Decision Making, , ACT-Adoptions & Permanency Curriculum for Service Providers Working with Youth, Safety Organized Practice, Supporting Father Involvement & Co-Parenting, and other key legislative and policy training that supports the shared missions of our department and contract providers. Resource Parents were invited to attend a variety of the above-mentioned training, in addition to Resource Family Approval training specific to onboarding new resource families supporting youth in the foster care system.

In addition to these FCS-sponsored trainings, FCS has and continues to collaborate with First 5 of Santa Cruz County and the Health Services Agency, Children's Mental Health to provide a training and certification program for the Triple P Parenting Education curriculum to several

providers who work with FCS families, including Parents Center and Children’s Mental Health therapists, workers at the La Manana Family Resource Center, and Families Together service providers. Triple P is an evidence-based parenting education program. These service providers were trained and certified to provide both individualized parenting education and standardized classroom parenting education.

FCS stakeholders also participate in trainings led by the Health Services Agency’s Alcohol and Drug Program, particularly trainings associated with Family Preservation Court. Trainings were held on evidence-based outpatient substance abuse treatment and other issues related to substance abuse. Social Workers, Alcohol and Drug staff, community-based service providers, and parent mentor participated in the trainings.

PROBATION

Probation officers are mandated to complete a 160-hour Probation Core class and a 40-hour training course on peace officer duties and responsibilities, both offered through California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation – Standards and Training in Corrections (CDCR-STC), within the first year of hire. All probation supervisors are mandated to attend an 80-hour supervisor core training course offered through CDCR-CSA. The Probation Department places an additional requirement that all supervisors attend and complete a local Leadership Academy pertaining to personnel related matters.

Placement unit supervisors are mandated to attend an 18-hour course specific to foster care and out of home placement state and federal regulations. Probation officers assigned to the placement unit are also mandated to attend a 32-hour course specifically designed for probation officers assigned to probation placement units.

All probation officers are mandated by CDCR-STC to complete 40 hours of approved training annually. In order to meet this requirement, officers attend a variety of trainings related to their assignments, inclusive of legal updates, evidence-based practices and training courses offered through Santa Cruz County Family and Children’s Services. Training courses attended by each probation officer is verified with records monitored closely and updated regularly to ensure CDCR-STC compliance. It should also be noted that each year staff are surveyed regarding upcoming training they would like to have available for the upcoming year and attempts are made by the departments training manager to locate suggested trainings for staff. Additionally, staff are provided information on specific trainings that focus on reducing implicit bias, increasing awareness around being trauma informed and building a culturally responsive organization.

Skill development and capacity building for probation staff are continuously addressed and monitored in the annual employee performance evaluation.

E. Agency Collaboration

The Juvenile Probation Division and FCS have had an evolving collaboration. Staff utilize their respective managers to communicate and problem-solve situations arising in either agency/department. Collaboration has increased significantly due to the need to address

specific issues such as CSEC and Dual Status youth. In addition, many staff collaborate during child and family team meetings. Both CSEC and Dual Status have joint protocols developed for FCS and Juvenile Probation to collaborate and share information with the goal to best serve children, youth, families, and communities in the county.

FCS and Probation have long had a joint protocol for collaborative case planning and communication between probation officers, social workers and judicial officers. As a result, the dependency and delinquency judicial officers have good communication regarding crossover youth and families and have an increased knowledge of both systems' philosophy and services available to families.

FCS, Probation, and ILP have a monthly AB12 conference call where they discuss youth between the ages of 17.5 and 21. This meeting is used to verify or facilitate a stronger connection between youth and ILP Providers, to review the availability of housing assistance, and to ensure that any CDSS mandatory data entry is completed. This meeting also serves as an information sharing session between the agencies to address transition planning, issues with meeting eligibility criteria, and other ILP related services/issues.

COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

FCS collaborates with an extensive array of stakeholders, including public agencies, court system partners, community-based agencies, and caregivers. The primary collaborations are described below.

EMPLOYMENT AND BENEFITS DIVISION OF HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Human Services Department's Employment and Benefits Division (EBSD) and the FCS division collaborate to ensure that eligible families are receiving local, state and federal benefits they are entitled to in a coordinated manner. At the time a child is referred to child welfare, it is determined whether the family is receiving benefits or services from EBSD. If FCS works with the family in any capacity and the family does not have benefits but may be eligible, FCS Social Workers refer the family to EBSD. The FCS social worker regularly asks parents and caregivers if they are enrolled in some type of healthcare coverage, and reviews possible options for healthcare with them. Parents and caregivers who may be eligible for MediCal and/or CalFRESH are referred to EBSD for enrollment.

If the family is involved in CalWORKs-Welfare to Work, case plan coordination occurs at initial case plan development and throughout the life of the case. The FCS case plan takes precedence over the employment services or Welfare to Work plan. A crossover data report is run every month, which lists all the cases actively open in FCS and Welfare to Work. Typically, about 100 children are in both a FCS case and Welfare to Work case. This report assists supervisors to monitor case plan coordination.

HEALTH SERVICES

FCS collaborates extensively with the Health Services Agency (HSA) of Santa Cruz County. Several of the divisions within the agency are key partners in providing needed services for children in families involved in child welfare. These partnerships are described below:

During the last SIP cycle, the FCS Division, the HSA's **Alcohol and Drug Program (ADP)**, and various community-based providers have successfully worked to increase and improve collaborative efforts to meet the needs of CWS clients struggling with substance abuse. This collaboration has resulted in on-demand substance abuse services that has eliminated any waiting lists for clients. FCS and ADP have continued to dedicate an AOD Specialist to be out-stationed in the FCS office. FCS has collaborated with ADP to implement and maintain an extensive enhancement of the Drug Dependency Court, which included incorporating an evidence-based outpatient model and expanding the numbers served. In addition, FCS and ADP management and line staff have met routinely to identify goals and work to mitigate any systemic issues. These efforts have greatly improved the collaboration between FCS and substance abuse administrators, managers and service providers.

Santa Cruz County's FCS Division, along with HSA's **Children's Mental Health (CMH) Division**, as well as the HSA's Alcohol and Drug Program, the Probation Department, County Office of Education, and a variety of community-based agency partners have a longstanding collaborative relationship through the County's interagency System of Care, which began in 1989. This partnership has grown over the years into a robust collaboration with a broad service array focused on helping to keep children and youth safely at home, in school, and out of trouble (the original System of Care goals). The collaboration supports screening, assessment, and enrollment into mental health treatment for children in foster care. In addition, regular manager/supervisor meetings are held to ensure effective service coordination.

FCS also works closely **Public Health Nursing** to meet the health care needs of children. One Public Health Nurse who is an FCS employee works with children at the time of removal from home. Her role is to gather medical histories from parents from interviews at detention hearings and to gather medical records from providers, to create a medical case management plan. An additional Public Health Nurse manages the medical case plan throughout the life of the case. This collaboration is effective and critical to ensuring the well-being of children.

EDUCATION

There has been much success in collaborating on educational issues in the last three years. The Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program developed a Memorandum of Understanding that has been signed by the County Office of Education (COE), FCS, the Juvenile Court, and school districts to delineate roles, responsibilities, and procedures for educational services to children in care as required under AB 490, using the FosterEd educational case management model. This MOU also outlines that every school-age student is assigned a FosterEd Liaison at the beginning of their dependency case.

FosterEd (originally an initiative of the National Center for Youth Law and now fully sustained by the COE) seeks to improve the educational outcomes of foster youth by ensuring each has an educational case plan, an education team, and an educational champion supporting their success in school. FosterEd currently operates in various jurisdictions in California, Arizona and Indiana. FosterEd is a collaboration between a wide-range of Santa Cruz County agencies and community organizations, including: Santa Cruz County Human Services Department (FCS and Children's Behavioral Health), Juvenile Dependency Court, CASA of Santa Cruz County, Encompass' Transition Age Youth program, school districts, and Cabrillo College.

The goal of FosterEd involves the following critical steps:

1. **Identifying the adult or adults who will serve as the student's educational champion.** Educational champions are most often parents or relatives but will sometimes be resource parents. This is the identified adult who will most likely be the student's long-term caregiver and will thus need to develop the tools and capacity to meet the student's educational needs.
2. **Identifying the educational strengths and needs of the student and educational champion.** This is accomplished by careful consideration of education data such as attendance, GPA, test scores, and other school records; conversations with stakeholders such as parents, social workers and teachers; and education team meetings held at school sites.
3. **Creating an "Education Team" for each student.** At intake, FosterEd pulls together key partners in the student's life, including the student, school staff members, social worker, parent, caregiver, therapist, CASA and any other stakeholder with an interest in the student achieving educational success. The team creates an educational case plan. Based on identified strengths and needs, educational case plans are to ensure the child receives appropriate educational services and the educational champion receives appropriate training and technical assistance. These plans are developed, monitored and updated by the assigned FosterEd Liaison, with input from a diverse range of agencies, organizations and stakeholders, including the foster students themselves, if age appropriate.
4. **Providing needed educational supports and services.** Monitoring by the FosterEd Liaison, a diverse range of Santa Cruz County agencies and community organizations implement the educational case plans, ensuring students in foster care and their educational champions receive the educational supports and services they need.
5. **Continuously monitoring data to update and improve the educational case plan.** Educational case plans are regularly monitored and updated based on new education data, progress or newly identified strengths and needs.

In addition to the implementation of the FosterEd model, collaboration around education also is reflected in: the practice of consistently including FosterEd Liaisons in the Child and Family Teaming process; the participation of FCS and other community agencies in the Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program Executive Advisory Council; the continual use of the "parent's educational report to court" and FosterEd Liaison educational updates in social worker reports to court; the development of transportation plans to ensure that foster students can remain in their school of origin; the inclusion of foster youth education-related provisions in school district local plans (LCAPs); and ongoing trainings on how to best support foster youth in education, offered to both schools and FCS.

COURT PARTNERS

Court partners in Santa Cruz County include the juvenile court judge, attorneys for parents and children, County Counsel, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), FCS staff, and the Court Clerk. The Dependency Court Systems Committee, comprised of these partners, meets

bimonthly to address collaboration issues. All court participants have an opportunity to express their views and have them considered by the court. The court process is adversarial by nature. However, in spite of opposing interests, court partners generally work well together and use both formal processes (such as settlement conferences and mediation) and informal opportunities to arrive at the best results for families.

In 2008, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed by FCS and CASA that delineates the roles and responsibilities of managers and workers in both organizations. This MOU detailed communication procedures including the joint supervisor and management meetings between CASA and FCS. In addition, the FCS Division Director and program managers meet monthly with the CASA Director and Program Manager to address issues regarding the collaboration between FCS and CASA, and there are quarterly meetings among FCS supervisors and CASA supervisors.

Community-Wide Collaborations

The FCS Division collaborates with various community-based service providers to meet the service needs of children and families. Most of these organizations are discussed in more detail in the section on service array. Most are also members of the ***Children’s Network***, a countywide body whose purpose is to “encourage the development of a comprehensive and collaborative service delivery system for children and youth.” The Children’s Network membership is made up of child welfare, health services, juvenile probation, schools, parks and recreation, law enforcement, courts, and service providers. The Children’s Network provides a venue for coordination of service delivery, launching new initiatives and makes recommendations for the distribution of CAPIT, CBCAP, PSSF and Children’s Trust Funds for services to children and families.

A major collaboration has been the county’s ***Triple P Collaborative***, which has introduced the evidence-based Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) to Santa Cruz County. This collaborative was spearheaded by First 5, Children’s Mental Health, and FCS. The directors of these three entities meet regularly as the steering committee for the collaborative. In 2010 service providers were trained and certified in Triple P parent education levels 3, 4 and 5. The community now has several individual practitioners from various agencies/programs who are accredited to provide Levels 3, 4 and/or 5 of Triple P. The majority of child welfare parents participate in Triple P services as part of their case plan. The response from parents has been overwhelmingly positive. Many parents report that the Triple P class, in conjunction with Triple P-based coaching during supervised visits, has improved their confidence in their parenting skills. Several practitioners have shared examples of how Triple P has helped parents learn concrete and practical parenting skills, which has resulted in improved relationships with their children. The collaborative provides ongoing training to Triple P practitioners in the community.

COLLABORATIONS WITH INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE PROVIDERS

The ***Parents Center*** has been a non-profit counseling agency in Santa Cruz County since 1975, with a mission to serve families with children from birth to 18 years. The Parents Center has had a contract with FCS to provide counseling services and parent education in both North and South County to referred families since 1977. The Parents Center has also provided court ordered

supervised visitation services in both North and South County since 1982 and after-hours hotline services for the entire county for over 15 years. Parents Center and FCS meet monthly to review issues and challenges of providing services for families in the child welfare system.

Encompass Community Services provides services to many CWS families and children. The organization has served the Santa Cruz community for almost 25 years. Encompass has four service components: Child and Family Development Programs, Youth Services, Community Recovery Services, and Community Support Services. FCS contracts with Encompass to provide differential response services (discussed further below under Prevention Collaborations), as well as Independent Living Program and Transitional Housing Program-Plus services, and supportive services to AB12 youth. Encompass is a member of the System of Care and utilizes EPSDT funding to provide mental health services as a component of these programs. FCS enjoys a very close and effective collaboration with Encompass in operating these critical programs. The ILP and THP+ programs work seamlessly with FCS and have an excellent record of achieving positive outcomes for youth in the areas of education and employment. Regular meetings are held with the contractor to coordinate services and ensure that objectives are met. Encompass offers two other child abuse prevention programs in addition to Families Together. These three prevention programs are discussed below.

PREVENTION COLLABORATIONS

FCS's collaborates with Encompass Community Services to provide two child abuse prevention programs as described below:

- Families Together (FT), the Santa Cruz County differential response program, was launched a by public/private consortium that included FCS, Public Health, Children's Mental Health, First 5 and Encompass. The program was planned and designed through an intensive collaborative effort where all parties participated in the shaping and scope of the program. The program continues to collaborate closely with FCS on referrals, as all referrals to FT are received from FCS. Currently 25% of a Senior Social Worker is dedicated to assist with the engagement of referrals. Challenges do arise regarding the flow of referrals when referrals are not processed timely by FCS due to competing demands. Each time this has happened, the issue has been resolved; however, this process will continue to be monitored closely to ensure timely referrals. HSD also provides evaluation support to the program by analyzing data on the occurrence of substantiated allegations for those who have completed FT services. These data are used in evaluation reports provided to First 5 by a local evaluator.
- PAPÁS/Supporting Father Involvement, described earlier in this report, is locally funded. As noted in the service array section, the program provides multiple services centered on an evidence-based parent education model that emphasizes fathers' relationships with their children and families. Beginning in 2003, FCS spearheaded the project and was the fiscal agent for an initial OCAP grant, but since 2007 it has been fully based in the community as a program of Encompass. PAPÁS receives regular referrals from Families Together and from FCS. FCS is working towards a more formal

relationship with PAPÁS in order to share information on father progress and coordinate efforts to increase father engagement by other family serving agencies.

LOCAL TRIBES

There are no Bureau of Indian Affairs recognized tribes in Santa Cruz County. FCS is currently working towards engaging the local tribal community. However, a tribal representative from the Esselen Tribe provided feedback during the Stakeholder Kickoff meeting.

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLANNING COLLABORATION

The SIP Steering Committee was established in 2006 and has operated continuously since that time. This committee has approximately 20-25 members representing public and private stakeholders in the child welfare system. The committee is chaired by a member of the Board of Supervisors and provides ongoing oversight to the County's child welfare system improvement work. During the development of the CSA and SIP, the committee provides extensive guidance and input into the process. Once the SIP is developed, the steering committee receives quarterly updates on the progress of improvement strategy implementation and provides feedback to the Division and partners.

F. Service Array

OVERVIEW

Santa Cruz County is a community that benefits from a wide array of services. FCS and its partner providers refer families to a host of services within the community. In addition, since 2010, Santa Cruz County United Way has maintained a 211 service for access to resource and services information via the telephone. Any caller can get information 24 hours a day about local resources and supportive services. Services in the community that are regularly accessed by child welfare families include:

Child/Youth Development:

- Developmental Assessment
- Educational Support
- Independent Living Training & Support
- Children and Foster Youth Advocacy

Parenting Education:

- Purposeful (including therapeutic) Supervised Visitation
- Parenting Classes and Support Groups
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

Alcohol and Drug

- Assessment & Testing
- Outpatient Alcohol and Drug Treatment
- Inpatient/Residential Alcohol and Drug Treatment/Sober Living Environments

- Prenatal Alcohol and Drug Screening and Referral

Mental Health:

- Screening & Assessment
- Counseling (individual or group)
- Inpatient/Residential Services
- Katie A. Services

Physical Health:

- Screening & Assessment
- Public Health Nurse Home Visits
- Public Health Nurse Medical Case Management

Domestic Violence

- Shelter
- Counseling & Education
- Family Support
- Home Visits/Case Management

Economic Support and Services

- Rental Subsidies
- Transitional Housing
- Income and Basic Needs Support
- Job Search Support
- Job Training
- Benefits Application Assistance
- Food Assistance

ASSESSMENT

A variety of assessment tools are used to assist workers in ensuring that family needs are met. FCS primarily uses Structured Decision Making (SDM) Tools for internal assessments. This is a set of online assessment tools developed by the Children’s Research Center. The SDM Hotline Tools, as well as Risk and Safety Assessments, are research-based and are used to determine the level and immediacy of the initial response and as a basis for recommendations in Court reports. The Family Strengths and Needs Assessment identifies the priority needs and strengths of a family in order to build an effective case plan. After these assessments, FCS Social Workers refer the parent and/or child for comprehensive assessments in specific areas. The following is a list of the primary assessments utilized:

- **Child Mental Health:** Every new foster child/youth over the age of three who is entering out-of-home care is screened for possible mental health issues by the post-disposition social worker, using the Mental Health Screening Tool (MHST) developed by the California Institute for Mental Health. The local version has been adapted into a single tool for ages 0 – 21. Based on this screening, the social worker makes referrals to Children’s Behavioral Health. Once the referral has been received, the Mental Health intake therapist completes the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment tool to assess the well-being of children and youth, identify their strengths and needs, inform support care coordination, aid in case planning activities, and inform decisions about placement. The caregiver has the option of completing a Child Behavioral Checklist (CBCL) if desired, but the CANS is comprehensive as to include any of the CBCL concepts. If the child is 12 or older, s/he also completes an Ohio Scales (Youth version) to assess problems, functioning and satisfaction from the youth perspective.
- **Child Development:** Children under 5 whose parents are participating in the Dependency Drug Court, locally called Family Preservation court, receive an Ages and Stages Questionnaire which is a developmental screening that provides information on whether the child should be assessed for delays.
- **Neuro-Development:** When warranted, a comprehensive assessment is completed by the Stanford Neuro-Developmental Foster Care Clinic. This clinic consists of a neuro-developmental assessment team which includes a Stanford pediatric fellow and a developmental psychologist from the Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital. The clinic provides a comprehensive assessment of the social-emotional development of a young child, as well as service planning and case management. In addition, children presenting with significant developmental delays are referred to San Andreas Regional Center whose staff assesses children for profound developmental disabilities.
- **Adult Substance Abuse:** FCS social workers refer individuals who present with substance abuse issues to be assessed by Health Services Agency (HSA) Alcohol and Drug Specialists. These specialists use the Screening and Assessment for Substance Use Disorder (ASAM) Criteria to assess the presence and severity of addiction. The specialist then refers the individual to appropriate treatment, which is funded by MediCal or by CWS allocation and realignment funds. Parents who participate in Family Preservation Court, a specialized court that processes cases where drug or alcohol abuse is a significant contributing factor in child abuse or neglect, receive ongoing assessment and case management by an HSA Alcohol and Drug Specialist.
- **Adult Mental Health:** Assessments for counseling services and ongoing treatment are provided for most parents at the Parents Center, a local non-profit counseling agency that serves FCS families who reside throughout the County.
- **Adult and Child Physical Health:** A Public Health Nurse (PHN) who is an FCS employee works with children who are involved in the dependency court system and gathers medical histories from parents and medical records from providers. She then creates a medical case management plan. The FCS PHN handles all Family Maintenance cases and the HAS PHN handles all Supportive Transition (AB12) cases. Cases that are in Family Reunification and Permanency Planning may be followed by either the FCS PHN

or the HSA public health nurse who manages the medical case plan throughout the life of the case. Children are referred to local clinics and hospitals for any needed medical intervention.

- **Probation Assessments:** In the event that a dependent youth is involved with the Juvenile Justice system, probation completes the Juvenile Assessment and Intervention System (JAIS), a multidimensional assessment and supervision tool that includes a risk and needs assessment to help workers develop appropriate intervention strategies for each youth at intake. The probation placement unit reviews all assessments (such as San Andreas Regional Center assessments, mental health assessments, psychological and/or neuropsychological evaluations, substance use disorder assessments), individual learning plans and social and educational history available for appropriate level of care placement. Additionally, the placement alternative wraparound program performs an assessment of needs and risks, a mental health assessment and a thorough review of all educational records. Staff works closely with the educational system and parent/guardian(s) to identify the need for an IEP update or other assessment(s)/services if appropriate.
- **Service Provider Assessments:** Each service provider typically conducts an assessment particular to the outcome they are working to achieve with the client, for example parent education programs typically conduct assessments on parenting knowledge, skills and attitudes.

SERVICE DESCRIPTIONS

Families receive a combination of services directly provided by FCS Social Work Staff and those provided by other public agencies as well as private agencies. FCS social workers assess family needs and broker services for children and families. Numerous public and private organizations offer a wide array of services to children and families involved with FCS. Service referrals are made dependent on the needs of children and parents that are determined in the assessments mentioned above. In terms of gaps in the service array, there is a need for access to services during evenings and weekends, crisis response outside of traditional work hours, respite homes, and therapeutic foster homes.

POPULATION BASED SERVICES

Specific services are designed to serve specific ethnic or gender-based populations. These are listed and described below.

ETHNIC MINORITIES

By far, the largest ethnic/minority population in Santa Cruz County consists of Latinos. Within this group, there is also a significant monolingual Spanish-speaking population. Virtually every service provider offers culturally competent services in Spanish as well as English. Some have additional resources to provide services in other languages such as Tagalog and Mixteco. Family and Children's Services (FCS) provides child welfare assessment and case management services in English and Spanish by trained culturally competent staff. Services can be provided in other languages via translation services. Several key service providers located in the major population

centers in Santa Cruz County also provide culturally competent services to ethnic/minority populations. Community service providers specializing in minority populations are:

- **Family Resource Centers (FRC)** are centrally located in the five distinct geographical locations of the county. Each of the FRCs have trained culturally competent staff providing an easily accessible, comprehensive array of services designed to meet the unique needs of the residents in the community they serve. Each of the resource centers provides both direct services and information and referral, including parenting education, health advocacy, resource distribution, case management, counseling and community organizing/empowerment services. In southern Santa Cruz County in the city of Watsonville, where the largest numbers of Latino residents live, La Manzana FRC is housed in a central and easily accessible downtown location. Several programs are situated around a large enclosed plaza. The FRC provides legal and financial referrals, childcare access, family advocacy, support groups, parent and child counseling, assistance with public benefits applications for SSI, TANF, MediCal, Food Stamps, Healthy Families, Healthy Kids, and passport applications. Parenting education is offered through a variety of programs including Triple P, Cara y Corazon which is designed to meet the unique needs of the Latino population, Play and Learn and Renacer, a support group for parents of children with special needs. Family education services are also available, many of which are specific to the needs of Latinos such as adult Spanish literacy and English classes. In northern Santa Cruz County, Familia Center FRC is dedicated to serving low income Latino families and provides a similar wide array of services, including those designed to ease access to social services through advocacy, form and application assistance, translation assistance, information and referral and direct services such as topical and relevant education workshops, parenting education classes in Spanish (Triple P), homework clubs and recreational opportunities for children, and food distribution. All of the FRCs conduct outreach to their local communities through distribution of written material and engagement events in order to reach the underserved in their communities.
- **Substance Abuse Treatment:** Alto South Outpatient Services in Watsonville provides culturally competent, bilingual drug and/or alcohol abuse treatment services to adults. Services include individual, family and group counseling, AOD education, early sobriety, relapse prevention, anger management, and domestic violence prevention. Services are based on a sliding fee scale, but no one is denied services due to inability to pay. Si Se Puede is a residential substance abuse treatment program providing AOD services designed to be culturally sensitive to the needs of Latino men. Services include residential treatment, on-going assessment, education, aftercare and exit planning. All treatment programs within the county, including Sobriety Works, Alto, Janus, and New Life have at least one bilingual/bicultural staff member.
- **Domestic Violence:** Monarch Services offers services to end and prevent domestic violence and sexual assault by providing intervention and prevention services in a culturally sensitive way. Services are available in Spanish and include crisis intervention, emergency shelter, community education and services to children and youth. Walnut Avenue Women's Center (WAWC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving

the quality of life for women, children and families in the local community. The WAWC has full-time and volunteer advocates available to support victims of domestic violence. The advocates are trained and certified DV counselors. They offer a 24-hour bilingual domestic violence crisis hotline, one-on-one peer advocacy, legal advocacy, support groups, an emergency interim shelter, and clinical counseling. All support services are provided in English and Spanish.

- **Youth Services:** Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance (PVPSA) provides education, training, counseling and prevention services to students, families and staff of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District in Watsonville (which has a large Latino student population), with the goals of preventing criminal behavior, gang involvement, truancy, and drug, alcohol and tobacco use. With its south county location and with its bilingual, culturally competent staff, PVPSA serves a significant Latino population with bilingual, culturally competent staff. PVPSA provides alcohol, drug and tobacco prevention and education programs for youth and adults, youth and family counseling, violence prevention and intervention, community-based prevention efforts, school dropout prevention and parenting education. Barrios Unidos seeks to prevent and curtail violence among youth in Santa Cruz County by providing culturally competent, esteem enhancing and self-affirming educational activities and services for youth.
- **Father Support:** PAPÁS/ Supporting Father Involvement is a local program designed to find the most effective ways to increase father participation in families and community. PAPÁS is located in Watsonville and draws much of its client base from the local Latino population. Fathers participate in highly structured group sessions centered on activities to promote self-esteem, relationship building with the mother and child, recognizing generational family patterns, and dealing with stress and stress reduction. Fathers also receive a Family Worker who assists in brokering needed services and resources in the community.
- **Bilingual Legal Services:** The Santa Cruz County Immigration Project provides immigration legal services including naturalization, appeals, waivers, information & referral and community education & advocacy for persons legalizing under IRCA & related immigration programs. California Rural Legal Assistance serves the rural poor in Santa Cruz County with a mission to strive for economic justice and human rights on behalf of the rural poor (many of whom are ethnic/minority group members) by providing no-cost legal services and a variety of community education and outreach programs. CRLA serves individuals but also takes on multi-client cases that grapple with the root causes of poverty.
- **Community-based Health Services.** Salud Para La Gente is located in South Santa Cruz County and provides free/low cost primary health care services to the underserved populations including ethnic/minority populations in Santa Cruz County. Staff members speak a number of languages including Spanish, Tagalog, Mixteco and English. Services include medical and dental care, eye care, Obstetrics and Gynecology, elder care and community outreach.

SERVICES TO NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN

Very few children served by FCS are identified as having American Indian heritage. However, the department adheres to state law and regulation requirements for determining whether children have American Indian heritage to ensure compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). Client needs are assessed to assure that the unique needs of each child and family are met. This assessment is accomplished by direct interview of the child and family, review of available history, consultation with other agencies or individuals who have had contact with the child or family, and consultation with experts in specific topic areas.

Native TANF provides services to Native Americans residing in Santa Cruz County, offering cash assistance and supportive services to eligible needy Native American families with children in need of temporary aid and services. Services also include job preparation, employment opportunities, and other support services to increase self-sufficiency. The four purposes of the Native TANF Program are to provide assistance to needy families so their children may be cared for in their own homes, end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage, prevent and reduce out of wedlock pregnancies and encourage the formation and maintenance of two parent families. Cultural sensitivity is built into the service delivery models as Native families may be more comfortable with culturally relevant based programs which specifically address their needs.

SERVICES BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

Santa Cruz County, which is geographically the second smallest county in California (though there are many counties with smaller populations), has two social service centers located in the two largest population centers: the cities of Santa Cruz and Watsonville. Additionally, many services are provided in local Family Resource Centers strategically placed throughout the county in more localized population centers. They are the Davenport Family Resource Center serving the north coast region, Mountain Community Resource Center serving the San Lorenzo Valley and mountain communities, the La Familia FRC serving greater Santa Cruz, Live Oak FRC serving the mid-county communities, and the La Manzanita FRC serving Watsonville and the south county communities. As already mentioned, these FRCs specialize in providing many direct services to meet needs particular to the communities they serve and in easing access to resources not directly provided by the centers.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

In the summer of 2010, FCS began referring children under five with suspected developmental delays to the Stanford Neuro-Development Clinic. This service provides intensive multi-disciplinary assessment of physical, developmental and psychological needs. Additionally, FCS screens for developmental delays utilizing the ASQ assessment tool for children whose parents are participating in the Dependency Drug Court (locally called “Family Preservation Court”). For all other children, social workers may make a referral to the public health nurse who utilizes the Denver II Developmental Screening Test to assess developmental milestones/issues.

Any child served by FCS that presents with developmental delays is referred to San Andreas Regional Center for assessment for Early Start services, or Regional Center services for children with developmental disabilities as defined by the Lanterman Act. Early Start provides family-centered early intervention services for children ages 0 to 3 who have or are at risk of having

disabilities. Early Start provides assessments, counseling, and development of an individualized Family Service Plan. Regional Center Services are available for children with a (profound) disability recognized by the Lanterman Act, which usually is only applicable to children age 3 and above due to diagnostic limitations associated with younger children. Services include assessment, case management, service coordination, respite, residential placement, behavior modification and adaptive skills training case management, referrals, and follow-up at 3 months and 12 months after the initial visit.

SERVICES FOR FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE HOMELESS

FCS social workers make referrals for any families or youth on their caseload who are homeless or marginally housed and who can benefit from homeless services. The Homeless Services Center provides services to the homeless in Santa Cruz County. The Center includes several shelters, a Daytime Essential Services Center that provides meals, shower and laundry facilities, mail service, computer access, clothing, work-readiness workshops, and AA and NA meetings, and access to healthcare. Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency (HSA) provides health services to homeless or marginally housed youth, adults and families with children through the Homeless Persons Health Project (HPPH). Services may include information and referral for health, mental health, substance abuse, shelter, social services, housing benefit programs, food and other services. Families in Transition (FIT) is another service provider that specializes in serving homeless families with children. FIT provides direct housing assistance and case management and collaborates closely with FCS to serve clients involved in the child welfare system.

Santa Cruz County FCS has been implementing the Bringing Families Home (BFH) program since May 2017. The goal of BFH is to reduce the number of families in the child welfare system experiencing homelessness, increase the number of families reunifying, and to reduce foster care placements. FCS has partnered with a local homelessness services agency, Housing Matters, to implement this 2-year grant. Housing Matters provides housing case management services and housing navigation.

FCS is currently participating in a countywide effort to create a strategic plan to end homelessness in Santa Cruz County. The strategic plan will address the specific needs of unaccompanied youth and young adults and families. Multiple stakeholders from several sectors in the community are involved.

OTHER SERVICES AVAILABLE IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY INCLUDE:

- Doran Center for the Blind provides evaluation, a low vision clinic, training in daily living skills, orientation and mobility, in-home volunteer support and social activities as well as training and support groups for families and caregivers.
- Special Parents Information Network (SPIN) is a parent-to-parent organization that provides support and advocacy on behalf of families that have children of any age with special needs.

- In-Home Supportive Services provides caregiver support for aged, blind and disabled individuals, including children, to enable them to remain at home and to avoid institutional care.
- Easter Seals of Central California provides information and referral, one-on-one educational assistants, educational programs, camps, mobility training, equipment loans, support groups, social and recreational programs for children and adults.
- BALANCE4kids is a local non-profit advocacy and service organization for students with disabilities. Services include one-to-one instructional assistants, respite workers, as well as sponsoring and providing funds for enhanced school-based services for children with special needs.

PREVENTION SERVICES

A number of collaborative programs are working to prevent child abuse and neglect and these programs are detailed below.

FAMILIES TOGETHER/DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE

Families Together is the most comprehensive child abuse early intervention and prevention program in the county. This initiative, using a differential response model, is a collaborative effort between the FCS Division and Encompass Community Services. Funding from First 5, and Santa Cruz County Health Services and Human Services Departments (including CCTF, CAPIT, and PSSF Family Support) are braided together to support this program. Families Together is an essential part of the Differential Response strategy developed in Santa Cruz County to reduce recurrence of child abuse and neglect. It is an innovative program that utilizes home-based, individualized services with an emphasis on the parent-child relationship and child development and parent education. Participation in Families Together is voluntary. Family and Children's Services (FCS) refers parents and pregnant women to this program when they've been reported to FCS and the referral has been:

- assessed out
- investigated and the case has been closed and the outcome was substantiated or inconclusive.

Once a referral is identified, a FCS social worker contacts the family to engage them in voluntary community-based services. The program has been actively serving families since fall of 2007. Once the verbal consent is established, a Family Support Specialist meets with the family and works with them to determine which available services would be most beneficial to the family.

TRIPLE P

Family and Children's Services, along with many local service providers, has chosen Triple P as our primary approach to parent education. Triple P is a comprehensive, evidence-based parenting and family support system designed to: 1) Increase parents' confidence and competence in raising children; improve the quality of parent-child relationships; 2) destigmatize parenting information and family support and; 3) make evidence-based parenting information and interventions widely accessible to parents. The Triple P system consists of five levels of interventions of increasing strength including:

Level 1 – Universal (media-based parenting information campaign); Level 2 – Selected (information and advice about specific parenting concerns provided in 1-2 brief sessions or in large-group seminars); Level 3 – Primary Care (brief consultations about specific parenting concerns provided in 1-4 sessions); Level 4 - Standard or Group (intensive training in positive parenting skills, offered as 10-week sessions to individual families or 8-week group sessions); Level 5 – Enhanced or Pathways (additional modules for families where parenting difficulties are complicated by other sources of family distress (e.g., marital conflict, parental depression, anger management problems or high levels of stress).

THRIVE BY THREE

Thrive by Three (TBT) is a California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Welfare to Work (WTW) Program that provides comprehensive child abuse early intervention and prevention services to the entire county. TBT is designed to help families with young children connect with supportive home visiting programs designed to improve knowledge about child development, parent-child attachment, and safety in the home. Eligibility for TBT is based on CalWORKs participation and are for those who are pregnant, parenting children ages 0-3, and/or child welfare impacted families receiving family maintenance services. TBT is connected to four nurse home visiting programs in the county: Families Together – TBT, Early Head Start (EHS), Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) and Public Health Field Nursing (PHN) home visiting programs. This program is provided in collaboration with First 5.

PAPÁS

PAPÁS - Supporting Father Involvement (SFI), a program of Encompass Community Services, is a community based locally supported and funded, evidence-based fatherhood program. The program promotes positive father involvement and co-parenting with emphasis on developing a father friendly social services and community at large. From 2003 to 2012, PAPÁS was part of a state-wide study with a goal of fostering the positive involvement of low-income fathers in the lives of their children and families. The findings of the study demonstrated that positive father involvement was associated with children's well-being, with lower levels of behavior problems, and with reduced risk factors for child abuse and neglect.

PAPÁS currently offers networking and support groups, as well as parenting workshops for fathers and father figures in their role as caretaker, provider and role model to promote father-child connection, relationship and attachment. PAPÁS provides culturally and linguistically appropriate services that strengthen family relationships, help fathers and father figures become more involved with their children, and provide a more positive environment for children's social-emotional development. FCS social workers routinely refer fathers who have had referrals to child welfare and are found to be in need of services, but who have not had a child welfare case opened.

PREVENTION EDUCATION

In September 2008 the County Board of Supervisors designated the Children's Network as the Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) for Santa Cruz County, and contracted with United Way to provide child abuse prevention messaging to the community. The Children's Trust Fund is

used to fund these CAPC services. Each year there is an intensive community education effort in April's Child Abuse Prevention month including tabling at community events, spreading information via news media and print, publications, trainings, and social media. Information such as posters and parenting tips sheets are located at each Family Resource Center and public agencies throughout the year. The Children's Network is supported with Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds.

PREVENTION WORKGROUP

In January 2019, OCAP invited counties to begin discussions on how to increase and coordinate prevention efforts throughout the state. Santa Cruz County sent a group consisting of FCS, Juvenile Probation, Children's Behavioral Health, Public Health, First 5, County Office of Education, the Dependency Judge, Family Resource Centers (Community Bridges), and Families Together (Encompass). Since this convening, a Prevention Workgroup was established that meets monthly to coordinate prevention efforts and determine the breadth and depth of prevention-related services in the county.

INTERVENTION SERVICES

FCS provides court-ordered family maintenance services when the child can safely remain at home with the provision of these services. The family works with their FCS Social Worker who provides case management and participates in an array of services described below. However, if a child cannot remain safely at home the child is placed in out of home care and services are provided to the family to support reunification.

Services provided directly by FCS staff include: referral screening, referral investigation, dependency investigation, case planning and coordination, case management, permanency planning and adoption support. FCS coordinates a host of services implemented by other service providers which include: parent education, behavioral health services, substance abuse treatment and support, health services, intimate partner violence intervention and prevention, employment support, and housing support.

Parent Education: Several parent education models are available in the county. The three that FCS involved parents typically participate in are described below:

- **Triple P:** Parents Center, a contracted provider, now uses the Triple P evidence-based parent education model for all its parenting classes. The response to this model from both service providers and families continues to be very positive. In addition to the Triple P classes, Parents Center visit supervisors and therapists also use Triple P principles and materials in their work with FCS clients. The majority of parents in FCS are required to participate in parent education provided by the Parents Center.
- **Positive Discipline for Parents in Recovery** is a parent education model based on Adlerian theory that human behavior is motivated by the need to feel a sense of connection and significance. The basic philosophy is that children thrive when they feel a sense of connection with others. Parents in Family Preservation Court, particularly

those with older children, sometimes participate in this parent education model as it is part of the larger system of services provided for drug dependency court participants.

- **PAPÁS/ Supporting Father Involvement (SFI)**, provides evidence-based parent education, information and referral services, socialization and peer to peer networking, community education and awareness campaigns, father friendly presentations and trainings and a “Hands on Fatherhood” program. Fathers and their partners who are court involved are referred and encouraged to attend as a supplement to one of the above court mandated models. Due to the fact that parents may have to wait to attend services, it currently cannot be used as a court mandated service.

Supervised Visitation: If a child cannot remain at home, in most cases the court orders supervised visitation for the parent and child(ren). FCS contracts with a local mental health provider, Parents Center, to provide all supervised visits, with the exception of cases pending disposition, for which FCS provides a visit supervisor. Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Time Limited Family Reunification funds are used to support this contract. Parents Center employs master’s level and licensed clinicians to provide the supervised visits. The service model involves development of a visitation plan and family counseling within the supervised visit context. Parents Center has implemented a system of multiple levels of purposeful supervision, from the most intensively therapeutic to less intense mentoring/coaching interventions. Families move through these levels based on behavioral criteria observed during visits. As stated earlier, Triple P concepts that are presented in parent education classes are carried over and practiced during supervised visitation.

Substance Abuse Services: FCS collaborates with the Health Services Agency’s Substance Use Disorder Services (SUDS) program to provide substance abuse services to parents. SUDS specialists first conduct assessments with referred parents, and then make a treatment recommendation. Depending on the parent’s needs, he or she may be referred to detoxification services, methadone treatment, outpatient or inpatient treatment and/or 12 step meetings.

FCS is fortunate to have a dedicated SUDS Specialist, out- stationed at FCS, who provides direct service to FCS parents and assists them in engaging in substance abuse services. Due to funding constraints, this SUDS specialist’s target population is parents of young children. They make contact with the parents at the Detention Hearing and schedules an assessment. If substance abuse treatment is identified as a need, they assist the parent in finding appropriate treatment and engaging in that treatment. In addition to the intake process, this SUDS Specialist also provides ongoing case management and support for parents who participate in the Dependency Drug Court. This court is described below.

Family Preservation Court (Drug Dependency Court): Parents in either Family Maintenance Services or Family Reunification Services who are substance involved may participate in Family Preservation Court (Drug Dependency Court) which is a voluntary treatment court whose purpose is to assist parents in addressing their substance abuse issues in order to prevent removal of their children due to abuse or neglect, or to increase their success of family

reunification in the event that removal has already taken place. Candidates may be referred or recruited to consider participation. The service team includes a Parent Mentor who helps clarify the benefits of participation and assists the client in applying to become a part of the program. After having an opportunity to observe the Court, the candidate expresses willingness to join, and the team usually accepts the person into the program. Most participants are enrolled in the evidence-based Matrix treatment program at Sobriety Works; however, other treatment modalities are utilized, as needed. The program is one year long, and hearings are held every week. Participants attend hearings every two weeks to every two months depending on which phase of the program they are in. Requirements for graduation include 90 days sobriety, completion of parenting education, success in treatment, and compliance with a family maintenance or family reunification plan.

Mental Health Services for Children: For those children referred to Children’s Behavioral Health, an intake therapist meets individually with the child, in either a play or discussion setting, depending on the child's age. The intake therapist also meets with the caregiver to gather information on the child’s needs. The intake therapist then determines the child's level of need for behavioral health services.

Children’s Behavioral Health therapists provide individual and family therapy to children presenting with high mental health needs. Children with moderate mental health needs are referred to the Parents Center, which provides individual and family therapy for these children. Other non-profit mental health organizations also serve some FCS children with moderate mental health needs; these providers include: Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance (PVPSA), Family Services, Encompass Community Services’ Youth Services program, or other individual private providers.

Children under age 5 are referred to the Stanford Development Clinic (formerly known as the Dominican Child Development Clinic) for a complete developmental assessment as mentioned earlier. The clinic also coordinates needed services for the children and works in collaboration with FCS Social Workers to ensure these services are received.

Katie A. mental health services are provided for all children who meet the subclass criteria for these services. Child and family teams are established for these families, and the team meetings are facilitated by a mental health therapist, with participation by the FCS social worker, the family, other service providers and natural supports.

Behavioral Health Services for Parents: When children are served by Children’s Behavioral Health or Parents Center, the parents/guardians are included in the initial assessment process, as well as in ongoing treatment. However, the emphasis is on the treatment needs of the child in the context of the family, rather than on the behavioral health issues of the adult. Since a majority of children are involved with FCS because of neglect due to their parents’ dual diagnosis substance abuse/behavioral health needs, there is a strong need for direct behavioral health treatment for the parents. Santa Cruz County contracts with Parents Center to provide individual, family, and group counseling to parents involved in the child welfare system. Parents Center has limited capacity to serve families outside of the child welfare system. In general, there are no waitlists for child welfare involved parents. Since most parents also attend Triple P

parenting classes at the Parents Center and have their visits supervised by Parents Center staff, this provides an excellent opportunity for integration of counseling services with these other services using Triple P concepts.

Most parents receive their behavioral health services at the Parents Center, but two other avenues for treatment also exist:

- Adult Mental Health predominantly serves adults with a serious mental illness who are at risk of hospitalization and experience acute functional impairment. While the typical parent of a foster youth does not necessarily have a major diagnosis such as schizophrenia, those who do can be served by Adult Mental Health for their treatment needs.
- For parents who are MediCal beneficiaries but do not meet the acute target population above, HSA Mental Health can refer to individual panel providers for treatment, as well as provide treatment by a number of county clinicians through Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) funding.

Intimate Partner Violence: The Walnut Avenue Women’s Center and Monarch Services provide services for victims of intimate partner violence. Through crisis counseling, safe shelter, legal assistance and advocacy, these organizations help victims of intimate partner violence and sexual assault to become survivors and repair their lives. Perpetrators of intimate partner violence have historically been referred to New View Learning Center which provides the traditional 52-week group. However, Monarch Services has embarked on a new treatment program called Positive Solutions. This program has an evidence-base that is focused on changing abusive patterns and building healthy relationships. Positive Solutions provides tools to stop abusive behavior, develops an appreciation of emotions, and changes the attitudes that have contributed to abusive behavior. This program launches spring 2020 and FCS will begin to refer clients.

Financial, Employment, and Housing Services: During Emergency Response investigations, social workers provide outreach information to inform parents about the CalWORKs, MediCal, and CalFRESH programs. Parents are referred to Santa Cruz County’s CalWORKs program, which provides temporary financial assistance and employment services to economically disadvantaged families with dependent children. FCS social workers and CalWORKs eligibility workers coordinate case plans for parents who are co-enrolled in both child welfare services and CalWORKs. Parents with housing needs are referred to a local housing support organization, Families in Transition (FIT) which provides transitional housing assistance, Section 8 vouchers, and other forms of support to help families achieve stable housing and self-sufficiency. Another program to address housing is Bringing Families Home (BFH) which is focused on reducing the number of families in the child welfare system experiencing homelessness, increase the number of families reunifying, and to reduce foster care placements. BFH has housed more than 20 families for the last 2 years and has applied for additional funding to expand the program.

Housing Services for Foster Youth: The *Transitional Voucher Program (TVP)* is a joint program of Encompass Community Services’ Transition Age Youth (TAY) Program and the Santa Cruz Housing Authority. Through TVP, the Housing Authority provides eight Section 8 Family Reunification

Vouchers to a small number of participants, ages 18-21. The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher allows ILP participants to secure private housing in the community and receive federal assistance in paying their rent for up to 18 months. To help participants be successful in their new housing and ultimately transition to paying for housing on their own, TAY Coordinators provide counseling, support, and empowerment to TVP participants in accessing resources and learning new skills.

In addition the **Transitional Housing Program Plus (THP Plus)** is a supportive housing program that serves former foster and probation youth between the ages of 18-24. The program can serve up to 13 youth per month. THP Plus participants receive assistance securing independent housing in the community and meet regularly with their THP Plus Coordinators to work on independent living goals for a maximum period of 24 months. Throughout this process, participants receive financial assistance with rent, utilities, food and educational expenses while also saving money for when they leave the program. They also receive emotional support, life skills coaching, and connections to valuable community resources. Eligible participants have emancipated from the foster care system or an out of home probation placement and have some form of income to maintain housing as program subsidies decrease.

Transitional Housing Plus – Foster Care (THP+FC) is a placement option which became available for Non-minor Dependents with the passage of AB12. Santa Cruz County has two programs currently, a scattered site program run by Encompass and a single site program run by a local group home. There are several programs in adjoining counties and throughout the state in which Santa Cruz County NMDs could be placed. Another placement option enabled with the enactment of AB12 is the **Supported Independent Living Placement (SILP)** which allows youth to receive a monthly grant in support of their living independently in situations like shared housing, apartments and college dorms.

Health Services are provided by local medical providers such as the Health Services Agency, California Children’s Services, community clinics, private physicians, and local hospitals. A south county clinic, Salud Para La Gente, previously mentioned, provides low-cost medical services to low income residents who are largely Latino.

Family Resource Centers (FRC) are centrally located in the five distinct geographical locations of the county. Each of the resource centers provide both direct services and information and referral, including youth advocacy, parenting education, healthcare access, resource distribution, case management, counseling, tutoring, foster family support and community organizing/empowerment services.

Independent Living Services for Foster Youth: The **Independent Living Program (ILP)** is a state mandated program and the County has been contracting with Encompass Community Services since July 2001 for ILP services. The program assists current and former foster and probation placement youth aged 15-21 to develop independent living skills and achieve educational/vocational goals to successfully transition to self-sufficiency. ILP services include individualized assessments, one-on-one counseling, tutoring, and weekly workshops at Cabrillo College on topics such as money management, personal health, finding independent housing, and obtaining financial aid for college. The **Independent Living Resource Center** provides youth a central location to get resources and support from ILP staff. The Resource Center assists

current and former foster and probation placement youth ages 15-24 in building the skills, self-esteem, and support system necessary to make a successful transition to independent living in the community. Center staff assist youth to obtain jobs, register for college, enroll in vocational training, find housing, learn budgeting skills, and make healthy decisions and choices for their futures. The Resource Center is equipped with a cozy living room, kitchen, laundry facility, and computer lab. The center also offers free tutoring services, counseling services, food and clothing donations, as well as a hot meal. Most importantly, the center is a safe place to go, and gain support from peers and ILP case managers.

In addition to the avenues that are available to all students through the educational system, such as Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and school tutoring programs, youth are supported by their Child and Family Team which includes their social worker, clinician ILP coordinator and any other identified support person, such as a resource parent, extended family or a CASA. This team works collaboratively with each other to ensure that the educational needs of the youth are being met. Specifically, ILP offers workshops in completing financial aid applications for college, assistance in completing college applications, and tutoring services. As always, youth can also receive individual assistance as needed. For youth attending Cabrillo, ILP also offers book vouchers.

Both Cabrillo and UCSC have well-established organizations that provide supportive services to former foster youth attending these colleges. At Cabrillo, it is the Guardian Scholars program and at UCSC it is the Smith Renaissance Society. ILP has a strong collaborative relationship with both programs.

Concrete Supports: FCS utilizes a flex fund for tangible, concrete supports for families receiving child welfare services. The contract is supported by Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Family Preservation funds. Concrete supports, such as rental deposits, furniture, or payment for after-school activities, assist families in need with open child welfare cases. 4Kids Foundation, a non-profit foundation, provides one-time basic needs assistance in areas of education, health and wellbeing for children and young adults birth through 20 years old. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) also assist with concrete supports for children and youth.

PERMANENCY SERVICES

Santa Cruz County FCS provides case management services to children and families by assigning a social worker who manages the case from detention through family reunification and to permanency planning and adoption. The hope is this will increase the focus on concurrent planning and permanency throughout the life of the case and result in improved and more rapid permanent outcomes for children in foster care.

ADOPTION SERVICES

Santa Cruz County FCS provides case management services for FR and PP cases in order to support the permanency of children in foster care. A case will be assigned to a social worker who will manage the case from detention through family reunification and to permanency

planning and adoption. Staff in ongoing services are now adoptions social workers. FCS has specialized social workers who provide adoption home studies and AAP post-adoption services.

Adoption Promotion and Support: FCS uses Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Adoption Promotion and Support funds to contract with a group of local therapists who provide pre- and post-adoption counseling to caregivers, with a goal of supporting them to make a lifetime commitment to the children in their care.

G. Quality Assurance System

Quality assurance refers to the overall system of quality, including identifying and documenting how to assure and improve quality processes and outcomes. Quality control is an important part of quality assurance, and it refers to the activities and observations that are required by the quality assurance plan in order to evaluate processes and outcomes for improvement. FCS undertakes regular case reviews, uses SafeMeasures as a key method of quality control and to review compliance, and reviews performance indicators.

In 2007 FCS adopted a comprehensive quality assurance policy and procedure that provided a background on quality assurance, identified eight key principles of quality and how each principle is linked to child welfare outcomes, incorporated the Council of Accreditation Standards of Practice and the Child Welfare League of America Standards of Excellence, and outlined quality control measures. The outcome was to ensure that children are in a safe and stable setting. Fundamental elements of this procedure, and the status of their implementation, are defined below.

California began implementing ***CFSR qualitative case reviews*** in 2015, as part of a federally mandated requirement. At that time, Santa Cruz started building its case review team and subsequently began conducting reviews in early 2016. The child welfare case review team consists of the unit manager/supervisor (who conducts the first level Quality Assurance on all reviews), two full-time case reviewers, and the unit's administrative aide who provides support to the process. Case reviews take a comprehensive approach to assessing quality of social work practice and what concerted efforts were made to address the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. Safety outcomes look at whether children are protected from abuse and neglect, and whether they are safely maintained in their homes when possible. Permanency outcomes are related to stability of children in their living situations and continuity of family connections. Well-being focuses on concerted efforts to provide/connect children and families to the appropriate services such as those with special needs.

Recommendations for ***new/revised policies or procedures*** are brought to the Leadership Team in FCS, which assigns a workgroup with an analyst as lead and a manager as the program expert. All completed policies are approved by the Division Director and posted online. A user-friendly Online Practice Guide (OPG) was launched in 2010 and is used for both training and ongoing reference.

State All County Letters, All County Information Notices, County Fiscal Letters, and County Fiscal Information Notices provide official information on how to operationalize new or revised laws

and regulations. The relevant letters are reviewed by the Division Director, who assigns each letter to be reviewed as needed.

A fundamental way that Santa Cruz County ensures service delivery for children who are at risk of abuse or neglect is by use of **Structured Decision-Making Risk and Safety Assessment and Family Strengths and Needs Assessment tools**. Santa Cruz has fully implemented the tools and the department relies upon their use to ensure appropriate families have access to services and families who don't currently meet criteria, but may in the future, are referred to the County's differential response program, Families Together. Trauma needs are included in these screening tools and the department offers families the appropriate level of intervention and support.

One important mechanism for implementing a quality assurance system is to be able to analyze key data elements in a timely manner. **SafeMeasures** is a sophisticated quality assurance reporting service that allows supervisors and managers to access useful and timely information. It provides a mechanism to ensure the needs of infants, toddlers, and youth are being met. SafeMeasures captures data from CWS/CMS and SDM databases and links these data elements to key performance standards. Key personnel have been trained to use this resource for everyday caseload assessment. Consistent use of SafeMeasures is now an element in each supervisor's and manager's evaluation and has led to more consistent use of this powerful tool. Most social work staff have expressed that they appreciate how SafeMeasures details compliance for certain data elements because it allows them to immediately address data concerns.

Regular performance indicator **data reviews** include: (a) The HSD Planning and Evaluation unit compiles a monthly dashboard of key program and performance indicators. The FCS director and assistant director review this dashboard with the HSD director and at monthly meetings with the Department leadership team; (b) the Division Director and analyst review the quarterly state reports on performance indicators; (c) Business Analytics generates monthly reports to assist specific supervisors and managers to monitor aspects of service delivery; and (d) outcomes data are reviewed periodically with the Division supervisor team.

For children with Native American heritage and who are removed from their parents, the **Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)** provides important rights to the tribe when determining permanency. FCS has assigned one worker, the Court Officer, with specialized training to notice the tribes (or all tribes, if the specific tribe is not known, or the Bureau of Indian Affairs, if the type of heritage is not known) and receive the response. County Counsel double checks this process. There is a specific updated policy and procedure for ICWA compliance to ensure social work staff understand notice requirements as well as how to appropriately engage tribes when a child falls within the purview of ICWA.

Multi Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA), the federal law that prohibits racial profiling in placement and adoptions. The FCS MEPA policy is in compliance with federal law and social workers, including permanency workers, are familiar with it.

Any time a foster child/youth in Santa Cruz County is prescribed **psychotropic medications**, the prescribing doctor (typically, one of two County Health Services Agency (HSA) psychiatrists) prepares a JV-220 application which is filed with the court to authorize the use of these medications. All information regarding JV-220s is entered into CWS/CMS by the FCS Public Health Nurse.

In addition, the Public Health Nurse maintains a spreadsheet tracking the following information: Name, age, and gender of the child for whom the medication is prescribed, a list of each prescribed medication including dosage, condition being treated, and the name of the prescribing doctor, child/youth's placement type, the child/youth's diagnoses, and the end date for the current authorization.

This allows us to have an up-to-the-minute snapshot of how many foster children served by FCS are being prescribed psychotropic medications at a given time. At the time of this writing, psychotropic medications have been authorized for about 10% (27 of the 259 children/youth currently in foster care through Santa Cruz County) of our foster care population.

Plans are in place for meetings between County Children's Mental Health, Family and Children's Services, and HSA psychiatry to review all processes related to the identification, assessment, and treatment of children for whom the use of psychotropic medications is considered.

The FCS **concurrent planning policy** assists social workers in the steps needed to immediately involve parents and extended family members in identifying the most appropriate placement, with the recognition that it may become the permanent placement if efforts at reunification fail. This policy was updated in 2010 and is consistent with the other permanency efforts underway as outlined in the Case Review section of this document.

By law, each foster child 16 and over is required to have a **Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP)** to identify transition issues and supportive services. FCS policy specifies that any youth 15 and up is required to receive a TILP. Post-dispo supervisors use SafeMeasures each month to print a list of all youth in foster care who are 14 or older. Case-carrying workers are responsible for working with the youth to complete the TILP, which is attached to the court report. The TILP is also used as a basis for assigning the youth to an Independent Living Program Coordinator to receive transition supports and services.

By federal law, **Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)** need to be considered by the court for all children who have been in out of home care for 15 of the last 22 calendar months unless there are compelling reasons not to terminate parental rights. At the 12 month permanency hearing the court considers what the permanent plan should be for the child. If the court finds there is not a substantial probability for return to a parent, the court then ends FR services and sets a 366.26 hearing within 90 days to consider a permanent plan, including whether parental rights should be terminated. Compelling reasons are included in the court report. Parents are advised at the beginning of the case that reunification may not be feasible, depending on their progress meeting case plan objectives. As indicated in the Case Review section of this document, the department's focus on termination of parental rights has shifted substantially since 2008. All social workers have received training regarding the benefits to the child of termination of parental rights in cases where reunification has failed.

Additionally, since there has been significant improvement in resources to support identifying forever families for children, the number of cases making “compelling reason” arguments for not terminating rights is likely to diminish over time. However, as stated in the Case Review section of this document, the department still has significant work to do with respect to educating court partners regarding the desirability of adoption as the most appropriate permanent plan if reunification efforts fail.

CSFR Quality Case Review and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Santa Cruz has a slightly unique set up for the Federally mandated CSFR quality case reviews in that the case review team is part of a larger Quality Improvement (QI) unit that is situated in the Planning & Evaluation (P&E) division, not the child welfare division. P&E consists of three units that work collaboratively with all the program divisions. Each staff focuses on a specific social service program (benefits, employment services, IHSS, child welfare), conducting reviews and collaborating with program on quality improvement efforts. Staff are considered subject matter experts in their respective areas. Santa Cruz began conducting the CSFR case reviews in April 2016 and in 2017, Santa Cruz became one of the 23 counties identified as a PIP county to have some of the county’s reviews included as part of the Federal review of the State. Starting in June 2017, Santa Cruz has had an average of 1-3 cases selected each quarter that are included in the Federal review of the State. This means that these cases receive both secondary QA by CDSS, as well as a final review by the Administration of Families and Children (ACF) and are included as part of the PIP measurement.

Since April 2016, a total of 123 reviews (92 out of home reviews and 31 in home reviews) have been completed, averaging about 35 reviews per year.

In FFY 18/19, the team completed 35 reviews of which:

- 6 were reviewed as in-home cases and 29 as out-of-home cases.
- 10 reviews (7 in-home, 3 out-of-home) were PIP cases and received State and Federal level QA.
- While out-of-home probation cases are included in the sample, there were no probation cases reviewed in this time period. All 35 reviews were of child welfare cases.

In addition to reviewing documentation in CWS/CMS, the court files, and the case files, these case reviews require that all key stakeholders for the period under review (PUR) be interviewed. A total of 153 interviews were conducted on these 35 reviews, which included:

- 14 Child/Youth interviews
- 11 Mother interviews
- 10 Father interviews
- 63 Case Worker interviews
- 10 Supervisor interviews
- 26 Resource Parent interviews
- 19 Other interviews (CASA, counselor, placement staff, PHN, foster FFA social worker)

The CSFR qualitative case reviews is a key component to CQI for Santa Cruz County and as such, concerted efforts have been made since 2015 to find ways to use case review data, themes, concepts to improve practice.

As a first step, in 2015, Santa Cruz focused on engaging child welfare staff and partners in understanding what case review is, the process, and some of the concepts that would represent a new way of assessing the work. The QI manager made the rounds meeting with child welfare managers, supervisors and all units, as well as partners such as probation, CASA, children’s behavioral health, and court partners. Focusing on ensuring that everyone was aware of why this new mandate was starting, how the work was being assessed and their part (if any) in case reviews, was key to strengthening the support and engagement that was needed to make the process successful.

In 2016, once the case review team was fully staffed and reviews began, Santa Cruz began developing ways to report on the results of reviews and use the information to inform improvement ideas. The following are some of the projects/efforts that have been implemented:

- **Social Worker Induction Training:** Since 2016, the case review team regularly participates in new social worker induction training, facilitating a module on Outcomes & Accountability with a focus on the case review process.
- **SIT Tour:** In 2017, the case review team developed and facilitated SIT Tour (Share, Inquire & Think) as a way to engage staff in a dialogue about case review concepts and develop improvement ideas. The team facilitated a multiple step process over several months that focused on two key case review items, explored what was working well and areas needing improvements, compiled a list of improvement ideas, and worked with staff to prioritize ideas based on impact and feasibility. The process resulted in 5 top ideas, one of which resulted in a workgroup and implementation of the improvement idea (next bullet).
- **New Safety Plan/Action Plan:** As a result of the SIT Tour, in mid- 2018 the case review team supported the division in facilitating a workgroup to update their safety plan template and create an additional “action plan” template to clearly delineate safety versus risk and address each accordingly. This effort was directly tied to implementing a quality improvement idea for case review outcomes. The workgroup developed, piloted and fully implemented the new documents in August 2018. The feedback has been positive, and we anticipate seeing the impact on case review Safety outcomes in late 2019 – early 2020.
- **Fatherhood Engagement:** In 2018, the lead manager for the Fatherhood Engagement Council, an effort lead by the child welfare division to explore and improve father engagement, reached out to QI to see what kind of engagement data might be available through the case review data. The QI manager and the one of the reviewers conducted a deep dive and presented a summary analysis to the council. The information was then presented by the council to the child welfare managers, the all division staff, the SIP Steering committee and to HSD leadership (which included directors of other divisions).
- **Quarterly Highlights & Tips:** In April 2019, the case review team issued their first Quarterly Highlights as another way to engage staff in understanding case reviews and outcomes that focuses on specific items and highlights actual case examples that rate as strengths. To

date, three quarterly highlights have been shared, each focusing on a different item, and includes “tips” that outline key elements that contribute to a strength rating. The quarterly highlight is shared via email (and posted on our intranet) with additional information about the overall data for the most recent year.

Another way Santa Cruz uses case review information is to have someone from the case review team participate in ongoing steering committees and workgroups. Currently, this includes representation in the following:

- SIP Steering Committee
- SOP Implementation Group and workgroups
- CFT Steering Committee and workgroups
- Father Engagement Council

CAPIT, CBCAP, and PSSF

Santa Cruz County ensures effective fiscal and program accountability for the CAPIT, CBCAP, and PSSF vendor/contractor services in the following manner:

- ***Families Together:*** Children’s Trust Fund, CAPIT and PSSF funds are contracted out to support Families Together, a child abuse prevention program, and the differential response program in Santa Cruz County. The contractor provides bi-annual electronic and written reports to the county on their progress toward specified objectives. Progress toward meeting service objectives is used to determine quality and to indicate any strengths or weaknesses of the program. A program manager from FCS meets quarterly with the contractor to determine a strategy for addressing any concerns, and to ensure that any necessary corrective action was implemented. Client satisfaction is evaluated through the use of an exit interview and an anonymous client satisfaction survey provided after case closure. An annual participation survey is completed by the contractor and submitted to the program analyst for inclusion in the OCAP annual report.
- ***Children’s Network of Santa Cruz County:*** CBCAP funds are contracted out to provide support for the activities of the Children’s Network of Santa Cruz County, the local children’s services coordinating council and the Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC). The Children’s Network submits an annual report of their activities to an FCS analyst, who monitors the contract to determine that support and technical assistance is provided to the Children’s Network members as needed.
- ***CWS Flex Fund:*** PSSF funds are utilized to provide flexible funding to meet emergency needs for families. All requests for funds are reviewed and approved by the FCS Analyst prior to being submitted to the Fiscal for payment. Requests are evaluated for need and relevance to the family’s case plan objectives. Fiscal accountability and oversight are maintained by the county Auditor’s office.
- ***Adoption Promotion and Support:*** PSSF funds are contracted out to provide counseling services to potential adoptive families and post-adoptive families. All referrals for

adoption promotion and support services are followed up by an analyst to ensure that the family received services. Client satisfaction pre and post surveys are used to determine if services met the needs of the adoptive family. Program effectiveness is monitored by an analyst, who reviews the number of disrupted adoptive placements in SafeMeasures quarterly. Any areas of concern are addressed in regular meetings with the contractor. An annual participation survey is completed by the contractor and submitted to the program analyst for inclusion in the OCAP annual report.

- **Supervised Visitation:** A portion of FCS therapeutic supervised visitation program is supported with PSSF funds. The contracted service provider submits a written report summarizing the activity of each visit. Written reports are reviewed monthly by an FCS analyst and general qualitative feedback is given to the contractor. Client satisfaction is assessed during monthly contact between the FCS social worker and the family. Any concerns are reported to the Ongoing FCS program managers, who meet monthly with the contractor to discuss any program issues, strategize for any required program changes and ensure corrective action was implemented. The contractor submits an annual participation survey to the program analyst for inclusion in the OCAP annual report.

PROBATION DEPARTMENT

The Santa Cruz County Probation Department operates under the mandates of the Juvenile Delinquency Court and with the Court's support, has embraced the use of alternatives aimed at the reduction in population and racial and ethnic disparities within the juvenile detention facility and justice system while maintaining community safety. As a national model site for detention reform and disproportionate minority confinement/contact, the Probation Department maintains a number of indicators and has implemented protocols as a means of quality assurance and for program utilization and oversight. Probation managers and some unit supervisors meet to review the detention population weekly, examining each youth's length of stay, ensure compliance with any interim court orders and explore the use of detention alternatives (pre and post-adjudication) and services for youth directly filed as an adult in court with lengthy stays in detention. The meeting also addresses transitional independent living plans as applicable to youth who may be transitioning from an STRTP and returning home. If it is determined a youth will be returning to an independent living situation then paperwork is immediately prepared by the Placement Supervisor to initiate the process of acquiring additional funding and other resources earmarked specific to this population. Additionally, the detention status and appropriateness are reviewed pertaining to any cross-system youth (youth involved with Children's Mental Health and/or Family and Children's services).

Specific statistical data for each caseload is updated and reviewed monthly. This data includes but is not limited to total of number of youth per caseload by race and ethnicity, total number or reports and detention assessments completed by officer, youth recidivism, recidivism while pending court, failures to appear for court, length of stay in detention, average daily population in detention and by program, program outcome data, probation violations by type and detention Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI) overrides. All indicators are disaggregated by gender and race/ethnicity. This data depicts program/service utilization and is often used to

examine the probation department's decision-making points for continual improvements and to drive departmental policy and procedures for improved processes and outcomes for youth. For example, a high override rate existed when the decision of a detention RAI override rested with probation supervisors. A change in policy was developed and implemented to have the decision made by a manager, which resulted in a reduction in detention override rate and an increased utilization of detention alternative services.

Additionally, the average daily population of youth in foster care and institutional placements is monitored closely to ensure fiscal targets, to examine program success by proximity and seeks to examine any potential racial and ethnic disparities. Unit indicators such as the monthly program cost, length of stay, length of stay in detention from disposition to placement, proximity of program, offense history and completion type/outcome data, all disaggregated by gender and race/ethnicity are tracked and reviewed monthly. In the event that an out of state placement is being considered by the Court or probation, approval is obtained through the County Multi-Disciplinary team prior to making such recommendation to the court.

The Placement Screening Committee serves as a formal quality assurance process that ensures youth are placed in the least restrictive environment, considering community safety and repairing the harm of victims and to review that community interventions have been offered and tried. This review process is the discretionary entry point for foster care and institutional placements as a recommendation stemming from probation and family participation in a multi-disciplinary committee. A probation officer brings a youth/family before this committee when considering removal from the home or intensive placement alternative services. Recommendations by the committee are examined and analyzed monthly and compared with Court outcomes for each youth participating in the committee process. A probation manager participates and monitors all recommendations from the committee.

As a formal quality assurance process within the juvenile division of probation there is a service utilization review and evaluation meeting that occurs every other month to review key program utilization and unit indicators, fiscal oversight and to examine trends or problem areas recognized through data review. This is a proactive process by managers as efforts to problem solve or make programmatic and/or fiscal adjustments if needed.

Santa Cruz County Probation in consultation with Children's Mental Health seeks to resume regular System of Care review meetings involving justice system partners as Children's Mental Health, County Office of Education – Alternative Education, Division of Alcohol and other Drugs and occasionally Family and Children's Services. Programs and services will be reviewed to include data indicators, review of fidelity to program models, implementation of evidence-based practices, program census review and brainstorming surrounding system improvements or program enhancements.

The probation department also utilizes a case management system to meet the department's needs of data collection, review and report building. Additionally, an updated risk assessment instrument has been implemented in the juvenile and adult divisions to aid in assessing appropriate levels of supervision. The department is also making strides to use the prescripts of

Trauma Informed Care to facilitate the process of developing case plans and appropriating services to improve outcomes.

Critical Incident Review Process

If there is a determination that a child died or could have died due to abuse or neglect in Santa Cruz County, FCS takes the following steps:

- The screener along with the screening supervisor/manager reviews CWS/CMS to determine whether FCS is currently or has been in the past, involved with the family. If yes, the supervisor/manager reviews all documentation to:
 - Determine if any other children are at risk in the situation and respond appropriately.
 - Determine who is involved in the life of the child that may need to be notified and provided with support resources.
 - Determine what staff members have worked with the child/family that may need to be notified and provided with support resources.
- Inform the court of the unknown circumstances (if the child is a dependent).
- Make contact with the pertinent law enforcement jurisdiction.
- Make contact with the pertinent medical professionals.
- Maintain open channels of communication with all persons involved in the investigation into the death/near death.
- Assess the case, through review of documentation and interviews with staff, to determine whether or not staff acted in accordance with FCS policies and procedures while working with the family.
- Assess FCS policies and procedures against the facts of the case to determine whether there are any changes needed to further support practices that help determine the presence or lack of child safety in their living situations.
- The Investigations Manager will ensure that a SOC826 (Child Fatality/Near Fatality County Statement of Findings and Information) is immediately filed with DCSS, in accordance with state policy.
- The Investigations Manager will attend the county's Child Death Review Team Meetings which are facilitated by the Sheriff's Office. The meetings are held quarterly with the District Attorney's Office, all the local law enforcement jurisdictions, local hospital staff, probation, County of Education and the County Coroner's Office in attendance. Any and all children who have died in the county during that time period are discussed. The review team ultimately comes up with recommendations in hopes of preventing a similar child death.
- The Investigations Program Manager will confirm all information sent to CDSS in this regard on a quarterly basis.

Peer Review and Focus Group Results

Overview & Focus Area

As part of the Santa Cruz C-CFSR process, numerous focus group sessions and a Peer Review process were conducted with stakeholders from both Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation during the summer of 2019. Both efforts elicited input into the strengths and obstacles facing both Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation in terms of the C-CFSR focal outcome P1: achieving permanency within twelve months. Specific ideas suggested by stakeholders for system improvement are also included.

Method

Distinct stakeholder groups were identified as important contributors to the C-CFSR focus group process and targeted for participation. Across both Child Welfare and Probation, a total of 103 participants contributed their input over the course of 20 focus group sessions. Participants represented multiple aspects of the Child Welfare and Probation systems, from birth parents and youth, to staff and management, to courts and public partners:

Child Welfare Focus Groups <i>52 total participants</i>	Juvenile Probation Groups <i>23 total participants</i>
CW Supervisors (9)	JPD Supervisors (4)
CW Line Workers (10)	JPD Probation Officers (7)
CW Support Staff (7)	JPD Parents (3)
CW Youth (5)	JPD Youth (4)
CW Parents (4)	Juvenile Justice Court (5)
CW Resource Families (9)	
Dependency Court (8)	
Serve Both CW & JPD Clients <i>28 total participants</i>	
Service Providers (26)	
Education (2)	

A specific question set was developed for each focus group, designed to elicit that particular group’s perspective and experience. During the session, questions about strengths, services, and barriers to success for CWS and Juvenile Probation families, children, and youth and recommendations for improvement were explored. The inquiry focused on factors influencing the P1 – Permanency in 12 months (children entering foster care) CFSR-3 measure. Focus groups were scheduled for 60-90 minutes and were held at different community locations including both North and South County to accommodate stakeholder participation.

A four-day Peer Review (August 12-15, 2019) process was conducted following the standard schedule of case interviews involving Child Welfare, Juvenile Probation and CQI representatives

from seven peer counties. Daily debriefs, sessions to prioritize findings and peer sharing provided a broad spectrum of feedback for Santa Cruz county.

Findings

The results of each focus group were analyzed individually with attention paid to the strengths, challenges and solutions identified by participants. Themes were drawn across multiple focus groups, highlighting key overarching topics and viable strategies. Likewise, findings and conclusions from the peer review were organized into similar themes.

Each theme is summarized in the findings below, supported by specific inputs, observations and suggestions. The findings from Child Welfare are outlined first, followed by the findings from Juvenile Probation. As with all peer review activity, these findings may not be generalizable to the patterns of the system as a whole, rather are indicators of experiences of those who participated in the focus groups and peer review process.

Child Welfare Findings

FAMILY & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Engagement of youth and families in all aspects of case planning is becoming a core practice for social workers. Continuing to strengthen use of engagement behaviors by workers and other team members (e.g., caregivers, service providers, parent partners) for consistency is needed. (Bio Parents, Dependency Court, Providers, Resource Families, Social Workers, Supervisors, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- Many SWs are very skilled at engagement and trust building with bio families.
- Growing involvement of fathers in case planning; father friendly services.
- Good engagement of family and youth voice and choice in CFT meetings, especially early in case process. Reduction in number of contested hearings is evidence of better engagement of bio parents.
- Strong practice of involving AB12 and ILP youth in case planning and other decisions affecting their lives.

Challenges

- More attention is often given to engaging mothers than fathers.
- Lack of emphasis on supporting resource parents to engage bio parents in a helping/mentoring relationship—only pursued when bio parent is cooperative.
- Engagement efforts need emphasis at all stages of case (e.g., ensure bio parents understand the court system and case plan objectives).

Potential Solutions

- Reinforce use of engagement behaviors by all social workers and other team members including caregivers, service providers and parent partners

“[Many] parents are grateful for involvement of CPS...even though initially it was difficult, overall the experience changed their family’s life for the better.”

—Provider—

- Utilize the crisis of initial referral and provision of concrete supports to increase family participation and follow-through.
- Improve engagement of parents to help them better understand and navigate the court process:
 - Increase number of parents’ attorneys (only two serving County currently)
 - Post-hearing debriefs with bio parents by social worker and/or Parent Partner to help ensure parents leave court with full understanding of outcome and implications

PLACEMENT

Findings about placement span a range of topics including placement capacity for youth with complex needs, placement matching, supporting caregivers, and resource family recruitment and approval.

Placement Capacity for Youth with Complex Needs

Consistent efforts are made to find relative placements for youth whenever possible, however, finding available, suitable placements for youth with complex needs continues to be an area needing concerted attention. (Bio Parents, Dependency Court, Providers, Resource Families, Social Workers, Supervisors, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- State now has dedicated position to monitor STRTP openings statewide.

Challenges

- Few family-based placement options for youth with intensive needs.
- Lack of STRTP placements within county, few across the state.
- No warning of some group home closures have resulted in staff scrambling to find new, suitable placement for displaced youth.

“Many group homes closed without becoming STRTP resources, so the overall capacity to care for kids with intensive needs is greatly reduced locally and across the state.”

—Social Worker—

Potential Solutions

- More training and support for resource families interested in caring for youth with complex needs.
- Develop and support more “therapeutic homes” for youth with intensive needs.
- Recruit and pay a premium for “transition homes” to care for youth exiting psychiatric hold, Juvenile Hall, STRTP placements.
- Develop a specific resource family recruitment campaign for targeted youth populations such as TAY, CSEC, SOGIE, etc.

Placement Matching

There is strong emphasis on securing relative placements for youth whenever possible, yet criteria for placement matching efforts needs clarification. (Bio Parents, Dependency Court, Resource Families, Social Workers, Supervisors, Support Staff, Youth)

Strengths

- Increasing focus on placement of children and youth with relatives or NREFMs—emphasis on keeping children connected to their extended family and culture.
- Good consideration of bio parent input in placement matching decisions.

Challenges

- Insufficient pool of available resource families impacts quality of matching.
- Lack of shared agreement by RFA and line staff as to the operational definition of a “good” placement match. Discrepancies among staff and supervisors about what constitutes a home being a viable option for placement matching:
 - family’s successful completion of the resource family approval process vs.
 - readiness for receiving a particular placement vs.
 - appropriateness as ‘permanent home’ for a specific child
- Balancing dilemmas in placement decisions (e.g., reluctance to change the placement that occurred early on, despite changing needs of child; push for local placements for children under age 3 to support frequent visitation, despite out of county relatives)

Potential Solutions

- Establish objective matching criteria based on best interest of the child (e.g., preference for relatives, healthy connections, commitment to permanency, focus on child well-being) and ensure transparency to guide placement decisions.
- Enhance teamwork between RFA staff, social workers and supervisors to optimize placement matching by aligning minimum certification requirements with child-specific caregiving expectations.

Supporting Caregivers

While FCS strongly values and demonstrates support for caregivers, a more consistent and placement-specific emphasis on training, support and guidance is needed. (Dependency Court, Education, Providers, Resource Families, Social Workers, Supervisors, Support Staff, Youth)

Strengths

- Strong array of pre-service training for resource families, including availability of bi-lingual training.
- FCS props up caregivers in a variety of ways, including support services, social/learning events, Facebook page, and Manzanita Center.
- RFA mentors are a valuable resource, especially for new RFA parents.

Challenges

- Inconsistency in supportive practices leads to resource family retention issues:
 - Lack of regular communications, role clarity, follow-through on expected supports/services, after hours crisis response.
 - Resource parents’ own children don’t receive support or therapeutic services for secondary trauma related to foster child placement.
- New resource parents need more realistic preparation with ongoing training and support during placement:
 - RFA overemphasizes pre-service preparations and neglects ongoing training activities.
 - Lack of clear guidance about information-sharing and confidentiality regarding the caregiver and others involved in the case.

- Need to adapt training, support, therapeutic intervention for relative caregivers to better fit their special relationship with bio family.
- Resource parents underutilize Office of Education mileage stipend available for transporting foster youth to and from school.

Potential Solutions

- Expand opportunities for ongoing training and skill building to resource families during placement:
 - Expand trauma-informed and youth-specific skill building for providing quality care to youth with special needs (e.g., medically fragile, intensive behavioral needs, parenting teens).
 - Provide specialized training and support groups for caregivers of transition-aged youth, transgender youth, AB12 youth.
 - Bring back SPARK (Supporting Parents and Reaching Kids) training for caregivers or something similar.
 - Offer focused skill building on attachment/separation, handling post-visit reactions, grief and loss related to placement transitions, advocating for child’s educational needs, etc.
- Increase supportive activities to promote retention of existing resource families:
 - Expand use of mentors for resource parents (highly experience caregivers who can offer 1-on-1 guidance and support to newer or stressed caregivers).
 - Provide child-specific “Information Packet” to caregiver at time of placement, including summary of child’s strengths and needs, important connections, initial tasks to be completed, other key information to support placement transition.
 - Improve the availability and utilization of respite for resource families.
 - Strengthen utilization of Office of Education mileage stipend by resource parents, including tracking data to monitor usage.
 - Petition CDSS to change Santa Cruz county’s designation from Rural to Urban to follow a rate structure commensurate with community cost of living.
 - Encourage resource families to ask for help.
- Develop specialized curriculum for relative caregivers.
- Ensure ongoing trainings for resource parents use preferred methods to promote participation:
 - Deliver training in face-to-face settings that create a learning community among caregivers (e.g., replace contract with Cabrillo College or another educational provider).
 - Create more family-friendly training times with better advance notice.
 - Consider utilizing Public Health Nurses as in-home training and support resources for caregivers.
- Ongoing assessment of resource families to ensure caregivers are adapting to youth’s needs over time.

Resource Family Approval and Recruitment

Implementation and refinement of the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process is generating quality resource families, yet shortages still remain to adequately meet the demand for placement homes. (Dependency Court, Social Workers, Supervisors, Support Staff)

Strengths

- RFA process is becoming more efficient in minimizing delays toward completion of certification process.
- Social workers are good at identifying family members as potential resource families and steering them to RFA application process.
- Implementation of a standardized RFA process has enhanced the quality of placement resources.

Challenges

- RFA process remains challenging in several ways:
 - Process of application, pre-service training and certification is cumbersome for applicants and confusing for social workers.
 - Approvals take a long time which can delay placement and payment.
 - RFA process is disconnected from rest of CWS system leading to communication breakdowns and mis-information.
- More mono-lingual Spanish resource families than needed.
- Lack of resource families within county to meet need.
- High cost of living is barrier for some families to become resource families.

Potential Solutions

- Utilize existing RFA Placement Packet & RFA Checklist to ease application process for families and social workers.
- Outreach and engage untapped parts of community to recruit resource families (e.g., Silicon Valley presence; schools—coaches, teachers, other families; retirees).
- Ramp up youth-specific recruitment beyond relatives, especially for older youth (e.g., past caregivers, coaches, teachers, mentors, etc.).

“The system really needs to do a better evaluation of those wanting to be foster parents to find out what their true intentions are; not just at the beginning, but throughout the whole time they’re caring for foster children.”

—Youth—

FAIRNESS & EQUITY

FCS has a strong commitment to fairness, equity and culturally responsive practice. This openness and willingness to learn will fuel continued efforts toward eliminating disparity in permanency outcomes going forward. (Bio Parents, Dependency Court, Education, Providers, Social Workers, Supervisors, Youth, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- Strong demonstration of respect for all cultural groups; commitment to raising awareness of bias and mitigating any impacts on decision-making; cultural humility and ongoing learning are important values among FCS and their partners.
- Lots of bi-lingual services, placements and social workers to ensure cultural responsiveness to the large Latino population served by FCS.
- Efforts being made to educate staff and resource families on the needs of SOGIE youth.

- Strong emphasis on providing support and advocacy for immigrant families, including undocumented.
- Awareness of cultural differences between Santa Cruz and Watsonville and implications for resource inequality and other disparities.
- SCC pays for bio parents to receive substance abuse treatment and counseling services.

Challenges

- Lack of acceptance of transgender youth by resource family placements, results in many placement changes.
- Double standard for mothers and fathers in reasonable efforts toward reunification—mom’s often given more chances to make behavior changes, participate in services, and access supports than dads.
- Limitations in accessing services for undocumented field working parents.

Potential Solutions

- More training for social workers and other team members to raise awareness and address implicit bias in decisions related to removal, placement and permanency planning.
- Better training and support for working with and caring for transgender youth:
 - Focus on building resource families’ skills in acceptance of and how to care for transgender youth.
 - Develop parallel training on transgender youth for birth parents.
 - Safety from harm inflicted by community on transgender youth.
 - Develop “safe haven” resource within community for transgender youth.
- Extend SOGIE training opportunities to include service provider community.
- Mitigate affordable housing shortage by allowing waivers of space requirements for relative care placements to fight discrimination against families with lower incomes who happen to live in a community with a high cost of living.
- Define metrics for measuring culturally responsive practice so that data can be collected about this aspect of quality practice.

“Even though I’m doing the best I can to do what the court says without losing my job, I feel like there’s more second chances given to moms than dads.”

—Father—

SERVICES & SUPPORTS

A rich array of service resources is available within the county, yet full utilization is often limited by access or capacity barriers. (Bio Parents, Education, Providers, Resource Families, Social Workers, Supervisors, Youth, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- Experienced social workers are resourceful in finding services and supports for children, youth and families; most have deep knowledge of available housing resources.
- CASAs are great by providing youth with experiences they wouldn’t otherwise have.
- Independent Living Program services provided by Encompass are really good, not only teaching skills to prepare for adulthood, but also help youth gain perspective & insight.

- Effective substance abuse providers and strong partnership with social workers.
- Foster Care Education Liaisons are amazing in helping meet the educational needs of youth in care including efforts to maintain school continuity.
- Leaps ‘n’ Bounds parenting education services are very effective for bio parents.
- PAPAS father support program is very effective in helping dads become better parents, raise awareness of community resources and provide peer support.
- Co-location of service providers in the FCS office has been helpful to raise awareness of service availability and promote coordination.
- Self-Help Center at Dependency Court has a referral process where social workers can request a service for families that is outside the Dependency Court system (counseling, legal services, etc.).

Challenges

- Securing stable, permanent housing is a big barrier to achieving permanency.
- Gaps in adult mental health services for bio parents from public system, unless severely mentally ill.
- Lack of substance abuse treatment programs where parents (especially fathers) and their child(ren) can stay together while receiving services.
- Underutilization of Wraparound services (e.g., not available for all families—only relative placements, not all supervisors know about Wraparound program).
- San Andreas Regional Center has insufficient services to meet needs of DD youth involved in child welfare services.
- Treatment services and providers are often tied to placement program—when placement change occurs, treatment continuity is disrupted.
- Access to services requires social worker referral and system involvement; need easier ways for vulnerable families to get help on their own.

“Parent Mentors are a great benefit for parents, we need to expand this resource for all parents whose children are in out of home care.”

—Parent’s Attorney—

Potential Solutions

- Broaden access to services that address treatment needs of youth and support their development.
 - Expand behavioral health crisis response services to be available 24/7 for youth, whether in placement or at home.
 - Design the system so that treatment services and therapeutic relationships follow the child/youth, regardless of placement setting.
 - Begin Independent Living Program services earlier (age 12-13).
- Implement strategies to make it easier for bio parents to participate in services that fit their needs and build their support network:
 - Set more family-friendly hours—evenings, weekends—so that services are more accessible for bio parents, including undocumented field working parents.
 - Create online resource and information portal for family support services.
 - Need more fatherhood programs focused on both prevention and intervention services and supports.
 - Provide broader array of parent education choices for bio parents beyond simply offering Positive Parenting Practices (Triple P) for everyone.

- Build capacity of resource families and parent partners to serve as supportive mentors to bio parents.
- Expand successful services to better meet demand: fully staff Adoption Assistance Program, expand Bridge Program (trauma informed childcare) for all caregivers, not just emergency placements.
- Increase utilization of Public Health Nurses as resources for: care coordination, parent education (normal development, special needs, developmental milestones), nutrition guidance, linkage to community resources, etc.

PERMANENCY

Findings about permanency cover a range of topics including timely permanency, maintaining connections, permanency best practices and post-permanency planning.

Timely Permanency

Frequent delays in establishing an appropriate placement as well as setbacks once a youth returns home following placement compromises timely permanency. (Dependency Court, Education, Social Workers, Supervisors, Support Staff, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- FCS provides every opportunity for bio parents to reunify; yet this can result in longer timelines.
- Staff are more aware of permanency timelines including faster reunification for children under age three.

Challenges

- Lack of capacity of placement options often requires a prolonged search for appropriate family-based care or residentially based treatment options for youth.
- Cases delayed up to two months for setting Juris-Dispo.
- Lack of childcare can be an obstacle to timely reunification (e.g., parent needs to work to create family stability, yet unable to find appropriate childcare).
- AB12 can unintentionally delay permanency (e.g., some youth start to ask for AB12 placement when case moves toward “plan B”, some social workers consider AB12 as preferred option in lieu of permanent plan).
- Delayed permanency often leads to school instability—placements may be far from school of origin creating transportation issues or school transfer; placement scarcity always outweighs school continuity.

“When children move schools, studies show that they lose 2-3 months of learning; with multiple moves in a year, it’s even worse.”

—Education Liaison—

Potential Solutions

- Eliminate paperwork delays through more accurate form submittal, timely supervisory sign-offs, use of case aides or interns to support paperwork processing.
- Make concurrent planning everyone’s job: educate all social worker positions (ER, FM, FR, PP); resource families; bio parents on concurrent planning and permanency.

- Increase focus on intensive work with parents of children under age 3 including, plan more intensive, immediate service interventions; rapid referral, engagement and participation of parents in services; consider assignment to specialized caseload.
- Increase collaborative partnerships with school districts, caregivers and community resources to develop accommodations for transportation and other special needs for foster youth in support of school continuity given placement location.

Maintaining Connections

While maintaining connections is a high priority, more creative strategies are needed to ensure important relationships are cultivated for youth, especially when placed out of the local area. (Bio Parents, Dependency Court, Education, Resource Families, Social Workers, Supervisors, Youth, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- Good efforts to identify important people in youth’s life, including preserving bonds with family members post-permanency.
- Strong emphasis on visitation, especially more frequent visits for children under age 3.
- FCS creative in serving complex, disconnected youth placed out of county.

Challenges

- Out of county placements pose barriers to visitation.
- Despite efforts to identify important people in youth’s life, not enough effort to make connections happen.
- Many children disconnected from school relationships due to placement moves, lack of transportation resources, or transfer to alternative schools because of disruptive trauma-related behaviors.
- Lack of focus on utilizing parent-child visits as ‘teachable moments’ to reinforce newly learned parenting skills and behaviors.

Potential Solutions

- Implement specific strategies to strengthen progressive visitation practice, including:
 - Create more infrastructure to support progressive visitation (progressing from supervised to unsupervised to overnights).
 - Expand resources to support visit scheduling and supervision.
 - More support and guidance for bio-parents, caregivers and social workers to promote effective visitation (e.g. respecting needs of the child, caregiver role in supporting child post-visit, coordinating visitation).
 - More accessible visitation for working parents (e.g., evening, weekend time slots, tie expanded hours to Parent Center contract, recruit and train interns to supervise visitation).
 - Consider therapeutic visitation models to coach parent on practicing newly acquired parenting skills learned in classroom during visits. Consider contracting with resource trained in these modalities (e.g., PCIT, Incredible Years).
 - Develop ways for all these improvements to apply to out of county visits.
- Improve post-adoption contact agreements.
- Deliver trauma-informed training to school personnel to better address needs of foster youth within mainstream schools, minimizing transfers to alternative schools.

Permanency Best Practices

Elements of the Core Practice Model are taking hold and enhancements to existing infrastructure will enable further strengthening of these practices. (Bio Parents, Dependency Court, Education, Providers, Social Workers, Supervisors, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- Great efforts at front end to engage in safety planning to keep children from being removed and avoid filings in court.
- Greater awareness and focus on making reasonable efforts to achieve reunification:
 - Increased use of CFTs
 - Early engagement of families
 - Good safety planning
 - Consistent visitation
 - Behavior-based case plans
 - Family Preservation Court
 - Building family's natural support system
- Greater emphasis on permanency from Day 1:
 - All programs becoming more conscious of permanency across all program components, including ER
 - Early identification of relatives through initial family finding efforts
 - Resource families are supporting the need for permanency
 - Better matching for sustainable permanency
 - Appropriate use of Bypass
 - Faster timelines to permanency for children under age 3
- Dedicated position to conduct family finding activities.

“At the CFT meeting we talk openly and early on about why FCS is involved and what the safety concerns are. As a result, we no longer have families that are well into the process with no idea why they're involved with the system.”

—CW Supervisor—

Challenges

- Barriers to more consistent, effective concurrent planning practice, include:
 - Programs are siloed which can detract from the idea of concurrent planning as *everyone's* job
 - Recent re-organization of staff have reinforced a narrower focus of staff roles.
 - Staff tend to focus on single permanency goal at one time
 - Managing workload when simultaneously working toward reunification and alternative permanency option is challenging
 - Concurrent Planning focused on children under age 3 only, rather than all kids
- Fewer legal guardianships are happening; pressure to pursue adoption or dismiss.

Potential Solutions

- Fully implement and support Safety Organized Practice:
 - Emphasize family engagement at all stages
 - Consistent use of harm & danger statements
 - Expand use of safety mapping throughout case life span
 - Coaching for social workers on SOP practice
 - Ensure all supervisors equally support and know SOP model

- Consistently apply SOP principles in all cases
- Educate Court on SOP model
- Separate AB12 and Adoptions case assignments (reverse recently combined unit).
- Implement case consultation model to problem solve on complex permanency cases.
- Incorporate strategies to reduce birth parents’ sense of overwhelm by juggling too many case plan expectations at once:
 - Streamline efforts by developing ‘staged’ case plans
 - Utilize care coordination
 - Expand use of Parent Partners to support bio-parents success, including Spanish speaking Parent Partners
- Consider expanding Family Preservation Court model to other issues (e.g., mental health, domestic violence).

Post-Permanency Support

Post permanency supports are most successful when they consider the realities of families’ natural environment outside of system involvement. (Dependency Court, Providers, Resource Families, Social Workers, Supervisors)

Strengths

- Good support to adoptive families by Meridian Group.
- Post-adoption support is successful.
- Effective post-permanency support provided by Parent Center.

Challenges

- Inconsistent inclusion of family and youth voice in planning post-permanency supports.
- Unstable housing is a huge barrier to sustained permanency.

Potential Solutions

- More emphasis on building natural circles of support for adoptive families.
- More attention to planning post-reunification supports in case planning (e.g., childcare vouchers, continuation of services, activation of natural circle of support).
- Better prepare permanency caregivers (e.g., adoption, legal guardianship) for meeting “known” future needs of youth in their care.
- Extend post-permanency support services for adoptive and kin-gap families beyond one year to help sustain permanency; all service access is tied to having an open case.

TEAMING and COLLABORATION

Family-centered teamwork to enhance case planning decisions and influence permanency is taking hold as a core practice value. Continued implementation efforts are needed to ensure team role clarity, coordination and consistent focus on family voice and choice. (Bio-Parents, Dependency Court, Education, Providers, Resource Families, Social Workers, Supervisors, Support Staff, Youth, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- Strong spirit of cooperation and teamwork among social workers, service providers and partners focused on #1 goal of working toward reunification.
- Child & Family Teams are helping youth and families in multiple ways:
 - Better informing bio parents about adoption

- Raising family awareness of network of “helpers” they have surrounding them
- Promotes coordination of service plans/case goals
- Foster Ed Liaison included in CFT meetings
- Strong relationships and effective collaboration between FCS and child and family serving partners:
 - Strong partnerships between FCS and Behavioral Health, FCS and community based service providers, FCS and CASAs
 - Being smaller community promotes relationship building
 - Warm hand offs from FCS to community partners
 - Commitment by FCS to outreach and engage community stakeholders in collaborative problem solving
- Attorneys are experienced and work well together for best interest of child.
- Warm hand-offs are happening from Juris-Dispo to Ongoing; good coordination between Court worker and Ongoing worker to get services going early.
- Independent Living Program very effective at collaboration.

Challenges

- Effectiveness of CFTs compromised by assigned worker being the CFT facilitator (rather than having neutral facilitator).
- Barriers to quality teaming include:
 - Insufficient consideration of dissenting opinions regarding best interest of child
 - Lack of transparent reunification standards which creates perception of subjective or arbitrary reunification decisions
 - Lack of shared understanding across team members about basic principles and theory behind SOP, CFT and other core FCS practices
 - Lack of clarity by all team members about purpose and goals of CFT meetings, and how activities before/during/after CFT meeting contribute to these aims
 - Sometimes team members speak using lots of jargon and the youth doesn’t understand what people are talking about
- Resource families not always treated as valued members of Child & Family Team:
 - Opinions regarding case are disrespected by some social workers
 - Not kept in the communication loop regarding important case developments
 - If resource parent raises concerns—it can be viewed as sabotaging reunification
 - Lack of “go to” person for resource parent to contact, especially in a crisis
 - Lack of clarity about what level of case information resource parents’ “need to know” in order to provide quality caregiving
- Sometimes team decisions don’t always result in the kind of help the youth needs.
- Strained relationships between administrative staff and line staff (e.g., tensions around completion of paperwork, lack of respect toward clerks by some social workers).
- No shared Educational Rights between bio parents and resource parents.
- Need more effective partnerships between FCS and schools.

Potential Solutions

- Strengthen environment for cross functional teamwork within FCS operations:
 - Need to build unity, teamwork and practice consistency between Watsonville & Santa Cruz permanency units.

- Seek out input from clerical staff early in the design of procedural improvements to determine how these processes can operate more effectively.
- Enhance respect for Resource Parents as valued members of CFT to promote:
 - More effective case planning decisions supported by the whole team
 - Shared understanding of bio parents’ behavioral goals for safe reunification
 - Focus on meeting best interests of child vs. conceding to most influential team member opinions
 - CFT needs to be a safe environment for caregivers to express concerns
- Strengthen CFT practice:
 - Fully implement CFTs ensuring all cases are holding them regularly and as needed
 - Educate parents and youth on purpose and benefits of Child & Family Team
 - Have dedicated CFT facilitators (not assigned social worker) and more administrative help to schedule CFT meetings)
 - Require a CFT meeting to be conducted for any 14-day Notice
 - Make CFT process and environment more meaningful for youth, especially those who are shy or introverted
 - Have professionals speak in plain language, especially during CFT meetings
- Enhance critical community partnerships to strengthen prevention, intervention and responsiveness to special populations:
 - Cross-training between FCS and Law Enforcement on topics such as: definition of CA/N, including when/how to intervene in allegations; trauma-informed practice regarding law enforcement response to child safety concerns.
 - Strengthen collaborative partnership between FCS and Public Health.
 - Expand Linkages teamwork between FCS and CalWORKs to coordinate Welfare-to-Work and child welfare expectations, leverage services to support basic family needs and promote economic self-sufficiency.
 - Promote education partnerships, including enhanced relationships with school districts, creation of Truancy Court, expand “Keeping Kids in School” initiative, ensure foster youth are educated on reproductive rights.
 - Reinstate Tri-county CSEC Collaborative (Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey) to continue developing meaningful and effective interventions for CSEC youth.

COMMUNICATION

While CFTs have significantly increased opportunities for gaining shared understanding among team members, communication gaps continue to challenge the teaming and working relationships between and among stakeholders involved in case planning. (Bio Parents, Dependency Court, Education, Providers, Social Workers, Supervisors, Support Staff, Youth)

Strengths

- Most social workers are helpful and stay in close communication with youth.
- Social workers encourage youth voice by asking youth what they need and want.
- Many parents have positive perception of FCS as helping them turn their lives around.
- Improvement in Court Report format to communicate more child-centric information.

Challenges

- Social workers don’t always return phone calls; often hard to reach.

- Clear communication and transfer of case knowledge is compromised by too many social worker assignment changes and no warm hand-offs for these transitions.
- Need communication enhancement among internal staff: social workers to clerks, clerks to clerks, eligibility workers to social workers, etc.
- Lack of updated Health & Education Passport data in CWS/CMS impedes accurate communication regarding health and educational needs of youth.
- Very siloed data systems across team (FCS, Providers, Schools, Courts, Probation, etc.) does not promote coordinated communication, assessment, planning or service delivery within the teaming model of CPM.
- Support staff often not informed of policy changes; not consulted for input in advance.

Potential Solutions

- Implement “warm hand-offs” between social workers to preserve case knowledge whenever cases transfer.
- Increase use of technology to promote communication and service coordination (e.g., Skype, Zoom, List Servs, Web portals, integrated data systems).
- Give Foster Ed Liaisons narrow access to CWS/CMS to update Health and Education Passport information for youth in care.
- Develop clear policies and procedures that are documented, easily accessible, regularly updated, trained to and reinforced by supervisors.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Findings about workforce development span a range of topics including staffing, training & professional development, and organizational culture. (Bio Parents, Providers, Resource Families, Social Workers, Supervisors, Support Staff, Youth, Peer Reviewers)

Staffing

Configure staffing and workload to enable case carrying positions to focus on the relational aspects of their role.

Strengths

- Highly committed, dedicated staff throughout FCS; social workers really care about their work with the children and have good intentions.
- Social workers help youth aspire to reach goals they never thought possible, such as going to college.

Challenges

- Lots of new social workers recently added to the workforce who have very little experience in the job.
- Social workers carry high caseloads and are overloaded with tasks making it hard to find the time to do the relational work of engagement, communication and teaming.
- Ongoing units have had unique challenges: high turnover; many new, inexperienced social workers; re-organization has been destabilizing.
- Lots of transition in leadership at all levels (e.g., agency, court, county counsel) which has affected the continuity and institutional memory of the workforce.

Potential Solutions

- Hire more SWs who have been through the foster care system themselves to help them have a better understanding—some knowing can only come from lived experience.
- Emphasize importance of “soft skills” and recruit people with emotional intelligence, compassion, and empathy.
- Streamline workload and provide task assistance for social workers to prioritize their role as communicators, engagers and teaming champions.

Training

Support multiple pathways for building the proficiency of the workforce in delivering quality practice in a team environment.

Strengths

- Pockets of good supervisory involvement in teaching and reinforcing operational processes and procedures with their staff.

Challenges

- Inconsistent model of supervision and management throughout agency.
- Lack of clarity and transparency in performance expectations across agency.
- Mismatch of staff skills to program area assignments.
- Confusion among staff regarding some permanency-related operational processes (e.g., adoption finalization, Resource Family Approval).

Potential Solutions

- Better alignment between social worker training and on the job practice and reinforcement.
- More training for social workers on: Concurrent Planning, Permanency Planning, Reasonable Efforts, Awareness of Personal Bias Influencing Permanency Decisions, Trauma-Informed Practice Strategies, Effective Partnering with Caregivers, Individualized Service Planning.
- Enhance staff knowledge about array of available resources and eligibility requirements for them.
- Streamline how new social workers learn internal processes (e.g., use of existing Desk Guides and Checklists, add content to induction curriculum, supervisory reinforcement, update written procedures).
- Have representatives from clerical support unit educate new social workers on key operational procedures and processes during induction training.

Organizational Culture

Create the organizational conditions to support team based practice reinforced at multiple levels through coaching, supervision and cross-system integration.

Strengths

- *None identified from stakeholder input.*

Challenges

- Intense period of transition for FCS:
 - Organizational culture is in a state of flux,
 - Lack of common culture—some areas very punitive, others very supportive,

- Leaders mis-matched to the job—some practice leaders bring direct service experience, while others have none.

Potential Solutions

- Develop and implement consistent model of supervision and management.
- Establish formal mentoring relationships between experienced and new social workers.
- Coaching for social workers on managing multiple casework demands, including team engagement, planning, prioritizing, service coordination and documentation.
- Cross-train line staff and clerical staff to enhance teamwork, including paint “big picture” of clerical/line staff interdependency at key stages of case, role clarity, expectations, and mutual respect.

PREVENTION

Enhance outreach to vulnerable parents early and get them the help they need so fewer children end up placed in out of home care or involved in child welfare. (Bio Parents, Dependency Court, Education, Providers, Social Workers, Youth)

Strengths

- Santa Cruz County has lots of prevention oriented services in the community.
- Improved relationship between FCS and Law Enforcement has resulted in fewer unnecessary removals initiated by police.
- Strong coordinated effort among FCS and community partners to preserve families and prevent removals through early intervention and safety planning.
- Differential Response and Families Together are both effective programs that prevent vulnerable families from entering the child welfare system.
- Integrated Health Services is a strong prevention resource where mental health and primary care health services are integrated in same location.
- Good documentation of prevention efforts in Detention Reports to the Court.

Challenges

- *None identified in focus group input.*

Potential Solutions

- Expand, strengthen Differential Response as a prevention and early intervention practice.
- Expand use of Wraparound as a prevention resource for any vulnerable families and partner with schools for family identification and referral.
- Strengthen prevention services network to better serve vulnerable families:
 - More realistic acceptance criteria,
 - Increase crisis intervention services,
 - Expand diversion services for immigrants, homeless families,
 - Enhanced support to parents to help with navigating the service system.

Juvenile Probation Findings

Family Engagement

Santa Cruz JPD has made significant improvements in family involvement through CFT meetings, quality engagement behaviors by probation officers, and family finding. Focusing on accountability and direct supports to families will continue this trend. (Juvenile Justice Court, Probation Officers, Probation Parents, Probation Supervisors, Probation Youth, Providers, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- Probation officers very helpful and supportive to parents, even when youth demonstrate really tough behaviors.¹
- JPD works with the family and relatives to support the youth by engaging possible relative placements.
- Juvenile Hall staff are kind and supportive.

Challenges

- Insufficient efforts to include parents in placement decisions.
- Lack of parent engagement in review of placements that were unsuccessful.
- STRTP placement programs are high quality, but lack of family engagement puts burden on parent to figure out how it all works.

“Engaging families in the CFT is a way to hear more of the family voice. So, it’s not just a recommendation by the Probation Officer that’s important, but the family’s perspective is equally valued.”

—Probation Officer—

Potential Solutions

- Increase engagement with other parents from the start—connect parents to support groups right when youth enter Juvenile Hall.
- Provide parent mentors for one-on-one guidance and navigation for parents through the probation system.
- More family-friendly service hours to better engage working parents.
- Hold STRTP placement programs accountable for family engagement activities from initial transition to discharge including:
 - Provide parents with program orientation materials at initial placement (e.g., program model, placement expectations, visitation rules, etc.)
 - Engage families in parallel services while youth in placement to better prepare family for successful reunification
 - Engage parents as ‘partners’ in youth’s treatment, behavior change, and maintaining progress after return home

Placement Capacity

The commitment to finding effective, culturally-relevant, local placements is strong, yet limited capacity exists due to group home closures, few STRTP options statewide, and the complex

¹ One parent described what Family Engagement looks like: communication about what to expect with the process; parent’s questions answered timely; family’s needs met; happily, even repeatedly, explained things to parent; described each person’s role in the process; conveyed patience & compassion while chaotic environment swirled around youth; checked in frequently; anticipated, listened to youth and parent; non-judgmental attitude; knowledgeable about programs, systems and how things work; a good ally for both youth & family.

needs of many probation youth. (Juvenile Justice Court, Probation Officers, Probation Parents, Probation Supervisors, Probation Youth, Providers, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- Efforts are made to develop resource family placement options for probation youth.
- Successful diversion programs are helping reduce the need for placement for a growing proportion of probation youth and their families.

Challenges

- Conversion of congregate care to STRTPs and closure of group homes across the state has reduced overall capacity of placement resources for probation youth:
 - Only 6 STRTP placement beds (3 for girls, 3 for boys) in Santa Cruz county
 - Competition between FCS and JPD for the scarce number of local STRTP beds
 - Youth stay in Juvenile Hall longer than needed due to low STRTP capacity and acceptance process for STRTPs taking up to 3 months
- Difficult to find local placements for CSEC youth because of safety concerns.
- Multiple barriers to confirming relative placements including:
 - Parents unwilling to ask relatives to handle issues that parents are unable to manage themselves
 - Relatives feel ill-equipped to cope with intensive needs & behaviors of youth
 - Caregivers unwilling to endure probation expectations such as home searches

“Youth are staying longer in Juvenile Hall—not because of their sentence or because that’s what they need, but simply because there are no places for them to go.”

—Juvenile Justice Court —

Potential Solutions

- Enhance supports, resources and safety plans for relative caregivers to increase the likelihood of extended family caring for youth with high level needs.
- Develop after hours support for Resource Families to receive therapeutic crisis intervention.
- Invest in targeted, local recruitment campaign to generate more local placement resources for probation youth with complex needs.
- Create an online resource guide or up-to-date inventory about statewide STRTPs that Court can easily and regularly access.

Fairness and Equity

There is a strong emphasis on culturally responsive practices at JPD, however continued efforts to address bias and inequities within the system and its partners are needed to eliminate disparities in permanency outcomes. (Juvenile Justice Court, Probation Officers, Probation Parents, Probation Supervisors, Probation Youth)

Strengths

- Strong emphasis at JPD on cultural responsiveness and respect for cultural identity that is appreciated by youth and parents.

- Language needs are supported by agency and most services; have sufficient staff and providers that are Spanish speaking.
- Court makes exceptions for parents who work in fields and can't attend hearings.

Challenges

- Inequity in how Latino youth are treated compared to non-Latino youth with similar circumstances, offenses, and placement needs:
 - Treated differently by Court (e.g., unjustified extension of probation time)
 - False assumptions about instability of Latino homes leads to extended time in placement for Latino youth
 - Unequal access to opportunities for Latino youth
- Monolingual Spanish speaking parents experience insufficient Spanish-speaking resources at both placements and at Court.
- Takes involvement of Office of Education for schools to enroll probation youth; even if accepted, mainstream school officials often look for reasons to expel these youth.

Potential Solutions

- Need more tolerance/acceptance of diverse parenting styles and cultural norms.
- Offer individualized parent education to align parenting skill building with family's beliefs, culture and values.
- Consider conducting entire Court hearing in Spanish for mono-lingual parents.
- Partner with school districts to develop on-site intervention programs in schools, like EPICS, so schools can handle educating lower level offender youth.
- Increase array of services offered in Spanish.

“Parents have very different reactions to their kids being in trouble and unmanageable. The solution has to work for the family, their beliefs, values and culture.”

—Probation Parent —

Services and Supports

Services and supports for probation youth and their families range from accessible, successful and collaborative to insufficient, underdeveloped or unavailable. (Juvenile Justice Court, Probation Officers, Probation Parents, Probation Supervisors, Probation Youth, Providers)

Strengths

- Services utilized by JPD have contributed to permanency and reduced rates of out of home placement:
 - Wraparound-Fuerte (including Family Specialist)
 - Barrios Unidos (anti-gang program)
 - Diversion program reduces deeper system involvement for probation youth
 - Juvenile Probation Integrated Service Center
 - Community Action Boards
- Strong array of therapeutic, vocational and supportive services available for youth in placement programs as well as while in Juvenile Hall.
- Services continue to be offered through community based providers once a youth returns home or achieves other permanent living arrangements.

Challenges

- Underdeveloped framework for serving specialized populations (LGBTQ, CSEC, etc.)

- Some service providers and many schools feel youth are too difficult to work with and will refuse to serve them.
- Services and providers are often tied to placement programs, so positive therapeutic relationship is disrupted when placement ends.
- Limited continuum of behavioral health services for youth (e.g., BH services are essentially “check-ins”; BH will not treat substance abuse unless dual diagnosis; no Children’s Behavioral Health center in county).

Potential Solutions

- Cultivate service resources to fill gaps in service array for youth and families including:
 - Long-term mentor relationships, CASAs, peer mentors for probation youth
 - Youth-oriented substance abuse treatment for probation youth
 - Strengthen post-reunification supports including respite for probation parents as “cool down” resource
 - 24/7 crisis intervention for probation youth in relative placement or reunified
- Improve accessibility to services for working parents with support for parents’ childcare, transportation and work needs and meeting parents at their location, after hours.
- Expand availability of helpful existing services to better meet the demand including:
 - Build up Resource Bank to help more families cover concrete needs to increase their participation in services (e.g., transportation, childcare, car repairs)
 - Offer local intensive therapeutic, support services for youth and families together
 - More services in Juvenile Hall: therapy for youth, vocational training, ILP
 - More parent support services like Parent Mentors, peer support, transportation
 - More partnerships with community to create opportunities for positive youth experiences (e.g., job shadowing, apprenticeships, vocational training)

“My therapist at the STRTP helped me a lot. I wish I could have kept seeing her after I went home.”

—Probation Youth —

Timely Permanency

Frequent delays in establishing an appropriate placement as well as setbacks once a youth returns home after placement, compromises timely permanency. (Juvenile Justice Court, Probation Officers, Probation Parents, Probation Supervisors, Probation Youth, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- Diversion programs are preventing youth from entering out of home care.
- Shorter timelines in STRTPs (6-9 months) required by Continuum of Care Reform has reduced length of stay for youth receiving care in high level placement programs.

Challenges

- Youth remain too long in Juvenile Hall awaiting appropriate and available placement.
- Length of time it takes to find, be accepted to and complete treatment at an STRTP does not align with expected permanency timeframes.
- Lack of accountability structure for parents of youth involved in juvenile justice system; parents are not mandated to participate in services and often choose not to.

- Expectation that youth agree to chosen placement option can complicate and delay placement process.
- Some families experience unsuccessful reunification due to focus on youth’s completion of treatment program and desire to return home instead of parents’ readiness to manage youth’s behavior at home.
- Takes time to overcome barriers to secure permanent homes for probation youth who are unable to reunify (e.g., reluctance of relatives or NREFMs to take on intense behaviors, prior gang involvement, and criminal histories of probation youth).

Potential Solutions

- Intensify family finding efforts at intake and throughout case life span.
- Focus earlier on preparations for transition from STRTP placement to home:
 - Have youth and family meet with team at least 90 days prior to discharge
 - Discuss strategies for transferring structures, rules, behavior management techniques to home setting and begin school re-enrollment process for youth
 - Deliver parallel services to parents throughout placement period to build their skills and capacity for successful reunification
- Create a solid network of support for the family both while the youth is in placement and once they return home (e.g., peer-to-peer supports, transportation, family specialists).
- Strengthen accountability structures for youth and parents to follow-through on case plan expectations and court orders.
- Fortify Juvenile Hall as a short-term placement resource:
 - Better transition planning into placements following Juvenile Hall
 - Attorney notification and teaming about issues arising for their clients while in Juvenile Hall
 - Increase communication with Court & attorneys when parents aren’t involved

Maintaining Connections

While maintaining connections is a high priority at JPD, more creative strategies are needed to ensure important relationships are cultivated for youth, especially when placed out of the local area. (Juvenile Justice Court, Probation Officers, Probation Parents, Probation Supervisors, Probation Youth, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- Good efforts to support youth-parent visitation while youth in placement.
- JPD supports monthly parent-youth visitation, even when youth placed out of state.

Challenges

- Difficult to maintain connections when youth placed out of county, especially out of state.
- High costs to families when youth placed outside the area interferes with parent-youth visitation (e.g., travel costs, time off work, childcare for siblings).
- Continuity of therapeutic relationships for youth are reduced by providers being tied to placement programs, rather than following the youth.

Potential Solutions

- Minimize relationship disruptions by having fewer changes in probation officers, therapists and other important connections for youth.

- Expand provision of financial support for parent-youth visitation out of county.
- Establish more family-friendly visitation hours for working parents at Juvenile Hall
- Employ Peer Mentors as positive role models to help youth maintain healthy personal relationships with family, friends, school staff, coaches, etc.

Teaming and Collaboration

Strong focus on teamwork has taken hold at JPD, however, deepening the partnership between CWS and JPD will strengthen existing collaborations and improve coordinated efforts for dually-involved youth and their families. (CW Supervisors, Dependency Court, Education, Juvenile Justice Court, Probation Officers, Probation Parents, Probation Supervisors, Probation Youth)

Strengths

- Child & Family Teaming practice is being demonstrated more consistently to better address the needs of probation youth and their families:
 - CFT meetings are occurring more quickly, with greater frequency and throughout the probation case life span
 - Voice and choice of youth and families are respected and heard through the CFT process²
 - CFT meetings feel like a safe and accountable place with support for youth & family
- Some efforts to improve teaming between CWS and JPD have begun and appear promising:
 - Co-located social workers and probation officers (e.g. Watsonville) have resulted in improved relationships
 - Better coordination for dually involved youth (DIY) through designation of lead agency in managing each DIY case
- Pilot program to improve collaboration between Education and JPD includes data sharing to help ensure educational needs of probation youth are better met.

“There are two probation officers housed at Watsonville CWS office which has resulted in improved relationships between the agencies on mutual cases.”

—Probation Supervisor —

Challenges

- When FCS schedules a CFT meeting for probation youth, PO is often not invited.
- Lack of ongoing collaboration and communication between JPD and FCS in serving dually involved youth.

Potential Solutions

- Improve collaborative culture and enhance teamwork between JPD and FCS to better serve dually involved youth:
 - Ensure participation by FCS social worker *and* probation officer in CFT meetings for DIY cases
 - Encourage probation officer and social worker to conduct joint home visits or team in other ways

² Parents described the following qualities of CFTs that make them feel respected and heard: Being asked what strengths and needs they see in their child; youth being asked to identify their own strengths and what they need to work on; safe space with lots of support around parent; accountability of the team; everyone hears each other’s perspectives; decision-making is visible; finding compromises when team members don’t see things the same way.

- Share child welfare and probation safety plans to support a family systems approach to addressing safety needs
- Clarify policies and procedures regarding 241.1 court reports
- Balance workload between both agencies on DIY cases
- Build more teamwork connections: expand co-location beyond two probation officers at Watsonville FCS office; create specialized unit to handle DIY cases; designate court officer as liaison
- Reinforce partnership principles such as role clarity, collaboration on placement decisions, emphasis on communication, mutual respect for each agency’s responsibilities, align efforts with Integrated Core Practice Model
- Promote accountability for shared outcomes between FCS and JPD on DIY cases
- Improve teamwork between all involved with youth’s plan including those providing natural support to the youth and their family.
- Strengthen school, Office of Education and probation partnership to improve the level of cooperation from education and better accommodate the needs of probation youth.

Communication

Increased attention to teamwork has set a good foundation for communications, yet greater emphasis on communication with parents and families is needed. (Juvenile Justice Court, Probation Officers, Probation Parents, Probation Youth, Peer Reviewers)

Strengths

- Good communication from support staff and therapist at Juvenile Hall to parents.
- Spanish-speaking resources at JPD have been appreciated.

Challenges

- Court can be very confusing; parents often don’t understand what’s happening at hearings.
- Lack of communication from probation officers or program staff to parents during placement changes.
- Too many probation officers assigned throughout the life of probation cases (e.g., intake, placement, transition) without consistent transfer of case knowledge from one PO to the next which weakens relationship/trust between probation officer and youth/family.
- Union contract requires frequent rotation of probation officer assignments adding more adjustment for youth & family.

“Early communication with parents is critical. When my son was first at Juvenile Hall, I needed to know what was going to happen and how the process worked.”

—Probation Parent—

Potential Solutions

- Provide parents with written guidelines about what to expect at every stage of the juvenile justice process (e.g., arrest, arraignment, placement, hearings, transitions, discharge, return home).
- Implement “warm hand-offs” between probation officers to preserve case knowledge.
- Restructure case files with a Face Sheet and sections to enable efficient knowledge transfer about a case.

Workforce Development

Expand consistency of skill building, effectiveness and supervision of quality practice with probation youth and families, as well as enhanced teaming with internal and external partners. (Juvenile Justice Court, Probation Officers, Probation Parents, Probation Supervisors)

Strengths

- POs are nurturing and more akin to social workers than law enforcement officers.
- Some POs and Supervisor feel well-supported by their respective supervisors.
- The director and division chief are setting a positive tone for support and development of the workforce.

Challenges

- POs are spread so thin with court cases and high end youth that there's little time for outreach and engagement of parents, family finding, and prevention work.
- POs feel an expectation to volunteer in too many community requests or projects without support or staff.
- Supervisors are overworked and feel pressure to meet outcomes without sufficient support.
- Inconsistency in supervisory support provided to supervisors (by managers) and probation officers (by supervisors).

Potential Solutions

- Hire case aides or other support personnel to help with high caseload in intake phase (e.g., assist with paperwork, follow-up tasks, scheduling, etc.).
- Establish dedicated staff to focus on Diversion as well as prevention efforts to supplement the direct service role of probation officers.
- Additional training for probation officers on the following topics:
 - Managing intimidating behaviors of youth
 - Advanced CFT practice including incorporating family voice & choice, preparation and follow-up for CFT meetings, role of assigned probation officer at CFT meetings
 - Outcome-oriented service planning
- Conduct joint training for FCS & JPD on Dually Involved Youth (DIY) cases covering the following topics:
 - Referrals/client identification
 - Coordinated service plans
 - 241.1 Report preparation
 - Parent engagement
 - Division of labor
- Training for newer supervisors to strengthen knowledge of JPD policies, procedures and program operations.

Outcome Data Measures – Family and Children’s Services

The source for the following data is the California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP)³ from Quarter 4 of 2018 in comparison to Quarter 4, 2015.

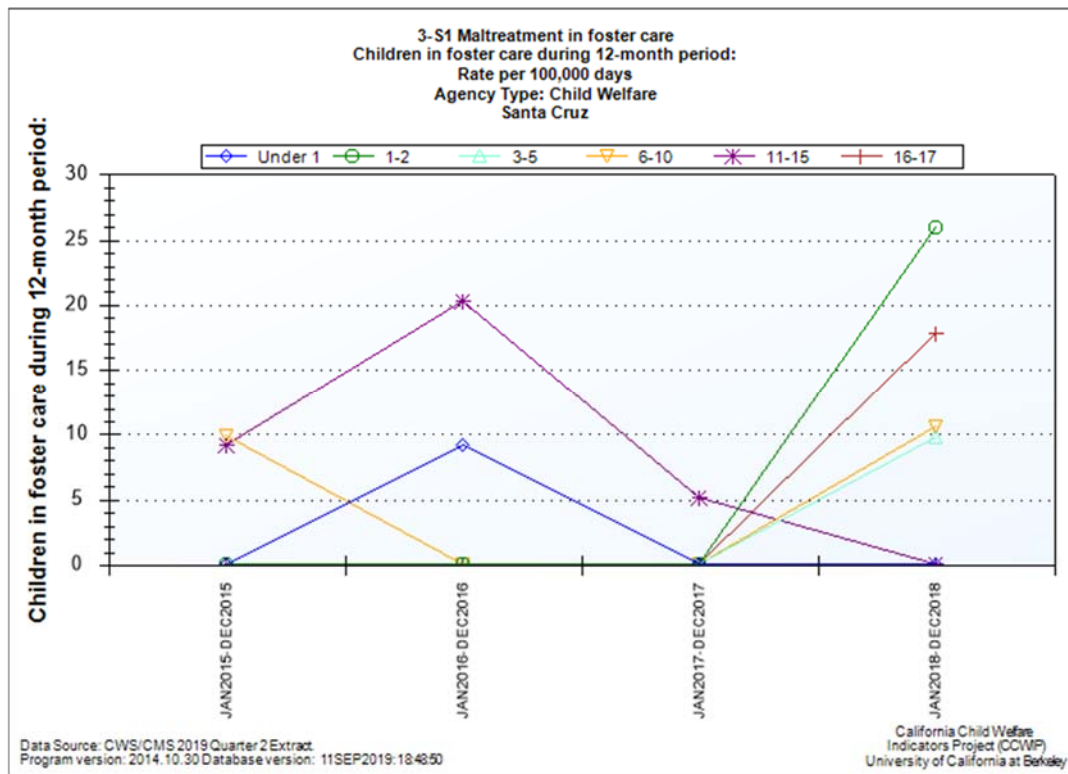
Measure S1: No Maltreatment in Foster Care

This measure compares the total number of substantiated or indicated reports of maltreatment during a foster care episode within the selected 12-month period to the total number of days spent in foster care.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/18	12/31/18	5	58,994	8.48	↓	-75%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate for children who had substantiated or indicated reports of maltreatment during a foster care episode within the selected 12-month period to the total number of days spent in foster care increased from 4.84 to 8.48. Current performance is above the Federal Standard (8.5).

³ Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., King, B., Sandoval, A., Yee, H., Mason, F., Benton, C., Pixton, E., Lou, C., & Peng, C. (2014). CCWIP reports. Retrieved 10/17/2014, from University of California at Berkeley California Child Welfare Indicators Project website. URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare



ANALYSIS

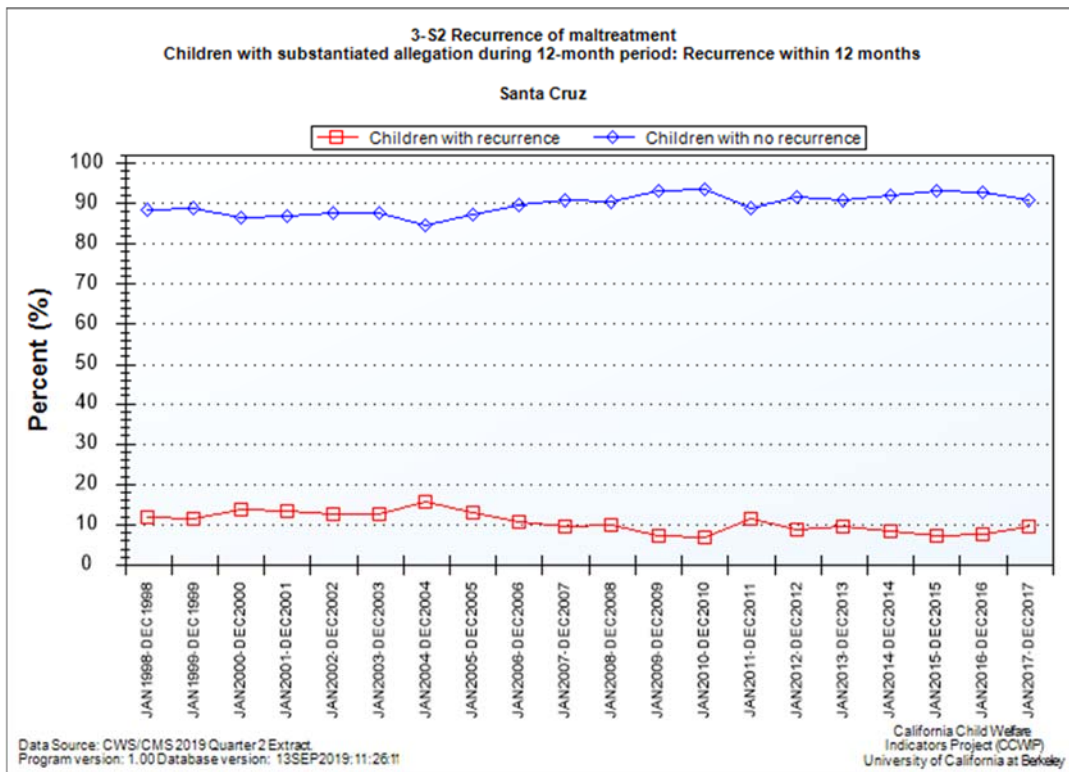
While Santa Cruz County is currently exceeding the national standard on this measure, we will continue to focus the issue of repeated maltreatment. It is important to note that there are only 5 children in this measure and that due to the small number of children in care, just a few instances can impact this measure. In addition, when looking at the nature of the maltreatment experienced by these children in foster care, one was a later disclosure by youth regarding sexual abuse before she was in care, 2 children who weren't transported properly with car seats, a child who had an unexplained injury while not being supervised properly, and a child witnessing domestic violence between the parents during a supervised visit. Where appropriate, children changed placement to be in a safer, less restricted home. Please note that this measure was obtained from CCWIP, which seems to be different than the static report provided by CDSS, which has a numerator of 7 instead of 5.

Measure S2 Recurrence of Maltreatment

This measure displays recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months of substantiations that occurred between 10/01/2017 and 12/31/2017.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/17	12/31/17	23	262	8.8	↓	-11%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate for children who had recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months of substantiations increased from 7.9 to 8.8. Current performance is above the Federal Standard (9.1).



ANALYSIS

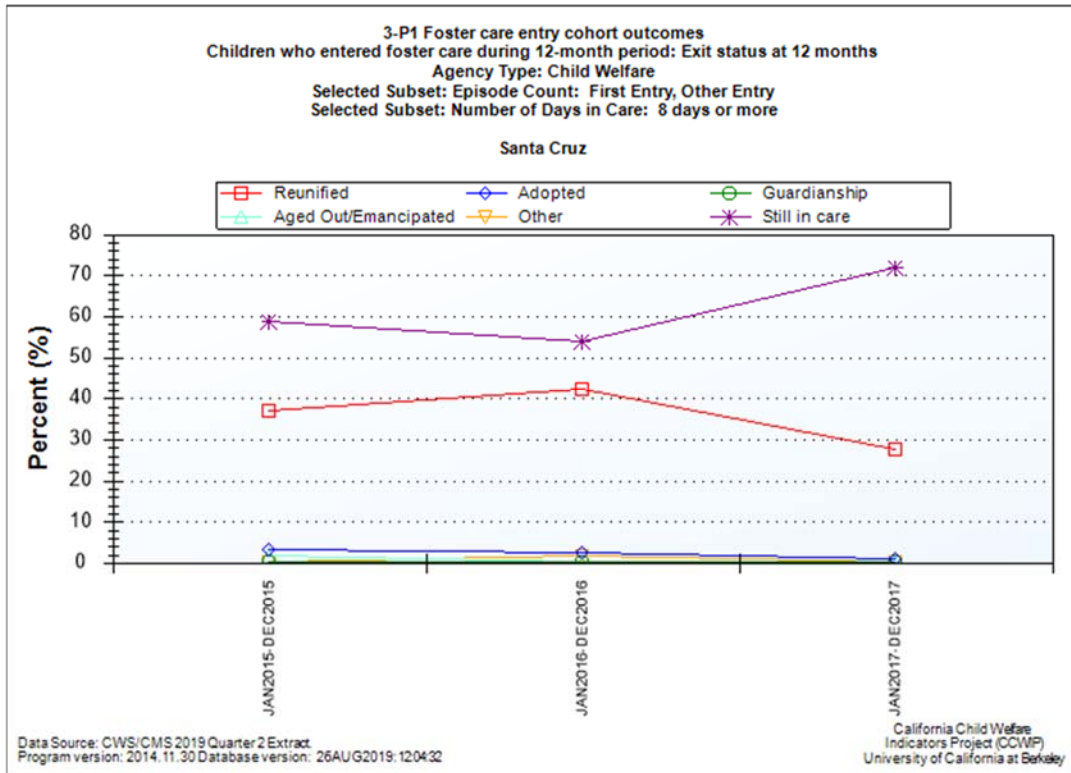
While Santa Cruz County currently exceeds the national standard on this measure, we will continue to evaluate this in light of various new efforts on child abuse prevention as well as Child and Family Team meetings (CFTs), with the goal of enhancing aftercare services and support. There is an increase from Q4 2015, however, the number of children in 2015 that experienced recurrence of maltreatment was 27, which is more than the number of 23 in 2018. Once again, there are spikes in this measure due to the small numbers of children in the Santa Cruz County foster system.

Measure P1 Permanency in 12 Months for Children Entering Care

This measure looks at all children who entered foster care in the selected 12-month period and calculates the percent who achieved permanency within 12 months of their removal. Permanency is determined as reunification, adoption, or guardianship.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/17	12/31/17	25	103	24.3	↓	-26.1%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the number of children achieving permanency during the year who had been in foster care for 8 days or longer decreased from 32.9% to 26.1%. Current performance is below the national standard (40.5%).



ANALYSIS

This measure continues to be an area of improvement for Santa Cruz County FCS and is the focus of the 2020-2025 County Self-Assessment and System Improvement Plan. This may be due to the fact that the majority of families that come into contact with FCS have significant substance abuse, mental illness, and/or domestic violence co-occurring. These are issues that require significant time to address and are often characterized by multiple relapses. For this reason, reunification within 12 months is not always possible. In addition, there has been an

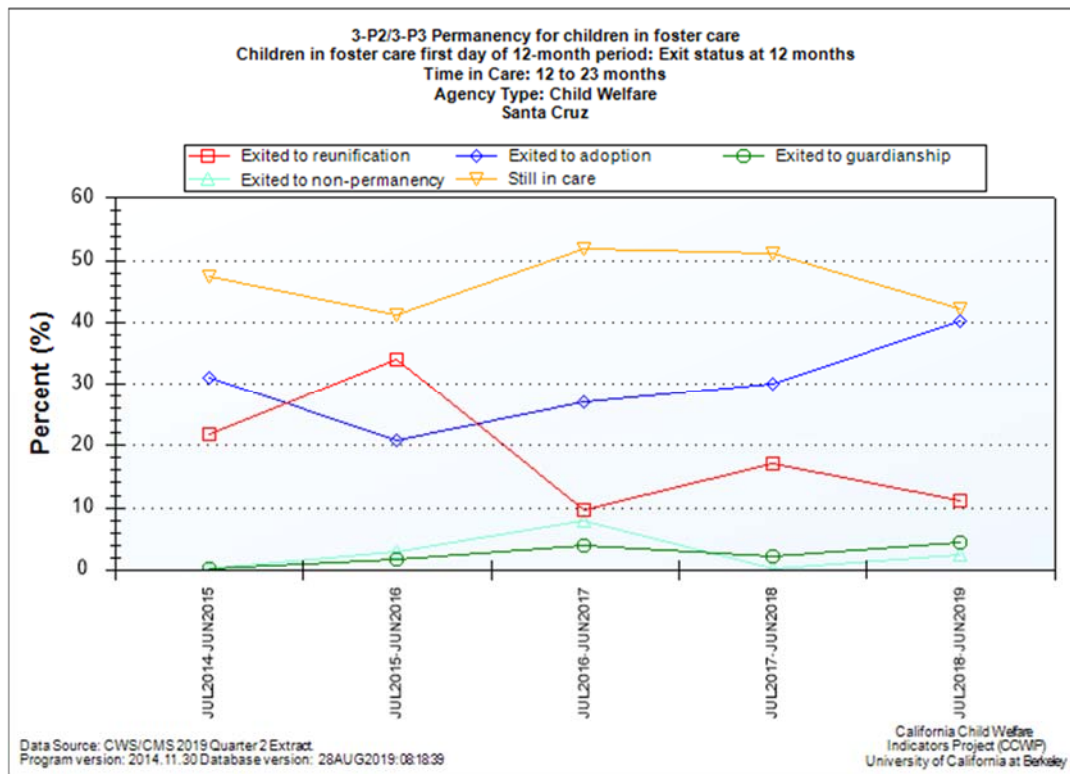
increase of families entering the child welfare system who are experiencing homelessness. These families encounter many difficulties around housing stability and delays in obtaining housing, which can prolong the timelines for permanency. Also, FCS works diligently to place as many children as possible with their relatives or non-related extended family members (NREFM). These families are more likely to wait to obtain adoption or legal guardianship in the hope that their family member can address the issues that brought them to the attention of child welfare and get their children back. FCS is trying to positively impact this measure through its 2015-2020 SIP strategies which include the expansion of Leaps and Bounds services, increased availability and effectiveness of substance abuse treatment, implementation of Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, improving engagement of father, and the continued efforts to find relative caregivers.

Measure P2 Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care 12-23 Months

This measure looks at all children who have been in foster care for 12-23 months as of the first day of the selected 12-month period and determines what percentage was discharged to permanency within 12 months of the start of the period. Permanency is determined as reunification, adoption, or guardianship.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/18	12/31/18	16	37	43.2	↓	-24.3%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the number of children achieving permanency during the year who had been in foster care 12-23 months decreased from 57.1% to 43.2%. Current performance meets the national standard (43.6%).



ANALYSIS

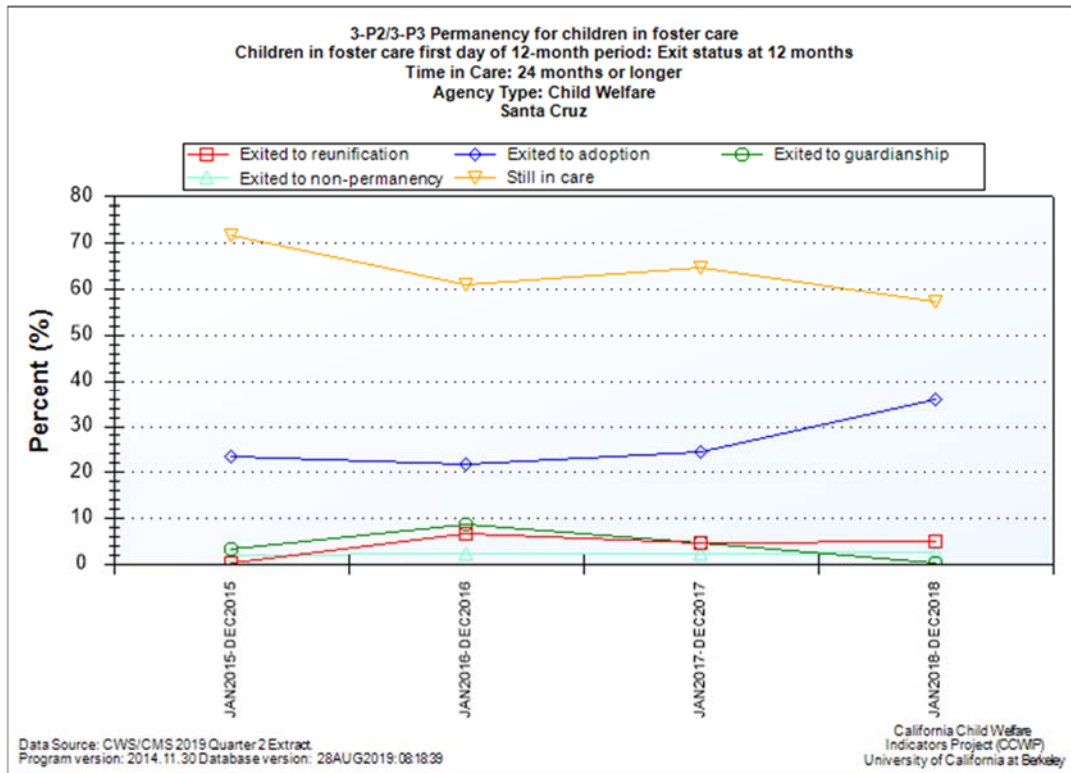
Historically, FCS has performed well in this measure. We have a high rate of relative placements and Santa Cruz County is consistently in the top five California counties with respect to the percentage of children placed with relatives. In general, relatives have been more willing to provide permanency to children in Santa Cruz County. In addition, under the Roots & Wings federal grant initiative, FCS has made strong efforts to train social work staff on the importance of permanency for all children. However, there has been a decline the last few years and this may be due to the effects of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR). The additional workload of CCR such as CFTs, finding home-based placements for children and youth with intense mental health needs, and connecting requirements of RFA with Adoptions may be impacting the ability of social workers to facilitate permanency for children and youth. Also, due to the efforts of FCS to divert children and families out of the foster care system with support networks and voluntary services, many of the families that do come into the foster care system are very high needs. The children and youth in these families may be staying in the foster care system longer because of their high needs.

Measure P3 Permanency in 12 Months for Children in Foster Care 24 Months or More

This measure looks at all children who have been in foster care for 24 months or more on the first day of the selected 12-month period and determines what percent were discharged to permanency within 12 months of the start of the period.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/18	12/31/18	17	41	41.5	↑	+63.4%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the number of children achieving permanency during the year who had been in foster care 24 months or more increased from 25.4% to 41.5%. Current performance exceeds the national standard (30.3%).



ANALYSIS

The current performance is 41.5%, which exceeds the national standard. Research shows that the longer children stay in care, the harder it is to find permanency options as these options would likely have been exhausted in the first 24 months (Carnochan, Lee, & Austin, 2013). Some of the SIP strategies to improve this measure with older youth include the use of Permanency Team Meetings (PTM's), CFTs where permanency is the main focus, increased training, and use of SOP. In addition, FCS has engaged in continuous family finding and seeking alternative permanency options through family finding and engagement efforts. Due to the

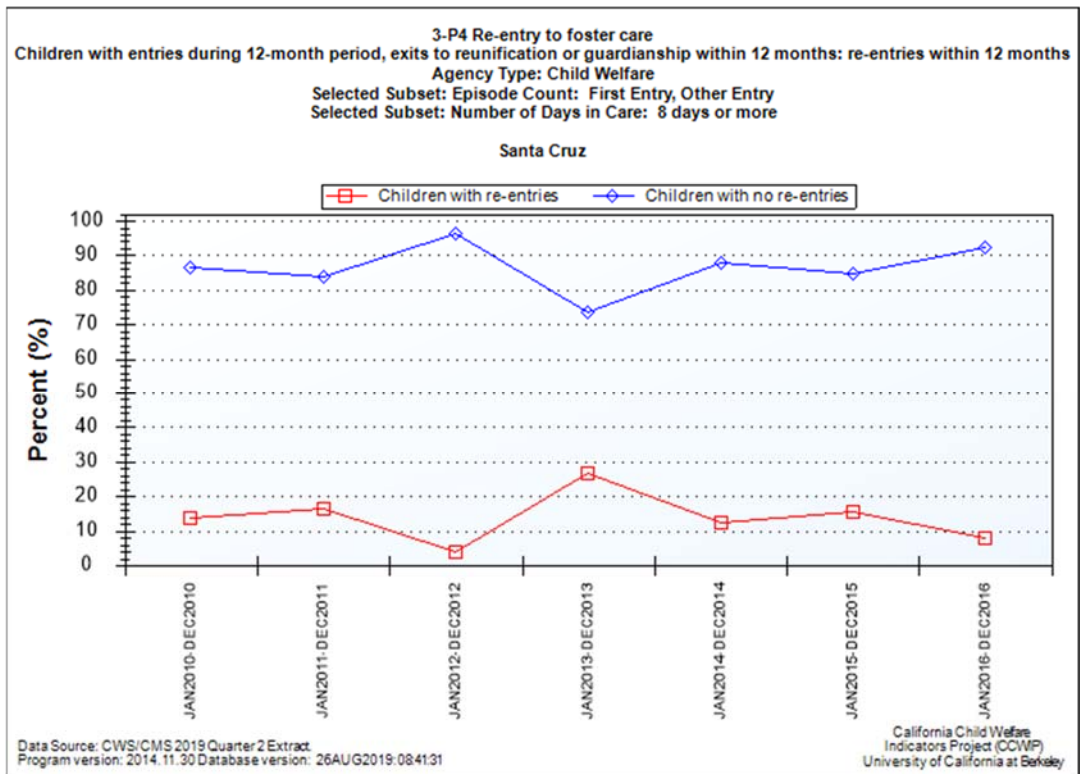
closing of group homes and the restricted use of Short-Term Residential Treatment Programs (STRTPs), FCS has increased focus on finding home-based placements for these youth. However, many of these youth have high levels of mental health and/or substance abuse issues, which makes finding permanency more challenging. In order to address this issue, FCS released a RFP for Kinship Support Services where a trained Masters-level social worker/clinician can go into homes and provide crisis counseling/therapeutic interventions to stabilize placements. Services began in March 2019. FCS emphasizes relative placements, and this results in longer time in care for some young children as parents attempt to reunify and relatives try to rise to the challenge of taking care of a relative child. Therefore, P1 is impacted for Santa Cruz County. However, FCS performs well in P2 and P3 as once the initial timelines for reunification have passed, relative and NREFMS are ready or willing to provide a permanent home for the children in their care.

Measure P4 Re-entry to Foster Care

This measure looks at the number of children who entered foster care in the selected 12-month period, were discharged to reunification or guardianship within 12 months, and reentered foster care within 12 months of their discharge date. If a child reenters foster care multiple times within the 12-month period following discharge, only the first reentry date will be selected. Because the measure looks forward from the start of the placement, data are not displayed for the most recent 24 months.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/16	12/31/16	4	52	7.7	↑	+213%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the number of children re-entering foster care within 12 months of their discharge date decreased from 24.1% to 7.7%. Current performance is above the national standard (8.3%).



ANALYSIS

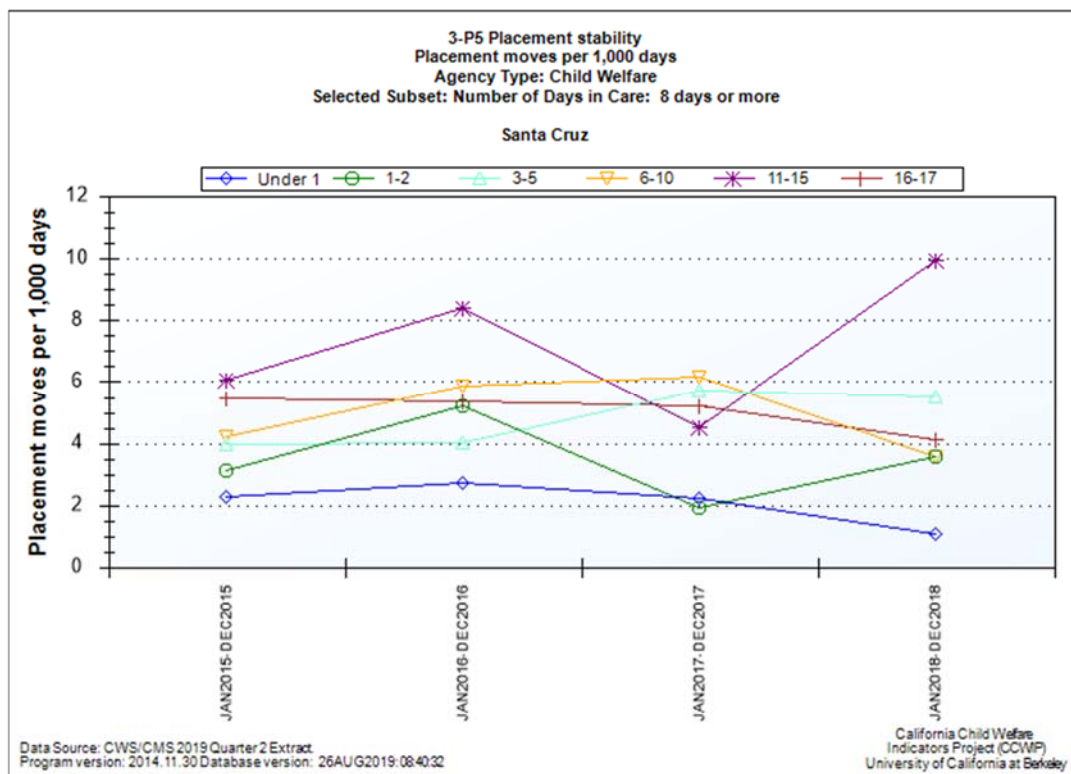
The baseline performance for this measure was 24.1% which did not meet the national standard of 8.3%, however, the current performance is 7.7%. This significant improvement from baseline is due to many factors, some of which are due to increased availability and effectiveness of substance abuse – related services and the use of Children and Family Team meetings (CFT). The improved performance in P4 may also be related to the decreased performance in P1. Many families that FCS works with have severe substance abuse issues, at times coupled with mental health and/or domestic violence, which takes time to address and is characterized with relapses. FCS works diligently with families and their supports to help facilitate return of the child(ren) to their birth families and to make sure that those families are equipped with tools and support networks to prevent re-entry into foster care. Some of these tools include Triple P parenting classes, building support networks through the use of SOP and CFTm’s, and connecting parents to resources in the community.

Measure P5 Placement Stability

This measure displays the rate of placement moves per day of foster care for children who enter foster care in the selected 12-month period. This measure counts the total number of placement moves and the total number of days in foster care at the end of the selected 12-month period. This is then multiplied by 1,000 to determine the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/18	12/31/18	43	11,471	3.75	↑	+8.5%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate of placement moves per day of foster care for children entering foster care has decreased from 4.1 to 3.75. Current performance is above the national standard (4.1%).



ANALYSIS

Placement stability is one of the main areas of focus for FCS, and performance has been exceeding or meeting national standards for some time. In CFSR 3 measure P5 Placement Stability, FCS continues to meet the national standard. Some of the contributing factors to this performance include the extensive supports given to resource parents and the intensive

training they receive. Also, Santa Cruz County’s high rate of placement with relatives contributes to placement stability for children from our County. Currently, there is a Kinship Support Services Program that launched in late 2017 that provides in-home support for relative caregivers. The establishment of CCR and RFA social workers who carry a caseload of resource parents is another positive impact to this performance measure.

Measure 2B Referrals by Time to Investigation (Immediate)

This measure answers the question regarding whether a qualified first contact was made in a timely manner for immediate referrals.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
10/1/18	12/31/18	93	97	95.9%	=	0%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate for making first contact in a timely manner for immediate stayed the same. Current performance exceeds the national standard (90%). Please note that this measure was obtained from CCWIP, which seems to be different than the static report provided by CDSS, which has a numerator of 91 instead of 93.

Measure 2B Referrals by Time to Investigation (10-day)

This measure answers the question regarding whether a qualified first contact made in a timely manner for ten-day referrals. Please note that this measure considers all contacts made within ten days to be in compliance.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
10/1/18	12/31/18	264	278	95%	↓	-1.9%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate for making first contact in a timely manner for ten-day referrals decreased slightly from 96.9% to 95%. Current performance exceeds the national standard (90%). Please note that this measure was obtained from CCWIP, which seems to be different than the static report provided by CDSS, which has a numerator of 260 instead of 264.

ANALYSIS

Santa Cruz County is above 95% in each of the measures related to timely response to referrals. There are several practices that may be impacting this measure in a positive manner. The agency has a bilingual social worker assigned to the hotline screening process. This enables the Screening unit to obtain complete referrals at the time of the call and has reduced the need for call backs in these cases. This results in faster assignment and response.

Another practice change is the front-end redistribution of social worker tasks, in which emergency response and dependency investigations functions were combined into a single investigations caseload. One impact of this redistribution was a decrease the number of referrals assigned per social worker. With fewer referrals, social workers can spend more time in initially locating families.

Measure 2F Timely Monthly Caseworker Out-of-Home Visits

This measure is for children who have been in placement for at least one month during the selected period, this display shows how many received at least one qualified contact for each whole calendar month they were in placement. Compliance is based on contact in every eligible month.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/18	12/31/18	1,728	1,835	94.2%	↑	+0.9%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate of children who received at least one qualified contact for each whole calendar month they were in placement increased from 93.3% to 94.2%. Current performance is just below the national standard (95%). Please note that this measure was obtained from CCWIP, which seems to be different than the static report provided by CDSS, which has a numerator of 1,709 instead of 1,728 and denominator of 1,854 instead of 1,835.

Measure 2F Timely Monthly Caseworker Out-of-Home Visits in Client Residence

This measure looks for all clients with at least one recorded qualified contact in the selected timeframe, how many occurred in the client's residence. Compliance is based on whether the contact occurred in the client's residence.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/18	12/31/18	1,189	1,728	68.8%	↓	-1.7%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate for making a qualified contact in the client's residence decreased slightly from 70.5% to 68.8%. Current performance exceeds the national standard (50%). Please note that this measure was obtained from CCWIP, which seems to be different than the static report provided by CDSS, which has a numerator of 1,175 instead of 1,189 and a denominator of 1,709 instead of 1,728.

ANALYSIS

Santa Cruz County has improved in timely monthly caseworker out-of-home visits since Q4 2015 even though it is slightly below the national standard. However, this is due to late data entry into CWS/CMS as all caseworkers are seeing their children on a monthly basis unless there is the rare situation that may arise where the social worker is not able to make contact, which mostly occurs with non-minor dependents. There was a slight decrease in making contacts in the client's residence since Q4 2015, however, it is still well above the national standard.

Measure 4A Placement with Siblings

This measure shows what proportion of children were in a placement setting with all or some siblings? Siblings are counted if the relationship to the child in placement is whole, half, step- or maternal sibling.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/19	1/1/19	43	76	75%	↓	-0.7%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate children in a placement setting with all or some siblings decreased slightly from 75.7% to 75%.

ANALYSIS

Santa Cruz County continues to emphasize placing siblings together in an effort to decrease the effects of being removed and supporting the continuity of family relationships. Please note that this measure was obtained from CCWIP, which seems to be different than the static report provided by CDSS, which has a numerator of 59 instead of 43 and a denominator of 81 instead of 76.

Measure 4B Placement Entries (Relative/NREFM)

This measure shows the distribution of facilities for the first out-of-home placement in the first episode and the table below indicates the percentage placed in a relative/NREFM home as the first out-of-home placement.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/18	12/31/18	19	67	28%	=	0%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate of children placed with a relative/NREFM as their first out-of-home placement stayed the same. Please note that this measure was obtained from CCWIP, which seems to be different than the static report provided by CDSS, which has a numerator of 23 instead of 19 and a denominator of 87 instead of 67.

Measure 4B Predominant Placement (Relative/NREFM)

This measure shows the distribution of the predominant placement type children entering into an out-of-home placement and the table below indicates the percentage placed in a relative/NREFM home as the predominant out-of-home placement type.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
1/1/18	12/31/18	24	67	35.8%	↓	-11.8%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate of children entering foster care who are placed in an out-of-home placement that is predominantly a relative/NREFM home has decreased from 47.6% to 35.8%. Please note that this measure was obtained from CCWIP, which seems to be different than the static report provided by CDSS, which has a numerator of 38 instead of 24 and a denominator of 103 instead of 67.

ANALYSIS

There are no national standards for placing children in the least restrictive setting, however, in Santa Cruz County has always emphasized placement with relatives and NREFMs. Part of the reason why there seems to be a decrease in relative/NREFM placements is that since the implementation of CCR and RFA, relatives and NREFMs go through the same approval process. Due to this reason, CWS/CMS has combined relatives, NREFMs, and resource parents under the category of resource family homes. When looking at the data via Binti or running business analytics on the back end of CWS/CMS, we see that the predominant placement for relatives/NREFM hovers around 40 - 45%, which is equivalent to Q4 2015.

Measure 4E(1) ICWA Placement Preferences – ICWA Eligible

This measure shows the distribution of placements for ICWA eligible children, broken down by the ethnicity of their substitute care provider for each age group of children.

Placement Status	Age Group								Total
	Under 1	'1-2	'3-5	'6-10	'11-15	16-17	18-21	Missing	
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	
Relatives
Non Relatives, Indian SCPs
Non Relatives, Non Indian SCPs	1	.	.	1
Non Relatives, SCP Ethnic Missing
Group Homes
SILP
Other
Missing
Total	1	.	.	1

Measure 4E(2) ICWA Placement Preferences – American Indian Ethnicity

This measure shows the distribution of placements for American Indian children (regardless of designated ICWA eligibility), broken down by the ethnicity of their substitute care provider for each age group of children.

Placement Status	Age Group								Total
	Under 1	'1-2	'3-5	'6-10	'11-15	16-17	18-21	Missing	
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	
Relatives	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	2
Non Relatives, Indian SCPs	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Non Relatives, Non Indian SCPs	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	.	2
Non Relatives, SCP Ethnic Missing	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Group Homes	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
SILP	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	1
Other	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Missing	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Total	1	1	.	.	1	2	1	.	6

ANALYSIS

These two charts for Measures 4E(1) and (2) represent point-in-time data. There is no baseline or comparison data. As there are no federally recognized Indian Tribes in Santa Cruz County, there is generally a small number of ICWA eligible children in care. Santa Cruz County continues to have no identified Indian resource families but has been able to place some children of multi-ethnicity including American Indian, with relatives.

Measure 5B(1) Physical Examinations

This measure looks at whether the client has been kept up-to-date with Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) medical exams. When a child is removed from a home, he/she should receive an initial CHDP medical exam within 30 days of removal. After the initial exam, workers are expected to ensure that the child receives a qualifying medical exam in accordance with the published exam periodicity schedule.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
10/1/18	12/31/18	110	176	62.5%	↓	-2.1%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate of children with up-to-date CHDP medical exams decreased slightly from 64.6% to 62.5%.

Measure 5B(2) Dental Examinations

This measure looks at whether the client has been kept up-to-date with Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) dental exams. When a child is removed from a home, he/she should receive an initial CHDP dental exam within 30 days of removal. After the initial exam, workers are expected to ensure that the child receives a qualifying dental exam in accordance with the published exam periodicity schedule.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
10/1/18	12/31/18	61	159	38.4%	↓	-6.7%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the rate of children with up-to-date CHDP medical exams decreased from 45.1% to 38.4%.

ANALYSIS

Santa Cruz County has seen low rates of completed CHDP medical and dental exams when looking in CWS/CMS. Much of this is due to data entry issues. FCS partners with the Health Services Agency to provide two public health nurses (PHNs) to help track these exams and enter the information into CWS/CMS. There has been some turnover in these positions which has led

to a backlog of data entry. FCS is working diligently to determine the best way to get CHDM medical and dental examinations entered into CWS/CMS timely.

Measure 5F Psychotropic Medication Authorization

This measure includes all children with open cases and open out-of-home placements in the Child Welfare Department. Placement episodes must be 31 days or longer.

No data exists for this measure in Q4 2018 report or in Berkeley’s California Child Welfare Indicators Project website. FCS will look into the reason why there is no information, which may be due to similar reasons mentioned above regarding data entry.

Measure 6B Individualized Education Plan

This measure shows if children in placement have had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) at any point during any placement episode.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
10/1/18	12/31/18	1	170	0.6%	↓	-0.2%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the number of children in placement with an IEP at any point during any placement episode decreased from 0.8% to 0.6%.

ANALYSIS

Due to the apparent lack of data entry, it cannot currently be determined what percentage of children actually have IEP’s. The data suggests a continued decrease in youth who receive IEP services to a current level of only 0.6%. From our partnership with the County Office of Education, FosterEd program, it is well documented that foster youth in Santa Cruz County are overrepresented in the group of youth receiving IEP services in the County. We have two education liaisons stationed imbedded in both North and South County offices with FCS.

This is another area where the County needs to emphasize data entry into CWS/CMS. We may need to provide further training for staff on data entry for this measure. Educational service providers have recommended in the past for training for CWS and Probation staff, to better understand the purpose, development and implementation of IEP’s, SST’s and SARB. A heightened awareness of these issues may also lead to increased focus on data entry for this measure. This is an area of improvement that FCS had in the last CSA and will need to be addressed during the 2020-2025 cycle.

Measure 8A Completed High School or Equivalency

This measure answers the question: Of those youth exiting out of foster care, how many completed high school or equivalency?

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
10/1/18	12/31/18	4	4	100%	↑	+33.3%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the percentage of exiting youth who completed high school or equivalency increased from 66.7% to 100%.

ANALYSIS

Due to very low numbers of youth exiting foster care at age 18-21 in Santa Cruz County, the percentage for the period in question represents four youth who completed high school or equivalency. The County's ILP and FosterEd programs provide ongoing support to foster youth to assist them in meeting their educational goals.

Measure 8A Obtained Employment

This measure answers the question: of those youth exiting out of foster care, how many of them obtained employment?

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
10/1/18	12/31/18	4	4	100%	↑	+33.3%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the percentage of exiting youth who obtained employment increased from 66.7% to 100%.

ANALYSIS

As mentioned earlier, the number of youth exiting foster care at age 18-21 small. For the time period mentioned in the above table, the data represents four youth who obtained employment. The County's ILP program provides workshops to assist youth in preparing resumes and seeking employment. Employment is an area that many stakeholder groups have recognized as a critical need for youth, both while in care and upon transition out of the foster care system. CWS youth express the desire for additional employment assistance.

Measure 8A Have Housing Arrangements

This measure answers the question: Of those youth exiting out of foster care, what is the percentage who exited with housing arrangements?

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
10/1/18	12/31/18	4	4	100%	↑	+33.3%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the percentage of exiting youth who had housing arrangements increased from 66.7% to 100%.

ANALYSIS

THP+ and THP+ Foster Care are extremely helpful to youth in obtaining stable housing. However, the issue of homelessness and lack of affordable housing makes finding housing very difficult in Santa Cruz County. Service providers describe a struggle to locate available housing for youth and discuss the difficulty of finding landlords willing to accept program youth. There has been recent expansion at the state level to increase housing for foster youth and this will help make it easier as well as provide housing to additional youth.

Measure 8A Permanency Connection with an Adult

This measure answers the question: Of those youth exiting out of foster care, how many reported having a permanent connection with an adult?

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
10/1/18	12/31/18	4	4	100%	=	0%

From the baseline of Q4 2015 to Q4 2018, the percentage of exiting youth who reported having a permanent connection with an adult stayed the same – 100%.

ANALYSIS

There has always been an increased focus on older youth establishing permanent connections and the Permanency social workers do this well. Youth have articulated how CWS staff assisted them in solidifying relationships with adults. In addition, service providers also understand the importance of permanent connections and several youth have reported the importance of connections with their CASAs.

Outcome Data Measures- Probation

The source for this data is the CSS Berkeley Website, the Kids Database and Safemeasures.

Measure S1: Maltreatment in Foster Care

This measure answers the question: How many youth that were in placement in Santa Cruz County during the time frame between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019 were identified as victims of substantiated maltreatment while in placement?

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
07/01/18	06/30/19	0	1,971	0.00	=	N/A

From the baseline of July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019 the number of children served in foster care during the year, whom were not victims of a substantiated maltreatment allegation by a foster parent or facility staff member remained the same, 100% to 100%. National Compliance Standard is 8.50%.

ANALYSIS:

In this period, Santa Cruz County Probation has had no incidents of maltreatment in care for probation youth. It should be noted that during the last five years only one incident was investigated for possible maltreatment, but it was not substantiated. Further, in order to properly evaluate and analyze trends in probation we looked at a bigger stretch in time due to the generally small numbers we see in the placement unit.

Measure P1: Permanency in 12 months for children entering foster care

This measure answers the question: How many youth that were discharged from placement during the time frame between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019 actually completed their placement within 12 months?

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
07/01/17	06/30/18	0	5	0.00	=	-100.0%

In comparison, five years ago in Santa Cruz County, of all the youth on probation discharged from foster care to reunification during the year who had been in foster care for 8 days or longer, 29% were reunified in less than 12 months from the date of the latest removal from home. National Compliance Standard is 40.5%.

Analysis: The Probation Department utilizes a Risk, Needs and Responsivity Principle to determine desired outcomes for the youth we serve. This is then followed by selecting providers who have demonstrated high success rates for youth in need of specific services related to the youth’s needs. As we have transitioned to the STRTP model as required by the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) the matching of treatment and the youth’s needs have actually become an easier process but the unfortunate part so far is that there seems to be fewer programs to choose from, fewer local programs and longer waiting times to place youth in an STRTP.

Measure P2: Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 12-23 months

This measure answers the question: How many youth that were discharged from placement during the time frame between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019 actually completed their placement within 12-23 months?

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
07/01/18	06/30/19	0	0	N/A	=	-100.0%

Analysis: When trying to compare data from five years ago there was no available records. However, based on recent trends with youth on probation in Santa Cruz County the average length of time in Juvenile Hall while awaiting placement from disposition to entering an STRTP program has climbed to over 70 days. There are some isolated instances of youth who unfortunately have had to wait many months to even begin their placement program. The result is that youth are rarely completing their programs and returning home within 12 months and are far more likely to complete their programs between 12-23 months. This will be an area of focus for Probation over the next several years to try and streamline the placement process to shorten the overall amount of time a youth is away from home and probably out of county as well. National Compliance Standard is 43.6%.

Measure P3: Permanency in 12 months for children in foster care 24 months or more

This measure answers the question: How many youth that were discharged from placement during the time frame between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019 actually completed their placement in 24 months or longer?

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
07/01/18	06/30/19	0	1	0.0	=	N/A

ANALYSIS

- As was the case in Measure P2 there was no five-year data available to compare the current numbers to but looking a recent information such as Quarter 4, 2018 there were two youth who fell into this measure and of those two only one reached permanency. The numbers are historically low for this measure as most probation youth do not spend 24 or more months in placement. There are several reasons for this as most group homes in the last ten years were designed to work with youth for 12-16 months. This length of time should go down eventually when STRTP programs have been up and running for some time and are fully staffed with highly trained staff including clinicians. The expectation when the CCR was enacted is that STRTP programs should be local and should last on average between 6-9 months. The transition from traditional congregate care has been very challenging for programs even resulting in many of these programs to close their doors rather than change their business models. It has been challenging for some programs to pass certification standards and for some programs their staff have not been trained to work with youth who require a great deal more treatment than youth that previously would have gone to a lower level group home. National Compliance Standards 30.3%.

Measure P4: Re-entry to foster care in 12 months

This measure answers the question: How many youth who were discharged within 12 months were brought back into the system of care?

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
07/01/16	06/30/17	0	5	0.00	=	N/A

ANALYSIS

A significant amount of effort has been put into offering transition services to youth who complete placement in an STRTP program and these efforts have seen positive results with youth not coming back into foster care within 12 months of discharge. A few examples of the work that is being done include the utilization of the Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) which are now used with every youth and their family before a youth leaves for a placement, while youth are in placement and then when youth are ready to return home. This has probably contributed a great deal to youth identifying opportunities in the community to be successful before they ever return home. Some examples of this might be assistance with enrollment in a vocational or educational program, or assistance with building job skills and receiving techniques to interview more competitively.

Another significant example is the recent news that Santa Cruz County Probation and its community-based partners were awarded a Title II Grant award to offer reentry services to youth who are in out of home confinement. This includes youth who are in Juvenile Hall,

Placement, Ranch Camps and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). The award is for more than 1 million dollars over three years and is called the Stable Transitions After Reentry (STAR) project. National Compliance Standard is 8.3%.

Measure P5: Placement stability

This measure answers the question: the number of youth who entered foster care during a 12-month period and the subsequent number of placement moves during that 12 month period.

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
07/01/18	06/30/19	0	1,457	0.00	=	-100.0%

Analysis: In looking at the numbers as reported above it is a positive note that we do not get a lot of movement in and out of placement for the most part. In comparison, five years ago in Santa Cruz County Probation, there were three documented placement moves and this appears to be a reasonably high number for that this measure. There are many contributing factors to placement stability including the fact that our placement staff are very active in the placements and on-site regardless of the location at least every 30 days. Additionally, when on-site our staff spend a great deal of time engaging our youth and trying to do everything possible to ensure the youth is adjusting well and that our youth are not being mistreated in any way. The addition of the CFTM has only increased placement stability and with the addition of our new reentry services grant we will increase contact with youth in out of home placement and their families as we will be putting together a transition plan that will require staff meet with the youth 90 days, 60 days and 30 days prior to release to work specifically on the transition plan. This is new to Santa Cruz County and will hopefully do nothing but add to placement stability. National Compliance Standard is 4.12%.

Measure 2F: Timely monthly caseworker visits (out of home)

This measure answers the question: Were youth being seen in a timely manner and were monthly caseworker visits being completed?

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
07/01/18	06/30/19	19	37	51.4	=	-36.9%

Analysis: Placement Officers are required to contact our youth who have been removed from their homes and there is plenty of information that staff are getting to the programs and seeing our youth. In fact, during a one-year period from July 2018 to June 2019 documentation in Safemeasures indicated that 31 contacts were made, and 80 overall contacts were recorded. During a one period between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015 there 173 contacts made and 190

recorded. This demonstrates that the probation numbers were much higher five years ago, but it also indicates that our staff have always done a significant amount of field work.

Measure 2F: Timely monthly caseworker visits (residence)

This measure answers the question: Were youth being seen in a timely manner and were monthly caseworker visits being completed at the residence?

Most recent start date	Most recent end date	Most recent numerator	Most recent denominator	Most recent performance	Direction?	Percent change
07/01/18	06/30/19	17	19	89.5	=	-8.0%

Analysis: As noted in the section above, not only do our officers visit youth in the placement facilities but they also see youth in the residence to ensure the transition from placement back to home is as uneventful as possible. Although previously noted above that the number of youth in out of home placement was much higher in 2014-2015 a good example of the data that supports this is that in 2014-2015 there were 148 contacts in the residence and 173 overall contacts recorded. In 2018-2019 there 27 contacts in the residence with 31 contacts recorded overall.

Summary of Findings

Populations at Greatest Risk

Santa Cruz continues to struggle with many of the same challenges of the previous C-CFSR cycle. The strengths and challenges of its child welfare and juvenile probation systems occur within the context of the county's high cost of living, extreme economic disparity of the client population and the lack of placement resources within the local area. There are vast differences in the economic resources available in the north part of the county focused on the city of Santa Cruz and the south part of the county centered around Watsonville. The cost of housing and other basic needs is very high in north county with a significant population of highly educated, affluent individuals, many of whom work in Silicon Valley or have chosen to retire in the Santa Cruz area. In contrast, Watsonville centers around the agricultural industry drawing a large population of field workers (primarily Latino immigrants) who are employed seasonally at relatively low wages.

The correlation between race, ethnicity and poverty has been demonstrated across the nation for those served by the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, and Santa Cruz county is no exception. The number of children and youth entering foster care continues to decline, yet many of the families who do enter care have complex needs, are socially isolated and often have significant trauma histories. This multi-faceted set of conditions impacts the likelihood that these children and youth will return home in a timely manner. Notably, the majority of children and youth in out of home care being supervised by FCS or Juvenile Probation are Latino. Approximately 70% of the youth on probation in south county reside in just two zip codes further demonstrating the challenges that many of our youth face in finding equity and opportunity.

In addition, Santa Cruz is designated as a "Rural" county for the purposes of setting foster care rates, yet the cost of living is far more reflective of an urban Bay Area county. Therefore, the care rate is set lower than the rate set for urban communities. This poses significant implications for recruitment and retention of resource families.

County Strengths

There are many strengths in Santa Cruz county in terms of its people, practices and partnerships. Both FCS and Juvenile Probation have developed a committed, compassionate, caring workforce that focus group participants indicated are respected by clients and other stakeholders. There is a strong coordinated effort among FCS and community partners to preserve families and prevent removals through early intervention and safety planning. Both agencies have cultivated good relationships with community based services and child and family serving partners.

Santa Cruz demonstrates its commitment to fairness, equity and cultural competence in multiple ways. A wide array of bi-lingual services, placements, and social workers support cultural responsiveness to the large Latino population served by FCS and Juvenile Probation.

This includes advocacy for immigrant families, as well as those who may be undocumented. Focus group input noted a strong demonstration of respect for all cultural groups by the staff and management, along with a commitment to raising awareness of bias and mitigating its impact on case decisions. Cultural humility and ongoing learning are important values among FCS, JPD and their partners. This theme extends to concerted efforts in placing children and youth with relatives or NREFMs to help keep them connected to their extended family and culture.

Key principles and values of the Core Practice Model (CPM) are beginning to take hold throughout the practices and experiences of children, youth and families, including family engagement, teaming, youth & family centered case planning, inquiry and accountability. Focus group participants and peer reviewers recognized the strong spirit of cooperation and teamwork among social workers, service providers and system partners in working toward reunification; the growing involvement of fathers in case planning; and the increased use of child and family teaming as a forum for family/youth-led decision-making.

Areas Needing Improvement

Santa Cruz county has many resources available for both families and staff, and established, effective, interagency partnerships. However, with a high turnover at both the leadership and line operations levels within FCS in recent years, there is a need for organizational stabilization. It will be important to bring the organization together around key goals and priorities to help unify efforts across the division and reinforce essential community partnerships. Continuing to identify and address racial/ethnic disparities remains central in these efforts.

Limited local placements affect service delivery and continuity while placing many logistical demands on staff and the system. The implementation of CCR has been a big lift for all counties and is exacerbated in Santa Cruz by a lack of local placement resources. In addition, county analysis has shown that children who do not achieve timely permanency are likely to come from families with complex histories. These require significant effort to ensure child safety, even with the county's robust service delivery system.

Other difficulties speak to the need to push forward with existing work such as full implementation of CFT practice, greater engagement of family and youth in case planning decisions, improved mental health service delivery coordination, and more consistent use of Safety Organized Practice throughout the case life cycle. A more efficient approval process along with timely engagement and communication with caregivers, as well as concrete supports and training, would mitigate gaps in resource family recruitment and engagement and support timely permanency for both FCS and Juvenile Probation.

The implementation of CFTs at both agencies is still on-going and needs to be supported as a venue to hear and understand the voices of parents and children. This has become a central avenue to build and strengthen the team relationships so important to producing good

outcomes. The open, transparent communication that is foundational to this teaming process could also be stronger across the child welfare division.

Service Array Gaps and Needs

Santa Cruz has a strong network of community based organizations that serve children, youth and families with an emphasis on prevention, early intervention and family support. However, there are some accommodations that are needed to increase parent participation, such as access to services on evenings and weekends, increased use of Wraparound, enhanced care coordination, and expanded crisis response. In addition, primary and secondary prevention of child maltreatment is a significant need in the county that is gaining focus. However, funding is a major issue to developing these prevention services due to the way child welfare funding works, which is to treat families after the child maltreatment has already occurred.

For JPD there is a need for services locally that address the needs of youth and families involved in juvenile justice, including CSEC youth, adolescent-oriented substance abuse treatment, and parent education for youth with intensive needs. Other supportive service needs for probation include long-term mentor relationships, CASAs and peer mentors for probation youth; respite for probation parents as a “cool down” resource to preserve the parent-youth relationship, and 24/7 crisis intervention for youth in relative care or at home.

The current lack of Therapeutic Foster Homes for both FCS and Juvenile Probation children and youth is another need for the county as this leads to children and youth being placed out of the county in STRTPs or lacking placement stability due to resource families not having the capacity to care for them.

Outcome Data Measures and Relevant Data Trends

Timely permanency (P1) continues to be an area of improvement for Santa Cruz County FCS and is the focus of the 2020-2025 SIP. Several characteristics of the service population contribute to this data trend. The majority of families that come into contact with FCS have significant substance abuse, mental illness, and/or domestic violence co-occurring. These are issues that require significant time to address and are often characterized by multiple relapses. For this reason, reunification within 12 months is not always possible. In addition, there has been an increase of families entering the child welfare system who are experiencing homelessness. These families encounter many difficulties around housing stability and delays in obtaining housing, which can prolong the timelines for permanency. Also, FCS works diligently to place as many children as possible with their relatives or non-related extended family members (NREFM). These families are more likely to wait to obtain adoption or legal guardianship in the hope that their family member can address the issues that brought them to the attention of child welfare so that their children can safely return home.

Significant improvement in re-entries into foster care (P4) can be attributed to several factors. Greater availability and effectiveness of substance abuse services and the use of Children and Family Team meetings (CFT) have strengthen families’ stability and readiness for reunification. The improved performance in P4 may also be related to the decreased performance in P1.

Many families that FCS works with have severe substance abuse issues, often coupled with mental health and/or domestic violence, which takes time to address and is characterized with relapses. FCS works diligently with families and their supports to help facilitate return of the child(ren) to their birth families ensuring those families are equipped with tools and support networks to prevent re-entry into foster care.

For Juvenile Probation, timely exits to permanency within 12-23 months is the focus area as youth are staying longer in Juvenile Hall awaiting placement orders or awaiting acceptance into a STRTP. Juvenile Probation is doing well in placement stability (P5) due to various programs to help stabilize youth such as FUERTE and Wraparound.

Effect of System Factors on Outcome Data Measures and Service Delivery

The CFSR outcome measures are meant to be understood in the context of one another. That is, a shift in the performance of one part of the child welfare system has some impact on other parts of the system. For example, fast permanency rates often pair with high reentry rates, suggesting that when children are sent home too soon, before the problems that precipitated the need for foster care are fully resolved, the result is a quick return to care. Santa Cruz continues to concentrate on striking a balance between increasing timely permanency while keeping re-entries low.

On the permanency side, several dynamics are at play. First, permanency rates are strongly negatively correlated with entry rates [[Beyond Common Sense: Child Welfare, Child Well-Being, and the Evidence for Policy Reform](#); Fred Wulczyn, Richard P. Barth, Ying-Ying T. Yuan and Brenda Jones Harden (2005)]. Low entry rates typically result in longer average lengths of stay because only the most challenging children are admitted to care. County analysis confirms that this appears to be the case in Santa Cruz.

Children who do achieve permanency within 12 months do so primarily through reunification rather than guardianship and adoption, which tend to take longer because reunification efforts are attempted first (for Juvenile Probation, there were no guardianships or adoptions). Therefore, it will be important to separately create practice improvements and targets around the specific permanency destinations. Children that remain in care beyond desired timelines tend to be older, and the county must consider its service delivery system for youth and young adults who remain in care.

Progress, Challenges, and Overall Lessons Learned from Previous SIP

The 2015 SIP focused on P1 – Timely Permanency Achievement within 12 Months. In spite of a number of strategies applied to meet identified targets in these areas, Santa Cruz continues to struggle with this measure, and will continue to focus on it in the 2020 SIP. Important positive trends continue, including fewer removals, improved reunifications, placement stability, decreased re-entry into foster care, and a decline in recurrence of maltreatment. The issue of re-entries is a trade-off with the measure regarding time in care. Santa Cruz is committed to

avoiding long stays in care and reunifying children, but the sooner children are reunified, the more they are at risk for re-entry. That is a statewide dilemma, and FCS continues to seek the right balance.

In the 2018 SIP Progress Report, FCS showed significant progress in P1, which was 44.7%. However, for Q4 2018, there was a decrease to 24.3%. As previously discussed, co-occurrence of substance use, mental health, domestic violence, and/or homelessness makes it difficult to achieve reunification or other form of permanency in 12 months. It is also important to note that due to the small numbers of children/youth in care for FCS, a small deviation in numbers can impact the percentages related to P1 drastically.

In the 2015 SIP Santa Cruz began to positively impact timely permanency through implementation of a number of practice improvements, such as expansion of Leaps and Bounds parenting education services, increased availability and effectiveness of substance abuse treatment, implementation of Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings, improving engagement of fathers, and the continued efforts to locate and engage relative caregivers. All these efforts have been integrated into the framework of Safety Organized Practice (SOP) and applying the practice and leadership behaviors associated with the California Core Practice Model (CPM). SOP includes using solution-focused tools to engage families and youth while ensuring that assessments and interactions with families are behaviorally specific and focused on the safety threats that require intervention. In order to strengthen this approach, deliberate oversight and review of practice need to be consistently provided, including solution-focused case consultation and leadership support of this complex casework. Coaching and training enhancements to deepen practice are also necessary to continue to implement the SOP tools and the CPM behaviors with fidelity.

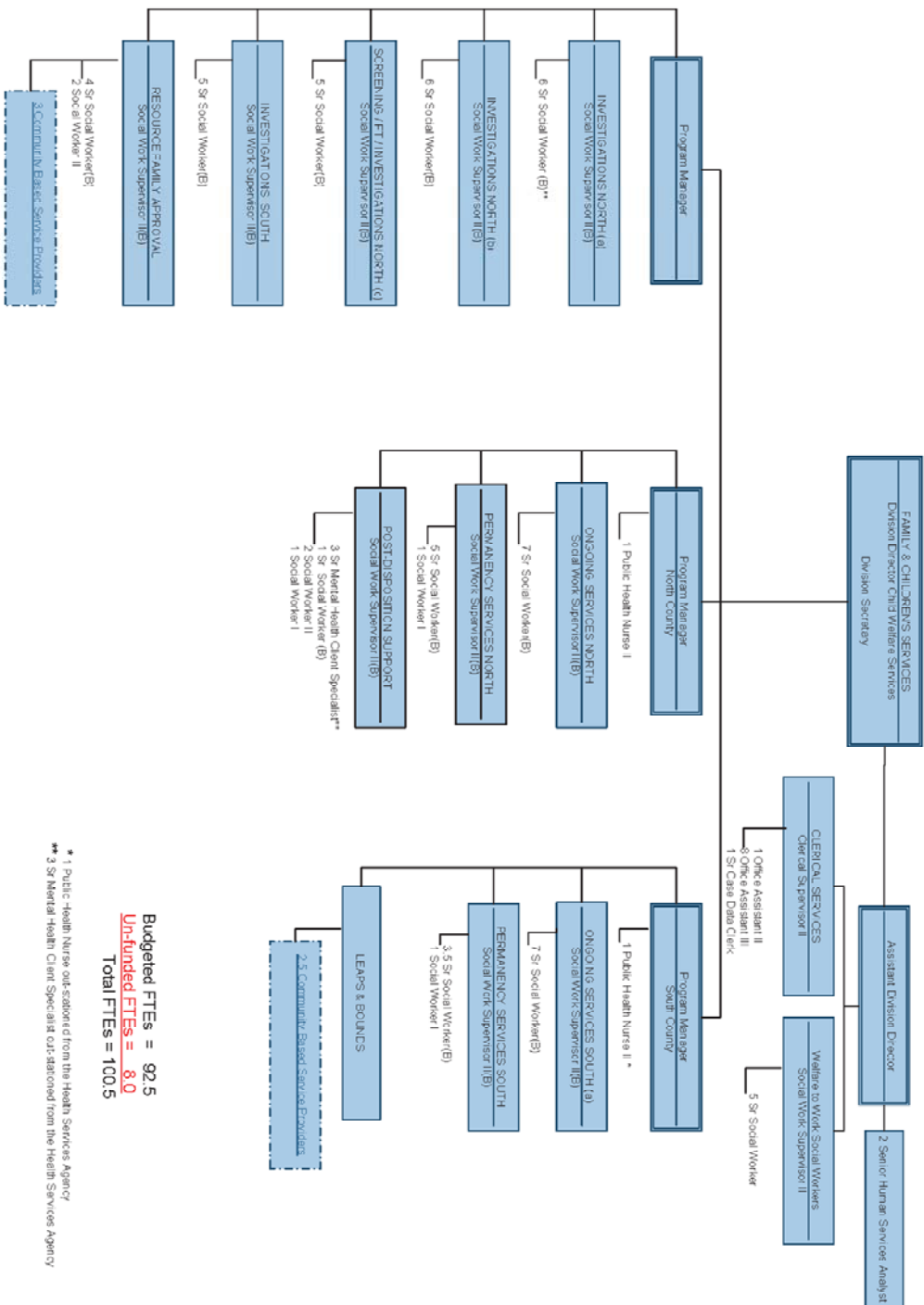
Juvenile Probation did not address P2 in the 2015 SIP and when looking at the date for these measures since 2015, there has been a decrease in the last 2 years. As mentioned previously, youth on probation in Juvenile Hall are spending significant time awaiting placement from disposition to entering an STRTP. There are some isolated instances of youth who have waited many months to even begin their placement program. Juvenile Probation has begun looking to improve this measure using existing stabilization programs and streamlining the process from detention/placement orders to placement program start. A significant barrier to placing youth in a timelier manner has been the implementation of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) itself. It has taken nearly three years for things to take shape and this includes getting more and more STRTP programs certified and willing to accept our youth. I anticipate this will only get better as more programs get certified and understand the changes in congregate care that is required by the CCR.

Development of the 2020 SIP

FCS and JPD will share its CSA findings with its stakeholders and engage them in identifying strategies for the 2020 System Improvement Plan that will be finalized this spring. The county plans to leverage existing efforts as part of this planning process and include strategies that will help identify and articulate the path forward now that the Family First Preservation Services Act (FFPSA) is on the horizon. The focus of FFPSA is on secondary and tertiary prevention which

requires Santa Cruz to continue nurturing and enhancing prevention services; this will help prevent children from coming into child welfare supervision or help support families to successfully achieve permanency. Similarly, the county will carefully consider and seek out strategies informed by the CPM and CCR for a cohesive approach to outcome improvements.

**HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT
FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES
FY 2019-20**



Budgeted FTEs = 92.5
 Un-funded FTEs = 8.0
 Total FTEs = 100.5

* 1 Public Health Nurse out-stationed from the Health Services Agency
 ** 3 Sr. Mental Health Client Specialist out-stationed from the Health Services Agency

**Santa Cruz County Probation
Juvenile Division**

	9/24/2019
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